# *Moved by the World*

## History of the Dutch Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC)


GABRIELLE DORREN

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by

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On the cover: Petr. Vertenten MSC, 'Young man of the Ewati Clan', Okaba 1914 (Southcoast of former Dutch New Guinea)

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*The publisher cooperated in bringing out the English translation.*

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# About this book

Moved by the World is not just about history – history never is. It is foremost about people, religious people in this case, people with a mission who worked in many parts of the world. They felt sent by a higher Authority who supported them throughout and they felt needed by a world that was lacking in so many things. They responded to both challenges – a powerful combination.

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are organised in provinces. These very often coincide with national boundaries, but this is not always the case. This book is about the Dutch Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. It looks at what happened through the eyes of the participants: their stories and their experiences constitute the main part of the book.

One does not find completeness here: the wealth of data required choices. In order to produce an accessible and readable book it was decided at an early stage to keep the book within a reasonable length of about 300 pages, pictures not included, and to tell some of the stories well in vivid detail rather than try to tell all and leave out most of what makes for lively reading.

This choice fits in well with an internet version of the book. Readers who are acquainted with parts of the happenings that are related here are invited to add their own stories and make up for the inevitable omissions. If in addition you have some pictures to share, so much the better. Just send your contributions to the e-mail addresses below and we will attach them to the website.

The original book was written in Dutch by a woman historian: Gabrielle Dorren. It took her four years of intensive work to collect many small stories and to combine them in the big story which is presented here. What is remarkable is that she did not simply consult the archives of the Dutch Province and consulted available literature, but she also conducted a series of interviews with both missionaries of the Sacred Heart and ex-missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The different perspectives add to the value of the book.

The Dutch version of *Moved by the World* was published at the end of 2004. It took us more than five years to come up with a translation in English. The reason is not simply that there always more things involved than one thinks in beginning a work like this, but also that none of us could give it his full attention and energy. But our belief in the value of the book prompted us to go on and make this work available for non Dutch-speaking readers, whether they are missionaries of the Sa-

cred Heart or not. We believe that the book is of interest to a wide range of readers.

The translation deviates from the original version in one important aspect: the 35 pages of footnotes have been removed. They mostly referred to the sources of the stories related in the book, but as these sources are in Dutch, they are not of big help to the English reader. Moreover, the archives of the Dutch MSC Province have been meanwhile been moved from the central house in Tilburg to Sint Agatha, where the combined archives of religious congregations are being kept (www.erfgoedkloosterleven.nl).

Finally, we are grateful to the publisher of the Dutch edition, *Uitgeverij Verloren* in Hilversum, who readily gave permission to bring out this English translation. We are even more grateful to the team of translators: Danilo Ceballos msc, Miss Hilary Clay and Daniel O'Connor msc. I myself have been involved as well, first in commissioning the original Dutch version and then in prompting the English translation and checking it against the Dutch original. We are confident that our efforts make for pleasant and inspiring reading.

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# Introduction

> It would have been around November 1872. One morning coming home from Mass I found mother busy making the bed. 'My son,' she said to me, 'you have often told me that you want to become a priest. Are you still thinking about it?'

Henri Peeters, just twelve years old, had already resigned himself to the impossibility of achieving his ambition. His father had died a young man and the family from Venray was so poor 'that mother sent me to the curate, Fr Schreyen, to ask for some advance money from the acolytes' kitty. Everything had become so bad that the baker had threatened not to bake bread anymore for us'. An expensive training for the priesthood seemed, therefore, to be out of the question.

But the Sisters of the Ursuline convent nearby, where his father had been the gardener, knew what to do. They saw in the bright little fellow an ideal candidate for a religious foundation with which they had good connections, the Missionaires du Sacré-Coeur. This French congregation, founded in 1854 by the priest Jules Chevalier, had its own junior seminary since 1867. Thanks to well organised fund raising, poor boys could be admitted there too. The congregation had international aspirations; so the students did not have to come from France, as long as they were sufficiently fluent in French and were prepared to live in a foreign country, far from their families.

In the months following the conversation of Henri Peeters with his mother, he was treated as one of the Ursuline family. The sisters taught him French and brushed up his knowledge of the catechism. They also took care of his outfit, consisting above all of clothing, because the junior seminary did not provide that. 'When my outfit was ready, something important had still to be done, namely fitting the clothes, at which half of the members of the convent showed up to watch.' The special event of the little rural boy's going all the way to France to become a priest deserved to be recorded by a photographer.

On the cold winter morning of February 3, 1873, it was finally time to go. His mother, brothers and little sister escorted Henri to the carriage which would take him to the railway station of Horst-Sevenum, which was about a two hour drive from Venray. 'Along the way little was spoken, my voice caught in my throat. We passed by the church, where we would pray once more together, and mother commended me to our dear Lord and dedicated me to our Heavenly Mother. At the carriage, which was ready and waiting, I could still shake hands, yet I could say

1. Henry Peeters before his departure to France, 1873. In his own words: "So finely was he never dressed. It was a rather unusual and tight fit: Imagine, in underwear and heavy wool trousers, in warm vest and jacket after the fashion, stiff collar and cravatt in short, a metamorphosis of a village school fellow into a student and young gentleman'. (*Memories and thoughts* I 1860-1867, p. 22)

nothing more than "Goodbye, Mother!" The whip cracked over the horses, my eyes became blurred, and I burst into copious tears, releasing held back emotions.'

The boy, who had never seen a train and had hardly been outside Venray, did not have to make the trip alone. As far as Paris he had the company of a sheep trader from Venray and almost a thousand sheep. Henri still had well over two hundred kilometres to go before he reached his destination, Chezal-Benoît. There he met the other boys with whom he would study. There were seventeen of them, who together formed a mixed company of boys of French, German, Spanish, Swiss and Italian origin.

Henri Peeters was the first Dutch boy at the junior seminary in Chezal-Benoît, but not for very long. In that same year, 1873, three boys from Venray joined him, also protégées of the Ursulines. In the following years a number of Limburgers from other places arrived.

The expansion of the congregation came to a temporary halt when, in 1880, the French government issued a prohibition on monasteries. The older students, like Peeters - by then twenty years old - were in Rome. They had finished at the junior seminary and had completed the novitiate, the period in which one was formed as a religious, and had begun the higher studies for the priesthood. Lodgings were found for the younger students and the novices in the Netherlands.

The exile ushered in a period of unprecedented growth for the congregation. From the Netherlands houses were opened in Belgium, Austria and Germany. Many vocations came from the Netherlands. The growth was closely linked to the fact that the congregation of the Missionaires du Sacré-Coeur (MSC) became a tru-

ly missionary congregation in 1881 when they accepted the assignment from Rome to do missionary work in the groups of islands of Melanesia and Micronesia. Many areas of work, near and far away, would follow.

From 1873 until the sixties of the twentieth century thousands of Dutch boys and men found their way to the congregation. An important attraction was the good education given at the junior seminary, which was accessible for those without means. For most of the students, the end of high school was also the end of life in the boarding school and the close ties with the congregation. More than fifteen hundred young men chose a longer engagement with the MSCs. They aspired to membership of the congregation, although about a third reconsidered that choice during the novitiate or during their time in the scholasticate (the house for higher studies for the priesthood). Eventually 1,028 Dutch men committed themselves to the congregation with perpetual vows as priests or brothers.

