

## Mission Needs

When we were investigating the possibility of coming to Russia we had to go into debt to pay for the investigation. We knew that part of what would be needed was benefactors who cared for us and for Russia. We were waiting for our visas and for the resources necessary to begin the mission. God supplied these needs through generous friends, too many to mention here, but including the Capuchins of Pittsburgh, Ignatius Press, many diocesan priests, and even more old and new friends, in America and in Europe. We hope to tell about our donors in future issues. Now that we have arrived in Vladivostok, we can see more clearly what is needed.

The most urgent need is for a jeep, since public transportation takes a long time, and is not safe at night when most of our meetings must be held, and we must visit cities and villages on poor roads. A three-year-old Japanese car costs \$2000, and a Russian jeep about \$3000.

Next, we look forward to the renovation of our church building. We need to have a study done about the costs and availability of materials. This will cost about \$1000. At a recent meeting, members of the Community said that what they most wanted, besides their church, was crucifixes for their homes, Bibles and books for Mass and for learning more about the Catholic faith. Such books are about \$3.00 apiece. Or perhaps your parish can support our mission's expenses for one week: \$288. --M.E.

## A Reflection by Father Myron

Vladivostok is truly unique, a city of skyscrapers built on hills surrounding a bay. At night, the buildings are not illuminated on the outside, but the windows twinkle with the thousands of lights of families at their dinner tables. How beautiful the view across the bay is, and how nice to reflect on what God has brought about.

Issue Number Three

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Column Table

"Vladivostok Sunrise" is a newsletter published by the Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord for their benefactors, to keep them informed about their work in Russia. The editor is Father Myron Effing, C.J.D.

Letters:

Canons Regular of Jesus the Lord  
P.O. Box 1873  
690012 Vladivostok  
RUSSIA

For security, money donations should be made out to:  
"Archdiocese of Anchorage--Vladivostok", and sent to:

Vladivostok Mission  
225 Cordova Street  
Anchorage AK 99501  
U.S.A.

## The Prerevolutionary Vladivostok

### Polish Community

[A chapter from the book, *The Poles in the Far East*, published in Polish in Harbin, China, 1928, and found in the State Archive in Tomsk, Russia, pp 175-179. The author is unknown at the present time.]

The beginning of the Polish community in the Primorsky region was in 1863, when Father Radziszewski was appointed as military chaplain in the Far East, and curator. At this time the Polish community consisted of only military people. Although the priest sometimes visited Vladivostok, he lived mostly in Nicolaevsk-na-Amure in which he had his own house where he offered mass.

When in 1875 Vladivostok was made a fort, and when non-military people started to arrive, he came to the city, and lived in the apartment of the Evangelical pastor who was not married. He offered mass in this apartment, also. He died during a trip to Blagoveschensk, where he was buried by orthodox priests in their cemetery. The gravestone is still extant, and Bishop Slivovski ordered it to be repaired in 1927.

His successor was Father Spiganovich, who was also the military chaplain. In 1885 and 1886, two Poles--we don't know their family names (one was called Monsevich)--gave to the Catholic community some land on which a building was built which had a bell tower in front and an apartment for the priest in back.

The beginning of the building of the Ussurijsk railroad brought a large wave of Polish people to Vladivostok who made the community bigger. In 1900, the Church of the Body of Christ was completely burned. Two years later, when Father Boulvich arrived, a new church was built, very small and poor. His successor was Father Lavrinovich, who decided to build a masonry church. He was very eager and zealous. He had been born in Kovno (Kaunas), and he had great achievements in the Polish community. He was a great patriot, which is why he organized Polish Catholic life in various branches.

The church building which was started by Father Lavrinovich was finished in 1922, after he left for Tambow where he was serving as parish priest, and where he was shot by Bolsheviks because of his zealous religious service. He did not want to leave his parishioners alone until the last minute. The foundation of the new church had been blessed by Bishop Tsepliac in 1909.

After the Russian-Japanese War, many Poles settled in Vladivostok. A Roman Catholic Relief Society was established, which opened the first Polish elementary school in 1907. The World War caused a new wave of Poles to arrive in Vladivostok. Until that time, there were nearly 2000 military Poles and 500 civilians, so-called "intelligence handicraftsmen" and businessmen. The number rose to 4500, and in all Primorski, Amursky, and Sakhalin Island there were 11,000 Polish Catholics.

