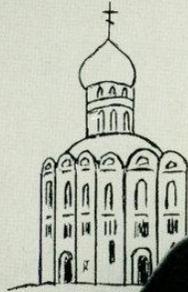


The Peasant from MAKEYEVKA

Patrick A. Croghan



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Biography of
BISHOP PIUS NEVEU, A.A.

By
Patrick A. Croghan, A.A.

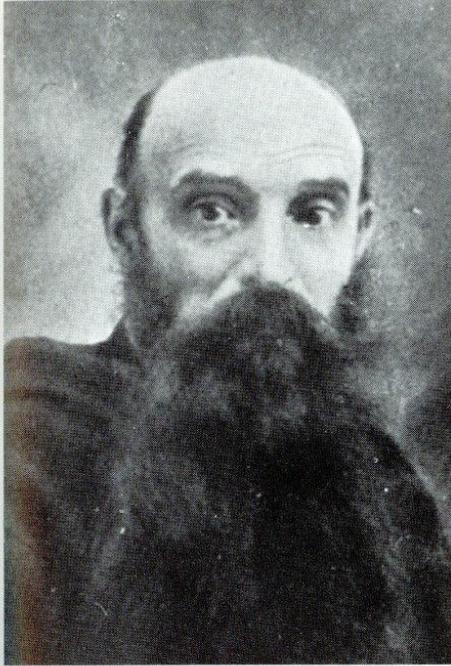
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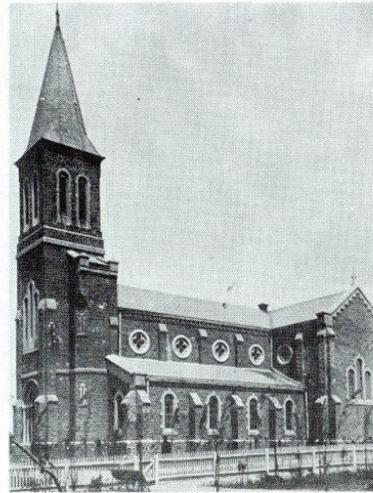
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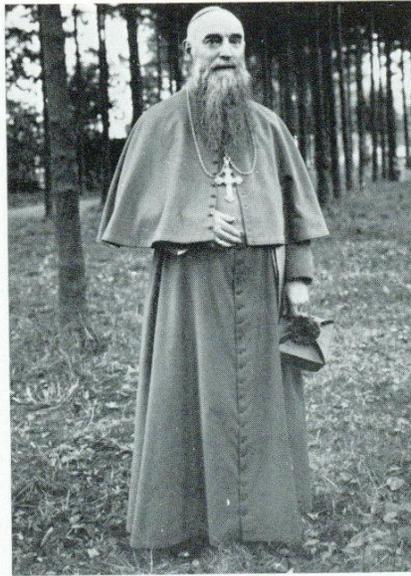
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Fr. Pius Neveu as missionary to Russia



St. Joseph's Church, Makeyevka



Bishop Neveu after his return
to France



(Left to right) Very Rev. Gervais Quénard, Bishop Pius Neveu, Rev. George
Antonio Laberge. Photographed in Paris, October, 1945.

FOREWORD

Bishop Neveu, a French Assumptionist, went to Russia as a missionary priest in 1906 and remained there until ill-health forced him to return to France in 1936. For the next ten years, he waited hopefully for a visa which would enable him to reenter the Soviet Union, but when he died in 1946, the visa, which was never refused, had still not been granted. Bishop Neveu steadfastly refused to write his memoirs. Fortunately, most of his correspondence with his Religious Superiors has been preserved in the archives of the Assumptionist General House in Rome. These letters, written infrequently until 1922 and with great regularity afterwards, were addressed mainly to Frs. Emmanuel Bailly, Ernest Baudouy, Joseph Maubon and Gervais Quénard respectively. Consecrated by Bishop Michael d'Herbigny in 1926, Bishop Neveu wrote thereafter in duplicate to Fr. Quénard and Bishop d'Herbigny. What follows is an attempt to piece together the story of his life in Russia by direct and indirect quotation from his letters. Contemporary events are noted only occasionally in order to establish a context; otherwise, these pages are taken almost in their entirety from Bishop Neveu's correspondence. It is hoped that he will emerge as the principal author of this work.

Patrick A. Croghan, A.A

Introduction

Bishop Neveu's life was fascinating and Father Patrick Croghan has done it justice. Though the book lacks the technical apparatus of a critical biography, it is nevertheless the result of exhaustive and critical research. The author had access to original documents many of which can only be found in the Assumptionist archives in Rome. He used those documents judiciously, ever careful of being faithful to them and of avoiding any unwarranted conclusions.

The Peasant from Makeyevka is the story of an Assumptionist priest who was already *persona non grata* in the U.S.S.R. at the time of his secret episcopal consecration in Moscow. Although these pages are not a history of the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union, they do provide a large slice of that history between the years 1900-1933. In the main, they were years of persecution, more or less covert. Bishop Neveu was an ideal target for the persecution: he was a Catholic priest whose very mission was at odds with the principles of Leninist-Marxism, and he was a French priest exercising his ministry at a time when relations between France and the U.S.S.R. were rapidly deteriorating. Fortunately, his faith was abiding and it provided him with the courage he needed. He was indeed a courageous man.

For whom is this book intended? Evidently, it is intended for Assumptionists who will take pride in the life of Pius Neveu, their brother, and who will be inspired by his witness. On a broader scale, it is really intended for anyone who is interested in the life of the Church, in the religious evolution of the U.S.S.R., in the life of the Church in Russia.

We are indebted to Father Croghan who gave us this revealing biography and who thus brought to light the life of a remarkable priest and bishop.

Joseph G. Loiselle, A.A.
Provincial

Worcester, MA
August 15, 1981

Chapter One

When Fr. Pius Neveu, a French Assumptionist priest, arrived in Russia on October 13, 1906, he had never heard of the Ukrainian town of Makeyevka. In this he was not alone. Formerly known as Dimitrievsk and situated in the heart of the Donetz Basin, it had only recently come to life with the opening of its coal mines and with the erection of a metallurgical plant in 1899. The last few decades of the 19th century had seen an intensive development of heavy industry throughout the Donetz Basin, promoted mainly by foreign capital which was predominantly French and Belgian. As a result, there had been a large influx of French-speaking company officials, engineers, technicians and their families, the majority of whom were Catholics. In the vicinity of Makeyevka alone, they numbered almost one thousand in 1906.

These people had never heard of Fr. Neveu, but they took a step which changed the whole course of his life when, in May, 1907, they petitioned the Catholic Bishop of Tiraspol, in whose diocese they resided, to erect a French national parish for them. Bishop Kessler received them kindly and sympathetically but pointed out that he had no French-speaking priest to give them. If they themselves could find a suitable priest, he would be willing to grant their request.

One of the officials of the Russo-Donetz Company, Mr. François Paris, suggested that the Assumptionist Fathers who had recently sent a priest to the French people in Odessa might be able to do the same for Makeyevka. Accordingly, he wrote to their Superior General, Fr. Emmanuel Bailly, with whom he was acquainted, and was informed that Fr. Auguste Maniglier from Odessa would go to Makeyevka to examine the situation. Fr. Maniglier arrived in July, 1907 and stayed two weeks. During this time, he attended a meeting of the managers of four companies in the area, at which it was agreed that, if an Assumptionist priest were available, the companies would pay his salary and would provide him with a residence and a church. Further, they would supply two horses, a driver and a carriage so that he could visit Catholic groups in the neighboring centers. In

return, the priest had to promise to stay in Makeyevka for at least five years.

Deeply impressed by all that he had seen and heard, Fr. Maniglier promised to recommend that an Assumptionist priest be sent to Makeyevka. Bishop Kessler gave his approval both to the suggested financial arrangement and to Fr. Maniglier's proposal and added that, as soon as he knew the name of the priest assigned, he would ask the Minister of the Interior for permission for him to enter the country and for authority to erect the French national parish of Makeyevka. Unfortunately, after his return to Odessa, Fr. Maniglier fell into a mood of indecision. He was attracted by the opportunity for a real apostolate in Makeyevka but was daunted by the difficulties inherent in the nature of the place and in its geographical location. When he finally did send in his report on September 24, 1907, Fr. Bailly, who had been approached directly by Mr. Paris, had already decided to send a priest to Makeyevka on a trial basis.

Meanwhile, over one thousand miles to the north in St. Petersburg, Fr. Neveu had settled in to his official duties as chaplain to the Good Shepherd Cancer Hospital and Orphanage, and was now the third Assumptionist residing in the capital. Founded by Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon in 1845 at Nîmes in France, the Assumptionist Fathers had first become interested in Russia and the Near East in 1862 when Pope Pius IX had invited Fr. d'Alzon to direct his young Congregation toward work that would lead to the reunion of the Orthodox Churches with Rome. By 1900, there were flourishing Assumptionist foundations in Bulgaria, Turkey and Jerusalem, but, as yet, Imperial Russia had remained inaccessible. By Russian law, religious orders were allowed to maintain houses and communities only within the territory of the former kingdom of Poland. Elsewhere throughout the Empire, their members could be admitted only as isolated individuals to act as chaplains to groups of foreign Catholics.

It was not until 1903 when Msgr. Zarnowiecky, Rector of the Catholic Ecclesiastical Academy in St. Petersburg, came to Paris with the approval of the Russian government to seek a Professor of Conversational French that an opportunity arose for an Assumptionist to enter Russia. Fr. Lievin Baurain, a Belgian, was nominated for the position and was accepted. As each professor in the Academy was allowed a manservant, Fr. Baurain

brought with him Brother Evrard, an Assumptionist student awaiting ordination to the priesthood. Fr. Jean Bois who relieved Fr. Baurain during the summer vacation of 1904 was assigned to St. Petersburg in 1905. In the same year, Frs. Gervais Quénard and Auguste Maniglier went to minister to the French colonies in Vilna and Odessa respectively. In 1906 Fr. Neveu went to St. Petersburg and Fr. Evrard, now a priest, took up temporary residence in Moscow.

Their primary purpose was to study the Russian Orthodox Church at first-hand, and with further positions being offered to them in Kiev and Makeyevka, they had good reason to be satisfied with their vantage points. At the same time, they were thoroughly aware of the need to remain inconspicuous. Because of the attitude of the Russian Government toward religious orders, each priest had entered the country with testimonial letters signed, not by Fr. Bailly, his Superior General, but by the Bishop of his own diocese of birth, and the presumption was that they were all secular priests. The existence of a vigilant postal censorship called for a great deal of discretion and even reticence in their communications with Fr. Bailly whom they always addressed as if he were a layman. This obstacle to full and open discussion was compounded by circumstances of time and distance and by the fact that their Superior General, who had no personal experience as a priest in Russia, was often absent on his official duties. In their relations with one another, they exercised extreme prudence. They met rarely, wrote few letters, and each man devoted himself to his work in comparative isolation.

From a missionary point of view, the historical background offered little reason for optimism. Traditionally, religion in Russia was identified with nationality. In the eyes of the State, every Russian belonged inalienably by birth to the national Orthodox Church. Catholicism was regarded as something intrinsically non-Russian, peculiarly Polish, and as such, at least potentially dangerous to the national interest. It was, however, tolerated, grudgingly and suspiciously, as the religion of foreigners living in Russia, and these included Catholics of Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian origin who had been forcibly incorporated into the empire after the various partitions of Poland.

This tolerance had been offset by defensive legislation aimed at controlling the influence of the Catholic Church in Russia and restricting the activities of its priests. Thus, although the Government maintained the Catholic Ecclesiastical Academy in St. Petersburg and contributed to the support of the Catholic clergy, any attempt by a priest to convert an Orthodox believer was punishable by law. There were two authorized Catholic ecclesiastical provinces. The Metropolitan see of Warsaw had six suffragan dioceses, all located in what had once been Poland. For the rest of the Empire, the Metropolitan was the Archbishop of Mohilev who resided in St. Petersburg and had five suffragan sees. Bishops were nominated by Imperial ukase after previous approbation by Rome, but in practice, dioceses were often suppressed without the consent of the Holy See or left vacant for long periods. No Catholic, ecclesiastic or lay, could communicate with the Holy See except through the Department of Foreign Cults and the Ministry of the Interior. No papal Bull or Decree could be published in the Empire without the permission of the Tsar, and the Minister of the Interior had to have previous assurance that it contained nothing detrimental to the sacred rights and privileges of the supreme autocratic authority.

It is true that an Imperial Manifesto in 1905 had proclaimed freedom of religion and conscience, but legislation to implement this was slow in coming. Officially, the Manifesto was interpreted in a restrictive sense. The Minister of the Interior issued a circular stating that anyone wishing to become a Catholic must first announce his intention to the police who would, in turn, notify the authorities of the Orthodox Church. The would-be convert was then subjected to a thirty-day period of interrogation and admonition, after which, if he still persisted, he could be allowed to 'fall away' from Orthodoxy.

Nevertheless, there was a feeling of optimism in Catholic circles in Russia. Tens of thousands of Uniate Catholics forcibly "converted" to Orthodoxy in 1839, returned en masse to the Catholic Church. In St. Petersburg, a little group of Russians who had secretly become Catholic before 1905 began openly to attend services conducted by a convert Orthodox priest. Intellectually convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church, they still remained deeply attached to their old liturgy. Now they

proposed to ask the Holy See to give them canonical recognition as Russian Catholics of the Oriental rite. True to Assumptionist tradition in the Near East, Fr. Bois and Fr. Baurain were encouraging and collaborating in this project when, in September 1907, they learned to their dismay that Fr. Baurain had been assigned to Makeyevka. There was some cause for their perturbation. In making his decision, Fr. Bailly, the Superior General, had apparently not adverted to the fact that Fr. Baurain had entered Russia, not as a priest, but as a Professor of French and, as far as the Government was concerned, that remained his status. If he attempted to go as pastor to Makeyevka before being officially recognized and registered as a Catholic priest, he was liable to arrest. A letter was hurriedly sent off to Fr. Bailly drawing his attention to this technical but important point. By the end of October, 1907, no reply had been received and letters from Makeyevka appealing for action were growing noticeably more impatient. Fr. Bois, as acting-Superior, found himself in a dilemma.

In the first place, he knew that Fr. Bailly considered the Russian venture so important that he had reserved to himself even the smallest decisions concerning it. On the other hand, Fr. Bois had not forgotten the incident of the previous year when the Assumptionists in St. Petersburg had been offered an important mission in Finland. The question had been referred to Fr. Bailly, but he had been absent and the letter remained unanswered. As a result, the mission had been given to another congregation, and Fr. Bailly had later blamed the St. Petersburg group for their lack of initiative. After consulting his confreres, Fr. Bois decided that, since Fr. Neveu's papers were in order, and since he was temperamentally best fitted to lead a life of possible isolation, he should resign his chaplaincy and go at once to Makeyevka.

Fr. Neveu agreed that this was the logical solution, but it was with a certain amount of uneasiness that he left St. Petersburg on November 3. He went first to Vilna where he spent November 5 and 6 with Fr. Quénard. The following day he went on to Kiev to see Fr. Evrard who had arrived there recently from Moscow. On November 10, Fr. Neveu reached Odessa where he had arranged to stay a few days with Fr. Maniglier, so that if Fr. Bailly replied to the explanatory letter sent by Fr. Bois, any further instructions could be forwarded from St. Petersburg. On November 15, still

none the wiser, he left for Saratov with Fr. Maniglier who was to present him to the Bishop of Tiraspol. Traveling by way of Kiev, where they called on Frs. Evrard, Kursk and Tambov, they arrived in Saratov on November 19, 1907.

The diocese of Tiraspol, which had an area of 462,504 square miles, was, after Mohilev, the largest Catholic diocese in the world. It stretched across South Russia from Bessarabia on the northwest of the Black Sea to the province of Samara beyond the Volga. Among its polyglot population was a strong bloc of German Catholics, descendants of the farmers invited by Catherine the Great to settle in the fertile lands along the Volga. Joseph Kessler, fifth Bishop of Tiraspol was, like all his predecessors, of German stock and had been born in Samara. Consecrated in 1904, he had assumed charge of a territory in which lived 330,097 Catholics of the Roman Rite with 100 parishes and 139 priests, and 33,216 Armenian Catholics with 50 parishes and 54 priests.

Bishop Kessler greeted Frs. Neveu and Maniglier warmly when they went to see him on November 19, 1907, and arranged for a formal interview on the next day. In the course of their discussion, the Bishop said very definitely that there could be no possibility of an experimental period. In the first place, it would be a waste of time for him to submit such a vague proposal for the approbation of the Russian Government, and secondly, the people of Makeyevka would accept Fr. Neveu only if he contracted to stay for five years. Furthermore, in view of the conditions under which the Catholic Church existed in the Russian Empire, he, the Bishop, must insist that if Fr. Neveu was willing to go to Makeyevka, he must tell nobody, not even other diocesan priests that he was a member of a religious order.

It was a moment of decision, and Fr. Neveu agreed at once to these conditions. Thereupon, the Bishop gave him jurisdiction over all the French-speaking Catholics in the Donetz Basin and said he would write immediately to ask the Government to confirm the appointment. The two Assumptionists left Saratov on November 21. The most direct route to Makeyevka was by ship down the Volga to Tsaritsin and then westward by rail to the Donetz Basin. The river, however, was frozen; and so Fr. Neveu traveled as far as Kharkov with Fr. Maniglier who, by the time he reached

Odessa, had made a round trip of 3200 miles to see his bishop. Fr. Neveu, with only the vaguest idea of the size of his parish, arrived in Makeyevka on November 25, 1907.

Born at Gien in the Loire valley, he was now thirty years old. He had been ordained in 1905 after studies in Jerusalem and Constantinople and had been trained in both the Roman and the Slav rites. His enthusiasm for the new Russian mission was well-known among his Assumptionist confreres and he had already acquired a working knowledge of the language. His assignment to St. Petersburg had come after a brief period of teaching in the Assumptionist college at Varna in Bulgaria.

Owing to the uncertainty of the last few months, nothing had been done about the promised rectory, and Fr. Neveu found himself the very welcome guest of Baron de Franclieu, manager of the Russo-Donetz Company. From the ridge on the edge of the town on which the French officials had their villas, he could look out across Makeyevka, perched on its long plateau amid the undulations of the steppe. The shroud of black smoke from the coal-mines, the white smoke from the lime-kilns and the white shooting flames from the blast furnaces were an eloquent testimony to a new-found industrial prosperity. The Baron spoke with authority and enthusiasm of the prospects of Makeyevka and of the great need for a priest. In a few short years, the population had jumped from almost nothing to 20,000, and this growth would certainly continue. Further expansion of industry was scheduled, and this would bring still more Frenchmen to the area. Plans for urban development had been drawn up: Fr. Neveu's church and rectory, for which building materials had already been donated, would be alongside a park in the future town center. The arrival of a resident French priest had been a much-needed spiritual tonic to the whole Catholic community, and Fr. Neveu could expect their wholehearted cooperation in all his undertakings.

Baron de Franclieu assured him that the life he would lead in the Donetz Basin would be active and even demanding. Accidents in the mines and factories were frequent, as were epidemics of cholera, typhus and dysentery. Besides saying Mass in Makeyevka, he would have to go twice a month to two other mission stations and would have to make periodic visits to isolated groups of his parishioners. Traveling could be hazardous

because the roads, where they existed, were bad, and acts of brigandage were not unknown. The climate was varied in the extreme. Torrid summers parched the earth; winter brought icy blizzards, and the spring thaws converted the countryside into a sea of mud. All things considered, Fr. Neveu decided that the general picture was very encouraging. The most pleasing feature of his situation was that, although his salary was paid by the various firms, neither they nor the people he had come to serve had acquired any right of patronage. His appointment had come from the Bishop of Tiraspol and from the Russian Government, and like the Orthodox priests, he was authorized by the State to perform certain civil acts on its behalf.

Baron de Franclieu was friendly and hospitable but, after a few days, Fr. Neveu began to feel that too close an association with any one family might jeopardize his priestly independence and even his future ministry. He had noticed two disused huts and had learned that they sheltered cholera victims in 1892 but had since been abandoned. He had no sooner decided to ask the Baron to place them at his disposal than he received a letter from Fr. Bailly ordering him to enter into no commitments at Makeyevka and to leave for Odessa at once. Fr. Neveu realized at once that this order left him in an unenviable predicament. In Russia any cleric attempting to change his domicile without the express permission of his ecclesiastical superior would be arrested. Bishop Kessler, who had obtained Government approval for his appointment to Makeyevka just two weeks before, would scarcely be enthusiastic about starting new proceedings to send him to Odessa. Still less, would the Bishop relish the idea of admitting to the Ministry of the Interior that he had made a serious error of judgment. Again, if the Bishop wanted him to stay in Makeyevka, there was no point in thinking of Odessa which was also in the diocese of Tiraspol. Even if Bishop Kessler did allow him to leave the diocese, a return to St. Petersburg seemed out of the question. The Archbishop of Mohilev would not be likely to accept him after hearing what had happened in Makeyevka and knowing that the Government would hesitate to sanction a further appointment for such a man who had resigned from two official posts within a month. As no mention had been made of a replacement, his abrupt departure, even if it were possible, would be a source of

embarrassment to men like Baron de Franclieu who had been instrumental in bringing him to Makeyevka, and of scandal to the people who were so anxious to have a French-speaking priest.

The more Fr. Neveu thought about Fr. Bailly's order, the more impossible his position seemed to become. On December 2, 1907, he wrote to his Superior General describing these difficulties at length. In order to make his own attitude clear, he also reviewed the circumstances that had led Fr. Bois to send him to Makeyevka, adding that he had felt it his duty to obey his local Superior. They had considered it too dangerous to consult Fr. Bailly by phone or telegram, but Fr. Bois had written at once giving the reasons for his decision. As Fr. Bailly had not countermanded that decision, they had concluded that he approved of their course of action. Fr. Neveu continued:

In the name of God and in the name of these people who trusted us, I beg you to consider all that I have just told you. I am not asking you to change your decision but please do not enforce it at present. For the sake of these poor exiles, let me stay here at least until next summer so that I can organize the parish and take care of the primary spiritual needs. The future is in the hands of God. I have never sought this parish, and I will leave it willingly to one more worthy, whether he belongs to our Congregation or not. My only concern is that we should not dash the hopes we have raised in these people and cause them to become angry and bitter.

Good news was not a feature of those early days in Makeyevka. A letter from home announced that his step-mother and a brother had died and that his father was utterly worn-out and unable to work. Fr. Neveu's heart went out to this man who was only sixty-three and who had known nothing but poverty, worry and hardship in bringing up sixteen children. Some of them, including an eleven-year-old boy who was paralyzed, were still dependent on him. Fr. Neveu thought again of his mother who had died when he was thirteen leaving him the eldest of eight. His father worked hard at the pottery factory in Gien but earned little. The young Neveu had been so proud of the five francs he earned each month for reading to an elderly lady. On Sundays he had sold *La Croix du Dimanche*, a paper published by the Assumptionist Fathers. In 1895, as a student for the

priesthood in the diocesan major seminary of Orleans, he had decided that his vocation was to the religious life and had joined the Assumptionists.

There was, however, little that Fr. Neveu could do to solve his family's problems and nothing that he could do about his own. In the hope that Fr. Bailly might accede to his request, he did not tell Baron de Franclieu that he might have to leave Makeyevka. The two disused huts had now been thoroughly cleansed and fumigated, so Fr. Neveu converted one of them into a chapel where he said Mass on weekdays. The other, in spite of the Baron's protests, became his temporary home and was furnished with the simple necessities by kindly parishioners.

An official document from Saratov bringing written confirmation of his appointment by both Church and State which, in other circumstances, would have been reassuring, was now just a further complication. He decided, for the time being, to obey strictly Fr. Bailly's order to "sign nothing and promise nothing," and he even referred some civil acts to a neighboring priest on the pretext that he was still not familiar with written Russian. In Kharkov, over two hundred miles away, the French Consul had heard of the arrival of a French priest in Makeyevka. Now he wrote inviting Fr. Neveu to act unofficially as his local representative in promoting the well-being of the French people in the Donetz Basin. To this, Fr. Neveu replied simply that he would be happy to do what he could for as long as he remained in Makeyevka.

The weeks went by. Fr. Bailly may have written. But the only letters Fr. Neveu received were from his family, and the news they contained did nothing to cheer him. It seemed to him that never before had he known such mental anguish. Fortunately, there was no scarcity of work, and he found some relief in plunging into his priestly duties, administering the sacraments, visiting the sick and laying the foundations of a new parish. For the first time, he had the experience of requesting, and being granted, governmental permission to receive four converts from Orthodoxy into the Catholic Church. Makeyevka was making such demands on his time that, as yet, he had been unable to visit the other French colonies in the area. However, he had already learned that in Russia there was no use being in a hurry about anything. Discovering that his congregation included not only French and Belgians but also Poles, Germans and Italians, all of whom

spoke Russian, he asked Bishop Kessler to allow him to preach in that language. This raised a delicate historical issue. In general, the non-liturgical language used in Catholic churches in Russia was Polish, partly because most of the Catholics in the Empire were Polish, partly because the Holy See had always resisted the attempts of the Tsarist government to impose the use of Russian even in the Catholic churches in Poland. In the circumstances, the Bishop felt that he could not grant Fr. Neveu's petition.

The beginning of May saw the return of spring and the end of Fr. Neveu's eremitical life. Thus far, he had steadfastly refused to employ a maid on the grounds that there would be fewer problems if he took care of the household duties, including cooking, himself. Now, from Kiev, Fr. Evrard sent him a middle-aged manservant who relieved Fr. Neveu of the care of the chickens, took charge of the singing at Mass and acted as sacristan. His kitchen skills, however, were extremely limited, and so Fr. Neveu, instead of cooking for himself, now began to cook for two. The month of May also brought a letter from Fr. Bailly, summoning Fr. Neveu to Belgium to meet him at Louvain in August. Fr. Baurain, whose situation had been regularized, would replace him in Makeyevka.

Chapter Two

Bishop Kessler, hoping no doubt that Fr. Neveu's own description of his life in the Donetz Basin would convince Fr. Bailly of the need for a priest there, readily gave the formal permission without which the civil authorities would not allow Fr. Neveu to travel. Fr. Baurain arrived in Makeyevka on July 24, and two days later Fr. Neveu left for Belgium.

Writing to a friend on July 30, 1908, Fr. Baurain noted his first impressions:

It is a strange country. The soil is as black as the coal they take from it. There are no trees and no grass and it seems even more of a desert than those I saw beyond the Jordan. The only vegetation is an unusual kind of plant with twisted leaves which are greyish-green in color. The sweeping undulations of the terrain are pitted, here and there, by deep gullies torn out by the rains which rush along the rich soil and disappear leaving scarcely any moisture. The air is hot and dry, and the driving wind that comes off the steppe must make this a terrible place in winter.

At the same time, the Makeyevka region is one of the most important in the Donetz Basin which itself is one of the most highly industrialized in Russia. Apart from the soil which is immeasurably rich, the subsoil holds treasures which, until thirty years ago, had not been tapped or exploited. Both soil and subsoil are owned by the various industrial concerns, many of which are French; and it is they who, around the mine-shafts and the blast furnaces, build towns and villages, administer them and collect taxes from the inhabitants. We have here a real feudal system in which the tall chimney has replaced the castle.

In this comparative desert, one senses an intense life. The steppe is criss-crossed with telephone wires and with cables which distribute light and power. Not many large cities have such facilities. Makeyevka, of course, is officially only a village, but it is a

village with a future. They tell me that ten years ago you would scarcely see a dog here. Now there are almost 25,000 people and more dogs—all of them black— than I have seen anywhere except perhaps in Constantinople. I am sure that in thirty years, Makeyevka will have a population of over 200,000 people.

One week later, Fr. Baurain wrote to Fr. Bailly who had asked him to give his opinion of the prospects in Makeyevka. Like Fr. Neveu, Fr. Baurain felt that, from an Assumptionist point of view, the most attractive feature of the new parish was that it was authorized both by Church and State. The pastor thus had an official status which would not disappear even if the industrial companies broke the contract under the terms of which they paid his salary. Even in the unlikely event that this did happen, the parishioners were willing and numerous enough to support a priest themselves. Fr. Baurain also pointed out that the French residents in the Donetz Basin, who were for the most part professional people, enjoyed considerable prestige and influence, and this would be of advantage to a French priest who was interested in working for the reunion of the Churches.

Fr. Baurain continued:

The pastoral ministry, however, will not be without its difficulties. The climate is trying, and I am surprised that you thought a stay in Makeyevka would be a relief from the heat of St. Petersburg. At present, I think it is hotter than Palestine and I am told that, in winter, it is colder than St. Petersburg. To stay here, a priest needs a strong constitution, I think, too, he would be a lot better off if he had a lay-brother as a companion. It is not good for Fr. Neveu to have to cook for himself day after day. I tried it, but discovered that once I had a meal prepared, my appetite was gone. Now my diet consists of a cabbage salad and bread, and I am grateful that I had my appendix removed last year. Neveu must have a good stomach to have lasted so long.

All things considered, I urge you to keep this parish of Makeyevka in which we are already officially recognized and which could easily become a most influential center for the work of

reunion.

Fr. Bailly, however, seemed to feel that he had to make a choice between keeping Makeyevka or Odessa and decided in favor of the latter. Fr. Neveu returned to Makeyevka very disconsolate, early in September, and told Fr. Baurain who was anxious to get back to St. Petersburg, that he had achieved nothing. He at once notified Bishop Kessler that his Superior General had ordered him to replace Fr. Maniglier in Odessa and on the following Sunday, make the same announcement to the people of Makeyevka.

Always in need of priests for his huge diocese Bishop Kessler decided to make a personal appeal to Fr. Bailly. On October 15, 1908, he wrote expressing his dismay at the news that Fr. Neveu was being recalled and that the Assumptionists were giving up Makeyevka:

I have a very high regard for this priest who speaks Russian, who is loved by his people, and who is doing so much good. If I failed to ask for your consent before appointing him to Makeyevka, I had only the best of intentions as far as you were concerned and was happy to have another Assumptionist in my diocese.

I ask you urgently to reverse your decision, if this is possible, because of the good that has been done and will be done, and so that we may avoid the bad impression and unhappy consequences that could arise if your Congregation abandons Makeyevka. Please remember that in Russia, a bishop cannot always do things the way they are done elsewhere.

If you are concerned because Fr. Neveu is cut off from community life, I would be willing to accept a second priest for Makeyevka, or if you prefer, a lay brother who could act as sacristan or servant but who would not wear a religious habit. I am ready to do anything in my power to enable the priest in Makeyevka to live according to the rules of your congregation, even though in Russia he cannot be officially recognized as a religious.

Fr. Bailly, however, remained adamant. In a letter dated December 2, 1908, he told Fr. Neveu that he had informed Bishop Kessler that the

Assumptionists could not keep Makeyevka and that, as Fr. Maniglier had to leave Odessa, Fr. Neveu had been assigned to replace him. Bishop Kessler, too, had made up his mind, having decided apparently that possession was nine tenths of the law. There was no indication that he even considered releasing Fr. Neveu who remained, as he reflected sadly, "between the hammer and the anvil."

His priestly duties left him little time either for brooding or for study. A steady stream of people came to his door with their various problems. Some wanted him to help them find work; others were just seeking advice, while even Orthodox believers, finding him more accessible than their own priests, came for help in their difficulties and consolation in their troubles. He held regular catechism classes for the First Communicants and for the older children, instructed converts and visited the sick. The French people usually went home to be married, but in the year ending September, 1909, he had 9 weddings, as well as 15 funerals and 37 Baptisms. He was often away in one or another of the neighboring French centers, and usually spent three or four days in each in order to preach a short retreat and give people the opportunity to receive the sacraments. He went to Ekaterinoslav twice, Mariupol three times, Enakievo twice, Goloubovka three times, and once each to Droujovka, Taganrog and Rostov-on-Don.

All of these things he noted in his letter of August 24, 1909 to Fr. Bailly. He also added that plans for the new church had been drawn up and approved by the Bishop. As yet, he had not ventured to use the permission given by the Attaman-General of the Don Cossacks to raise funds within the Military Province of the Don. Fr. Neveu continued:

My situation remains the same, and I find it very embarrassing. My Superior General orders me to go to Odessa, and the Bishop will not give me the document without which I cannot leave. I felt that my only course was to keep silent and ask God to resolve the ambiguous state of affairs. You and the Bishop are the competent authorities. I have no choice but to wait until your negotiations are successfully concluded.

Although I promised to write to you more often, I felt that my letters would only aggravate you and bring me new reproaches since I am still here against your will. I must admit that this self-

imposed silence went hard on me; but, in the circumstances, I considered it infinitely preferable. If I was wrong, forgive me.

I still think Makeyevka is well worth keeping, but I would prefer to be the least elsewhere than to be the greatest here without a clearly defined mandate. I am willing to go anywhere since my knowledge of the Russian language and of the Slav ceremonies would enable me to do a task more Russian. If you do send someone to replace me, I think he should have the companionship of a lay brother who can play the organ and sing. These things are important here.

Despite his precarious position, Fr. Neveu saw no harm in pursuing what had already become for him a work of dedication. Convinced that the continued existence of schism between Rome and the Orthodox Churches was due largely to ignorance and prejudice on both sides, he wanted to see the foundation of a Center of Russian Studies, similar to the Assumptionist Center for Oriental and Byzantine Studies in Turkey, at which future missionaries would have the opportunity to acquire a knowledge and love of the Russian people and their culture. To this end, he had begun to assemble a Russian library specializing in works of philology, literature and the civil and religious history of Russia. Wherever he travelled, he sought out the second-hand bookstores and had formed such a good relationship with the dealers that they now notified him whenever they had books that would interest him. In this way, he had been able to buy cheaply many books of first rate importance which were unobtainable outside of Russia.

The development of the metallurgical and coke-chemical industries of which the Baron de Franclieu had spoken had increased the number of Fr. Neveu's parishioners. However, though the plans for the church were completed, nobody could give him any idea when building would begin. Two of the larger French companies were discussing a merger, and it was a time of re-organization characterized by frequent changes in official personnel. Fr. Neveu was on good terms with all of these men, but he readily understood that they were in a position similar to his own, and that, lacking the security of tenure, they hesitated to commit themselves to anything.

In 1910, for the third time in two years, the Donetz Basin was hit by an epidemic of cholera. So far, Makeyevka itself had escaped, but now the disease had been brought in by a carrier from Rostov, and within a month, there were over 400 fatal cases in the town. It was about this time that Fr. Bailly ordered all the Assumptionists to return from Russia.

Increasingly frustrated by what they considered their Superior General's complete lack of understanding of their situation, the priests in St. Petersburg had written to his Assistants pointing out that his attitude was undermining whatever future their work might have in Russia. Fr. Bailly interpreted this letter as evidence of a spirit of rebellion and disobedience and felt he had no alternative but to close down the entire mission in Russia.

The reaction from the south of Russia was immediate. A petition, signed by all the French people in Odessa, by three foreign consuls and by the Governor of the city, begged Bishop Kessler to keep Fr. Maniglier there. The French and Belgians in the Donetz Basin also sent a petition but added that, if necessary, they would detain Fr. Neveu by force. Bishop Kessler was conscious of his responsibilities to the French-speaking people in his diocese and was also aware that, if the Assumptionists left, the Government would not allow other priests from abroad to replace them. On June 16, 1910, he wrote to Cardinal Richard in Paris drawing his attention to the difficulties of French Catholics in the diocese of Tiraspol and asking him to try to persuade Fr. Bailly to change his mind. In July, he made two direct appeals to Fr. Bailly, one in Latin and one in French reminding him that the greatest desire of the Founder of the Assumptionists was that they should work in Russia. From London, en route to visit Assumptionist houses in South America, Fr. Bailly informed Bishop Kessler that he would not enforce his decision for the time being. In fact, the order recalling the missionaries was never rescinded, but it was never mentioned again, and an uneasy peace ensued. Fr. Neveu, in a letter to an Assumptionist friend on August 18, 1910, commented:

If the history of the first seven years of the Russian mission is ever written, the Assumptionists of the future will find it amusing, sad, and most of all incredible. The danger has been averted for the moment, but all is far from well. If our Founder does not intercede

for us in heaven, I fear we shall all be done for.

Thus far, Fr. Neveu had had no difficulties with the Russian Government, but on October 5, 1911 as he was finishing a funeral service, a local policeman handed him a letter and told him it was urgent. From the Minister of the Interior, it had come down along the bureaucratic route via the Director of the Department of Foreign Cults, the Attaman-General of the Cossacks, the Chief Inspector of Police of the District of Taganrog to the Inspector of Police at Makeyevka, and it requested information as to when, by whose authority and with what resources the Catholic Church in Makeyevka had been built. Hoping to discover the origin of this sudden interest, he was in no undue haste to reply, and two days later, he received an identical document from the Bishop's office, an indication that the Minister was making inquiries on two fronts. He finally answered that no Catholic church had been built in Makeyevka, but that, with the permission of the Attaman-General, he was using an old hut as a temporary chapel. This permission had been issued verbally but was sufficient since no permanent building was involved.

His reply brought forth further questions and was the beginning of a correspondence which lasted twelve months, to the intense irritation of all concerned. Finally, in October, 1912, he received letters from both the Bishop and the Government stating that the Minister of the Interior had no objection to the building of a Catholic church in Makeyevka, and that Fr. Neveu could continue to use his hut with an easy mind until such time as he had a church. The Minister asked only that the permission to raise funds for the church, granted previously by the Attaman-General, be ratified by himself. The Minister regretted to inform Fr. Neveu that French citizens could not act as trustees of the parish since Russian law demanded that such offices be held by subjects of the Empire.

Fr. Neveu never really did find out what started the inquiry. It was possible that somebody in Makeyevka itself was trying to make trouble for him because some Orthodox believers had said quite openly that they would never allow a Catholic church to be built unless they too were given a church by the foreign industrialists. On the other hand, he could be feeling the aftermath of the expulsion of Fr. Werczinski, a German Jesuit resident in Moscow, which had taken place in the spring of 1911. This

priest had come to the attention of the police because he was making so many converts, and after a search of his house, he had been deported in virtue of an almost century-old law against the Jesuits. Immediately, every foreign priest was suspected of being a Jesuit, and only the personal intervention of Mr. Stolypin, President of the Council of Ministers, on the day before his assassination, had saved Fr. Evrard in Kiev from banishment. In any case, the whole incident had been providential. The completion of the merger between the two French companies had brought a relative stability to managerial circles in Makeyevka. As soon as the first difficulties had arisen with the Minister of the Interior, Fr. Neveu had gone to discuss his problems with various officials and had raised the question of the actual building of the church that had been promised. The result was a petition signed by all the members of the French colony in the Donetz Basin which, together with a history of the parish in Makeyevka, was sent to the headquarters of the Mining and Metallurgical Company of Russia in Paris. These documents were presented at the annual stockholders' meeting, and in November, 1912 Fr. Neveu was informed that a grant of 25,000 rubles (66,500 francs) had been voted for the erection of a church. With the funds already in hand and with gifts in kind already assured (bricks, lime, stone and steel), there would be almost enough to build a church and a rectory and to buy land for a cemetery. Fr. Neveu was determined to have French trustees for the parish, but he was not too concerned for the moment about the words of the Minister of the Interior, because he knew that exceptions to the Russian law had been made for the French national parishes in Odessa, Moscow and St. Petersburg.

For some time now, Fr. Neveu had not written to his Superior General. He had no desire to be either the cause or the object of further recrimination. Until Fr. Bailly accepted the fact that the Russian Government would not allow him to leave Makeyevka without Bishop Kessler's permission, any attempt at correspondence would seem to be pointless. Nevertheless, he felt the need to keep in contact with his Congregation and, especially, to open his heart. On March 1, 1913, he wrote to Fr. Ernest Baudouy who had received him into the Assumptionist novitiate at Livry some twenty years before:

I have only pleasant memories of you, but if you find that you

are bored by the first letter I have ever written you, I promise not to offend again. You are, I think, aware of our situation in Russia and will understand if I speak like counsel for the defense. When the father of a family is angry the children remain quiet and keep out of his way. Scripture tells us that he who hurts an eye brings tears, he who hurts a heart causes sadness, and he who throws stones at the birds makes them fly away. At present, I am suffering from a problem which I did nothing to create, and I would love to see the clouds of distrust broken up.

He recapitulated the history of the parish. Since 1909, he had 161 Baptisms, 93 funerals and only 20 weddings. He had hoped to start building the new church for which he already had the money, but the site given previously was not suitable and he would have to find another. This would probably mean that new plans would have to be drawn up and that new delays would have to be anticipated before the plans were approved. Just as necessary as a church was a parish magazine, because many of his parishioners, scattered throughout the Donetz Basin, did not have the opportunity to hear sermons or instructions regularly. He had received permission from the Government to open a little printing press, and Bishop Kessler had approved the project, but he had either to use the permit before June, 1914, or start all over again. Because his plan would involve expenses and commit the future, he would like to have Fr. Bailly's consent. He was sure that if Fr. Ernest pleaded for him, the cause would be won:

You will understand if this letter comes to you by a roundabout way. If you care to write to me, do not mail your letter in Rome, do not use Congregation letterhead, register the letter and seal it firmly. I know from sad experience that no precaution is to be omitted in this dear country. I often think of the Fathers and Brothers from whom I am so far away. I know from a trustworthy source that many of them consider me stubborn and wicked. With all my heart, I thank the charitable souls who work so hard to give me this reputation. Their opinions do not really trouble me, because my only trust is in God. I am content if my stay in Makeyevka establishes our Congregation in Russia, as was the heartfelt wish of our Founder.

Fr. Ernest took most of the precautions suggested, and his letter, written on April 8 but not delivered until early June, brought tears of joy to Fr. Neveu's eyes. In his reply, dated June 14, he admitted that he was not used to receiving fatherly and encouraging letters. Now was the time, he felt, for some official delegate of the Superior General to come and examine the affairs of the Assumptionist mission to Russia at first-hand:

For over six years, I have been praying for a Canonical Visitation. In this country it is almost impossible to do one's priestly duty without an element of risk, and all of us could be held guilty of offenses meriting either imprisonment or expulsion. We have not yet exhausted our wiles, and if you or any other Major Superior would come dressed as a civilian, we can arrange entry into the country without any difficulty. Then you will see for yourselves that we have nothing to hide, and mutual confidence and affection between Superiors and religious will be restored.

Fr. Neveu was unusually busy that summer. The neighboring pastor of Enakievo, eighteen miles away, had been ill and had received permission from the Bishop to go for treatment to Carlsbad. Fr. Neveu was to assume charge of the parish in his absence. In Makeyevka, work on the new rectory had already begun, but the church was still on the drawing board. The plans had been accepted by Bishop Kessler and had been passed on to the Attaman-General's office for technical approval, but, as usual, there seemed to be no hurry to release them.

On November 21, 1913, Fr. Neveu, no doubt encouraged in this by Fr. Ernest, made a new approach to Fr. Bailly:

Forgive me if my long silence has caused you pain, but—and I say this without bitterness—the letters you had been writing to me were breaking my heart. The one thing a religious living far from his brethren must have is the confidence and affection of his Superior, and I am not yet detached enough to be able to live without this. I will not tell you what I have suffered from my unhappy situation. My only consolation has been in work, prayer and tears, and my hope was that time would open up the way of reconciliation.

I treasure my religious vows above all things, and I intend, with

the help of God, to be faithful to them until death, as I swore on the day of my final profession. I disavow anything in my letters that may have grieved you or offended God, and I sincerely ask for your forgiveness. I am convinced, however, that if we had had the benefit of a visit from you or someone delegated by you, the clouds of misunderstanding would long ago have been dissipated.

I love this Makeyevka which has cost me so much, but I have never considered it my personal fief. I love this Russia for which I would gladly live and die, but if you wish me to leave, I shall go as soon as I am allowed to do so. Yet, I must say in all simplicity that despite the hardships inherent in the life of a missionary in the steppe, I think the Congregation should stay here. At the same time, I accept in advance any decision you see fit to make. I hope and pray that this avowal of my dispositions will restore me to your favor.

In spite of his hopes, the rectory was not yet completed, and work on the church, which had finally begun in the fall, had now been brought to a halt by the coming of winter. He still had to raise another 5,000 rubles, but he was confident that this would be forthcoming and had not hesitated to order the stained-glass windows from France.

1914 began inauspiciously. In January, he was thrown from the sled three times, thanks, as he said, to the skill of his driver and the indescribable state of the roads. The thaw came early, and on February 5, while on his way to visit some parishioners, he slipped in the mud, fell awkwardly, and dislocated his left knee. Fluid developed and for six long weeks, he lay on his bed with his leg in a cast. It was not a good time to be confined to the house. Lent would soon be here and, just when he should be the busiest, the parish would have to take care of itself. He could not say Mass, and the mud had made the roads impassable so that nobody could come to bring him Holy Communion.

Black thoughts crowded in on him. What had he gained by volunteering for the Russian mission? He had given up the community life he loved in order to live almost like a hermit in an old cholera hut, cooking for himself and a bachelor servant, and making a two-day trip whenever he wanted to

go to Confession. Hours that he hoped would be devoted to the priestly ministry were spent traveling abominable roads, getting lost in blizzards and trying to learn how to keep parish books, or they were frittered away in the bureaucratic procedures that accompanied his function as a civil servant. It was his privilege to see the miseries of working-class families without being able to help, to minister to the sick in a land that had known plague for three years, and to try and console widows and orphans after the frequent accidents in mines and factories. Around him was the brutish debauchery of the poor, the refined debauchery of the middle-class and the wealthy, and the evidence of an intemperance that was beyond description. Faithful to his vow, he had obeyed his local superior and had come to Makeyevka. As a result, his Superior General had apparently disowned him and considered him to be an outcast from the Congregation. Fr. Neveu confessed that he felt abandoned both by God and man.

By the end of March, the cast had been removed from his leg, and although he was allowed to walk only a few steps, Fr. Neveu's customary good humor had returned. On Palm Sunday, he was able to say Mass. His genuflections were neither beautiful, profound, nor liturgical because his left knee tired quickly and swelled up, and in his right knee, he had rheumatism. Work on the church and rectory had been resumed, and he was hoping that both would be finished before the end of the year. On June 15, still without an acknowledgement of his letter of the previous November, he decided to write again to Fr. Bailly and invite him to come for the dedication of the new church. His perseverance was rewarded, and on July 22, he wrote briefly to Fr. Ernest:

I have had a letter from Fr. Bailly that is full of nothing but praise. I think the sensible course is to put the compliments in my hip pocket and get on with my work, but I will not deny that I am happy at the return of the tranquility of order that is peace.

One week later, on July 30, His Imperial Majesty, Alexander II, ordered the mobilization of the Russian armies, and World War I had become inevitable.

Chapter Three

As a reservist in the French Territorial Army Fr. Neveu knew that he would inevitably be called home for military service. Accordingly, on July 31, 1914, he wrote to Bishop Kessler explaining his status and asking for permission to hand over the care of his parish to the nearest priest and for authorization to leave the country. On Monday, August 4, Mr. Pigeonneau, the French Consul in Kharkov, ordered all Frenchmen of military age in the Donetz Basin to join a special train leaving on August 6 for Odessa where they would take a ship for France. From Saratov, Bishop Kessler wired the requested permissions and his blessing; at Mass on Sunday, August 10, Fr. Neveu said goodbye to the remainder of his parishioners.

It had been an emotional week, and it was with a sense of relief that he took the train for Odessa. Carrying his little bundle of personal effects, he felt very proud that he was going to share the burdens of his countrymen and was looking forward to at least the chance of seeing his family. At the same time, he was wondering if this were the end of the Assumptionist mission in Russia and if so, what would become of his library which had now grown to several thousand volumes. Already, he noticed, wartime confusion was beginning to affect the railroads and, as a result, his journey to Odessa took 55 hours instead of the normal 28. He made his way at once to Fr. Maniglier's rectory where he was greeted by Fr. Evrard, who had already arrived from Kiev, and was handed a telegram from Mr. Pigeonneau ordering him to return to Makeyevka. Surprised and disappointed by this anticlimax to the last few days, Fr. Neveu went down to the harbor to bid a second farewell to his parishioners who were sailing next morning and returned to the rectory to spend two weeks in bed with bronchitis.

Once he was fit enough to travel, he decided that a sea voyage would be more beneficial than a long train journey, so he took a ship along the coast of the Black Sea via Sebastopol to Yalta in the Crimea. Here he had to wait five days for a passage to Mariupol (now Zhdanaov) which was only about 100 miles south of Makeyevka. The time was not wasted because a

Polish priest who knew no French asked him to visit the French families in his parish and also to preach and hear Confessions. He then sailed north via Feodosia and Kertch through the Sea of Azov and finally reached Makeyevka, secretly ashamed of the shortness of his campaign, but to the joyful surprise of his parishioners.

A letter awaited him from Mr. Pigeonneau who explained that Fr. Neveu had been recalled to his parish at the request of the Minister of the Interior, the request having been transmitted through the French Embassy in St. Petersburg. The Consul felt sure that Fr. Neveu's patriotism would enable him to accept this decision. In time of war, the place of a priest was with his people, and Fr. Neveu could best serve his country by continuing to be a source of strength and support to the French people in the Donetz Basin.

Fr. Neveu was almost certain that this maneuver had been initiated by Bishop Kessler who was a very persistent man, but he felt that he would like some official reassurance that he would not be classified as a deserter because he had not returned to France. His letter to Mr. Pigeonneau brought the following reply:

In keeping you at your post in Makeyevka, the French Government spontaneously recognizes the service you are rendering. France is already asking too many sacrifices from her womenfolk to have the right to deprive them of the consolation of religion. The French people of the Donetz now need you more than ever.

Fr. Neveu found this line of reasoning very interesting because recent French Governments had not been especially notorious for their concern either about religion in general or Catholicism in particular. It was true, however, that there was plenty for him to do. Children who were studying in France had been unable to return to their schools, so he became a schoolmaster again. After classes, he went out to beg food and clothing for the needy and discovered that he was also expected to be a doctor, especially for children. People had great faith in his knowledge and ability to cure, although the only thing he ever prescribed was cleanliness.

Illiteracy was widespread, and so his evenings were spent acting as secretary to those who came to ask him to write letters for them.

With a strict military censorship of all mail now in force, Fr. Neveu had thought it too risky to write directly to Fr. Bailly in Rome. Having learned from one of the rare letters that came his way that his Superior General was staying for a few weeks in Paris, he wrote on January 23, 1915, giving the reasons for his continued presence in Russia and also a description of his wartime activities. He continued:

This year, the winter has been very unhealthy. Instead of the usual cold, we have had rain and mud... and the mud of Makeyevka could never be imagined by one who has not seen it with his own eyes. We are far away from the fighting, but Makeyevka is near the main railroad between the Polish and Caucasian theaters of war, and the frequent sight of trainloads of troops, wounded, and prisoners reminds us of the trials and hardships from which people throughout Europe are suffering. Our local factories are producing munitions night and day, and it is terrible to think that such engines of war and destruction are deemed necessary to preserve our poor European civilization. At the same time, a large industrial center like this is an ideal spot for judging morals. People here are, by nature, resigned to nearly everything, but it seems to me that this conflict has been accepted almost with enthusiasm. The unfortunate Germans have a genius for making themselves detested by everyone, and yet the German families who have remained in this area are not molested. I try to visit them whenever I can because I am a priest and I know that their only refuge is in God and their faith.

His journeyings became longer and more frequent. In the spring of 1915, he was invited to Kiev to give a four-day retreat to the French colony which had been without a chaplain since Fr. Evrard's departure the previous August. He felt that the very fact of war was a more eloquent sermon than any that he preached, and he noted with satisfaction that people who had not practiced their religion for as long as fifteen or twenty-five years returned to the Sacraments.

On the day after his return from Kiev, Fr. Neveu received a telegram from Bishop Kessler instructing him to assume the additional charge of the parish of Enakievo about 18 miles away. The previous pastor, although born in Russia, was a descendant of the German colonists who, after more than 100 years in the South of Russia, had remained Teutonic in both language and loyalties. A little trouble had arisen in Enakievo either because this priest had been undiplomatic in some of his remarks about the war or because he had been misrepresented, but in any case, the Bishop felt it necessary to transfer him to a German settlement along the Volga.

Enakievo was a large and scattered parish with a fine church and rectory and about 3,000 Catholics, most of whom were employed in the huge Russo-Belgian metallurgical works. There were over 160 Belgian and French families who had always considered themselves neglected because, since its foundation, the parish had never had a French-speaking priest. From the time of his arrival in Makeyevka, Fr. Neveu had tried to visit Enakievo at least once a month, but now, he began to spend two days a week there. He was already helping out another pastor who was sick, and as his own parish measured 80 miles from end to end and now contained a camp with several thousand prisoners of war, he considered that he had reasonable protection against idleness or boredom.

One of his more pressing anxieties in Makeyevka was the completion of the church and rectory. Work, held up by war and the long muddy winter and spring, had been resumed, but Fr. Neveu's hopes that the church would be ready for the feast of the Assumption on August 15 were not realized. It was not until the last Sunday of November, 1915, that he was able to bless it and use it for the first time. On December 13, 1915, he wrote to Fr. Bailly:

The church of St. Joseph in Makeyevka has finally been opened. My prophecies were not very accurate because the dedication ceremony could not take place until the first Sunday of Advent, but after all, the beginning of the ecclesiastical year is a very suitable day for the serious business of opening a church. This year, it coincided with the vigil of the feast of St. Andrew who is one of the great patron saints of our dear Russia. The night before, we had a

fairly heavy snow fall, but it turned to rain before the ceremony began, and we had a large attendance of both Catholics and Orthodox.

The church is simple and spacious, and I think it is beautiful. It is about 100 feet long and has a steeple, tiled floors, central heating and electric light. The rectory too has been finished and bears no resemblance whatsoever to my old cholera hut. I have already moved in, and I can assure you that my people have spared nothing in their attempts to make me comfortable. I have large windows, linoleum and wallpaper in every room, electricity, running water and central heating. For the first few days, I thought I must be visiting somebody else.

As the war dragged on, the letters Fr. Neveu received became increasingly rare, and what news they brought was not always good. He had seven brothers in the French armies, scattered from Verdun to Salonika and the Cameroons. The latest information he had was that two of them had been wounded and had been given a disability discharge. From *La Croix*, the Assumptionist daily newspaper, which arrived very irregularly and, as often as not, in shreds from the scissors of the censor, he learned that a third brother had been killed in the Congo.

Of the letters Fr. Neveu wrote, few were received. One, written on August 23, 1916, to Fr. Bailly, noted an interesting development in the south of Russia. All French-speaking people in the Government of Ekaterinoslav and in the Military Province of the Don Cossacks, an area almost half the size of France, had requested that they be considered members of the French national parish of Makeyevka. A formal petition had been sent to the French Ambassador in Petrograd, and he had submitted it to the Russian Government.

The petitioners asked that Makeyevka be officially recognized as a French national parish with the same status as the parishes of Notre Dame de France in Petrograd and St. Louis-des-Français in Moscow. This would mean that the pastor and the assistant priests required because of the size of the parish would have the right to act as missionaries, that the trustees of the parish would be French citizens, and that the parish would have the

right to open Catholic elementary schools for French-speaking children. Fr. Neveu continued:

This petition has been granted, and Bishop Kessler has given his approval, although, of course, none of these things can become a reality until the war is over. I hope, however, that this news will give you an added incentive for keeping Assumptionists in this parish but not necessarily with me as pastor. When the time comes, it is you who will have to decide the question of additional priests and whether the present incumbent should remain, and I assure you in advance of my loyalty and obedience to your decision. I have now been living alone for ten years and this is perhaps too long for the good of the soul. I would welcome a return to community life.

There was other news from Russia. The war had been going badly, and social unrest and discontent were spreading rapidly. On March 2, 1917, the Tsar Nicholas II abdicated and a Provisional Government took over. One of the first of its acts, on March 20, was to abolish all restrictions on religious freedom, although as far as the Catholic Church was specifically concerned, this only became law by a decree of August 8, 1917. Nowhere was the sense of relief felt more keenly than among the Russian Catholics of the Byzantine Rite. The Holy See had given canonical approval to the existence of this little group in 1908 after the Assumptionist, Fr. Bois, had taken advantage of a visit to France to submit to Rome a report on their activities and their aspirations. At that time, it had been decreed that these converts from Orthodoxy were to continue to carry out their liturgical ceremonies exactly as they had done when they belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church without changing anything whatsoever. Since then, their situation had not been altogether happy. The Russian Government did not want Catholicism of the Byzantine Rite, and the Polish Catholic clergy of Russia had little sympathy for Catholicism which was not of the Roman Rite.

These difficulties were removed, for the most part, by the granting of religious freedom in 1917 when Russian Catholics were placed under the jurisdiction of an Exarch, Fr. Leonid Feodorov, who had been born in St. Petersburg and had left Russia for Italy in 1902 in order to become a Catholic. This title, unusual in the Catholic Church, was given advisedly. It was Byzantine in origin and carried with it very wide powers for a special

situation. In this case, it brought an end to the anomalous situation in which Russian Catholics of Byzantine Rite had been under the jurisdiction of a Bishop of the Roman Rite.

On October 6, 1917, after years of solitude, Fr. Neveu had the unexpected pleasure of being host to two Assumptionists, Fr. Zephirin Sollier and Br. David Mailland, who arrived in Makeyevka from Odessa. His pleasure in their conversation, however, was soon tempered by the news they brought. The war seemed to have dealt a fatal blow to the Assumptionist missions in the Near East. In November, 1914, following the entry of Turkey into the war on the side of the Central Powers, the Assumptionists and other French nationals had been expelled from the country. Some of the priests and brothers had been able to regain France directly, but others had gone to various Assumptionist houses in Bulgaria. In October, 1915, Bulgaria followed Turkey's example, and one month later all French priests and nuns were notified that they had three days in which to leave Bulgaria by way of Rumania which was still neutral. It was a bitter moment. Schools, colleges and parishes, built up during more than fifty years of missionary and educational activities had to be abandoned. As they crossed the Danube, some of the priests threw into the river the medals and decorations awarded them by the Bulgarian Government for their devotion to the people.

In the circumstances, there was no question of trying to establish themselves in Rumania, and Fr. Quénard, who had been transferred from Vilna to Bulgaria in 1908, decided that the majority of the religious should try to reach France. The only way was north through Russia, but there was a delay of five weeks before the Russian Government gave them transit visas. On December 22, 1915 about fifty priests, brothers and nuns set out by rail and traveled in the depths of winter almost to the Arctic Circle, eventually reaching France by way of Norway and England.

Six Assumptionists, including Frs. Quénard, Sollier and Br. David had remained in Bucharest where they rented an apartment and supported themselves by giving private lessons in French. In March, 1917, Fr. Quénard sent Br. David to Fr. Maniglier in Odessa and, three months later, decided that Fr. Sollier should go to Makeyevka to help Fr. Neveu, stopping in Odessa to bring Br. David with him. The odyssey had ended happily

enough, but the travelers had little to offer Fr. Neveu except companionship because their luggage had been stolen en route.

In the Ukraine, the abdication of the Tsar had released pent-up aspirations for autonomy, and during the months that followed, nationalist sentiment had grown steadily in strength. In November, 1917, two weeks after the Bolshevik overthrow of the Provisional Government, a Ukrainian National Republic had been proclaimed. The new rulers of Russia, however, were not anxious to be cut off from the Caucasus and the oil of Baku or to be deprived of the coal, iron and wheat of the Ukraine. Already they were trying to withdraw from the European war, and returning troops with Bolshevik sympathies were being diverted to the south of Russia where fierce fighting broke out. In January, 1917, the Ukrainian Central Council declared that the Republic was a "sovereign, independent power of the Ukrainian people, subject to no other authority" and the following month, a separate peace treaty was concluded with the Central Powers who then agreed to give military aid to the Ukrainian people in their struggle for independence.

As a consequence, communications became even more disrupted, and almost a year passed before news was received from Fr. Neveu. In a letter dated January 9, 1919, and delivered to Fr. Claude Allers in Paris on March 27, 1919, Fr. Neveu wrote:

God be praised! I have just heard that it is possible to write to France through Novorossisk, and I am preparing a host of letters for my temporal and spiritual family. Since October, 1917, an impenetrable veil has separated us from the civilized world and from those who are so dear to us. The only news we have had was a note from Fr. Quénard in Rumania announcing the death of Fr. Bailly on November 23, 1917. We do not even know if we have a new Superior General.