The Dutch Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are the main characters in this book. They are referred to as 'MSC fathers and brothers', or MSCs for short. Their history is characterised by a strong missionary orientation, which determined their conduct from the beginning. In the nineteenth century forty Dutch MSCs set off to the distant mission of Oceania. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Dutch Indies came on the horizon when the congregation got permission to do missionary work in Dutch New Guinea and the Moluccas. New candidates for brothers and priests applied in such large numbers that work in the Philippines and Brazil was accepted. Before 1900 brothers constituted the majority of the missionaries, but in the twentieth century they worked more in the expanding junior seminary and in the other houses of the congregation in the Netherlands.

The growth of the congregation led, in 1894, to the establishment of a Northern Province, of which the Netherlands was a part. An independent Dutch province was set up in 1919. This expanded its overseas mission to other places, among them Celebes and Middle Java. Over the years the congregation expanded the work in Holland by setting up twenty parishes (initially rectorships) in Sittard, Eindhoven and Berg en Dal. In the nineteen-forties the apostolate among non-Catholics began in several places in the Netherlands, under the name *Una Sancta*. The latter took a more ecumenical direction in keeping with the secularisation which took place in post-war Netherlands. While the MSCs sought new forms of pastoral work in the Netherlands, they worked at a transfer of their tasks in the former mission areas.

The MSC congregation is not a contemplative but an active congregation with a strongly outward- looking orientation. The Dutch MSCs recognized from the beginning the importance of lay people in the work of the apostolate. At home and abroad they have invested much in good collaboration with lay people in their work. Among the MSCs we find true world travellers as well as brothers and priests for whom the world has remained always much closer to home. Globetrotters or not, they agreed on the strong orientation to 'the other'. The MSCs had learned not to seek for themselves or to go out after their own glory (mindful of the motto of

Thomas à Kempis: 'Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari'), but to fight for spiritual and social needs out of solidarity with the world. How they received this orientation and in which way they tried to give shape to this compassion is recounted in this book.

The author of this book has consulted the fine archives of the Dutch MSC province. Besides primary sources such as letters and reports, use has also been made of a number of publications of MSC members. In addition one hundred and fifty priests, brothers and former members of the congregation, have answered exhaustive questionnaires. Interviews and conversations completed that treasury of information. A reading group under the guidance of the provincial, Ton Zwart, commented on earlier versions of the chapters. The group consisted of the MSCs, Kees Braun, Jo Groenen, Arie Vriens and Gerrit te Wierik, Sr Marie-Louise Beurskens FDNSC, the publicist Theo Schouw (who had connections with the MSCs until the novitiate) and the former MSC, Jan van de Geijn. I thank all those involved for their cordial collaboration, for their trust and for the time they have given me for the completion of this task, a history of the Dutch Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

CHAPTER 1

# The Red Hearts

This chapter tells the story of the congregation in the first fifty years of its existence. It treats its development from a French foundation to a congregation in which the Dutch acquired their own prominent place. This process was strongly influenced by the mission work in which the MSCs had engaged since 1881, which is the subject of the second chapter.

## A French Congregation

In order to understand Jules Chevalier and his foundation, it is best to take cognizance first of the time and context in which the society was established. After a sketch of the political and spiritual climate in France in the nineteenth century, devotion to the Sacred Heart, to which Chevalier would dedicate his congregation, needs some explanation. After a three-part prelude  the account of the actual founding follows.

### *State and Church*

The congregation was born at a time and in a land of revolutions. Frustrations over the effects of the French revolution led to new upheavals in France during the nineteenth century. The forms of state alternated rapidly. From a republic the country became an empire (1804), then a monarchy (1815), a republic again (1848), an empire (1852) and a republic once again (1870). This last lasted until the First World War.

France had thus become an empire for the second time, with Napoleon III at the head, shortly before the foundation of the Missionaires du Sacré-Coeur (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart) by Chevalier. Under the rule of Napoleon III the cooperation between Church and state was resumed. In 1848, Bonaparte had appointed himself protector of the Pope against Italian nationalism and thus won the trust of French Catholics. Their support stood him in good stead against the republican opposition in his own country. The emperor rewarded them with a number of subsidies, from which particularly the clergy of the higher rank profited. A myth

about the enormous wealth of the monasteries persisted while most of the religious lived in poverty. However, the relative peace which was granted to Catholics by the state led to the establishment of religious congregations and to an increase in the number of priests.

Napoleon's relationship with the Church came under heavy pressure on account of his reaction to the Italian war in 1859. This time he decided not to hinder the Italian nationalists in their striving towards a unified state, thus delivering the Pope and Rome to the enemy 'like a Pontius Pilate', according to a French bishop. In exchange for his standing on the sideline Nice and Savoy would go to France. Militant Catholics decided at this time to form a force of their own and set out in 1867 for Rome to rescue the Pope and to defend the Papal States. They called themselves 'Zouaves' and came chiefly from Western France, where people had fought hard in 1793 for God and country. This volunteer corps would develop later into the Papal Guards.

While it was becoming increasingly difficult for Napoleon in his own country, France's great rival in Europe was growing ever more powerful. Otto von Bismarck was busy forging a large unified German state under the leadership of the Prussians. In international politics he achieved one success after another, and a conflict with France whose interest had been thwarted by German unity became inevitable. In 1870, war broke out between the two countries. The Prussian army emerged victorious and the pitiful defeat of Napoleon and his troops at Sedan on September 1, 1870, was the fatal blow to his title of emperor. An uprising took place in Paris and the Third Republic was proclaimed. Napoleon fled to the United Kingdom, where he died in 1873.

The war with the Prussians lasted until the beginning of February 1871, when the proud bulwark of Paris fell. Because of the long siege a great malaise reigned particularly in the capital and Bismarck's conditions for peace did not improve the economy in the short term. Soldiers and workers felt betrayed by the new government, which according to them, betrayed the republican ideals. They seized power in Paris where they formed a revolutionary city administration, the 'Commune'. France got entangled in a civil war. After months of fighting the Parisian Commune was crushed in May 1871. It had been an extremely bloody fight - in the last week alone fifteen thousand victims fell.

Now that the radicals had been temporarily eliminated the more moderate among the republicans faced the task of winning over a majority of the French population for the Republic. The fear of social disorder and anarchy worried many Frenchmen. Through the moderate policy which the Republic adopted after the crushing of the Commune, it managed to win over more of the middle class. The internal division in conservative and monarchist circles played into the hands of the government. Anti-republican sentiments continued to exist but the camps were not able to take a unified stand.

The Church institutions could survive in this climate, but a thriving religious life could not. Since the French revolution more and more Frenchmen had been aliena-

ted from the Church which adopted a hostile attitude towards the new ideas. Anti-Church feelings were widespread. Freemasonry was particularly popular in France. The Third Republic failed to solve the division in the polarised society. On the contrary, with the inauguration of a new government in 1878, it set out on a collision course on a number of matters. Jules Ferry wanted to banish the Church from public life, starting with education. Many new congregations derived their right to exist from education and they were directly affected by obligatory public education (regulated by law in 1882). But the old orders also suffered under the anti-clerical policy. On March 29, 1880, the French government ordered the Jesuits to vacate their houses and colleges. A subsequent decree a day later ordered all orders to apply within three months for authorization of their statutes, regulations, number of members and the like. While initially people still thought that in practice the implementation would not be as bad, in October 1880 the MSCs too had to close seminaries.