In 1917 in Vladivostok there was founded a good organization called "Polish House". By a decision of this organization, the Polish settlement decided to run a candidate for the City Council, engineer Cheslov Wolf. According to the Harbin newspaper, "Letters from the Far East" (#8, Nov 29, 1917) this step was very good, and based on his request the Council decided to give enough money to build and take care of a Polish school for 120 pupils. Polish House found two male and one female teacher who started the classes. There were four grades in the Polish school. In the same year, the Union of Polish Military was founded, and next year the People's Interests Defense Committee. Vladivostok also took

part in the Harbin "Forum of Polish People". The arrival of new Polish people in Vladivostok promoted the establishment of new organizations, such as political and party organizations. These organizations made terrible mistakes in most Polish settlements, and happily ended in Vladivostok very soon, before harm was done. In 1919 the association "Connection" was established in Vladivostok which lasted a year. At the same time, representatives of military committees arrived in Vladivostok and started to print the newspaper, "Polish Echo", which lasted from December of 1919 until March 1920.

In 1920, Archbishop Rotsop established the Vladivostok Deanery which included not only Vladivostok, but also Nicolsk, Khabarovsk, Harbin, Alexandrovsk-on-Sakhalin, and Blagoveschensk. There were five priests excluding Harbin, and nearly 11,000 Catholics. There were wooden churches only in Khabarovsk and Alexandrovsk--the others were masonry. The first dean was Father Karol Slivovski, and later he was bishop. After the Bolshevik coup, the GPU [later called KGB--ed] closed the Polish Red Cross and Polish House on July 23, 1923, but the Polish House opened again soon after a new constitution was written.

Dean Father Slivovski was consecrated bishop of Vladivostok on October 28, 1923, in Harbin. He was consecrated by Bishop Constantini from Peking, with Bishop Gospe from Girin.

A commission of repatriation was established in Vladivostok in August of 1924. In the beginning of the 24-25 school year, all four grades of the Polish school consisted of 50 children. Primary Polish schools were functioning in Kiparisovo and New Kievka. The Relief Committee took care of both schools. The Polish consulate took care of a school in Monastirka for a year and half. In Nicolsk-Ussurijski there was also a Polish House which was destroyed in 1923. The Polish House in Vladivostok existed in 1925, and its library consisted of 5000 volumes.

The situation in the Polish settlement in Vladivostok and in the Province was very good. Polish people were owners of buildings, stores, organizations, coal mines, etc. Then Bolsheviks nationalized everything.

The establishers of Polish House were: Engineer S. Offenbergl, V. Marszets, Bank Director Golembiovski, Attorney Booksitski, and many others.

Photo Table

Bishop Slivovski

A procession on a Vladivostok street with the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God in the background.]

"For God, Church, and Souls"

by Bishop Joseph Werth, S.J.  
Apostolic Administrator of Novosibirsk

I was born in 1952 of a traditional Catholic family in Karaganda [Kazakhstan--ed.]. My parents are of German nationality, my father from the Volga, and my mother from Odessa. I am happy that I was born among the two million German people there who have suffered so much. I am happy that I was born and grew up in the Catholic Church. It seems to me that it is a great grace to be born and to live in our time. I remember as a child looking through an old family Bible,

that I wanted to be born 2000 years ago so that I could have seen Jesus Christ with my own eyes. But in the 20th century, Christ is bearing just the same cross, falling down and rising again through the oppression which some have made against the Church. In my early childhood, when asked, who are you?, I was taught to answer, "I am a Christian Catholic!" During my school years this "Christian Catholic" faith was the butt of all the jokes of militant atheists. Maybe it borrowed something militant from its enemy. "For God, Church, and Souls": In these words of my bishop's seal, even at that time, I found something to which one can devote oneself.