On October 6, 1917, Fr. Sollier and Br. David arrived here from Odessa. On Christmas Day, 1917, the Bolsheviks bombarded Makeyevka, drove out the occupying Cossacks and set up their own regime. We are only about 10 miles from the Ukrainian frontier, so we have seen a good deal of fighting. We heard that German troops were coming to throw out the Bolsheviks,

but as they drew near, our remaining French and Belgian parishioners became alarmed and decided to make an attempt to get back to France. In March, 1918, their train of twenty coaches, with Fr. Sollier as chaplain of this parish on wheels, headed north across the whole of Russia for Murmansk. Since then we have had no news of them. The Germans, triumphant with their taking of Soissons and hoping for the fall of Paris, had no difficulty in capturing Makeyevka at the end of April. After a month, they were replaced by a regiment of Austrians who left us, not very proud, after their country had signed an armistice. The German detachment, which then took over, left—even less proud—only in December, 1918, although a truce had been proclaimed here the previous June. I must say that they were always more than polite to me, perhaps because they had heard that I was kind to German prisoners of war here.

Now the Bolsheviks are trying again to break the Cossack and Volunteer armies around Kharkov, and if they get here before the liberating French troops we have been led to expect, my head will not remain long on my shoulders.

The cost of living is assuming incredible proportions, but so far we have not been hungry. Br. David is invaluable, and I do not know what I would do without him. His work in the garden provided us with a store of potatoes and cabbage but flour is almost unobtainable. The worst feature of our situation is that we are in rags. We cannot buy cloth, and our cassocks are almost beyond repair. But since everybody else is in the same boat, we are no longer ashamed of our appearance. The much vaunted “earthly paradise” has returned, and it is like hell. Revolution is a terrible thing. The only happy result of two years of turmoil in this country is that there is religious freedom for everybody, at least where there are no Bolsheviks. The fall of the Tsar, however, has been disastrous for the Orthodox clergy already disgraced by Rasputin, and bishops, priests and monks have been killed. These are the martyrs who will pray for the reunion of the Churches.

In fact, the new regime had gone further than the Provisional Government in its legislation on religion. On January 23, 1918, it had been

decreed that the Church was henceforth separated from the State, and the school was separated from the Church. Every citizen had the right to adopt any religion or to profess none at all. The teaching of religion, in either state or private schools where general subjects were taught, was forbidden. Citizens could study or teach religion privately. Churches and religious societies were not juridical persons and had no right to own property. Such property as they did have was the patrimony of the people and must be turned over to the local Soviet which, in turn, could restore to the church, without cost, such buildings as were needed for worship. Religious ceremonies could be held provided that they did not disturb the peace or encroach on the rights of other citizens.

The constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, adopted at the Fifth Congress of Soviets on July 10, 1918, further stipulated that every citizen had the right to spread either religious or anti-religious propaganda. On August 24, the Commissariat for Justice issued a further instruction about church property. It was, as the earlier law stated, the property of the people and should be handed over to the local Soviet which, after receiving an inventory, could return it to the Church provided that twenty people were willing to assume responsibility for its upkeep and taxes. It was also added that the organized religious instruction of children under 18, in school or church buildings, was forbidden, though private instruction in the home was allowed. People over 18 could be given lessons in religious doctrine, provided these did not have the character of systematic school instruction.

Apart from Fr. Neveu, Br. David was now the only Frenchman in the Donetz Basin. Born in Savoie in the south of France, he was fifty-two years old when he arrived at Makeyevka, having spent thirty-five years in Turkey and Bulgaria. He had originally joined the Assumptionists with the idea of becoming a priest, but finding the studies too difficult, he had chosen to remain in the Congregation as a lay brother and had now acquired a reputation for the excellence of the wines he made. In Makeyevka, he was revealing other talents. He could play the organ, sing and cook, and he was proving himself to be a very proficient and successful gardener.

The character of Fr. Neveu's parish had undergone a radical change. With the exception of 6 Belgians, three of whom were married to Russians,

1 Italian and 1 Swiss, his congregation consisted of several hundred Polish workmen and their families, all of whom understood Russian. Bishop Kessler had moved from Saratov to Odessa, and there was a report that he had been forced to leave that city along with the French. In the circumstances, Fr. Neveu felt justified in presuming permission to give his sermons in Russian. At the same time, this very fact served to deepen his sense of isolation, and he often felt that the situation of Br. David and himself could be compared only with Robinson Crusoe and his Man Friday.

Fr. Allers answered Fr. Neveu by return mail on March 27, 1919, but his letter was not received in Makeyevka until the end of July. In the meantime, there were many things to occupy Fr. Neveu's mind. Hostilities had broken out again not long after the departure of the Germans, and for four long months, he lived with the constant sound of gunfire. Once again, the Bolsheviks made a drive for the industrial cities of Youzovka and Makeyevka, possession of which would ensure numerous recruits for the Red Army and mastery of almost all the coal in the Donetz Basin. By the end of April, the fighting had drawn considerably nearer to Makeyevka, and the Bolsheviks were approaching the town from the west, north and northwest.

Makeyevka was garrisoned by only a small detachment of the Volunteer Army with three armored cars which took up position about two hundred yards from the church at the northwest extremity of the town. On May 7, church and rectory were caught between two fires. Although the shells burst dangerously near, in some miraculous fashion neither building sustained any damage. For two days the fighting raged fiercely, and, on May 9, to the sound of falling shells and the disagreeable chatter of machine-guns and rifle fire, Fr. Neveu conducted a funeral in the cemetery beside the church. At 12:30 P.M., the firing increased in intensity, and from his window Fr. Neveu could see the defending troops retreating. At 1:15 P.M., there was a sudden silence, followed by the Bolsheviks' burst into town.

Makeyevka had been the terminal point of the Bolshevik thrust, but the occupation lasted only two weeks. This was scarcely long enough, Fr. Neveu noted, for him to see and experience all the beatitudes of the Communist paradise. Bolshevik headquarters had been set up in the Town

Hall across the street from the church, and he was able to admire the array of colored posters glorifying the new regime and caricaturing its enemies. Few non-combatants were shot, but there had been a great deal of looting. Fr. Neveu had been fortunate in that respect because he was on excellent terms with the local workmen who were pointing out the most likely sources of plunder, and, as a result, his house was not even searched. Food had been scarce, but Br. David had proved his resourcefulness by creating dishes of "spinach" from the large dandelions that grew abundantly on the steppe, and even though this was not very nourishing, it enabled them to chew their hard dry bread.

The only time Fr. Neveu was personally affected by the occupation was when some Bolsheviks raided the little chapel about eight miles away where he said Mass on alternate Sundays, stole the sacred vessels, and paraded down the street in his vestments. Others were not so fortunate. In some places, Orthodox priests and monks had been attacked and driven from their churches. Four of the five Orthodox priests in Makeyevka had fled, leaving behind only one old priest who was escorted to and from his church by a band of women who were determined to ensure that no harm would come to him. On the other hand, Fr. Neveu saw many of the Red soldiers go openly into his church to pray, and, once again, he had to confess that it was not easy to understand the soul of Holy Russia. On May 23, a strong force of Cossacks began to move in on Makeyevka, and the Bolsheviks quietly evacuated the town, one of them firing two farewell shots at Fr. Neveu as he walked down the street to give a French lesson to one of his parishioners.

Fr. Aller's letter of March 27 finally reached Fr. Neveu, and he learned that Fr. Joseph Maubon had been recalled from Chile to act as Vicar General of the Congregation until such time as it was possible to hold a General Chapter to elect a successor to Fr. Bailly. On August 4, 1919, Fr. Neveu wrote to Fr. Maubon pledging his loyalty and giving a report on his situation. He explained that he had stayed on in Makeyevka, instead of leaving with Fr. Sollier and the other French people, because he preferred to try to hold on to the one parish in Russia where the Assumptionists were really independent and which could, he was sure, be a valuable center for the work for the reunion of the Churches. His parish had several

hundred Polish families, and he felt he had no right to leave them just because the times were dangerous. He continued:

I was influenced also by two other considerations. Our French people, before their departure, entrusted many valuable articles to the protection of me and the Church. I felt that it would be neither just nor honest to abandon these things to the thieves of every description who abound in this country. Secondly, over the years I have built up a large library for the use of the future apostles of Russia. I could not possibly have brought these books with me, and after what they have cost me in money and trouble, I could not bear to have them nationalized.

Father, I believe that the future of the Catholic Church in Russia lies in the Slav Rite. I have been here thirteen years, and I know these people. Many of them, including Orthodox priests, have told me that they feel attracted to the Catholic Church, but they are incapable of drawing a logical conclusion from the premises. The difference in Liturgical Rite and language is an insuperable barrier to them.

This poor people has always been ill-treated, distrusted, despised and exploited by their masters. Nobody has ever tried to serve them or show them any kindness. On the day when they see nuns like our Little Sisters of the Assumption working freely among the sick poor, they will be already halfway into the Catholic Church. Then, we shall need as many priests of the Slav Rite as we can possibly get. Perhaps God has permitted the sufferings of the present time as the price of freedom of conscience which exists today and which, I hope, no government will ever again suppress.

Br. David and myself are well and have been vaccinated against all current epidemics. He keeps himself busy in his garden where he grows potatoes, carrots, beans and cauliflowers, but I would be lying if I said we never get depressed. The price of food is fantastic, and bread alone costs one hundred times more than it did in 1914. If I wish to go to Confession, I have to walk almost twenty miles because the Bolsheviks took all the horses. Our greatest cross is the

lack of news of both the Congregation and our own families. Br. David has heard nothing of his people for over three years. What we need more than anything else, however, is your formal assurance, as head of the Congregation, that we are still considered members of the Assumptionist family, and that it is your wish that we hold on to our parish in Makeyevka.

Chapter Four

Postal communications seemed to be improving following the summer truce in the civil war, and Fr. Maubon's reply, written on September 23, 1919, reached Fr. Neveu on November 1st. The letter was kind and encouraging, without giving the formal assurance requested, and went on to raise certain questions about the future of the Assumptionist mission in Russia. Delighted at the opportunity to express his views, Fr. Neveu discussed the matter at length in his letter of November 4, 1919. Of primary importance, he felt, if the Russian mission were to continue, was a visit to Russia by Fr. Maubon himself or by his delegate. Such a visit, possible even under the Tsarist regime, could easily be arranged now, and an objective appreciation of the situation would do much to eliminate the possibility of future misunderstandings.

As all restrictions on religious liberty had been removed by the Provincial Government, and the Bolsheviks had separated state from church, direct and open communication could be maintained with religious Superiors abroad. It was Fr. Neveu's opinion that the canonical status of future missionaries to Russia would be more correct if they came, not as priests of their diocese of birth as in Fr. Bailly's time, but simply and unequivocally as members of a Religious Order. He was sure that the Bishop of Tiraspol, who was always short of priests, would have no objection to the establishment of a regularly constituted religious house in his diocese. Moreover, a true community life in such a house had already been made possible by the 1916 agreement between the Government and the Bishop to make Makeyevka a French national parish with a pastor and at least two assistants. This privilege should not be allowed to lapse.

Fr. Maubon could rest assured that there would be sufficient work for even several priests. Apart from the regular parochial ministry to the French and Belgians who were slowly returning to the Donetz Basin, Makeyevka could become a focal point for the development of relations with the Russian Orthodox Church. In this connection, Fr. Neveu was convinced that some form of apostolate of the press was vital. Before the

war, he himself had hoped to publish a magazine for his scattered parishioners and had received a permit from the Tsarist Government to have a printing press. Circumstances had not allowed him to pursue this project, but now he was thinking of something more ambitious such as a scholarly review in the Slav language similar to the publications of the Assumptionist Byzantine Center in the Near East. Of even more immediate value in promoting a better understanding of practical Catholicism among the Russian people would be the presence of nuns like the Oblates of the Assumption for teaching and the Little Sisters of the Assumption to nurse and care for the sick poor.

Even before the advent of religious freedom, Fr. Neveu pointed out, he had had no cause to complain of the arbitrariness of local authorities. Any inconvenience he had suffered in the past had come from general restrictive laws applying to everybody in the Russian Empire. If difficulties should arise in any particular case, he had every reason to believe that they would have the support of the French Embassy and Consulates which had already given proof of the high regard in official circles for the Assumptionists. In outlining his hopes for the future, Fr. Neveu wrote:

I do not think that I have been unduly optimistic, but, in any case, it is just possible that I shall soon be able to talk to you face to face about these things. The French Military Mission with the Headquarters of the Volunteer Army moved to Taganrog, about eighty miles away, in August of this year. They sent for me, appointed me their chaplain and, with the hope of doing something to restore good relations between France and Russia, asked me to submit my ideas as to the most practical ways of relieving the sufferings and misery which surround us on all sides. My suggestions were sent to the French High Commissioner in Constantinople, and, as a result, I have been invited to go to France to arouse public interest in the plight of the Russian people.

I mention this now because instructions to travel may come at any moment, and I shall probably have to presume your permission to undertake the journey. I have given considerable thought to this matter and I have decided that it is my duty to try and render this service to the people of this country. I would go with a much lighter

heart, however, if I knew that Br. David would not be alone and that my people would not be without a priest. So I hope it will be possible for you to send Fr. Evrard, who knows the language, to replace me during my absence.

Five weeks later, on December 9, 1919, Fr. Neveu wrote again to say that he was "still poised for flight like a bird on a branch," but that so far, he had received no further news of his journey. The plan had been for him to go to Novorossisk where he would be given a passage to Constantinople in one of the ships which would be returning empty after bringing home Russian troops from France. From Constantinople he would sail in a French naval vessel to Marseilles. He had heard recently from a Russian naval officer, however, that ships were not putting into Constantinople because of an outbreak of plague there, and this, no doubt, was the cause of the delay. He was not too disturbed because there was a violent epidemic of typhus in the Donetz Basin, and he was needed by the sick and dying.

I have already explained to you the primary purpose of my proposed visit to France. I now confide in you that I propose, with your approval, to carry out an additional and self-imposed duty. I have always believed that schism took its rise in disobedience but has been perpetuated by lack of charity. Since the overthrow of the Provisional Government, the Russian Orthodox Church has suffered many tribulations at the hands of the Bolsheviks. In charity to our separated brethren, I would like to make known to the Catholics of France the true story of the sufferings of the Orthodox clergy which have been, and still are, very great. With this in mind, I wrote to the Orthodox Bishop of the Don and Novorossisk, who had himself been imprisoned for a time, asking for details of the Bolshevik persecution in his diocese. Through his Diocesan Council, he sent me a mass of official documents from which I made long extracts. I returned the papers, thanking the Bishop and asking if he had any objection to my making use of names and places. He replied that, far from having objections, he strongly urged me to do so and regretted only that the information supplied could not be complete because of lack of communications with the northern reaches of his diocese. I hope you will agree with me that it will be very profitable

to the cause of the reunion of Churches to inform the Catholic world of what is being suffered in Russia by those who wish to remain faithful to Christ.

I shall be a little better equipped for my journey than I expected. Two engineers who returned here recently from France brought a host of precious things such as shirts, socks, handkerchiefs, and thread, all sent by former parishioners. I also received a cassock which, unfortunately, is much too long for me. Rather than cut it, I am going to give it to my neighbor, the pastor of Youzovka, who is even more destitute than I am. I often look with love and regret at the religious habit which has been my constant companion since 1906. It is a pitiful sight, but with the thread I have just received, I may be able to make it last until I get to France.

Fr. Neveu had to make do for longer than he expected. In that same December, 1919, fighting broke out again in the Ukraine. Fr. Neveu never did travel to France, and no further news was received from him until October, 1921.

According to Fr. Vidal, pastor of the church of St. Louis-des-Français in Moscow who had been repatriated to France in October, 1920, Fr. Neveu and Br. David were safe and well in May of that year and were not unduly worried. In June, 1921, however, a French engineer who had just returned from the Donetz Basin brought the news that Fr. Neveu was being held as a hostage in some place unknown and that his rectory had been completely pillaged. Br. David was not mentioned, but the indications were that he had suffered the same fate. A letter from Fr. Maubon to the Charge d'Affaires at the French Legation in Estonia brought the information that the Estonian Minister to Moscow was making inquiries but was having great difficulty in getting in touch with Makeyevka.

In a letter mailed in Paris and dated October 4, 1921, Mr. J. Tostivant, General Manager of the Russian Mining and Metallurgical Society, informed the Assumptionists in Paris that he had seen a postcard written by Fr. Neveu himself at the end of July and entrusted to a Frenchman who had just arrived in Paris. The card simply stated that Fr. Neveu and Br. David were well and asked that this news be conveyed to their relatives.

Mr. Tostivant himself had been in Makeyevka earlier in the summer and had seen Fr. Neveu. He was still in the rectory that Mr. Tostivant had had built for him, but the Bolsheviks were actively hostile to him and had forced him to hand over to them the property left in his care by the French people who had left during the war. Fr. Neveu had started to write a letter to Mr. Tostivant to bring to France but had torn it up as he could not risk its falling into Bolshevik hands. He was still holding services in the church, but the Bolsheviks were promising that it would be soon turned into a cinema. The engineers whom Mr. Tostivant had left behind had all been arrested, and the country was in a state of anarchy.

Fr. Neveu would have agreed that conditions were certainly chaotic. His constant and heartfelt prayer in 1921 was: "From pestilence, war and famine, O Lord deliver us," because he was in the midst of all three. Evil days had come upon the Ukraine and its people. Production of coal had fallen from 23 million tons in 1913 to 4,600,000 tons in 1920, and the iron industry was almost at a standstill. Foreign technicians had been expelled, machinery without maintenance had deteriorated, and many of the mines were flooded. Land under cultivation in 1920 was only 45% of the 1916 total and, in the grain-growing areas, only 24%. A terrible drought which ruined the 1921 harvest had brought famine. The treaty of Riga, in March of that year, had brought an end both to the war and to the Ukrainian National Republic, but sporadic fighting continued. Typhus had been ravaging the country for three years.

He had been almost two years without letters when, in September, 1921, to his great surprise, he received a postcard from London. With renewed hope, he seized this possibility of regaining contact with his Congregation and wrote, begging his correspondent to take the letter to the Assumptionist Fathers in London whose address, unfortunately, he did not know. Dated September 22, 1921, and written in Russian, the letter was delivered safely on October 30. It simply stated that he and Br. David were well, and that his church and rectory were intact. He asked for letters from anyone who cared to write, stipulating only that they should be registered and should make no reference to political events because, on such matters, no opinions were allowed.

The first reply was from London. Writing to acknowledge it on November 27, 1921, he noted that it reached him on November 26, the 14th anniversary of his arrival in Makeyevka:

I cannot attempt to describe our happiness or find words to thank you for your letter which brought us so much joy and which gives us new courage. I have made so many vain attempts to get in touch with those we love that it is a great relief to know that the mail is coming fairly quickly from England. Perhaps you would be kind enough to forward any letters I send to France.

Thank you for the important news that a General Chapter is to be held. We accept in advance all decisions that are reached. I am particularly happy to hear that Fr. Quénard is now Superior of our missions in the Near East. Russia, being the most easterly, will be particularly close to his heart since it was he who opened the way to Vilna and Kiev. Let him know that I expect a visit from him soon. A host of names comes to my mind but I must not give you too many messages to deliver.

You ask what you can send us. We shall be satisfied with anything because people who are ragged and hungry are not hard to please, and in any case, you could never send all the things we need. I would give priority to "hard tack," canned meat, margarine, clothes, coffee and shoes. We have had to use so many different kinds of flour that we all have digestive troubles, and a bottle of brandy would be very useful. If postal conditions ever return to normal, you will have no decisions to make... just send everything you can!

Our greatest need is for news. We have not the slightest idea of what is going on in the Congregation, the Church or the world. It would be wonderful if you could send us regularly the *Lettre à la Dispersion* (the Assumptionist newsletter), the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, and some English weekly paper that does not concern itself too much with Russia. I do not speak English, but I can read it fairly well. Also useful would be a small map of Europe because we know nothing of present-day political geography.

Money here is worthless. Once when you went to shop, you could put your money in your pocket and bring a bag for your purchases. Now it is just the opposite. We bought a goat with two kids last spring so that we would have a little milk, and the whole family cost 350,000 rubles. Br. David paid 75,000 rubles for eight pounds of green grapes so that he could make a little altar wine. I almost count the drops I use because it is all we have, but I am afraid it will go sour. We bartered the kids for flour, and so we now have milk from our poor man's cow, though Br. David's vegetables remain our great standby.

By the same mail, Fr. Neveu wrote to Fr. Maubon of a more serious need:

Knowing that you will be in Rome for the General Chapter, I wish to draw your attention to the sad condition of Catholicism in the south of Russia so that you, in turn, can inform the Holy See of our predicament.

Most Rev. Joseph Kessler, Bishop of our diocese of Tiraspol, felt forced to leave Russia over two years ago, but, unfortunately, he named no Vicar General to replace him, and so we are without a Hierarchy. The Dean of Berdiansk, who had very extensive powers, has gone too, and the priestly ministry has become very difficult because we have no one to whom we can turn, either for guidance or dispensations. Many of the priests, discouraged by their helplessness, have abandoned their parishes and have returned to Poland, while others are only awaiting the opportunity to do likewise.

The Holy Oils had not been blessed or distributed for over three years, and since Fr. Neveu's arrival in Makeyevka, the Sacrament of Confirmation had not been administered and there had been no parish visitations. The diocesan seminary no longer existed, and, as a result, priests who had died or gone away could not be replaced. Thus, he now had the additional charge of the parish of Youzovka about nine miles to the south-west. It was a town of 70,000 inhabitants, and before the war, there had been over

3,000 Catholics there. They were still numerous enough to support a priest if one were available.

The greatest single source of distress, thought Fr. Neveu, were the marriage cases. What was to be done with young couples who had impediments of consanguinity or mixed religion? At first, he had encouraged them to wait patiently, but he did not see how he could, in conscience, refuse Christian marriage for years to people who had a right to a dispensation and who could easily have obtained it if times were normal. In recent months, Fr. Neveu had taken it on himself to bless mixed marriages so that the couples would not go to a non-Catholic church and also to secure the Baptism and Christian education of the children. In such instances, he always reserved the right to revalidate the marriage, if necessary, whenever he could obtain the required jurisdiction. Fortunately, because his powers as confessor were reasonably broad, he could take care of some problems, but what was he to say to people who traveled long distances to see him, convinced that, since he was the only foreign priest in the south of Russia, he must have extraordinary powers and jurisdiction. The general situation was causing discontent among the people, and it was imperative that the Holy See should be informed of the problem:

To the north, my nearest priest neighbor is in Kharkov, 230 miles away; to the east at Enakievo, 18 miles; to the south, in Taganrog, 80 miles, and to the west, in Ekaterinoslav, 200 miles. How far could I radiate, if only I were well-shod or had a horse! The only shoes I have belonged to a man who had bigger feet than I have. However, even if I had a horse, my problem would be to train it to live without eating. The pitiless sun of last summer burnt up the hay as well as the wheat.

Both Br. David and myself are suffering from chronic rheumatism, and, in addition, he has emphysema. What I thought at first was a tumor in my lower stomach turns out to be a hernia, but I dare not have an operation here. I am fortunate to have a companion so versatile as Br. David who acts as sacristan, cantor, organist, cook, gardener, goatherd, (we have one goat), locksmith, chimney sweep and electrician. His vegetable garden arouses the

admiration of all who see it. Our diet still is not very substantial, and we both become very angular. We hesitate to accept anything from the parishioners who are always willing to share the little they have, but, from time to time, I am able to obtain flour or whatever commodity is available in exchange for private care.

Staying with us now is a 21-year-old girl, Tania Stadnik, born of a Russian father and a Polish mother. She decided not to return to Poland with her former employers and came here to study French and to prepare herself to enter the novitiate of the Oblates of the Assumption. She has been with us now for two months and has taken over the kitchen and the housework. I think she is a fine, devoted girl and that she will make an excellent nun. "Sister Tania" would be grateful if you sent her your blessing.

Whenever Fr. Neveu reflected, as he often did, on the needs of the Church in Russia, he could never quite rid himself of one gnawing little doubt about the legitimacy of his own position. In this respect, he realized that his thinking was colored by the memory of his earlier difficulties with Fr. Bailly. As a religious, he had a vow of obedience, and, in virtue of that vow, he had obeyed his local Superior by going to Makeyevka. This decision of Fr. Bois, however, had never been ratified either by Fr. Bailly or by his successor. For conscience sake, Fr. Neveu still felt that he needed to hear, in so many words, that his superiors both wished and commanded him to remain in Russia. Fr. Maubon's reply, dated January 9, 1922, arrived at the post office in Makeyevka on February 4 but was not delivered for another 13 days. Fr. Neveu opened it eagerly, noted the praise and encouragement it contained, but looked in vain for the plain words he was seeking.

His decision to stay after 1918 and the departure of the French had, of necessity, been his own because he had not been able to communicate with anyone. Now, as he reviewed his reasons for doing so, he could not see that they had lost anything of their validity. He had long ago sworn to himself that he would never be like the hireling of Scripture who had fled in time of danger, leaving his master's sheep to fend for themselves. Thus, in spite of war, plague and famine, the Assumptionists still had a parish in

Russia, his people still had a priest to minister to them, and the library that would serve the future missionaries to Russia was still intact.

It was not that he felt particularly heroic, in spite of Bolshevik hostility. His house had been searched twenty-two times within the last two years, but he had been arrested only once, though, on that occasion, he narrowly escaped execution. When the Germans were leaving in 1918, one of their officers left a small locked box for safekeeping with Fr. Neveu; the officer assured him that it contained no weapons. The Bolsheviks later pried open the lid and discovered a small revolver with a mother-of-pearl handle. A summary sentence of death was passed, but, as Fr. Neveu was facing a firing squad, a corporal loudly remarked that the nails in the lid of the box were rusted with age and, that, therefore, Fr. Neveu could not have known the contents. He was released after an hour and a half with the assurance that his turn would come later.

The situation was more stable now, and Fr. Neveu thought that the only threat to life was from plague and famine. On February 19, 1922, he wrote again, this time at great length, to Fr. Maubon thanking him for his words of encouragement but pointing out that what he really needed was a simple order either to go or to stay. By the same post, he sent off to London a letter in which he described the famine conditions under which they were living:

Thank you for the offer of money, but we do not need any more at present. Last week I spent four days in the parish of Youzovka, and, of their own initiative, the people took up a collection for me which amounted to -1,325,875 rubles. This huge sum will not even buy a 36 lb. bag of flour which, at current rates, costs 2 million rubles. Last Sunday, a pound of meat cost 37,000 rubles, and nobody knows whether it came from an animal that was killed or that died from disease. If I went on to tell you about some of the atrocities committed through hunger, or if I described for you the ocean of miseries in which the poor Russian people are struggling, your hair would stand on end. We are witnessing scenes reminiscent of Flavius Josephus' description of the siege of Jerusalem. Mothers kill their children and then commit suicide to put an end to their sufferings. Everywhere we see people with

haggard complexions and swollen bodies, people who can hardly drag themselves around, and who are driven to eating dead cats, dogs and horses. Small wonder that there is so much typhus, cholera, scurvy and even the glanders. It must be well known in Europe what Russia is suffering. Are Christians no longer revolted by the thought that thousands are dying for want of a piece of bread?

So far, none of the newspapers you claim to have sent have reached us, and I am sure that a good package would not survive the first mail clerk who saw it. Everybody here will steal whatever food they can get their hands on, and, in the circumstances, not even the shrewdest moralist could oblige them to restitution. We are getting thinner and more anemic, but many people are much worse off. Necessity has made us ingenious, and nothing is allowed to go to waste. I hope that you will never be in similar circumstances, but if you are, remember these few hints. Br. David obtains a sugar substitute by saving and distilling the water in which he boils beets. The result is a sticky syrup which has the advantage of being already dissolved. If you fancy pancakes, have carrots for dinner, keep the water in which you have cooked them, for it will be lightly sweetened, and use it to mix your flour. Don't worry if you have no coffee. For years, we have been using roasted barley, which does not upset the nervous system or cause palpitations. Instead of tea, shred a carrot and dry it in the oven. It will give you the makings of a pre-sweetened beverage which is quite hygienic. I should mention that you can also make tea from dried apples, but this is more expensive since apples are 6000 rubles each. This is how we survive. Superiors in straitened circumstances would find us excellent treasurers, and if the opportunity arises, we will gladly lecture on our various strategems.

Today, the snowplows were out, but already we are longing for the coming of spring when we will be able to eat dandelions. We are also preparing for the holy season of Lent which for us, as the Russians say, lasts the whole year round. I am so used to fasting that I would have no trouble in changing from the Roman to the

Oriental Rite. Please forgive this dissertation on food. According to the old Slav proverb, “the hungry hen dreams of corn,” and in time of famine, all thoughts are centered on the stomach.

Chapter Five

Fr. Neveu had no way of knowing that the Holy See had been watching developments in Russia with close interest. As early as March 12, 1919, Pope Benedict XV, through a telegram sent by his Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, to Lenin, had deplored the persecution of the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the beginning of 1921 he had sent an Apostolic Visitor, Msgr. Genocchi, to the Ukraine, but after waiting in vain for almost a year for permission to cross the frontier, the Visitor had had to return to Rome in January, 1922. Following the appeal for aid to the victims of famine sent by Maxim Gorky to the American people, the Pope had called upon the whole world to send help to the starving in Russia. He had contributed to the organizations that were quickly formed for this purpose, and when he died on January 22, 1922, papal diplomats were negotiating with the Leninist Government to secure the admission of a Papal Relief Mission. Under Pius XI, who was elected Pope on February 6, 1922, these discussions were continued and had been successfully concluded when the Conference of Genoa opened on April 10, 1922.

This meeting, the first international gathering to which the Bolshevik Government had been invited to send a representative, had been called in the hope of settling some economic problems, especially the question of Lenin's repudiation of the debts incurred by the Tsarist regime. On May 5, 1922, Pius XI sent a special envoy, Msgr. (later Cardinal) Pizzardo, with a memorandum on religious freedom in Russia which was presented to each of the delegates. The Holy Father urged the participating Powers who were considering the readmission of Russia to the community of civilized nations, to lay down certain safeguards for religious interests, which were the basis of all real civilization. Among the conditions which Pius XI thought should be essential elements of any agreement reached were full freedom of conscience for all Russian citizens as well as for all foreign residents, freedom for public and private practice of religion, and the right of all religious denominations to own real property. The memorandum was never formally discussed at the Conference, which ended on May 19, 1922, without achieving anything.

In this same month of May, Fr. Neveu learned that his letters had been shown to the Holy Father and to Cardinal Gasparri who could quote whole passages from them by heart. The Holy Father had forthwith conferred upon Fr. Neveu the power to confirm and to carry out all the functions of a bishop, except those which demanded episcopal consecration. By the same letter, Fr. Neveu was informed that it was Fr. Maubon's express wish that he remain in Russia. On May 29, 1922, he wrote to acknowledge this letter:

With tears of joy we read and reread your letter and the blessing sent by the Holy Father. Now that the order to stand fast has reached us, we are happy indeed, and in spite of our unworthiness, we shall try to justify the confidence placed in us by our Congregation and by the Catholic Church. I was embarrassed to hear that my letters, which I was forced to leave vague on many interesting points, had been shown to the Pope. I blush, too, at all the compliments which are coming my way. People charitably believe that I am what I ought to be, but the reality, alas, is not as beautiful as the ideal. Thank you for the pictures of our new Holy Father. I did not even know his name until two months after his election.

The famine continues. We feel almost guilty whenever we eat a piece of bread, and we have seen so many horrible things and heard of others, including cannibalism, that our sensitivities are becoming numb. There are still two long months until the harvest. God has sent abundant rains to this area, but not 20% of the land has been sown because of lack of seed and of horses for plowing. People are dying like flies from hunger and typhus, and now the dreaded cholera has made its appearance. There must be some special Providence which preserves missionaries from sickness. I have just come back from a funeral with an escort of lice which joined me during the night I spent with the bereaved people. This is one easy way to catch a disease and I try to immunize myself by eating garlic. Though our supply of this perfumed plant is almost exhausted, it is in the process of being renewed in our garden.

Earlier this month, all the clergy in town were summoned to the local Soviet where we were told that the Government is going to requisition all sacred vessels and precious objects from churches, temples and synagogues and intends to use them to buy wheat from abroad. Since then, I have been sent for six times. The only thing of value that I possess is a crucifix, but they rejected this because it was not in the Russian style, having only one nail in the feet of our Saviour instead of two. I must say that on each occasion I was treated with great respect.

The Government decision to requisition the Church valuables brought a mixed reaction within the Orthodox Church. Some bishops and priests felt that the distress of the victims of famine fully justified such a step, but others, notably Patriarch Tikhon, elected in November, 1917, and the first to hold the office since the days of Peter the Great, were opposed to it. The Patriarch issued a proclamation which was circulated privately, calling for the continuance of contributions to famine relief but stating that he could not approve the taking away of consecrated vessels whose use for any purpose except divine worship was sacrilegious and forbidden. In many places, Government representatives, attempting to collect church valuables, were attacked by the people.

As a result of such disorders in Moscow, fifty-four people were brought to trial in May, 1922. Patriarch Tikhon, called to give evidence, said that he had simply done his duty as head of the Orthodox Church by pointing out the canonical rules governing the use of sacred vessels and added that individuals who had resisted the civil authorities had done so on their own responsibility. The Moscow Tribunal, however, found that the Patriarch's opposition was evidence of his counterrevolutionary spirit, and he was indicted and arrested. Counter-revolution was also the main Government charge in other trials in which bishops, priests and laymen were condemned, some of them to death.

Spring had come late but now the steppe was producing a few wild greens which helped to eke out the dwindling supply of vegetables. The goat gave birth to two kids, one of which was lame and soon found its way into the stew-pot. The other was weaned leaving the Religious the mother's milk which they used to make soup and cheese. Fr. Neveu had

been spending his free time helping Br. David to dig the garden, in which they were going to plant potatoes, beans, beets, maize, and a few lentils from which they hoped to obtain seed for the following year. If they ever needed any incentive, they could always find it in the memory of the day when they had to work in a stifling stench. The authorities had buried near their garden a consignment of meat and fish which was unfit for consumption, and some women, desperate with hunger, were digging it up to take it home.

Fr. Neveu had heard from some of his correspondents that parcels of food had been sent to him, but so far, nothing had arrived. He drew to their attention another pressing need. They were very short of clothing of every description. Br. David had been for years without a cassock, and Fr. Neveu's religious habit, made in 1906 had finally disintegrated. Their shoes were full of holes, and Fr. Neveu thought that if somebody could send each of them a strong pair of soldier's boots, they would be ideally equipped for the conditions in which they were living. It did not matter if these boots were iron-tipped because nobody would mind the noise. The better dressed people in Makeyevka were wearing small boards tied to their feet with thongs of leather.

He had other anxieties. The roof of the Church had been damaged, and he had not been able to get anyone to repair it. He was also awaiting trial for an innocent violation of municipal regulations. Two years before, all holders—there were no longer any "owners"—of libraries had been ordered to register them with the local authorities. Fr. Neveu had been unaware of this decree, and the men who had searched his house so often and had seen his books had never mentioned it. Now a similar order had been made in regard to musical instruments, and being unaware of this too, he had failed to register the church harmonium. As a result, he had received a visit from two town officials who had declared both library and harmonium confiscated.

The People's Tribunal, however, had hesitated to confirm this arbitrary decision and had referred the whole matter to a higher court in Youzovka, the chief town of the district. From this court came the reply that recent decrees of the Central Government forbade the confiscation of goods belonging to foreigners and that Fr. Neveu could be charged only with non-

compliance with municipal laws. He had appeared before the magistrates, had made out and signed a statement, but had refused to plead guilty. The date of his trial had not yet been fixed, but he rather expected that he would get off with a fine. At the same time, he felt that this was evidence that arbitrariness was disappearing and that law and order were beginning to rule.

It was at times like this that he most felt the need of a priest companion. In spite of everything, he thought, Makeyevka would be almost like paradise if only he had somebody with whom he could discuss his problems and if he could go to Confession without having to undertake a two-day journey. Only a month and a half before, the pastor of Taganrog had abandoned his parish, and the priests in Rostov and Enakievo (the latter his nearest neighbor) intended to leave as soon as they could. It seemed to Fr. Neveu that, very soon, he would be the last priest in the whole Donetz Basin which had an area almost half the size of France. As he went around among the sick, he could not help contemplating the gloomy possibility that he would die without the Last Rites.

Other things accentuated his sense of isolation:

It was with mixed feelings of joy and sadness that I read about the Eucharistic Congress which was held in Rome. On Saturday, May 20, I had to go to Youzovka for a funeral, and I decided to stay there until after Mass on the following Thursday, the feast of the Ascension. During this time, I baptized children, performed some marriages and revalidated others and heard confessions. On Ascension Thursday and the next day, terrible rainstorms turned the roads into mud, and I was unable to get back to Makeyevka for the Sunday. The supply of hosts and altar wine which I had brought with me was exhausted, and on the day when the whole Catholic world thronged around the Blessed Sacrament, neither I nor the people of Youzovka and Makeyevka could even have Mass.

On the other hand, he now had the consolation of using the new powers that had been given to him, and on June 29, he was able to confirm a group of 40 people. Encouraging, too, from a material point of view, was the news that some people had received food from America and that the

American Red Cross Society had opened an office in Rostov-on-Don. Packages were to be addressed directly to the Red Cross with a note giving the name and address of the intended recipient who would then be notified to come and collect his property in Rostov. Fr. Neveu passed on this information to Fr. Maubon, expressing the hope that the Assumptionists in America would hear about and make use of this facility because the outlook for the 1922 harvest was now far from encouraging.

Br. David was correspondingly depressed. The abundant rains of May had ceased after the downpour on the feast of the Ascension, and despite his perspiring efforts, by mid-July, he had to admit that his hopes of a good crop of vegetables had been dashed. To add to his gloom, the wine he had made from the green grapes had spoiled because the fruit had not been ripe enough. Furthermore, his spectacles had been broken for a year and a half, and the pair of lenses Fr. Neveu had got for him were not mounted. He had fastened the lenses with a piece of wire to an old frame which he had found in the attic, but this was a very precarious and inconvenient arrangement and was doing nothing to heighten his spirits. Commenting on this in a letter acknowledging an announcement from Fr. Quénard that food parcels had been sent from Constantinople, Fr. Neveu wrote:

I know that your many cares permit you to write only a postcard, but this is no more than a tiny morsel of food thrown to the starving. Is there nobody in Cadi-Keui talkative enough to write us a long letter about our missions? You have no idea what torture it is to be without news of everything that interests us. Often in the evenings, Br. David and I sit down and reminisce about all the old names and places: Philippopolis, Varna, Yamboli, Sliven, Adrianople, Coum-Capa, Phanaraki, Ismidt, Brousse, Eski-Chekir and the rest. Do our missions there still exist, and if so, what religious are stationed there? Our spirits would perhaps not sink so low if we knew what our friends were doing.

Tania, our future Oblate, bursts into tears every time her name is mentioned in a letter. One day, I asked her why, and this is what she told me: "For twelve years, I worked for a family which has now returned to Poland; I have never heard a word from them since. I am an orphan, and I know nothing. Yet, in France and Rome,

learned and holy men who do not even know me are kind enough to think of me." I think Tania will make a good religious. In June, we had a little ceremony in the church at which I placed the white veil of a postulant on her head. In the eyes of the people here, she is already a nun.

On the religious scene, I can only say that the Orthodox Church, without the support of the Tsar and the police, is in a state of ferment. The absence of any ecclesiastical newspapers makes the nature of this ferment a matter for simple conjectures, but it seems to me that it is not caused by the leaven of Christ. In the south of Russia, episcopal sees have multiplied to an amazing extent. There are bishops not only in the chief centers of government but also in many large towns. As the Church is separated from the State, nothing prevents such creations. This is a source of strength for the Orthodox Church, since the bishop can exercise closer control over his diocese. In fact, however, it is also a source of weakness because the bishops are by no means united among themselves or with their clergy. I hope that our young religious are being encouraged to learn Russian. When they come here trained in the Slav Rite, they will find an abundant harvest awaiting them.

On August 22, 1922, Fr. Neveu announced to Fr. Maubon the arrival of food packages containing rice, sugar and condensed milk, via the American Relief Organization at Rostov-on-Don. In his gratitude, he regretted that the procedure was so impersonal because he was unable to discover the identity of his benefactors. Three other packages, ordered in Constantinople by Fr. Quénard, were awaiting him at Kharkov. He heard, too, that the Assumptionists in America had dispatched a consignment of food, clothing and bed linen. Br. David had been given some unrefined wax from which he was making candles for the altar, and so the most urgent needs now were shoes and Mass wine.

Three weeks later, he received a rather cryptic letter, written in Latin, from a priest in Rostov which told him that the envoys of the Holy See had arrived, that they had a package for him, and that they had seen and spoken with his brother. He found this letter so intriguing that he decided

he would go himself to Rostov to investigate, even though, for over three years, he had avoided using the overcrowded trains because they were hot-beds of disease. He knew that, on such an expedition, any unexpected happening could become a crisis, so for the first time in his life, he went out to borrow money. As he expected, he did not have to go far. Two of his parishioners lent him a hundred million rubles and were kind enough to waive the current interest rate of 20%.

On reaching Rostov, he went straight to the rectory where he learned that the “envoys” were the representatives of the Pontifical Relief Mission to Russia, which, although operating as an independent unit, was using the transportation and purchasing facilities of the American Relief Administration, so as to avoid duplication of services and expenses. Its Director was an American Jesuit, Fr. Edmund A. Walsh, and its sole purpose was to bring food and clothing to the needy, regardless of their religion or politics. Although the members of the Mission were priests, it had been stipulated that they were not to engage in any type of priestly or apostolic work.

As it was late when he arrived, he just had time to meet two Spanish members of the Mission, who invited him to lunch next day, and to catch a glimpse of huge supplies of staple foods which had been purchased with the donations of Catholics all over the world. The following morning, after he had said Mass, he went first to the American Relief Administration where, he had just learned, a package of food was awaiting him. It contained, once again, rice, sugar and condensed milk, but he was given, in addition, a large sack of flour. At a fee of three million rubles, he hired a porter to carry these provisions to the rectory in Rostov, but before they were half-way, the man put down his bundle and demanded another four million rubles which Fr. Neveu had no choice but to pay.

Lunch with the Spanish priests was a very pleasant meal, accompanied by wine and by conversation which was fascinating to one so starved for news. He received a package and a letter from Fr. Quénard who was, as he had begun to suspect, the “brother” in question. His ragged appearance aroused compassion, and one of his hosts gave him a light alpaca cassock, explaining that he had no use for it while he was in Russia. Fr. Neveu asked, rather diffidently, if there was any possibility of his getting some

wine for Mass and was given a letter to take to the Italian Red Cross. Here again, his ragged clothing spoke eloquently, and he was given a voucher which would entitle him to receive twelve bottles of wine, enough to take care of his needs for a whole year, provided he could supply his own empty bottles. In addition, he received a bedspread, three pounds of fats and naturally, five pounds of macaroni, a food he had not seen now for nine years.

Once back at the rectory, he opened and read Fr. Quénard's newsy letter about the missions in the Near East and opened his eyes wide at the sight of five 100 franc bills which, at current rates, were worth 295 million rubles. The letter also informed him that the package contained shoes and materials for cassocks, but he resisted the temptation to open it because the external appearance indicated that it had been made up with a skill he could not hope to duplicate, and he had no desire to attract the attention of thieves.

The next step was to transport his supplies to the rectory in Rostov where, he decided, he would leave the flour and the condensed milk to be picked up on another occasion. He hired a wheelbarrow for five million rubles, loaded it and pushed it up the hill. Having handed it into the charge of the pastor, he put the rice and the sugar into two bags which he tied together and slung over his shoulders, bandolier fashion. Then with Fr. Quénard's package in his hand, he went to the railroad station, as it was necessary to be there at least three hours before train time in order to be sure of getting a ticket. He was fortunate enough to get his ticket almost at once, and then adjourned to the buffet where he ordered bread and tea for which he had to pay 750,000 rubles. As usual, the train was unlighted and was crowded, which made it a paradise for thieves. The journey passed without incident because he had to stand most of the way, and this enabled him to keep a closer eye on his packages. It was 1:00 A.M. when he alighted, and walking down the railroad tracks, grateful for the inky darkness that concealed him and his load, he reached the house of a doctor friend where he spent the night. Next morning, he completed his journey to Makeyevka arriving just in time to say the Sunday Mass.

Writing to thank Fr. Quénard on September 27, he described his adventures and added:

With what we have already received, we shall be able to spend the winter without anxiety and still have enough to share with our neighbors. The Near East Mission has never been rich, and when I opened your letter and saw what the poor had sent to the poor, I could not hold back my tears. This is not merely the result of senile debility. I am ashamed because you seem to think that we are men of extraordinary virtue and this is anything but the case.

I was delighted to hear from the priests with the Pontifical Mission that Sister Theresa-of-the-Infant Jesus is to be beatified very soon. I would love to know the date of that ceremony and to be able to say the new Mass in her honor. Shortly before the war, I translated a prayer to her into Russian and sent it to the Carmelites in Lisieux who had it printed. They also assigned her to me as a second guardian angel, and so far, she has ably discharged that function. I have great confidence in her intercession, and I have made a vow to walk in pilgrimage from Paris to Lisieux if ever I return to France.

Even Br. David, disconsolate at the failure of his vegetable garden after all his hard work, began to cheer up as he saw that their brothers in religion were aware of their needs and were anxious about their welfare. He and Fr. Neveu began to discuss again their old plan of keeping bees so as to ensure a supply of honey and wax. The new funds would make the project possible if only they could find some hives for sale. All Fr. Neveu's outgoing and incoming mail was still being directed via the Assumptionist house in London, but postal communications seemed to have been speeded up and personal letters were arriving regularly. The occasional arrival of the *Lettre à La Dispersion*, a little magazine made up of letters from Assumptionists all over the world and published in Paris every two weeks, brought a new sense of union with the Congregation.

On November 14, 1922, Fr. Neveu wrote to answer some questions put to him by Fr. Maubon:

Our health in the main is not bad. Br. David still has his rheumatism, and I have my old complaints such as rheumatism, hernia and kidney trouble, but we have had no serious illness. Tania

says she feels better than she ever did in her life. Miraculously, we have had no snow yet, although it usually begins at the end of September. The winter so far has been mild but very damp and unhealthy, and we are wading in mud. I would be tempted to go out on stilts if that method of travel were known here. Some time ago, I noticed that my teeth were beginning to decay on both sides of my mouth, and I am forced to chew with my front teeth, which complicates this very necessary operation. I have begun to receive treatment from "the best dentist in the district," but I am wondering how much he will charge me. I feel ashamed and ridiculous at having to eat like a rabbit when I am enjoying the gifts of generous friends.

You ask whether we find our isolation oppressive. I must confess that I do, more and more. The one thing I cannot stand is the absence of a priest companion. I could support everything else almost joyfully if only I was assured that I would not die without the Sacraments. If you care about the welfare of my soul, Father, this situation should trouble you, too. I know that some French businessmen have been to Moscow recently to renew commercial relations with Russia. I hesitate to think that they have more courage than our priests. Fr. Evrard or anyone you choose to send would be welcomed like the Messiah. Once again, I urge you to interest our young religious in the study of Russian. Send them to me, and I shall be very happy to teach them this beautiful and expressive language.

I find it very encouraging to hear that my old friend, Mr. François Paris, has made an arrangement with the Carmelites and the Poor Clares in Belgium and France to have prayers said twenty-four hours a day for the reunion of the Churches and for us. I hope this is true because it is the supernatural way of doing things, and I am sure God will bless it. If the movement becomes general, we may see the happy day of reunion sooner than we expect.

From a natural point of view, there was certainly little reason for optimism in this respect because, by the end of 1922, there was a

noticeable lack of unity within the Orthodox Church itself. Liberalistic tendencies, long present but suppressed under the Tsarist regime, had crystallized after the arrest of Patriarch Tikhon, and a group of self-styled “reformers” calling themselves “The Living Church” had taken control of the administration of the Orthodox Church, pledging support to the principles of the Revolution. Other splinter groups broke away, and although Fr. Neveu found it impossible to get detailed information, he mentioned that in addition to the Old Establishment and the Living Church, there were now a League for the Regeneration of the Church, an Ancient Apostolic Church, a Workers’ Church and a People’s Church; and he felt this list was by no means exhaustive.

There were two other things that Fr. Neveu found noteworthy. Before Christmas of 1922, an anti-religious demonstration was staged by members of the Young Communist League. It was not well organized or universal, and popular support for it was less than overwhelming. However, Fr. Neveu thought it might be indicative of things to come. For the most part, the demonstration took the form of parades accompanied by bands and bearing banners that were caricatures of religious themes and personages. One newspaper, which had a large circulation in the Donetz Basin, did not carry a line of news but instead featured items such as: “1922 years ago, in a town called Bethlehem which has never existed, from the immaculate conception of the carpenter, Joseph, and his wife, Mary, NOBODY WAS BORN.” Fr. Neveu added that he could no longer walk down the street without being insulted and that he had been stoned several times by conscientious young citizens.

Also in December, 1922, delegates to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets constituted themselves the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which was declared to be now in existence.

Chapter Six

Meanwhile, in Rome, discussions had been going on and decisions taken which brought new stability to the general affairs of the Congregation. The interregnum which had lasted since the death of Fr. Bailly in November, 1917, came to an end when Fr. Gervais Quénard was named Superior-General early in 1923. The Constitutions, which had been revised and brought into conformity with the new Code of Canon Law, had been approved by the Sacred Congregation of Religious. A certain amount of decentralization of authority had been achieved by the erection of provinces. These events marked the beginning of a period of new and healthy development for the Congregation.

A telegram on March 10, 1923, informed Fr. Neveu of the honor and the responsibilities thrust upon his friend and former colleague. He could not but rejoice at the news which came when he was badly in need of encouragement. He now had a new set of preoccupations. On January 6, he had been summoned to Youzovka, his second parish, where the Catholic community had been ordered to give up their church and rectory. He had then set off for Kharkov, the capital of the Ukraine, to make a protest for which he enlisted the support of the Polish and Lithuanian representatives there. He had returned with no definite promise, but with influenza which confined him to bed for a few days. Scarcely was he on his feet again when two local officials arrived to take another inventory of the rectory and the church. Under the prevailing conditions, he realized that the visit was, equivalently, an intimation that he should start looking for somewhere else to live.

He drew up a statement pointing out that, in accordance with the law of separation of Church and State, he had permission from the authorities to use the church, and as everything in the rectory belonged to him, nobody, no matter how exalted his position, had any right to meddle in his personal affairs. He had received no reply to this declaration and, so far, the status quo, both in Makeyevka and Youzovka, remained. There might soon be some question about his own status, however, because he had

heard a disquieting rumor that all foreigners who did not wish to become naturalized Russians must return to their own country.

Although fundamentally atheistic, the new regime had been too busy trying to establish itself to have time to mount an organized, frontal attack on religion. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union, much smaller now that Poland and Lithuania had recovered their independence, had lost all the members of the hierarchy. These bishops, Polish for the most part, had been forced to leave the country and only Archbishop Cieplak, Co-Adjutor Archbishop of Mohilev, remained. Recent statistics for the diocese of Mohilev, given in a booklet Fr. Neveu had picked up during his visit to Kharkov, revealed that only 136 priests remained, 336 being listed as "outside the diocese or forced into exile." Of 131 parishes, 56 were vacant and 54,391 of the total Catholic population of 245,154 were without a priest. In the huge Vicariate Apostolic of Siberia, 27 out of 45 parishes were vacant, and 50,850 out of 101, 140 Catholics had no priest.

These numbers were soon further depleted. In March, 1923, Archbishop Cieplak, fourteen Petrograd priests including Fr. Feodorov, Exarch of the Russian Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, and a young seminarian were arrested and sent to stand trial in Moscow. They were charged with forming, in 1918, in Petrograd, a counter-revolutionary society in order to combat systematically the orders of the Bolshevik authorities, with having exploited the religious prejudices of the people by inciting them to resist the legitimate demands of the government to requisition church valuables, and with having given religious instruction to children. All the defendants were found guilty, and Archbishop Cieplak and Msgr. Butkiewicz, pastor of St. Catherine's, Petrograd, were sentenced to death. Fr. Feodorov and four other priests were sent to prison for ten years, and the remaining priests received a sentence of three years imprisonment. Archbishop Cieplak's sentence was commuted to ten years imprisonment, but Msgr. Butkiewicz was shot at the end of March.

While Fr. Neveu was in Kharkov, he had had to have his photograph taken for his Ukrainian identity card. On March 8, he sent the last of six copies to Fr. Evrard, explaining:

You will find me thin and wrinkled but I am afraid the original is even more slender than the picture shows. I was wearing a

sheepskin coat and had been running around trying to find a photographer who would not charge too much (I paid 20 million rubles for six copies). Great drops of sweat were running down my face which was swollen from my exertions. However, I must admit that I have gained a little weight since last year. What a Lent we had then! Small plates of vegetables and a piece of black bread, yet there were always leftovers. Apparently each of us had adopted the same plan of pretending not to be hungry so as to leave more for the other two. Thank God, these calculations are no longer necessary. I picked up two more food packages when I was in Kharkov. I hope you like my typing. I received a ribbon from Constantinople for the typewriter one of the French officials gave me when he was leaving in 1918. I am so grateful for it because I detest fountain pens.

His own parishioners were not so numerous now but with two parishes to take care of, there was always something to be done. In 1922, he had 57 baptisms, 25 marriages, 24 funerals and had confirmed 80 people.

Since 1918, I have preached only in Russian. I must be the only priest of the Latin Rite to distinguish himself in this way because in the Catholic Church here, they will preach in Polish, German, Lithuanian, Lett or any language except Russian.

The saddest feature of my life at present is the offensive and gross impiety which is showing itself everywhere. Religion is caricatured and attacked, and we seem to be witnessing the triumph of lies. Now there is even a two-page weekly newspaper, started last year and entitled *Bezbozhnik* which means "The Godless."

There were consolations too. It seemed likely that Tania would soon have a companion. A young Polish widow named Sophie, a dressmaker by trade, had come to stay in town with her mother, and was coming regularly to talk with Tania. Fr. Neveu had officiated at her wedding in Kiev, five years before, and knew her to be a very devout and serious person. She told him that after her husband's death two years ago, she had resolved to enter religious life, even though her mother was very much

opposed to the idea. Now she wanted to know more about the Oblates of the Assumption of whom Tania had spoken to her.

A personal joy had come to him with the news that Sr. Theresa-of-the-Child-Jesus was to be beatified. On April 29, the day of the ceremony, he had devoted his sermon to her, and after Mass had distributed pictures of her which bore the prayer that he had translated into Russian and which had been printed for him by the Carmelites in Lisieux.

Another anxiety disappeared when he consulted the local authorities about the report, still persistent, that all foreigners would have to adopt Russian nationality. He was shown the decree and was assured that the rumor was without foundation.

By this time, winter had finally ended, although there had been snow during Easter Week. Br. David, laboriously and optimistically, had dug and seeded the garden, but it was still cold and nothing was sprouting. Tania had now relieved him of the care of the chickens and a young pig which they hoped to kill before the end of the year.

On May 7, 1923, Fr. Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

We are all rather amazed and disturbed at the compliments being showered on us in high places. We do not deserve them. I am reminded of the words of La Fontaine: "From afar, it is something; close at hand it is nothing!"

The business of the rectory has not been settled. A week ago, I had a visit from the secretary of the Communist cell in the factory. Like all his predecessors, he wanted to know my name, age, what armies I had fought in, even what motives led me to become a priest. Conversation always comes round to religion, and I find the anti-religious propaganda among the young very distressing. The interrogations themselves are periodic occurrences, rather like head colds; they are occupational hazards.

He asked permission to conduct, when the time came, a religious ceremony for Sophie, similar to the one he had held for Tania. It would be simple: the cutting of a lock of her hair and the placing of a small white veil on her head as a token of a religious habit. Then, she would pronounce

temporary vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. He also asked for the address of the Mother-General of the Oblates so that he could tell her about the two girls who were so impatient to become her daughters.

He wondered too if Fr. Quénard could obtain permission from Rome for him to make Blessed Theresa-of-the-Child-Jesus joint patron with St. Joseph of the church of Makeyevka and to expose her picture for public veneration.

And now, if you don't think the peasant from Makeyevka is ordering you around too much, would it be possible for you to let me have a detailed list of the powers given me by Rome last year? My books of moral theology give me no information on that point, and I may soon need to know if I have the authority to remove the ecclesiastical censures from those who have incurred them. There is an Orthodox priest here who seems interested in becoming a Catholic and who, in case of his abjuration of heresy, would need absolution from excommunication and censure in virtue of Canons 2314 and 2372. I do not know if I have that power. In a conflict between supporters of the "Living Church" and the Orthodox Church, this priest said that the former was a heretical organization and as a result, he had been expelled from his rectory. He has been to see me several times, and although his theology is not very profound, he has a very high ideal of the dignity and responsibilities of a priest. If I am able to receive him into the Church, I shall at least have someone to hear my confession.

A month later, he was acknowledging receipt of a letter forwarded by Fr. Quénard, from Most Rev. Andrew Szeptyckys, Metropolitan of Galicia, Archbishop of Lvov, and Metropolitan of Kiev, written in Rome, on May 10, 1923. It read:

In virtue of the powers conferred upon us by the Holy Apostolic See, we name you, dear Father, our *locum tenens* with all the authority of a diocesan bishop for the churches of the autonomous Ukraine, the Crimea and the territory of the Don.

We instruct you to receive with love, according to the command of Our Lord, the clergy and faithful desirous of entering into

communion with the Holy See of Rome, and to preserve, with the greatest care and in all firmness, their ecclesiastical organizations in conformity with the Rules of the Holy Fathers and the Canons of the Oriental Church. You will hasten to inform us of everything that happens.

Fr. Neveu pointed out that, while he was willing to assume this obligation, the regions involved were distant, and his activities would be circumscribed by the difficulty and expense of travel. At this stage, there were no grounds for undue optimism, although he himself sensed that there was a gradually growing conviction among believers that a national church was repugnant to the idea of Christianity.

Here is a true story which shows something of the state of mind of the Orthodox clergy. In Youzovka, at the end of May, one of them who had been expelled from his church asked me if he could use our church to conduct services for his people. If I had followed my heart, I would have agreed immediately, but I knew it would cause scandal among my parishioners. There was another reason for refusing which I explained to him: "You are not unaware that our church was recently in danger of being closed and that you, who do not recognize the 'Living Church', are considered seditious. If you held your services there, without formally entering into communion with the Catholic Church, all of us would be regarded as critical of the authorities, and the building would be closed both to you and to us." The poor man accepted my reasoning and then said: "Do you know that many of the Orthodox priests who have remained faithful to ecclesiastical law are anxious to embrace Catholicism?" I have heard this same remark from many sources.

If he often discussed the weather in his letters, it was because it was no trivial subject to those who depended on what they could grow for themselves, or on food sent from abroad. In 1923, spring had come late, but May and early June had brought abundant rains and the endless expanses of the steppe now were a mantle of green. Br. David was in the garden from morning until night except when he went to feed the rabbits and the goats. There were now five mouths to feed: Sophie had come to

live with them, and they had also taken in a five-year-old orphan boy whose grandmother could no longer take care of him.

The question of the rectory, simmering since January, came up again on July 7, when the local chief of Police arrived and told them they must leave the house at once. Fr. Neveu asked to see the official document ordering the eviction and was told: "I am the document." Undaunted and determined not to yield an inch unless he had to, Fr. Neveu went down to protest to the President of the local Soviet. He was received very sympathetically and told that the matter would be taken care of. On July 23, he wrote to Fr. Quénard that they were still in the house and were entrusting the future to Blessed Theresa:

In three days time, on the feast of St. Anne, I shall give the religious veil to Sophie. She is a charming person and gets on well with Tania who is delighted with her company. Her people had been strongly opposed to her becoming a nun, and there were lots of tears on all sides. Fortunately, that is now ancient history. From time to time, there are a few sighs, but I think they are now reconciled. Tania, relieved of some of the household duties, has more time to study her French which has been progressing very slowly. I give them spiritual conferences and read scripture to them, and I am trying to prepare them generally for entrance into the novitiate. I wish you could send me a photograph of an Oblate Sister so that they can see the religious habit they hope to wear. By the way, Tania drinks to your health in water every day (a custom of the south) from the little glass you gave me when you were at Vilna, in 1908.