Unlike, for example, in Belgium and Germany, the French Catholics did not succeed in forming one large political party. They had kept themselves as much as possible outside politics and the Church institutions were inward-looking rather than directed towards society. Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers (now Missionaries of Africa), did not find a very sympathetic ear when he called on Catholics in 1890 to recognise the republican form of government. Instead some of the clergy had entered into an unholy alliance with an important part of the nobility and the army command. This rightist opposition made a stir over controversial issues, which had been intended to undermine the Republic. One of these, the Dreyfus affair, turned eventually against the opposition. The victory of the government in this controversial affair became the signal for a stronger anti-clerical government policy which resulted in a complete separation of Church and State.

This law put an end to the over a hundred-years-old concordat which Napoleon I and Pius VII had entered into in 1801-1802. The appointment of bishops became once more the responsibility of the Pope instead of the French head of state. This had the advantage that Catholic leaders could take their own political position, no longer dependent on the state. Bishops could organise their own conferences and were no longer automatically suspected of Gallicanism by the Vatican. But it meant also that clerics were no longer paid as state civil servants; they had to live by means of gifts from the faithful, sacramental service and their own sources of income. Church buildings became the property of the municipality or the state. Thus the eighty-two year old Chevalier had to leave his presbytery in Issoudun in 1907.

*'Le Mal Modern'*

The clergy had been considerably thinned out during the French revolution, but recovered again in the nineteenth century. The number of priests grew from more than 30,000 in 1810 to 56,600 in 1870. The increase was accompanied by a drop in the intellectual level of the clergy as a whole. French seminary training was considered to be extremely strict and conservative. The one-sided emphasis on discipline and conformity did not help critical formation and in general produced priests who hardly had a good education. Unlike the situation in Belgium few French clergy attended university, which became practically impossible in 1885 with the closing of the theological faculties of the state universities. The seminarians came mainly from the rural areas and from the urban lower class. After ordination they were dependent to a large extent on their bishops, who generally thought little of self-willed parish priests.

The French revolution and its ideals, and especially the way in which these had been achieved, had not left the French clergy unperturbed. They were left with a great aversion to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the striving towards social change. Since the eighteenth century, under the flag of philosophy, reason could bring up anything for discussion, even the existence of God. While modern thinking had initially remained restricted to an elite, since the French revolution it had reached the masses as well. They turned away from the Church and thus were heading, according to the same Church, for disaster.

The French clergy were not alone in this view, especially after 1848, the year in which all of Europe experienced a wave of revolutions. Rome openly took a stand against modern freedoms and new political directions. Sometimes the Church leant towards intolerance. In France anti-Dreyfus pronouncements reinforced ultranationalist campaigns and sympathy for the undemocratic image of the militant Action Française.

Pope Pius IX played an important role in the formation of the image. While at the beginning of his pontificate he was still considered liberal, quite quickly he earned the name of being reactionary. In *Syllabus Errorum* (1864) the Pope enumerated the most important errors of modern times. His encyclical, *Quanta Cura*, was explicitly ultramontane. He stated in no uncertain terms that the authority of the state ought to put itself under that of the Church. From this standpoint Pius IX antagonized the most important heads of state, namely Bismarck, Napoleon and the Italian, Cavour. The relations were none the better for it when at the First Vatican Council in 1870 the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope was defined.

Chevalier's training for the priesthood and the foundation of his congregation took place during the long pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878). In the official recognition of the congregation the Pope gave it as an explicit task the fight against liberalism which, as the dominant stream of political thought of the nineteenth century, was at the top of the list of modern errors. The separation of Church and state which liberalism supported made people drift further and further away from the

Catholic faith and according to Chevalier and his people faith was the only means that could reverse the moral decline. Moral depression became more clearly visible as modernism progressed. 'Le mal modern', as Chevalier called it, included especially indifference and egoism. In order to attack them and bring people back to the faith, Chevalier had put his trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In this he was clearly a man of his time. The nineteenth century is considered as the century of the Sacred Heart, a devotion of French origin which also happened to enjoy great popularity with the Pope.

### *Devotion to the Sacred Heart and Mary*

Devotion to the Sacred Heart was propagated with fervour in the seventeenth century by the Norman priest, Jean Eudes (1601-1680). The pierced heart of the crucified Jesus was the symbol of his sacrificial love for humanity. Eudes found a follower in Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (1647-1690). Alacoque had become a nun in Paray-le-Monial in 1671 out of gratitude for the cure from paralysis which was in her conviction achieved through the intercession of Mary. The nun had several visions which attracted the interest of many. Christ had shown her his heart that burned with love for humankind. His love had gone so far that he had given his life, but humankind had continued to deny him. Alacoque had been convinced that Jesus' great sacrifice asked for reparation. She managed to give to the devotion to the heart of Jesus a new language of its own. Her visions were related initially only to her own convent, but as her reputation increased they touched the whole country and its king more and more. Louis XIV left the visions for what they were. The Sun King did not need confirmation of his God-given power but the idea took hold among many people that the French kingdom had to be dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

The story of France and the Sacred Heart as a twin unity continued in the eighteenth century among others including the generals of the Vendée, who were confident of a return of the monarchy. On the monuments which have been preserved all stand portrayed with a badge of the Sacred Heart on their uniform. Also, the Zouaves pinned such a heart on their breasts when they set out for Rome to rescue the Pope. The Sacred Heart acquired a central position in the devotional and political life of France also at the time of the Third Republic. In 1873, the archbishop of Paris obtained permission from the government for the construction of a colossal church, the Sacré-Coeur of Montmartre, on the place where the feared commune had been defeated.

In popular Catholicism devotion to the Sacred Heart was able to thrive. It was a visually attractive symbol that appealed personally to people. For Chevalier, devotion to the Sacred Heart was primarily his confession of faith in the Incarnation, the great revelation of God's mercy. Next to the Sacred Heart, Mary enjoyed great popularity in nineteenth century France. As a mother symbol she stood for centuries close to ordinary believers. The veneration of Mary was considerably boosted by the

dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which was defined on December 8, 1854. The declaration that Mary was born without original sin was the ultimate justification for the high pedestal on which simple believers had placed her. As early as the 12th century this point of belief had stirred up tempestuous debates. Seven hundred years later the criticism was still very common and came not only from the Protestant side but also from the liberal Catholic side.

Marian apparitions became more frequent especially in France. New pilgrimages became popular. After Rue du Bac (Paris, 1830) and La Salette (Bretagne, 1846) followed Lourdes (1858), Pontmain (Bretagne, 1871) and Pellevoisin (1876). Lourdes, where Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous eighteen times, had to cope with a great influx of people. Napoleon III made his own contribution to the Marian veneration when he gave an order to convert some of the Russian guns seized during the Crimean war, into an enormous statue of the Blessed Virgin, which was built on the mountain of the Comeille in Puy-de-Dôme. Eventually Jules Chevalier had chosen the day on which the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated, December 8, 1854, as the founding date of his congregation.