From 1979 to 1984 I was studying at Kaunas [Lithuania] Spiritual Seminary. After finishing, I was ordained and received my first appointment in Lithuania, but a year later I had a chance to return to Kazakhstan. First I worked at Aktubinsk, and sometimes I visited Omsk--that was my first acquaintance with Siberia--and the Volga region where I later worked for three and a half years.

On the huge territory from the Urals to Vladivostok live Catholics of various nationalities. Their destinies are very similar in most cases. The biggest groups are German and Polish, without doubt. I need to learn the history and the language of the Polish Catholics in Siberia in order to become, according to the words of the Apostle Paul, "everything for everybody". I studied the history of Russian Germans from life! Their destiny is truly tragic. Their deportation from the Volga region, the Ukraine, and the Caucasus started long before World War II. In a very short period of time the Diocese with its fine structures was completely destroyed. Our Diocese finds itself in its huge Siberian-Kazakhstan campus, and here, in the taiga forests of Siberia and Kazakhstan the fire of faith was lit, the faith before which our brothers in the free world bow their heads. I want to ask thousands of young hearts to consider the motto, "For God, Church, and Souls"--those who have the fire of idealism in their breasts, who can do heroic deeds, and are ready to offer a sacrifice, to give themselves to the highest deeds--let them hear if Christ is calling them to follow him. Let them turn back and see. We are living in amazing times which were prophesied by Mary at Fatima. Russia will turn back, but God needs people, needs priests, religious, active lay Catholics, through whom this turning will be achieved.

As I begin serving God's people in Siberia, I need your prayers. Pray for me, in order that I will always be faithful to God and the Church, and always be a tool in the hands of God.

\*[published in AMOUR ET VERITE, No. 2 (Dec, 1991), p. 13.]

Welcome to Vladivostok:

JEANNE D'ARC

From March 9 through 14, the city of Vladivostok was host to the French helicopter carrier and officer training ship, Joan of Arc. It has only been a few times since the communist take-over of 1922 that a foreign war ship had dropped anchor in this, the largest military port in Russia. Hundreds of people, especially teenagers, lined up to tour the vessel.

Fr. Myron and Br. Dan did not have to stand in line. They got a personal tour from three of the ship's staff: Catholic chaplain, Fr. Alain (a Capuchin), and two seminarians who are fulfilling their 10-month compulsory military service, Guy-Emmanuel Carriot and Br. Denis Borel of the Little Brothers of Saint John. The tour ended with a bilingual Mass in the chaplain's quarters and a

toast to the rebirth of the Church in the Russian Far East. Then there was dinner at a local Japanese restaurant.

Fr. Alain and his two seminarians were surprised to learn that there were Catholic clergy in this part of the country. During their Mass on board ship as they sailed into port the first day of their visit, they had entertained the possibility that it was the first Catholic Mass to be celebrated here in 70 years, but they were not disappointed when they learned otherwise. They were overjoyed that the Church is once again proclaiming the Gospel and celebrating the sacraments, and they promised to pray for the work of the Church here and to tell the Catholic people of France about the needs of the mission. As the Joan of Arc sailed on to Hong Kong, the French clergy received a hearty "Bon voyage!" from our American missionaries, and the Americans went back to their apartment with some of that famous French "jioie de vivre" and two bottles of French altar wine.

First Communion at Last!

Ida Nikolaevna Chesnakovskaya was five years old when she was brought to Khabarovsk to the big wooden church to be baptised. She was born in 1914, and it was 1919. The October Revolution had occurred in Moscow in 1917, but it would not come to Premorye until 1922. The Far Eastern Republic had been proclaimed, and the White Army had determined to resist the Red one from the East. But a storm of change was to descend upon Premorye and upon its Churches. Ida grew up with very little knowledge of the Faith, and never received another sacrament--until March 5, 1992, when Father Myron came to her apartment at the invitation of her daughter and offered her her first confession and first communion! She is 78 years old. Now she will soon be confirmed, when Bishop Joseph comes to Vladivostok.

Photo Table  
Ida Nikolaevna and Father Myron

Photo Table

Original architect's drawing of our church. The Joint Committee for the Renovation of the Church have agreed that it is important to restore the church to its original appearance as we proceed with the renovation project. The Main Post Office of Vladivostok was designed by the same architect, A. A. Gvozdiowski.