I almost forgot to mention your telegram of May 28, 1923, informing me that the Holy Father would like me to stay on here, but that I may leave if I wish. At first, it seemed unintelligible.¹ Our telegraphist apparently had a horror of the letter "r" and much prefers to use "k". He would probably decide that you are an

¹ The telegram was translated as follows: *Piekké conseille Keste natukellement pouvez venik. Gekvais*"

“impoktant peksonage.” Thank the Holy Father for his solicitude. We shall stay on until we are ordered to leave.

To his great joy, two pictures of Blessed Theresa and the text of her new Mass, sent by the Carmelites in Lisieux, arrived safely. He was notified, too, that a carton of clothing and bed-covers, sent by the Assumptionists in America in August, 1922, had finally reached Mariupol. When he took possession of it, he discovered that it had been opened and some of its contents removed. Tania was lucky because two pairs of shoes fitted her. The men’s shoes were too small but were in good condition and could be bartered. He found particular delight in a copy of the Catholic Almanac, published in France, which did much to bring him up to date on church news in that country.

On the other hand, a copy of the psalter which he had requested from London—his breviary was in tatters—had been returned marked “Not allowed to enter.” He had not received the *Lettre à la Dispersion* since May, and he begged Fr. Quénard to make some one person responsible for sending it:

Letters give us great pleasure but they are rare, and they do not help us to enter into the life of the Congregation like this little bulletin. It could be sent to us via London with all references to Russia deleted. It is aggravating that, at a time when such changes are being made in the government of our religious family, we remain ignorant of what is happening. The lack of news is what makes our exile painful.

There had been no rain for some time now, and, by the end of August, it was obvious that the harvest would be no more than mediocre. Br. David, however, had been able to make a year’s supply of altar wine, and in his spare time, was melting down pieces of old wax to make candles. Some packages of food had been received via the Nansen Mission as well as some money. The latter was particularly welcome as he had just had to raise 5,267,000 rubles for the insurance and taxes on the church and rectory.

October, 1923 was not an easy month. A new decree stated that all local religious associations failing to register their statutes within three

months would be dissolved. To facilitate the registration, a special form had been drawn up and issued uniformly to the various religious denominations, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Mohammedan, etc. Fr. Neveu noticed that several provisions were in direct conflict with Canon Law, and so he did not complete the form. Now, he was summoned to the local Soviet to give an explanation. He had replied that in view of the full religious liberty granted by the government, he could not in conscience fill out or sign the form. Pressed further, he pointed out that the model form stated that a member of the association could be expelled at the request of two thirds of the members:

Now, according to our Church Law, nobody can be excommunicated unless he has done something deserving this penalty. Secondly, it says that the community is to designate its own ministers. In our system, it is the Bishop who chooses, teaches, ordains and assigns the priests, and it is to him that the faithful must go if they have complaints about their pastor.

The Council had been rather taken aback by this defense and decided to shelve the matter and wait for a further ruling.

On Monday, October 16, a friendly neighbor warned him that he could expect to be put out of his house at any moment. On Wednesday, during dinner, two officials came and asked to see the interior of the house, so he rose from the table and showed them around. The visit was brief and the conversation even briefer. It was all very ominous, and once again, the little household turned to the intercession of Blessed Theresa and St. Joseph. Sunday came with no new developments, and immediately after Mass, Fr. Neveu set out for Kharkov once more.

In a letter written in pencil and without date or address, he described his adventures:

My heart was heavy as I set out. I had to wait until 12:30 A.M. for a train, and at 2:00 A.M. I had completed the first leg of my journey and was faced with a wait until 4:00 P.M. for the next train. I spent the night amid the smoke and dirt of the refreshment room, finally managing to get a seat, without being able to sleep. I left about 5:00 P.M. in a cattle truck and reached my second stage at

11:00 P.M. Here I was hoping to spend the night with a Catholic family who lived near the station.

I ploughed my way through the mud to their house and knocked for twenty minutes without anyone opening to me. War-weary and spattered with mud, I returned to the station and spotted an unoccupied window-recess where I thought I might be able to sleep. I curled up there, using my bag as a pillow, but I could not understand why I was so cold. Finally I discovered that, in the darkness, I had not noticed that there was no glass in the window. So I wrapped myself in my cloak and stretched out on the platform. I abandoned my attempt to sleep at 5:00 A.M. and began to walk about.

As soon as I saw light and smoke from the house I went back and was told that nobody had heard the knocking. Probably, they were afraid to open the door so late at night. Anyway, they found someone to drive me over to a nearby German settlement where the priest was sick. I was so tired that I decided I would have to spend the night there. On Wednesday morning, the feast of St. Raphael, Patron of Travelers, I went to confession, said Mass, and then chatted about conditions in general with the pastor whom I found to be very much better. Although my train would not leave until midnight, the school-master, who was to escort me to the station, insisted that we start at 5:00 P.M., explaining that because of the activities of brigands, it was not safe to be out after dark.

After another long wait at the station, I got into an overcrowded train and had to stand. Mercifully, this stage of the journey was short because I was in a draft, but when I changed at the next station, I had to stand in line for four hours, waiting to get a ticket to Kharkov. I no longer had any feeling in my legs.

He finally reached the capital after midday on Thursday, too late to accomplish anything that day. He went to visit Fr. Ilguin, the local pastor, who had been expelled from his rectory and was now living in the sacristy and with whom he spent the night. Next morning, he went to the Commissariat of the People where he was received politely, even kindly, by

two young men who spoke French. They listened with sympathy to his story of the annoyances to which he was being subjected, and then asked him to draw up and submit a memorandum to them. The next day, when he presented it, they explained that, administratively, the matter did not depend on the Commissariat of the People. However, they promised a provisional reply within a week and assured him that he would not be evicted at a moment's notice and that he could go home without anxiety.

The return journey was less painful, and he reached Makeyevka on November 3, just two weeks after he had set out. An official letter from Kharkov, which had arrived the day before, informed him that orders had been given that all proceedings against him were to be suspended. He learned too that the chief author of their difficulties and his confederate had been transferred.

Br. David and the women were relieved to have him back. They had had a little excitement, too. On October 31st, Br. David had gone over to the church to say his night prayers a little earlier than usual. He was just in time to hear the sound of glass falling on the floor. Arming himself with a heavy padlock and chain, he went to investigate but found no trace of anyone. The pastor of Enakievo told him that his church was entered and robbed on that same night. Since then, Br. David had been sleeping in the church.

Writing to Fr. Quénard on December 15, 1923, Fr. Neveu had new woes to relate:

On the night of November 14, we had a surprise, if one can call it that. It was the twenty-second incident of its kind, but this time, the search party decided to come at 1:00 A.M. We were awakened by a thunderous hammering on the door, and when I opened it, I recognized an old acquaintance. It was an investigator whom I call "Mr. Quizzy." He has left me in peace since July, 1920, but I see that his personality has not changed. He is still arrogant, coarse and stupid. The visit was a long one, but he finally left after putting seals on the door of my study. He arrested Br. David, who does not know a word of Russian, and Sophie who knows only how to sew and to pray. They were detained, in three different places, until the evening of the 17th, their only nourishment being air, which was by

no means fresh. On Sunday, the 18th, Mr. Quizzy came back with a gang of henchmen, removed his seals, my watch, and a pile of old letters (including some of yours), manuscripts, notebooks and memoranda. He just loves to read.

Poor Br. David's feet are in bad shape. He left in such a hurry that he put on his heavy boots without socks. Sophie, who is not strong and about whom I was most concerned, seems to have suffered no ill effects. Since then, I have twice had to walk eight miles to Youzovka for questioning, and Tania and Sophie have been there once each. I must say that the investigator was very polite. I went back of my own accord on December 10th, hoping to retrieve my papers but "Quizzy" is still reading. If this affair ends happily, I shall let you know at once. Otherwise, there will be no time to write. There is nothing we can do, but those who have a good conscience have nothing to fear.

What aggravates me is that, in addition to losing my watch, I have also lost my pipe. This implement, doubtlessly not in common use among the Fathers of the desert, is particularly helpful when one has to visit hovels where the air is no longer fresh, or when one's stomach is growling with hunger. Misfortune never comes alone, and I am sure our trials are only beginning. But all things work together for good to those who love God.

Later Fr. Neveu discovered that several people whom he knew had been arrested at the same time and had been released after having been questioned about their connections with him. The whole furor had been caused by a former apprentice to a Polish watchmaker in Youzovka whom Fr. Neveu had visited several times. This young man had finally been dismissed for breaking too many tools, and, in revenge, had reported to the police that Fr. Neveu and the watchmaker were in the habit of locking themselves in a room to discuss counter-revolutionary projects.

He continued his letter on December 17:

Do not worry too much about our clothing. Our only real need is socks or stockings: the ones we have are beyond repair. I have another favor to ask on behalf of three priests who have had much

to suffer for the faith. They are Fr. George Klass, who was recently released after spending several months in prison; Fr. Emmanuel Simon, driven by intrigue to leave his parish of Enakievo some years ago. Sent to a parish along the Volga, he and all his parishioners were forced by famine to leave their homes. Now I hear he is to replace his successor at Enakievo who has returned to Poland. Finally, there is Fr. Vincent Ilguin, at Kharkov, who has often sheltered me and who has been put out of his rectory. If you could get the Holy Father to send his blessing to all three, it would be a consolation and inspiration for them.

The Christmas season was ushered in with a snowstorm so heavy that nobody could go out. He said the midnight and dawn Masses in his room where the smallness of the attendance and of the place reminded him of the cave at Bethlehem. On January 8, 1924, he noted that it was three months since he had the opportunity to go to confession, and as yet, they were still trying to dig themselves out of the snow. Later that month, he was able to go to Enakievo bringing with him Br. David, who had never been to that town, and who needed a change. Unfortunately, they had to travel both ways in thick fog, and Br. David saw nothing of the countryside. Then winter returned. People said there had not been so much snow since 1888. Whole villages were completely buried, and the inhabitants had to communicate by tunnels. Sleds which had been extricated traveled over the roofs of the houses, the horses' heads often grazing the telephone wires.

On April 10, 1924, he wrote Fr. Quénard:

You know that every country has its secret service, one of whose functions is to investigate political criminals. I must inform you that I am now ranked among the suspects. This has been going on since the incident of last November. On March 21, I was called to Youzovka where some of my papers were returned to me. I took the opportunity to make the following statement:

Comrade, I am not telling you how to run your business, and I hope you will not be offended when I say that I know you have me under surveillance. I would like to point out that your agent is as

inaccurate as he is incompetent. He has told you that I hold political meetings with Polish people each night at the church. Perhaps he cannot see over the fence very well. What happens is that two Frenchmen, a Polish girl and a Russian girl go over to the church to pray for a few minutes before going to bed. The pharmacist, who supposedly presides at these so-called meetings, is a man of over sixty, is crippled with rheumatism and can come to church only two or three times a year. True, he has spoken once in church: last Palm Sunday, while I was reading the Passion in Latin, I asked him to read it in Russian so that people would be able to understand.

My parishioners are not numerous but they represent 11 nationalities: besides Polish people, I have French, Germans, Italians, Lithuanians, Turks, Swedes, Czechs, Belgians and Bulgarians. I would be false to my ministry if I favored one nationality at the expense of the others. You know from your examination of my papers that I was once under the surveillance of the Tsarist police, that I never took part in any plot against the autocracy, just as now I am involved in no conspiracy against the Soviets. I keep my opinions on political affairs to myself, and I occupy myself only with my pastoral ministry as is the duty of every priest. So if anyone in the future tells you that I am mixed up in political intrigues, tell him on my behalf that he is a liar.

The poor man blushed deeply, and beads of perspiration formed on his forehead. However, we parted with a handshake. I am glad to be able to say that I think the central authority is filled with good intentions, but its representatives in the provinces are sometimes very clumsy. I forgive the faults of the servants for which the master is not responsible.

Chapter Seven

Until 1924, Germany alone of the European nations had resumed diplomatic relations with Russia. Early in that year, however, England, with its first Labor Government in power, extended diplomatic recognition to the new rulers of Russia, but there was no exchange of ambassadors. Within a matter of weeks, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Austria had followed suit.

Fr. Neveu considered these decisions to be realistic. On July 1, 1923, he himself had written to Mr. Rakovsky, Commissar of the people for Foreign Affairs in Kharkov, stressing the value to the Soviet Republic of entering into diplomatic relations with the Holy See. It would indicate a wise and farsighted foreign policy and there would be nothing to lose and everything to gain in prestige and in the confidence of all sincere peoples. He felt that the Law of Separation of Church and State in Russia would not be an insuperable obstacle. Rome would scarcely desire a return to conditions under the Tsarist regime when the Catholic Church suffered grave inconveniences arising from the distrust of the ruling classes.

He pointed to the experience of his own country, France, which had passed similar legislation in 1905. There had followed a break with Rome which had lasted for almost 16 years. As the influence of the Holy See continued to grow, even non-Catholic nations were anxious to have a representative in Rome. It had been realized in France that the laws infringing the liberties of the Church could not be enforced without detriment to the unity of the country, and that even material interests were suffering through a lack of representation at the Holy See. As a result, there was now a French ambassador in Rome and a Papal Nuncio in Paris, and a scheme was being worked out which would safeguard the Church's rights as well as the principle of the Law of Separation of Church. He drew attention to the fact that the Catholic Church in Russia was now without a hierarchy. The bishops had left, either because they felt they should or because they had been forced to do so, but their presence abroad lent substance to the accusation that there was religious persecution in Russia.

It was known, too, that the seminaries had been closed and that many parishes were without priests. It should not be humiliating for the Russian Government to make a direct approach to the Father of all Christians; on the contrary, it would be a proof of their statesmanship if they could put an end to the present abnormal situation and disarm their critics at the same time.

He felt sure that the Holy Father, who had sent aid to Russia during the famine, would not refuse to negotiate honorably with the Russian Government. Even if he did refuse, Russia would gain the esteem of the whole world for making a peaceful overture:

I submit my ideas to you, Sir, in all sincerity. They contain nothing anti-revolutionary and are intended only to serve the interests of the Russian people and of religion. Nobody knows of this letter. The initiative was my own, and I assume all responsibility.

Writing to Fr. Quénard, on April 17, 1924, he enclosed a copy of that letter and expressed his anxiety that the Holy See and Russia find speedily a *modus vivendi*:

The accompanying document was the fruit of much reflection. My arguments have lost none of their validity with the passing of time. No matter what counter-revolutionaries or émigrés may say, one fact is clear: the Bolsheviks are now in control of this country, and it is to them we must look for a restoration of order.

He knew that Catholics might not approve of his views because the Bolsheviks were militant atheists and unbelievers. He, too, abhorred this unbelief, but, he asked, what had the Bolsheviks done which had not been done by the French Revolutionaries? Recently, the interests of souls and the good of the Church had obliged the Holy Father to overlook many things in order to come to terms with France. For the very same reasons, he felt that there should at least be an attempt to reach an understanding with the Russian Government:

I am trying to be objective because, personally, I cannot congratulate myself on the local representatives of our Government. They have caused me considerable trouble and

worry, and I have had to seek protection from the Central Authority at Kharkov where excesses are condemned and where they simply want obedience to the law. I do not say that everything is exemplary, but one must be just to all concerned.

When the censor reads this, he will see that I am no conspirator. I do not ask the Holy Father to attach an indulgence to Communism, but, for the general good and the welfare of the souls redeemed by Christ, a way of living with Communists must be found.

After his encounter with the local authorities over the registration of the parish statutes in 1923, Fr. Neveu had equipped himself with a handbook of laws relating to religion. After some study, it now seemed to him that he had been unduly concerned about that matter. Two categories of believers were recognized by law: (a) simple *Groups* of at least 50 believers who could make a contract with the municipal authority without any previous formality; (b) *Religious Associations* who must first register their statutes, a long and costly proceeding which conferred no special privileges. As his income was now minimal, he decided to ask for recognition as a Group, and, lawbook in hand, had won his point, at least "for the time being."

In studying the Decree on the Separation of Church and State, he discovered what he thought might be a possible avenue of agreement between the Holy See and the Government. According to paragraph 9: "The school is separated from the Church. The teaching of religious doctrine in all educational establishments, whether public or private, where matters of general education are taught, is not permitted. Citizens may teach and learn religion privately" (Jan. 23, 1918).

This was confirmed, also in 1918, by an Instruction of the Commissariat of the People for Justice. On June 13, 1921, a further precision came from the Central Executive Committee for all the Russians: "It is not permitted to teach religion to young people who have not reached the age of 18 years. For persons over 18, separate courses, conferences and lectures on religious matters are permitted insofar as these have not the character of systematic school teaching." Then an explanation from the Commissariat

of Justice declared: "The Decree of the Separation of Church and State, of School and Church, does not forbid those who so desire to teach children catechism or any religion whatsoever in the home."

Article 121 of the Criminal Code prescribed that "The teaching of religions to infants or minors in State establishments for Instruction, or in private schools, is punishable with hard labor to the extent of one year." On the other hand, a decision of the Commissariats of the Interior and of Public Instruction, on March 25, 1924, stated that parents could invite someone into their home to give religious instruction to no more than three children.

Discussing this matter in a letter to Fr. Quénard, on June 23, 1924, he said:

Here, in my opinion, we have the principal elements of the issue. If talks did take place, there would be no point in asking for the suppression of this legislation because the Russian Government could not grant that without losing face and contradicting itself. However, I see no reason why it could not be stipulated that Catholic priests be authorized to prepare children for First Communion both private and solemn, according to the rule of the Catholic Church and in accordance with Paragraph 5 of the Decree of the Separation of Church and State which states: "The carrying out of religious ceremonies is guaranteed insofar as they do not violate public order and are not accompanied by any infringement of the right of citizens of the Soviet Republic."

Laws referring to Places of Public Worship were similar to the French legislation. In Paragraphs 12 and 13 of the Decree of Separation of Church and State respectively, it was stated: "No ecclesiastical or religious societies may own property. They have not the rights of juridical persons" and "All goods of ecclesiastical and religious societies existing in Russia are declared the property of the People. Buildings and articles specially destined for purposes of worship, under special conditions, may be restored by central or local civil authorities for the free use of the religious societies concerned."

While waiting for happier times, it could be agreed that the

goods of the Catholic Church, considered as belonging to the people, be restored, by common consent, to the Catholic people organized into parish Societies according to the rules of the Catholic Church. One could then make use of previous laws for the election of vestrymen, giving women the right to vote. Would this be conceding too much? On the other hand, how can souls be saved without sacrifice? I have the feeling that nobody knows how to talk to the Russians and that in Rome they have only a general idea of Russian law in regard to worship. If there is to be any discussion, they must have an accurate knowledge of all the laws.

So far, 1924 had been relatively calm. The goat had presented them with two kids, and a friend had given Fr. Neveu a watch to replace the one which had been taken from him. He had recovered a few more of his papers from the police, but, at the same time, had been informed that his permit to stay had expired and that he must get a new one at once under penalty of arrest and expulsion. This had involved another trip to Kharkov where he was able to complete his business without any difficulty. Once again, he stayed with Fr. Ilguin who had now been put out of his sacristy and had found a room in a hospice for ladies. To add to Fr. Ilguin's miseries, a stage had been set up in the churchyard, and noisy demonstrations were held during services.

When Fr. Neveu returned to Makeyevka, he was greeted by the police with a new decree ordering another inventory. This occupied two evenings. In the confusion, their pig died, and one of the kids strangled itself with its cord. Two more weeks were spent trying to assemble 50 people on three different occasions to sign the contract of possession and the copies of the inventory.

Health had now become a matter of concern in the rectory. Sophie appeared to be wasting away: she was very nervous and had developed respiratory trouble. The doctor had ordered a change, and she was going to spend some time with relatives near Kiev. Tania would accompany her and stay for a few days because she too needed a rest. She had grown thinner and was eating and sleeping little, while continuing to work as hard as ever. Br. David no longer had his old strength and became very depressed when they were without news for any length of time. Fr. Neveu

himself had pains in the lumbar region, a hernia, rheumatism, bad teeth, insomnia and some kind of an intestinal disorder. His feet swelled up at night and were badly blistered as a result of his recent activities.

To Fr. Quénard, he wrote on June 25:

I know what is undermining the girls' health. They see that the convent of which they have dreamed so long is just as far away as ever. I wish I had a nun to take over their spiritual formation, and especially to teach them French. Through a long-standing and incorrigible habit, I speak to them only in Russian. Now, I often have difficulty in finding the French word I need.

I have just learned that the papers which were not restored to me have been lost. Among them were four thick notebooks in which I had written my sermons in Russian. The reading and study of seventeen years has gone to make paper for cigarettes. I shall no longer write my sermons.

Other people were having their troubles as he discovered from a brochure of resolutions taken at the 13th Congress of the Communist Party held in Moscow in June. It seemed that anti-religious propaganda, despite its obvious influence on young people, was not an unqualified success in its present form. The simple administrative expedient of closing churches and places of worship would be abandoned in favor of a materialistic explanation of social life and of natural phenomena encountered by the peasants such as storms, properties of the soil, action of fertilizers etc. Under Party auspices, schools and reading rooms would be the center of this propaganda. At the same time, care must be taken not to offend the religious sentiments of believers. These could be overcome only by a long period of instruction which must be measured in years, even in decades.

Just the same, a circular for the Ukraine announced that churches could be closed if the number of believers in the local population was less than 50. If any particular area needed a club, a school, a cinema or a theatre, a majority of the workers could request the closing of the church. In this case, alternative accommodation was to be found for the believers.

For some time now, currency had gradually been stabilized. Rubles and kopecks were again in use, and the reappearance of silver coins indicated

that things were returning to normal. Money, however, was beginning to be a problem. Father's income for May, June and July was 4 rubles, not enough for traveling expenses. In July, there was a new crisis. The newly-appointed manager of the mine, like his predecessor, wished to repossess the rectory on the excuse that there was an acute shortage of places for rent. Fr. Neveu went down to the Soviet and pointed out that, as the rectory had been *nationalized*, or, more correctly, *municipalized*, he had a right to rent the house himself. Four weeks and fifteen visits later, the Soviets decided that his point was well taken and that the mine had no claim to the house.

On August 7, he confided to Fr. Quénard:

They have leased the house to me. In two weeks, I shall have to pay 120 rubles deposit and I have only 20. The contract has not yet been drawn up, but I grow cold when I think of what I shall be charged for water, heat and light. Prayers and blessings will not be accepted as currency. I put my trust in the bank of Divine Providence, but please do not lose sight of the fact that our authorities have announced that there is no limit to the money we can receive from abroad. Please thank Mr. François Paris but tell him this is not the time to send me vestments. Does he not remember that all church furnishings, past, present and future, have been nationalized?

The outlook for winter was bleak. During the critical summer months, the sun had been heating down out of a sky of bronze. Locally, the miserable sprouts of oats and barley had been cut for fodder while still green and only a few inches high. Many of the German farmers along the Volga, fearing there would be nothing to harvest, had abandoned everything and come to work in the mines. Br. David had dug over thirty feet of his garden and had gathered less than three pounds of potatoes. To make matters worse, the Relief Missions had all left.

Towards the end of August, his anxieties were temporarily banished by the rare joy of a visit from another priest. He had invited Fr. Simon and Fr. Klass to help him celebrate the feast of St. Augustine, one of the Patron Saints of his Congregation. He had announced that there would be a

Solemn High Mass on the 28th, and although it was a working day, over 60 people were present, some of them from Constantinowka, more than 50 miles away. As it turned out, Fr. Simon alone could come, and he sang the Mass and preached. The people, who were so used to Fr. Neveu and his beard, immediately concluded that Fr. Simon, a fine and typical specimen of the German race, must be Polish because he was clean-shaven.

Before he left, Fr. Simon invited his hosts to spend a few days with him in a small German farming community, suggesting that it might be possible for the three of them to make a retreat. It was an attractive prospect, but it would mean leaving Tania alone; Sophie was still away and the little boy who had been staying with them had proved so unmanageable that he had to be returned to his grandmother. The matter was settled when one of the ladies of the parish volunteered to spend the nights with Tania, and two weeks later, Fr. Neveu and Br. David climbed into the cart of a German farmer with the authentic name of Bosch, who had come to collect them.

Acknowledging the receipt of money sent by Fr. Quénard, on September 26, he wrote:

We have descended the slopes of Mount Tabor, after our simple retreat. It was so good to breathe pure air and drink limpid water, to enjoy stillness far from the noise and grime of mines and factories, and to gaze out onto the vast horizons of the steppe which are so conducive to recollection. It is true that we had no eloquent preacher and were forced to have recourse to silence and meditation. But we did draw up a schedule of religious exercises which we followed faithfully each day just as if we were in a regular community.

These good people were more than kind to us, and when we were leaving, they would accept no payment. As they had never seen a picture of Pope Pius XI, I gave them my last copy as a token of our gratitude. Their tears of joy were an acknowledgement of payment in full.

By mid-October, he had discovered that he would have to pay 20 rubles a month for light and water, but he still had no idea what he would be assessed for space. There were so many channels through which his

funds were draining away. Small as his revenue was, he was still taxed on it. There was a tax for the goat, a tax for the building, compulsory insurance, etc., and he feared that the cost of heating during the winter would be a crippling burden. Up to then, it had been quite warm, but now the north wind had started to blow, and his hand trembled as he wrote. Somehow, next year, the roof of the church would have to be repaired, and the rectory floor, which had rotted, would have to be relaid.

On October 28, 1924, came the news that France had finally granted diplomatic recognition to the Russian Government, and ambassadors were to be exchanged. Almost immediately, there was an appreciable improvement in postal communications between the two countries. From the Carmelites in Lisieux, he received a beautiful, large picture of Blessed Theresa, a new edition of her life and a 600-page collection of favors attributed to her intercession. That night, while he was in church, he felt moved to compose a hymn in her honor, which he set to an old Russian melody, and sent to Lisieux.

Another fascinating gift was a train schedule which contained a miniature map of Europe, and he noted that it was a complete revelation to him:

I have been so far out in my imagining of the frontiers of the various countries, both old and new. Rumania has really filled her belly, and Hungary can only keep quiet beside her. Austria, in its bizarre form, bears no resemblance to the monarchy buried with Franz-Joseph. I see that Greece extends a thin arm towards Istanbul and completely prevents Bulgaria from bathing its feet in the Aegean Sea. How the old world has turned upside down territorially. As for political upsets, I think I know as much about them as anybody. I have seen and am still seeing so much of them. What will our descendants, the citizens of the future Soviet Republics of Europe, have to say?

As had been feared, Br. David's harvest had been a mockery, and all his hardship had gone for nothing. The goat had hit him with his horns and left a nasty gash on his leg. His only consolation was to be summoned, in a professional capacity, by an Armenian wine merchant whose wines were

turning muddy. He had come home with a present of two bottles of wine and a newspaper which announced that the new French Ambassador to Russia was Mr. Jean Herbette. There was news, too, of a distinct cooling of relations between Russia and England where a Conservative Government had recently been elected. Fr. Neveu decided that he had better notify his correspondents to write directly instead of via London.

On December 1st, he drew Fr. Quénard's attention to the fact that foreign literature seemed now to be entering Russia quite easily:

Send us everything you can as we have almost everything to learn. You might also look into the possibility of sending me a priest companion. We are now in the depths of winter, and to conserve fuel, we have made the kitchen our headquarters. In the evening, we heat the other side of the house a little, otherwise it would be like trying to sleep on a glacier.

Did I tell you that my parish is nearly half German? The other Sunday at Mass, for the first time, I read the Gospel in German because the women in particular understand very little Russian. Another item: since June, Youzovka has been rebaptized, it is now Stalino (Steel Town).

By accident, we found out that November 19 was Br. David's Silver Jubilee of his Religious Profession, but our attempt to celebrate it was lacking in suitable resources. Sophie is distressed because her health is not improving quickly enough. She will spend the winter in Kiev. Tania is frustrated because she does not know enough French to be able to read the life of Blessed Theresa. As I write here in the kitchen, she is rendering fat. I hope the smell does not get into my note-paper. Anyway, she asks your blessing and sends her love.

Towards the end of December, the local Soviet, still perplexed about his stand on the question of registration of statutes, sent Father to the district headquarters for a definite ruling on his case.

There, he was told flatly that he would have to make formal registration or else the church would be closed. This news he found less

than stimulating: his income since April was just 69 rubles. He had no alternative now, and on January 6, 1925, after Mass, he called a meeting of the parishioners. A council of ten members was elected, and Fr. Neveu then discussed the statute which he was modifying in order to maintain the rights of the Catholic hierarchy.

For a whole week, he worked from morning till night, drawing up the various documents and having them signed. It was a formidable task. He had to provide three copies of the declaration of registration for the Executive Committee of the Government, three copies of the minutes of parish meetings, five copies of the parish statutes, three copies of the list of parish clergy and three copies of the list of parish councilors. He had also to furnish three copies of the list of parishioners, giving name, address, employment, social position, public status, economic position of each person, as well as the date on which each had adopted his present religion. Each of these documents and each copy had to bear the signature of the fifty *founder-members of the parish community*.

On January 15, 1925, he had taken the papers to the Soviet and was told to return on the 17th when he would be presented with the bill for notarizing the signatures and for the stamps. Commenting on the affair in a letter written on February 10, he said:

When we went back to the office, the bill was not ready. The rules are so clear that each of the clerks had a different estimate, varying from 300 rubles to 1000. Finally, the secretary gathered up the papers and said they would have to be referred to district headquarters. Well, I am not going to keep running back to find out how much I owe. Let them come and tell me. You see how the taxpayer is at the mercy of the merest hireling, and, you know, I may have to pay dearly to be refused authorization because my statement may still be considered too Catholic.

Chapter Eight

In January, 1925, Fr. Neveu was reviewing the year which had just ended, and there was nothing inspiring in what he saw. He had had 64 baptisms, 15 marriages, and 12 funerals, but he was forced to admit that the outlook for religion in general was deteriorating. He wondered how long his people could remain unscathed by their constant exposure to atheistic propaganda. They were pursued with objections to religion in the workshops, in the streets, in the clubs and even in their own homes to which their children brought the anti-religious songs they had been taught in school.

It seemed to him that Communism was almost a religion in reverse. Instead of being given Christian baptism, a child would be taken to a club where it was given a name, and its sponsors promised to see that it was brought up according to true Communist principles. The whole affair was punctuated with lengthy speeches, presumably thought Fr. Neveu, because, despite the seven years that had passed since their emancipation from centuries of silence, the people were still not quite used to the sound of their own voices. From time to time, Councils would be held at which various anti-Communist heresies were condemned, and the cult of pictures, especially of Lenin, of medals and of banners was flourishing as never before. Since Lenin's death in January, 1924, his tomb had become a place of pilgrimage, and the city of Petrograd was now known as Leningrad.

Perhaps more disturbing was what appeared to be a campaign to discredit, at one and the same time, the Catholic clergy, the Holy Father and the Polish Government. In November, 1924, the *Communist*, a Kharkov newspaper, had published a letter from a Fr. Fedoukovitch in which he appealed to the Holy Father to forbid the Polish Government to use Catholic priests in the Soviet Union for the purpose of spying. Fr. Fedoukovitch had since died, but not before telling his story to Fr. Ilguin of Kharkov.

Stationed in Zhitomir, a Ukrainian town near the Polish border, Fr. Fedoukovitch had been arrested in the late summer of 1924 and was charged with being a Polish agent. The grounds for the accusation were that he had received a visit from an old friend, Mr. Swirsky, who was at that time the Polish Consul in Kiev. After a period of solitary confinement, he had been moved to a prison in Kharkov where he was told that his crime was punishable with death but that clemency might be shown to him in return for a small favor. It was well known to the authorities, said the police, that Catholic priests were spying on behalf of Poland, and it was felt that somebody should draw the Pope's attention to this fact. All they wanted Fr. Fedoukovitch to do was sign his name to a letter which had already been written in longhand. The police would take care of everything, and only they, the Pope and Fr. Fedoukovitch would ever know about the letter.

Fr. Fedoukovitch was a good priest, but he was timid by nature, and his long imprisonment had done nothing to strengthen his morale. After some protests, he signed the document, was released from prison and was advised to go and stay with Fr. Ilguin. To his horror, the letter was published in the newspaper the next day. Almost beside himself with anxiety and self-reproach, Fr. Fedoukovitch soaked himself in benzene, set himself on fire and ran out into the street enveloped in flames. Brought back to Fr. Ilguin's residence, he received the Last Sacraments and died after several hours of intense suffering.

Since then, the secret police had been visiting every Catholic parish, even non-Polish, in the Ukraine demanding similar letters of protest from the parishioners. Fr. Neveu had been away when they came to Makeyevka, and his parish council, consisting of 5 Poles, a German, an Italian, a Belgian and an Armenian, had signed the required statement under duress. The protest was printed in full in the Stalino newspaper on February 26, 1925, and ran as follows:

From the letter of Fr. Fedoukovitch to the Holy Father and from the (recently published) protest of the parishioners of Stalino, we have learned that some Catholic priests are actively aiding the Polish Government in its secret maneuverings against the Soviet Union and that they receive into their homes spies and other Polish

agents whom they provide with information.

Therefore, we, the members of the Council of the Catholic Church of Makeyevka, demand, along with Fr. Fedoukovitch and the parishioners of Stalino, that the Catholic Church not be subjected to the orders of the Polish Government, that its priests confine themselves exclusively to their ecclesiastical duties without being forced to spy or fight against the Government of the Workers and Peasants of our Union. We feel sure that, if the priests will simply abandon the role of Polish agents, their crime will be pardoned by the Soviet authorities.

Commenting on this to Fr. Quénard in March, 1925, Fr. Neveu wrote:

The Orthodox clergy have already been handed over, bound hand and foot, to their parish councils. Now it is the turn of the Catholics. With the order to register our parishes, the fate of our priests passes into the hands of frightened parishioners. If we had resisted, we might at least have fallen honorably. Now, without bishops or seminaries, I fear we shall go under ignominiously, and perhaps permanently, unless the Holy Father on whose account we are insulted daily, intervenes efficaciously. It is absolutely necessary to be able to talk to Moscow and come to some agreement, no matter how imperfect, for the good of souls.

If the Soviets complain that the Polish Government is meddling in Catholic affairs here for purposes of intrigue, let them allow us to send a delegate to investigate. Once again, I return to my thesis: do everything in your power to restore our hierarchy. I know that I am only a private soldier in the thick of the fray, and it is possible that I do not see the whole movement of the battle. However, I speak of what I do see before my eyes, and it seems obvious that our present situation cannot long endure. The abandoned clergy, without bishops and without visible communion with Rome, are helpless. The length of our trials and the absence of all human hope will gradually drain away all strength to resist, especially when we are constantly told: "Have you not had enough of ridicule, privations and harassment? Our Government is anxious for your

collaboration. Your bishops have deserted you for a life of comfort and safety. It is time for you to break with them who first broke with you.”

I often think of St. Eusebius, Bishop of Samosata, who, according to the martyrology, lived in the reign of the Arian Emperor, Constantius, and who, disguised in military uniform, went around among the Churches of God strengthening them in the Catholic faith. I have always admired the courage and savoir-faire of this holy man, and I ask myself why there is nobody to imitate him in our days.

On February 26, 1925, Fr. Neveu had had a visit from a Fr. Potapii Emilianov accompanied by three of his parishioners. Fr. Neveu had never met this man, but he knew something of his story. Once an Orthodox priest, he had been convinced by his studies of Scripture and the Fathers of the Church that the Catholic Church was the true Church of Christ. In 1918, he had gone to Petrograd to consult Fr. Leonide Feodorov, the Exarch of the Russian Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, who had received him into the Catholic Church. Being a zealous priest, Fr. Potapii felt that his own conversion should not remain an isolated fact, and he had returned to his parish at Nizhnaya Bogdanovka, about thirty miles from Lugansk, and had shared his convictions with his parishioners. As a result, the whole parish with its 388 families and almost 2,000 people had joined the Catholic Church.

Fr. Potapii was on his way to Kharkov, but he had come to Makeyevka with a petition signed by himself and 36 of his parishioners, which he wished Fr. Neveu to translate into Latin and forward to Rome. As it was late evening when they arrived, Fr. Neveu insisted that his visitors should stay the night, and the next morning, for the first time, Fr. Potapii and his companions were present at a Mass said in the Roman Rite. Then Fr. Potapii said his own Mass in the Byzantine Rite. After breakfast, Fr. Neveu got together a bundle of old Catholic magazines, printed in Russian and gave them to Fr. Potapii's companions who were returning home almost at once. As they were greatly in need of sacred vessels, he also gave them a small ciborium and sent Br. David to escort them to the station.

Unfortunately, they did not get very far. In less than ten minutes, Br. David was back with the news that they had been stopped by the police, who had questioned them and who had taken the three travelers into custody.

Nothing could be done for the moment, and as they settled down to wait, Fr. Neveu tried to give Fr. Potapii a confidence, which he himself did not really possess, by pointing out that there were no real grounds for any charge against the prisoners. The evening dragged on, and it was not until nightfall that two police officers came to question Fr. Neveu. Finally, having succeeded in convincing them that the men they had arrested were law-abiding citizens, they agreed to release them. Br. David accompanied the police so as to be able to escort the unfortunate visitors back to the rectory, but it was over three hours before they returned. Their magazines and books, which had apparently been the cause of the trouble, were being held until the next day.

The following morning, a Saturday, just as Fr. Neveu was finishing Mass, Tania came rushing over to the church to announce that the police had come back and, this time, had arrested all four of the visitors. Fr. Neveu had breakfast and then hurried down to police headquarters. He had never seen the roads so muddy. Though he was growing angrier by the minute, he tried to force himself to stay cool. The officer who interviewed him seemed fairly amenable, but Fr. Neveu answered his questions very tersely. Yes, the men were his visitors. They had come to see him and also to see a Catholic church for the first time. Yes, he had given them the literature they were carrying. These magazines were his own personal property, and he could dispose of them as he wished. The prisoners' reasons for wishing to read them were their own, and, as far as he knew, there was as yet no law against reading. The magazines dealt with religious matters, they had been printed before the Revolution and contained nothing seditious. No, he had no wife or children, and in any case, that question was completely irrelevant. What mattered was that he was a taxpayer, his visitors were peaceful citizens, and he had a perfect right to entertain them in his own home.

The police officer glanced casually through the magazines which lay on the desk in front of him, agreed that there was no case against his prisoners, and ordered them to be released. Fr. Neveu took them back to

the rectory, gave them a hasty lunch and then hustled Fr. Potapii's parishioners out of town in case the police should have another change of mind.

A slightly more relaxed Fr. Potapii decided to stay in Makeyevka for a couple of days and, the next morning, celebrated the Sunday High Mass in the Byzantine Rite. Fr. Neveu, accompanying himself on the Harmonium, acted as choir, and was secretly gratified when both Fr. Potapii and the parishioners expressed their astonishment at his familiarity with the Oriental Liturgy. He explained to them that he had been trained in both Rites.

The petition which Fr. Potapii had brought in the name of his parishioners, the Russian Catholics of the Byzantine Rite living in the village of Nizhnaya Bogdanovka (Ukraine), contained a brief history of the parish since the submission to Rome of its 1862 people. Their pastor, Fr. Potapii, had been harried from prison to prison, calumniated by his former Orthodox brethren to whatever authority happened to be in power during the civil war, accused alternatively of being a Bolshevik and an anti-Bolshevik and of being a man dangerous to the welfare of the Russian people. During his absences in prison, Orthodox missionaries, accompanied by the police, had come to persuade them, both by threats and promises, to return to the Orthodox Church. In spite of physical violence and the confiscation of their property, only 40 families had apostatized.

These new Catholics had continued to use the church which they themselves had built as members of the Orthodox Church. In 1922, they were accused of stealing an Orthodox church which had been built for Orthodox believers. Not wishing to see a place of worship become a source of strife, and unable to pay the cost of repairs and taxes, they had finally abandoned the church, hoping some day to be able to build another for themselves. At present, they were using a room in their pastor's house, but this meant that only about thirty of their number could attend the services. They were, for the most part, a farming community and had been ruined economically by the famine. In 1922, they had been forced to eat all their farm animals, and in 1923, when they might have had a good harvest, they had been unable to sow their fields because they had no horses. In

1924, they had no harvest at all, and the staple diet for most of them was cabbage and sunflower seeds.

It was impossible for them to build a church without outside financial assistance, but because life without a church was insupportable, they were now turning for aid to the Holy Father. They were confident that he would stretch forth his hand to wipe away their tears and those of their children, and thus give living proof that God had not abandoned them in their distress nor left them without consolation in their sorrow.

Fr. Neveu was deeply moved as he translated the petition which he found eloquent in its very restraint. He was also very favorably impressed by Fr. Potapii and in a long letter written in March, 1925, he said to Fr. Quénard:

It is wonderful to see the perseverance of this priest and his people in the midst of such sufferings, and to know that, here in Russia, at least one whole parish has been united with Rome by the sole force of truth and without the intervention of any priest of the Latin Rite. Fr. Potapii told me that although he did not know one word of Latin, he would willingly adopt the Latin Rite if that were necessary. I assured him that he would never be asked to do this, and that one could still be a true child of the Catholic Church while still continuing to follow the ceremonies used by the Fathers of the East before the unhappy division of the Churches. No Catholic priest has ever visited his village, but I have promised to go there in the spring.

Fr. Potapii has now no vestments of his own rite, but he is using an old Roman style chasuble given to him some years ago in Petrograd and a small chalice of which the gold has peeled. In spite of the abject poverty, there is a great interest in religion in his parish, and Fr. Potapii has trained a group of thirty young men as catechists who continue the religious instruction of the people. This, however, does not really compensate for the lack of a church because the ceremonies and the chant are very dear to the hearts of the Russian people.

I am enclosing the original petition and the translation I made.

Somebody should make a copy of the translation because our paper here is bad, and the ribbon on my typewriter is very worn. The original has suffered from its adventures, but this only adds to its authenticity. Publish any part of my letter which seems interesting but be very discreet. The authorities here are now trying to make use of the confessional to find out the political opinions of priests and people. I know of two priests who have been offered money by these functionaries in return for secrets of the confessional. You can see what kind of existence we lead. Thank you for your indulgence in reading this long rambling letter which I wrote at odd intervals and with my door locked as a precaution against undesirable visitors.

In that same month of March, Fr. Neveu had gone to Moscow to see the new French Ambassador, Mr. Jean Herbette. It was not entirely a social call. Administrative wheels in France may have been grinding very slowly, but finally some clerk had discovered that Fr. Neveu had not reported for military service in 1914, and now, the police in Gien were annoying his father with their visits and questions. He showed the Ambassador the letter of August, 1914, in which the French Consul in Kharkov had requested him to remain in Makeyevka, and Mr. Herbette promised to see that his father was left in peace. Fr. Neveu also obtained new French passports for himself and Br. David, and on the evening of March 25, was invited to dine with the Ambassador and his wife. He wrote:

Mr. Herbette is not a Catholic, but he is a very kind and generous man. I told him the story of our parish in Makeyevka, and he was very interested and amused at my tragi-comic adventures. Perhaps the fact that we are both pipe-smokers established a bond between us because, when I was leaving, he slipped 30 rubles into my hand. He also gave me a letter which should prove very useful and promised me his whole-hearted support if I ever run into difficulties.

While I was in Moscow, I met Fr. Amoudru, the French Dominican from Leningrad who was also visiting the Embassy. Together, just two bald-headed, middle-aged men, we held the

General Council of all the French priests in the Soviet Union. On the Sunday, I heard confessions and sang the High Mass in the church of St. Louis-des-Français, and Fr. Amoudru preached. There had been no priest there now for five years, and Mass is said only on Sundays by a Polish priest from a neighboring parish. The congregation consists of people from the various embassies, and the few French teachers who have stayed on here. The church is kept clean by a devoted lady named Mrs. Ott, but it is very poor. The teachers, who were its main support, are now having difficulty in eking out an existence.

By the way, I recently saw Fr. Ilguin, pastor of the church in Kharkov, who had just come back from Leningrad. He assures me that he knows for a fact that a certain document No. 728, issued by the Commissariat for Justice on December 16, 1922, authorized Catholics to sign a form of contract which paid full respect to Canon Law. Thus, the clergy there do not have to register their statutes or pay dearly for the privilege as we do. If all this is true, I cannot understand why we were never informed of this arrangement.

Fr. Neveu returned to Makeyevka where spring had come early. The snow and mud had entirely disappeared, and the mists and fog had given way to sunshine. The town was still growing, and work had begun on a huge housing development quite near to his home. Fr. Neveu looked wistfully at his church and rectory and wished that some of the labor could be diverted his way. The roof of the church was now leaking to an alarming extent, and some of its windows had been broken by neighborhood children. The rectory needed new floors and repairs to the doors and windows; also, it was taking all Br. David's ingenuity to keep the fence from falling. Still, they were lucky to have a house at all. A fire had broken out in a nearby stable, and strong, gusting winds had driven the flames and smoke in the direction of the rectory. Fr. Neveu had seen the column of smoke from several miles away, as he was returning from Stalino. When he arrived, he found the yard swarming with firemen and spectators. Br. David and Tania had packed up clothes, church records and other documents and had carried them over to the sacristy where they were in as much danger as they had been in the rectory. He noticed with pleasure

that they had hung a picture of Blessed Theresa on the outside wall of the house directly facing the fire. Fortunately, the flames were quickly brought under control although the ruins of the stable were still smoking five days later.

To his great joy, Blessed Theresa-of-the-Infant Jesus was canonized in May, 1925, and there was now no reason why she could not be named co-Patron of the parish. Makeyevka held its own celebration of the event on Pentecost Sunday. Banners and candles were carried in a procession, the focal point of which was a girl, dressed in white and bearing a picture of the new saint, preceded by other girls strewing flowers. After this, there was a High Mass with a special sermon, which was followed by the singing of hymns which Fr. Neveu himself had composed and set to music.

Describing the scene, he wrote to Fr. Quénard:

A great many tears were shed because, here, people weep very easily, and the poor pastor is like the rest. Difficult times have strained the nerves and, no doubt, have enlarged the tear glands. Only Br. David bore up like a man. The church was crowded, and it seemed that Catholics and Orthodox had forgotten their differences in honor of the occasion. I noticed quite a few workmen from the housing project who, interestingly enough, have been coming to our May devotions and seem to like them. It is a pity that I am not allowed to say Mass in the Byzantine-Slav Rite because it would be very useful on occasion. Perhaps you could raise this question in Rome. Of course, our celebration was very tame in comparison with the solemnities in Rome, but all our people were pleased and I am sure St. Theresa must have been. I would have loved to be present at a canonization. It seems to me that I would have thought myself at the very gates of heaven. You see how naive I am; I forget that each morning at Mass, I hold in my hands the very King of heaven.

Next day, Fr. Neveu set off with a parishioner from Stalino for Alexandrinka, a village where there were about 40 Catholic families who had not seen a priest since 1920. It was an interesting and typical experience. They arrived just in time for lunch, which consisted of hard-

boiled eggs and some kind of soup in which thick lumps of bacon fat were floating. There were no plates, each person fishing directly from the tureen with a large wooden spoon. Fr. Neveu decided that it would be wiser for him to forgo the soup and contented himself with a boiled egg, after which he was rewarded with a cup of tea.

Then he was summoned to the local Soviet where he had to produce his identity papers and was asked if he knew the laws relating to places of worship. Experience had taught him that this preamble was often an invitation for him to offer money, so he ignored it and answered simply that he knew the laws and that they did not apply to the purpose for which he had come to Alexandrinka. He had been invited to come and conduct private services, and he had no need of a place of worship. If the official had been hopeful, he was also philosophical, and the conversation turned pleasantly and harmlessly to the weather.

There was, in fact, a tumbledown old chapel in Alexandrinka which Fr. Neveu used for the purpose of hearing confessions. He was kept busy until it was time for supper at which, he discovered, the menu was the same as for lunch. Afterwards, he said he would like to retire for the night. He was shown to his bed which turned out to be a stout wooden couch on which were two cushions and a light bedcover. Because his feet would swell if they were lower than his head, he propped his legs on the cushions and settled down as comfortably as he could. This appeared to be the signal for a "combined attack by a host of small enemies which were crawling, jumping and biting," and it effectively removed all desire for sleep.

Up again at 6 A.M., he began to hear confessions while the assembled people recited the Rosary, sang the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, then continued with every hymn they knew. At the Mass which followed, he gave Holy Communion to 50 people and was then summoned to the bedside of a Red Army soldier who was dying of tuberculosis. He revalidated the man's marriage and administered the Last Rites. Commenting on the event, he wrote:

With the type of care he is receiving in that miserable, squalid hovel, it will not be long before he dies. How I pity the Christians of this country on whom the love of Christ, clad in a nun's habit, has never smiled. Our Sisters would be literally worshipped by these

people.

After a lunch of rennet and garlic, he was to baptize 20 children whose ages ranged from five years downwards. This proved to be a monster concert:

Perhaps I provoked it. Although I am not a Bulgarian or a Jew, or even from the south of France, I believe strongly in garlic as a safeguard against contagious diseases. When I breathed on the first child, the howling began, and it continued to resound until I had finished. By that time, priest, parents and godparents were streaming with sweat, and everybody had had more than enough.

Next, he had to lead a procession to the cemetery to bless the graves of those who had not been buried by a priest. The people regarded no burial as definitive until a priest had blessed and scattered earth on the grave and recited funeral prayers. From there, he went to the chapel to meet the young people of the village, but they were conspicuously absent. From all sides came the sound of accordions and singing, and he had to admit that the twenty baptisms in one day were sufficient cause for rejoicing.

Once again, his hopes for sleep were disappointed. From after supper until 11 P.M., he had to resist the eloquence of a Sabbatarian who felt it was his duty to convert him. When he finally did get to bed, he had a succession of asthmatic seizures which forced him, at about 2 A.M., to go out and spend the rest of the night in the yard where he was at least able to breathe more comfortably.

After an early Mass, he and his companion from Stalino were driven to the station where they took the train for Makeyevka. There, Fr. Neveu found Fr. Potapii awaiting him:

He had come to find out if I had had any news from Rome, but all I could tell him was that his petition had certainly been received. He is still very concerned about his lack of a church, and if he had any money at all, he would start building now because the weather is good and the stone and the labor will cost him nothing. I shared the few rubles I had with him because he too must live.

In August, 1925, Fr. Neveu was notified that his parish statutes had been approved and that this would cost him 34 rubles. To his relief, the fee for the registration of the parish had been, not 1000 rubles but only 52. This expenditure, however, definitely ruled out repairs to the church and rectory for 1925 because he was now almost entirely dependent on the money sent by Fr. Quénard each month

On the credit side, it seemed almost certain that Br. David would have a good crop of potatoes, cabbage and beans. The summer had brought abundant rains, the wheat had reached an amazing height, and there was an abundance of grass. Br. David had also been able to make sufficient Mass wine for themselves and for Fr. Simon with whom they were again hoping to make a retreat after the harvest was gathered.

The campaign against the Catholic clergy, which had worried him so much at the beginning of the year, now seemed to have run out of steam, but he had discovered that the police were taking an increasing interest in his own movements. Several people had been questioned about him, and at least one had been asked outright for any information that might compromise him. Things were not going well in the parish of Stalino. He spent as much time there as he could, but the fact that there was no resident priest was having its effect, and many had abandoned their faith. He suspected that some of these were the instigators of a new move to close the church. Frustrated in a similar effort in 1923, the Communists had refined their tactics. Party spokesmen simply raised the question in every workshop, asked for a show of hands, and, irrespective of whether they had a majority, announced a unanimous vote in favor of closing the church. So far, the church at Stalino was still open, and he was determined to fight every inch of the way.

On October 29, 1925, Fr. Neveu wrote to announce the return of Sophie after long months of convalescence. She was still not very strong, but both she and Tania were putting their trust in the intercession of St. Theresa:

Thank you for the news of the Congregation. We are beginning to find the time heavy on our hands, and only the reading of this little bulletin prevents us from falling into complete apathy. It gives me an opportunity of rejoicing in the good that is being done

elsewhere because I am certainly not doing much here. Anti-religious propaganda is increasing in intensity, and, last June, the League of the Militant Godless was founded. My eloquence resounds to empty benches, and my humble zeal does not hinder my people from intoxicating themselves on vodka and false doctrines. I am so popular that I am insulted in the street; false friends tell evil stories about me; and people only come to see me when they need some service. To think that the only reason I stayed here was to ensure that they would not die and be buried like animals!

No, I was not joking when I mentioned saying Mass in Russian, although I did not use that term. I think it would be extremely useful here to be able to celebrate in the Slav or the Roman Rite, according to circumstances. Many people have told me that they go to our church to pray because they find it easy to be recollected there and that they would come all the time to our services if only they could understand what was being said. In Dalmatia, they have permission to use the Roman Rite with the old Slavonic language. Why can we not do this in Russia? I would be interested in the official reply to this question. If only there was a uniform ruling in force from Vladivostok to the Adriatic, it would be very much in our favor. Without some such change as I suggest, our apostolate faces a long period of stagnation.

At present all four of us have head-colds and tooth-aches, and we find this touching unanimity very amusing. Our situation is not rosy, but this is a place of perfect peace for those who do not seek to satisfy self-love in the sacred ministry. On this note, I will leave you. I could tell you some very interesting things, but, at present, such matters must be ingested and digested on the spot.

Chapter Nine

In the summer of 1925, Fr. Quénard had suggested that Fr. Neveu should try to make a visit to France. At the time, Fr. Neveu had decided that this was out of the question unless an Assumptionist was allowed by the Soviet Government to come to replace him. He did not wish to leave either his parish or his people without a priest because he might well come back to find that the local authorities had closed down his church. Since then, however, he had learned that a French Jesuit, Fr. Michel d'Herbigny, President of the Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, had come in October, 1925, to make a general study of religion in the Soviet Union, with particular reference to the situation of the French people in Moscow whose church of St. Louis-des-Français had been without a priest for five years.

If this could be taken as an indication of an increasing warmth in Franco-Soviet relations, Fr. Neveu felt that it might not be impossible to obtain permission for an Assumptionist to come and make a Canonical Visitation, and then stay and take his place while he went to France to see his father who was over eighty years old. By January, 1926, the idea of going home had become almost an obsession with him, and he urged Fr. Quénard to do everything in his power to send either someone to replace him temporarily or even a permanent assistant priest. He pointed out that priests were also needed for the French National parishes in Odessa and Moscow and that the French Ambassador was very much in favor of having these posts filled.

Fr. Neveu's records for 1925 showed 74 baptisms, 10 marriages and 8 funerals. There had also been some deaths in his other parish of Stalino, but here, some of the people were adopting the new proletarian ritual of mourning and laid their dead to rest to the music of brass bands. The struggle to keep open the church in Stalino was still dragging on. His friend, Fr. Simon, had been finally forced out of his rectory in Enakievo and was now living with his nearby German farming community. He still held services in the church at Enakievo, but the local authorities were insisting

that the building be repaired. The minimum estimate for this was 5000 rubles, and as the parish had no money, the church was almost certain to be converted into a club or a cinema. The only good news was that Fr. Potapii had received a first installment of financial aid and would start to build in the spring.

In January, 1926, Fr. Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard :

We priests are now merely the directors of ceremonies and distributors of the Sacraments for the few people who still wish to avail themselves of our ministry. There is no apostolate, no religious instructions of the young, nobody to replace the priests who have died or fled, and no bishop. We are witnessing the death, slow but sure, of Latin Catholicism in Russia.

For years now, I have been writing jeremiads like this. It will soon be too late to take action. There is no use awaiting the restoration of the monarchy. The Soviet Government is firmly and solidly entrenched, in spite of its defects and its enemies both without and within. It seems more and more clear to me that the Commissars of the people are anxious to bring about civil peace, and it would be good to profit by these dispositions.

He pointed out that other religious groups seemed to be much more realistic in their grasp of the situation, and that they had achieved a working arrangement with the Soviet authorities. For example, the Baptists in his area, who number more than 300, were very well organized, and even had their own religious publications:

It is only the poor Catholics who have been blotted out. Thank God there have been no attempts at schism so far, although the law favors the springing up of independent communities. Catholics know that they cannot create a religious organization without the Hierarchy, and as this has its center in Rome, the Holy See would do well to consider the problem seriously. There are hotheads everywhere, and it could easily happen that we might wake up one day to find that the "Old Catholics of Russia" had their own little Church. If I speak rather strongly, it is because I love Rome and the Catholic Church too much to worry about whether my words are

offending anyone.

The idea of schism was not far-fetched. The Fedoukovitch affair having failed to produce the desired results, Fr. Neveu felt that the official strategy now was to encourage the setting up of an independent Church. As an example of this he cited the experience of Fr. Klass. This priest had recently visited Kharkov to see the German Consul who had given him some German newspapers. When he was returning home, his train had been searched by the secret police who had confiscated his newspapers as being illegal and had accused him of being in possession of stolen property. When he protested his innocence, he was told:

You Catholics have been abandoned by your bishops. The Pope and the Cardinals in Rome have their pockets full, while you are suffering and in misery. You must demand your rights. We will give you all facilities for holding a congress of priests and laity, and we will support you in your struggle for freedom.

Fr. Neveu himself had had no contact with the police for some time, but he knew that his frequent visits to the bank at Stalino to cash the bank drafts which were sent to him were attracting a great deal of attention among the employees. Accordingly, he warned Fr. Quénard:

Remember that here there are spies and informers everywhere. I think it would be more prudent to send larger sums of money less frequently. Fr. Potapii is impatiently awaiting the rest of the money promised him for his new church. Spring will finally reach Russia, and with it, the short building season, and he and his parishioners are anxious to get out of their miserable room. Send dollars if you can. There may be a devaluation here again, and I would not like to return to the days when I had millions of rubles in my pocket and yet was unable to buy anything to eat.

Toward the end of February, 1926, Fr. Neveu heard that there would be no Canonical Visitor, but that it was more than likely that he would soon be receiving a visit from Fr. d'Herbigny. He was puzzled at this because he had never met Fr. d'Herbigny and could not understand why the distinguished Slav scholar should be putting himself to the inconvenience of traveling to Makeyevka. At the same time, he was

vaguely apprehensive. In two letters that he had received recently, there had been what could be interpreted as mysterious hints. Then, there had been the open post-card from Fr. Quénard which had said: "In view of the kind of life that you have had to lead for the past few years, you would probably not be surprised at anything that happens." Perhaps it was just his imagination making a mystery where none existed. Solitude did strange things to a man. Perhaps the visit was in connection with his proposed trip to France. If he was able to go, he must take Tania with him. It was time she entered the novitiate of the Oblates of the Assumption in France. Sophie would have to stay behind, as her health was still not good. In any case, he began to think that if only he had kept his mouth shut, he might be enjoying much more peace of mind.

Early March brought a thaw. The streets of Makeyevka were running with water. If only there had been a few gondolas in sight, Fr. Neveu could easily have imagined himself in Venice. When the floods subsided, there was mud. It was very unhealthy weather, and Br. David and Tania both came down with malaria at the same time. Sophie too was ill, and as he ploughed his way through the mud in the middle of the night to get a doctor, Fr. Neveu was sure that if he did not get to France soon, he would have a heart attack. Fortunately, liberal doses of quinine worked wonders for the patients, and Fr. Neveu's nursing career was of short duration.

Meanwhile, in Moscow, Mr. Herbette, the French Ambassador, had been advised by his Government that Fr. d'Herbigny had again been commissioned to make a report concerning French cultural property in the Soviet Union. As this would entail visits to Leningrad, Makeyevka, Odessa and Sebastopol, it would greatly facilitate Fr. d'Herbigny's task if the Ambassador would obtain for him in advance the necessary permission to undertake these journeys. When Fr. d'Herbigny arrived in Moscow on March 29, 1926, the Ambassador had to tell him that, so far, the Soviet Government had refused this permission and insisted steadfastly that a member of the Embassy staff could easily be sent to collect whatever information was needed.

Fr. d'Herbigny had been entrusted with another mission. Pope Pius XI had decided to try to reestablish the Catholic Hierarchy in the Soviet Union, and Fr. d'Herbigny had been chosen for this task. In view of the

Soviet Constitution which stipulated that the Church was separated from the State, the consecration of several bishops should logically be a matter of complete indifference to the Soviet Government. Fr. d'Herbigny had left Rome for Moscow, traveling via Berlin where Most Rev. Eugene Pacelli, the Papal Nuncio, had received instructions to consecrate him bishop. This was done in the utmost secrecy on March 29, and Most Rev. d'Herbigny, Titular Bishop of Ilium (ancient Troy) had continued his journey to Moscow without, of course, any external indications of his new dignity.