### *Chevalier and his Foundation*

Jules Chevalier was born in 1824 in Richelieu, the third child of the baker, Jean Chevalier and Louise Ory. When he was twelve years old, Jules longed to go to the minor seminary in neighbouring Tours, but his parents could not afford it. Instead he went as an apprentice to a shoemaker. However he did not give up his ambition to be a priest. In the evening hours he studied Latin assisted by the parish priest. Five years later, in 1841, his chance came when his family moved to Vatan, where Jean Chevalier worked as a forest keeper  It turned out that Mr Juste, who had hired him, was prepared to pay the costs of the minor seminary of Saint-Gaultier for Jules who was then seventeen years old.

After five years Jules proceeded to the major seminary of Bourges which was under the direction of the Compagnie de St Sulpice (Society of St Sulpice). This congregation of secular priests had been founded in the seventeenth century to train parish clergy. They considered obedience, asceticism and humility to be of paramount importance. Devotion to the Sacred Heart as well as the veneration of Mary occupied a central place for them. As a child Chevalier had been brought up on both devotions and was again so inspired that he organized in the seminary the 'Chevaliers du Sacré-Coeur' (Knights of the Sacred Heart). The aim of this student association with a romantic name was to fight the prevailing indifference and to reconquer the world for Christ. From the name of the club something too of the strong personality of Jules is evident. Two other members, Emile Maugenest and Charles Piperon, were to play a significant role in the future congregation.

Someone who had a strong influence on Chevalier's thinking was his professor, Pellissier. The Dutch MSC, Kees Braun, who followed in 1981 in Chevalier's footsteps as superior general of the congregation, says about the Sulpician priest:

'Once when he spoke about the veneration of the Sacred Heart in the context of the treatise of the Incarnation, Chevalier's eyes were opened to the possibilities which the emphasis on the Incarnation ('God loved the world so much ...') could have of giving an answer to the problems of his time and how much the language of the heart was pre-eminently the language to touch people.'

During his training Jules Chevalier was seized more and more by a missionary ideal. Although his sights were set on distant horizons, he let himself be convinced that there was still in France itself a totally unexplored field. After his priestly ordination on June 14, 1851, he helped out in three parishes until he was appointed as curate in Issoudun in 1854. In this small provincial town, located in the Berry (the department of Indre, under Orléans), Chevalier was going to fulfil his plans. Issoudun, 'fortress of indifference', was for him a suitable point of departure for the rest

2. Jules Chevalier (1824-1907)

of the world.

Some months before Chevalier's appointment, Maugenest too had been appointed as curate in Issoudun. Just as during their student days Chevalier's enthusiasm worked on the other, who concurred with the plan to establish a missionary group. Both curates were also able to convince Crozat, their elderly parish priest. The problem was that there was a lack of resources. The trio decided to ask for advice and to make a novena. With the promulgation of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception in prospect, they planned their novena in such a way that the last day coincided with the papal declaration of December 8, 1854. Moreover, if their prayer was heard, they promised to go through life henceforth as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. On the last day of the novena an anonymous donor presented Chevalier with 20,000 francs through an intermediary. In accordance with the promise the name MSC stood from that day for Missionaires du Sacré-Coeur, or Missionarii Sacratissimi Cordis, in Latin.

The anonymous person was the rich Ferdinand de Champgrand, a Sulpician priest, whose attention had probably been drawn to this good purpose by his friend, Pierre Gasnier, also a Sulpician, who had been Chevalier's professor of Ethics in the major seminary. The donor had made it a condition that the archbishop of Bourges should agree with the purpose. Mgr Dupont thought, however, that while this amount could indeed provide for the accommodation, the missionaries would not be able to support themselves afterwards. They reacted to this disappointing rejection with a second novena (20-28 January 1855), whereas Crozat was able to persuade de Champgrand to increase the donation a little and, moreover, got a countess to provide an annual allowance of a thousand francs.

The curates bought a house with a shed, which they themselves rebuilt into a chapel. They worked immediately on their plan to set up a congregation and to live according to a rule. For the Church authorities, however, evangelization of Issoudun and the surrounding area remained the main aim. The Episcopal Council was not crying out for yet another congregation which furthermore held far-reaching ambitions. It was not until June 4, 1855, before the plan for the founding of the MSC was approved. In it there was talk of two categories of members, namely missionaries and brothers of the Sacred Heart, who together would form the congregation. From 1869, all members, both priests and brothers, were called missionaries.

The congregation consisted of Chevalier and Maugenest. Quite soon both had plenty of dealings with the local populace when a part of the rebuilt shed collapsed. The humble housing had awakened both curiosity and compassion among the parishioners, several of whom set out on their own initiative to do repairs. But this did not mean that they took the road to the church. Like elsewhere in France, the men showed no interest in the church at Issoudun. For women the church formed an environment in which they were taken seriously and could be active. Men stayed away in such great numbers that attending Mass was jokingly described as 'a secondary sexual characteristic of the French woman'. To remove as much as possible the hint of femininity, Chevalier organized in 1856 a Mass especially for men, after

first having spent a month recruiting house to house those who were interested. While at first the attendance numbered just thirty men, by Easter of 1857 there were already fifty who went to communion.

At this build-up stage, a welcome reinforcement had come in the person of a third priest and a school friend, Charles Piperon. The relief from the enormous work load did not last long, because the bishop appointed Maugenest in 1858 to the cathedral of Bourges. It appeared that in case Crozat happened to die, Chevalier and Piperon would be designated to succeed him, and this would mean the natural death of the congregation. This scenario put even Chevalier in a sombre mood, who had faced up until then to all difficulties in very primitive circumstances. He decided to consult Jean-Marie Vianney. Every year about twenty thousand people travelled to Ars for a meeting with the parish priest who was regarded as a saint. Vianney, who died some weeks after his conversation with Chevalier, inspired him with courage to persevere. Vianney himself had won the hearts of the once indifferent inhabitants of Ars and managed to make it a model parish.

With new energy Chevalier and Piperon set to work. While Chevalier operated from Issoudun, Piperon travelled all over France, preaching all the time to spread the devotion to the Sacred Heart and to raise funds. With the money collected they could start in 1861 with the construction of a church in Issoudun. That same year Maugenest joined his friends again. He had been appointed to succeed Crozat as parish priest of Issoudun.

### *Confraternity*

A side altar of the church was dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and one of the stained glass windows showed the first picture of the devotion. This novelty put Issoudun on the map. The church became a place for Marian pilgrimages. Soon the idea of setting up a confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart emerged. This idea was entirely according to the spirit of that time, in which people sought support and security in the togetherness of confraternities. Chevalier set up the confraternity in 1864, and instead of complicated regulations he drew up only one rule - to recite every morning and evening 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us'. In this simplicity lay strength. The rule was easy to observe, with the result that the confraternity did not remain merely an exclusive little club but acquired members worldwide.