Our Church of the Most Holy Mother of God as it is today--in urgent need of repair.

Bishop Joseph Werth, Apostolic Administrator of Novosibirsk met with Pope John Paul II three times in March, 1992.

Catholic Church Saved  
by Russian Orthodox Bishop

Archbishop Nicolai, the Russian Orthodox bishop responsible for the Primorye

region where Vladivostok is located, was touring the city with a government official to locate and select all the buildings which would be turned over to the Russian Orthodox Church, now that there is religious freedom in Russia. There were once 28 Russian Orthodox churches and a cathedral in Vladivostok, all of which were destroyed during the persecution. The only Russian Orthodox facility still in operation is a chapel at a cemetery which has served as St Nicholas Church since the 50's. As they toured the city, one building he definitely wanted back was the former chancery building, which the government was using as the Department of Education. The car was passing Most Holy Mother of God Roman Catholic Church, a church which was new at the time of the revolution, being dedicated only in 1924. The Catholic community had built the church through a lot of effort at fundraising, and at a time of great instability. Because the church was new, it was saved from destruction and used by the government as the Regional Archive, two additional floors having been added inside. Perhaps it would be easier to use this church rather than to have to build another building. The government official asked Archbishop Nicolai whether he wanted this building, too. But Archbishop Nicolai said, "No! That is the Roman Catholic church, and the Catholics want it back some day." So the Catholic community of Vladivostok has its building saved for its use through the generosity of the Orthodox archbishop, and it has his support for the return of the building to its original builders and owners.

#### Catholic Relief Services

#### Arrives in Vladivostok

As the media have reported, the Catholic Relief Services has set up a major food distribution system in Khabarovsk, using foods donated by the American government. The distribution system includes three Americans living and working in Vladivostok, who have been a welcome addition to the small but growing American community here. The director of the Vladivostok unit is Melody Schram from San Diego, and co-workers Richard Balmadier from New York and Bradley Foerster. Melody studied six years of Russian, but worked for two years in India. For the next twelve months, CRS plans to ship 60,000 tons of food designed to aid 500,000 people. This funding comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and assistance will be targeted at vulnerable groups in orphanages, hospitals, and schools. Included will be milk, oil, infant formula, flour, rice, and peas. This brings the total of Americans living and working in Vladivostok to eleven that we know of, many of whom are Catholics.

#### The Family of a Russian

"Hero Mother"

by Father Myron

One of the most interesting people I have met here in Vladivostok is Olga Alexandrovna and her husband Anatoly Basilevich. Both are 40 years old. He is a heavy truck driver, and she a housewife. They have eleven children. The oldest Elena is 15, and then comes Vladimir, Tatyana, Andrei, Leonid, and Maxim, who is in the first grade. The preschoolers are Ludwig, Nadyezhda, Lydia, Raisa, and Sergei.

They had been living in a typical Russian apartment in a highrise--small and crowded for such a big family. Just a week before I met them, they had an opportunity to move to an old wooden home at the city's edge. They took this chance because there is room for a garden, and some woods for the kids to run and play in. They have running water only in the summer months. They heat their four room home with a wood stove. They are also hoping to raise some pigs--there are three little pigs in the kitchen now--as these will provide better food for the kids. Olga is a good manager and homemaker, in spite of tremendous problems for a family this large. The kids are well-behaved, if occasionally in need of a good bath--something difficult to do in the winter. They are struggling to be good providers for their children in these difficult times.

I asked Olga if she would like to make friends with a family in Turkey who are looking for a pen family in Russia. She said it would be fun, and suggested that the children might like to exchange letters, too. I took some pictures, which I hope our readers will enjoy. After visiting Olga I wondered why there is no Mother's Day in Russia.

If readers would like to help Olga, here are some suggestions: vitamin tablets, seeds for the garden, simple medical supplies like tylenol, bacitracin, merthiolate, personal supplies like shampoo, clothing, especially winter clothing, socks, and winter shoes.

Photo Table

Olga and some of her children. Also Catholic parishioners Andre, Igor, and Alex.

Father Myron's and Brother Dan's Russian language teacher, Mrs Marina Stupnitskaya.