On April 1st, Holy Thursday, Bishop d'Herbigny had consecrated the Holy Oils which he would need to carry out his mission. On the same day, the French Ambassador wrote to Fr. Neveu pointing out that it was a long time since he had seen him and asking him to come to Moscow at his earliest convenience. No reply was received, and the Ambassador wrote a second letter. This also remained without acknowledgement. On April 13, Mr. Herbette complained to the Soviet Government that somebody was interfering with his correspondence with French citizens. When he explained the situation, he was told that the Soviet Government could not be held responsible if Fr. Neveu chose neither to write to his Ambassador nor come to see him. Thereupon, Mr. Herbette issued formal notice that he intended to send a telegram to Fr. Neveu with the reply prepaid. If this were not acknowledged, he would consider it his duty to take up the question with his Government in Paris.

On April 15, a telegram from Fr. Neveu announced that he hoped to be in Moscow on Wednesday, April 21. At once, Bishop d'Herbigny wrote asking Fr. Neveu, if it were at all possible, to come on Tuesday, April 20, as he would like to talk to him. They could then spend Wednesday morning together, and Fr. Neveu could leave in the afternoon if he wished. He suggested that Fr. Neveu should perhaps wear civilian clothing but, in any case, he should come to Moscow as soon as he could.

Two letters from Fr. Neveu crossed this one. In the first, Fr. Neveu said that he had received neither of the Ambassador's letters and that he was taking the evening express from Kharkov on Tuesday and expected to arrive in Moscow at 5 A.M. In the other, he drew the Ambassador's attention to an enclosed clipping from a local bi-monthly magazine which urged that the Catholic Church in Makeyevka which served only twenty

people should be converted into a cinema for the workers in the new housing development adjacent to it. Fr. Neveu commented:

This statement simply is not true. The editorial staff must know that more than 100 Catholic adults living in Makeyevka are officially registered as parishioners at the local Soviet. To these must be added: (1) those who refuse to go through the ceremony of registration but who remain de facto and de jure members of the parish because I have no right to excommunicate them; (2) children and young people under 18 years of age; (3) Catholics of neighboring districts attached to our parish who have no church except the one in Makeyevka. Thus, more than 80% of my parishioners are not registered.

The conversion of the church into a cinema would naturally result in my expulsion from the rectory. I remind you that church, rectory and cemetery are on the same plot of ground, and that all three were provided by Frenchmen and with French money. Makeyevka was recognized as a French national parish by the Russian Government in 1916.

I would be grateful if you would draw the attention of the Commissar for Foreign Affairs to our painful situation and ask him to intervene to moderate the zeal and greed of the young people who are behind this movement against us.

The French Ambassador was still making valiant efforts to get permission for his visitor to travel extensively in the Soviet Union. Finally, Bishop d'Herbigny was served notice to appear at the Municipal Soviet of Moscow at 2 P.M. on Wednesday, April 21. The Ambassador pointed out that this could mean several things. He might be arrested or expelled from the country, or the duration of his stay might be curtailed. It could also mean that he was being given the permit to travel. Bishop d'Herbigny decided that he must see Fr. Neveu as soon as possible after his arrival in Moscow on the morning of April 21.

The French National church, St. Louis-des-Français, was just across the street from the Lubianka prison, the headquarters of the secret police. This might even be an advantage because it made the French church the most

unlikely place for what he had in mind. Contingents of prisoners were usually brought in between 2 A.M. and 3 A.M., and after that, activity round the prison usually tapered off. During the three weeks he had been in Moscow, Bishop d'Herbigny had been under constant surveillance. The police were familiar with his daily routine which, so far, had not included going to church at 5 A.M., and there was a reasonable chance that vigilance might be relaxed at that time. On the other hand, he must complete his business and be safely back in his hotel by 8 A.M. so that he could leave for the church at his usual time, arriving at 8:30 for confessions followed by Mass.

The real problem would be to leave the hotel in the small hours of the morning without being observed because the night "porter" slept with his back to the only door. A short flight of steps led from the street to the vestibule of the hotel, and, as a result, there was a sort of half-basement. Bishop d'Herbigny reconnoitered quietly and discovered that this contained a window just above street level through which he was sure he could squeeze. There would be few people about at that hour of the morning and, with his long clerical coat and his fur hat, he would easily pass for an ordinary Muscovite. It was not an ideal plan but, in the circumstances, it was the best he could do. After Mass on Tuesday, April 20, he asked Mrs. Ott, the sacristan at St. Louis-des-Français, to open the door just before 5 A.M. the next morning, and invited Colonel Bergeret, Military Attache at the Italian Embassy to meet him in the church at the same hour.

On the morning of April 21, Bishop d'Herbigny rose at 4 A.M., dressed quietly, slipped out of the window without any difficulty, and found himself in a deserted street. He made his way to St. Louis-des-Français by a roundabout route without meeting a soul. The church was in darkness, but Mrs. Ott opened the door to his quiet knock. Colonel Bergeret arrived precisely at 5 A.M., and then Mrs. Ott left for the station to meet Fr. Neveu with instructions to bring him straight to the church. The church doors were relocked and would be opened only on a pre-arranged signal.

The two men sat down to wait in the darkness. Time passed. 6 A.M., 7 A.M., 7:30 A.M. Still no sign of Mrs. Ott and Fr. Neveu. Bishop d'Herbigny looked anxiously at his watch. He could not afford to wait much longer. At

7:45, he left the church, regained his hotel room without any incident, left by the front door at his usual time and returned to St. Louis-des-Français and began to hear Confessions. He began his Mass promptly at 9 A.M., and a few minutes later, as he turned to face the people, he noticed a bearded man wearing a leather coat and carrying a peaked cap in his hand, take his place quietly among the congregation. The Bishop knew instinctively that this must be Fr. Neveu, and with a silent prayer of gratitude and a great sense of relief, he went quietly on with the Mass.

When the ceremony was over Bishop d'Herbigny returned to the sacristy and signaled to Fr. Neveu to join him there. The two priests introduced themselves, and Fr. Neveu apologized for his appearance saying that his cassock was old and worn but that, in any case, he had decided three years previously that life was much more simple for a priest in the Soviet Union if he dressed like everyone else. He then gave the reason for his late arrival. At mid-day on Monday, April 19, he had been repairing his shoes when Br. David brought in Bishop d'Herbigny's letter. He had left that afternoon for Kharkov where, on Tuesday, he had caught the evening express to Moscow. The train had been halted at an intermediate station, and he had been taken off for questioning. The train went on its way without him, while officials gravely inspected his papers and the Ambassador's telegram and then decided to telephone Moscow for instructions. After considerable delay, Fr. Neveu was informed that he could continue his journey by a slower train which would be leaving in a few minutes. At the station in Moscow, there had been more questions and another telephone call before he was told he was free to go.

By this time, everybody had left the church except Colonel Bergeret and Mrs. Ott who, once again, locked the doors from inside and went about her sacristan's duties. Bishop d'Herbigny closed the door of the sacristy and told Fr. Neveu that he would like to go to Confession. As he knelt down, he was slipping a copper ring on to his finger, and after the blessing, he said to a startled Fr. Neveu:

I am a Bishop sent by the Holy Father to regulate Church jurisdiction in the Soviet Union in so far as I can. This, however, must remain secret. You have been a long time in this country, and I am in great need of your advice and assistance.

Fr. Neveu replied:

I am willing to do anything I can to assist the representative of the Holy Father. At the same time, I sympathize with you because you will have many things to suffer not only from the Soviets but also from some false brethren among the clergy.

Bishop d'Herbigny then explained that he himself would not be staying in the Soviet Union. His instructions were to consecrate at least one bishop, and he would like Fr. Neveu to suggest the names of priests whom he thought were suitable candidates. Fr. Neveu named several priests, some of whom he praised and others he excluded. He finally decided that three men were outstanding and could not be passed over. First, there was a Msgr. Anthony Malecki, the elderly General of the Diocese of Mohilev. He had been tried along with Archbishop Cieplak in 1923, and although there was no personal accusation against him, he had been sentenced to three years imprisonment. Released in January, 1925, he had taken over charge of the diocese from the temporary Administrator, Msgr. Przyrembel, in July of the same year. The other two candidates named by Fr. Neveu were Fr. Boleslas Sloskan, a young and saintly assistant priest in Leningrad, and Fr. Alexander Frison, pastor of Sebastopol. Bishop d'Herbigny noted that, with one omission, these were the names decided on in Rome after a study of the available evidence. Bishop d'Herbigny continued:

Good. We shall discuss this matter later if God permits, but I must act today, at once. I must report to the Municipal Soviet here at 2:00 P.M. and, as Mr. Herbette points out, I may be arrested or expelled from the country. In order to be faithful to the mission I have received, I must consecrate a bishop now. You have just said to me, and rightly, that trials and sufferings await the first new bishop to work in the Soviet Union. My dear Father, you are the man.

Fr. Neveu was stupefied. If the idea that he might become a bishop had ever crossed his mind, he had refused to think about it. Before he could speak, Bishop d'Herbigny handed him a document signed by Pope Pius XI

and Cardinal Gasparri which named him Titular Bishop of Kitros, an ancient town of Macedonia, and said:

I know you are a member of a religious order, but your Superior General is aware of the Holy Father's decision. Here is a letter in which he orders you to accept this office. Now we do not have much time, but we have enough. First you must make a very brief retreat. Go over to the altar of the Blessed Virgin and recollect yourself and come back to the sacristy in a half an hour. Then together we shall celebrate the Mass during which I shall consecrate you Bishop.

Fr. Neveu left the sacristy, and Bishop d'Herbigny, assisted by Mrs. Ott, completed preparations for the ceremony. His long black coat would serve Fr. Neveu as a cassock, and he himself would wear an altar-boy's cassock. He picked out the two best sets of vestments he could find and arranged them in the sacristy. In the sanctuary, Mrs. Ott set up a table, with a portable altar-stone, covered by a white cloth which Fr. Neveu would use as a temporary altar.

The thirty minutes passed quickly. Fr. Neveu rejoined Bishop Herbigny who then invited Mrs. Ott and Colonel Bergeret to come for a minute into the sacristy and said to them:

I have asked you to be present this morning as witnesses to the consecration of Fr. Neveu as Titular Bishop of Kitros. In the circumstances, I think it is too dangerous to give him a certificate of consecration, and I must try to foresee every contingency. In case anything should happen to me, you would have the duty of testifying to the Holy See, and if necessary, to the Catholic clergy and laity of the Soviet Union that you were present when Fr. Neveu was raised to the Episcopacy.

One final precaution must be taken. Bishop d'Herbigny had been a bishop only three weeks, so he and Fr. Neveu spent a few minutes studying the rubrics for the rite of the consecration of a bishop. Then the concelebrated Mass began. By 12 noon, everything was over and Bishop Neveu gave his first episcopal blessing to his three companions. The little group breakfasted on bread and drank the coffee Mrs. Ott had brought in a

thermos. Bishop d'Herbigny then called Bishop Neveu aside in order to give him what might be final instructions. He first explained that the Holy Father, as a temporary and emergency measure, had decided that the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union would be governed by a number of Apostolic Administrators located in various cities, without reference to previous diocesan boundaries. Some, but not all, of these would be Titular Bishops, although all would exercise episcopal authority in the area committed exercise to them:

I can show you no Papal Bull naming you Bishop for the simple reason that none was issued. The Holy Father sent for Fr. Quénard in November, 1925, and received from him the assurance, that in his opinion, you were a suitable candidate for the episcopacy. You were named Bishop on March 11 and, at that time, I requested the direct written order which I have just given you in case you took refuge in your obligations as a religious. There was no Bull issued for my consecration either. I received a direct verbal order on February 11, and was forbidden to do or say anything against this choice. For obvious reasons, I was not consecrated in Rome but in Berlin by the Apostolic Nuncio.

Now I told you, I must appear at the Moscow Municipal Soviet at 2 P.M., and I do not have to remind you of what may happen. If for any reason my activities are curtailed, in virtue of the authority I have received, I now name you Apostolic Administrator of the U.S.S.R. Here are the written instructions of the Holy Father and a list of your powers and duties. It will be for you to find some way of consecrating Frs. Frison and Sloskan, and the three of you must agree among yourselves as to the best time to announce publicly that you are Bishops. You will, of course, try to do this in such a manner as will not cause you to be arrested immediately. On the other hand, if nothing happens to me, I shall take care of all of these things myself. Mr. Herbette is awaiting you at the French Embassy and, if all goes well, I shall see you there later.

Just before 2 P.M., Bishop d'Herbigny presented himself at the Municipal Soviet. He was shown into a large office, and as soon as his

name was announced, everybody stopped work and gathered around, looking at him in silence. Finally a clerk stepped forward and led him to the private office of the Director of the Soviet who smilingly stood to greet him and said:

Your Ambassador is a very difficult man, and we do not want to have him complaining to Paris again. At the same time, we are not the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Republics. We are just a Municipal Soviet, and we cannot give you a visa to travel all around the Soviet Union. You must make it very clear to your Ambassador that we have had to refuse your request.

However, you might care to do an errand for us in Kharkov. We would like you to take this letter to the Municipal Soviet there, and they will see that it reaches the President of the Republic of Ukraine to whom it is addressed. We have told him that you are a Parisian and that, at the request of the French Ambassador in Moscow, we are asking him to give you a permit to travel in the Republic of Ukraine and to prolong your permit to stay until May 16. Remember that we in Moscow have given you no such permissions. It is the Republic of Ukraine making use of its sovereign powers, which will grant them to you.

The Director smiled again and handed Bishop d'Herbigny a large envelope bearing an official seal and told him that he could leave for Kharkov as soon as he wished. Back at the French Embassy, he dined with the Ambassador and Bishop Neveu who were waiting eagerly to hear what had happened. Together they examined the envelope, not entirely without suspicion. Apart from the fact that the Moscow Soviet had not indicated that the bearer was a priest, there was no evidence to show that the letter was anything other than it purported to be. Anxious to continue his mission, Bishop d'Herbigny decided to leave Moscow the next day, and since Bishop Neveu had to go via Kharkov to reach Makeyevka, they arranged to travel together by the evening express. As they were leaving the Embassy after an evening of pleasant conversation, the Ambassador handed Bishop Neveu two packages of cut tobacco for himself and Br. David and promised to send them two new pipes.

After Mass on Thursday morning, April 22, in a final briefing, Bishop d'Herbigny told Bishop Neveu that, through the Ambassador, he had suggested to the Commissar for Internal Affairs that it would be diplomatically wise for the Soviet Government to accept a Catholic Bishop into the country, as, in the eyes of the world, this would be proof of their tolerance. This was countered with the remark that nobody was preventing the Catholics from nominating a bishop. It was then explained to the Commissar that only the Pope could do this. The upshot of the discussion, said the Ambassador, was that if d'Herbigny chose to go and see the Pope, ask him to name a bishop, he could return to the Soviet Union in the summer bringing the nomination with him. Bishop d'Herbigny continued:

Obviously then, you must not tell anyone what has just happened or make any use of your episcopal powers until my return. I shall come openly as a bishop so that everybody will know by whom you and the others have been consecrated. If I do not return within six months, then you and the other bishops must decide for yourselves the mode of procedure. I may as well tell you that the Holy Father says he has given you more powers than he has himself.

The evening express left, in fact, in the afternoon, and after a journey of 18 hours, they reached Kharkov on Friday morning in time to say Mass. Bishop d'Herbigny then informed the pastor, Fr. Ilguin, that he had been made Apostolic Administrator for Kharkov and district. At the Municipal Soviet, his permit to travel was granted without difficulty, and Bishop d'Herbigny went on with his companion to spend the week-end in Makeyevka. His arrival caused some consternation among the parishioners. They were convinced that the only purpose for which he could have come was to transfer Fr. Neveu. He spent Saturday and Sunday trying to reassure them that, while he could not foretell the future, his presence in Makeyevka was simply to carry out a commission given him by the French Government. Most disturbed of all, perhaps, was the Baptist minister who feared that he would lose his reference library if Fr. Neveu had to leave Makeyevka.

A week after his consecration, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard in such guarded terms that only one who knew what to expect could have understood:

I want you to be the first to receive the testimony of my indefectible attachment to the Assumption. After the intimate concelebration which took place in Moscow, I left the church feeling chilled to the bone. True, it was damp, but I seemed to be a totally different person, so much so that I have not slept since. My emotions are hopelessly confused and my thoughts are so incoherent that I sometimes feel that I am going out of my mind.

I ask for the nth time that somebody send me the *Lettre à la Dispersion*. We have received nothing since January. I forgive all those who have done this to me, and I hope I can justify the confidence they have placed in me. Ask everyone to pray for me because the life of a country pastor is not easy. Begging your blessing, I remain, Your bald, anointed, ringed and affectionate Pius.

Chapter Ten

During Bishop Neveu's stay in Moscow, he had naturally discussed with the French Ambassador the question of the closing of his church about which he had written to the Embassy on April 16. Mr. Herbette had informed him that there was no need for anxiety, and that he had written to him to this effect on April 20. In the letter, which was awaiting him on his return from the capital, Bishop Neveu read with relief that Mr. Herbette had raised the issue with the Commissar for Foreign Affairs and had been told:

Even if the church is only used by 20 or 30 people, that would be a sufficient number for the church to be left at their disposal. In any case, it could not be put to any other use. A building used for worship may be taken over only if there is no group of worshippers in the habit of using it, or if they are unable to support and maintain it.

The statement in the paper, said the Ambassador, should therefore be regarded simply as the expression of a personal opinion, and it in no way indicated that any administrative measure against the church was contemplated. Bishop Neveu could feel quite free to refer to this letter if he considered it necessary, and he should inform the Ambassador without delay if anything further came up in regard to the church.

Bishop Neveu took this as another indication that the Central Civil authorities were anxious for peace and civic order. He had, of course, other annoyances. Children living in the new workers' housing development had been breaking the stained glass windows in the church and seemed to have developed the habit of coming to play and make noise in the churchyard while services were in progress. During a terrible thunder storm on the night of May 12, thieves had broken into the church and had made off with the best linen and the embroidered altar-cloths. Fortunately, they had not attempted to go near the tabernacle, but they had left the place in great disorder. One package of linen had been left lying on the ground, indicating that something must have disturbed the

intruders. Bishop Neveu had complained to the police, but such occurrences were so commonplace that there was little hope of the thieves being apprehended.

On May 24, in a letter to Fr. Quénard, he wrote:

Of course, I had to tell Br. David, Tania and Sophie what has happened to me. Their emotions became very mixed when I added that I was awaiting instructions as to the most propitious time to go to Moscow to take charge of the Church of Saint-Louis-des-Français. Tania immediately said that she would follow me to the ends of the earth if necessary, and would enter the novitiate of the Oblates only when I have no further use for her. The truth is that without the absolute devotion of this dear child, I would be very much at a loss. The rest of the people know nothing. The fact that I have administered the Sacrament of Confirmation arouses no curiosity, as I have been doing that since 1922. While waiting orders, I am trying to possess my soul in patience by meditating on two texts of Scripture: "It is not for you to know the times or the moments which the Father has placed in His own power," and "Remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

For a month now, there had been continual rain which had brought disaster to many parts of the country. The Makeyevka area had not been too badly hit, but from along the Volga came reports of terrible floods which threatened to wash the crops out of the fields. Whole villages had been completely inundated, and thousands of people were homeless. The embankment protecting the city of Astrakhan had been undermined by the waters and by huge swarms of rats which sensed the danger of drowning. The city had been saved only by energetic civic leadership and by the heroic efforts of the people who had worked night and day to close the breaches. Br. David was pleased that he did not have to water his garden but, like everybody else, considered it was time for the floodgates of heaven to be closed.

The night of June 8 brought another raid on the church. Br. David, who had gone back to his old custom of sleeping in the sacristy, did not hear anyone enter, but awoke suddenly to see a shadow passing in front of the

sanctuary lamp. He jumped to his feet, grabbed the bell-rope and began to ring the church bell. The intruder escaped by a window through which he must have been handing things to an accomplice. The man disappeared so hastily that he left his jacket and two bundles of linen on the ground. Another jacket was found in the cemetery where, apparently, the men had waited, smoking, for the time to act.

Writing in mid-June from Moscow where he had gone to get a new travel passport, Bishop Neveu described this second incident to Fr. Quénard, then added:

You can see what life here is like, especially for Br. David who, after working hard all day, has to stay on guard at night. Do you wonder that the nerves are getting frayed? It would be wonderful to breathe the air of France again; it would do something to restore us after the over-excitement in which we are forced to live.

I cannot describe the strain of being a clandestine Bishop. Someday, I may be able to amuse you with my story but, at present, it is far from funny because my correspondence is scrutinized closely. I don't know how much the police suspect, but Fr. Potapii was questioned recently. They asked him who was his ecclesiastical superior and was it true that there had been a change in Church organization in Russia. Two other priests were also interrogated. Fr. Nicholas Tolstoy, who is rather eccentric, came from Moscow to see me and said that Most Rev. d'Herbigny had told him that I would be a Bishop by August 1st. One day when I was in Kharkov, the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Synod embraced me and asked, "Would you not like to be promoted?"

On May 6, I had a visit from a self-professed atheist from Stalino who stayed the night with me. He had no particular reason for coming, but among the interesting things he said was that a man like me should be a bishop. He also told me that, according to the GPU in Stalino, I was writing my memoirs of the days of militant Communism for a foreign newspaper. I said I would be grateful if he could get me a copy so that I could see what I had written without knowing it. Finally, my visitor said: "I am an unbeliever, but I

respect you and I fear the Catholic Church. Your priests are the only ones worthy of esteem because they cannot be bought. Our priests are Judases and are the first to collaborate with us. We trust only those whom we have put in prison. Has there ever been a single one of our priests who, after having betrayed his people like your priest Fedoukovitch, had, like him, the courage to sacrifice his life to expiate his crime? The only power we have to fear in this country is the Catholic Church.”

P.S. Please tell the editors of *La Croix* to be careful what they publish about me or about the Soviet Union. Too much enthusiasm will do me no good in too many places.

I still want to go to France to see my father. Send Fr. Hildebert Blois to replace me here as soon as you can. He should point out to the Soviet Embassy that he merely wishes to come to a French church in a French parish, so that the French pastor can take a vacation.

The weeks of summer passed all too quickly, and there was still no news of Fr. Hildebert’s arrival. Bishop Neveu had been notified that he should go to Moscow in the middle of August, and he was concerned for the members of his household, especially for Br. David, whose knowledge of Russian was negligible.

On August 10, acknowledging a letter from Fr. Quénard, Bishop Neveu wrote:

I read your letter of July 28, with great bitterness and disappointment. We seem to have had bad luck with our correspondence: either you did not receive my letter of the end of June, or I did not get your reply. Two whole months have been lost at a time when it is urgent to make decisions (about a replacement). I am supposed to be in Moscow any day now, and it seems that nothing has been arranged. What is going on?

Br. David has to sleep in the church because of thieves, and the girls should have somebody in the house with them. Of course, the Blessed Sacrament will not be reserved in the church after I go, but

what about the sacred vessels? Br. David, Tania and Sophie have spent themselves for me and the Congregation, and now, it seems that they are to be abandoned. This is no time for academic discussions; we need vigorous action.

I have never been in such bad humor as at present. Everybody is deciding my destiny, yet nobody ever listens to me. Our own sins inevitably punish us. For four years, I have been crying out that there should be bishops in the Soviet Union. Now that I myself am one, I am not very joyful.

Another thing that upsets me is that we have not received the Congregation news bulletin since January, and I don't know how many times I have mentioned this fact. My poor father is cursing whoever stopped me from going to see him. I feel frustrated because I was not able to have the church repaired before I left. You can see that I am in no frame of mind for assuming new responsibility.

I will cease this recrimination. In reading this, you will think that I am very peevish, but the complete lack of news, the endless hesitations, the serenity of Bishop d'Herbigny who thinks everything is fine, are not calculated to bring peace of mind to one who sees the immediate task endangered and people suffering because of lack of foresight and coordination of effort. Forgive me Father, but in my place, you would not be very happy either. In spite of everything, however, I am deeply attached to you and to the Congregation.

A telegram from the French Ambassador invited him to dine at the Embassy on August 28. Bishop Neveu concluded that Bishop d'Herbigny had arrived. He decided not to answer the telegram so as not to give the police advance notice of his movements. Instead, he would take a few days to say goodbye to his parishioners, go to see Fr. Simon, and then go on to Moscow without announcing his arrival. The leave-taking was a sad business. One could not be in a place for 19 years without forming some attachments. It broke his heart to leave Tania and Br. David so helpless. They all wept bitterly, both in public and in private. His last tears were rung

from him by the thought of the impending departure of Sophie for further convalescence near Kiev. She was so good, and yet God had not granted her the gift of health.

On August 31, there was another telegram from the Ambassador. This one he acknowledged, saying he would leave on Thursday, September 2, and be in Moscow at 5 P.M. on Friday. In a letter of September 10, he described his adventures to Fr. Quénard:

I have already sent you a card to announce my arrival in Moscow. I finally did arrive in spite of everything. You have no idea how closely the police have been watching me since last April. There are the makings of a good novel in that story.

The police knew that the Ambassador had sent for me, and once I had sent the telegram, they also knew what train I must take. I was hoping that the authority of the Embassy would protect me, but I was far from sure. I decided to bring Tania with me, so that if I were arrested or detained, she could go on to Moscow and inform the Ambassador of my predicament. I will not describe the farewells at Makeyevka because I cannot think of them without wanting to weep.

We took the 4 P.M. train on Thursday, September 2, and all went well as far as Tula. There a Jew, who had had us under observation since we started, had us both arrested. He claimed to have recognized Tania as a White Russian spy who had been instrumental in having his brother shot at Bachmut. Tania has never even been to that city, but our protests were of no avail. They went through our baggage with a fine toothcomb, and then we were forced to undress while they made a search of our persons. They confiscated nothing, but they asked how I, a Catholic priest, could be traveling alone with a woman. I told them I knew of no Soviet law forbidding this.

We were left without food and drink until 6 P.M. Friday evening. Then we were questioned again, a report was made, and we were released at about 8 P.M. We got a train a little after midnight, but the incident had delayed us for fifteen hours, as it was 8 A.M. on

Saturday when we finally reached Moscow.

Bishop Neveu and Tania had gone straight to the Church of St. Louis-des-Français where they found Bishop d'Herbigny, dressed in his episcopal robes, about to vest for the 9 A.M. Mass. Immediately afterwards, Bishop Neveu said his own Mass, and then the two men compared notes. After hearing Bishop Neveu's description of the incident which had delayed him, Bishop d'Herbigny said that he had arrived in Moscow at the beginning of August with a permit to stay till September 4. He had begun to pontificate at St. Louis-des-Français on August 15, and since then an increasing number of people had been attending Mass and coming for Confession. On some days, he was not able to leave the church until 2:30 P.M.

On the previous night, just about the time Bishop Neveu and Tania had been resuming their journey at Tula, Bishop d'Herbigny had been brought back to his hotel by the French Ambassador and his wife. It was about 12:30 A.M. There was a knock at his door and a request to open up in the name of the Moscow Soviet. He dressed quickly and admitted a very polite, well-dressed young man who apologized for the lateness of his visit but explained that he had been unable to contact the Bishop on Friday. He then expressed surprise that the Bishop was still in Moscow since his permit to stay expired on Saturday, September 4, which had already begun. Bishop d'Herbigny pointed out that although his application for an extension of his stay had been refused, the refusal was not definitive because he had been given a temporary permit which was valid until September 12.

The young man, still very urbane, examined the permit which had been issued on August 28 and then said that he had not come to argue but simply to tell the Bishop that his presence in the Soviet Union was no longer desirable and that he must leave as soon as possible. He was not being expelled because he could cross the frontier at any point he chose, but the police would have to know that point by 8 A.M. that same Saturday morning.

Bishop d'Herbigny replied that of course he would go if he must, but that he had already arranged to preside at a ceremony in the Polish church of SS. Peter and Paul on the following day and also that his passport and

other papers were down at the Moscow Soviet. He was told that the papers would be in his possession by 2 P.M. Then the young man left. The Bishop could not help noticing that the scrupulous politeness was in marked contrast to the rudeness he had experienced on his last visit to the Moscow Soviet. On that occasion, he had simply walked away, leaving his papers with the clerk and saying he would speak to his Ambassador. That same evening, Mr. Herbette had expressed to the Commissar for Foreign Affairs his astonishment that a distinguished French citizen should be treated in such cavalier fashion. It seemed obvious that the polite young man had been given strict orders to efface the bad impression previously made.

When Bishop d'Herbigny told Bishop Neveu that the French Ambassador had already informed the Soviet authorities that the French national church of St. Louis-des-Français would soon have a new pastor who would be a bishop, it seemed clear to Bishop Neveu that the two incidents they had just discussed could not be unrelated. The police, he thought, no matter what their suspicions, could not be certain whether he was or was not already a bishop. They knew, of course, about the telegrams summoning him to Moscow. Realizing also that Bishop d'Herbigny was in the capital, they surmised that it was really he and not the Ambassador who wished to see him. Wishing to prevent this meeting they had delayed Bishop Neveu's arrival and had ordered Bishop d'Herbigny to leave the Soviet Union as soon as possible.

In any event, Bishop d'Herbigny's papers were not returned to him on Saturday, and he decided to interpret this as a gesture of courtesy which would enable him to keep his engagement at the Polish church the next day. The two Bishops were able to spend the weekend together, and Bishop Neveu learned that Frs. Sloskan and Frison had been consecrated in May during Bishop d'Herbigny's previous visit. During his present stay, Bishop d'Herbigny had gone to Leningrad and had consecrated Msgr. Malecki on August 13.

On Sunday, September 5, Bishop Neveu said the parish Mass in St. Louis-des-Français, and Bishop d'Herbigny introduced him to the people as the new pastor, without mentioning that he was a bishop. On the Saturday morning, as requested, Bishop d'Herbigny notified the police before 8 A.M.

that he would cross the frontier at Biellostrov on his way to Finland and Estonia. His papers were returned to him on Monday morning with the request that he should leave Moscow the same day. Accordingly, he took a train at 9 P.M. for Leningrad. At 10:30 P.M., very much against his will, and against Tania's, Bishop Neveu put Tania on the train for Makeyevka. He wept and she wept, but both knew that, for the present, Br. David needed her most:

That is the situation. I am where obedience has ordered me to be, and now I must show the Government that there is no evil design in my presence here and persuade them to accept me. The clergy know that I am their Bishop. I have, I believe, ten priests, five of whom I have already met. They seem to be happy to have me, but the Bishop of Kitros, Apostolic Administrator of Moscow, feels very much alone. Until Wednesday, September 8, I had not even a place to stay. Then I met an Armenian Catholic, a former parishioner of Makeyevka, who found me a room in the house where he lives. My apartment is on the fourth floor (120 stairs to climb), and came complete with bedbugs. The food is not too good either, but it is the best I can do for the present.

My thoughts are still in Makeyevka. For the love of heaven, get somebody out there as soon as possible. Mr. Rakovsky, former People's Commissar in Kharkov, to whom I wrote in 1923 suggesting the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Holy See, is now in Paris. A personal visit from you might simplify everything. I am sure he remembers my letter. You could tell him that it is for me that a replacement is needed, and that your proposed candidate, Fr. Hildebert Blois, has the same ideas and dispositions as I have. Pull every string you can because our only mission in Russia is at stake, not to speak of the spiritual needs of Br. David and Tania who may be left for months without Mass and the Sacraments. Don't forget that, in the absence of a priest, the town officials may simply take over the church and the rectory. They have every opportunity to do this, and if they do, it is the end of the Assumptionist mission in Russia because St. Louis-des-Français does not belong to the Congregation.

On Sunday last, the entire Italian Embassy staff was here at

Mass. Next Sunday, the subject of my sermon will be "Peace be to you." We are humble and peaceful people and it would be good to let this be seen.

He told Fr. Quénard to wait and discuss with Bishop d'Herbigny the questions of how and when the fact that he was a Bishop should be announced. Members of the Congregation could perhaps be told, not through the news bulletin of the Congregation, but by a private letter, and they should be advised not to discuss the matter in their correspondence. For the rest, he was putting his trust completely in God.

On October 1st, acknowledging a letter from Fr. Hildebert Blois, who was hoping to replace him in Makeyevka, he offered some practical advice on obtaining a visa to come to Russia. He went on to say that he himself had written to Mr. Rakovsky at the Soviet Embassy in Paris, pleading Fr. Hildebert's case, and he suggested that Fr. Hildebert himself go to see Mr. Rakovsky. It was urgent that a priest go to Makeyevka soon:

My abandoned children of the Ukraine are bombarding me with pitiful letters. They have had another visit from robbers, and this seems to have crushed them completely. They are without Mass and Holy Communion, and surely, in the history of the Congregation, such a situation must be extremely rare. I am powerless for the moment. Our only help is in the name of the Lord and your speedy arrival. If you do succeed in getting a visa, travel via Moscow. You can spend a few days with me, and I will brief you on some of the peculiarities of the ministry in this great country. If only you could have come while I was still in Makeyevka, my advice would have been much more helpful to you.

In Paris, Fr. Hildebert was making no progress at all. Visits to the Quai d'Orsay, to the Russian Consulate, to Secretaries of the Soviet Embassy and even to the Soviet Ambassador, had produced no results. The only reply the Quai d'Orsay could get was that there must be a delay somewhere.

In view of this difficulty, Fr. Quénard wrote to Bishop Neveu on September 29, suggesting that the only solution was to ordain Br. David a priest. Bishop Neveu replied that he would willingly impose hands on the good Brother, but first it would be necessary to find some way of getting

him up to Moscow. No doubt, Providence would turn up something. He noted that on Tuesday, September 28, he had had a visit from Bishop Sloskan, with whom he was deeply impressed, and then went on to describe to Fr. Quénard his own first public and official appearance as a Bishop in Moscow. He had asked the pastor of the nearby Polish church of SS. Peter and Paul to announce on Sunday, September 26, that on the following Sunday, Mass would be said by a Bishop. Bishop Neveu had reached his decision after a conversation with the Polish pastor who said his people were very curious about what Bishop Neveu had come to do, and were rather disturbed at his beard. So on Sunday, October 3, the assistant priest of the Polish church had come to Saint Louis-des-Français to sing the High Mass. The Bishop had preached and, after Mass, said the Rosary and gave Benediction.

At five minutes before noon, dressed in his Assumptionist habit and accompanied by two altar boys wearing their street clothes, he had set out for the Polish church. Moving through the crowd of bystanders who were awaiting with curiosity, he entered the church, removed his hat, slipped a copper pectoral cross around his neck and placed on his finger a copper pastoral ring, adorned with a piece of violet glass, which had been sent to him by the Pope.

Crozier in hand, he took holy water and walked up the crowded church, sprinkling and blessing the people. As they made the sign of the cross, he noticed that there were many members of the Orthodox Church in the congregation:

I will spare you a description of the Mass. Fortunately, the Polish pastor is very good at ceremonies, while I, a simple country priest, am not. He acted as deacon while his curate was subdeacon. Fr. Nicholas Tolstoy was assistant priest, and two Armenian Catholic priests were present in the sanctuary. The unity of the Catholic Church should have been obvious to all. No members of the Diplomatic Corps were present, and I was glad of this because, thus, the ceremony had a strictly religious character.

After the Creed, I went to the pulpit, and speaking in Russian, I made the Sign of the Cross and started: We, Pius Eugene Neveu, by

the grace of God and favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Kitros and Apostolic Administrator of Moscow, declare that we enter at this moment on the exercise of the functions committed to us.

He went on to say that in spite of his unworthiness, the Holy Father had sent him to be their spiritual shepherd and teacher. He had come in the spirit of obedience and service.

Dearly Beloved, if you ask what we shall do in the midst of our flock, we answer simply that we shall do only the work of God. We make our own the rule of Saint Paul: "I judge myself to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ crucified, for the source of salvation is the Cross of Christ."

On this 19th Sunday after Pentecost, Saint Paul tells us that each one of us should put away lying and speak the truth in our dealings with our neighbor, for we are members one of another, and the truth shall make us free (Jn 8:22).

In our own name and in the name of our clergy, we announce clearly to you and to all those who have a right to know, that we have a horror of all deceit and lack of frankness. We reject, as we have always rejected, all hidden motives, evasiveness and trickery, for these are unworthy of the ecclesiastical state.

We are not conspirators. We serve and wish to serve no earthly power because, like Saint Paul, it is for Christ and Christ alone that we act as ambassadors. As we live in the bosom of the great Russian people and enjoy their hospitality, we should be, and we are, grateful, and we wish their country peace, prosperity and glory. We consider the Russians who are united with us in Faith as real brothers through the bond of the universal faith. Our policy will be to give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and to God, the things that are God's, to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, to do good to those who hate us, to pray for those who persecute us or ill-treat us, although we do not presume for a moment that there are such people. This is the only policy we recognize because it is the policy of the Gospel. Because of this, we

fear nobody, and nobody has reason to fear us.

As for you, dearly beloved, show, not merely by your words but by your actions, that Catholics, members of the True Church of Christ, are the most peaceful, the most honest, the most hard-working of citizens. Be a good example in your family and in society, at your work and in your service. By the holiness of your life, you will be apostles who will draw the whole world to the One Fold of the One Shepherd.

He then invoked the intercession of the Saints especially of St. Theresa-of-the-Child-Jesus to whom he was dedicating his episcopacy, and urged the people to remain faithful to their priests who had put up with so many difficulties for their sake. In conclusion, he quoted from Saint Paul: "You are in our hearts, both in life and in death."

Bishop Neveu knew instinctively that his talk had been good, but he was reassured when the sub-deacon confessed that only the fact that he was holding the mitre in front of the pulpit stopped him from bursting into tears. The pastor called the sermon an historic document, and Mr. Herbette, to whom Bishop Neveu showed the text the next day said that the Bishop had not said one word out of place. In other quarters, however, the sermon was being criticized as an appeal addressed to the people of Russia rather than to the Soviet Government.

After Mass, there was a procession of the Blessed Sacrament in the churchyard. The crowd overflowed into the streets, and there were no regrettable incidents. Everybody was very excited and wished to meet him personally, yet, while he appreciated their kindness, he could not share their enthusiasm:

All through the ceremony, I could not help thinking that not one of those whom I loved the most were present: not Br. David, not Tania, nor Sophie, nor anybody from the Assumption, nor my old father. Just one person, old Fr. Tolstoy, said anything that meant something to me: "Fr. d'Alzon, the founder of your Order, must be smiling down from heaven on you. He was so interested in Russia." And indeed, all the members of the Congregation, both in heaven and on earth, were in my mind and heart all through the ceremony.

The measure of Bishop Neveu's anxiety and concern about his public pronouncement is that it was not until everything was over that he realized that the day he had chosen, October 3, was the feast of his favorite saint, Theresa-of-the-Infant-Jesus.

Chapter Eleven

On Monday, October 18, 1926, Bishop Neveu had just gone to rest for a few minutes after dinner when, suddenly, a man burst into his room and said he was summoned to appear before the GPU, and that a car was waiting outside. The Bishop put on his shoes and accompanied the man to the car and was then driven to police headquarters. After mounting by elevator to the fifth floor, he was guided by his companion through a maze of corridors to a room bearing the number 179. The officer there came quickly to the point and told him that he must decide either to give up his priesthood or leave the Soviet Union within three days.

Bishop Neveu replied that he had already made his decision but begged leave to ask the reason for this harsh treatment of a peaceful citizen who had lived in Russia for twenty years. He was told that according to the new legislation, only Soviet citizens had the right to engage in religious propaganda. When he asked how and when he had been guilty of breaking this law, the answer was that for him to even baptize a child was now illegal. The officer again began to study the papers on his desk, and Bishop Neveu, understanding that the interview was over, asked if somebody could show him back to the front door in case he lost his way in the corridors.

Once outside, he went at once to the French Embassy. After hearing his story, Mr. Herbette immediately sent a telegram to Paris and went himself to see Mr. Litvinov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs. On October 20, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

I am writing this in the French Embassy where I am waiting while my fate is being decided. A sharp telegram of protest came in from Paris and this has been taken to the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Herbette, too, is protesting and defending me, but all we can do is wait. It will surely be something of a record if I lose two parishes within a little over a month. I would not mind if this business affected only me, but can you imagine the plight of Br. David and the girls. I am heartbroken when I think of them.

This is just a short note because I must prepare for a possible hasty departure. If things go badly, I shall arrive in Paris at the same time as this letter. God, however, will have the last word, so pray harder and harder. Just the same, you need not be surprised if I tumble into your arms one of these fine days. Nobody in the novitiate ever told me that religious life would be like this. Excuse the handwriting. I am using a borrowed pen which is terrible.

On the same day, he ruefully acknowledged the receipt of material to make episcopal robes for himself and Bishop Frison. There seemed to be a good chance that he himself would never get a chance to wear his robes in the Soviet Union, but Bishop Frison might be more fortunate. Fr. Potapii, in high spirits because his church was now almost completed, had paid a visit to Moscow and had volunteered to deliver Bishop Frison's share of the cloth. He had also volunteered to contrive an early opportunity to go to Makeyevka to stay with Tania and Sophie while Br. David came to Moscow to be ordained.

On October 21, Bishop Neveu received relatively good news. Mr. Litvinov had informed the French Ambassador that an exception to the new decree forbidding foreigners to propagate religion in the Soviet Union had been made in the case of Neveu. The next day, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

Through the graciousness of the Soviet Government and in recognition of my past services, I am being allowed to stay here, but on condition that I concern myself only with the French people. Mr. Herbette did indeed fight valiantly, and he had strong support from Paris. I shall now have to arrange things so that I will be as unobtrusive as possible so as to safeguard the good of my people. I have decided to make Fr. Charles Lupinovitch, pastor of the Polish Church of SS. Peter and Paul, my Vicar General, and I shall name Fr. Soloviev (nephew of the famous Vladimir), Vice Exarch for the Russian Catholics, and this will enable me to remain even more in the background. All of this is necessary because of the decisions taken by the Central Executive Committee on the occasion of the recent visit of Bishop d'Herbigny, my august consecrator, who does all the damage and leaves me to pay the bills.

I think you will agree with me on the significance of an incident which happened this morning. The same police agent who brought me to headquarters came again to ask me if I had my passport stamped with an exit visa. When I told him I had not, he replied that, in that case, the police would be forced to escort me across the frontier tomorrow. I explained to him that I had received permission from the Government to remain in the Soviet Union. He said the police knew nothing about that, but he would go and make enquiries and would return at 3:00 P.M. In the meantime, I spoke to Mr. Herbette, who at once telephoned Mr. Litvinov, and received from him the assurance that the permission granted me had not been revoked. The police agent has not returned, although I have been expecting him all evening. The conclusion would seem to be that there is a State within a State, and that the GPU acts independently of the Soviet Government.

This country has eyes and ears everywhere. I have a feeling that my present difficulties arose as the result of indiscretions in the foreign press. The Russian Catholics and the Poles attribute the persecution and arrests to certain public utterances by an American Jesuit.² This is perhaps not true, but people easily conclude that post hoc, ergo propter hoc. I know there is a great desire for news, but people must mortify their lawful curiosity or else we will have to pay for their indulgence. Please make this known to the editors of our Bonne Presse publications. Here, they distrust anyone who has such powerful connections. Be very prudent even in the *Lettre à la Dispersion*. These people know all the tricks and have even sent agents to confession to set a trap for priests. They are quite capable of sending others as workmen to the Bonne Presse or even as postulants to the Order. Tell Fr. Hildebert not to despair of his visa. God knows how to untangle the skein of events.

(Signed) Pius-Eugene, Bishop of Kitros,

² Presumably, Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., formerly director of the Pontifical Relief Mission to Russia.

Apostolic Administrator of Moscow, Pastor of St. Louis-des-Français.

P.S. I don't need the titles. They could have left me plain Fr. Pius.

Meanwhile, down in Makeyevka, Br. David, Tania and Sophie were adjusting themselves, in so far as that were possible, to being without Mass and the Sacraments. Br. David described some of the practical steps he had taken in a letter to Fr. Quénard:

For reasons of security, we have transferred the vestments and sacred vessels to the rectory, leaving the altar completely bare. The church is a sad place now, and my heart grows heavy whenever I go into it. In order that the faithful who come to pray on Sundays do not have to share this feeling, we replace, for the occasion, the crucifix, candlesticks and altar cloths, and put flowers around the statues of Our Lady and St. Joseph and before the picture of St. Theresa.

At what used to be the usual time for Mass, I light the candles, and the people sing the Kyrie and the Gloria. Then we recite the Rosary, the Litany of Our Lady, and sing the Credo, the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei. We conclude with a prayer to St. Joseph and St. Theresa to hasten the coming of the priest we are awaiting. I had to baptize a baby privately and say prayers at the burial of a man who had died without the Last Rites because no priest was available.

Some of the parishioners come in turn to spend the night at the rectory. Another man makes three tours of the church and grounds each night, and has arranged a signal with two of his friends so that they can be summoned in a matter of seconds. We have shutters over the rectory windows and are quite prepared to receive anyone who tries to break in.

To this letter, Br. David added a postscript which was by no means so coherent. He had just received a letter from Bishop Neveu telling him that he, Br. David, would be the new priest in Makeyevka:

P.S. What is this I hear from Bishop Neveu? You must have completely forgotten my lack of virtue, knowledge and other

requisites for the priestly ministry. Even if I knew Russian, and I don't, what good can I do? I am in no way fitted for the priesthood. If I do become a priest, would it not be detrimental to the people here? I am alone. How can I prepare myself or teach myself? My memory is rusty, and I find it almost impossible to assimilate what I read. In my studies, I barely began the Humanities, and that is a long time ago. I do not understand Latin very well, even the Latin of the Breviary. However, I leave to you, who have the glory of God in mind, the burden of making the decision.

With Fr. Hildebert still without a visa, the spiritual welfare of the Catholics of Makeyevka demanded that such a step be taken. Br. David would be ordained for the purpose of saying Mass only. Bishop Neveu, who knew him so well, with all his strengths and weaknesses, had no hesitation. On October 15, he wrote that Br. David should come to Moscow as soon as Fr. Potapii arrived to replace him. But Fr. Potapii was delayed and did not reach Makeyevka until Sunday, October 31. He was in time to say the parish Mass, and for the first time in two months, the little household had the joy of being present at it and of receiving Holy Communion.

Br. David set out for Moscow on November 2, and reached the capital two days later. He at once pleaded his unworthiness and lack of qualifications for the priesthood to Bishop Neveu, who reminded him that obedience demanded that he accept the office. Between November 6 and November 9, Bishop Neveu conferred on him the varying degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and on November 10, in the presence of the three Moscow priests of the Latin Rite, Br. David was ordained a priest. Bishop Neveu announced the event to Fr. Quénard in a typically impish telegram: "Wine-cellarer Father Today." There had been little time to give the new priest any instructions in the rubrics, but on November 11, with the Bishop acting as his assistant priest, he said his first Mass. In a very strange way, his abandoned dream had been realized.

Bishop Neveu, who was beginning to feel the need for Tania and her devoted services more and more, had not been idle since his arrival in Moscow. He had met a trustworthy Polish lady, Stanislava Pankievitch, born in Moscow, who had agreed to go as housekeeper to Makeyevka. Still

rather dazed by the course of events and overwhelmed with his new responsibilities towards two parishes, Fr. David left Moscow in company with Stanislava on November 12.

He reached Makeyevka early on the morning of Sunday, November 14, but prudently decided to say Mass privately in the rectory. It would have been too great a shock for the totally unprepared people to find their former sacristan and organist saying Mass. Later, at the parish Mass, Fr. Potapii gently explained to the congregation that, because of the unusual circumstances and through the intervention of their former pastor, Fr. David really was a priest. Normally, his sole duty would be to say Mass, and Fr. Simon would come from time to time from Enakievo to preach and hear confessions.

Fr. David began his pastoral career on the day of his return by presiding at the burial of a recently baptized baby. On Sunday, November 21, he said the parish Mass for the first time and afterwards gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The fact that the Blessed Sacrament would now be reserved in the church again raised a problem which Bishop Neveu had discussed with him during his visit to Moscow. The danger from robbers was as great as ever, and, obviously Fr. David could not sleep both in the church and the rectory at the same time. The girls needed somebody in the house, so the simplest thing was to try and strengthen the church against intruders. Entrance had usually been made through the windows; it might be possible to cover them with heavy wire mesh and protect them still further by cementing iron bars into the window recesses. It would be better not to leave the sanctuary light burning during the night. In the future, the parish Mass would not be a High Mass, as there was no organist, and neither Stanislava nor Sophie had enough confidence to lead the singing.

Bishop Neveu, after all his anxious activity, had been taking stock of the situation and of his responsibilities. A study of the Papal Documents brought by Bishop d'Herbigny revealed that he had been given a certain precedence over the other newly-consecrated Bishops who were also Vicars Apostolic in their own area. It was clearly stated that if any Apostolic Administrator should die or be prevented by ill health from exercising his functions for a considerable length of time, Bishop Neveu would inform

the Holy See at once and present his opinion of a suitable candidate to take over the office. If time was an urgent consideration or if great harm would be done by waiting for a reply from Rome, Bishop Neveu had the authority to choose, nominate and consecrate an Apostolic Administrator who could, however, be later removed at the wish of the Holy See. Bishop Neveu was also to ensure that a successor to himself, who would enjoy the same rights, was always designated, and whose name should be sent to Rome for approval. Bishop Neveu should also see to it that the number of consecrated Bishops in Russia be never less than three.

It was also stipulated that if, by chance, any of the Apostolic Administrators should have the opportunity to negotiate with the Government to improve the lot of the faithful, he was to consult and obtain the approval of Bishop Neveu before making any commitment.

The Holy See, solicitous for the needs of the Russian Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, urged Bishop Neveu to appoint their Exarch, Fr. Leonide Feodorov, as his Vicar General in matters concerning the aforesaid Russian Catholics. Fr. Feodorov would be free of the jurisdiction of any other Bishop and would be subject only to Bishop Neveu. The latter had never met, and never did meet, the Exarch who had been arrested in 1923, and had been sentenced to ten years imprisonment. He had been released in April, 1926, was re-arrested in August of the same year, and was sent for three years detention in the Solovki Islands in the White Sea, north of Archangel. This was to be followed by another three years of restriction to the northern latitudes. Thus, he was back in prison by the time Bishop Neveu had moved to Moscow.

Of his own Vicariate, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard in October, 1926:

The principal cities of the territory over which I have jurisdiction are Moscow, Rybinsk, Kostroma, Nijni-Novgorod, Ryazan, Tambov, Tula, Kaluga, Smolensk, Tyver, Yaroslav, Roslav and Viazma. You see that it is the very heart of Russia which I must love, and you know that I have loved it tenderly for a long time.

In addition to this, he was also the pastor of the Church of St. Louis-des-Français and the French National parish which had been founded in

the time of Catherine the Great. Continuing her predecessor's policy of westernizing the Empire intellectually, artistically and industrially, Catherine, by a ukase of 1762, offered foreigners who would immigrate to Russia certain concessions such as exemption from taxes and freedom of religion, on condition that there was no attempt to proselytize. In return, she asked only an act of submission to the Imperial authority. Many French writers, teachers and businessmen had been attracted by the offer, but, in Moscow, like all foreigners, they had been forced to live in a sort of international ghetto in the Sloboda. A commercial treaty between France and Russia in 1786 had done much to improve the status of French people in Russia, and they were now allowed to develop industry and commerce and could move freely throughout the empire.

By the end of the 18th century, French commerce was well established in Moscow and had the same attraction for Russian customers seeking to supply their material needs as the French language and literature had for their minds. Then, as now, French taste and leadership in feminine elegance was undisputed, but in addition to clothes and fashions, there was a luxury market for French perfumes, jewelry, glassware, wines and liqueurs.

Until 1789, the French Catholics had attended the Polish Church of SS. Peter and Paul in the Sloboda. With the opening of a French vice-Consulate in Moscow, however, the French Community organized itself into a colony and applied both to the Archbishop of Mohilev and to the Governor of Moscow for permission to have a French National parish and to build their own church. This was granted by Imperial ukase in 1789, and the French colony bought a private house, and eventually the land on which it was built, and converted it into a church which was dedicated to St. Louis and blessed and opened on March 30, 1791. This gradually became too small and was replaced by the present church which was solemnly dedicated on November 24, 1835. It is quite large and seats 500 people comfortably, has a main altar and two side altars, with a sanctuary which is semi-circular in shape and raised about 18 inches above the floor of the nave. The ceiling of the sanctuary is domed with a beautiful fresco of the Transfiguration, and the front of the church has an imposing peristyle with six large columns.

Adjoining the church, two high schools, one for boys and another for girls, with accommodation for 600 students, were built, and a hostel, where sick and aged French people could receive care and shelter, was opened. The parish also owned two houses; one was rented, while the other served as a residence for a priest and as a day nursery. Except for the church, all of the buildings with their furnishings had been seized by the Soviet Government.

When Bishop Neveu took possession of St. Louis-des-Français, both church and parish had fallen on sad times. Many of the French business people had been ruined by the fire of 1812. Some had returned to France, but others had remained to become poorer and poorer. The Church itself was well-cared for and was always neat and clean, but the entrance had been disfigured by a high barricade of wood which had had to be erected to preserve the building from the depredations of local urchins.

On the domestic side, Bishop Neveu was longing for the coming of Tania. He had not brought much luggage with him, which was just as well, because the room he had from the Armenian was very small. To reach it, he had to pass through a bedroom in which three men and three women were sleeping. He was also having trouble with the Armenian style of cooking. On December 15, 1926, he wrote:

From the point of view of holy poverty, I think I am more fortunate than the poorest of our religious in the poorest of our houses. I struggle alone against the bedbugs, I make my bed, and my table is more modest than that of many a workman. The only thing that annoys me is the mending. My shirts, stockings, etc., are all old and are beginning to yawn shamefully. However, when Tania comes, she will put everything in order. She will have to study her French, since she is now a French citizen, the adopted daughter of David Mailland, whose name she bears. She will stay about a mile from here with an old, unmarried French lady, and can come to the church and to me by trolley car for a fare of 8 kopecks. The trolley cars and falls on the slippery pavement are about the only things that are cheap here.

There should be an opportunity to send her to France soon, or

maybe I can take her myself if, in 1927, I get my long awaited vacation. But the moment of separation will be very hard, both for postulant and Bishop.

I am alarmed and distressed to learn that the story of my secret consecration is known in many places. Someone is being indiscreet. I know that the Polish Embassies are well informed about me and about the whole religious situation in the Soviet Union. For example, the story of my (proposed) expulsion in October has not been told outside of the French Embassy, yet a few days afterwards, a secretary of the Polish Embassy here expressed surprise to a member of our Embassy staff that I was still here. I took the precaution at the time of notifying Bishop Malecki of the delicate situation. His comment was that I should have left rather than have my jurisdiction circumscribed. That is an encouraging attitude!

Each week, Bishop Neveu received a letter from Fr. David who was doing as well as could be expected: Tania would be leaving him about December 20... Sophie had been told by the doctor that her lungs were now in good condition, and that once she got to a different climate, she would soon forget that anything was ever wrong with her. No doubt, she would want to follow Tania to Moscow... The local authorities had asked him (Fr. David) to fill out a form stating his profession. He had simply described himself as a chanter and organist of many years standing... Another form, dealing with statistics, had been completed for him by a parishioner... He had an eight year old boy whom he was training to serve Mass; until the boy knew the Latin prayers, the girls were making the responses... Now that he was bound to the recitation of the Divine Office, he needed a set of breviaries... He also wished that the Congregation News Bulletin, which he had not seen for a year, could be sent to him regularly... For the rest, he was in good enough spirits, largely, he thought, because of the spiritual strength he seemed to have received at his ordination.

On December 28, Bishop Neveu wrote, announcing the arrival of Tania:

For the last week, I have no longer been alone. Tania came on Tuesday, December 21, the feast of St. Thomas. She is living on

Nikitskye Vorota, just beside the church of St. Theodore the Studite about half an hour ride from me. In the morning she comes to St. Louis, and, after Mass, goes to the "episcopal palace" to work until evening. I am absolutely in rags and the poor girl is not short of things to do. Her presence also relieves me from the terrible Armenian cooking. We have bought the most essential cooking utensils; others, left by Msgr. Vidal in 1920, have been passed on to me, and we share the kitchen like father and daughter. On Christmas Day, we still had not enough plates so, from little pans, we ate an omelet, some lampreys and the remains of a chicken brought from Makeyevka. We were both exhausted and had neither the energy nor the time to produce a more elegant meal. Besides, at the present time, we have no spirit stove and have to borrow one from our neighbors. If we were not perched so high on the fourth floor, I could say that we were re-enacting the story of the Stable at Bethlehem, for we, too, have the pleasure of living with noisy (biped) animals.

At Makeyevka, they are heartbroken without Tania. Her departure, so soon after mine, has further deepened the emptiness. Fr. David is still a little embarrassed in his role as makeshift pastor. He takes one hour to say a simple Low Mass and is worried about what kind of figure he will cut before the Administration which is a shrewish stepmother. Pray hard for him so that he can hold out till the arrival of the much desired Fr. Hildebert.

Talking about Makeyevka, I must let you know of the distress of its inhabitants. When I left, I divided in two the little money that remained. An equal amount went to Makeyevka and to Moscow. These two halves have gradually dwindled away and both places are now in poverty. It is true that there is a certain sum of money from which I am authorized to take what is necessary for my support, but Fr. David will soon be penniless, and I am no longer able to send him anything. He is still waiting for the wire lattices for the church windows and the rectory. The young cubs down there have broken everything. My parishioners are so few and so

burdened with the upkeep of the church, to say nothing of the taxes, that I cannot, in conscience, ask them to give more. If you know of any would-be benefactors who are interested in Russia, you will know what to tell them. I may mention, too, that tea, rice and coffee are almost unobtainable at the present time.

Our Christmas solemnities went off very well. On Christmas Eve, I baptized two converts, one of them a Jew. I had Midnight Mass, and at 10 A.M. I had a Pontifical High Mass and gave the Papal Blessing. Both Masses were celebrated at St. Louis because, in view of the restrictive framework imposed upon me by our rulers, I cannot risk pontificating again outside my own church. There are quite a few Russians, including some priests, who come to our services. Also, as a rule, there are two Government agents at all my sermons. I recognized one of them one day when I was walking down the church, sprinkling the people with holy water during the *Asperges*. I deliberately gave him such a shower that now he does not come in till I am in the pulpit.

Persecution against the Catholic clergy continues. Exarch Feodorov, who has been sent to Solovki for three years, is, I hear, the custodian of a wood pile up there and has to spend eight hours a day outside in the bitter cold weather in spite of his rheumatism and other ailments. But all our confessors of the faith are admirable and, in spite of their terrible trials, declare themselves happy to suffer for the Catholic Church. My friend, Fr. Ilguin, the pastor in Kharkov, was arrested at the end of October and it is expected that he, too, will be deported to Solovki where he will join Fr. Bielogolov, former pastor of Mohilev. Msgr. Skalski, of Kiev, is still in prison. This is the fate of all great citizens.

Chapter Twelve

Tania was discovering that the winter in Moscow was much colder than that in the Donetz Basin. The light coat she had brought with her offered little protection against the elements, and she was literally freezing to death. In January, Bishop Neveu, noting that he was followed everywhere he went, had to go out and buy a heavier coat for which he had to pay 80 rubles. Tania too was followed, both to and from her lodging. She was a complete enigma to the police who just could not understand her position. One of the Polish priests said that he had been questioned about her. Who was this girl who came to work every day at the Bishop's apartment? Why did she have the name of the new priest in Makeyevka? Wasn't he a monk? Ought a Catholic monk have a daughter? The Polish priest had replied that it was entirely possible that a priest could have a daughter. For example, he might have been married and become a priest after the death of his wife. Or again, he might have adopted a girl. The police had also shown a great interest in what the Bishop ate and wondered who was supporting him.

In a letter of January 12, 1927, Bishop Neveu noted that, on the previous day, Mr. Litvinov had complained to the French Ambassador that the Bishop was still performing acts of episcopal jurisdiction. Mr. Herbette denied this, pointing out that Bishop Neveu had delegated his authority to his Vicar General, Fr. Loupinovitch, and to Fr. Soloviev, both of whom were Soviet citizens. Bishop Neveu also acknowledged a package of tea, coffee, shirts and towels and said that both he and Fr. David were down to their last pair of sheets.