The success of the confraternity reflected on the congregation, which acquired greater and greater renown. In 1866, the popular confraternity launched its own magazine, the *Annales de Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur* (Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart). It was managed by Victor Jouët, then still a priest of the diocese of Marseille, who had taken his private vows in 1865. Six years later he joined the community of Issoudun. In the same year that the *Annales* were published, the 57 year-old Jean-Marie Vandel joined the MSCs. This priest had already won his spurs as a fund raiser with his efforts for poor rural parishes. He brought to his new circle

a 'Petite Oeuvre' campaign (known in the Netherlands as the Little Work of Charity), which called on people to give the equivalent of a penny for seminary vocations. This meant an expansion of the apostolic school (junior seminary) which the MSCs had started in Issoudun in 1866. On October 10, 1867, it was transferred to neighbouring Chezal-Benoît, where the real growth would start. The *Annales* made the fund widely known, resulting in many benefactors and many candidates for the priesthood. For the twelve places in the school no less than one hundred and fifty applications were made. The congregation, whose members numbered eleven, began at this point to take care of its own junior seminary. Under the name of the fund, Petite Oeuvre (Little Work of Charity), the MSCs founded an apostolic school in Chezal-Benoît, which was under the direction of Vandel.

In 1869, Pope Pius IX joined the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which had become international. In the same year the MSC celebrated the fifteenth year of its existence and the Pope played an important role in this celebration too. Already in 1860, Chevalier had unfolded his plans for the congregation in a private audience. The papal (provisional) approval of the constitutions ten years later placed the congregation in effect directly under the Holy See and no longer under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Bourges. The latter attended in 1869, as a representative of the Pope, the culmination of the MSC festivities, the crowning of the statue in Issoudun on September 8 (the pilgrimage day) in the presence of 15 bishops and about seven hundred priests. The church became a basilica in 1874.

In 1873, the Pope elevated the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to the status of archconfraternity. The definitive approval of the congregation followed shortly afterwards (June 12, 1874). This formalized the connection with Rome and it became obvious that besides the houses in France it was necessary to have a permanent place in Rome too. Moreover the MSCs were keen on being represented in the leadership of the archconfraternity. By this time there were millions of members worldwide and the most prominent ones preferred to see it established in Rome rather than in Issoudun. Jouët set out for the Holy City on behalf of the MSC congregation with this double mission and succeeded on both fronts. The first accommodation that Jouët found with the Trappists was replaced in 1879. Thanks to a papal loan, he acquired the former Spanish church at the Piazza Navona.

### *Expansion*

The congregation spread its wings. Although it had been known that Chevalier did not wish to limit himself to one parish or diocese, until 1873 the MSC had remained within the confines of Issoudun. That year witnessed a crossing of the Atlantic Ocean to Canada. After Toronto came Montreal and finally Watertown in the State of New York. A group of Canadians living there had asked for French speaking priests. In Watertown the first Dutch MSC came to work. He was Fr T. Ariëns, a nephew of the well-known Dr Alphons Ariëns. He had been a priest for thirty years, and was the parish priest of Valkenburg when he went on pilgrimage to Is-

soudun. Shortly afterwards, in 1875, he joined the congregation. His first appointment was to the basilica of Issoudun. According to Peeters, Fr Ariëns was teased good-humouredly by his colleagues for 'his formality and enthusiasm'. Chevalier was supposed to have had plans to make him superior in Rome, but that office went eventually to Jouët. In the 1880s, Ariëns, an elderly man by then, would leave the congregation.

In 1875, the congregation got a pied-à-terre in Rome. In France there were already four communities - one at the apostolic school (Chezal-Benoît), another at the novitiate (in St Gérand-le-Puy) and two in Issoudun, namely the mother community Sacré-Coeur, and St Cyr, accepted as an MSC parish in 1872. Chevalier was the parish priest there. This position protected him in times of the persecution of the monasteries, and so the congregation and all its works could not be wiped out in one fell swoop.

Chevalier did not wish to restrict himself to one country, much less to one type of work. From the beginning he had offered secular priests the opportunity to link themselves with the MSCs without having to take vows. Especially in the countryside parish priests often led an isolated existence. Chevalier thought that a religious congregation could inspire and stimulate them in their care of souls and in devotion to the Sacred Heart. Such a federation had for the MSCs the advantage of continuity in the event of further persecution of religious orders. Indeed there seemed enough zest among the secular priests for such an association, but in practice the MSCs did not get round to the promised guidance at the initial phase. Moreover Rome was against a formal structure because of the fear of the proliferation of congregations. Several of the associated priests decided to enter the congregation - Vandel and Jouët are well-known examples of this. Lay people got the chance to be associated with the MSCs. For them, in 1874, Chevalier set up the Third Order, called since 1904, Sodalitium Cultorum Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu (SCSCJ) (Sodality of the Adorers of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus).

Chevalier's term 'third order' implies the existence of a second. The founder had a strong belief that, as well as his first order of men, an order of women would be established. This came about in 1874, under the name Filles de Notre Dame du Sacré-Coeur (FDNSC, according to the Latin abbreviation). The Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart did not really blossom until Sr Marie-Louise Hartzer (1837-1908) took office as superior. This widow was a good friend of Chevalier. Her two sons had received their education with the MSCs and the older one had already been ordained when she assumed office. Both congregations are closely related in spirit and in work. That does not alter the fact that each of them developed entirely in their own way. An extensive study of the history of the Daughters of Our Lady of The Sacred Heart in the Netherlands and Indonesia has been published in 2002.

Just like the male congregation the Daughters had to flee from France. They established themselves at first in Thuin (Belgium), afterwards in Waalwijk in 1911, and Tilburg in 1915, where they had a novitiate house built on the same street

where twenty-five years before the MSCs had erected a mission house. As early as 1884, after a mission had been assigned to the MSCs by Propaganda Fide, Hartzer sent the first Daughters to Australia, where a thriving section of the FDNSC soon came into being. Sisters were sent from there to the surrounding mission areas. A second congregation of MSC sisters was founded in 1899 in Hiltrup by Fr Hubert Linckens.

*In Exile*

In 1880, dark clouds gathered for all French religious orders. An anticlerical cabinet had come into office, of which the MSCs experienced the consequences on November 5. The change of government coincided with the silver jubilee of the congregation, which by then numbered 29 priests, 29 scholastics and 5 brothers - a total of 63 members.

Both in Issoudun and in St Gérand-le-Puy the MSCs were turned out into the street by the gendarme, who immediately sealed the buildings. The eviction from St Gérand-le-Puy started at seven thirty in the morning. Upon the refusal of Brother Porter to let the gendarme in, a locksmith had to be called. Peeters would later exaggerate this event: 'The sledgehammer blows fall with violence, raging violence on the door, which soon flies to splinters.' Not averse to straining after effect, he timed the eviction some hours earlier, exactly when the novices were meditating on the betrayal of Jesus.

The eviction was in itself dramatic enough. A number of French novices decided to return to their parental homes The six who remained travelled with Frs Celestin Ramot and Louis Couppé to Paris. Among them was Linckens, already mentioned, who later became the head of the MSC German province (1897-1910). In Paris this group of eight met up with those who had been driven away from Issoudun - Frs Piperon and Maillard with three remaining candidates for the novitiate. One of them was Clemens Offermans (superior of the Northern Province from 1897 to 1902).

The complete company, which, as well as Linckens and Offermans, included two other Dutchmen, boarded the train from Paris to the Netherlands. For the four Limburgers this meant a return to their mother country; for seven Frenchmen, a Swiss and a Belgian, a new destination.