He also received a gift of a pectoral cross and felt sure that this was an indication that crosses of another nature were on the way. He had not long to wait. Between January 1 and February 20, 1927, 130 Catholics had been arrested, including six priests in Leningrad, and the pastors of Vitebsk, Podolsk, Lepel, and Mariupol. Fr. Potapii had been taken into custody on January 28 and was brought to Lugansk. There seemed little doubt that, once again, he owed his arrest to the jealousy of his former Orthodox

brethren. He expected to be transferred to Kharkov, and without a miracle, would be sent to Solovki in the White Sea. Fr. Ilguin, who had demanded and who had been refused a public trial, had been sent there for three years on February 11. The church at Stalino was now definitely closed. In recent weeks, Bishop Malecki's house had been searched several times, and he was reported to have told the GPU that it would be simpler for everyone if they just shot him.

Writing to Fr. Quénard on February 23, 1927, Bishop Neveu said:

We have to live constantly on the qui-vive. We are followed like criminals everywhere, and as long as we breathe the air of this country, we shall always be considered capable of crime. In the midst of all this distressing news, the people here are pestering me to make use of the material sent to me for a purple cassock, but nobody here knows how to make one. I tell them that I am in no hurry to color myself like an Easter egg. Being a Bishop is not amusing; it seems that many things must be considered in regard to dress, and these must have their importance since people write and talk so much about them. I am afraid that I would need somebody to train me in these matters. At present, to please the people, I wear my pectoral cross on Sundays, and also a little purple skull-cap left by Bishop d'Herbigny.

Tania asks you to send her another picture of the Holy Father. She gave hers to an Armenian priest who takes care of 14 parishes and had never seen a photo of the Pope. She has just become 27 years old.

I am looking around for somewhere else to live. Apart from the internal disadvantages of my present abode, I have noisy neighbors. They have parties which last far into the night, and it is almost impossible for me to get any sleep. I complained to the House Administration, but that changed nothing.

By the way, last year I declared my taxable income as 190 rubles. The Tax Commission decided that I was much too poor and added 1912 rubles of fictitious income, and now, they want me to pay 53 rubles tax.

At 6:30 A.M. on April 4, he answered a knock on his door and found Fr. David on the threshold in a state of considerable excitement. The Makeyevka police had been to see him and ordered him to sign a prepared statement forbidding him to hold religious ceremonies, say Mass, or pray aloud in the Church. There was a whole page of prohibitions. Fr. David refused to sign the paper and was ordered to report to the police the next day. He had done so, taking Sophie with him to act as interpreter. The police threatened, shouted and raged, much to the alarm of Sophie who thought it would be simpler to give in. Fr. David resolutely refused to sign, and finally the police had to acknowledge defeat and release him. After discussing the matter with Stanislava and Sophie, he decided to come in person to see Bishop Neveu because he distrusted the postal service.

Bishop Neveu congratulated him on his Savoyard stubbornness and suggested that, as it was just 7 A.M., they should each say Mass, have breakfast, and then decide what action should be taken. After breakfast, the Bishop typed a note and brought it down to the French Ambassador. Then he and Fr. David took a little tour of Moscow. Fr. David was anxious to write to Fr. Quénard while he was in the city, but Bishop Neveu dissuaded him, pointing out that it would be inadvisable to ride around in trolley cars, carrying a letter that their hosts might consider impolite. Fr. David told him that Sophie was well, but that she wanted to go to spend some time with her relatives in Kiev at Easter. He was rather concerned about the fact that he would then be alone in the house with Stanislava, and had more or less decided to ask some German friends to allow their 15 year-old son to come and stay with them.

The next day, they heard from the French Ambassador that the Makeyevka police had been ordered to leave Fr. David in peace. On his return to Makeyevka, the police said that Fr. David had misunderstood the whole incident.

On May 17, Bishop Neveu happily announced that he had a new address:

I must tell you about my new residence at Apt. 2, 17 Baumanovski Pereulok, Moscow 5. It is a room about half as big as the one I had and measures just over ten feet by six and a half. For furniture, I have a bed, two chairs, a stove, a bookshelf and a

kitchen dresser at which I dine and wash the dishes. I also bought a small writing desk because I have been without one for the last eight months.

The room is on the ground floor and looks out on to a little garden. I gain access to my room through the kitchen, but that is infinitely preferable to having to pass through a room where men and women are sleeping. I brought my three casseroles and my four plates but I shall have to leave my clothes in a suitcase in the corridor as I have no room inside. I am now further away from the church, but there is a trolley line which will take me there directly in a half hour. You may think my move was foolish, but my presence was really an inconvenience to the kind Armenians who sheltered me and who, at first, refused to take any payment. I had noisy neighbors, and the room had two doors. This obliged me to talk to visitors as if I were in the confessional. I also had to climb 120 stairs every time I went in or out, and that was becoming too much.

Now, for 25 rubles a month—excluding water and electricity—I am independent. There are no bugs or stairs. The house is made of wood and is like an *isba* you would see in the country. The area is quiet and I disturb nobody in my little cell, which reminds me of the one I had in the house of studies. In two weeks, my landlords will be going to the country for three months, so I may have to look for another place when they return. Tania is the one who is really affected by the move. She has to travel further than before, but she, too, is on a direct trolley route.

Poor Fr. David is always on the bed of thorns. The police are still trying to make him resign. I am so sorry for him because he is innocent of any crime. Formerly, these blows fell on me first, but now I am no longer near him. He finally appealed to Mr. Herbette, who sent a note of protest and who then intervened personally. Diplomatic exchanges here are very friendly and even encouraging, but Makeyevka is a long way from Moscow.

On May 5th, the GPU told Bishop Malecki that he had three days in which to leave Leningrad, but he managed to extend this to a week. He was then forced to sign a statement that he was leaving voluntarily. He is now in Archangel.

Today, I celebrated with all possible solemnity the second anniversary of the canonization of St. Theresa. We even had a new canticle which I composed myself (both words and music). I shall send a copy to our Sisters and to the Carmelites at Lisieux. My famous cassock is finished at last, for the Polish priests had a friend, a tailor, who was home on leave from the Red Army. I think Fr. David needs a cassock too. Write to him as often as you can.

In June Stanislava arrived with a detailed account of their tribulations in Makeyevka. It seemed that Bishop Neveu had unwittingly contributed to them. In August, 1926, just before his departure for Moscow, he had gone to see Fr. Simon and had given him a few things for which he had no further use. Among them was a table lamp which he had wrapped in an old blueprint.

When the French officials and technicians had gone back to France, they had left behind a mass of papers, plans, and designs for mines and factories. These prints were obsolete and had been made available to anyone who wished to use them for any purpose whatsoever. Some had ended up in the attic of the rectory, some had been used to line the Bishop's bookshelves. In any case, they had been seen many times by the police during the twenty-three searches they had made.

Fr. Simon, however, had converted a blueprint into a lampshade, and this had been noticed some time later by police agents. As soon as they learned where the print had come from, they concluded with irrefutable logic: "Fr. David collects information about industrial plants in Makeyevka and sends it to Neveu who then passes it on to the French Embassy." Fr. Simon then innocently asked: if this be true, why was Fr. David not expelled from the country? He was told that this might be easy to say but not so easy to do because Fr. David and Bishop Neveu were French, and any attempt to expel them might cause international complications. But if

they ever made a mistake, it would not be long until church, rectory and library were seized.

It was becoming increasingly clear to Bishop Neveu that the police were primarily interested in him, not in Fr. David or in any of the other clergymen. Anybody who had anything to do with him either had or would have trouble with the police. A former trustee of the parish of Makeyevka, who had been held in custody after the search of the rectory in 1925, had just been arrested again. Apart from the harassment of Fr. Simon, Fr. Potapii was also in prison and had been told that "Neveu is a dangerous character who writes articles attacking the Soviet Government for the foreign press." The pastor of Rostov, with whom Bishop Neveu had stayed on the occasion of his visit to the Pontifical Relief Mission, had been arrested on Easter, 1927. Fr. Ilguin of Kharkov, another old friend, had already been sent to Solovki.

On June 24, 1927, the GPU had searched the rectory of SS. Peter and Paul and had come across some old church records in which the previous pastor had noted that, on various occasions, he had sent off baptismal certificates which had been requested from Warsaw. As a result, the police arrested the young curate for having had secret relations with Poland. His real crime was that he was popular with the children and had prepared them for First Holy Communion. Even poor Sophie had had a narrow escape. Fortunately, she had been away in Kiev when the police had gone to her mother's house in Makeyevka to arrest her, and they had contented themselves with merely searching the house. A request for information about Bishop Neveu had become almost routine in the interrogation of any priest. The overall strategy was to create a void around him as a person dangerous to know.

On June 30, Bishop Neveu applied to the Municipal Soviet for the annual renewal of his permit to stay in Russia. So far, this had never been refused. He paid the fee of 5 rubles, 60 kopecks, and was told to return on July 11 to pick up the permit. Dutifully, he presented himself on the prescribed day and showed the receipt for the payment of the fee. One of the clerks looked through his file, went into another office, and came back almost at once with the news that the permit had not been granted. If the Bishop would come back in a week's time?

Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard on July 11:

There is good news in the midst of our troubles. On July 2, Fr. David was summoned by the police and was informed verbally and in writing that he is authorized, as in the past, to officiate at religious ceremonies in the Makeyevka area. I had a joyful card and letter from him. I had told the Commissar for Foreign Affairs that Fr. David knew no Russian, and he must finally have believed me. I see that it is sometimes good to be ignorant of things here. I do not have this advantage to the same degree. I must wait for another week to see if I will get a permit to stay. If it is not granted then, I shall have to ask the Ambassador to intervene. If that fails, I shall see you soon. Fr. David's permit was renewed at Stalino on July 4 without difficulty. You can see what an undesirable guest I am here. They would be very happy to see me do something foolish, and my shadows are around just in case I do.

Bishop Malecki is back in Leningrad. It seems that some of his parishioners went to the GPU to ask for information about him and were told that he had gone to Archangel of his own freewill. The parishioners had at once retorted that, in that case, he could come back if he wished, and the police had had to agree. Two young men set off at once for Archangel with the news, and the Bishop returned with them.

These days, I am washing the dishes just as I did at the novitiate. Tania has a very painful boil on her hand, and I had to take her to a surgeon. She sends her love.

One way or another, it was a long, hot summer. It had started with a minor war scare when, on May 12, 1927, British police had raided the premises of Arcos Ltd., a branch of the Soviet Trade delegation in London, and claimed to have found overwhelming evidence that it was the center of a huge Soviet espionage ring. The British Government had suspended diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and there were anti-British demonstrations in Moscow.

The wave of arrests continued. Severe storms did nothing to cool the atmosphere. Bishop Neveu was relieved of one anxiety when, thanks to

the support of the French Ambassador, he was granted permission to stay in Russia. On August 4, Fr. David arrived, bringing his little altar boy to spend a vacation in Moscow and a host of questions for Bishop Neveu. One of his latest problems was that the fence around the church had been broken and knocked down in two places, and a large quantity of his potatoes had been dug up and stolen.

The summer ended with another diplomatic flurry. Mr. Rakovsky, the Soviet Ambassador in Paris, had, on August 8th, declared his support for a Trotsky resolution calling for the defeat of all bourgeois states which were waging war on the Soviet Union. The French Government protested and demanded the recall of the Ambassador, who in fact, had to leave France on October 27. In a letter in which he mentioned that there was considerable alarm in Moscow over the possibility of a break between France and the Soviet Union, Bishop Neveu announced his intention of remaining even if the French Embassy were closed.

Already, there was talk of an amnesty for criminals in October to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. According to information filtering back from Solovki, over 11,000 people were detained there, among them 18 Catholic priests, 12 Orthodox Bishops and a great number of Orthodox priests. There was no indication that any of them would benefit from the amnesty. At that time, prisoners at Solovki were allowed to write and receive packages of food and clothing. From Exarch Feodorov, Bishop Neveu learned also that religious services were permitted, that through lectures and discussions the Exarch thought he was dissipating some of the Orthodox prejudice against the Catholic Church, and that one of the priests in St. Catherine's Church, Leningrad, was giving information to the GPU.

After learning that France had named him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor on August 13, 1927, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard on September 6:

I have been instructed by Rome to stay on here at all costs. Thank God, I now know where I stand, and I have not yet given up hope of martyrdom. The Pastor of the Immaculate Conception has again been questioned about me.

Fr. Potapii managed to send me a postcard with the news that he has been transferred from Kharkow and is now in prison here. I tried unsuccessfully to send him some money, but the GPU refused permission because he was arrested under his baptismal name, and I know him only as Potapii, his monastic name.

Bishop Malecki said he would come to see me yesterday, but although I stayed at home all day, he never arrived. On August 28, I had a two-hour conversation with Bishop Bartholemew of the Orthodox Church. He embraced me when I was leaving and expressed the hope that we would be able to concelebrate Mass soon. I have suggested that Bishop Frison should move from Sebastopol to Odessa where there are still some Catholic priests, but I have heard nothing from him since.

On Sunday, September 19, a telegram from a priest in Mohilev informed Bishop Neveu that Bishop Sloskan had been arrested the previous day. Between September 3 and 16, he had been away from home making episcopal visitations in the territory assigned to him. During his absence, his servants had been arrested, and compromising papers had been left in his room. At 4:00 A.M. on September 17, the night of his return, the GPU searched his house and, of course, found the papers. Bishop Sloskan was imprisoned first in Minsk but was then brought to the Lubianka prison in Moscow at 11:00 A.M. on September 23. That evening, he was taken to the inner GPU prison in the Lubianka. In Leningrad, the Latvian Catholics, his compatriots, had already demanded the Bishop's release in a petition in which they said openly that the incriminating evidence had been placed in his room by police. From a prisoner in Solovki came a note in which it was said that they were already expecting Bishop Sloskan to join them. As they had a candidate for ordination to the priesthood, they would like a book containing the rite of the ceremony and the Holy Oils so that the Bishop could ordain the young man when he arrived in the far north.

The return of Bishop Neveu's landlords from the country forced him to look for another apartment. On September 23, he was able to rent two rooms at 11 Miastnitskaya in the center of Moscow. It was not so quiet as

the *isba*, but it had the advantage of being only a couple of minutes from the Church of St. Louis-des-Français. Tania could come there to live, and they would save both time and money. His immediate neighbors would be Jews, a family in one apartment and two students in the other.

As the 10th anniversary of the revolution drew near, on three occasions, the French Embassy asked the Soviet Government to extend the amnesty to clergy and other prisoners detained in Solovki. The reply simply stated that nobody who had conspired against the State could receive amnesty, but appeals could be made in individual cases. About the same time, Bishop Neveu received a letter from Bishop d'Herbigny in Rome, written after his return from a long audience with the Holy Father in which Bishop Neveu and Russia had been the main topic of conversation. The Pope sent his paternal blessing in the following words:

Each day, each day without fail, each day for a long time since the beginning, we offer up Russia at Mass, with all its priests, all its confessors of the Faith, all its faithful, those who are Catholic and those who are not. It is not enough for us to say that at each Mass, we go to Russia with all our heart. Each day, Jesus goes there with us, from Minsk to Vladivostock, from Tiflis to Solovki. We bless pray, love, hope, and above all, we suffer together with them, with all of them. To dear Bishop Neveu, we send our gratitude, our blessings, for his daily sacrifices, his faith, his courage, his vigilance and for the constant offering he makes of his life for the Church.

Bishop Neveu was grateful, but he thought the Holy Father was overestimating him. However, he had no time for self-analysis: Tania was sick with angina, lumbago and a fever, and a letter from Fr. David announced another threat to take over the church:

The situation at Makeyevka is fluid and uncertain. For some time, it has been said openly that the church would make a fine day nursery. The appetite of the authorities has been whetted by their success in taking over the church in Stalino. Moreover, they consider that I am superfluous because there are no French people in the area. They also accuse me of not carrying out the ceremonies according to the liturgical rules, which I think is very amusing. They

will make use of anything to accomplish their ends.

My little German boy now knows the chant sufficiently well and can accompany himself on the organ, so we had a High Mass on November 1 and 2. I am still not receiving the Congregational news bulletin. Apart from that, we are well enough; we are not badly off for food and we have heat. Unless something unforeseen happens, we should manage till the end of March.

Bishop Neveu, however, did not think that Fr. David was as well as he pretended. When he had come to Moscow in August, both himself and Tania thought he had grown thin and haggard. All of them, in fact, were beginning to show signs of wear and tear as the Bishop mentioned in a letter on November 29:

In October, Fr. Potapii was sent to Solovki for ten years. He has only the clothes he was wearing when he was arrested.

We are beginning to bend; we are not made of iron, and we have seen too much. I had to go to the doctor who found that I had an enlargement of the heart. This is not a rare thing, but the doctor used the word "exhaustion." This would not trouble me in the least if only there were somebody to replace me here in case something happens. I am not unduly upset but, as you can guess, the situation is not exactly exhilarating. Tania has rheumatism, and the air of France would do both of us good. Well, we shall just have to be joyfully sad since Providence does not yet permit us to be joyfully joyful.

I shall try to come to France in 1928. If I succeed, I shall certainly bring Tania with me. I am not too sure that I can get Sophie out of the country because she is a Soviet citizen. She will soon be coming to Moscow as she is feeling much better; she will be company for Tania.

The year was not over yet. On the night of December 23, 1927, the church at Makeyevka was broken into for the fifth time. It seemed that robbery was not the motive because only a pair of scissors and two candlesticks were missing. All the closets were forced, all the drawers

ransacked, the linen and the vestments were soiled, and a deposit of filth was left at the church door. Even the padded interior of the monstrance case was slashed and the lining removed. It would seem that the intruders were searching for something, and not finding it, had spitefully done what damage they could. Fr. David found, among the vestments lying on the floor of the sacristy, a piece of paper bearing the name of a woman who worked in the factory and took it to the police. There, he was told that the woman, a non-Catholic, had gone to the church to pray. However, nobody was able to explain why the paper was found, not in the church, but in the midst of the disorder in the sacristy.

Chapter Thirteen

The more Bishop Neveu thought about the raid on the church at Makeyevka, the more it seemed to him that it had been carried out with at least the connivance of the police, and perhaps even at their instigation. The French Ambassador lodged a protest and finally was told that two young men had been arrested and would be brought to trial, but nothing further had been heard. Bishop Neveu, who was in the habit of writing to Fr. David every week, learned, too, that none of his December letters had reached their destination. Both he and the Ambassador were in agreement on the urgency of providing a companion for Fr. David, or even of replacing him so that he could go to live in Moscow. The latter course could relieve another anxiety. If Bishop Neveu got the opportunity to go to France, he could leave with an easy mind, knowing that Mass would continue to be said at St. Louis during his absence. The question of a return visa, however, was still uncertain because the Soviet Government did not normally issue one when a person was leaving the country.

On January 23, 1928, Bishop Neveu wrote:

I am certain that Mr. Herbette would do everything in his power to get me a return visa, but what often happens is this: he makes a request. It is refused. He is angry and informs his Government. The Soviet Department of Foreign Affairs gets in touch with its Paris Office, and somebody is sent down to the Quai d'Orsay to feel out the atmosphere. According to their estimate of the determination of the French Government, the request is either granted or is met with a categorical and final refusal.

In the meantime, I have found somebody to go and stay with Fr. David. This should cheer him up. The man is a Russian Catholic, Serge Ivanovitch Koltchev; he is about 40 years of age. I met him over a year ago when he came to me for spiritual direction, and he wishes to enter religious life as a lay Brother. He is pious and devoutly attached to his own rite; he is also very practical, though he has a quick temper. I hope he and Fr. David will hit it off.

Serge will probably leave for Makeyevka in a week or ten days. Sophie arrived in Moscow on December 23, 1927, and seems to be very well. Tania is becoming a patriotic Frenchwoman. She has made a little tricolor for herself and has it hanging at the head of her bed. She has a great devotion to St. Joan of Arc who was a shepherdess, as she herself used to herd cows. I have not dared to tell her about the benefactor who is going to send her a fur coat. She probably would not get a wink of sleep, and it is bad enough for one of us to have insomnia.

The trial of Msgr. Skalski began today. There is a report that Bishop Sloskan will be transferred to the Boutyrki prison. So far, they have not allowed him to have his breviary. I hear that the Catholics in Enakievo have been told by the authorities that if they wish to keep their church, there must be 400 personal requests for this favor which will be granted only with the unanimous consent of the local population.

Msgr. Skalski's case, tried behind closed doors, was soon settled. On February 6, Bishop Neveu wrote that the prelate had received a ten-year sentence. Though there was no evidence that he had been spying, he was convicted of counterrevolutionary activities on the simple accusation of a woman. On the same day Bishop Sloskan learned that he was being sent to Solovki for three years.

March began disastrously, with Bishop Neveu confined to bed for eleven days with agonizing pains in his back. He was so sure that he was going to die that he almost sent for the Polish priest to come and give him the Last Rites. Only the fear of causing Tania and Sophie even greater alarm stopped him from doing so, and from this, he concluded that loved ones can be a great handicap to somebody who is sick. The doctor suspected stones, but an X-ray revealed only an accumulation of gravel in the kidneys, and gradually, this yielded to treatment. However, the attack weakened him to such a degree that, even weeks afterwards, he still tired very quickly. To his relief, he managed to conduct the Holy Week ceremonies and was gladdened by the return of a great number of people to the Sacraments.

Writing on March 19, 1928, Bishop Neveu noted:

Bishop Sloskan has been sent to the detention camp at Kern in the far north. A month ago, two ladies from Leningrad came to Moscow with food and clothing for him, and to their surprise, received permission to visit him. They came to see me afterwards, and I learned from them that the Bishop was questioned for the first and last time on October 18, 1927. There was no trial, and he was told his sentence by an ordinary policeman. The two ladies never reached home, and in spite of all efforts to trace them, nobody either can or will say where they are being detained.

There was alarming news from Makeyevka. Serge and Stanislava did not get on at all, and by the end of March, Fr. David was in greater straits than ever. Both Serge and Stanislava wrote letters to Moscow, each complaining about the other. There was no doubt that these letters had been read by the police who were thus provided with a golden opportunity for soliciting information. Serge and Stanislava were arrested on March 28, each being told that they had been denounced by the other. Two weeks later, Fr. David was still without news of their fate. On April 11, he wrote:

I do not know what has become of them. Last week a man came to make an inventory of Serge's belongings. This afternoon, a policeman came to draw up a formal report about him. He wanted to know when he had disappeared, his former address, where he was from originally, etc. As he was leaving, he told me that somebody would be coming today to pick up Serge's things, but it is now 7 P.M. and nobody has arrived. It is two weeks since they disappeared like soap bubbles, and I can't find out where they are or take them whatever they need.

The next day, Fr. David added to his letter:

I have just come back from seeing the police. They were very pleasant, but they are still very mysterious about the disappearance. Even when I almost put the words into their mouths, they would just tell me to keep calm as everything possible was being done. In the hope of seeing Stanislava come back, I have not hired anyone to take her place. In any case, I probably could

not find a suitable person here.

Fr. David also asked why Bishop Neveu had not acknowledged the telegram he had sent on March 28, giving news of the arrests. Since the telegram had not been received, Bishop Neveu informed the French Ambassador who protested to the Commissar for Foreign Affairs that the correspondence of French citizens was being systematically interfered with and demanded to know of what crimes they were suspected. This produced a belated apology from the Post Office, but no telegram. As far as Serge and Stanislava were concerned, the French Embassy was powerless to help because they were Soviet citizens. Bishop Neveu had no doubt that both of them had been asked for information about him, but he was not too worried on that score. Stanislava had a character of steel and would never say or sign anything that was not true, while Serge could honestly say he knew nothing about the Bishop except that he had received spiritual direction from him.

Inquiries about the possibility of his being given a return visa if he went to France were still being made. The latest report was that it might be granted, but the Bishop must not think for one moment that anybody would be allowed to replace him at St. Louis-des-Français. The arrests were still going on, and the details of some of them were rather interesting. The pastor of Rybinsk, for example, had been asked to sign a paper pledging his allegiance to the Soviet Government and denouncing the espionage of Bishops Sloskan and d'Herbigny. He had replied that he could not do this because, as a priest, he had no political rights and therefore could not perform a political act.

Towards the end of April, Fr. David arrived in Moscow with the news that Serge and Stanislava were being held in Stalino. During his stay of three days, Bishop Neveu discussed with Mr. Herbette possible ways and means of ending the harassment to which Fr. David was subjected. He commented:

The Ambassador has asked me to draw up a memorandum on our difficulties, but it will probably have as much effect as the others I have submitted. Our Ambassador is certainly devoted and kind-hearted, but he is at a great disadvantage in dealing with these

people. He is much too polite and cultured. Here they understand only invective and force.

Ignore any reports that I have consecrated other bishops. They are simply not true. I should consecrate at least one, but I have been unable to do so for various reasons, the chief of which is that the GPU will not allow the candidate to travel to Moscow. I remind myself of the people of Montlhery who once made a similar statement to King Henry IV of France, explaining that they had not fired a royal salute for fifteen reasons, the first being that they had no gun. The King dispensed with the other fourteen.

On May 19, Fr. David wrote saying that the police had told him that there was no point in his returning to the prison at Stalino as Serge and Stanislava were no longer there. From this, he concluded that they had been deported. He also added that his sole companion, the fifteen-year-old German boy, had been taken home by his parents. Desperately concerned, Bishop Neveu decided to send Tania to Makeyevka. She arrived on June 6, much to the surprise of Fr. David.

On June 25, Bishop Neveu wrote:

Tania is back. Fr. David imagines that I cannot possibly manage without her and sent her home at the end of a week. She is quite upset at what she saw. Fr. David is always depressed and speaks only of his death which, he is convinced, will come soon. He is eating little or nothing, is not sleeping and is neglecting the property. Tania was able to find him a German Catholic housekeeper.

Tania also tried to get him to take an interest in getting the church repaired because this is more and more urgent. The gutters are almost useless, and it has rained so often and so heavily that the water enters freely. There is still a sum of about one thousand dollars which was given to me in 1926 for repairs to the church, but at that time, I was too occupied with other matters. That would be enough at least to start the work, but I realize that it is difficult at present to get workmen and material. The church fence is down in several places and needs either to be repaired or replaced. Fr.

David is very lonely, and people should write to him as often as possible.

The trial of the Donetz Basin engineers is in progress. I know a number of the accused and the witnesses. Names of more than one of the former French officials have been mentioned.

Arrests among our Orthodox brethren have multiplied to an alarming extent. I have had another talk with Bishop Bartholomew about whom I spoke to you recently. He is a very learned man and an excellent linguist; he is also well disposed towards the Catholic Church. He is, however, a man of books rather than of action, and I fear that should he ever become convinced of the truth of Catholicism, he will never be able to make a decision.

I shall try to send my measurements for a black episcopal cassock to you soon. My Assumptionist habit is almost threadbare, and it is the only thing I have for everyday wear. They made me a purple cassock, but I feel like a fireman in that. My purple skull-cap has become very soiled. Since I have very little hair, my bare skull quickly becomes greasy.

Early in July, a verdict of "guilty" was brought against the Donetz engineers accused of espionage and counter-revolutionary activities. Bishop Neveu's name, mentioned several times during the trial, was included in the verdict passed on one engineer, a Greek subject named Voutsina, who was not only sentenced to ten years in solitary confinement, but also stripped of all his goods and deprived of civil rights for a further five years. According to the official report, the trial showed that Voutsina more than any of the other accused engineers, had, through the French priest Neveu, maintained communications with the expropriated French officials and owners and passed on information concerning industry in Makeyevka.

It was a very complicated story. Bishop Neveu only heard the details in November 1928 when Mrs. Voutsina brought him a letter written by her husband in prison at Kharkov and passed to her when the guard was momentarily distracted. Voutsina had worked in Makeyevka for over

sixteen years and was highly regarded by his French employers. He had several children, one of whom had received French lessons from Bishop Neveu. He also owned a house at Taganrog and a villa at Anapa on the Black Sea. He would probably have gone to France when the French left the Ukraine if his wife had not been Russian. By 1927, he had become very dissatisfied with conditions in Russia and had applied to the French Embassy for a visa to go to France. He had also written to some of his former French colleagues, asking them to do what they could to expedite matters. He received his visa on March 7, 1928, was arrested the next day, and was then detained at Stalino. The charge against him was that he engaged in counter-revolutionary activities, working under the instructions of his former employers which were transmitted to him by "Neveu, a member of the French Mission."

Voutsina's request to see the Greek Ambassador was denied. He was told that the Ambassador would simply be informed that he had died during the preliminary hearing. The trial, which had begun on April 26, 1928, was held behind closed doors, and Voutsina was not allowed a lawyer. In vain did he protest that his only communication with France was in connection with his visa. One witness against him was a man who had become chief engineer and technical works' Director following the departure of the French. This man testified that he had given Voutsina information to be passed on by Neveu to France in 1920, a time when the Ukraine was being torn by war and when the factory was not even working. Later, this witness went mad. Another hostile witness, after attempting to commit suicide, sent a letter retracting his testimony. In any case, Voutsina was found guilty. Bishop Neveu, apart from being mentioned in the verdict, was described by the President of the Court as "a secret agent of the Vatican." This, the Bishop felt, was a little less than accurate. As a Bishop of the Catholic Church, he was an official and public representative of the Holy Father. He was also amazed at the inconsistency which allowed a Government tribunal to pronounce a judicial sentence that declared him guilty of counter-revolutionary activities and yet permitted him to remain at liberty.

His hopes of going to France in 1928 now were negligible. There was no guarantee, even if he were promised a return visa, that the promise would

be kept, and he could not afford to take the chance of not being permitted to return to Russia. The situation in Moscow was less than inspiring. It was very hot, the rain seemed incessant, and there was every sign of famine. In July, he wrote to Fr. Quénard:

I have had to send Sophie home. Conditions of life here are not at all suitable for her, and her health was beginning to deteriorate. Tania is holding on, but the poor child is terribly thin. I received your letter in reference to Fr. David. I do not want to bring him to Moscow at present because there would not be room for him in my present establishment. Besides, since I last wrote, things seem to be going a little better for him. Tania's insistence that he should get busy with the repairs seems to have had some success. He went out and found a contractor who had worked on the church when it was being built. He got an estimate for the repairs, and these are now under way. Fr. David's last letter was very different from his previous ones. He feels now that he is still of some use and is correspondingly happy. The housekeeper that Tania got for him seems to be hard-working and trustworthy. It is good that he is not so much on his own. I just hope they don't take the church away from him after he has gone to the trouble of fixing it up.

At the time, Bishop Neveu was just recovering from another attack of pains in his back. Everything happened together. It was time for him to apply for a new permit to stay in Russia, and Tania had to help him down to the Municipal Soviet. For the first time since his arrival in Russia in 1906, a permit for only six months instead of a year was issued to him. He noted that he was charged the same price, 5 rubles and 50 kopecks. His student neighbors were proving to be rather rowdy and, on August 7, 1928, he wrote:

Last evening, for the second night in succession, our neighbor, a Jewish Communist, organized a party which was just getting under way at the time I usually go to bed. There were four young men, four girls, a mandolin and a great deal of Vodka. The noise became unbearable and, some time after 11 P.M., I went to the House Administration to register a complaint. On my way, I met the student in the corridor. He said something about "spitting on

priests." I looked around quickly, saw there was nobody in sight, and gave him a sharp kick in the rear. This forced him to swallow his saliva! He did not dare complain and accepted my caress quietly. Fortunately, I was not wearing my cassock when I performed this exercise in gymnastics; my action was scarcely clerical, much less episcopal. Those who sent me here should come and sample our way of life; when they went home, they would surely write new rules. Poor Tania was scared to death, but I thought it was very funny.

I am still using most of the money I get to buy books for the future Assumptionists of Russia. There are some golden opportunities which it would be foolish to ignore. Somebody from England sent me money a year and a half ago. Last week, I spent it on the complete Collection of Russian Chronicles, forty old books in good condition which will delight the heart of lovers of history. How I wish these books and my library in Makeyevka were in a really safe place.

The doctor advised Bishop Neveu to get away from Moscow for a while, so he decided to take a cruise on a riverboat down the Volga as far as Astrakhan. As Tania also needed a change, he thought he would bring her with him. Another reason for doing so was that he had a prudent fear of another kidney attack while he was traveling, and he wanted a companion whom he could trust. They were to leave Moscow by train for Nijni-Novogorod, where they would pick up the boat, at 10 P. M. on August 22.

On the afternoon of that day, Bishop Neveu went around to the Polish church to ask Fr. Loupinovitch to take care of Sunday Mass at St. Louis while he was away. At the rectory, he met a priest who had visited him on the previous day bringing documents concerning the parishes of Vologda, Viatka, Archangel, Rybinsk, Yaroslav, Tula and Kostroma which he alone was looking after. The Bishop was scarcely inside the house when the police arrived with a warrant to search the visiting priest. An officer told Bishop Neveu that he too must empty out his pockets. He protested that the police had no warrant to search him and produced his passport to show that he was a French citizen. The officer, slightly taken aback, said he had to go and make a phone call. He came back in about fifteen minutes

and said that if the Bishop would merely turn out his pockets, he would be free to go. Not wishing to make the situation more complicated for Fr. Loupinovitch and his guest, Bishop Neveu produced his purse, a rosary and a handkerchief, and was then told to leave.

He heard later that the police had made a superficial search of Fr. Loupinovitch's room but did not find a letter, written from Podolia, which contained the remark:

Neveu must have a very difficult time because the police even question priests down here to see if they have any dealings with him.

A search of the unfortunate visitor revealed only a notebook containing a list of Mass intentions. This was sufficient to get him arrested, leaving another seven parishes without a priest. In a letter dated September 17, Bishop Neveu wrote:

We left Nijni-Novogorod on August 23 and reached Astrakhan on August 28, the feast of St. Augustine. I hope you got my telegram of good wishes. I would like to give you my impressions of the trip, but that would take much too long. The thing that struck me most was that nowhere did I see any sign of wheat or corn in the fields. I wonder what they are doing with it. The bread on the ship was black.

I got back to Moscow on September 5 and found a letter from Fr. David awaiting me. He tells me that, according to the police, he is a spy and shelters spies. The information came from a former trustee of the church in Stalino who had just been released from prison. The police, it seems, gave the man a very hard time on my account. They reconstructed an imaginary scene in which he and I and two engineers had been seated at a table on which there was a bottle of Vodka. They even told him the positions in which we were supposed to have been sitting. I had 30,000 rubles. The police told the trustee that if he would swear that he had heard me offer the money to the engineers in return for industrial information, they would give him a pension of 500 rubles a month for life. He refused to do as they wished, but you can see the general strategy. They

want to make us odious to our Catholic people so that they will fear us as men who bring misfortune to anybody with whom we have any contact. They want to create a void around us, an atmosphere of hate, so that we will be forced to leave the country. We are foreigners who see too much. A neighbor tells me that one of the students living in the house is a police informer who is here to keep me under surveillance.

On September 9, Bishop Neveu went to Leningrad to return Fr. Amoudru's visit and sought an opportunity to meet Bishop Malecki for the first time. Although he seemed in good health, he had had two seizures and was very much afraid that he would be arrested. For this reason, Bishop Malecki said that he would like to have a Vicar General who would also be a bishop. There were two candidates: Fr. Theophilus Matulanis, a Lithuanian who had been arrested and imprisoned with Archbishop Cieplak in 1923, and Msgr. Przyrembel, the former temporary Administrator of the diocese of Mohilev who should be ruled out because of previous dealings with the GPU. Fr. Amoudru felt that Msgr. Przyrembel's character was stronger and that since he had worked very hard, Rome might make him a Domestic Prelate. Bishop Neveu promised to transmit the idea to the proper quarter.

Bishop Neveu also saw a letter written to Bishop Malecki by Bishop Sloskan who had been sent first to a forest near Kern where he lived in a tent pitched on a marsh near a river. Although sick and barely able to walk, he was obliged to spend the day cutting wood in the snow. He finally reached Solovki and was able to ordain to the priesthood a young detainee. So far, noted Bishop Sloskan, the priests had been allowed to say Mass. He also added that the morale was good, and that Fr. Potapii, who acted as cook, shoemaker and tailor, had made himself almost indispensable.

Chapter Fourteen

In view of the official attitude to religion in the Soviet Union, it seemed only in the nature of things to Bishop Neveu that his role as Apostolic Administrator should have been reduced to the receiving and reporting of bad news. It came from all sides. Each morning after Mass, he remained in the church to speak to the people who had come to see him, not only from Moscow but from distant parts of the country. His correspondence was extensive, much of it being delivered by trusted messengers. He also subscribed to the three most important Soviet newspapers which he read closely each evening.

From the pile of newspapers which had accumulated during his vacation, he learned that, in September 1928, the Moscow Soviet had approved a motion calling for an increase in all rents. For the “non-working” classes, which included clergymen, the increase would be retroactive to January 1, 1928, and in addition, they would be charged at a much higher rate than the “workers.” He also discovered that an application had been made to the Soviet for a ruling that all non-workers should be expelled from Municipal houses by October, 1929. Bishop Neveu had little doubt that this proposal would become law and felt that it might be good for Tania, whose doctor attributed her rheumatism, anemia and migraines at least in part to the dampness of the apartment in which they were now living. It would be a rather drastic remedy as the Bishop had not the slightest idea of where he would find alternative accommodation. It was true that the Austrian Ambassador had offered him hospitality. He felt sure that the same courtesy would be extended to him at the Italian Embassy which was large and commodious. Best of all, of course, would be the French Embassy but that was very small. Bishop Neveu could never understand why the example of the Austrians, who had ceded their property in Leningrad in exchange for the ownership of a building in Moscow, had not been followed. As it was, the unused French property in Leningrad was deteriorating while the Embassy in Moscow was much less imposing than those of much smaller nations.

Residence in an Embassy was not, to Bishop Neveu's mind, a desirable solution, although it would have certain advantages. Anyone who visited a foreign embassy was immediately suspect by the GPU, and many people who had a right to see him would be precluded from doing so. On the other hand, he would be relieved, to a large extent, of the attentions of the police agents who had him under surveillance. He now knew for certain that his student neighbors, Berkovitch, the tenant, and Bieloousov, the sublessee, were working for the GPU. They had admitted this openly in the course of a violent argument which was audible to the whole house. Berkovitch ordered his lodger out and, the next day, changed the lock on the door. Bieloousov simply went for the police who reinstated him in his half of the room. It was obvious that he preferred to suffer the intolerable situation rather than lose the income he received for keeping an eye on the Bishop.

Matters of a more urgent nature soon pushed Bishop Neveu's speculation about a new home to the back of his mind. A parishioner of Makeyevka, visiting in Moscow in October, 1928, brought news that Fr. David was suffering from nervous exhaustion. The latest misfortune was that he had lost the German housekeeper whom he thought to be so diligent and pious. She contracted a civil marriage with a compatriot and left, taking whatever she could lay her hands on from the rectory kitchen. Fr. David had also received a bill for water and electricity for the years 1920-1928 which amounted to 10,641 rubles 87 kopecks and included a 120% fine. There was news, too, of Stanislava. After many fruitless journeys to the GPU at Stalino where he had been told alternately either that she had been sent to Solovki or that the GPU had no knowledge of her whereabouts, Fr. David discovered that she was being detained in the common prison at Stalino and, there, was able to bring her food, clothing and money.

Bishop Neveu managed to persuade a Polish lady of his acquaintance to go as housekeeper to Fr. David and sent her off to Makeyevka with instructions not to get herself arrested. She brought with her a letter for Fr. David in which the Bishop described the electricity bill as an act of brigandage because from 1920 to 1922 industry had been at a standstill and nobody had electricity. He advised Fr. David to accept responsibility

only from September, 1926 onwards and, in case there were difficulties, to refer the authorities to the previous pastor. He also told Fr. David to try and come up for a few days rest to Moscow.

Bishop Neveu himself was only just recovering from a sharp attack of nephritis which, together with the diet prescribed as a remedy, had left him very weak and with a pulse that raced and legs which swelled alarmingly. It was at this time that he received the bill for his new rent. So far, for twenty-three and a half square meters, he had paid 12 rubles 92 kopecks a month. Now he would have to pay 67 rubles 46 kopecks a month, an increase of 500%.

The weather in Moscow was vile and disagreeable when Fr. David arrived at the end of November. It was damp, foggy and rainy, and he was strained, anxious and slightly unnerved by the obviously calculated harassment to which he was being subjected. He was still hopeful that Stanislava would be released, but he was well satisfied with his new housekeeper and pleased because his little German boy had returned to him. The change apparently did him good, and he seemed refreshed and cheerful when he left again for Makeyevka, but Bishop Neveu and Tania could not help feeling uneasy. Their foreboding was justified, for Fr. David had no sooner reached home that he came down with jaundice.

On January 7, 1929, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

We are very concerned about Fr. David who has still not completely recovered. I have asked him to come up for a rest as soon as he can travel, but he knows that we do not have much room and does not wish to feel useless or to be a burden on us. I received the books you sent. Tania wept with joy when she saw the shawl, stockings and the other things she had requested. She does not understand how people can be so kind to someone they have never met.

There was a terrible scene in our lodging last week. My friend Bieloousov shot himself at about 5:00 P.M. on January 4 when Tania and I were alone in the house. In fact, it was I who had to notify the police. It seems that he had been expelled from the Communist party the night before. Tania is very upset. She is having

a very unusual novitiate, and we both need the earnest prayers of the Congregation.

I have received from Rome the authorization to proceed with the consecration of Fr. Matulanis. I would like to go to Leningrad, but I am being watched too closely. I am sending the documents to Bishop Malecki with a trustworthy messenger who does not know what he is carrying but who is only too happy to be doing something that will benefit the church.

On January 25, 1929 Bishop Neveu wrote to the French Ambassador asking him to discuss two matters with the competent Soviet authorities. He enclosed an envelope addressed to Fr. David Mailland mailed from Paris on December 5, 1928. It had reached Moscow on December 10 and Makeyevka on December 13. Although it bore the correct address and Post Office Box Number, it had been returned to Paris marked "Addressee Unknown." Fr. Mailland, he pointed out, had been registered with the Makeyevka police since October, 1917.

He also enclosed a receipt, No.13965/664063, for 5 rubles 50 kopecks which he paid to the Administrative Section of the Moscow Soviet on January 14, 1929, for his permit to stay another six months in the Soviet Union. He had left his passport and was told the permit would be ready on January 19. He returned on that day and was told to return on January 25 as the permit had not yet been granted. He returned on January 25, and after waiting for two hours, was told to come back January 28.

In his opinion, he told the Ambassador, this was persecution of a peaceful French citizen who had lived in Russia for 23 years. He had neither the intention of putting up with the bureaucratic tendencies of subaltern employees of the police nor the time to waste in administrative buildings whenever it pleased some minor official to send for him. He would be grateful if the Ambassador would be kind enough to explain this attitude to the Bureau of Foreigners and demand that his passport and permit be sent to him at once.

Towards the end of January, a postcard from Fr. David announced that he was feeling much better. It, therefore, came as a bombshell to Bishop Neveu when, on February 3, he received a telegram from Makeyevka,

signed by the German boy. It stated simply: "We are waiting for the end." It was Sunday. By the time the telegram arrived, it was too late for Bishop Neveu and Tania to catch the evening express. So he hastily sent a wire to Fr. Quénard advising him of the situation and got two French ladies to come and occupy the apartment while he was away. Then he and Tania took the mail train at 9:00 P.M. and reached Makeyevka at 5:00 A.M. on Tuesday, February 5, much to the surprise and delight of Fr. David who did not know that the Bishop had been notified.

On February 18, Bishop Neveu wrote at length to Fr. Quénard describing Fr. David's condition:

He has cancer of the liver, which has spread to the intestines, but he does not know that. The doctor holds out no hope. Apparently, Fr. David collapsed while saying Mass on January 31, and the people carried him back to the rectory and put him to bed. He revived a little and realizing that something was seriously wrong, he got someone to send a telegram to Fr. Simon who came over from Enakievo and administered the Last Rites. Fr. David gave strict instruction that I was not to be sent for but, in spite of his pain, he spent the early hours of Sunday morning writing to me, and this touching letter of farewell was awaiting me on my return.

I set up a small altar in the doorway of his room and said Mass there each day. He has become terribly thin, and he is in great pain. We sat up with him night and day. On February 8, 9, 10 we said special prayers to Our Lady and St. Theresa in preparation for the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. On that day, I said Mass for his intentions, and Fr. David renewed his vows in religion. We had to leave immediately after Mass on the 11th because, with Tania's permit expiring on February 14, she would have to apply for its renewal in Moscow. I promised to send her back as soon as possible. If he should die, it will be the end of Makeyevka. Once the local authorities see the church without a priest, they will close it immediately.

Fr. Matulanis was consecrated Titular Bishop of Matrega by Bishop Malecki on February 9, and he is named Auxiliary Apostolic

Administrator. The consecration is to remain secret until circumstances permit or force it to be made public, i.e. if Bishop Malecki is impeded from carrying out his duties. It will be for me to decide whether this situation obtains. Msgr. Przyrembel is appointed pro-Vicar General.

A long letter from an Armenian Catholic priest in the Crimea brought news of Bishop Frison. The GPU told him that he must have their permission to visit the parishes under his jurisdiction and that this permission would not be given unless he promised to make a full report to them. He and his two nieces were put out of the rectory and were living in two small rooms which they were ordered to leave each day by an official who admitted that he was acting under the strict orders of the GPU. The Bishop was on the point of moving to Odessa, but the thoughtless words of a priest resulted in his being stopped. Understandably exasperated, Bishop Frison had used some forthright but tactless German expressions which had served only to enrage the police. The Armenian Catholics were having their own difficulties. They had attempted, as ordered, to renovate their four churches simultaneously, but just as one set of repairs was completed, additional demands were made. Since they had no money, the situation had become impossible. The priest who wrote was himself looking after 14 parishes.

On February 24, Tania set out again, not very optimistically, for Makeyevka, bringing with her a piece of white material which was to take away the bareness of Fr. David's casket. He was still alive, seemed less yellow, but was so weak that he could not get up without assistance. He told Tania that after their departure he had had two days of agony accompanied by nightmares and hallucinations, but that, after that, the pain had eased. He was sure he was getting better. Bishop Neveu found this news incredible and, fearing that this change was not a good sign, he went to Makeyevka on March 11 and stayed for three days. On March 18, he wrote to Fr. Quénard:

I am afraid to say that there has been a miracle, but Fr. David is losing the yellow color, his appetite is improving, he is sleeping well, has recovered his good spirits and is even joking about his thinness. The doctor says that the swelling is still there, but the

pain has gone, and he himself was totally unprepared for this development. He knows that his first diagnosis was correct, but now he prefers to say that he was mistaken. God gave us a rare pearl when he sent Tania to us. She has been a real tonic to Fr. David, hut. If he continues to improve, she will come back to Moscow on March 25.

Since the day before yesterday, there has been bread rationing in Moscow. As a "parasite," I received no ration card, so if I get bread, I will have to pay twice the price. Tania got a card because she is a member of the cooperative.

For almost a month now, Fr. Loupinovitch and I have had to take care of the three parishes in Moscow. The pastor of the Immaculate Conception church was arrested on February 19. He had an appointment to meet a friend at the station, but he never appeared. After inquiries were made, it was learned that he was in prison. The technique is obvious. Catholicism will be suppressed by arresting the priests so that the faithful will die of spiritual inanition. In another two years, it will be all over.

On April 8, 1929, new legislation dealing with religious organizations went into effect. Article 13 of the Constitution of 1918 which had granted liberty to engage in religious or anti-religious propaganda was amended, and citizens now had freedom either to profess a religion or to engage in anti-religious propaganda. Religious propaganda had become illegal. Believers were forbidden to engage in any other activity except divine worship and could not have gatherings of young people or organize religious study groups. Henceforth, children could be taught religion only by their parents, and ministers of religion were restricted to the area inhabited by the members of their parish.

One week later, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard to say that he thought that Fr. David should receive clear instructions to return to France as soon as he was able to travel. There were famine conditions in the Ukraine. Besides, it had to be realized that the parish of Makeyevka was disintegrating. For over two years, there had been no sermons or Confessions except when a visiting priest came through, and this was very

irregularly and always in midweek. The rectory was dilapidated and would soon be uninhabitable. The foundations of the church had been weakened, and there were great cracks in the walls. Both, of course, could be repaired at great expense, but there was always the possibility that the church would be taken over or closed by the local authorities. As it seemed that Fr. Hildebert was not going to receive a visa, it would be wise to recognize that the Assumptionist mission in Makeyevka was finished. Fr. David had had more than his share of suffering and harassment, and there was no point in allowing him to end his days in misery and loneliness.

To this letter, Bishop added a postscript:

I see that *La Croix* of March 20, 1929 had the nerve to describe me, on the front page, as "a holy Bishop." Why cause those who know me to make fun of me? I know a little about myself, and there are some compliments which disgust and hurt me more than insults. Please ask them to leave me in peace. God is well able to distinguish between the sheep and the goats, but He is in no hurry. He is waiting for the Last Day, so let everybody else do the same.

The winter had seemed interminably long, and the strain of life in general and the weeks of anxiety over Fr. David had left Bishop Neveu worn and thin. On May 5, he had a surprise visit from the French Ambassador who embraced him and then told him that his father was dangerously ill. Mr. Herbette seemed so moved that the Bishop, instinctively suspecting the worst, forebore to ask any questions. The next day, a secretary from the Embassy came to inform him that his father had indeed died on April 29. Suddenly, Bishop Neveu had no longer any great desire to take a trip to France.

At the same time, there were a few cheering items to lighten his sadness. A member of the Embassy staff, who had been sent to Makeyevka, returned with the news that Fr. David was still improving and was now able to go for short walks. As a result of the Embassy's interest, the electricity bill had been reduced to three thousand and some hundred rubles. The pastor of the Immaculate Conception church had been released after two and a half months in prison. There had been no charge against him, but he had been interrogated seven times for periods varying

between five and two hours. The constantly recurring subject had been his relations with Bishop Neveu.

The great tonic for the Bishop, however, was his success in finding and renting a new apartment. Actually, it was half a wooden *isba*-style house with three rooms, a kitchen, a woodshed and a large yard. The surroundings were quiet and peaceful, the air was clear, and even though he would have a ten-minute walk and a twenty-minute trolley ride to the church, all things considered, this was only a minor inconvenience. He was given a three-year lease and, apart from a 1500 rubles deposit, his monthly payment of 60 rubles was less than he was paying in the apartment near St.-Louis-des-Français.

His new home, into which he moved on May 31, was near the Boutyrki prison, and each morning, as he passed it on his way to church at 6:30 A.M., he saw a crowd gathered round the gates waiting to give food and clothing to relatives and friends who were detained there. Stanislava had been brought there early in June, as Bishop Neveu learned from a lady who had visited her. In Stalino, she had been told that she was being sent for three years to Solovki. Now in the Boutyrki, they were saying that her sentence was for ten years, but she was sure that she would not live to see Solovki. She was being interrogated several times a week, the main charge against her being that she was an accomplice of Neveu in counterrevolutionary activity. The grounds for this were letters, written at the time she and Serge were quarreling, in which the Bishop had reminded Stanislava of the duties of Christian charity and patience and had urged her to hold her tongue. In reality, Serge and Stanislava had both been arrested before they received these letters which were now in the possession of the GPU and from which the GPU had inevitably concluded that the only possible reason for asking anyone to keep silent was counter-revolution.

On July 22, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

As you know, my big preoccupation has been to arrange for the shipping of my library to Rome. I have at last found a way to do so, and at the beginning of this month, I went down to Makeyevka to help Fr. David pack the books. The weather was very hot, but we worked hard for a whole week. Finally, we ran out of wooden boxes, so Fr. David went to buy materials to make some. Do you

know that in the whole area of Stalino, Makeyevka and Enakievo, it is impossible to buy nails. I have just sent him some from Moscow, but now he has to find the wood. This will further delay the departure of the books.

On the whole, it was a very sad visit. I said the Sunday Mass in the church, but only six or seven people were there. Even families with whom I used to be very friendly were afraid to show their faces in church in case they should lose their daily bread. I do not regret having stayed to look after these people when the other French citizens left, but it was a sharp reminder that a priest must be detached from everything and everyone. When I left on July 9, I must confess that the tears choked me, and my heart was pounding as though it would burst. Such a pitiful exodus after so many years of work and suffering! I never once looked back to see the panorama which is so much a part of my life.

Sophie has returned to us and is very pleased with the house which I have named the "Villa St. Theresa." She and Tania can alternate in coming to the church with me each day, and so there will always be somebody in the house. A dog which was given us by a friend yesterday will be an added protection and, believe me, this is very necessary in this city of thieves. Tania, by the way, has been stricken from the rolls of the co-operative because she works for a minister of religion, so now she has lost her bread ration-card.

On August 26, 1929, the continuous workweek was introduced in the Soviet Union. Workers would still have a day off, but it could be any day of the week. Sunday would no longer be a general day of rest. The official reason for the change was economic, as it was felt that a staggering of time off would make for more efficiency and speed in developing the Five-Year Plan. In view of the general policy, however, it could be interpreted as another attack of religion because Sunday church-going would obviously be affected. From Solovki came the news that it had been decided to segregate the clergy. The buildings which they had used for saying Mass had been closed since the beginning of the year. Now all the Catholic priests had been transferred to the smaller island of Anzeraki where the

camp commandant, according to the press, was a strict disciplinarian. Serge, Fr. David's former man-servant, had arrived in Solovki with a ten-year sentence.

Meanwhile, Fr. David managed to complete the packing of the library. Thirty-two large wooden boxes containing the results of over twenty years of book-hunting were safely on their way to Odessa whence they would be taken by ship to Rome. Fr. David also obtained his exit visa. All that remained for him to do was to sell the furniture and wind up the affairs of the parish. He expected to be able to leave Makeyevka at the end of September.

Fr. David's estimate was accurate. He came to Moscow on October 1, 1929, stayed a week. On October 10, a telegram from Paris announced that he had arrived there safely. Writing to Fr. Quénard to acknowledge this news, Bishop Neveu said:

I am very happy now that Fr. David's trials are over. You have a living chronicle of our life and times in this great country. I may not be too far behind him. There is great indignation here over the French Government's decision to expel an Orthodox clergyman from France, and Soviet diplomacy is rushing to his defense. Our Ambassador has twice been told discreetly that the same thing could easily happen to me unless the matter is dropped. Fr. Amoudru came to see the Ambassador about the increased taxes on our church of Notre-Dame-de-France in Leningrad. Mr. Herbertte referred him to me, but I flatly refused to help and told the Ambassador that it is the duty of the French Embassy to protect French national property here.

Whatever money I can spare goes to priests who are Soviet citizens and who have nobody to whom they can turn except me. Thereupon, the Ambassador replied that the French Government would pay the taxes but that such an expedient would merely delay the inevitable. Almost every other country, it seems, has some kind of agreement with the Soviets about property, but France has nothing.

Bishop Matulanis has been interrogated at length three times

recently by the GPU, but there is no indication that they suspect he is a bishop. There is an unconfirmed report that Msgr. Przyrembel has been arrested. Exarch Feodorov has completed his sentence but has been sent to Pinega, about 135 miles from Archangel. Stanislava got her ten years and has arrived in Kern on her way to Solovki. The lady who went to see her in prison has been arrested.

Bishop Neveu had already requested and received permission from Rome for priests to say Mass at any hour of the day in any becoming place without vestments, using simply, if necessary, a glass or any suitable container for a chalice. The Catholic clergy, detained on the island of Anzeraki where they were forbidden to say Mass, were doing so secretly between midnight and 7:00 A.M. They numbered 22, including one bishop, 17 priests of the Roman Rite and 4 of the Byzantine Rite. Since their quarters were confined, they had to kneel in an alcove containing a low shelf which served as an altar. The four Orthodox priests detained with them did not betray them, while the guard apparently noticed nothing. It was almost certain that Bishop Matulanis, arrested in December, would soon go north to join them. The morale of the priests was high. In spite of the law proclaiming the continuous workweek, they refused to work on Sundays saying they would prefer being shot. They also refused to stop wearing the clerical garb, except when they were out chopping trees.

In an effort to bring spiritual consolation to the Catholic laity held on the larger island of Solovki and cut off from priests and sacraments, Bishop Neveu petitioned Rome "that in cases of necessity and for the benefit of those detained in prison or similarly cut off from access to a priest, the Blessed Sacrament be brought to them by trustworthy lay people, lest through the present persecution, Catholics in the Soviet Union be deprived of the Body of the Lord." The petition was granted.

Chapter Fifteen

On December 23, 1929, Bishop Neveu joyfully acknowledged the news received from Fr. Quénard that his library had arrived in Rome:

Thank you for your words of kindness and affection which bring pleasure even to a person of my age. I am as happy as one of the cherubim to know that my books are safely in Assumptionist hands, and I am sure that they will gladden the hearts of our Oriental scholars. You will have to draw up a new catalog because the Makeyevka police took the one I had. If you notice that some of the collections are not complete, send me a list of the missing volumes as I may be able to pick them up here.

The struggle against God in the Soviet Union has reached such a pitch of ferocity that the age of martyrs could easily come again. I would thus have a chance to expiate my sins and ingratitude to God. In the offices and workshops, believers are given the choice of apostatizing or losing their jobs. There are many examples of cowardice, but there are also many courageous confessors of the Faith. The old animosity towards Catholicism seems to be disappearing gradually among the ordinary people; the Communists, unwittingly, are the greatest contributors to this turn of events. Perhaps we shall see the Union of the Churches after all.

Fr. Amoudru came again to Moscow to see the French Ambassador in December, 1929, because the authorities in Leningrad were threatening to evict him from his rectory. The official reason was that, when inventory was taken, Fr. Amoudru did not list his library as a book warehouse. The authorities now declared that it was a book warehouse, and that by maintaining it without a license, he had broken the terms of the agreement by which he leased his own rectory from them. The GPU were constantly advising him to leave the country, but he told them that he would just as soon be shot now as later. It was not a propitious time for the Ambassador to make a protest as he himself, France, and the French people were getting a very bad press in the Soviet Union because of Mr.

Tardieu's energetic measures against Communists in France. He merely told Fr. Amoudru that if he were put out of his rectory, he could go and live in the old French Embassy building. Bishop Neveu's comment was that the Ambassador had obviously not yet found the right language for dealing with the Soviet authorities. He was much too courteous to be effective.

Bishop Neveu heard from Fr. Amoudru in January, 1930, that the Catholic Cathedral in Leningrad was closed and that Bishop Malecki did not think he would be arrested because of his age. Bishop Neveu felt that he would not like to lay odds against this. He heard too that Fr. Simon, his old friend and neighbor in Enakievo, was dying and, that in Makeyevka, the church had been placed under seals within two weeks of Fr. David's departure and was now being converted into a cinema. The crosses in the cemetery had been knocked down in preparation for turning it into a public park.

Recently, a former French resident of Makeyevka had written to the International Red Cross in Moscow asking assistance in obtaining a birth certificate for his daughter whom Bishop Neveu had baptized in 1911. On making the request, the National Red Cross was told by the Makeyevka police that the Catholic church there had been closed and that the priest had gone away without leaving any address and had failed to hand over the baptismal registers to the authorities. Asked if he could shed any light on the matter, Bishop Neveu told the Red Cross that the police had seized the parish books during the search of the rectory in November, 1923, and as far as he knew, they were still in their possession.

Even nature seemed attuned to the general gloom. The snow had not been unusually heavy nor the cold more penetrating than usual, but for weeks, the whole sky had been closed in by rain and fog. There was no sign of the sun, the moon or even a star, and the dampness had almost crippled the Bishop with rheumatism.

In a letter written on December 9, 1929, Bishop Neveu suggested that perhaps Pope Pius XI could be asked to call for a day of universal penance and prayer on behalf of those who were suffering persecution for their religion. At the end of January, 1930, he learned that the Holy Father, who had so far rejected similar proposals, had given his approval. The Pope made his desires known to Cardinal Pompili in a letter written on February

2, 1930, in which he deplored the persecution of religion in the Soviet Union and urged all the faithful all over the world to make March 19, 1930, a day of reparation and atonement. He himself would celebrate Mass on that day at the Tomb of St. Peter, asking God to have pity not only on those who were being so sorely tried but also on their persecutors.

The storm of indignant protest that rocked the Soviet press at the proclamation of the Day of Prayer grew stronger when, a few days later, the Church of England also condemned the persecution. The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs announced that Metropolitan Serge of the Orthodox Church would give a press conference for the Tass news agency on February 15 and another for foreign journalists on February 17. To the Soviet press, Serge stated that full freedom of conscience existed in the Soviet Union and that there was no attempt to interfere with religious convictions. If some churches had been closed, it was at the request of the people, and if repressive action had been taken against the clergy, this was not for anti-religious reasons but because some priests were plotting against the Soviet government. Reports of atrocities which had appeared in the foreign press were complete fabrications which in no way corresponded to reality. The Pope's protest put him openly in the capitalist camp.

From the foreign journalists Bishop Neveu learned that Serge was late for the interview which was arranged for 2 P.M. on February 17. The presumption was that he had been in conference with the GPU, and when he arrived at 3:05 P.M., he simply handed typewritten pages, on which the ink of his signature was barely dry, to each of the twelve correspondents present. The questions he answered were not asked by anyone present and when one journalist did raise a point, Serge said he had no time and left the room.

Writing on March 30, Bishop Neveu said:

We may have to suffer because of the Pope's letter, but we have gained immeasurably by it. I gave a copy to the Orthodox Bishop Bartholomew who told me that he was disgusted by Serge's statement. No doubt, you have learned from the newspapers that the Central Committee of the Communist Party has admitted that there is some persecution but said that these excesses were

perpetrated by hotheads in the country and were not in accordance with Party policy. The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was very anxious to find out what was going to happen in the church of St. Louis-des-Français on March 19, and a member of the Italian Embassy was asked if there was going to be a Mass “against” them in Moscow. The attaché replied that the Pope was not sponsoring a political demonstration but an act of religion. Our church was crowded for the occasion, and our ceremonies were simple. We exposed the Blessed Sacrament, and we sang the psalm, *Miserere*. For reasons of prudence, I did not preach. Many of our Orthodox brethren were present and were very much moved. One of them said to me: “This is the first time the whole world has prayed for Russia.”

I feel much calmer now that the conscience of the Catholic world has been stirred, and I hope that what the Holy Father has started will become a permanent League of Prayer for Russia. Fr. David wrote to me from Menton. He seems to be feeling guilty because he is not here. I told him that he should be thanking God for having taken him out of this lunatic asylum and that I have been left to atone for my sins and to acquire a sense of my own nothingness.

On April 28, Bishop Neveu noted that he had received encouraging words from the Holy Father who had called him his “dearly beloved son” and who had praised the course of action he had adopted, urging him to continue to pursue patience, charity, prayer and discretion and, above all, to retain his good humor. This last objective was particularly difficult to realize at the time of national holidays such as May 1st which were always made the occasion for anti-religious demonstrations. As a rule, he did not go out at all on those days, preferring to avoid what could only offend his eyes and his ears. But really, there was no escape because slogans and posters still remained for weeks afterwards. In 1930, the Pope, as usual, was caricatured in every conceivable fashion, but the current favorite was a cartoon depicting him in the act of blessing a huge capitalistic gun.

A man who had just been released from Solovki told Bishop Neveu that over 18,000 people were detained there. Bishop Sloskan was in reasonable

health and was very well liked. His sentence would be completed by the end of September. Stanislava was working in the pharmacy, and Serge was in an office. But Fr. Potapii, who was still cooking, was being given a difficult time by Orthodox believers who considered him a renegade. The priests continued to say Mass but were asking for grapes in order to make their own wine because the Orthodox monks, who had shared their wine with them, were now gone.

In Moscow, life continued against a background of terror and privation. The chanter at St. Louis-des-Français had been deported for three years without a trial because a novena Leaflet to St. Theresa had been found in his house. The police had gone around the stores collecting small coins, which were in short supply, and replacing them with paper money. People had begun to hoard small change, and anybody found with three rubles worth of coins in his possession could be shot. Even for those with a ration card, black bread was difficult to obtain, meat was a rarity, and yet both beef and wheat were being exported. The only shoes available in Moscow were luxury shoes for ladies. The stores contained mountains of toothpaste and perfumes, but vegetables and fruit were almost non-existent. To make matters worse, snow and frost at the beginning of June endangered the harvest for 1930. There was no soap, cloth or thread. Bishop Neveu therefore took great care of his one pair of trousers because he did not know when he would be able to replace them.

If the Bishop and his little household were getting enough to eat, it was due in large measure to Mrs. Herbette, wife of the French Ambassador, who bought her provisions in the Elisiev store where all the Embassies shopped. In return, Tania and Sophie did some mending and sewing for her. Sophie's two cousins from the Ukraine had been arrested, sent to Archangel, and forbidden to leave that area for three years. They had been questioned by the GPU about Bishop Neveu, Tania and Sophie and had been given the impression that all three had been arrested.

Bishop Neveu's health was now giving cause for concern. To his other physical ailments had been added a grumbling appendix to which the doctor ascribed the violent stomach pains he was experiencing. In September 1930, he came down with a severe attack of influenza which kept him confined to the house for three weeks. He was barely up and

about again when, on October 12, he had the unpleasant task of announcing that the church of St.-Louis-des-Français would be closed for repairs. Almost every day for some weeks, children from a local school had been engaged in stone-throwing battles, and the chief casualties had been the stained-glass windows of the church. Almost all the panes were broken, and at that time of year, the cold was so intense that the Bishop could compare the building only to an Aeolian cave. He had just finished telling the people that, until further notice, they should go to Sunday Mass in the nearby Polish church when a stone came through one of the remaining windows and landed noisily in the middle of the church, narrowly missing an attaché from the Italian Embassy. Two more stones came in through the sacristy windows.

What really aggravated the Bishop was that, two years before, he had asked the chief lady trustee of the church to get protective gratings for the windows but had been told that this would make the building even darker. Even up to the spring of 1930, it would have been possible to obtain some form of protection for the stained-glass, but now a private individual in the Soviet Union was not allowed to buy glass, so it looked as if he would have to import what he needed from France. He brooded darkly on the predicament of a pastor who had only women trustees. In the meantime, he would say Mass in his home because he could not use the facilities of the Polish church without permission from the Government.

On November 10, 1930, Bishop Neveu acknowledged the safe arrival of a box of grapes destined for the priests in Solovki. He had already dispatched it but was wondering whether it would ever reach those to whom it was addressed. Bishop Matulanis and Msgr. Przyrembel had been sent to Solovki for ten years. Bishop Sloskan had been released and had returned to Leningrad at the beginning of November. Upon his arrival, he received a great welcome from his people and announced his intention of having a Pontifical Mass on November 7 at 11:00 A.M. A large crowd gathered for the Mass, but the Bishop never appeared. A delegation of 14 went to make inquiries at the GPU, but all of them were arrested. The Bishop himself had been arrested that morning and was to be sent to Siberia.

Writing to Fr. Quénard on December 22, 1930, Bishop Neveu said:

The situation here does not look good at all. Throughout the whole year, the Soviet press has maintained its campaign against France. The other day, I heard somebody in the Embassy say that as many French people as possible should be repatriated. The question of debts has never been settled, Mr. Herbette is detested, and I think he would almost prefer a break in diplomatic relations. On the day he leaves, I shall find myself in the Lubyanka prison.

The GPU have been seeing Fr. Loupinovitch regularly for some time. The other day, they asked him to sign a document by which he agreed to give them information. They asked him, too, if I were supporting Fr. Soloviev. He said he didn't know. Only a priest could have prompted them to ask that. I have had to help Fr. Soloviev since he lost his teaching post at the university and his work of translating. A group of people here have been arrested on a charge of conspiring with the Catholic clergy in Moscow. Where does that leave us? I hear that Bishop Malecki has been in prison since November 29.

I must point out an error in the *Lettre à la* Dispersion of November 3. As you know, I am very proud of being from near Orleans. The bridge there dates back only to roundabout 1750. Thus, it could not have witnessed the triumph of the Maid of Orleans. The first person to cross it was Madame de Pompadour, and this gave rise to our saying: "We have a strong bridge because it supported France's greatest burden."

On January 19, 1931, Bishop Neveu noted that he had received word from Rome that the Holy Father considered his mere physical presence in Moscow to be efficacious. He was urged to stay as long as possible, but if there was a diplomatic break between France and the Soviet Union thereby creating a danger of his being held as a hostage, he was to arrange to leave with the French Ambassador.

While fully determined to do all in his power to remain, Bishop Neveu realized that he would not be averse to a break. It was time that somebody with personal knowledge and experience tell the true story of what was happening in the Soviet Union, and it would be good for Tania to enter the

longed-for novitiate. He was a monk who had lived for twenty-five years outside his community, an Apostolic Administrator with almost nothing to administer, and a pastor whose parishioners were being arrested one by one. Article 4 of the Soviet Constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience and the free use of churches, but the Government was trying to avoid the application of its own laws by imposing taxes which increased progressively each year on both churches and land. For St. Louis-des-Français, the taxes in 1929 were three times as great as in 1928, and the 1930 taxes were triple what they had been in 1929. His compatriots, poor as they were, had sacrificed everything to hold on to the churches which they had built with their own money on land which they had bought. Unless there was energetic intervention by the French Government, the National churches in Leningrad and Moscow would soon be taken over. There was a time when St. Louis-des-Français was going to be requisitioned for use as a club for telephone workers. In Leningrad, the authorities were demanding that costly and unnecessary repairs be carried out in Notre-Dame-de-France. It was true that the French Embassy gave generous help in the paying of the taxes, but that was not a real solution. It was hard to admit that French diplomacy was reduced to giving financial assistance to poor people who did not wish to give up either their faith or their country.

At the same time, the Catholic priesthood in the Soviet Union was gradually being wiped out. Apart from those detained in Solovki, there were 33 priests of German extraction who were imprisoned at Yaroslavl. From Podolia, the Bishop heard that in the old deanery of Proskourov, one old priest was trying to take care of the spiritual needs of 100,000 Catholics. In Moscow, he now had three priests, for a visitor had come to stay at the Polish church. Bishop Neveu knew that he would never be allowed to have two priests in one church and began to speculate as to when the pastor, Fr. Loupinovitch, would be arrested. He had not long to wait. On the night of February 15-16, there were mass arrests in Moscow. Although the Bishop could not get exact figures, he knew that among the victims were a number of people who attended St. Louis-des-Français and Fr. Loupinovitch. The saddest news was that Fr. Soloviev, Vice-Exarch of

the Catholics of Byzantine Rite, and a lady, both of whom had acted as his arms and legs in giving assistance to the prisoners, were also detained.

Bishop Neveu had another anxiety. On February 15, Tania had gone to the Administrative Section of the Department for Foreigners to apply for a renewal of her permit to stay in the Soviet Union. She returned very angry at the treatment she had received and announced that she had been given a week in which to produce proof of her French citizenship. After three more visits, the permit was granted on March 1st but only for two weeks.

On March 16, Bishop Neveu wrote:

I am very concerned about Tania. She was told today to return to the Department for Foreigners on March 21 when she will hear whether her two-week permit will be extended. Fr. Amoudru, who was here last week, told me that his housekeeper had been arrested. When he asked the charge, he was told there was none as yet. This lady who was French had married a Russian officer who was killed during the war. Just recently, she applied for permission to resume her French nationality. Fr. Amoudru and I are the only French priests here, and they feel that we know too much. It is obvious that they are trying to make things so difficult for us that we will leave. A new tax on all non-proletarians will cost me 200 rubles. The GPU are investigating Tania very thoroughly, and if she has to go I do not know how I shall replace her. She is hard-working and utterly devoted and trustworthy. Sophie is good, but she has neither Tania's strength nor savoir-faire, and Stanislava's friends here say that anyone who has anything to do with me is arrested.

At Mass on Sunday, February 22, after the parish announcements, I told the people that they were going to hear the message of the Vicar of Christ to the whole world. I got the text from *La Croix*. As one man, the congregation rose and remained standing until I had finished. I did this in order to assert our right to be children of the Catholic Church and to assert the Holy Father's right to speak to us without the permission of any modern Pilate.

Fr. Amoudru also said that he had seen Bishop Sloskan during his brief period of freedom and had learned that the GPU had told the Bishop that

they had proof that he was a spy. When he asked to see the proof, that was the end of it. Bishop Malecki, who had been sent to the village of Doubiniovno in Eastern Siberia, had no trial because the GPU did not wish to arouse public opinion. During his interrogation, he was asked why Bishop Neveu had come to see him in September, 1928. When he replied that it was just a social call, he was accused of having correspondence with foreigners (Art. 58, Sect. 5 of the Penal Code) and was told that Msgr. Przyrembel had an excellent memory for detail. If indeed the prelate had talked to the GPU, Fr. Amoudru was sure that he had hurt a lot of innocent people.

To Tania's relief, her permit to stay was extended for three months on March 21, but she, in turn, was now worried about the Bishop. The attacks of stomach pains continued. Though he was not able to perform the Holy Week ceremonies, he did say Mass on Easter Sunday. He consulted the doctor again and was told: "You need an operation, but people in your category are not admitted to the hospital. All I can do is give you these pills." The Pastor of the Immaculate Conception church was re-arrested which left the visitor at the Polish church the only priest at liberty in Moscow. The Bishop had a feeling that this man was collaborating with the GPU and so, now, the Bishop only went to Confession when Fr. Amoudru came to visit him. He began to feel more and more like Fr. de Foucauld in his Moroccan desert. He knew, too, that the GPU, which had now assumed control of the regular police force or militia, were following Tania. Sometimes he wondered if, for her own sake, he should not try to send her to France. She understood French well enough but would need some lessons in conversation as he himself was only too apt to speak to her in Russian. He would miss her sorely, but he would manage somehow.

It was June before he was able to get any real news of the prisoners arrested in February. Fr. Loupinovitch was still in the Lubianka, and Bishop Neveu was able to send him some money. However, the officer on duty refused to admit packages of food. Fr. Soloviev, in the Boutyrki, was quite ill and had told a visitor that he felt he was going out of his mind. In the far north, Exarch Feodorov had been sent from Pinega to Kotlas and, though at liberty, he was kept under surveillance. Bishop Sloskan had reached Ieniseisk by way of Irkutsk and Krasnojarsk where, in spite of the fact that

his legs were partially paralyzed, he had been sent to hard labor. A letter written to Leningrad by Bishop Malecki revealed that he had reached the village of Dubinovo which was in the midst of the barren tundra. He was living with a student in a little hut surrounded by high wooded hills which were inhabited by bears. The student had exchanged some clothes for a sack of wheat which they had ground so as to have some bread. Even with money, it was not easy to buy food, so he asked for soap, sugar, tea and especially for cigarettes and tobacco, because almost anything could be obtained in exchange for these commodities. He also asked for a hatchet so that he could cut firewood.

Tania's permit to stay was renewed for a further three months on June 21, 1931, and so Bishop Neveu decided that Sophie, who had been in Moscow for almost two years, should go for a change of air to her native Ukraine. He himself was determined to make a private retreat this year during the week of July 26-August 2. He brought the Blessed Sacrament to his home and reserved it on a little altar which he had improvised. He felt that the Congregation of Rites would excuse him for taking this liberty. He spent almost the entire week at home in prayer and meditation. He did have to go out on July 30 because it was his turn to have difficulties in getting a renewal of his permit to stay. He had gone to the Department of Foreigners on July 15 and 22, and had come back empty-handed although he had had the satisfaction of giving the officials a piece of his mind. On July 30, having been told to come back again on August 6, he spoke to his Ambassador who, in a telephone conversation with Mr. Litvinov, learned that the Bishop's permit had been ready for a month. This was almost the last service that Mr. Herbette would render him, for the Ambassador was about to leave for France and fully expected to be replaced by someone else.

Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard on August 31, 1931:

What a week I have just spent. On Tuesday morning a lady who had been arrested in February came to see me and said that she had been released from the Boutyrki along with Fr. Soloviev at 3:00 A.M. He is sick, frighteningly thin, babbles like a child and trembles at the slightest noise. He is being sent to live in Alma-Ata near Afghanistan and is forbidden to leave there for ten years. The lady

told me that she had to return to the GPU at 8:00 P.M. to find out where she was being sent, but first, she would like to go to Confession, even though she could not receive Holy Communion. Because she was so weak, her friends had made her drink some tea. I told her that, in the circumstances, she could certainly receive Holy Communion. This pleased her very much.

After Mass, I sent someone to find out more about Fr. Soloviev and to ask him to come to see me. He was supposed to leave Moscow on Friday the 28th, but his friends were trying to delay his departure because he was in no state to travel. He was ordered on Saturday to go at once. I was upset because he did not come to see me, but I respected his wishes. I have just found out that he thinks I was shot in June, for such a report was spread among all the prisoners. He was a fine man and, really, the only priest here who was attached to me. I must tell you that the lady came back to say she was being sent to Irkutsk. Enclosed is the rosary which she made for herself out of breadcrumbs and used while she was in prison.

Tania has managed to get some firewood which will take us through part of the winter, but we will have to chop and split it ourselves. She had many fierce arguments with the carters who demanded an exorbitant price for hauling it. Besides being a hewer of wood, I am also a drawer of water. Until recently, a man would come around with a horse and water tank selling the water at 8 kopecks (1 franc) a bucket, but now his horse has been taken away from him. So each morning, the Bishop of Kitros goes with his two buckets and waits his turn at the water fountain about 200 yards away. In the primitive church, the presbyters must have acquired all kinds of functions in much the same way.

On September 12, Tania completed her twelfth year in the Bishop's service; he had nothing to give her except a holy picture. He told Fr. Quénard that he needed a sweater, but since he was not allowed to buy one, perhaps someone could send one for him and for Tania. He learned that Fr. Soloviev had been unable to leave Moscow on Saturday, August 29, because he was unable to get a train ticket and that he had been re-

arrested and taken to the Lubianka. From there, he had gone by car to see a doctor who said he should be in a hospital. He then went by rail to Kursk where he was met by a car which brought him to a GPU hospital. He was being well looked after, though he was going to have to count on visitors to bring him food.

Bishop Neveu now had a list of thirty-two priests detained in Solovki and of the ten German priests who were confined in the same area. Apparently, they had not received all the food packages that had been sent, but some of the grapes had got through. So far now, none of them had asked to be exchanged for political prisoners, but now they were seriously thinking of doing so. Many of them were ill and so weak that they might not survive the winter. If an exchange could possibly be arranged, Bishop Neveu thought that they should take advantage of it and return to continue their priestly work in Poland.

Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard on November 23, 1931:

Our new Ambassador, the Count Dejean arrived on Friday, November 20, and I wish him luck. Tania is delighted with her sweater which came as a complete surprise to her. Fr. Amoudru tells me that his former housekeeper has been released but is to be expelled from the Soviet Union. The authorities in Leningrad insist that he repair the church at a cost of 55,000 rubles and, in spite of the fact that churches are not allowed to have firewood, he has to spend 20,000 rubles on the heating equipment. The pastor of the Immaculate Conception has been released but is being sent to Tambov where he is forbidden to exercise his priestly ministry. That means that the only other priest down there will be arrested. Fr. Loupinovitch is being sent to Kazakhstan, and another lady who told the GPU that she was a believer was told to pack her bag and go to Alma-Ata for three years. Sophie came back from the Ukraine at the end of October. She says things are on the verge of famine down there.

Don't worry too much about me. For ten years now, the GPU have been at my heels, promising freedom or money to prisoners in exchange for evidence against me. Thank God, all have been

courageous enough to refuse to bear false witness.

From time to time, Bishop Neveu contrived to meet secretly with Bishop Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church. Though Bishop Bartholomew was still very much in love with the idea of the reunion of the Churches, Bishop Neveu had the feeling that this love was purely platonic. Bishop Bartholomew continued to speak warmly of the Catholic Church but seemed as far away as ever from taking any decisive step. He also told Bishop Neveu in January, 1932, that it was being said by some Orthodox clergy that the "French Bishop" was a collaborator of the GPU. Bishop Neveu merely replied that he was surprised that this had not been said before because, not having been arrested yet, he obviously had belonged to the organization. He himself was of the opinion that the GPU had originated the rumor so as to try to isolate him still further. If so, the plan was not succeeding. A Russian lady had the courage to come to him with the news that the GPU, after telling her that the Bishop was giving false information to foreign embassies, had tried to commission her to worm her way into his confidence and report back to them. She had turned down the suggestion and had ignored the instructions to keep the conversation secret.

1932 had not begun well. Tania, who had renewed her private vows of poverty, chastity and obedience at Christmas, 1931, received word that her father had died in Poland. Unfortunately, there were no details of time or circumstances. Unwilling to see Sophie, who was a Soviet citizen, suffer the fate of Fr. Amoudru's housekeeper, Bishop Neveu found her employment at the Italian Embassy where she was now living. What is more, Bishop Neveu's landlord, who had been forced to take in two additional lodgers, had decided to sell the house as soon as the Bishop's lease expired at the end of May. The Bishop learned this with some dismay because, at that time, members of the clergy deprived of civil rights were not allowed to lease accommodations within twenty-five miles of Moscow. He confided his anxiety to Count Dejean, the new Ambassador, who at once suggested that he should come to live "temporarily" at the Embassy. Bishop Neveu was grateful and appreciative of the security he was being offered but feared that it would be like living in quarantine as far as the people who wished to see him were concerned.

Writing to Fr. Quénard on February 29, Bishop Neveu said:

At the time of my last letter, I was sick but did not want to admit it. I had a bout of influenza at the end of January from which I did not fully recover. On February 15, I had to take to my bed because I was shivering and feverish. The doctor said it was a violent attack of bronchitis accompanied with a touch of pleurisy; he also told me that my heart was beating much too quickly. Tania took care of me like a professional nurse, applying mustard plasters and painting my chest with iodine. I must be as tough as leather because I scarcely felt the heat. The doctor prescribed medication for my cough. Since I have no right to buy this, the prescription was made out in the name of an old gentleman whose daughter was "sick." I got the medication free of charge! I am still coughing a little and am consoling myself with the old proverb: "He who coughs long, lives long."

Our Ambassador went to Leningrad recently and decided to bring Fr. Amoudru back with him for a rest. He is looking after nine parishes, is very tired and strained, and was almost on the point of asking for his exit visa. Bishop Bartholomew sent for me because he was sick and thought he was dying. He said that he had nobody else to whom he felt he could open his heart. I was in bed myself, but I hope to go and see him one of these nights after dark. I think he is slowly working himself up to a decision.

Tania thanks you for the package which finally arrived. She was in an ecstasy of tears when she saw the handbag, the strong thread and such a shawl as nobody in Moscow possesses. She has seen so many sad things here that she is convinced that love and kindness have taken refuge in convents.

Bishop Neveu received a tax bill for the church which amounted to 1833 rubles, but he was more fortunate than the pastorless church of the Immaculate Conception. This church was usually valued at 54,000 rubles. Unfortunately, somebody arbitrarily added a zero, and in spite of all protests the authorities were demanding 13,000 rubles in taxes. The

housekeeper who looked after the church was ordered to leave for Poland, which seemed to indicate that the church would soon be closed.

In the diocese of Tiraspol, there were now only four priests to look after the district of Samara, Saratov and Astrakham where, in 1915, there had been 36 parishes and 44 priests. One of the four priests was trying to serve 18 parishes.

Chapter Sixteen

In 1932, Easter Sunday fell on March 27, and it was still very cold. Bishop Neveu had been hoping that the church would be warm enough to prevent the Holy Oils from congealing while he was blessing them on Holy Thursday. He need not have worried because, with olive oil unobtainable, he had to postpone the ceremony. Though Holy Week seemed long and tiring, he found it rewarding. On Good Friday, he and Tania were in the church from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M., he busy with confessions and visitors, she cleaning and making material preparations for the various ceremonies. To his surprise, he had two altar-boys but had to do all the chanting himself. On Easter Sunday, the church was crowded, perhaps because so many other churches had been closed, and it was not until 4:30 P.M. that he and Tania reached home and had something to eat. As an Easter gift, somebody left him an envelope containing a page from the French paper, *Le Monde*. It carried an article signed by "Maurice Schuman" in which it was said that Bishop Neveu was the director of a propaganda and information center for the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union and that he was doing this with a great deal of method and determination.

On Sunday, April 10, 1932, Bishop Neveu was about to start Mass when Tania came to the sacristy with a telegram announcing the death of Fr. David the previous day. The news was not altogether unexpected as Fr. David's health had been steadily deteriorating since August, 1931, but Tania had been expecting another miracle.

On April 11, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

How Tania and I have wept since we heard the news. There are many reasons for tears in this great country, and I admit that I have become a great weeper but this is something different. How many stories could I tell you of this man who was so well able to hide his solid virtue and his delicate, affectionate, fraternal charity behind a gruff exterior. He has, I believe, been loud in his praise of me, but I think he was always inclined to view me through rose-tinted spectacles. It is no more than just that I now tell the truth about

him.

He never sought for esteem or attention, but he was humbly devoted to his work and deeply attached to the Assumptionists. He could, and did, turn his hand to anything. He was cook, chanter, organist, sacristan, goatherd, rabbit-keeper, gardener, winemaker, night watchman, electrician, candle-maker, and, finally, a pastor. He was very sensitive, though he did not show it, and he was very upset when Stanislava was arrested. I could not tell you how many times he walked the nine miles from Makeyevka to Stalino, and back again, first in his efforts to locate her, and then to bring her food and clothing. I am sure he did not speak of these things because he would much prefer to discuss the merits, real or imaginary, of others. As I write, I notice that it must be about 10 A.M. in Menton, the time of the funeral. Tania and I are there in spirit.

Thank God he left Makeyevka. A former parishioner told me the other day that life there is becoming intolerable. The houses are being searched for gold, and everybody is terrified. All through the provinces, bread is becoming increasingly scarce and dear. There is famine south of the Volga, and typhus, which usually accompanies it, has appeared in the Urals, Kazakhstan, and even here in the Boutyrki. A doctor friend told me that he was offered almost dictatorial powers if he would agree to try to halt the epidemic, but he refused since there is no soap to chase away the lice.

The sale of the house in which the Bishop was living was delayed for a month, and although he took advantage of this respite, it was with a sense of relief that he and Tania moved into the French Embassy on June 29 as guests of the Ambassador. The uncertainty had been weighing heavily on the hardworking Tania, and for over a month, she had been suffering from dizziness and a persistent cough. It was true that the arrangement was "temporary" and perhaps contingent on the fact that Count Dejean was a bachelor. Another Ambassador might be married and have a family. Also, the Embassy building was small. Bishop Neveu decided to leave the future to Divine Providence, and in the meantime, rejoiced that there were such

good people as the Ambassador still left in the world. Count Dejean had spared no effort to make his guests feel at home. They each had a room on the ground floor, while a kennel had been provided for Flipp, their watchdog. For the time being, Bishop Neveu would have lunch with the Ambassador and the evening meal, privately, with Tania.

Negotiations were now underway for a non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Poland, and Bishop Neveu discussed with Count Poninski of the Polish Legation the possibility of reaching an agreement about an exchange of prisoners at the same time. Since a number of Polish priests had been detained and prevented from exercising their ministry in the Soviet Union, the Bishop felt that it would be kind and sensible to arrange for the release of at least some of them, if this were possible. Among the names he suggested were Bishop Malecki, Msgr. Skalski and Bishop Sloskan—though the latter was Latvian. The non-aggression pact was signed on July 25, 1932, and on August 3, an agreement was reached on the exchange of political prisoners. About 40 people arrested by the Soviet authorities would be affected, including 17 priests, Msgr. Skalski among them. Though Bishops Malecki and Sloskan were not on the list, the Soviet Government promised that they would be given exit visas to Poland. The exchange was to take place at the frontier on September 15.

Out for a drive in the Embassy car on July 25, Bishop Neveu asked to be dropped in the vicinity of Bishop Bartholomew's house which he then reached on foot by a short cut. A four-hour conversation ensued during which the Orthodox Bishop said that he was now mentioning the Pope secretly in his celebration of the liturgy. When the meeting ended, Bishop Bartholomew asked for his blessing. Bishop Neveu was incredulously sure that his friend was near the moment of decision. He returned to the Embassy by trolley car along with Tania who had come out to meet him with an armful of flowers in order to give the impression that they had spent an afternoon in the country.

From Leningrad, Fr. Amoudru, to whom Bishop Neveu had now given powers of Apostolic Administrator, reported that there was a proposal to close all Catholic churches except St. Catherine's. He added, too, that anyone found guilty of sending food or clothing to Bishop Malecki was being arrested. In Moscow, those interrogated by the GPU were told to

keep away from the French Bishop, as he was the Soviet Union's worst enemy. The Bishop himself was approached by a man who said he wished to discuss religion but who very soon wanted to know about his mode of life in the Embassy. The Bishop replied curtly that such questions had nothing to do with religion. Even the French Ambassador was not exempt from harassment. Though he loved to walk, he soon discovered that he was followed everywhere. When he complained to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Litvinov replied that this was something completely out of his control.

On September 26, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

The Soviet newspapers announced, without comment and without giving names, that the exchange of prisoners with Poland took place at the frontier as arranged. Count Poninski, who was present at the official ceremony, came later to give me details. He was not able to see the priests from closehand, but though poorly clad, they did not look too ill. On behalf of all of them, Msgr. Skalski asked the Count to thank me for what I had done, which, I am afraid, was very little. There was an official delegation from Poland, including representatives of the Papal Nuncio and the local Bishop at the station of Stolbtsky. The honor of saying the first Mass went to Msgr. Przyrembel who, it seems, shed torrents of tears. I suppose he was thinking of all the innocent people who have been deported because of his co-operation with the GPU. I hope the recommendation that he be made a Domestic Prelate is buried under a pile of papers on some desk or that it has been destroyed. Otherwise, I shall cry scandal. We all have our faults and weaknesses, but there are times when we must face the ultimatum to be either a hero or a coward. There must be no decorations for cowards.

Bishop Bartholomew got permission to go for a cruise on the Volga. He wrote to me saying that he wanted to come and see me before he left but decided it was too dangerous. I shall visit him on his return because it is the Good Shepherd who makes the first move and goes to look for the sheep that has strayed. Sophie is in Italy with the Italian Ambassador's wife, and Tania, who has

become a real lady, has abandoned tea in favor of Count Dejean's Bordeaux.

Following the visit of a Government or GPU agent to Solovki, Bishop Matulanis and three priests have been brought back to Leningrad where they are now in prison. It is said that new charges will be made against all those who have sent out news concerning life in Solovki. Count Poninski asked my opinion of a Polish proposal to ask for an amnesty for all arrested or deported priests. I encouraged him to pursue this. Now he wishes me to help him draw up a list of names. Recently, I met a nun who was brought from a prison in Yaroslavl to the Boutyrki to have an operation for cancer. She is now at liberty but is forbidden to reside in any of the twelve chief cities of the Soviet Union. She wanted to go and do religious work in Tambov, but I dissuaded her and told the Polish Commission to ask for an exit visa for her. It was granted. I hate to do things like that because it makes me feel like the liquidator of the Catholic Church here.

In a letter dated November 7, 1932, Bishop Neveu stated that the list of names was completed on October 30 and that an amnesty was being asked for 130 priests. The request had been submitted by Count Poninski to the Soviet authorities who received it politely and said it would be taken under consideration. The Count made a special case of Bishop Malecki who, he said, had devoted his life and his financial resources to the welfare of the working classes and to the orphans of Leningrad.

In the same letter, the Bishop said that he now knew definitely that the priest in the Polish church in Moscow was collaborating with the GPU. His own people did not trust him. What is more, the Bishop's suspicions were confirmed from unexpected sources including one as far away as the Ukraine. What particularly disturbed the Bishop was that this priest was a protégé of the chief lady trustee of St. Louis-des-Français whom he visited regularly. Bishop Neveu confronted the good lady with proof of the priest's disloyalty but was never sure of what effect, if any, he had on her. Bishop Bartholomew had warned him that this lady was jealous of Tania and was trying to dislodge her from the Embassy. Bishop Neveu concluded that his

trustee was still biting her finger-nails for having left him standing on the pavement when he first arrived in Moscow while the Armenians had found him a room. Her excuse had been that, with her and her husband, he would have been too near the GPU. As if anybody could be far from the GPU! He concluded his letter by asking God to give him patience and to strengthen his nerves.

On November 14, 1932, Bishop Neveu had the consolation of receiving Bishop Bartholomew's profession of faith in the Catholic Church. He advised his friend that this should remain secret for his own personal safety and that he should continue to minister in the Orthodox Church for the time being. Bishop Bartholomew said he was willing to adopt the Roman Rite, but Bishop Neveu discouraged him saying that it was not necessary and that he preferred that he ask permission to concelebrate in the Slav Rite. Also heartwarming was the return of Count Dejean from his leave in France. He not only brought Bishop Neveu a long, heavy overcoat, a pair of shoes, medication and a stout walking stick, but also refused the Bishop's offer to pay for them, just as he refused to accept payment for their room and board at the Embassy. Tania, by this time, had resumed her normal duties of cooking and housekeeping for the Bishop.

Bishop Neveu's reference to his nerves in the letter of November 7 had been duly noted in Rome and occasioned considerable anxiety, for they were read in conjunction with letters from English visitors to Moscow, which spoke of his "corpse-like and terror-stricken appearance," and with letters from some of the priests released to Poland. He received word that the Holy Father, who shared in all his sadness and moral sufferings, urged him to take care of his health and not to overtax his strength. He was to be kind to all priests, especially to those who might be a source of worry to him. He was to dissimulate his awareness of the evil about him, to be careful not to say everything he thought, and to try and give courage to those who were wavering.

Bishop Neveu found the Pope's words singularly disturbing. The "corpse-like appearance" he dismissed as being signs of hunger and fatigue because he was up each morning at 5 A.M., traveled down by trolley to open the church, heard confessions until his Mass at 8 A.M., and then received in the sacristy all those who had come to see him. This meant that

he often did not get his breakfast until 10:30 or 11 A.M. But he had never consciously been unkind to anyone, and he could only interpret the Holy Father's words as an indication of displeasure with him. If the released Polish priests complained about him, it must be because the gratitude they had expressed to him at the frontier had been profoundly modified by the air of the Vistula.

He knew that the Polish clergy resented the fact that a Frenchman was in charge of the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union. Ever since the philosopher, Vladimir Soloviev (uncle of Fr. Soloviev) had told the Poles that, in their situation as Catholics and subjects of the Tsarist autocracy they would seem to have the mission of bridging the gap between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, the conviction in Warsaw was that only Polish priests knew how to evangelize the Russians. Bishop Neveu doubted whether this was true, and the Russians doubted it still more. He had often heard the latter, both Catholic and Orthodox, comment on the Holy Father's wisdom in putting Bishop d'Herbigny rather than a Pole at the head of his Commission for Russia set up in 1930. In any case, things had changed since Soloviev's time, and only a small minority of the Polish people were subjects of the sorry heirs of the Tsar. Bishop Neveu himself had only the highest esteem for the Polish people he had met, but he remembered that Pope Pius IX, who had also loved them, had not been afraid to say that one of their great sins had been their abandoning of the Uniate Church. A sharp eye should be kept on priests trained in Lublin and destined for the Russian mission because what was needed was a true spiritual apostolate and not one based on nationalism or prejudice.

All these things, written in Bishop Neveu's letter of December 5, 1932, were read to the Holy Father who expressed surprise at the conclusion the Bishop had drawn. He ordered him to be assured that "the esteem in which he is held has never weakened and has never been so great as at the present time. He must try to cultivate a serenity of soul which he should not only retain inwardly but also express outwardly, even when the text of Matthew, Chapter 10, Verse 17 seems to apply."³

³ "Beware of men; they will deliver you up in councils and scourge you in their synagogues."

On December 14, 1932, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

I have two surprises. Count Dejean, our Ambassador, is going to be replaced here by Mr. Hervé Alphand who is now in Dublin. I have met Mr. Alphand. He is a very kind man, but he is married and has children. I wonder how that will affect my situation at the Embassy.

The other news is that Count Dejean received a telegram from Paris saying that the Soviet Ambassador there had telephoned the Quai d'Orsay to inform them that Messrs. Amoudru and Neveu were authorized to make a visit to France and would be guaranteed a return visa. Count Dejean arranged all this at the time of the signing of the Franco-Soviet Non-aggression Pact on November 29, 1932, thinking it would make everybody happy. He remarked that I did not seem too excited. I said I was merely dumbfounded and did not know what to think. He advised me to accept, as this would establish a precedent which could be useful in the future. I agreed but said I must consult my Superiors.

Humanly speaking, the prospect is attractive, but I do not know what it would accomplish. This is not a good time for me to go, and it would be foolish for me and Fr. Amoudru to be away at the same time. He is more in need of a change than I am. I fear the Greeks when they bring gifts, for it would be easy for them to find some pretext for refusing the visa once we have left. There would be a general protest if I made the priest at the Polish church my Vicar-General, but there is nobody else. Furthermore, six years ago, the GPU gave me just three days to get out of the country. When I wanted to go and see my dying father, they would not give a return visa. The same GPU has arrested and deported many people for the sole reason that to come and see me constituted an act of espionage. How could I go abroad with an easy conscience to inhale the incense which would be wafted at me when I know that men and women are suffering for their faith because they spoke to me? When the prisons are empty and the persecution is over, I may consider such a trip but, at present, it seems better for me to stay.

The amnesty for priests has not been granted yet, and I do not think it will be granted unless we have a funeral of the highest rank. The suitable time, I think, has passed, but in case the amnesty does come, it would be better if my name is not mentioned. It is no use giving the impression that I have a long arm. I have given the Latvian Mission here a full briefing on the case of Bishop Sloskan, and they are taking it up with the Soviet authorities.

Bishop Bartholomew is very happy, but he is not well. Though he is only 46, he has heart trouble and a kidney disease. He is now my confessor, a luxury I have not enjoyed since Fr. Soloviev was arrested. I do not think he should be given a title at present because it is better that his conversion be kept secret. For the time being, only Tania, Sophie and one other person know but I think I shall tell Fr. Amoudru in case anything should happen to me.

Count Dejean has just told me that the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs says that the offer of the return visas will remain valid even if no immediate use is made of it. The Count thinks that I should go to France now because relations may not be so friendly when the commercial discussions come up. I am of the opposite opinion. The Soviets, no doubt, hope that our arrival in France would be interpreted as a proof of their tolerance, of the falseness of the allegations of the Pope, and of the lack of foundation for the accusations about persecution. We would be used to provide water for the Soviet mill, and this I will not allow.

Early in January, 1933, Fr. Amoudru arrived in Moscow to make a complaint to the Ambassador. He had had to give permission for the use of his church basement for the storage of potatoes; the electricity wires leading to the rectory had been cut; the man who came to repair them was arrested; he was summoned to GPU headquarters where his three-hour interrogation began with the usual process of intimidation. They asked why he had not labeled all church furnishings, including the sacred vessels, as the property of the nation. He replied that he did not know this was necessary, but that he was willing to comply with their wishes. They then asked if he would be willing to swear that he had never had any dealings

with either the secret or regular police under the Tsarist regime. He said he would swear to it and signed a document to this effect. They then showed him a statement he had signed in which he swore to be faithful to the Tsar, not to conspire against him, to denounce anyone who did so and to defend him to the last drop of his blood. This was the proof, they said, that he had been involved with the Tsarist police. Fr. Amoudru recognized this as the oath which, by law, all ecclesiastics had had to take before accepting any office and which he had signed on his arrival in Russia in 1908. He pointed out to the GPU that this oath had been made before the ecclesiastical authorities and not the police. The GPU then said that he could at least do as much for the Soviet regime as he had done for the Tsar and asked him to sign a promise to denounce anything that could be harmful to the State. He asked for an example of what they considered harmful to the State and was told a crime such as murder or robbery. Fr. Amoudru replied that he did not associate with people who did such things and, anyway, they were not likely to tell him their plans. He told the GPU that he could neither sign the promise they proposed nor agree to keep silent about his interrogation.

It seemed to Bishop Neveu that the GPU had gone too far in this case and had revealed themselves as inept and unimaginative in the handling of it. If Fr. Amoudru had allowed himself to be intimidated into signing the promise, they would have manufactured some charge which would justify their expelling him without trial. Bishop Neveu had taken the same oath of loyalty, which he considered exaggerated, in 1906 and was in the same position as Fr. Amoudru. It was increasingly obvious that the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs had little influence over the GPU, and he had little doubt that if he had gone to France, the GPU would have invented some reason which would cause Foreign Affairs to refuse the return visa. Now the question did not arise. Not only did the Holy Father approve his reasoning; he ordered him not to leave the Soviet Union. Learning this, Fr. Amoudru said that he too would stay until he was forced out so that he could at least leave with the honors of war. Just the same, Bishop Neveu hoped that framers of future concordats might work out a *modus vivendi* with the civil authorities and eliminate any terminology that might possibly be used as a weapon against the clergy involved.

On January 3, Count Dejean made a vigorous protest and laid a memorandum before Mr. Litvinov who, after saying it had nothing to do with him, agreed to look into the matter. The Count, knowing that the Soviet Government was getting nervous about Japan and had no desire to alienate France, told Mr. Litvinov that he was sure that a satisfactory solution could be found.

Writing on January 30, 1933, Bishop Neveu announced that Bishop Sloskan had been released. He had been transported by sled from Touroukhanski to Krasnojarsk, a journey of about 870 miles which had taken twenty-three days. From there, he had traveled six days by train to Moscow where he arrived on January 11. He was lodged in the Lubianka until January 20 when he was taken to see the Latvian Minister who finally convinced him that the Pope had given permission for him to leave the Soviet Union. To Bishop Neveu, the GPU's insistence that Bishop Sloskan give no interviews and publish nothing about his imprisonment was indubitable proof of the injustice of his arrest. If he had broken a Soviet law, why didn't the GPU say so? If the Bishop had broken no law, why couldn't he say so? Bishop Sloskan left Moscow on January 21 and reached Riga the next day.

Bishop Neveu said also that he had learned from a lady who had returned from three years of exile in Kotlas that Exarch Feodorov had completed his sentence in August 1932, but that the GPU had refused him permission to leave. He heard too that Serge, Fr. David's servant had died in Solovki. Negotiations for the release of Bishop Malecki had been resumed but were proceeding very slowly. Bishop Neveu also discovered that Bishop Bartholomew already had a title. He was the first Bishop of Serguievo which had been officially declared a town at the time of his consecration. He thought the Holy Father should confirm the title by erecting a Titular See. The town was now known as Zagorsk but most people continued to use the old name.

On March 13, 1933, Bishop Neveu wrote:

Recently, I met General Umberto Nobile, the Italian Arctic explorer who has come to advise the Soviet Government on the construction of dirigibles. On March 4 he had surgery in the Kremlin Hospital for a ruptured appendix and peritonitis. He had asked the

Italian Ambassador not to let him die without a priest. As soon as I heard this, I said I would go and see him. Wearing my black cassock with the red buttons and accompanied by a Counselor from the Italian Embassy, I went to the hospital before Mass on Sunday, March 5. It is so unusual for a priest to be there that everybody had to come and look at me, but they were all very polite. The hospital is scrupulously clean. I could have sworn that I was in an entirely different republic. I administered the Last Rites and promised to return to see him in a few days. One must not overdo things in the Kremlin hospital.

I was interested in the clipping you enclosed from the Geneva newspaper. However, the information given about the Catholic church in Little Lubyanka Street (St. Louis is the only church there) is not accurate. The congregation at daily Mass is more than "seven including the celebrant." Each day, I distribute an average of 25 Holy Communions, and to this must be added those who do not communicate. I also think that the figures given for the Orthodox Church are too low, unless the correspondent was here on a Soviet holiday when the trolley does not run, and the streets are closed to all except those taking part in the processions.

Judging by the reports he received, the Bishop thought that the Soviet Union was in the grip of a famine which was as bad if not worse than the one of 1922-23 but that this time, there were no foreign relief missions. Nothing of this appeared in the Soviet Press, but he knew from a certain but secret source that the Red Army food supplies had been cut by 30%. At the same time, he felt that the Holy Father's offer to send help would not be well received. It would only cause the Government to lose face because the newspapers spoke only of Soviet prosperity. He thought it would be better if such an approach were made through the International Red Cross.

After months of negotiations, in February 1933, Count Dejean signed the contract for the lease of another building which would provide much-needed office space for the Embassy staff. On April 4, the Chancellery and the Consulate were moved to their new home, and only the Ambassador, Tania and the Bishop remained in the Embassy. Tania was usually up early

to tidy their rooms before they left for the church. After Mass, while the Bishop was seeing people who dared not come to the Embassy, Tania would clean the church, a task which she had somehow inherited from the chief trustee. The Bishop was usually free by 11 A.M., and together he and Tania drank the coffee she had brought in the thermos. Then Tania would go by trolley car to the Torgsin store which had replaced the co-operative where the embassies used to shop. Despite the fact that food had tripled in price and must be paid for in foreign currency, the Torgsin was infinitely preferable to one of the 16 "free" stores which were convenient only for those with three or four hours to spare. Tania then had to hurry back to have a meal ready by 1 P.M. so as not to disturb the Embassy routine. Because her kitchen was on the third floor, there was necessarily a lot of running up and down stairs. Then she would wash, iron or mend and perhaps go out again to visit the sick and the poor. The Bishop began to think that it might be good for both of them if he bought a second-hand car. The trolley cars were usually overcrowded, and the fare had just gone up to 50 kopecks which meant that public transportation would cost him about 75 rubles a month. With his people scattered all over the city, he estimated that, out of the six and a half years he had been in Moscow, roughly two had been spent in traveling, breakdowns and waiting for trolley cars.

In his letter of May 22, Bishop Neveu noted his pleasure at the warm welcome given to Bishop Sloskan on his arrival in Rome for the opening of the Holy Year. He himself received from the Pope a present of a set of breviaries bound in white pigskin and embossed with the tiara and keys. He sometimes thought they were too beautiful to touch. He added too that he had been speaking to the secretary provided for General Nobile by the Soviet Government and learned that she had been dismissed because she would not sign a statement which calumniated the General. Bishop Neveu's comment was: "You can see the kind of atmosphere in which the poor foreigners who have hired themselves to the Soviets have to live."

Count Dejean left on May 11, and his successor, Mr. Hervé Alphan, arrived on May 25. He at once assured Bishop Neveu that he and Tania would be welcome to remain at the Embassy.

Writing on June 6, Bishop Neveu said:

Mr. Alphand has also offered to place an Embassy car at my disposal, but this is not realistic as I have too many trips to make. It would be better if the Embassy bought me a car — for which I would reimburse them — so that my work among my French parishioners might be facilitated. A young man whom I received into the Church is willing to work as my chauffeur. Though he will be placed on the official Embassy staff, I shall, of course, pay his salary. The Soviet Government will have no objection because this is a time of mutual sweetness.

Imagine my surprise when, a few days ago, Fr. Ilguin walked into the sacristy. His hair is white, and he has grown so old and feeble that I burst into tears. His rheumatism and heart trouble made it impossible for him to work outside, so they told him to go. He told me that when he was arrested, he was asked why Bishop d'Herbigny and I stopped to see him in April, 1926. He replied that he did not ask them what went on at GPU meetings and was told to pack his bag for Solovki. I shall ask the Latvian Minister to try to have him repatriated.

On Saturday, June 17, Bishop Neveu learned that the Holy Father had ordered Tania to leave the French Embassy. Bishop d'Herbigny described the circumstances in a letter dated June 10:

I went to the Vatican this morning for my audience which was arranged for 10 A.M. The Holy Father received me kindly but told me he would have to send me away after 45 minutes. As I began to read your letter of May 22, I noticed that he seemed to be very preoccupied. He made one or two comments when you mentioned that people were being questioned about you. As soon as I came to your remark on page three about General Nobile's secretary and about the atmosphere in which foreigners have to live, he interrupted me and said decisively: "A plot is being hatched which will involve Tania in some calumny which could have the widest repercussions; this must be prevented. Write at once to Bishop Neveu assuring him that there is no cause for self-reproach, but telling him that I order Tania to leave both the Embassy in Moscow

and the Soviet Union as soon as possible so that she cannot be used as an instrument for intrigue.”

I could see by his manner that he had very precise information, but when I ventured to question him, he refused to divulge his source though he did exclude France and the French Embassy. Perhaps it is an Italian or especially a Polish source, for I have heard that a distinguished Polish prelate has just arrived in Rome. When I pointed out the inconvenience and practical difficulty which would result from her departure, he repeated: “It is an order. Be sure to say that there is no diminution of our affection and confidence.” Then, as if he had prepared the expression of his thought, he opened the New Testament and, adapting the words to the situation, he read from The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 7, vv. 1-2, while I took notes: “Be generous with us...I am not finding fault with you...With what confidence I speak to you, what pride I take in you... If I cause you pain by my letter, you are in no way the loser by what I am doing...you have shown yourself innocent in this business... I write to show you the solicitude I have for you before God.”

On June 19, under great emotional stress, Bishop Neveu replied to Bishop d’Herbigny:

Tell the Holy Father that his wish is our command. However, Tania cannot leave yet because we need time to arrange things. Besides, I do not want her to travel alone. Mr. Alphand says she can go with the next diplomatic courier, but that will not be until July 5. If there is a plot, she will be much safer in the Embassy. She cannot go to live anywhere else in Moscow because the stringent regulations concerning internal passports make it easy for her to be traced. All last week I felt a great weight on my mind and a great sadness in my heart. Even Tania remarked that I seemed anxious and strained. Two or three days ago, she was amazed to notice that one of the police agents who usually follows her was actually preceding her as she went to the Torgsin. He looked around once or twice to make sure she was coming, but then she lost sight of him

until, having completed her shopping, she found him waiting for her at the cash register.

And then your letter arrived. Poor Tania! God gave me such a treasure in this girl. She has never wished to leave me for a moment in case something should happen to me. She is the only one who has ever taken the place of my own family, and now she must go after twelve years of devoted service for which she has never accepted a single kopeck.

We thank the Holy Father for his solicitude, and we have never for one instant doubted his kindness. We love him the more for the cross he has sent us. It is already a source of supernatural joy to us because we feel that the Divine Master is impressing His seal more deeply on our souls. Tell the Pope that his taking of Tania calls for a sacrifice which we both make without any reservations. Tania sends her love. I have let her cry her fill during these days. Next week, she will be better, I think.

On Monday, July 3, over two weeks after the Holy Father's order had arrived, Tania was still without an exit visa. Bishop Neveu noted that she had made her application, suffered the usual interrogation and had been told to return to the office for an answer. So far, she had gone on five different days, only to learn each time that the visa had not been granted. Two telephone calls from the French Ambassador had as much effect as if he had been spitting into the river. Bishop Neveu was still determined that Tania would travel only with the diplomatic courier, even if he had to keep her until July 18 or August 2. The GPU was aware of all departures and could easily stage a repetition of the incident at Tula in 1926: Tania could disappear without leaving a trace. To prevent misunderstanding, the parishioners of St. Louis-des-Français had already been informed that the convent Tania wished to enter was now ready to accept her. Bishop Neveu added a postscript: "P.S. Monday, July 3, 9 P.M. A telephone call has just been received saying that Tania's visa has been granted and can be picked up tomorrow. We shall then have to get transit visas for Poland and Germany. She is laughing and crying at the same time, and so am I. You do not know what I am losing."

By noon on Tuesday, July 4, Tania's passport had been visaed. The Polish Consulate issued the transit visa the same day, and the German Consulate promised to do the same on Wednesday. Tania's tickets having been bought, she left with the courier by the 10:30 P.M. train on July 5 for Warsaw and was expected to be in Paris on Saturday, July 8.

Writing on July 17, Bishop Neveu said:

It is all over. The sacrifice has been consummated. There is not a Bishop in the whole world as desolate as I am. During the last few days Tania house-cleaned and washed the church linen and my own. She was ironing up to supper time on the day she left. She then packed a small bag with the minimum of the goods of this world because she had given most of her clothes to the poor.

Mass was crowded that morning because everybody loved her. I offered the Holy Sacrifice for her intentions. I can assure you that I wept bitterly. I wanted to be so brave at Holy Communion, but when Tania and Sophie came up last of all, the words stuck in my throat and everybody in the Church began to weep. It is true that you must lose somebody to realize how much you love them.

When the Lithuanian Minister returns, I shall take up with him the case of Bishop Matulanis. A request for an exit visa for Fr. Ilguin has been made, but it may be some time before it is granted. People here are sometimes bitterly critical of foreigners for not doing more to help them. I ask them if they want another war. In any case, who would be willing to come and die for them since the majority of the people have submitted themselves to the Soviet regime.

Tania arrived safely in Paris, and after a few days there, went to the Novitiate of the Oblates of the Assumption at Sèvres where she was received as a postulant on July 15. Bishop Neveu, knowing that he might possibly get somebody to succeed her but never anybody to replace her, was still not decided on a new house-keeper. Sophie had come over for a few days from the Italian Embassy, but he felt it would not be fair to keep her because the Italian Ambassador's wife had promised to take her out of the Soviet Union, she being the only one who could do this. He thought he

would probably fall back on the Polish lady he had sent to Fr. David. She was honest and hard-working, though he was afraid of her tendency to gossip.

He also received and handed over to Bishop Bartholomew a decree from Rome dated February 25, 1933, which stated that in accordance with Bishop Neveu's request, Bishop Bartholomew was appointed as his Auxiliary for the Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, while another decree made his see of Serguievo a Titular See of the Catholic Church. On July 24, Bishop Neveu went over to the church of the Immaculate Conception to confirm 100 children from that parish and from the Polish parish. He had hoped to do this quietly so that the authorities would turn a blind eye to his escapade, but afterwards the people formed two long lines outside the church to kiss his ring. Among them, he noted a former altar-boy from Makeyevka who told him that the church in Stalino was now a children's nursery while the church in Enakievo was closed, despite the fact that the priest was still living nearby.

Still puzzled by the circumstances that led to Tania's departure, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard on July 31, 1933:

The whole thing smells of intrigue, but I am at a loss to understand its nature. I have known for some time that the GPU is anxious to get rid of Fr. Amoudru and myself because we are foreigners who know too much. At the same time, the Soviets can never accuse me of using the office I hold to denigrate their regime without calumniating me. I have always tried to be prepared for a possible easing of the situation in regard to religion. For this reason, I have carefully sought not to draw attention to myself and have tried to remain hidden and inconspicuous so as not to enrage them or provoke them to further cruelty and severity towards believers. It is my duty to inform my superiors of all the facts which come to my knowledge. It is for them to decide what use to make of them. When I judge that something should be brought to the knowledge of the general public, it is because I think it is opportune and for the common good. I have never advised anyone to use the *Osservatore Romano*. In fact, I have often advised the use of the press which is not officially Catholic or French. I think our Ambassador

exaggerates the Soviet strength in politics. It is the strength, or rather the nerve, of those who have no scruples about truth or honesty. Take, for an example, the campaign in the Soviet newspapers to deny the existence of famine which convinces absolutely nobody here.

While I am on the subject of the press, I told Bishop d'Herbigny some time ago that he should use his subordinates for communicating useful information to the newspapers so that he could reserve his authority for the day when, as President of the Commission for Russia, he might have to take part in negotiations affecting the situation of the Church and religion in this country. Such a contingency seems very unlikely at the present time, but we must never cease to hope that Divine Providence will arrange something. I have never told you that two or three years ago, the Pope held back an already printed Encyclical on religion in this country because I advised against its publication. Though I never saw the text, this proves that the Vicar of Christ has, in a very high degree, the virtues of prudence and humility.

Chapter Seventeen

In mid-September, 1933, the Lithuanian Legation in Moscow sent Bishop Neveu a list of thirteen priests who were to be exchanged for political prisoners in October. Bishop Matulanis was among them, but he was reported to be very sick. He was, in fact, released on October 9 and went to Kovno where he took up residence in a seminary. He and the other priests had been received in procession after they crossed the frontier. From Rome, Bishop Neveu learned that Bishop d'Herbigny, who had just had a serious operation, had tendered his resignation as President of the Commission for Russia, but the resignation had not been accepted. Exarch Feodorov had finally been given his freedom but was forbidden to reside in any of the twelve chief cities of the Soviet Union. He was suffering from myocarditis and chronic bronchitis. Fr. Ilguin too had received his exit visa and intended to live in Dvinsk.

The most important news in Moscow in October, 1933, was the letter from President Roosevelt of the United States to President Kalinin of the Soviet Union expressing his desire to end the abnormal relations between the two countries and his willingness to discuss personally all questions outstanding with any representative President Kalinin might designate. The invitation having been accepted, Mr. Litvinov, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, went to Washington to take part in a series of private conferences beginning on November 8. Agreement was reached and diplomatic relations were established between the two countries in an exchange of letters on November 16, 1933.

Of particular interest to Bishop Neveu was the fact that President Roosevelt had raised the issue of religious freedom. Mr. Roosevelt pointed out that after the establishment of normal relations, many Americans might wish to reside, either temporarily or permanently, in the Soviet Union, and he was deeply concerned that they should enjoy, in all respects, the same freedom of conscience and religious liberty which they had at home. Accordingly, he expected that American nationals, resident in the Soviet Union, would have the right to conduct religious ceremonies

without molestation in buildings leased or built by them for that purpose, as well as the right to impart religious instruction to their children either directly or through someone employed for that purpose.

He then went on to stipulate that religious groups or congregations of nationals of the United States, resident in the Soviet Union, would have the right to have their spiritual needs taken care of by clergymen, priests, rabbis or other ecclesiastical functionaries who were also nationals of the United States, and to further stipulate that all such clergymen would be protected from all disability or persecution and would not be denied entry into the Soviet Union because of their ecclesiastical status.

Mr. Litvinov, agreeing in writing to these stipulations, quoted from the Soviet laws which applied to the rights demanded. He added that the Soviet Government, while reserving to itself the right to refuse visas to Americans wishing to go to the Soviet Union on personal grounds, did not intend to base such refusals on the ecclesiastical status of such persons.

Bishop Neveu knew that Fr. Quénard had tried unsuccessfully to obtain an entry visa into the Soviet Union first for a French, then a Belgian and finally a Dutch Assumptionist. With this new agreement making specific provision for the entry of American clergymen into the Soviet Union, Bishop Neveu saw no reason why one of the first should not be an American Assumptionist. On December 18, 1933, he wrote to Fr. Quénard drawing his attention to the possibilities of the situation, adding that he had learned that Mr. William C. Bullitt, the first Ambassador of the United States to the Soviet Union, would soon make the selection of his Embassy staff. Since there was a reasonable chance that this staff would include some Catholics, their presence would justify the coming of a Catholic priest in Moscow. Bishop Neveu, noting that according to the Soviet press, Mr. Bullitt was very sympathetic to the Soviet Union, wondered to himself how soon disillusionment would come. Bishop Neveu announced finally that Mr. Alphand had sold him his son's car, a Renault, which was almost new. His chauffeur, who was also his altar boy, was already on the French Embassy staff and would take over Tania's duties as sacristan.

Equally aware of the opportunity, Fr. Quénard had already acted. In 1933, the Assumptionists in North America, many of them European by birth, were still under the jurisdiction of the Paris Province of the

Congregation. It was to their Vicar Provincial, Fr. Crescent Armanet, President of the Assumption College, Worcester, Massachusetts, that Fr. Quénard turned with his request for a priest companion for Bishop Neveu. Fr. Armanet reacted energetically. Years before, he had been a fellow student with Bishop Neveu in Jerusalem, was aware of his difficulties and trials through letters published in the news bulletin of the Congregation and had sent him food and clothing during the famine of 1922-23. His first task was to find a candidate who was not only suitable, but who, in view of the unusual nature of the assignment, would be willing to accept it. Such a candidate, he also felt, should be American-born. This automatically limited his choice. Finally, after consultation with his advisors, he decided upon Fr. Leopold Braun, a young priest who had been ordained in 1932 after studies in Europe, who spoke four languages and who was, at that time, a professor at Assumption College, Worcester. Surprised and bewildered at first, Fr. Braun, having willingly agreed to go to Moscow, was bound to secrecy for the time being. There the matter rested until after the Christmas holidays.

The next step was to contact the Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull, but he was attending the Pan-American Conference in Montevideo. Early In January, 1934, Fr. Armanet went to Boston to keep an appointment with Mr. James Roosevelt, eldest son of the President of the United States. On January 13, he received by mail from Mr. Roosevelt letters of introduction to Mr. William Phillips, Under-Secretary of State, and to Mr. William C. Bullitt, newly appointed United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

On January 14, Fr. Armanet arrived in Washington. On the following day he went to see his friend, Mr. de Laboulaye, the French Ambassador who had previously been stationed in Moscow and who knew Bishop Neveu very well. Mr. de Laboulaye, who also knew Mr. Litvinov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, told Fr. Armanet that Mr. Litvinov, during his recent stay in Washington, had visited his French Embassy and that they had spoken at length about Bishop Neveu. Mr. de Laboulaye criticized the restrictions placed by the Soviet authorities on the Bishop in particular, and on Catholic priests in general. Mr. Litvinov, in turn, had complained bitterly of the surreptitious manner in which Bishop d'Herbigny had consecrated Bishop Neveu. In view of Soviet feelings in this regard, the

French Ambassador urged the utmost frankness and simplicity in stating the reasons for Fr. Braun's desire to go to the Soviet Union. The application for a visa should be allowed to stand or fall on its own merits.