## On Dutch Soil

> 'Although its members in 1880 went the road of persecution and exile lamenting all the time, they knew that they were sowing in tears, although they did not know when, and how quick, and how abundantly they would reap amidst the jubilation and rejoicing.' (Henri Peeters, 1907)

The exiles established themselves first in Gerra House in Haaren, then afterwards in an unoccupied factory in Tilburg. In 1890, the congregation built its own mission house. The foundation for this auspicious development had been laid years earlier. The devotion of the confraternity of Issoudun had a solid foundation in the Netherlands on which the congregation could flourish, thanks to the Ursulines of Sittard.

### *The Confraternity and Sittard*

The Netherlands was no terra incognita for the MSCs. In Sittard a section of the confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was set up on January 23, 1867. The bishop of Roermond, Mgr J. A. Paredis, had granted his approval, and Chevalier recognized the section as the centre for the Netherlands. It had been started by the Ursulines of Sittard in 1866, when devotional objects from Issoudun were brought to their convent and boarding school. From Luik (Liège) a mother sent some medals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to her daughters in the boarding school. In Belgium the medals were thought to give protection from harm. The Belgian craze immediately caught on with the girls and won over the sisters when a little girl escaped from death by suffocation. While doing needlework she had swallowed a needle, which came out after a prolonged coughing. The Ursulines signed up as members with the confraternity in Issoudun, which soon resulted in the establishment of the Dutch section in their convent.

Issoudun gave the Sittard section a painting and statues for the embellishment of the chapel. In May 1869, the very first altar in honour of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was put in place there. The Ursulines proved successful in spreading the devotion and in recruiting members. The conditions for membership were extremely simple: saying twice a day the prayer 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, pray for us'. The approval of Mgr Paredis and afterwards that of Archbishop Zwijsen soon promoted the devotion in religious circles. The students of the major seminary, of the college of Roermond and of several other educational institutions in the diocese became members. Also the bishop of Breda, Mgr Van Genk, joined. They succeeded in getting a lot of the faithful interested in the confraternity so that in 1869 it had already a hundred thousand Dutch registrations, especially from Limburg and Brabant.

The Sittard section was established in1869 with a monthly Dutch language publication about the confraternity. Two hundred propagandists (named after the French 'zelateurs'), most of whom were lay people, distributed the magazine and recruited members. In March 1870 the number of members had gone up to

250,000, including the bishops of Cologne, Luik, Haarlem and Utrecht. Archbishop A. Schaepman showed his love for this devotion by dedicating to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart the teaching congregation that he founded in 1873 (Fraters van Utrecht or Brothers of Utrecht).

The Franco-German war which started in 1870 cut Sittard off from Issoudun. This meant that Sittard had to go it alone. New registrations could no longer be passed on to Issoudun. Devotional objects were obtained from elsewhere and propaganda materials were composed at their own discretion. Moreover the magazine prepared its own contents and was no longer a copy of the French original. In 1873, pilgrimages to Sittard began. Magazines such as *De Katholieke Illustratie* (The Catholic Illustration) and *Het Huisgezin* (The Family) were excellent platforms for the new devotion in the Netherlands. They gave nationwide publicity to the construction of a church dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Sittard. This was completed in 1879 and was elevated to basilica status in 1883.

In the meantime the MSCs watched the developments in Sittard with some concern. In 1873, Fr Victor Jouët tried in vain to get the section to toe the line of Issoudun. Jouët and his people saw the confraternity as a way of reaching out to people. The work of the congregation might continue on a modest scale, while by means of the confraternity the world could be conquered. Sittard was well on the way to proving that, while it was busy breaking away from Issoudun. On March 10, 1876, this was underscored when Pius IX gave the confraternity of Sittard four indulgences of its own.

With more than eight million registrations and around three thousand propagandists - inside and outside the country in 1879 - Sittard saw itself as the principal seat of the confraternity, at least for the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. The sections in Belgium and Germany, however, preferred a direct relationship with Issoudun as the headquarters of the confraternity. That same year, Pope Leo XIII offered the Spanish church in Rome to the MSCs. The Roman section of the confraternity also moved there. Shortly afterwards the Pope elevated the originally French confraternity to the status of archconfraternity, with its seat in Rome and orientated towards the whole world. Sittard was not left out. On June 1, 1883, the pope elevated the Sittard confraternity to an archconfraternity for the Netherlands.

The confraternities were a typical nineteenth century phenomenon. For the MSCs it would recede into the background, as soon as the work of the congregation assumed soaring proportions. Without the preliminary work of the confraternity in making the devotion known and spreading it, the congregation would have never grown so strong. The Ursulines had thus paved the way for the congregation to develop in the Netherlands. Not only had they helped the ideals of the founders to be accepted in the Netherlands, they stimulated the Catholics in their devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and they even provided (from Venray) the first Dutch students for the apostolic school.

*Gerra House 1880-1882*

Meanwhile in France, the Dominicans, the Carmelites, the Benedictines and the Norbertines lost their houses. Jouët undertook a desperate attempt - according to the *Annals* - to find accommodation in the Netherlands. He succeeded. The MSCs were able to rent a country house, near the major seminary of Den Bosch. Jouët was lost for words in giving praise to the Netherlands, 'that happy little remote corner on earth'.

> The rat which one day got the terrific idea to retreat into a Dutch cheese, could not have found a more delicious place, also none more suitable for rest and for the good of religion.

That ode was due particularly to the Ursulines of Venray. It was especially due to their mediation that there were in the Netherlands several possibilities of housing for the MSCs since May 1880. Even in September the sisters had written to ask the MSCs to give some guidelines for further negotiation with the house owners. Thus, at the beginning of October, Jouët visited the Ursulines in order to discuss the different options. The German brother, Johannes Ilge, accompanied him. Ilge already had preliminary discussions with the superior of the Ursulines.

Jouët had travelled to the Netherlands not exactly in a spirit of despair. Still he thanked Providence elaborately that they could move into an unfurnished country house, paying an ordinary business rent. What was special had to do with the owner of the villa, who was Msgr Godschalk, the bishop of Den Bosch. Undoubtedly Chevalier and Jouët had thought that good relations with the bishop and his diocese would be the best conceivable start for the congregation in the Netherlands. Probably they did not dare count on the diocese of Roermond because of the strained relations with the confraternity in Sittard, which fell under the protection of the bishop of Roermond. A glorious future of the archconfraternity was still an important item on the MSC agenda.

On November 9, 1880, the group of exiles under the leadership of Piperon arrived in Sittard, where the Ursulines gave them a cordial reception. Two days later the company travelled on to Haaren. Frs Ramot and Maillard had gone almost immediately to Den Bosch to make the first preparations.

'A big, nice and totally empty house' was how Piperon described Gerra, which had been unoccupied for years. Gerra House, located along the way from Tilburg to Den Bosch, had been inhabited for ten years by Mgr Zwijsen, until he took up residence in Den Bosch in 1864. Since then it had the status of the country house of the bishop. The lease included the house, a kitchen garden and a stretch of woodland.