From the French Embassy, Fr. Armanet went to the State Department where, after producing his letter of introduction to Mr. Bullitt, he was received almost immediately by the new ambassador. Mr. Bullitt listened attentively while Fr. Armanet read a memorandum in which he had summarized the purpose of his visit. The Soviet Union, Fr. Armanet noted, had recently guaranteed to all American citizens living permanently or temporarily within its territories the freedom to practice their religion. In view of this, he asked if the Ambassador would be willing to ask the United States Government to appoint an American Catholic priest to go to Moscow to minister to the spiritual needs of American Catholics in the Soviet Union. Would the Ambassador be willing to take along with him such a clergyman? Most Reverend Pius Neveu, a Catholic Bishop of Moscow and a fellow Assumptionist, had recently requested that an American Assumptionist be assigned as his assistant. He, Fr. Armanet, had been delegated to select a priest for this purpose, and his choice had fallen upon Fr. Leopold Braun, born in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1903. There seemed to be no reason why Fr. Braun could not combine his assignment to the Bishop with the duty of ministering to American Catholics in the Soviet Union. This, concluded Fr. Armanet, was the proposal he respectfully submitted for the Ambassador's consideration.

After a moment of silence, Mr. Bullitt replied that, having played a part in the recent conversations with Mr. Litvinov, he was certainly interested in Fr. Armanet's suggestion. While he did not think that Fr. Braun could go to Moscow as an official member of the Embassy staff, he considered that Fr. Armanet had made a legitimate request. He would do all in his power to assist Fr. Braun in obtaining a visa to enter the Soviet Union for the purpose of exercising his priestly ministry.

Then Mr. Bullitt continued:

"Both President Roosevelt and I argued for hours with Mr. Litvinov over the necessity of guaranteeing to American citizens resident in Russia the freedom to practice their own form of religion. For us it was an essential point, and one on which we could not compromise. Now that a Catholic

priest wishes to apply for permission to go to Moscow in order to take care of the religious needs of American Catholics, I am inclined to do all I can to persuade Mr. Litvinov to authorize Mr. Troyanovski, the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, to grant a visa to your confrere.”

“However, when I undertake anything,” went on Mr. Bullitt, “I like to bring it to a successful conclusion. At the moment, I am of the opinion that it might be better for me to wait until I am in Moscow before taking up this matter. Once there, I could explain your request personally to Mr. Litvinov. I would conceal nothing of the identity of Fr. Braun from him. I would tell Mr. Litvinov that Fr. Braun is an Assumptionist who is being sent as assistant and secretary to Bishop Neveu and that, at the same time, he will have the special duty of ministering to the spiritual needs of American Catholics. Mr. Litvinov will wish to question me about the past history of Fr. Braun. He will want to know if this priest has ever said or done anything that would indicate anti-Soviet sentiments. It will therefore be to my advantage, and to that of Fr. Braun, if I make his acquaintance before I leave for Moscow on February 15. Tell him to be prepared to come and see me in New York on the 23rd or 24th of January. I shall let him know later the precise day, place and time.”

As Fr. Armanet took leave of the Ambassador, he mentioned that he had also a letter of introduction to the Under Secretary of State. Mr. Bullitt advised him to go at once to see Mr. Phillips because the support of the State Department would also be required for the negotiation of a visa for Fr. Braun. Mr. Roosevelt’s letter gained Fr. Armanet speedy access to the Under Secretary of State who listened with interest as his visitor once again briefly summarized the purpose of his call. Finally, Mr. Phillips said he saw no reason why Fr. Braun’s application for a visa to the Soviet Union should not be successful. The State Department would be deeply interested in the outcome, as the case seemed ideally suited to testing the sincerity of the Soviet assurance of religious freedom for American citizens in the U.S.S.R.

Fr. Armanet was considerably heartened by these two interviews, but he still had two little nagging anxieties. First, he had yet to see the Apostolic Delegate, Msgr. Amleto G. Cicognani, and there was always the possibility that it might be considered more desirable for a secular priest

rather than an Assumptionist to go to Moscow. Secondly, he had hoped that Fr. Braun would have a visa in time to travel to the Soviet Union with the United States Embassy staff. There was of course never any question of Fr. Braun being a member of the Embassy. It was just that Fr. Armanet felt that things would certainly be made simpler for Fr. Braun if he traveled with the Ambassador, and he was a little disturbed at Mr. Bullitt's remark that the question of the visa would be settled more simply if he approached Mr. Litvinov when he reached Moscow.

The next day, January 16, Fr. Armanet went to see Msgr. Cicognani. At first, the conversation turned to Fr. Quénard and other Assumptionists whom the Apostolic Delegate had known in Rome. Then Fr. Armanet introduced the subject of Bishop Neveu, of whom the Delegate had heard, and of the project to send Fr. Braun as his assistant and as chaplain for American citizens in the Soviet Union. He described his meetings with Mr. Bullitt and Mr. Phillips, whereupon Msgr. Cicognani congratulated him on the progress he had made and asked for a report in writing of all that he had just heard. The report, he explained, was for Cardinal Pacelli who, as Papal Secretary of State, was aware of Bishop Neveu's situation and of his hopes arising from the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. Msgr. Cicognani agreed that it was only natural that Bishop Neveu would want an Assumptionist as his assistant and said that Fr. Armanet could count on him for any support he needed. He strongly recommended that Fr. Armanet go next to see Cardinal Hayes in New York.

Before leaving Washington, Fr. Armanet completed and sent to the Apostolic Delegate the written report that had been requested. Then he went to the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, an Assumptionist parish in New York City, to await his second interview with Mr. Bullitt the following week. It was now Wednesday, January 17, which left barely a month before the departure of the United States Ambassador to Moscow.

On Monday, January 22, Fr. Armanet went to see Cardinal Hayes whom he knew, but whom he had not seen for some years. The Cardinal, he noted, had aged visibly and seemed to be quite ill but showed nonetheless, a lively interest in Fr. Armanet's account of his visit to Washington. He then surprised Fr. Armanet by saying that he had already been informed by the Apostolic Delegate of the proposal to send Fr. Braun to the Soviet Union.

Msgr. Keegan of the Archdiocese of New York had visited Msgr. Cicognani the day after Fr. Armanet and had then made two calls on his friend, Mr. James A. Farley, Postmaster-General of the United States.

“You will be pleased to learn,” went on the Cardinal, “that your plan has our full support. You will also be interested to know that Mr. Farley dined with me yesterday evening. He has discussed Fr. Braun’s projected assignment to the Soviet Union with President Roosevelt and assures me that it meets with the complete approval of the President.”

The Cardinal then plied Fr. Armanet with questions about Bishop Neveu, whom he described as a “real Martyr,” and spoke of his pleasure that an American Assumptionist priest was willing to go and join the Bishop in Moscow. He felt sure that the situation was providential and asked Fr. Armanet to keep him informed of his progress through Msgr. Keegan.

One of Fr. Armanet’s anxieties had apparently resolved itself, and he was in good spirits as he continued, on January 23, the report to his Superior General, Fr. Quénard, concerning his initial moves:

So far, everything is going well, but I am under no illusions. There may yet be numerous difficulties which we cannot foresee. I shall consider nothing really achieved until I hear that Fr. Braun is safely in Moscow. After all that I have seen and heard in these last few days, I feel sure that, if there are any difficulties, they will be made, not by the United States, but by the Soviet Union. However, I do hope that Mr. Bullitt will change his mind and arrange for Fr. Braun to travel with him rather than go alone later. It would certainly simplify matters and protect Fr. Braun from possible difficulties at the Soviet frontier.

That same afternoon, January 23, Fr. Braun received a letter from Mr. Bullitt:

I shall be very pleased to see you tomorrow (Wednesday) morning in the Hotel Plaza, New York, at 10:00 A.M. I hope that this time will be convenient for you. I have told Fr. Armanet that there are insurmountable difficulties in the way of taking a priest as a member of the Embassy staff. When Fr. Armanet said, however,

that what he really wanted was assistance in obtaining for you a visa permitting you to stay in Moscow to take care of Catholics there, I told him that I would be very happy to do everything in my power for you. I look forward with great interest to meeting you.

Sincerely yours, William C. Bullitt

Fr. Braun left Worcester for New York that same evening. On the next day, accompanied by Fr. Armanet, he kept his appointment with Mr. Bullitt. Almost immediately and of his own accord, the Ambassador brought up the question that was on the tip of Fr. Armanet's tongue and said that he had been seriously considering the possibility of Fr. Braun's traveling to Moscow with himself and the Embassy staff. He was willing to try to arrange this and, therefore, felt it was advisable for Fr. Braun to take the earliest possible occasion to see him in Washington.

"You will come to my office at the State Department," he said to Fr. Braun, "and I shall then telephone the Soviet Embassy, tell them that I am sending you down to see them, and ask them to give you a visa for the Soviet Union as quickly as they can. It is quite unlikely, however, that they will grant the visa at once. As a rule, something like this takes from one to two months. Now, however, if the Soviet Ambassador were to telephone Mr. Litvinov asking him to take care of this matter immediately, Mr. Litvinov would certainly question Bishop Neveu about your background. Can you tell me if Bishop Neveu has asked for you personally or if he even knows you?"

Fr. Armanet explained that Bishop Neveu did not know Fr. Braun and had not asked for him personally. He had simply requested that an American Assumptionist be sent to him and left the choice of this assistant to Fr. Armanet himself.

"In that case," said Mr. Bullitt, "you must send a telegram to Bishop Neveu announcing that you have chosen Fr. Braun to go to Moscow and asking him to ratify your choice. This is very important."

Mr. Bullitt then asked who would be responsible for Fr. Braun's support while he was in Moscow, explaining that the Soviet authorities would be certain to ask that question. On being assured that the Assumptionist Congregation would accept the responsibility, the Ambassador then

pointed out to Fr. Braun that, since the United States Government was supporting his application to go to the Soviet Union, it was of the utmost importance that his conduct should always be extremely correct.

“The Soviet Government,” he said, “must never be given grounds to reproach you with interference in their politics or with violations of any of their laws. As long as you avoid these things, I guarantee that you will be left in peace. Finally, in the event that things do not move quickly enough to enable you to travel with me, you will notify me from Berlin of the day and the time that your train is due at the Soviet frontier. I myself will then request the Soviet authorities to instruct the officials at the frontier that you are to be allowed to enter the country without let or hindrance.”

After taking leave of Mr. Bullitt, Fr. Armanet lost no time in sending a cable to Fr. Quénard in Rome:

American civil and religious authorities willing to send American Assumptionist to Bishop Neveu. Fr. Leopold Braun prepared to go. Advise Bishop Neveu to cable you his acceptance immediately. Urgent. This formality indispensable for obtaining visa.

There was nothing for Fr. Armanet to do but wait; this he did rather restlessly. Wednesday evening passed, and the next day, January 25, was dragging itself to a close with still no word from Rome, when Fr. Armanet added a paragraph to his letter to Fr. Quénard:

It is now 10 P.M. here (4 A.M. in Rome), and the answer to my telegram has not yet arrived. If it comes before midnight, Fr. Braun will leave at once for Washington where Mr. Bullitt is expecting him. Mr. Bullitt thinks that no steps towards obtaining the visa can be taken until we are sure that Bishop Neveu knows the name of the priest we wish to send him. We await your reply with real impatience.

Meanwhile in Rome, not noticing that Fr. Armanet’s cable had been sent from New York, Fr. Quénard had sent his reply to Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts. Received there just after midnight January 25, and referred to New York, it gave the assurance that Bishop Neveu would be delighted to accept Fr. Braun. It was now January 26, with about

three weeks remaining before the departure of the United States Embassy staff for Moscow.

At 9:30 A.M., Fr. Braun took a train for Washington and arrived there just before 2:00 P.M. He went at once to the State Department but found that Mr. Bullitt was out until 3:15 P.M. The Ambassador, however, was delayed and it wasn't until 3:40 P.M. that Fr. Braun was shown into his office. Mr. Bullitt greeted him warmly and at once asked if there had been a reply from Bishop Neveu. Fr. Braun produced a copy of Fr. Quénard's telegram. After reading it, Mr. Bullitt frowned slightly, hesitated for a few moments, then decided that it was sufficient for their needs. He reached for the telephone and placed a call to the Soviet Ambassador, Mr. Troyanovski, who had already arrived in Washington and had presented his credentials on January 8. Informed that Mr. Troyanovski had just left for the White House, Mr. Bullitt, after a few more moments of reflection, placed another call to the Soviet Embassy, commenting to Fr. Braun that there was nothing to lose. It was now 4:10 P.M., too late as Mr. Bullitt well knew, to achieve tangible results, but he proceeded to inform the Soviet Embassy:

I have here in my office, a Fr. Braun, an American Catholic priest, who will be going to your Embassy to file an application for a visa to the Soviet Union. Fr. Braun is known personally to me, he has no political affiliations, and wishes to go to the Soviet Union solely for religious purposes. We shall consider this a test case for our recent religious agreement because Fr. Braun is the first American clergyman to apply for a visa.

Mr. Bullitt then sent Fr. Braun to have his passport renewed for another two years, pointing out that the visa, if issued, would be good only for the term for which the passport was valid. On his return to the Ambassador's office, Mr. Bullitt spoke seriously to him about the cost of living in Moscow and said that Fr. Braun must be sure to supply himself with ample funds so that he could guarantee to the Soviet officials that there would be no problems on this score. For the rest, transit visas would be needed for France, Belgium, Germany and Poland, but these would be obtained without difficulty.

At 10:50 A.M. the following morning, Saturday, January 27, Fr. Braun received a telephone call from Mr. Morlock, secretary to Mr. Bullitt, informing him that the Ambassador had just been speaking personally to Mr. Troyanovski who had asked that Fr. Braun present himself at the Soviet Embassy at his earliest convenience. Twenty minutes later, Fr. Braun was ushered into the Soviet Embassy where he was greeted courteously by a Soviet official and offered a cigarette. After some general questions, he was asked the precise reason for his wishing to go to the Soviet Union. Fr. Braun replied that his only purpose was to act as chaplain to American Catholics in the Soviet Union and, at the same time, to be secretary and assistant to Bishop Neveu. He was then asked if he had any reason to believe that Bishop Neveu wanted an assistant, and in reply, Fr. Braun showed the telegram from Fr. Quénard. Apparently satisfied, the official asked when Fr. Braun would like to leave for the Soviet Union and was told "as quickly as possible." It was then suggested that Fr. Braun might be well-advised to wait until Bishop Neveu had left, to which he replied that his purpose in going to the Soviet was to assist, not replace, the Bishop. At this point, he was asked to fill out the routine application form for a visa and was then told that his case would be referred to Moscow by cable and that a reply might be expected within two or three days.

It was now 12:20 P.M. Fr. Braun just had time to reach the State Department to give a report of his interview before the Government Offices closed at 1:00 P.M. At this time, he took the opportunity to ask if it were yet known whether there would be any Catholics on the staff of the Embassy to the Soviet Union. He was told that the list of personnel for Moscow had not been completed, and that, in any case, Embassy officials were not selected on the basis of their religious beliefs. However, the law of averages for first-class embassies would seem to indicate that some of the officials going to Moscow would, in fact, be Catholics.

By January 30, no reply from Moscow had been received. Tired of waiting aimlessly in Washington, Fr. Braun decided to return to Worcester and arranged with the Soviet Embassy that he would be notified at Assumption College if his application for the visa was successful. It was also agreed that, in this event, it would be sufficient for him to mail his passport to the Soviet Embassy to be stamped with the visa.

On February 5, less than two weeks after Fr. Braun's first meeting with Mr. Bullitt, word was received that the visa had been granted. Returning hastily from New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he had been visiting his parents, Fr. Braun sent his passport to Washington and made final preparations for his journey. Within a couple of days, his passport was returned, complete with the visa authorizing him to enter the Soviet Union at any point of the Western frontier between the dates of February 7 and March 15, 1934.

On February 15, together with Mr. Bullitt and the Embassy staff, he sailed on the S.S. Washington for Le Havre where the group split up. Mr. Bullitt and some of his staff went for a short visit to Paris, while the rest sailed on to Hamburg. Fr. Braun also went, independently, to Paris where a letter of instructions from Fr. Quénard awaited him and where he completed his shopping for clothes that would be suitable for the Russian winter. He was to rejoin the members of the Embassy staff in Berlin on February 26 for the last stages of their journey, via Warsaw, to the Soviet frontier at Negoreloye. He arrived in Moscow at 9:00 A.M. on Thursday, March 1st.

Chapter Eighteen

Bishop Neveu was not at home when, later that Thursday morning, Fr. Braun called at the French Embassy to announce himself. He was in his church of St. Louis-des-Français, located much nearer to Fr. Braun's hotel than the Embassy, offering a Memorial Requiem Mass at the request of the Diplomatic Corps for Albert, King of the Belgians, who had been killed in a recent climbing accident.

On his return to the French Embassy, Bishop Neveu learned that Fr. Braun was in room 333 at the Hotel Savoy where two floors had been placed at the disposition of the staff of the United States Embassy. It was not until the following afternoon that the Bishop had the opportunity to meet his new assistant. Snow was falling steadily and he had difficulty distinguishing the little French tricolor fluttering bravely from the radiator of the Renault as his chauffeur drove him down to the Savoy Hotel. He would readily have confessed that there was a certain amount of emotion mingled with his anticipation because it was seventeen years since he had seen any other Assumptionist except Fr. David. At the hotel desk, he asked for Fr. Braun and then stepped into the lobby to wait. Fr. Braun, coming down the stairs, instinctively recognized the tallish man whose long beard overflowed onto a huge fur coat which reached to his ankles and whose piercing eyes softened and filled with tears as he embraced his American confrere. In an instant, the Bishop became his practical self again. The crowded lobby of the Savoy was no place for an intimate conversation between two foreign priests, so he took Fr. Braun by the arm, led him out to the car, and brought him back to the French Embassy.

The next day, Bishop Neveu sent a cable to Fr. Armanet:

"Gift received. You are very kind. Thank you."

He then followed this with a letter:

What a joy it was for me to welcome Fr. Braun to Moscow. I know now, dear Father, the role you played in this affair, and I cannot thank you sufficiently for your devotedness. Now that there

are two of us, things will go, if not better, at least a little less badly. Now we shall have to find him an apartment. His arrival caused a great sensation among the Catholics here. Fr. Amoudru in Leningrad and myself were the only foreign Catholic priests in the whole of the Soviet Union, so the coming of an American priest is quite an event. The GPU still do not know what to make of it, but the two representatives they send to daily Mass are always anxious to learn.

If, as Bishop Neveu had said, the picture seemed brighter, it was also true that there were some difficulties in store. Though the Savoy Hotel was conveniently located near the church of St. Louis-des-Français, it was at least a mile from the French Embassy. Consequently, the close companionship for which both men had hoped could not be a practical reality. As it was, the Bishop himself opened the church at 7:00 A.M. and heard confessions until his Mass at 8:00 A.M. Fr. Braun would arrive to say Mass at 7:30 and then acted as altar-boy for the Bishop. Afterwards, in the sacristy, they breakfasted on the bread and coffee which the Bishop brought with him. Fr. Braun then went into another room to study Russian while Bishop Neveu received all those who had come to see him. Though such people were noted by the GPU and were later held for questioning, this never seemed to deter them.

It was usually about 11:00 A.M. when the last of these visitors had departed. Bishop Neveu then brought Fr. Braun back to his room at the French Embassy for a lesson in Russian which was followed by a simple lunch. After that, Fr. Braun would return to his hotel, while the Bishop devoted his afternoon to a study of the newspapers and periodicals to which he subscribed. On Sundays, the routine varied a little. Bishop Neveu suggested that his assistant have a Mass at 9:00 A.M. with a sermon in English for the benefit of his fifteen or so "parishioners" from the United States and British Embassies. Bishop Neveu himself sang the High Mass, at which he preached in French, at 10:00 A.M. On Sundays, too, they had a standing invitation to lunch with the French Ambassador.

For a few tense moments, soon after Fr. Braun's arrival, even this desultory companionship seemed to be threatened. One afternoon, the manager of the hotel sent for Fr. Braun and returned to him his passport

and other papers. He then expressed the hope that Fr. Braun had enjoyed his visit to the Soviet Union and, to the priest's growing amazement, wished him a safe journey back to the United States. Fr. Braun never did quite know whether or not this was a genuine mistake, but he managed to convince the man that he was authorized to stay indefinitely in the Soviet Union. The incident was closed with the payment of a further registration fee.

Besides its geographical location in regard to Bishop Neveu's apartment, the Savoy Hotel had other disadvantages, among them, Fr. Braun's feeling of being under constant surveillance and the fact that the hotel was expensive. For the moment, these drawbacks were outweighed by the benefits. Fr. Braun had been officially registered as a minister of religion, which meant that he had no right to a ration card for food or clothing and that he was not entitled to rent a room in a private dwelling. The Savoy, at least, provided food and shelter, and at that time, the companionship of his fellow-countrymen. The United States Embassy had rented offices in a building which had not yet been completed, and the members of the staff, who had been dispersed among several hotels continued to use the Savoy as temporary headquarters.

For this reason, Fr. Braun frequently saw Mr. Bullitt who was now living in a private residence which had been hastily prepared for him. On several occasions, the Ambassador asked Fr. Braun to come and live with him but, each time, the invitation was regretfully declined. The material well-being and security which the Ambassador offered were indeed attractive, but Mr. Bullitt's house was even further from the French Embassy than the Savoy. By this time, Fr. Braun realized that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, nephritis, cardiac hypertrophy, and an alarming blood pressure had taken their toll of the Bishop's once robust constitution. In the circumstances, he felt he should be as close to him as possible. The problem was happily solved when, six weeks after his arrival in Moscow, Fr. Braun was invited by Mr. Alphand to come and live in a room alongside the Bishop's at the French Embassy.

More than anything else, Bishop Neveu needed a change of air. Mr. Alphand encouraged him to think of a visit to France. There was a growing closeness in Franco-Soviet relations, and the Ambassador was convinced

that a return visa would not be refused. In fact, when the Ambassador took up the matter with the Soviet authorities, he received a promise in writing that a return visa for the Bishop would be granted. Accordingly, Bishop Neveu wrote to inform the Holy Father of this, was given permission to go to France, and received an invitation to come to Rome. In mid-May, Bishop Neveu left Moscow with Mr. Alphand and his family for his first visit home in over twenty years. He left with the knowledge that Bishop Malecki had been released, but on condition that there be no formal reception for him at the frontier, that the press be silent and that there be no demonstration in his favor. He also knew that Bishop Malecki had returned to Leningrad in very bad health, and that after a few days there, had arrived in Warsaw on April 28, 1934.

Bishop Neveu arrived in Paris at 6:45 A.M. on May 17, 1934; the first news he heard was sad. Fr. François Mathis, a fellow Assumptionist and an old friend, had died the previous day. Consequently, the Bishop's first episcopal act on French soil was to pontificate at the funeral Mass and read the committal prayers at the graveside on May 19. After a few days rest, he left Paris on May 28 on his first *ad limina* visit to the Pope. On May 31, at 10:30 A.M., he was received in private audience by Pius XI and later that evening, he wrote to Paris:

When I entered the presence of the Holy Father, I attempted to make the usual reverences but he took me in his arms and embraced me. Then he made me sit down and began to question me with an amazing shrewdness. He revealed a wonderful memory. Yesterday was his birthday, so I offered him the gifts I had brought. As he looked at the little icons, he began to talk in a desultory fashion. This gave me the opportunity to bring up all the subjects I wished to discuss. I did not even have to look at my notes.

I will not describe the audience in detail, but I should mention one moving moment. I explained to him that Catholics who were arrested were always questioned about their allegiance to the Pope. When I told him of the protestations of loyalty and devotion made by many of them, he began to weep, and I wept with him. I told him too of the trials of Fr. Amoudru in Leningrad. We then spoke about the religious agreement made between the United

States and the Soviet Union and of how Fr. Braun had come to Moscow. He did not seem to be aware of the details and was very interested to hear them.

Then, with a solicitude which touched me deeply, he said that he wished me to stay in Rome at least until June 29, the feast of SS. Peter and Paul. On the eve of the feast, he usually goes alone to pray at the Tomb of St. Peter; this year, he would like me to accompany him. Finally, he gave me a relic of St. Theresa and granted me permission to enter the enclosure of the Carmel at Lisieux. To Tania, he sent his blessing and a large medal commemorating the Holy Year. Tomorrow at 9:00 A.M., I am to see Cardinal Pizzardo of the Papal Secretariat of State.

Bishop Neveu returned from his visit to Cardinal Pizzardo with the task of preparing two comprehensive reports on the religious situation in the Soviet Union. This occupied him for the greater part of a week, but he was in no way displeased by this. He had little interest in sightseeing and wanted to avoid all publicity. He granted no interviews, issued no statements to the press, either Catholic or secular, and did not even visit the Pontifical Russian College or the Institute of Oriental Studies, places to which he might have been expected to go. He had not intended to stay so long in Rome and soon tired of being forced to monopolize the conversation wherever he went. To himself, he admitted that he might have had more heart for visiting if he had not been so worried about Tania who, it seemed, was far from settled in the novitiate.

On June 23, 1934, he wrote to Fr. Quénard:

It is now becoming very hot and I am not sleeping well. I have said Mass only once outside our own house and that was in the convent of the Little Sisters of the Assumption. I am concerned about the number of invitations to visit various Assumptionist houses which I have received. I would like to please everybody, but I don't see how I can. I must go to the Landes to see the de Franclieus, my old friends from Makeyevka, and then I would like to make a little pilgrimage to Lourdes. After that, I want to rest because I have lumbago and my legs still swell at night. Perhaps

you could issue a statement something like this: "Bishop Neveu has had to remain in Rome longer than he expected and, as he must rest, he regrets that he cannot accept all the invitations extended to him. I myself will regulate the schedule of the Bishop, and will decide, according to circumstances, which houses he should visit."

On June 27, Bishop Neveu was notified by telephone that Pope Pius XI would see him at 11:30 the next morning. The Bishop had already arranged to leave Rome for Paris at 2:05 P.M. on June 29, traveling by Grenoble, Lyons, and Ars, and visiting one or two Assumptionist houses en route. He would be in Paris by July 6 or 7, but his stay there would be short as he was expected in his home town of Gien and the neighboring Orleans on July 10. He wrote to Fr. Quénard on the morning of June 29:

Yesterday, I saw the Holy Father for forty-five minutes and was pleased to get a directive on a question which has been worrying me. I asked whether I should not, in all prudence and simplicity, hold out a hand of friendship to the Soviet Government in the hope of obtaining some relief for those who are suffering persecution on account of their religion. He answered thoughtfully: "I am afraid they are not to be trusted. Wait until they give proof of their goodwill and may God preserve you until then."

At this point, he made reference to the prayers for Russia which Pope Leo XIII had ordered to be said after every Mass: "Many bishops and archbishops have asked me to discontinue them as they are not liturgical. I have refused to do this because it is such an important intention. This evening, we shall pray together for Russia at the Tomb of St. Peter."

At 7:45 P.M. I went to the Vatican. At 8:15 the Holy Father came out of his room. I was standing there alone, waiting for him. He came over, took my hand and put me on his right. We said the Rosary and other prayers, and then went to venerate the relics of St. Peter. I shall not attempt to describe my feelings, but it was one of the most moving experiences of my life.

When Bishop Neveu returned to Paris, about two months remained of his vacation in France. Since his visa was valid for four months, he expected to be back in Moscow on September 16. During these weeks, he continued his policy of avoiding the limelight and all publicity. He visited his relatives and friends in Gien and Orleans. He went to see Tania in the novitiate and optimistically tried to interest the Oblates in training sisters for future work in the Soviet Union. He saw his Assumptionist brethren in the houses round Paris and kept several appointments with doctors. In gratitude to St. Theresa, he made a pilgrimage to her shrine at Lisieux, not on foot as he had hoped, and was able to thank the Carmelites for all the prayers they were saying for his intentions. He went quietly to Lourdes and then spent a few days with the de Franclieus with whom he had stayed on his arrival in Makeyevka. If he spoke about life in the Soviet Union, he did so in private and, even then, he told no one that he had been instructed to find some way of secretly consecrating another bishop after his return. The man designated by the Holy Father was Fr. Amoudru, O.P., of Leningrad.

Bishop Neveu traveled back to Moscow with Mr. Alphan's wife, her two children and Colonel Simon, a Military Attaché, and on September 24, he wrote to Fr. Quénard:

If I told you I was overjoyed to be back, I would be exaggerating, but I know I am doing the will of God and that keeps my mind at peace. Here, at last, I am useful to somebody.

We had a pleasant journey. Once again, I saw nothing of Belgium because I was asleep. In Germany, I was asked how much money I had, and I declared 235 francs. This time there were far more red shirts and swastikas than I had noticed in May. Nobody interfered with us, and when we crossed the frontier, our purses were casually checked to see if we had left any foreign money in this dear country. In Poland, it was impossible not to be aware of the new pro-German sympathies of the people, but I am afraid that the non-aggression pact signed with Germany in January of this year will not do them much good with the "turkey-cocks."

When we reached the barbed wire of the Soviet frontier, a Red soldier, armed with a rifle, looked under all the coaches to see if

anyone was hiding there. This was the first sign of liberty! We passed through Customs quickly and at the pay desk, they returned to me the 115 rubles I had to leave there on my outward journey. By this time, we were hungry. The Alphands went to the restaurant car, while Colonel Simon and I kept watch over the luggage. Two guardians are always better than one in this country! After an hour and a half, the Alphands returned, full of apologies for their long absence. They had only a sandwich with caviar and ham. The delay was the result of the waiter's difficulty in calculating the value of the foreign currency.

Then the Colonel and I went to try our luck. Once again I was captivated by the nonchalance and the sweet half-dirtiness that no regime has ever been able to eradicate. We asked for caviar, eggs, and tea, which were served by a young girl wearing a badly-ironed white dress that had a red collar. The German and Polish waiters are very proper and formal, but this little girl laughed with delight at finding someone who understood her language. She asked how we were and if we had had a pleasant journey. Her unassumed simplicity, so typical of the peasant and the worker, made me feel at home immediately.

Night came and we prepared for sleep. As I dozed off, soothed by the monotonous noise of the wheels which seemed in no great hurry, it occurred to me that they were simply expressing the general attitude toward life in Russia. I was awakened early by the bitter cold, but it was impossible to see where we were. With the coming of dawn, as we were passing through Borodino, I remembered the words of Napoleon before the famous battle on September 7, 1812: "It is rather cold today but it is clear. It reminds me of the sunshine of Austerlitz." We too looked out on a cold, clear sky, for the Russian sun gives little heat at this time of year. It was 11:40 A.M. when we pulled into Moscow. The Ambassador, some of his staff, and a radiant Fr. Braun were waiting to greet us. Unfortunately, I was unable to say Mass, because being so cold, I had had to have some tea.

A few words about my health. I am carefully taking the medication prescribed by Dr. Jeunet, but as it is a three months course, it is premature to speak of any results. In any case, I am no worse.

On the whole, there had been little change during his absence. Moscow, it is true, did look somewhat different, largely because of the rapid progress made in the construction of the city's first underground railway. There was a slight difference, too, in atmosphere. The anti-religious campaign with its gross impieties seemed to have declined in virulence, but the Bishop could sense an almost total indifference to God on the part of the people. The fact that, here and there, a few individuals were finding God in the midst of their trials served only to heighten the contrast. If missionaries were ever allowed to enter Russia, Bishop Neveu felt that they would have to begin to lay again the foundations of belief.

The day after the Bishop's return, Fr. Amoudru arrived in Moscow quite unexpectedly. The situation in Leningrad was still deteriorating and, alone, he was trying to look after eight parishes. Bishop Neveu, never a believer in precipitate action, decided that this was not the time to discharge the commission given him by the Pope. Consequently Fr. Amoudru left the next day bearing with him only a package of white flour needed for altar breads and obtained through the American Embassy.

The weather that autumn was very capricious, and the sun was niggardly with its rays. On the whole, however, Bishop Neveu was feeling better.

On November 19, he wrote:

I am still taking the medicine prescribed in Paris and, at present, my legs seem to be swelling less and my heart is quieter. As before, I am still a barometer, sensitive to every change in temperature, and these are frequent in this gloomy season. I have difficulty in getting to sleep. Consequently, I often fail to hear my alarm when it rings at 5:00 A.M. I have instructed Fr. Braun to call me if he hears no movement by 5:30. This he does very faithfully and efficiently.

Since my return, I have been the object of a great deal of interest and, frankly, I am worried. You will remember the

mysterious reasons which resulted in Tania's departure. I know that there were hopes that I would quickly follow her. At the end of May, the Polish newspapers announced my arrival in France. A month ago, they stated that I would soon be leaving Moscow for Rome. This rumor had long wings because a Gien newspaper reported recently that I was appointed to negotiate an agreement between the Vatican and the Soviet Union.

Fr. Braun, when not studying Russian, was indulging an interest in radio. He had brought home the Italian Ambassador's radio which needed repairs and, as a result, they were able to listen to the description from London of the wedding of the Duke of Kent and Princess Marina. It was soon after this that Bishop Neveu heard that a Fr. Daems, Superior General of the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, who was returning from a visit to the missions in Manchuria, had been taken seriously ill on a train which was now in Moscow.

On December 18, the Bishop wrote:

I went at once to the station, but I had difficulty in finding the platform at which his train was standing. I was anxious because I did not know how critical his condition might be. I was relieved to see that, while he was suffering from asthma, compounded by a cold, and could neither lie down nor sleep, he seemed in no immediate danger. I stayed chatting with him for about an hour. Last Thursday, I heard that he died in the train just before crossing the Soviet frontier and that his body was brought back to Minsk because there was a suspicion that he had been poisoned. You can imagine my feeling because I must have been one of the last persons to speak to him. I have just heard that Bishop Frison was arrested in November.

There always seemed to be some cause for anxiety. Bishop Neveu noted with dismay that *La Croix* of December 20, 1934, carried an article about Fr. d'Alzon and his interest in the missions and in Russia. He felt that this was an indiscretion which served only to strengthen the interest of the Soviet authorities in the two Assumptionists already in the Soviet Union, and would minimize the chances of any other Assumptionists being

allowed to come and join them. This was the second complaint he made since his return from France. Earlier, he had warned the editors of the *Lettre à la Dispersion*, that if they were not more careful in the editing of his letters, he would be forced to cease writing.

1935 opened on a hopeful note. Early in January, Fr. Florent, a French Dominican, arrived in Moscow on his way to Leningrad where he was to be an assistant to Fr. Amoudru. This swelled the ranks of the foreign Catholic clergy in the Soviet Union to four. However, this good news was neutralized by the fact that three other priests had been arrested since the beginning of the year, a catastrophe in view of their diminishing numbers.

On January 28, 1935, Bishop Neveu wrote to an Assumptionist friend who had been ill and was convalescing beside the Mediterranean:

It is a pity that I cannot be with you because, at present, I am not worth much. Like many Muscovites, I have influenza. I must have picked it up when I went to renew my permit to stay here, for I was feverish and had to stand for a long time in a draft. I did not even have the satisfaction of getting the permit, because after I had paid my 5 rubles and 50 kopecks, I was told to come back in ten days. Finally, on January 19, I gave up the struggle to stay on my feet and have been in bed ever since.

This attack of influenza took away his appetite completely, and he grew noticeably thinner. At the same time, Fr. Braun was suffering from an outbreak of boils on his feet and was, for all practical purposes, immobilized. Finally, a doctor from the United States Embassy who came to treat Fr. Braun, was kind enough to examine the Bishop. The prescription he gave him brought considerable improvement.

On February 25, Bishop Neveu wrote:

Here, we can do nothing but weep. Arrests are continuing on a grand scale. The last straw is that on the night of February 22-23, they arrested my confessor, Bishop Bartholomew. Please be careful not to mention anything about him because his reunion with Rome is a secret. A Russian Orthodox nun, also secretly a Catholic, used to act as our liaison officer. A lady of fifty-three, who was perhaps my best parishioner, has also been arrested. An office worker and the

only support of her aged parents, she was a ministering angel to the sick and a source of strength to all in trouble. The house of a twenty-five-year-old girl was searched on February 21. She was not at Mass yesterday or today, and I fear that she too is in prison. I learned that Bishop Malecki died on January 17.

Is it any wonder that I have a bad heart? It is all very well for the doctor to tell me that I must not allow myself to be upset or my aorta will burst. Life here is not amusing. I am still without a permit to stay. I have been back to the Bureau for Foreigners four times. On the last occasion, I left there all my papers, including the receipt for my passport. Though I am now living here illegally, I am sure that Mr. Alphand will take care of that for me. On February 23, I entered into my fifty-ninth year. Since my ordination in 1905, I have kept a record of every Mass I have said, and on February 20, I reached the peculiar total of 11,111 Masses.

The Renault had now been out of commission with transmission trouble for a week. A worn-out clutch plate was removed and sent to France for a replacement, and shock absorbers were also requested. In the meantime, an English Catholic was driving the Bishop and Fr. Braun down to the church for Mass.

If they wished to go anywhere during the day, they had to use the public transportation system. This renewed experience of the trolley cars convinced the Bishop that an automobile was not a luxury but a necessity. The vehicles were hopelessly overcrowded with struggling, pushing and cursing passengers; Bishop Neveu decided that if hell had a vestibule, he now had a good idea of what it looked like. He expected that the underground railway would be officially opened on May 1, but already doubts were being expressed about the solidity of the terrain through which it passed, for, recently, a heavy truck had sunk into a tunnel not far from the French Embassy.

On March 11, Bishop Neveu wrote to Sister Agatha of the Oblates of the Assumption in Paris:

Thank you for the statue of St. Theresa which arrived safely. It had to go through Customs, of course, and our officers thought that

it was a “really beautiful doll.” I am sure that St. Theresa, who wanted so much to be the plaything of God, must have been delighted at being classified as a toy! We also received the spare parts for the Renault; they have already been installed. Tomorrow, we shall gratefully give it a trial run to the church. Each day, my legs swell until they are almost the size of an elephant’s. The medicine prescribed in France has failed; the trouble is starting all over again.

On March 21, the Bishop had to take to his bed again, for he inadvertently ate some rye bread which had been served by his housekeeper. His doctor placed him on a diet which amounted to a fast. It was in these circumstances that he learned that Exarch Feodorov had died in Viatka on March 7. Only two days before his illness, Bishop Neveu had sent the Exarch money, books, and medication with a lady who was going to visit him in Viatka. The Exarch had, of course, died without a priest and had been buried on March 10. However, four days later, one of the priests from Leningrad went to bless the grave and recite the committal prayers.

On April 9, 1935, Bishop Neveu noted:

I hear that the whole Catholic population around the frontiers of White Russia, Volhynia and Podolia, (Poles, White Russians and the descendants of the Uniate Catholics) and also all Germans, both Catholic and Protestant, are to be deported to Siberia. This will involve thousands of people and will mean the evacuation of entire villages and the breaking up of families. The objective is threefold. They are removing from the frontiers all those who might be sympathetic to the Poles and Germans in the event of a war. It will also enable them to strengthen their defenses in Siberia against the Japanese. Finally, they are satisfying their hatred for religion. Though Hitler has his own methods, he is not as clever as our people who waste no time in talking but who act quickly and present a *fait accompli*.

In 1906, there were over 700,000 Catholics in White Russia in 55 parishes and mission churches. Now, there are just ten priests, of whom five are old and three are invalids. I am playing the role of the undertaker’s mute at the obsequies of the Catholic Church in

this country. Although this prevents me from becoming proud, it is not improving my health.

Bishop Neveu, who was now Librarian at the French Embassy, was still without a permit to stay in the Soviet Union. He discussed the matter with Mr. Alphand who told him that he was going to try to arrange for him to receive a visa, valid for twelve months, directly from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. This would eliminate both the need to keep applying for a permit at the Bureau for Foreigners and the aggravation this inevitably entailed. The Ambassador anticipated little difficulty in arranging this because, at the moment, Franco-Soviet relations were particularly friendly: a Mutual Assistance Pact — though not signed until May 2, 1935 — was being negotiated. However on April 30, two days before this discussion with the Ambassador, Bishop Neveu had secretly consecrated Fr. Amoudru in the Church of St. Louis-des-Français in the presence of three witnesses. He had confided his intentions to no one, not even to the French Ambassador. Since both France and the Soviet Union had a law of separation of Church and State, the Bishop had concluded that the ceremony he was to perform had nothing to do with either nation.

Bishop Neveu had a great admiration for Fr. Amoudru who had been in Russia since 1908 and who had an intimate knowledge of the people and their country. He feared, however, that while Fr. Amoudru's criticisms of the existing state of affairs in the Soviet Union were legitimate, he was far too violent and outspoken in expressing them. And he had often warned him that no good would come of it. Consequently, Bishop Neveu did not quite know what to say when, immediately after his consecration, Bishop Amoudru remarked that he did not think his episcopacy would be a long one. There was nothing to be done except to commend the new Bishop to God and send him back to Leningrad with instructions to keep his new office a secret.

On May 14, Bishop Neveu received his permit to stay in the Soviet Union, just four months after he had applied for it. From now on, the French Embassy would deal directly with the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs once a year to obtain this authorization for him. A similar arrangement by the United States Embassy would solve the difficulties of Fr. Braun whose permit was often issued for two or three weeks. It was a

good start to a summer that needed a great deal of encouragement. Once again, there were fears for the harvest as rain continued steadily, day after day, and there was danger that the wheat would rot, either standing in the fields, or in the sheaves. There was not even the occasional drive into the country to relieve the monotony, partly because of the bad weather and partly because the chauffeur was in the hospital with tuberculosis. Fr. Braun could drive, but Bishop Neveu felt that it would be better if he did not do so for the time being.

The month of July did provide some excitement which the Bishop could have done without. The GPU discovered that Fr. Amoudru was a bishop and reported this to the Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Mr. Litvinov immediately sent for the French Ambassador and demanded an explanation which Mr. Alphand, knowing nothing of the secret ceremony, was unable to give. Embarrassed and angry, Mr. Alphand sent for Bishop Neveu who simply state that in consecrating Fr. Amoudru, he had broken no law, either French or Soviet.

On July 15, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard

My dear colleague in Leningrad is worn-out and sick. He is very nervous and never tires of abusing our Soviet authorities who are very much aware of this. In fact, they only allowed Fr. Florent to come in January because they want to get rid of Fr. Amoudru. His permit to stay comes up for renewal in September and will surely not be granted because our Ambassador does not wish to risk a rebuff. The Quai d'Orsay is furious with Fr. Amoudru and has, no doubt, made this known to the Master General of the Dominicans. He was told to keep quiet about his consecration. This would perhaps have allowed him to go for a rest to France and to return in case I should either die or be expelled. But the poor man was hardly back in Leningrad after his consecration when he betrayed himself. Since then, he has performed episcopal functions in public. He has signed his exit visa by not being able to keep the secret. Fr. Florent, his young confrere, is the first to condemn him. He was here a few days ago and showed me a letter he had written about Fr. Amoudru to the Master General. I made him tone it down because one ought not to cast stones at a man who has suffered so

much, who has made himself ill through overwork, and who is a very supernatural religious. I enclose the letter in which Fr. Amoudru naively explains how he let out the secret. One day, he vested for Mass without crossing his stole in front of him. The sacristan noticed this and, concluding that he was a bishop, suggested to the trustees of the church that they should have a little presentation for him. Fr. Amoudru lost his head, admitted that he was a bishop, and then asked 15 people to keep the secret! Perhaps the easiest way out of this situation is for Rome to send him a telegram ordering him to go to France for a rest.

A couple of weeks ago, Mr. Alphand told me that he had requested Paris to arrange for a French priest to be sent to Odessa. We have a church there built by French people, and there are still the remnants of the French colony. Yesterday Mr. Alphand wanted to discuss this matter with Mr. Litvinov who would not even listen to him. Mr. Alphand thinks that Mr. Litvinov reacted so abruptly because he thought it was the Armoudru case that was being raised, while Mr. Alphand had no intention of even mentioning it.

Two days ago, the newspapers ran a story that the Soviet and the Belgian Governments are going to exchange ambassadors. The talks will probably be either in Brussels or Paris. The Belgian Assumptionists should ask their Government to bring up the question of a Belgian priest for the new Embassy. This must be done *BEFORE* the discussions are completed. The proverb "Don't do today what you can have done tomorrow by somebody else" does not apply. Let them imitate the diligence of Fr. Armanet. Any priest who is sent must be given the title of Chaplain to the Belgian Colony in the Soviet Union. If he is described only as Chaplain to the Belgian Embassy in Moscow, he will not be allowed to move out of that city.

Writing again on July 28, Bishop Neveu said:

There is no doubt now that it was the Litvinov-Bargeton conversation in Geneva that sealed Fr. Amoudru's fate. Now Litvinov is turning his attention to me. On July 19, Ambassador

Alphand told me that the Commissar for Foreign Affairs is very unhappy about me. He is still furious about the way in which I was consecrated in 1926 and says that I am a secret agent for the Vatican. The Ambassador angrily defended me and said I had never intrigued for the episcopacy. I think that that was very kind of him. The Soviets, however, have their methods of bringing pressure to bear on the Quai d'Orsay and will simply dictate to their Ambassador in Paris the line he must follow.

A publication here, without mentioning me by name, marks me down for Bolshevik vengeance. It simply states that I live at the French Embassy, and that when they had made their preparations, my head will roll. The palm of martyrdom is apparently glittering before me, but I shall try not to hasten things by any imprudence which would compromise the work of God. Yet I cannot help thinking that since I have served the Church of God so badly in my lifetime, I may be much more useful in death.

Chapter Nineteen

It was with a sense of triple bereavement that Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard on August 12, 1935: a telegram recalling Bishop Amoudru had arrived the previous day, news had just reached him that Bishop Bartholomew had been shot in prison, and on the morrow, Sophie was due to leave Moscow with the household of the Italian Ambassador who was being transferred to Berlin.

On August 26, Bishop Neveu wrote again:

I sent Fr. Braun to Leningrad to bid goodbye to Bishop Amoudru on my behalf. He served the Bishop's last Mass in the Soviet Union. He tells me that the tension between Bishop Amoudru and Fr. Florent was almost palpable and, rightly or wrongly, he had the impression that Fr. Florent had come to Leningrad, not to assist the Bishop but to replace him as soon as a convenient opportunity arose. I have told Bishop Amoudru to go and see you in Paris. I know you will make him welcome because, in spite of the *gaffe* he made, he is a man of God and my son in the episcopacy. I can assure you that you will not be bored in his company.

I enclose the only photograph in existence of Bishop Bartholomew. I would like you to have copies made of it as soon as you can. Please return the original because it belongs to his old nurse. He is a true martyr and has given his life for his belief in the Reunion of the Churches. He was the first Russian Catholic Bishop of the Byzantine Rite since the Patriarch Isadore, one of the protagonists for reunion at the Council of Florence in 1439 who was later made a cardinal.

Tania, as you know, has been far from happy. For a while, she went to another convent of the Oblates with the idea of becoming a domestic servant for the nuns. Now she writes to tell me that she has made up her mind to return to the Novitiate. Sophie, whose employers still have need of her, is in Berlin, but is upset because

she has heard nothing from the Sisters about her entering the Novitiate. The Italian Ambassador's wife will notify them by telegram as soon as she can let Sophie go.

On September 8, Bishop Neveu noted that he had celebrated the fortieth anniversary of his entry into religious life by hearing the confession of a penitent who had been forty years away from the Sacraments. Another source of pleasure was the arrival in Moscow of Fr. Garelli, a Salesian priest brought from Rome by the Italian Ambassador to act as librarian to the Embassy and as tutor to the Ambassador's four children. Since he was not officially registered as a minister of religion, his priestly activities would be confined to the chapel which had been set up in the Embassy for the exclusive use of the Ambassador and his staff. Bishop Neveu was sure that at least a similar arrangement could be made when the Belgian Embassy was established and hoped that the Assumptionists in Belgium would imitate the initiative of their American confreres.

At the beginning of October, 1935, Bishop Neveu was complaining of chest pains and insomnia. After several visits to his doctor, he still showed no improvement, so, on November 12, Fr. Braun called in a doctor from the United States Embassy who diagnosed an abnormal dilation of the heart resulting from a valvular lesion. He also found that the Bishop was suffering from alarming hypertension and nephritis. X-rays which, for various reasons, could not be taken until November 25 confirmed the diagnosis. The next day, the doctor told the Bishop to take care of any pressing affairs at once because he would have to take a long rest. The Bishop went to bed on December 4 and did not leave the house again until February 7, 1936. The doctor, who visited him on alternate days, treated him with sedatives and placed him on a diet consisting of a liter of milk and 500cc of water a day. Gradually, the diet was increased to include a little meat, vegetables and fruit which the doctor himself brought from the United States Embassy with the compliments of Mr. Bullitt. Fr. Garelli came each morning to bring Holy Communion. By December 15, Bishop Neveu felt so frustrated that the doctor agreed to allow him to say Mass in his room on condition that he went straight back to bed.

On January 20, 1936, further X-rays revealed some improvement which the doctor attributed to the bed rest. But he told Fr. Braun that although

with constant care, the Bishop could live for several years, there could be no cure. The doctor also felt that there was a danger of a hardening of the aorta and suggested a consultation with Dr. Pletnev, a distinguished heart specialist. On January 28, Dr. Pletnev confirmed the findings and said that the Bishop also had cardiosclerosis. At the invitation of the American doctor, Dr. Pletnev agreed to assume charge of the case and prescribed brine baths and massages, on alternate days, in addition to medication supplied by the United States Embassy. He also told the Bishop that he must avoid fatigue and emotional upsets. Both doctors agreed in recommending that the Bishop should go to France for a rest. But when the Bishop pointed out that he might not be given a re-entry visa, they compromised by saying that he must at least leave Moscow and spend some time in the country. Bishop Neveu said nothing but did not find the latter prospect very attractive. Apart from the expense, it would mean that he would be without Mass and would be unable to write or receive letters.

Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard on March 23, 1936:

I am improving slowly, but I have only just been allowed to say Mass in the church on Sundays. The atmosphere in which we have to live is not helping things, and it is no wonder that the pills which I have to take for my insomnia are having no effect. The persecution has been intensified again. I do not see how we can hold out much longer. Most priests are in prison; parishes are almost non-existent. I do not despair, but I must confess that I do not know how Divine Providence will ever restore the Kingdom of God in this country. The Belgian Ambassador has been talking to me about the possibility of getting a Belgian priest to Moscow. I told him that it was too late to be thinking in those terms. Everything should have been arranged at the discussions which preceded the exchange of Ambassadors.

The general situation in Europe does not inspire much confidence now. I know for a fact that the French Embassy here informed Paris that Hitler would march into the Rhineland two months before it actually happened on March 7.

Tania writes that she was given the religious habit on January 8,

and that she is much happier since Sophie came to the Novitiate. I hope they will both persevere because I think they will make good nuns.

Bishop Neveu continued to make progress and was able to conduct the Holy Week ceremonies with the assistance of Fr. Braun and Fr. Garelli. Subsequently, however, his blood pressure went very high. On Tuesday of Easter week, he was ordered a complete rest for ten days. There was, naturally, considerable anxiety in Rome about his health, but the Holy Father still wished him to remain in the Soviet Union and authorized him to leave only if there was danger of physical violence. It seemed too that, in spite of the doctors' insistence, it would be impossible for him to spend summer outside Moscow. Writing on May 6, 1936, the Bishop pointed out that nobody wished to rent a room to a stranger, especially if he was a priest, because of possible unpleasantness on the part of the authorities. Most of the available summer places had already been taken by members of the diplomatic corps. The only solution he could see was for God to take him to a better world. The Bishop also had a complaint to make:

I notice that the *Annuario Pontificio* has a photograph of Bishop Bartholomew. This well-meaning gesture is a sad mistake. I hope that it is not brought to the attention of our Soviet friends because just that one indiscreet mention of him could inspire another wave of investigations and arrests here in Moscow. Even his two sisters were not aware that he was a Bishop of the Catholic Church. Those two lines could cause them a great deal of trouble.

There were occasional moments of consolation. In spite of everything, the faith of his Catholic people remained unshaken, and ever since Easter, trustworthy messengers sent by the few priests who remained free had been coming to St. Louis-des-Français to pick up the Baptismal Oils and the Oil of the Sick blessed during Holy Week because nowhere else in the Soviet Union were they available. On May 31, Pentecost Sunday, he confirmed 30 people, some from Moscow, others from the Ukraine and the banks of the Volga. Most of them had not seen a priest for seven years.

On June 29, Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

Yesterday, Sunday, I was so ill that I could neither go to the

church nor say Mass. You see what a fine Christian I am becoming. Today, I was allowed to say Mass at my desk, but I am very weak. The doctors say it is another attack of nephritis. And now, they do not want me to spend any more winters here. Our winters last for seven months, so of what use am I to anyone now? Our Ambassador has sent a telegram to the Holy Father urging him to tell me to take a vacation in France and promising to obtain a re-entry visa for me....The heat has been torrid for the past two weeks; all I can do is sprawl on my bed in a room almost devoid of air. The doctors say I must leave if there is to be any improvement in my condition.

In July, 1936, Bishop Neveu was informed that Pope Pius XI had granted him permission to go to France. He therefore arranged to travel with Mr. Alphand who was leaving for Paris on July 31. The French Ambassador wrote himself a note to the effect that he had received the verbal promise of a return visa for Bishop Neveu on July 4, 1936, and inserted the note in the Embassy archives. Bishop Neveu notified Fr. Quénard of the date and time of his arrival in Paris and said he would fall in with any arrangements Fr. Quénard saw fit to make. He was bringing with him a medical report dated July 27 and signed by Adolph Rumreich, M.D.: "Bishop Neveu is suffering from a cardiac valvular disease, a sequel, probably, to a rheumatic endocarditis. With this is associated a chronic nephritis and a considerable cardiac hypertrophy. I recommend that he spend his winters in a mild and equable climate as it appears unlikely that he could survive another breakdown in the severe climatic conditions and unfavorable psychic atmosphere of Moscow." Bishop Neveu arrived in Paris at 10:45 A.M. on Sunday, August 2, and was taken at once to the Clinic on Rue de Turin.

On August 13, the Bishop was moved to Royat, near Clermont (Puy de Dome) for further treatment and rest. By September 8 he had improved sufficiently to be allowed to return to Paris where he took up residence in the Assumptionist house on Avenue Bosquet. There he learned that Mr. Alphand had had an operation that same day and would be going to Berne as Ambassador to Switzerland, that Mr. Robert Coulondre would replace Mr. Alphand in Moscow, and that Mr. Bullitt was leaving Moscow to

become the United States Ambassador to France where he was expected very shortly.

Bishop Neveu was placed on a very strict diet. But since his docility to medical prescriptions was suspect, one of his confreres, Fr. Ludovic, took upon himself the responsibility of keeping the Bishop under surveillance. Bishop Neveu accepted this supervision good-humoredly, and despite his long absence from community life, soon found himself very much at home. Unpretentious by nature, he seemed to consider his episcopal title an embarrassment; he neither sought nor claimed any exceptions to the general rule. He rose each morning at 4:45 A.M., made his bed, and after devoting some time to mental prayer, went down to the chapel to say Mass privately. The years in Russia had not blunted his quick wit; in community, he added joy to the lives of his companions.

Determined not to compromise his future in the Soviet Union, he carefully avoided all publicity, and he graciously declined all invitations to speak of his experience on the grounds that he must rest in preparation for his forthcoming visit to Rome. He did, however, on October 1st, go to see Mr. Bullitt, and a few days later, paid a courtesy call on Mr. Coulondre, a non-Catholic, who assured him that there was no change of policy in regard to his staying at the French Embassy in Moscow. On November 4, he wrote to tell Fr. Quénard not to expect him in Rome before January, 1937, because he had promised to perform the ordinations at the Assumptionist House of Studies at Lormoy, near Paris, and because on December 2, he was to officiate at the wedding of Miss Marievic Alphan, daughter of the Ambassador, to Mr. Charpentier, Counselor at the French Embassy in Moscow. Moreover, he was looking forward to receiving Tania's first vows as an Oblate of the Assumption on January 8, 1937. Bishop Neveu continued his letter:

I share your anxiety to have another priest in the Soviet Union, but I do not think I should raise the question until I am safely back in Moscow. Our people at the Quai d'Orsay have given me ample proof of their capacity for having the wool pulled over their eyes. If I give them two hares to chase at the same time, namely, my re-entry visa and the nomination of another priest, either or both will be lost. These stupid people did not even dare to claim real estate

and buildings in Russia which were the property of the French nation and which would have given free lodging to the Embassy personnel. Instead, they prefer to pay dearly in order to hire stolen property.

Last night, I went to the station to say "Au revoir" to Mr. Coulondre. He seems to me to be very kind and to have a great deal of poise. I hope they will not give him any foolish instructions; but even if they do, I think he will lend us any support we need.

Bishop Neveu left Paris for Rome January 16, 1937, with an uneasy mind. In December he had learned, on excellent authority, that the Quai d'Orsay had sent to the War Office a document concerning him which was full of praise but which expressed the fear that he could be a danger to good relations with the Soviet Union. He had also heard from Fr. Braun that the Polish Ambassador had been to see Mr. Coulondre on "church business," to wit, the fact that nobody was doing anything to prevent the closing of the Catholic church in Smolensk. When Mr. Coulondre told him to take up the matter with Fr. Braun, whom Bishop Neveu had appointed acting Administrator, the Polish Ambassador professed to be unaware that the Bishop had made any such provision for his absence, and this despite the fact that Fr. Braun had been delegated in the presence of the Polish priest in Moscow who was a frequent visitor to the Polish Embassy. Fr. Braun also told the Bishop that Fr. Potapii had died in Solovki.

Bishop Neveu replied to Fr. Braun on January 25, 1937:

You will recognize the attitude of the Polish Ambassador as a further manifestation of a consistent policy aimed at representing me as incapable of looking after the affairs of the Church in the Soviet Union. I am sorry for the Catholics of Smolensk, but you can do no more for them than you have already done. Even the payment of their taxes will not produce a priest to look after them and will not prevent the closing of the building which has been threatened now for over two years. It is sad to think that even a Polish Bishop could not conjure up a pastor for them at the present time. Be careful! I never once set foot in the Polish Embassy, and I advise you to take the same precaution. For the rest, remember

that the Son of God was not able to please everybody and we are not greater than He.

The Holy Father was ill when Bishop Neveu arrived in Rome and consequently, he had to wait until February 3 for an audience which lasted an hour. Bishop Neveu disclosed nothing of what had passed between them, remarking only that though the Pope seemed very thin and worn, he revealed amazing energy. The Bishop had already met with Cardinals Tisserant, Pacelli and Pizzardo and had once again been asked to submit written reports on the religious affairs in the Soviet Union. He was rather relieved to find that, in these circles at least, everybody seemed to be aware of Polish maneuvering.

While realizing the futility of trying to make definite plans, Bishop Neveu had set May 1st as a possible date for his return to Moscow. He was now anxious to get out of Rome, where he was at the mercy of a host of people, and to return to the relative tranquility of Avenue Bosquet. It was, however, March 5 before he was able to leave, and he was still in Paris when, on March 19, 1937, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical letter *Divini Redemptoris* in condemnation of atheistic Communism. It was understandable that the Bishop should express the hope that the Soviet Government would not think that he had dictated the encyclical.

On Easter Monday, March 29, Bishop Neveu began his remote preparation for his return to Moscow by going to make a series of visits to relatives and friends in Gien, Orleans and Burgundy. He returned to Paris on April 19 and, two days later, celebrated the 11th anniversary of his consecration in the company of Bishop d'Herbigny. On the same day, he visited Mr. Coulondre who was recovering from a broken leg. The Ambassador assured him that he would take care of the taxes on St. Louis-des-Français for 1937 and sent a memorandum full of praise for Fr. Braun to the Quai d'Orsay. On April 25, Bishop Neveu went to the Landes to see the de Franclieus, and from there went to Lourdes where he said Mass privately at the Grotto on May 8. The snow-clad Pyrenees were beautiful, but beyond them, from Spain, came the ominous rumbling of artillery. His health had improved so much that his friends were urging him to prolong his stay, but he was anxious to get back to Paris because he had received some disturbing news.