On the first night the 'French Fathers' slept on the straw which the servant from the seminary of Haaren had brought for them. The next day they were invited by the seminary to dinner. They needed this hospitality, but only for a short time because with donated kitchen utensils and provisions the novices were able to try

their cooking skills in their own kitchen a day later. This task often fell to the Fleming, Reyn, and the Limburger, Offermans. Important benefactors in that difficult initial period were the Ursulines of Venray. The van Dijk family from Den Bosch, too, kept up their support. Piet van Dijk ran a large dry goods store at the Market and was known as a pious man. He had taken care of Frs Ramot and Maillard when they arrived in Den Bosch. Both his daughters, former students of the Ursulines, were propagandists of the Little Work of Charity. After their mother had come to take a look at Gerra, she immediately sent chairs, a table, curtains and a lamp.

During a short visit to Venra, Piperon let slip that from the outside Gerra indeed looked like a palace, but on the inside it was more like the stable of Bethlehem. The sisters donated immediately linen and bedding, towels and provisions. This was one of the few times that the MSCs simply let it be known that they lived in primitive circumstances. If only they had done that more often, Peeters sighed later, for the will and the capacity to help were abundantly present. According to him the ideal of mortification - peculiar to religious - and the language barrier stood in the way. The consequences of the heat, dampness and hunger were plain: 'The great majority of the youngsters were languishing away, and died untimely deaths.' Linckens sketched a somewhat more balanced picture, but laid a direct link between the death of his nephew and the bad health which one contracted at Gerra.

A later historian of the congregation, Henri Vermin, has discounted the stories concerning the hardships suffered as fairytales. In this Vermin based himself especially on remarks of the van Dijk family and the Ursulines that happily there was always something to eat in the house. Moreover the sources speak only of inadequate furnishing. Another point that Vermin made was the positive balance with which Gerra closed in the year 1882. During a year and a half Gerra had received from the Netherlands and Belgium more than 2,200 guilders for Mass intentions. No fixed financial support came from Issoudun. It had been agreed that the house should try as far as possible to cover its own expenses, and in this it had succeeded really well.

In December, when the French fathers had been a month in the new house, the Ursulines sent their stable man to Gerra to manage the kitchen. In January 1881 this man asked the Sisters for help:

> Here there is next to nothing. I have but a small coffee pot in poor working order; I have no bread knife, no chopping board, no axe to chop meat. Please send all of these. We will be so glad, if something comes.

The servant stayed on for almost two years as a cook. He took part in the move to Tilburg, where one of the Brothers of Tilburg took his place. Another indispensable hand in the initial period in Haaren was a local carpenter.

The fathers and boys had fared badly with the weather. The first impression of the French was that the Netherlands were very swampy and that the sun never shone there. Thévénot wrote to his compatriot, Lanctin, that the Limburger, Fleischeuer, could claim as much, but there was nothing but a moon in the Netherlands. For the rest he had seen nothing but rain. Perhaps Thévénot could not get

used to the climate, and he resigned a year and a half later. According to Vermin, Peeters' description of water running down the walls was exaggerated, but November 1880 was an exceptionally rainy month. December witnessed the floods of the Dommel and the Aa, and on January 9, 1881, frost set in. As opposed to these inconveniences, there were happily some pleasures. Rozenkranz wrote to the scholastics in Rome:

> In this country they all smoke like a chimney. Every time we introduce ourselves somewhere, the first words we hear, after the usual courtesies, are: 'coffee, coffee, cigar, cigar?

Piperon, the superior of the community, kept regular contact with Chevalier. Apparently Chevalier had his doubts about the novitiate in Haaren:

> I request you urgently to discipline those characters who have grown much too much used to go their own way at the Little Work of Charity and in St Gérand. We have formed them insufficiently in the curbing of their senses and in discretion. The directors have treated them as comrades. That is wrong and has regrettable effects.'

Whatever Piperon did with this urgent recommendation, Reyn, Linckens, Kicken, Fleischeuer and Moncorget were deemed suitable to take temporary vows in September 1881. With that the first Dutch scholastic community of the congregation was established. By day the young MSCs attended lectures at the seminary which were given partly in Latin, partly in Dutch. In the evening the 'little Piperons', as they were called in the seminary, returned again to Gerra.

The next group of five novices had already come forward. Among them was Joseph Peeters, the brother of Henri. The house was getting very full and Frs Piperon, Maillard and Couppé found it was practically impossible to give proper guidance to the different groups. Scholastics, novices and postulants all lived under one roof. At the end of 1881 Clemens Offermans moved to Issoudun to teach at the apostolic school where the people there tried to keep it going. Gerra had by then 23 occupants, including the servant and the cook.

New accommodation became a necessity. If need be, a cloister of wattle and daub in a pastureland would do. Not only was this option dropped but also a stay in the South Limburg castle of Elsloo, which the Count of Geloes offered. This matter fell through due to the fact that the costs of rebuilding the castle were too expensive. The MSCs could stay there temporarily. Meanwhile the Little Work of Charity had proved to be impossible to carry out in Issoudun, and the Netherlands was being considered as an alternative location, and that made the need to move all the more urgent.

The last addition in Gerra came in the summer of 1882 from Rome, the young Frs Pierre Barral and Franz Xaver Klotz. Their stay in Haaren did not last long. On August 21, 1882, all occupants left for Tilburg, ten kilometers further on.

*New House*

Piperon had established contacts with Antoon de Beer, the superior of the Brothers of Tilburg. De Beer was also dean of Tilburg and highly esteemed in the city. He had already helped Piperon to get a cook in Gerra and offered help in finding accommodation in Tilburg, where there were a lot of empty factory buildings. De Beer knew all the owners and even undertook to negotiate himself. On April 25, 1882, Piperon informed Chevalier that he had made a final offer on a former textile factory. The building was named 'Veldhoven' after the district in which it was located. The factory had been in the hands of De Beer's cousins.

For the small amount of 16,000 guilders the fathers became the owners of a vacant factory building with four annexes, a garden and a yard each covering almost 2000 square metres. The former engine room became the chapel. In May 1883, an adjacent house, the former factory director's house, with a shed and yard and adjoining land, were also bought. The rebuilding of the complex was finished in 1885, when the paving of the playground and the ring wall were completed as the last job. The rebuilding and associated purchases had cost a pretty penny. The 'Veldhoven' became a monastery after a total expenditure of over 70,000 guilders.

Almost immediately after the signing of the deed of sale on May 13, 1882, Piperon had received eleven applications to join the Little Work of Charity – three boys from Venray, four from Brabant and four from Germany. Mgr Godschalk had given the MSCs permission for the training in the 'Veldhoven' and was prepared to associate his name with the Little Work of Charity. The bishops of Breda and Haarlem followed.

Peeters would later blame the French administration for shortsightedness because, according to him, they had considered the Netherlands only as a temporary base. There seems to be little ground for this view. Gerra House was indeed temporary accommodation, but certainly in June 1881 the MSCs were resolved to stay on in the Netherlands. With the rejection of Elsloo, a deliberate decision was made to look for a house of their own. Vermin is of the opinion that a permanent residence was the goal even before their arrival in the Netherlands. The administration had correctly recognized, well in advance, the potential of the Netherlands as a new area for establishing the MSCs, because they had rejected Spain for it. In 1872, Jouët had already tried to set up a Little Work of Charity in Spain. According to Vermin a move to Spain was a more obvious choice because the MSCs could get a free house there at the beginning of November 1879. When problems arose in Spain, the congregation put all their cards on the Netherlands which, according to Vermin, 'was still far from the emancipated Catholic life of now [1942]. Only a prophet would judge differently'.