First, there had been a letter from Mr. Alphand which included the remark: "The formalities in connection with your visa will doubtless take a long time, so why don't you come to Berne and stay with us for a while?" Then Fr. Braun, in his letter of May 3, told him that on April 26, Mr. Payart of the French Embassy in Moscow had taken him aside and had warned him to be on his guard about church affairs because "something is being prepared against you." Fr. Braun had pressed him for more information, but Mr. Payart had declined to elaborate on his remark. Fr. Braun also announced that the only other Catholic priest in Moscow had been arrested. This Fr. Tsakoul, who was at the church of the Immaculate Conception, had gone to the Polish Church at the request of the Polish Ambassador to celebrate Mass on May 3, Polish Independence Day. Within an hour the police had come to the room which served him as a rectory and had taken him away.

Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Braun on May 24, 1937:

Go over to the Immaculate Conception and remove the Blessed Sacrament because the church will surely be closed now. Do not celebrate Mass anywhere outside of St. Louis because you, too, could be accused of performing religious ceremonies in a place for which you are not registered. Do not give them any excuse, and if the people do not understand, tell them that in losing you, they will have lost all.

I have already been to the Soviet Embassy here to pick up the three forms which I must fill out in application for my visa. Before I return them, I shall go to the Quai d'Orsay for a letter of recommendation which may speed things up. I have certainly given them no reason not to support me.

Mr. Payart's remark, in conjunction with what I know already, is very interesting. I have just received a letter from Fr. Quénard saying that Msgr. Vidal, former pastor of St. Louis and now Canonical Consultor of the French Embassy to the Holy See, wishes to have my address because he has something important to tell me. Fr. Quénard went on to say: "I am afraid they have outlined a plan which does not include us. After all your work and hardship, we

should not give up this post without a struggle. Other projects have already been started." I have my suspicions, but for the life of me, I cannot decide where the blow is coming from or who "they" are. Meanwhile, I am trying to keep calm, and you should do the same, especially as you are fortunate enough not to have to deal with the Quai d'Orsay. I do not think it is a Soviet intrigue, and we have the support of Rome, so sleep peacefully.

Bishop Neveu was more disturbed than he cared to admit, because that same day he wrote another letter, this time to Mr. Coulondre in Moscow:

Excellency:

I wish to inform you that I have initiated the proceedings to obtain a visa of re-entry to the Soviet Union and also that, on July 24, 1936, Mr. Alphand placed in the Embassy archives a document on which he stated that he had a verbal promise that the re-entry visa would be granted to me.

Now I beg your leave to discuss a very delicate matter. I have just heard from Rome that moves are being made to prevent my return to Moscow and to give St. Louis-des-Français to another French candidate. This does not surprise me. As long ago as December, 1936, I learned from an unimpeachable source that a document concerning me, the signatory of which I do not know, was transmitted by the Quai d'Orsay to the War Office. The writer recognizes my competence in Russian affairs but fears that I could be an obstacle to good relations with the Soviet Union. In March of this year, I met Mr. Charpentier of our Moscow Embassy who said to me: "What can you expect to achieve in Russia now? You have suffered it long enough." It was the tone of his remark rather than the content which puzzled me. More recently, Mr. Alphand invited me to come and stay with him in Berne because "the formalities of your visa will take a long time." Before leaving Moscow for Spain, Mr. Payart warned Fr. Braun that somebody was plotting against us. Today, I learn from my Superior General that "they" have outlined a plan which does not include us, and it has already been

put into action.

My dear Ambassador, I have never had any ambition either for the episcopacy or for the post in Moscow. I was consecrated in the most unexpected way in virtue of obedience to the Pope, and my transfer to Moscow caused me to lose my church and rectory and the Assumptionist mission in Makeyevka which I had founded. In Moscow, I have never interfered in affairs which did not concern me. On occasion, I have been asked for my opinion on people and things and I have always given it frankly and before God without worrying whether I was upsetting ill-founded or preconceived ideas and also without caring whether my opinion was acted upon or not. I felt I was merely doing my duty in this, and I think any honest man would have done the same.

The delicate, not to say sad, religious situation in the Soviet Union as well as my own situation made me also consider it my duty not to complicate the task of our Ambassadors, and nothing that I did, either of my own accord or in fulfillment of my religious obligations, has ever been a source of embarrassment to them. I have always carefully avoided saying or doing anything which could annoy the Government to which they were accredited because, receiving the hospitality of the Ambassadors of France and living under their roof, I would have been a boor if I had acted otherwise. Although I am primarily a man of God, I cherish the good name of the human fatherland which God gave me, and therefore, I cannot understand why they wish to do with me what they did with Bishop Amoudru.

Naturally, in virtue of my oaths, I shall try to carry out the Holy Father's wishes. My personal lot concerns me not at all, or rather, only secondarily, but there is one consideration which I must submit to you. It was my religious family which sent me to Russia and allowed me to organize the mission in Makeyevka which was lost when, in obedience to the Pope, I went to Moscow. I know that the French Government was happy to see the control of Catholic affairs of one sixth of the world in the hands of a French

Assumptionist. It is also the Assumptionists, in the person of Fr. Braun, who are rendering service to the French colony as well as to all the Catholics in the Soviet Union during the absence imposed by my illness. It seems to me that if my departure has been decided upon, honesty would demand that I be replaced by an Assumptionist, and if, one day, this question should arise, I would like you to remind the Quai d'Orsay that thirty-one years of devoted labors have created some rights in favor of the Assumptionists. It would be very unpleasant to see a cuckoo put its eggs into the nest which we have kept with so much difficulty.

Forgive me for writing these things to you. If it is painful for you to read them, it is much more painful for me to write them. But I must let you know what is going on because you certainly will have a voice in the matter. There are things which cannot be done there without you, and I rejoice in this because I know your conscientiousness and your sense of justice. I hope that, in spite of the winds and the storm, I shall arrive safely in port and be able to give the rest of my life to these poor Russians whom I have never been able to stop loving.

From Fr. Braun who met Mr. Coulondre soon after he had received the letter, Bishop Neveu learned that the Ambassador knew nothing of any intrigue and could scarcely believe that any existed, but he readily agreed with Fr. Braun that the Bishop would not have written such a letter unless he had solid grounds for his belief. Fr. Braun also suggested that there might be other reasons for the temporizing in regard to the Bishop's visa. There was an atmosphere of terror in the Soviet Union because the armed services and the Communist Party were being purged. The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs had not been spared, and all Soviet administrators were trembling for their own safety with consequent difficulties for diplomats accredited to Moscow. Moreover, continued Fr. Braun, the presence of foreigners was particularly unwelcome at this time. On June 14, Bishop Neveu was informed that it would be at least six months before his visa could be granted and that he should make no move to obtain it independently of the Quai d'Orsay.

Fr. Braun was having his own troubles. An official of the Department of Religions had come into the sacristy one Sunday and demanded the parish books including the baptismal registers. Fr. Braun replied that, in accordance with the law of the separation of the Church and the State, he could not recognize the right of the Soviet Government to make such a request. Shortly afterwards, the French Consul received a memorandum from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to the effect that "Braun, Leopold, minister of religion at the church of St. Louis-des-Français, is not authorized to interpret Soviet law. If the records are not surrendered, judicial proceedings will be instituted." This note was brought to Fr. Braun's attention, but he refused to budge an inch from his position. Most of the baptisms he performed were of children brought from the provinces and were recorded, not in the parish records, but in a separate book.

Finally, Fr. Braun sought the support of Mr. Joseph E. Davies who had succeeded Mr. Bullitt as United States Ambassador in Moscow. Mr. Davies wrote to Mr. Litvinov pointing out that he was making a personal appeal rather than an official representation. He then reminded Mr. Litvinov of the spirit of the discussions which had led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and expressed the hope that the honorable Soviet Government would not permit this matter to develop into an incident or issue which would, he thought, have an untoward effect upon the sensibilities of the American people. This intervention by Mr. Davies was effective because Fr. Braun heard no more about his records. However, he gathered that he was now *persona non grata*.

About the beginning of October, Bishop Neveu called on Mr. Coulondre, who was home on leave, and learned that during a League of Nations Conference at Geneva in September, Mr. Yvon Delbos, the French Foreign Minister, had pleaded the Bishop's request for a visa in a conversation with Mr. Litvinov. The latter replied that the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs had no objection but that the GPU were making difficulties. Mr. Coulondre assured the Bishop that he himself would do everything in his power to get a definite answer.

On December 27, 1937 Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard:

As you can see, I am still here in France, and I have no idea when

my exile from Moscow will end. Mr. Coulondre wrote to me on November 30 to say that he had reminded Litvinov of his conversation with Delbos last September, adding that the whole business had dragged on long enough. When Mr. Coulondre said that I had never mixed in politics and was interested only in my duty and my people, Litvinov's reaction was not unfavorable, but he did not commit himself to anything. Mr. Coulondre intends to make another approach soon but points out that so many prominent men in the Soviet Union are on trial that the others are ultra-cautious. I saw Mr. Alphand about ten days ago and he told me that, while he was Ambassador in Moscow, Litvinov confided in him that he was afraid of me because he considered me capable of conspiracy. Such people always judge others by themselves.

In the meantime, I am trying to be patient. The material situation in Moscow is not good. The new home of the French Embassy, spacious and magnificent as it may appear outwardly, has had to be handed back to the carpenters and plasterers because the floors and ceilings are not satisfactory. The Ambassador, who told me that there is a room reserved for me, has had to take shelter in what used to be the Finnish Embassy. (The Finns have a brand new building). Fr. Braun is alone in our Embassy amid the dust and noise. He has heard that Bishop Frison has definitely been shot in prison sometime during the summer, but he is not sure of the date.

A lady from Bordeaux tells me that she has a group of 200 people who want to form themselves into a canonical association dedicated to prayer for Russia. They approached Archbishop Feltin of Bordeaux for approval, and he discussed the matter with Archbishop Gerlier of Lyons who was of the opinion that "it might cause diplomatic and political inconveniences!"

In Paris, a similar group (I did not start it) went to Cardinal Verdier who referred them to Msgr. Chaptal. He said he would give them an answer in six months, but at the end of that time, all he could add was "Wait." In their frustration, both groups sent

representatives to me. I told them that the Assumptionists have an Archconfraternity, erected and approved by Rome in 1898, whose object is to offer prayers and good works for the return of the separated churches, especially the Greeks and Slavs. I suggested that they join this as individuals, and then, from within, recruit and form groups who would consecrate themselves particularly to praying for Russia. I wrote to the headquarters of the Archconfraternity in Lyons to find out if it had been canonically erected in the dioceses of Bordeaux and Paris, but there was not even the courtesy of a reply. Apparently, the young Assumptionists either know or care nothing for this form of apostolate.

On Friday, January 14, 1938, Bishop Neveu had lunch with Mr. Bullitt, the United States Ambassador, who soon afterwards paid a visit to the Quai d'Orsay to try to arouse a little more enthusiasm for the Bishop's re-entry visa. In March, Fr. Braun reported that Mr. Bullitt's action seemed to be having some effect, perhaps because the Quai d'Orsay objected to his suggestion that, if Bishop Neveu could not return to Moscow, he was willing to ask Washington to arrange for another American Assumptionist to go to St. Louis-des-Français. In Moscow, Mr. Litvinov and his new Assistant Commissar, Mr. Potemkin, former Ambassador to Paris, kept referring the matter back to one another. Since nobody would make a decision, the visa had neither been refused nor granted. Eventually, Mr. Bullitt was informed, without comment, by the Quai d'Orsay that the Soviet authorities could not accept responsibility for the life and safety of the Bishop if he returned to the Soviet Union.

Fr. Braun reported, too, that the church of the Immaculate Conception had been closed. The cross had been knocked off the roof, and the building would be used for storage purposes. So many churches had been closed that the crowds at St. Louis were larger than ever, and even members of the Orthodox Church were coming to Mass. Fr. Braun was now reading the Epistle and the Gospel of the Mass in Russian and was also preaching in Russian, French and English every Sunday. In January, 1938, he had three groups of German Catholics from the Volga region who had come to go to confession and to be married by a priest.

As long as his request for a visa had not been refused, Bishop Neveu was still hopeful. But when he was invited to give the sacrament of Confirmation in the diocese of Bourges between May 1st and June 9, and in the archdiocese of Paris between May 19 and June 26, he was realistic enough to accept. Before he began his rounds, he received Sophie's first vows as an Oblate on April 26. These two Confirmation circuits called for 68 different ceremonies, and although the Bishop was happy to be useful, he found it a strain to be constantly on the road, sleeping in a strange bed every night, and to watch his diet without offending either the cook or his host.

Mr. Coulondre's will to succeed in the matter of the visa was still unshaken, and he assured the Bishop that it was shared by the new Foreign Minister, Mr. Georges Bonnet. In September, 1938, the Ambassador was authorized to refuse all applications of Soviet citizens for visas to France until he had received a definite answer about Bishop Neveu. Within two weeks, he had rejected ten such applications. In the aftermath of the Munich agreement of September 30, 1938, it was announced that Mr. Coulondre would be the new French Ambassador to Germany.

In October, 1938, Mr. Bullitt wrote to Fr. Braun mentioning that he had been told by Mr. Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, that Bishop Neveu would be arrested as soon as he set foot in the Soviet Union. Mr. Bullitt again offered to try to get another American Assumptionist for St. Louis-des-Français, and this time Mr. Bonnet said that there would be no objections from France. Fr. Braun concluded from this that the Quai d'Orsay had decided to pursue the matter of the visa no further.

Bishop Neveu readily understood that the statesmen of Europe had many things to occupy their minds. Both before and after the Munich Agreement, there had been considerable diplomatic maneuvering as uneasy nations, uncertain of the direction of Hitler's next move, sought new alliances or tried to cement old friendships. The Soviet Union was not immune from the general apprehension, and Bishop Neveu felt no surprise when he heard that the Polish church in Moscow, which had been closed on July 21, 1938, had been re-opened. He warned Fr. Braun that this was almost certainly a political gesture to reassure Polish public opinion and

said that he would be much more convinced of a change of heart if the Soviet authorities had released a priest to take charge of the church. As the question had been raised, Fr. Braun should make it quite clear to all concerned that if he did say Mass in SS. Peter and Paul's, it would be on a provisional basis until such time as a Polish priest were available.

At the beginning of 1939, it seemed that, for some time at least, Divine Providence had cast Bishop Neveu in the role of Auxiliary Bishop of the dioceses of Bourges, Orleans and Paris. He would never have denied that he derived great consolation from these opportunities to exercise his episcopal ministry, but his heart was still in Russia. Everything he did seemed to remind him of this, even if only by contrast. When he was confirming, he thought of the days when it was illegal for him to mention religion to a child. At ordinations, he remembered Fr. David, the only priest he had ordained in the Soviet Union. The solemnity surrounding the consecration of a bishop, the well-trained choirs and the crowded churches merely accentuated the stark simplicity of his own consecration in a locked church with a congregation of two.

When World War II began in September, 1939, it brought little change to his life, especially during the period known as the "phony war." His activities, if anything, were increased rather than curtailed because he was always willing to make himself available at short notice to ordain students who, on the threshold of the priesthood, had been called to the armed forces. Often enough, these ceremonies took place whenever the candidate managed to get a few days leave. Two occasions in 1940 were particularly memorable for him. On January 8 and on April 26, he received, respectively, the Perpetual Vows in religion of Sr. Tatiana-Therese of the Infant Jesus (Tania) and Sr. Salome (Sophie).

By mid-May, 1940, the slumbering war had erupted, and the German armies had broken through into France at Sedan. Bishop Neveu was still busy on his Confirmation rounds on June 9 when, in view of the rapidity of the German advance, it was decided that the members of the staff of the Assumptionist publishing house, the Bonne Presse, should move to Bordeaux and that the Bishop should go with them.

Chapter Twenty

On July 23, 1940, Bishop Neveu wrote from Arcachon, just south of Bordeaux, to Mr. LeBlanc, a friend in Gien:

I wrote to let you know that I had to leave Paris on June 11, but my letter must have gone astray. Since then, I have been making a very sad and painful Way of the Cross because the fatigue of my exertions in Paris, my journey and, most of all, the sense of the depths of the misery of our country almost brought on a heart attack. Your story of the destruction in Gien makes me think that Divine Providence is showing us that desperate diseases demand desperate remedies, and I only hope that our dear country will understand and apply them.

I had intended to make my way to the de Francieus in the Landes, but there was no way of going any further. In spite of the charms of nature, the quietness of Arcachon is almost unbearable. The worst feature of my situation is that I don't know what to do for the best. It is important for me to resume the contact, lost two months ago, with the country I left almost four years ago. Would it be better to pitch my tent near Clermont so as to be near the Government, or should I simply return to Paris? In any case, how would I reach Moscow now even if I had a visa? At the moment, I am like a waif and a stray because I have been told to keep my identity a secret and to hide all my papers about Russia in a secure place. I feel like St. Paul who once described himself as "the refuse of the earth."

Gien had, in fact, come under attack on June 15, and for three days the center of the town had been in flames. It was with a sense of personal loss that Bishop Neveu learned that the church of his baptism had been one of the first casualties. Only two months before, he had ordained a local boy there, and the sound of the bells had brought back vivid memories of both sad and joyful occasions in his youth.

In September, 1940, friends from Bordeaux gave the Bishop the use of their summer residence just outside Arcachon and near to the convent which he was serving as chaplain. A few weeks later, the increasing frequency of air-raids on Bordeaux forced the owner of the house, with his wife and four children, to take refuge with the Bishop; their company made life much more tolerable. Even so, Bishop Neveu soon tired of doing nothing, and in February 1941, he wrote to Fr. Quénard:

Come what may, I intend to return to Paris at the end of April. The Archbishop here does not need my services. I know there will be plenty for me to do around Paris. Despite the fact that many lay people come to Sunday Mass in the convent here, the Sisters will not allow me to preach because they "have never had a sermon on Sunday." When I offered to give a weekly conference for the Sisters themselves, I was told that they were too busy.

I noted your reference to the Bonne Presse incident. I think our people should have protested more vigorously and noisily. In the Soviet Union, I had the reputation of being a very difficult character, and that served me well on numerous occasions. Even when they came to make trouble, they always handled me with kid gloves. I always asked their names and demanded to see their papers and authorization. Sometimes, I had the effrontery to do a little threatening. By the use of a few measured and mysterious words, I gave the impression that I had very high and important connections. This is a useful art and, for some situations, I recommend it heartily.

Once back in Paris, Bishop Neveu slipped easily and happily into his old way of life, but his presence soon came to the attention of the Occupying Forces. Between August 7, 1941 and February 21, 1942, he was visited four times by German representatives. He made a resume of these conversations:

August 7, 1941

I have just had a visit from a Dr. Kurt Reichl, who is a sort of "Ambassador at large" with the Occupying Forces and whose special interest is religious affairs. He had already been to see Fr. Quénard after

Easter and is always accompanied by an interpreter because, in spite of the position he holds, he speaks no French. On this occasion, the interpreter was an Italian named Guido Mancio. The conversation went something like this:

Reichl: You will have heard no doubt about our crusade against Bolshevism, and as we know that you have spent a long time in Russia and have suffered at the hands of the Bolsheviks, we come to ask if you would lend your support to our efforts on behalf of the Christian civilization by making an anti-Communist declaration for the press.

Myself: No, I cannot issue such a statement because here in France, I have no jurisdiction. Besides, the French Bishops would soon lift their eyebrows if they saw me meddling in politics. Moreover, I detest all publicity and prefer to remain incognito as much as I can. Such a statement would only result in the death of the confrere I left behind in Moscow and increase the harassment of the faithful.

Reichl: That is understandable enough...but after we take Moscow?

Myself: Why don't you come back when you have succeeded in doing that?

Reichl: Another thing. The relations between the Vatican and Germany are not...very normal. We consider that the foreign churches, for example, the Catholic Church in Spain and in France, which is the eldest daughter of the Church (I bowed my head respectfully), should make an effort to bring about an improvement in these relations.

Myself: That is not the right way to do things. The Catholic Church is not a democracy, and the Pope's authority comes from on high, not from below.

Reichl: Yes, but you must see that it is difficult for us to make the first overtures or take the first step.

Myself: I don't see why this should be so. There are many ways in which you can speak directly to the Vatican. You have an Ambassador to the Holy See, and there is a Papal Nuncio in Berlin.

Reichl: This is precisely what we find embarrassing. A word from you would perhaps, be better received.

Myself: Do you think so? Can you imagine what they would think in Rome

if an insignificant little bishop, either through the press or in a letter to the Pope, tried to tell the Holy See what policy should be pursued? They would at once ask: "Who is this Visigoth, and what does he think he is doing?" If you do not want to use official channels, you can always make an unofficial approach. Surely, in Berlin, there must be at least one intelligent officer (sic) who could go and see the Papal Nuncio and make known to him the wishes of your Government. The Nuncio will refer the matter to the Vatican which will state its point of view, and conversations will have already begun. (Then memories of Moscow came back to me) You could also try to go through Mr. Attolico, one time Italian Ambassador in Moscow and Berlin, who is now in Rome. I know that he is a good friend of the Cardinal Secretary of State because they were both in Switzerland at the same time and the Cardinal baptized the Ambassador's youngest child, Giacomo. (They thanked me and wrote in their notebooks).

Reichl: What do you think will be the future political situation in the Soviet Union?

Myself: Politics are out of my domain. I am concerned with religious matters only. Still, it seems to me that the form of government can hardly change. There must always be a strong man in control, whether he is a dictator or a Tsar. The present ruler is a Red Tsar, a brigand, a usurper and an assassin, but even a legitimate ruler would have difficulty in making himself accepted everywhere. Some regions, such as the Ukraine, will certainly demand autonomy.

Reichl: We have our own ideas. We intend to restore the old Grand Duchy of Moscow. The future of the Ukraine has already been decided.

At this point I wanted to say to the Italian interpreter: "In the Middle Ages, and even later, Venice and Genoa had flourishing settlements in the Crimea and around the Black Sea. Are you going to let the Germans take everything?" But Italians are intelligent and understand irony, so I kept quiet.

Monday, September 15, 1941

Today, I had a visit from a young man with a scar on his cheek who had driven from Orleans to Gien to see me. He had been reading our local

paper which, describing me as "Bishop of Moscow," announced that I had come to Gien for a few days rest. I asked to see his credentials and saw that he was a member of the Gestapo. I asked then if he had come to arrest me. He replied that he wished only to talk about Russia. He apologized for not bringing an interpreter, but I assured him that we would be able to make ourselves understood.

Officer: Did the Bolsheviks give you much trouble?

Myself: Well, they searched me and my house 23 times, arrested me twice and were going to shoot me once. However, as you can see, I am still alive.

Officer: In that case, you would, I am sure, have no objection to helping us by publishing an anti-Communist declaration.

(I declined this offer for the reasons I gave before).

Officer: We are working for the Christian Church (?) and yet the French Catholics will not help us. The number of French volunteers for our Anti-Bolshevik Legion is insignificant. A word from you would help recruitment.

Myself: Listen, you have broken our backs, and nobody really wants to fight. In France we have not enough people to till the land while in your camps in Germany 800,000 French farm workers are being held. All those who want to fight are your prisoners. Release them, and perhaps some of them will volunteer for your Legion.

Officer: The French Catholics do not understand us. I was talking to some young people in Orleans who told me that they would not collaborate with us because we have enthroned neo-paganism in Germany.

Myself: (innocently) Why do they say that?

Officer: (He looked embarrassed and began to stutter) There was a Papal Encyclical...

Myself: Well, what do you expect? Catholics are guided by the Pope who is not a man who makes such statements lightly. He studies things deeply before speaking to the whole world about them.

Officer: But it is only a difference of method in training the young people.

Myself: Possibly, but the Church has something to say on that point. Let

the Pope know exactly what you want. He will study your requests seriously, and if he finds that he agrees with you, all Catholics will admit that you are right. As far as France is concerned, I advise you not to introduce here your system of training the young. The Catholics of France would prefer to be shot rather than hand over the souls of their children to the State.

(The officer said he did not understand me too well, so I repeated my words slowly and distinctly. This time, he understood so well that our conversation ended. He started to tell me that he wished to go to Russia, that he had bought a Russian grammar, and then, suddenly, he left.)

Thursday, January 8, 1942

Since last September, an important official of the Chancellery of the German Embassy has been saying that he would like to meet me for he wished to offer me German assistance to regain my post in Moscow. However, since the German armies in Russia have just had to fall back, the question of my return to Moscow was not raised at all during the conversation. This diplomat looked quite distinguished and spoke French very well. Our discussion contained nothing worthy of note except that I told him how the Germans could have made their Russian campaign shorter and more successful:

“You should have been clever enough to give the Russian people the idea that you came, not as conquerors, but as liberators. You should first of all have come to an understanding with the Grand-duke who is the heir to the throne. Then you should have recruited a Russian Army Corps from among the émigrés all over the world and sent it and the Grand-duke ahead of you. You should have proclaimed that the Tsar had come to take possession of his country in order to restore peace and order to it. The people would have welcomed you with open arms.” (He listened to me attentively and then left. There is no doubt that, at present, all Russians, both White and Red, detest the Germans.)

Saturday, February 21, 1942

Dr. Reichl has told me several times that he wished to see me again. He has been recalled to Germany on business, so today he sent his interpreter who, though born in Russia, has a German sounding name and was

brought up in one of the Baltic states. His father, an officer in the army of the Tsar, had been shot by the Bolsheviks. Though this interpreter speaks French fluently, Dr. Reichl had told him that he could speak to me in Russian, which is what he did. This young man had been brought to the West while he was very young and seemed to be very ignorant of day to day life in Soviet Russia. He asked a lot of questions about the Soviet Union and also about religion in general and Orthodoxy in particular. Though he seemed interested in my replies, I wondered if he anything more important to discuss when finally came out with it:

Interpreter: Dr. Reichl wishes to know what form you think the ministry of the Catholic Church will take in the Russia of the future?

Myself: I see it as every Catholic must see it. It will consist in fidelity to the canonical rules which forbid us to force Oriental Christians to adopt the Roman Rite and which demand that we conserve intact their own rites in the Slavonic liturgical language. (I saw a look of skepticism on his face.) Let me add that there are some Catholics, especially in Poland, who do not always obey the rules laid down by Rome. The primary issue is unity of faith and submission to the Pope. The liturgical rites have an importance that is only secondary and the variety of rites in itself does not conflict with unity of faith and submission to the Holy Father.

Interpreter: But what do they think in Rome itself?

Myself: Rome has never varied and will never vary its policy in this regard in spite of political upheavals and geographical changes. Rome respects everything which is worthy of respect and will even undertake its defense. But if you really wish to learn from me what Rome thinks, obtain for me from the Italian authorities a permit which will enable me to cross the line of demarcation and the Alps. You would be doing me a favor, and I don't think the Vatican would be too angry at me. (The gentleman left after thanking me profusely for the pleasure I had given him, but without promising to get me the permit.)

It goes without saying that if the way to Moscow does open up, I shall be delighted to return there if I have the blessing of the Holy Father. One thing is certain: I shall not go back on a German armored car, because it

would make both Catholics and Orthodox distrust me. If the Pope orders me to return, I shall have the approval of everyone.

After the German onslaught on Russia, the Vichy Government broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in July, 1941, and Bishop Neveu's hopes of getting his visa seemed more remote than ever. Still, he never despaired, and in his spare time, he gave lessons in the Russian language to Sister Magdalena, an Oblate of the Assumption who had volunteered to return with him to do missionary work in the Soviet Union. He followed the war news with interest and noted, towards the end of 1942, that Rumanian troops who were fighting with the Axis powers were occupying Odessa. Since Fr. Maniglier had been forced to leave there in 1920, nothing had been heard of the fate of the French church of St. Peter of which he had been pastor. Bishop Neveu wrote to Fr. Quénard suggesting that it would be interesting to see if one of the Assumptionist priests in Rumania could get permission to go to Odessa and investigate. In the event, it proved comparatively easy for Fr. Judicael Nicolas, a Frenchman, from the Assumptionist college in Blaj, to spend a few days of his Christmas vacation, 1942, in Odessa. Fr. Judicael found that St. Peter's was still standing, although it was badly in need of repairs to the roof and walls. The following summer, Fr. Judicael returned to Odessa with a lay brother and spent several weeks working on both the church and rectory. By this time, the course of the war had changed. The German tide had begun to ebb, and Soviet troops had started their own advance towards Odessa. In October, 1943, Fr. Judicael, who had returned to Blaj for the opening of the school year, received a telegram from Rome asking if he were willing to return to Odessa to minister to the needs of the faithful there and if he were willing to stay indefinitely, in spite of the possible consequences to himself. After a few moments of soul-searching, he agreed to go, having been assured that he would be given a companion who spoke Russian fluently.

Russian troops had retaken Odessa, as had been expected, but Fr. Judicael's letters indicated that, although he felt he was under surveillance, he was suffering no restrictions in the exercise of his ministry. In November, 1944, the prospects seemed so good that Bishop Neveu

suggested that another Assumptionist might be sent to Odessa so that Fr. Judicael could go to Moscow to help Fr. Braun who had now been alone for eight years. This would make it possible for one or another of them to go, from time to time, to Leningrad where the Catholics had been without a priest since Fr. Florent had left after the break of diplomatic relations between Vichy and the Soviet Union.

Life had not been easy for Fr. Braun. Electricity rates for the church of St. Louis had been increased exorbitantly, and he was not allowed to buy wood to heat the building. Between 1939 and 1941, St. Louis-des-Français had been broken into five times, and twice the Blessed Sacrament had been profaned. Although GPU headquarters were just across the street, nobody had noticed the intruders, and the police professed themselves baffled. Finally, after notes of protest had been lodged by the Ambassadors of the United States, Great Britain, Belgium and Italy, the police had announced, in a matter of hours, that five men, known to be specialists in church robbery, had been arrested. The French Embassy staff left in July, 1941, entrusting the protection of French interests to the Turkish Ambassador and the care of the Embassy building to a janitor. Fr. Braun moved out, first into a small room, and then, after the whole Diplomatic Corps had been evacuated to Kuybyshev, into a house belonging to the British Consulate. In April, 1942, a Free French Mission arrived at Kuybyshev, and the Minister in charge invited Fr. Braun to return to the Embassy so that he could exercise some supervision over the property. Fr. Braun agreed to do so but decided to live in a small annex rather than in the Embassy itself.

Knowing the difficulties that Bishop Neveu was having with his visa, Fr. Quénard had been hoping to send Fr. Braun a companion. But it was not until August, 1943 that what seemed to be an opportunity presented itself. Personal representations were made to President Roosevelt for his approval of the application of Fr. George A. Laberge, another American Assumptionist, for an entry visa to the Soviet Union. In September, 1943 there was a reply indicating that the time was considered inopportune for asking this favor of the Soviet Government. Another application by Fr. Laberge in April, 1944 made no progress whatsoever.

In 1945, Bishop Neveu's Confirmation rounds began early and were unusually heavy because of the illness of two Bishops. In the Archdiocese of Paris, he was to preside at ceremonies, beginning on March 15 and ending on June 10. In addition, he was also to confirm in the dioceses of Bourges and Orleans. He was still in precarious health and tired easily, especially when he was on the road. Sometimes there were four ceremonies on the same day, after which he had to talk to the children, their parents and the municipal authorities, then listen to speeches, make speeches, and sit through long banquets. He missed the Russian lessons he had been giving to Sr. Magdalena, and he often wrote to her about his hopes for the future and his memories of the past. Early in 1945, he was reflecting on his early difficulties with Fr. Bailly and on his present life in exile: There is no greater cross than finding oneself not in full accord with one's superiors. It causes great suffering, but it is a wonderful opportunity to offer God the sacrifice of one's own will. It is the moment to remember that, in order to be perfect, it is necessary to take up the cross like Christ who was so misunderstood by his own people but who never ceased to do the will of His Father. It is in such moments that one must remain humble and retain the spirit of meekness so as not to become a burden to oneself and to others. God can inspire us with noble ideals and with projects that tend only to His glory and to the good of souls. Then, He can demand that we abandon everything because He has a time for everything and is reserving for better workmen the completion of the task He allowed us to begin. God is everything and we are nothing. From time to time, He is kind enough to let us realize this so that we may be on our guard against self-sufficiency, complacency and pride.

Bishop Neveu had already told Sr. Magdalena that the question of his return to the Soviet Union, dormant for so long, had been raised again with the Soviet authorities but that he had no great hopes that anything would come of it:

I am afraid that those who have gone to negotiate with the Russian bear so as to escape the German lion have neither the character nor the ability to gain any concession which would benefit the cause of religion. The most recent documents we have received testify again to the Soviet skill in maintaining abroad the

legend of their religious evolution, while at home, they continue their anti-religious propaganda. Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical of March 1937, points out very clearly the strategy of these people who conceal their real designs in order to win sympathy and gain adherents, but nobody seems to have studied this document which is of far more value than the newspaper articles which are read so hungrily.

It is God, however, who will have the last word. Continue to study Russian at all costs because there are millions of souls who are waiting for us.

On May 24, 1945, Bishop Neveu received news which indicated that his fears about the situation in the Soviet Union were justified. The next day, he wrote to Sr. Magdalena:

It is because I appreciate your sincerity that I feel I must share my sorrow with you. Since 3:00 P.M. yesterday my heart has been heavy at the news I have heard through returning prisoners and by way of America. Fr. Judicael, who was sent to Odessa at my suggestion, has been arrested and nobody knows where he is being detained. (*Note.* At that time, Fr. Judicael was in the Lubianka prison, just across from St. Louis-des-Français. He had been accused of espionage. After his interrogations, the verdict stated that it could not be proved that he had been spying, but that this did not mean that he would not have spied if he had had the opportunity. Sentenced to eight years in the labor camps, Fr. Judicael was released in 1953 and repatriated to France the following year.)

From America comes the hardest blow. A Catholic gentleman, who is a friend of President Roosevelt and of Archbishop Spellman of New York, recently spent ten days in Moscow after a short visit to Rome. Naturally, he met some important Soviet officials who had no trouble in convincing this rather simplistic visitor that the people of the Soviet Union have an intense love for the United States which has contributed so much to their war effort. This visitor also went to Mass at St. Louis-des-Français and met Fr. Braun. After his return to the United States, he went to see

Archbishop Spellman, and the two of them sent for Fr. Crescent Armanet, the Assumptionist Vicar Provincial. They told him that the United States enjoys tremendous prestige in the Soviet Union where the authorities have become much more tolerant of religion (?). They also said that Fr. Braun is nervous and tired, that he needs a rest, that he recently struck a Soviet citizen (this last is simply not true), and that he has become *persona non grata*. They said that he must be replaced by another American Assumptionist who knows Russian. Fr. Armanet had to admit that he had no priests who spoke Russian. (For years, I have pleaded that our religious should study this language and now you can see what comes of procrastination and carelessness). Thereupon, they said they would have to look for an Apostolic Administrator in some other Congregation, since Bishop Neveu was also *persona non grata*.

This would mean nothing less than the liquidation of the Assumptionist work in Russia and my being condemned to rot in France. I can afford to ignore the personal slight because I try always to be resigned to the will of God but I hate to see my Congregation suffer. All is not lost yet; we shall fight here, in Moscow and in Rome.

On September 8, 1945, Bishop Neveu celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his entrance into religious life. The next day, writing to Sister Magdalena who had sent him congratulations and good wishes, he told her that he had first made up his mind to become an Assumptionist in 1892 while he was at the Minor Seminary of the diocese of Orleans. The Sulpician Fathers who conducted the seminary did not take his proposal seriously and insisted that he stay and finish his studies with them. He then went to the Major Seminary where he received the tonsure. On September 8, 1895, while returning from a pilgrimage, he went secretly to the Assumptionist Novitiate at Livry and was so enamored with everything he saw and heard there that he decided to stay. His letter continued:

I will spare you the details of the trials I had to endure. The good Sulpicians insisted that I return to the Major Seminary, but they finally had to let me go on November 5, 1895; I received the

Assumptionist habit on December 8. Then my father, at the instigation of my aunt who was a nun, wrote to me and said he would send the police to remove me, but my reply silenced everyone.

You speak of my splendid life as a missionary, but now, as I look into myself, I see only that I am a poor bishop and a poor man in every sense of the word, especially in virtue. I do not mind if people know and say this because it is true. I did spend nineteen terrible years under the Soviet regime, but you exaggerate when you say that I am a hero. I did nothing more than my duty, and sometimes I did that very badly. If I did not do worse, it was because (a) I had a sense of responsibility in the eyes of God, (b) I had the prayers of my persecuted people and I did not want to cause them to blush for their pastor, (c) I had the prayers of my religious family which I did not want to disgrace in the eyes of the Church.

There, you can see the designs of Divine Providence in regard to the one whom you praise and glorify in such epic terms, but who knows that he has to reproach himself for fifty years of faults and negligences, and who asks the help of your prayers. If only I practiced what I preach to you, my exhortations would be much more persuasive. Yet I have the right and duty to preach to you because the theologians assure us that a bishop is in "the state of acquired perfection." I wonder what God will think of this thesis when he is judging the poor Bishop of Kitros.

6:00 P.M. I am thunderstruck! I have just had a telephone call from Mr. Charpentier, Counselor at our Embassy in Moscow, who arrived in Paris today. He tells me that he has filed another application for my re-entry visa to the Soviet Union and that he will come and see me tomorrow. My head is spinning. Can it be possible that, after nine long years, God will bring me back to Moscow? The pen is shaking in my hands. I can't write any more now.

September 10. It is 11:00 A.M. and Mr. Charpentier has just left. He brought me a Slav book, which is a bibliographical rarity, and a

letter from Fr. Braun who had to stand trial for assaulting a Soviet citizen. Even though the prosecution's star "eyewitness" refused to testify that she had seen Fr. Braun strike the man, he was found guilty. He appealed, and the verdict was reversed. He has since received an official document completely exonerating him. I fear the poor man will have to leave Moscow just the same. His countrymen are negotiating a visa for Fr. Laberge to go as Chaplain to the Catholic colony in Moscow. As far as I am concerned, Mr. Charpentier simply repeated that a request for my visa has been made, but that no reply has been received as yet. Nobody in Russia is in a hurry. Pray hard. If I succeed in returning to the Soviet Union, I shall do all in my power to bring you and Tania to join me.

I don't know how I shall manage to get around Moscow now because my legs are not too good, but God will take care of me. When one has survived a famine in which, for three days, there was nothing to eat but grass, one can get used to anything. To die for God would be a great gain, but I am afraid I missed my chance of martyrdom on the day the Bolsheviks in Makeyevka put me against the wall to shoot me, and then changed their minds, saying that I would keep for another day.

As soon as he learned that the question of his visa had been resurrected, Bishop Neveu wrote to Pope Pius XII to inform him of this development and to ask point-blank if the Holy See wished him to return to Moscow. His spirits rose at the reply communicated by the Auditor of the Papal Nunciature in Paris, which stated that the Pope was very anxious that he should resume his position as Apostolic Administrator if it were at all possible. Pleased as he was at the renewed interest of the Quai d'Orsay in his re-entry visa, he was not too optimistic about the results of their efforts. World War II was over, and in his analysis of the situation, the Soviet Union had emerged in a strong position which eliminated the need to woo or to be gracious to France which was already an ally. This impression was strengthened on October 15, 1945 after his meeting with his fellow-Assumptionist, Fr. George Laberge, who spent three days in Paris

en route to Moscow via Berlin. It appeared that although Fr. Laberge's application for a visa to enter the Soviet Union had the support of the United States, it had been granted only after the Soviet authorities had demanded and received a written assurance that Fr. Laberge was going not to assist Fr. Braun but to replace him. Furthermore, Fr. Laberge was to fly from Berlin in a Soviet aircraft. Commenting on this to Mr. LeBlanc of Gien, Bishop Neveu wrote:

Our dear allies, the "Reds," will not allow a foreign airplane, even a friendly one, to sully the purity of Soviet air or sky. You can see the degree of confidence which exists between the Eastern "bloc" and the Western "disunity." The outcome of the negotiations for my visa is in the hands of God, and, if you will pardon the rather sacrilegious connection, also in the hands of Stalin and Molotov. Fr. Laberge's countrymen have the atomic bomb while France has nothing. Recently, a Russian Metropolitan and two other clergymen of the "Orthodoxy of Stalinist Obedience" arrived in Paris from Moscow having been granted entry visas as soon as they applied for them. Their business was political rather than religious, but they completed it and left in peace. Yet France cannot get a visa for a French priest to go for the purely religious purpose of taking charge of the French church in Moscow.

It was a long winter for Bishop Neveu, and when it was over, the position in regard to his visa was unchanged. It had not been refused, but neither had it been granted. From Moscow, he learned that Fr. Braun had been able to spend two months with Fr. Laberge before leaving for the United States on December 27, 1945. The Bishop continued to give lessons in Russian to Sister Magdalena who told him, one day, that she had been reading some of his letters which had been published in the Assumptionist *Lettre à la Dispersion* and asked why he had never written a formal account of his experiences in Makeyevka and Moscow. He answered:

If you are referring to the letters I wrote from my hermitage in Makeyevka to Fr. Quénard between 1922 and 1926, I must confess that I have never seen them in print. The originals must be in our General House in Rome. From Moscow, between 1926 and 1936, my letters went out in duplicate. The copies should also be in the

General House and the originals, including some replies and documents signed by Pope Pius XI, are in a safe place. Many people have asked me to write my memoirs but I have always refused. I feel that, almost unconsciously, I would show myself in the best possible light and would thus be lacking in humility. The letters themselves are sufficient to give an authentic picture of the one who wrote them at the risk of his life during his sorry episcopate in Moscow.

In March, 1946, Bishop Neveu had a serious illness from which his recovery was slow. Nevertheless, he refused to cancel any of the appointments he had made for Confirmations and ordinations. He went wearily through his engagements in Paris, Bourges and Orleans, finding the ceremonies in the rural parishes extremely trying, but continually thanking God that he was still able to be useful. Toward the end of July, he went to Gien for a rest but his vacation was ended rather abruptly by a fall which resulted in his being brought back to Paris. Sister Magdalena, who went to see him on August 18, came away with the feeling that his days on earth were numbered. She found him in his armchair, his rosary twined around his fingers. He seemed too weary to look at her. He never opened his eyes while he was speaking and told her that he still had severe pains in his head as the result of his accident. Yet, on September 7, he was able to go to Gien for the marriage of his niece, which was only the second time in his life that he conducted the nuptial service for a relative.

On October 15, 1946, Bishop Neveu wrote to Mr. LeBlanc in Gien:

If it is a long time since you heard from me, it is because I seem to have become public property. People know that I am not well and that, therefore, they are sure of finding me at home. So they come to see me at almost any hour of the day or evening, sometimes with the most outlandish requests. God did send me a pleasant surprise in the form of a visit from Bishop Sloskan whom I have not seen since October or November, 1926. He is on his way to Rome and came to Paris especially to call on me. I learned that the Latvian Government had to hand over ten Communists before they could obtain his release.

I am feeling fairly well at the moment but my eyesight is failing. I am constantly bumping into, or being bumped into, by other pedestrians. I find it difficult to write for any length of time and, as a result, the people, like yourself, to whom I would love to write, have to wait interminably. Fortunately, I know that you are very well endowed with patience.

On October 27, I am to close the Parochial Congress which is being held in Paris. I shall then go with Fr. Quénard to spend a few days at the Carmel in Lisieux.

Bishop Neveu did not go to Lisieux. On October 17, 1946, he attended a wedding, at which Cardinal Suhard was officiating, at the church of St. Pierre-de-Chaillet in Paris. The Bishop was not feeling well that morning, but since he was a friend of the bride and her family, he rejected the suggestion that the occasion might be too tiring for him. He did, however, agree that instead of taking part in the preliminary procession he would wait in the sacristy until the nuptial service itself was about to begin.

The wedding was scheduled for noon, and the Angelus bells were ringing out as the Cardinal reached the altar. A priest went to summon Bishop Neveu to take his place in the sanctuary but found him lying on the ground, his rosary still clutched in his fingers. There was a slight trickle of blood from his mouth and nostrils. The priest, suspecting a heart attack or a cerebral hemorrhage, at once gave conditional absolution. A discreet whisper brought Cardinal Suhard to the sacristy where he gave Bishop Neveu the Last Rites. Then the Cardinal returned to the altar and at once began the wedding ceremony, giving no indication to the bridal party that anything was wrong. Bishop Neveu died as he had lived for so long, alone and unobtrusively.

He had often expressed a wish to be buried in Gien. But since both churches in the town had been destroyed during the war, the Mass was scheduled to be said in the parish hall. Informed of this difficulty, Cardinal Suhard at once offered the use of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris or the parish church of St. Pierre du Gros-Caillou and announced his intention to preside at the funeral services. Fr. Quénard gratefully accepted the offer and decided on the church of St. Pierre where he himself sang the Solemn

Requiem Mass on October 21, with two of Bishop Neveu's recent ordinands as deacon and subdeacon.

The Bishop's body was then brought to Gien and was later transferred to the new church, completed in 1954 and dedicated to St. Joan of Arc who had visited the town frequently and had from there proclaimed her mission to lead the French people to victory. Bishop Neveu's tomb in the center of the church is marked by a simple inlaid stone bearing his episcopal arms and his motto, in both Latin and Russian, "Peace be to you!"

SOURCES

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<u>HH</u>	149.	Lettre de la Légation fr. en Esthonie au P. Maubon, 23-8-1921.
<u>HS</u>	109.	Allocution du P. Quénard à Gien sur Mgr. Neveu, 1944.
<u>HS</u>	175-180.	Nouvelles de Mgr. Pie Neveu (sacre), 1926
<u>HV</u>	23.	Service funèbre au Collegium Russicum de Rome, 1946.
<u>C</u>	17.	Sacre (circ. P. Quénard), p. 57-66.
<u>C</u>	18.	Sacre (circ. du P. Quénard), p. 57-58.
<u>C</u>	17.	Sa mort (circ. du P. Quénard), p 465-468.
<u>C</u>	18.	Idem-p.369-374.
<u>IF</u>	110.	Rapport sur Gallipoli, ch. gen. 1906.
<u>C</u>	92.	Notes, p. 122-123.
<u>D</u>	7-8	Mgr. Neveu en Russie, p.223-225.
<u>NH</u>	642.	Lettre de M. Frenay au P. Coggia (nouvelles de Russie) 14-2-1920.
<u>NM</u>	544.	Transfert à Gien (lettre de son frère, J. M. au P. Quénard), 1953.
<u>NT</u>	241.	Lettre au P. Baudouy, 1900.
	359-360; 451.	Lettres au P. Picard, 1901-02.
<u>SS</u>	24; 71-72; 150; 189-194; 223-	Lettres au P. Quénard, 1936-1946.

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

	225; 252-253; 261-262; 264- 267; 272-274	
	73; 243-244; 254.	Lettres au P. Vandenkoornhuyse, 1937-1943.
	74-76; 124; 151- 153; 195-198; 226-232.	Lettres au P. Baudouy, 1937-1941.
	199; 226	Lettres au PP. Michel et M. André Pruvost, 1940-41.
<u>SS</u>	222.	Lettre de William Bullitt à Mgr. Neveu, 1940.
	77.	Lettre aux enfants de Ste-Croix (B.P.), 1937.
<u>VY</u>	89.	Mort (Carillon de N.D.de l'er), 1946.
<u>ZA</u>	35-36.	Notes relatives à Mgr. Neveu (Et. de S.J. d'Arc, 1929).
<u>ZG</u>	7.	Mort (Vers l'autel, 1947).
<u>2AG</u>	171 (p.183); 172 (p.10); 174 (p.37).	Pendant la Révolution, 1917.
<u>2AH</u>	88; 99.	Visite à Miribel; lettre au P.B. Finaert, 1934- 35.
<u>E</u>	2. 926.	Lettre de Caragatch, 1901.
<u>E</u>	3. 151.	Lettre de Caragatch, 1903.
<u>E</u>	6. 506; 640.	Lettres de Makievka, 1922-1923.
<u>E</u>	7. 432; 485; 533; 567.	Lettres de Makievka; visite de Mgr. d'Herbigny, 1926.
<u>E</u>	9. 530.	Visite à la Procure des Missions, 1934.
<u>E</u>	10. 286.	Mgr. Neveu au pays natal, 1937.
<u>2BP</u>	177.	Lettre de Caragatch au P. Baudouy, 1900.
<u>2BQ</u>	8-9; 32; 85-88; 128-131; 157- 158.	Lettres de Caragatch aux PP. Picard, Emmanuel et V. de P. Bailly, Baudouy, Jaujou, 1901-1905.

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

<u>2CC</u>	165.	Lettre au P.E. Bailly, 1906.
<u>F13</u>	315.	Nécrologie, 1947.
<u>2CS</u>	32.	Oeuvre de presse à fonder à Caragatch, Nov. 1903.
<u>2DU</u>	174-182.	Lettres aux PP. E. Bailly, Jaujou, Mère Marie du Christ, 1906.
<u>2DV</u>	4-13.	Lettres de S. Petersbourg au P.E. Bailly, 1907.
<u>2DW</u>	61; 70-101; 104-137; 140-152.	Lettres aux PP. E. Bailly, Canouel, Baudouy, Allez, Maubon, Jugie, etc. 1907-1925.
<u>2DW</u>	101; 107; 114-131; 133-137; 140-145; 147-153.	Lettres de Makievka aux PP. Monsterlet, Série, Mathis, Quénard, Fr. E. Mine, PP. Evrard, P. Bélard, Mme. Guillemot, Mme. Peyre. 1919-1926.
<u>2DX</u>	99-113; 119-142; 162-180; 196-231.	Lettres aux PP. Quénard, Baudouy, Jugie, Pètlement, Canouel. 1926-1928.
<u>2DY</u>	1-7; 21-43; 79-105; 136-152; 202-203; 206-219.	Lettres à Mgr. d'Herbigny et PP. Quénard, Baudouy, Jugie, etc. 1929-1934.
<u>2DZ</u>	1-34; 39-55.	Lettres aux PP. Quénard, Baudouy, Coggia, Souarn, etc. 1935-1936.
<u>2EA</u>	122.	Lettre à Sr. Agathe, O.A. 1937.
	144-161; 168-197.	Lettres au P. Mailland, 1930-1932.
	162-167.	Lettres de Mgr. d'Herbigny et Sup. de Lisieux, 1930.
	198-251.	Lettres aux PP. Quénard, Baudouy, Cogeia, 1932-1934.
<u>2EB</u>	72-95; 98-119.	Lettres aux PP. Quénard, Milland, et X., 1929-1936.
<u>2DW</u>	180-184.	Lettres au P. Pètlement, 1926.

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

<u>2EQ</u>	36; 48-49; 54-55; 57-64; 67-68; 70-72.	Note sur Makyevka; lettres aux PP. E. Bailly, Maubon, Quénard, Mathis. 1914-1926.
	110.	Pouvoirs accordés pour la Russie, 1923.
	132-4.	Situation des travailleurs en Russie soviétique. Aperçu sur le communisme; interview sur les évènements de Russie, 1927. (<i>idem</i> , <u>2ES</u> 264-266).
	147-150.	Pouvoirs exceptionnels de juridiction concédés à Mgr. Neveu par Pie XI, 1926.
	152-153.	Lettre pastorale, Oct. 1926.
	154-155; 160-174; 177-195.	Lettres à Mgr. d'Herbigny, aux PP. Pètremont et Baudouy, 1926-1928. Au P. Maubon, 1926.
	197-198.	Lettres à M. Herbette ambassadeur, 1928.
<u>2ER</u>	1-26.	Lettres à Mgr. d'Herbigny, 1929.
	34.	Lettre à l'ambassadeur de France, 1929.
	50-77.	Lettres à Mgr. d'Herbigny, 1930.
<u>2ER</u>	78-101.	Documents concernant la Russie et l'administration de Mgr. Neveu et ses pouvoirs, 1930.
	102-130; 139-152; 173-183.	Lettres à Mgr. d'Herbigny et documents laissés par Mgr. Neveu. 1931-1932.
<u>2ES</u>	1-12.	Lettres aux PP. Quénard, Coggia, aux novices des Essarts, Mgr. d'Herbigny, Dom Quentin. 1933.
	59-65; 66; 115-128; 190-200.	Lettres aux PP. Braun, Evrard, Mgr. d'Herbigny, M. l' Ambassadeur de France. 1934-1937.
	143.	Rapport médical sur Mgr. Neveu, 1936.
	144-145; 239-241; 276-278; 296-297.	Lettres de X., des Cards. Pizzardo, Tisserant, Tardini, de Coulondre ambassadeur. (1936-1939).

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

<u>2ET</u>	18; 20-22; 34-35.	Lettres au P. Quénard, 1943-5.
	78.	Sa Mort. (Presse Libre) Nov. 1946.
	135-180.	Papiers personnels; curriculum vitae; vocation; lettres testimoniales; rapports de noviciat; profession; rapport pour prêtrise; passeport; comptes; plan d'église; note au Commissaire du peuple à Kharkov; notes sur Mgr. Neveu pour épiscopat (1925) nomination comme Administrateur Apostolique (1926) décoration belge (officier de l'Ordre de la Couronne); divers papiers.
	168-173.	Lettres ou notes au P. Jugie.
	174-180.	Sépulture; dalle funéraire; transfert du corps en l'église J. d'Arc de Gien; allocution du P. Quénard; extraits des lettres à la Prieure du Carmel de Lisieux; Entrevues avec émissaires allemands. 1941.
<u>2ET</u>	181-189.	Passeport et photos.
<u>2EV</u>	85-90; 117-121; 126-127.	Lettres à Mgr. d'Herbigny et Mgr. Giobbe, 1934-36.
<u>H1</u>	98.	Obsèques de Mgr. Neveu (P. St. Martin) 1947.
<u>2LC</u>	61.	Lettres de Russie, 1922.
<u>2LD</u>	14; 17; 19; 23; 25.	Nouvelles diverses de Mgr. Neveu, 1925-28.
<u>H118</u>		Sacre de Mgr. Neveu (P. Quénard, tire de "Hier"), 1956.
<u>2TL</u>	72-74.	Lettres de St. Petersburg à Mère M. du Christ, 1907.
<u>J579</u>	40-49.	Sacre (notes Quénard et d'Herbigny).
<u>K12</u>	686; 733.	Mitre et armes de Mgr. Neveu (Assomption, 1928).
<u>K10</u>	491.	Lettre de Makievka (Assomption 1919).
<u>K11</u>	235; 247; 280;	Lettres de Makievka (Assomption 1922-1923).

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

	316; 325; 372; 408; 554.	
<u>K12</u>	294; 529.	Missionnaire de l'Union; élévation à l'épiscopat (<i>ibid.</i> 1926-1927)
<u>K13</u>	40; 13; 557; 630; 703.	Nouvelles (Assomption, 1929-32).
<u>K14</u>	226; 286.	Lettre au P. Merklen; lettre au P. Quénard. (Assomption, 1933).
	542.	Mgr. Neveu à Rome. (Assomption, 1934).
<u>K17</u>	88.	Mort. 1946.
<u>K19</u>	126.	Transfert des restes de Mgr. Neveu à Gien, 1954.
<u>K39</u>	493.	Lettre de Makievka au P.E. Bailly, 1915.
<u>K44</u>	95; 425.	Nouvelles; lettre de Makievka 1916-1917.
<u>K45</u>	80.	Nouvelles de Makievka, 1916.
<u>K46</u>	373.	Nouvelles (lettre du P.Machon dec.1917).
<u>K47</u>	11; 393.	Lettre au P. Allez 20-3-1917; nouvelles par lettre du P. Machon, dec. 1917.
<u>K52</u>	85; 132.	Lettres de Makievka 1919.
<u>K53</u>	98; 145.	Lettres de Makievka 1919.
<u>K54</u>	105; 113; 171; 196.	Lettres de Makievka 1919.
<u>K55</u>	57; 137-138.	Lettre de Makievka 9-12-1919; nouvelles par lettre du P. Cauliez 1920.
<u>K56</u>	164; 211; 233; 248; 258.	Nouvelles 1921.
<u>K57</u>	20; 33; 49; 85; 87; 161-166; 180- 183; 229-231; 242; 299-304; 372-375; 385-	Lettres de Makievka 1923-25.

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

	389; 406; 434; 439; 447-451; 492; 501; 517- 525; 533; 567; 640; 673; 698; 741.	
<u>K59</u>	65-69; 74-80; 89; 162; 185; 241; 289-294; 345; 347.	Nouvelles de Makievka 1926.
	212.	Notes de Mgr. d'Herbigny (Etudes).
<u>K60</u>	18; 113; 201; 225; 241; 332.	Nouvelles de Moscou; Légion d'honneur 1926-27.
<u>K61</u>	56; 113; 141; 193; 205; 228; 242; 257; 283; 292; 300.	Nouvelles de Moscou 1928.
<u>K62</u>	1; 30; 87; 109; 117; 141; 172; 179; 180; 215; 269.	Nouvelles de Moscou 1928-29.
<u>K63</u>	7; 20; 28; 56; 64; 87; 89; 101; 112; 131; 178; 216; 222; 231; 271; 296; 316; 337.	Nouvelles de Moscou, 1929-1930.
<u>K64</u>	18; 33; 56; 107; 120; 150; 191; 215; 242; 252; 290; 383.	Nouvelles de Moscou 1931.
<u>K65</u>	21; 37; 65; 73; 89; 105; 121; 183; 191; 234; 305; 370.	Lettres de Moscou 1932.

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

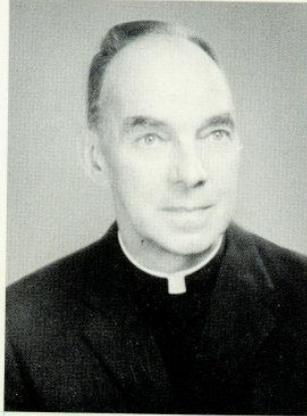
<u>K66</u>	2; 47; 78; 94; 135; 149; 193; 208; 259; 275; 317; 333.	Lettres de Moscou 1932-33.
<u>K68</u>	15; 30; 54; 68; 83; 128; 144; 149- 151; 175; 191; 259; 268; 294; 301; 325; 387.	Lettres de Moscou, Paris, Rome, audience de Pie XI; déplacements en France; retour à Moscou, 1934.
<u>K69</u>	33; 41; 113; 124; 128; 145; 267; 340; 397; 482; 549.	Lettres de Moscou 1935.
<u>K70</u>	31; 51; 101; 143; 177; 284; 304; 363; 409; 470.	Nouvelles de Moscou, Paris, Royat, Lisieux. 1936.
<u>K71</u>	46; 64; 84; 106; 134; 161; 164; 169; 304; 336; 342.	Nouvelles de Rome, Paris, Gien, Nuits sous-P; Coudures (Landes) Sceaux et X.Belgique, St. Gérard 1937.
<u>K72- 73</u>	16; 24; 68; 75; 77; 80; 82; 86; 164; 192; 210; 252; 276; 288; 334; 360; 407; 424; 439.	Nouvelles divers, 1938-39.
<u>K74</u>	16; 40; 54; 64; 71.	Nouvelles 1940.
<u>K76</u>	18; 26; 66; 71; 79; 135.	Nouvelles 1942-44.
<u>K77</u>	47; 118; 126; 157; 174; 190; 202; 220; 290; 302.	Nouvelles 1940-42.
<u>K78</u>	101; 105.	Mort; obsèques 1946.

Chapter Seventeen:

Details of the conversations that led to Fr. Leopold Braun's going to Moscow in 1934 are taken from the file "Moscow Mission" in the archives at the Assumptionist North American Provincial House.

Chapter Twenty:

Use is made of personal notes of conversations with Bishop Neveu submitted by Sister Magdalena.



REVEREND PATRICK A. CROGHAN, A.A.
1919-1977

Father Croghan was an Assumptionist priest who came from England to the United States in 1955.

For a few years, he served as chaplain of the Regina Laudis Convent in Danbury, Connecticut. Serious illness, which required frequent dialysis treatments, ended even this ministry. Father Croghan spent the last years of his life in what might be called "an apostolate of suffering". He devoted himself to doing what his ailing health allowed: writing. His only relaxation was occasional, brief hours spent fishing in the streams of Northwest Connecticut.

THE PEASANT FROM MAKEYEVKA

presents one Assumptionist missionary's difficult and dangerous work in Russia before, during, and after the Communist Revolution.