*Tilburg*

But Tilburg had not been doing too badly in the late nineteenth century. In 1882,

the population of this wool town was almost 30,000, the majority being Catholics. Each of the five parishes had its own character, evidence of the past of each village. Forged together into one town, the villages preserved their individual characters beyond the paved main roads for quite a long time. In 1809, Tilburg had received its municipal rights. As early as the seventeenth century, the textile industry was an important business sector, but after the separation of Belgium from the Kingdom of the Netherlands the market had shrunk considerably. The increased mechanisation of the work caused overproduction and large-scale unemployment was the consequence. Around the time when Willem II became king in 1840, the tide turned. The king was on friendly terms with Joannes Zwijsen, parish priest in Tilburg since 1832. Zwijsen had been very important in the revival of Roman Catholic Netherlands. In Tilburg' he gave education an enormous impetus by founding two congregations: the Zusters van Liefde or Sisters of Charity in 1832, and the Fraters van Tilburg or Brothers of Tilburg in 1844. In 1851, Zwijsen succeeded the apostolic vicar of Den Bosch and two years later he became the first archbishop after the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the Netherlands.

Initially the spiritual revival of Tilburg was accompanied by a material one. Tilburg profited from the strong government policy in the years 1845-62, directed at protecting industry. Moreover in 1862 the town was connected with the national railway system. But the change in trade policy beginning in 1862 had disastrous consequences for the Tilburg industry, which resulted in closures of previously busy factories around 1880.

In the 1880s, the differences between the combined population clusters were still clearly present, but the Tilburgers, according to Vermin, had clearly something in common: 'real Catholic joie de vivre and religious kind-heartedness, mixed with respect for the spiritual. A tough perseverance and patient endurance through all miseries'. Socialism had therefore no chance of success. By September 1, 1882, the Brothers of Tilburg had already four schools and the total number of students numbered 4,437. In comparison, the five public schools in Tilburg had jointly 660 students in 1887.

The MSCs awaited a ripe harvest. Quite quickly it was impossible to imagine the town without the MSCs. For a long time they were popularly called 'Red Hearts' after the heart embroidered on flannel which they - after good French practice - wore on their black soutane.

### *The Veldhoven 1882-1890*

The Veldhoven had at the end of the first year (1882) 52 occupants, who were in different stages of their formation to the priesthood or were already priests. The junior seminary, whose oldest students had come from Issoudun, was led by Fr Lanctin. After him Kicken became director of the Little Work of Charity.

In 1883, a new type of resident came along. That year the congregation laid down the basis for the so-called 'work brothers'. A few brothers had already joined

3. The Veldhoven in Tilburg, 1886

the congregation, but the Veldhoven went ahead with a special section. The distant mission which the MSCs took up at that time had a strong power of attraction. Boys and men came to present themselves in large numbers to become MSC brothers.

A second achievement in August 1883 was a Dutch edition of the *Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart* (circulation 500). As he had earlier done for the Little Work of Charity, Bishop Godschalk attached his approval and name to this publication. A copy of the first issue was sent to the Ursulines of Sittard with an accompanying note for the superior. In this the congregation declared that this edition did not want by any means to come in the way of the publication of the Sittard confraternity and that both monthly magazines could even exist very well beside each other. At the end of 1883 a German version also appeared, drafted in Tilburg and printed and distributed in Düsseldorf. In the autumn of 1885 a separate Flemish edition followed.

The Veldhoven thus had a lot of activity and an increasingly large population. In 1886, it had reached a record number of 132 residents. At least five nationalities were represented, but the house breathed a French atmosphere. The medium of communication was French and the direction was in French hands. Changes in the latter situation and in overcrowding came in May 1886. Piperon moved with all the novices to Belgium, and the Veldhoven was placed under the direction of the Austrian, Klotz.

The departure of the novices for the priesthood and the brotherhood coincided with a plan of the general council to set up a seminary for the Oceania missions. In 1881 Micronesia and Melanesia had been entrusted as a mission area to the MSCs (see further) and the general council wanted to set up a separate seminary for that work, just as the Scheut Fathers (CICM) had done for their African missions. France and Germany were not considered for such an establishment, given the anti-religious climate in both countries. The General Council thought that Antwerp had the best credentials because in an international seaport all MSCs could feel at home. Not everyone agreed with this. The Dutch especially were of the opinion that Tilburg had proved itself an excellent breeding ground for the congregation and that such a headquarters was in fact already present there, needing only to be developed further.

In spite of all the valid arguments the congregation bought Hofter Lo in Antwerp (Borgerhout), where they established the novitiate for priests and brothers. In 1887-88 a junior seminary was founded nearby. The Antwerp headquarters attracted especially many Germans. A large part of the mission area of the MSCs belonged to the German empire. For this reason it was convenient for the congregation to establish a house also on German soil. Under Bismarck this was not feasible, hence their eyes fell on Austria. Eventually Frs Ilge and Barral found a suitable location in Liefering near Salzburg. They moved to that house in 1888, and Klotz was brought from Tilburg to become superior. A junior seminary was established there and had 25 students within two years.

### *Mission House Tilburg*

Antwerp-Borgerhout had thus been promoted to mission headquarters for the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Austria. The French students of the junior seminary had returned to France in 1886 where the persecutions had abated. With their departure and that of the novitiate, the Dutch house lost its international character and it became largely a Dutch foundation. The large exodus had given temporary relief to the Veldhoven, but the old factory was completely dilapidated. Moreover the popularity of the congregation increased in the Netherlands and with that also the number of applications. Again a move was necessary. Tilburg had proved to be a good location and so people wanted to remain there, but in an entirely new building. Building a monastery from the ground had a lot of practical and financial advantages over altering an existing property with all its defects.

In 1889, the congregation bought a parcel of agricultural land of approximately five hectares, situated between the Bredaseweg, the Klaverstraat, the Akkerstraat and the Diepenstraat. No less a man than P. J. H. Cuypers designed the plans for a new mission house. The Catholic architect, who had already to his name the Amsterdam Central Station and the National Museum, had designed a number of Church institutions. The implementation was in the hands of the Tilburg architect Hub. de Beer. Both the contractor and the stone supplier were natives of Tilburg. During

During its existence, the Mission House has naturally undergone the necessary remodeling. Although it had been set up spaciously, it was already clear in the 1930s that expansion was necessary. It was decided to put the minor seminary in an annex, and for this a part of the garden had to give way. The Tilburg architect F. C. de Beer designed an entirely new wing for the teachers and students of the minor seminary. The contractors, the Struycken Brothers of Tilburg, started work in January 1934. Ten rooms for the teachers, eight class rooms, a study hall for 125 students, a stage and recreation hall were built. About ten months later, on November 13, Provincial Superior Zandvliet blessed the new building.

The brothers had to wait a long time for their own rooms. Admittedly their full programme did not allow them time for relaxation. They spent the whole day in harness looking after the occupants, the house and the land. Up to 1953 they shared a dormitory in the attic, with only wooden partitions between the beds. Their only other privacy was in the reading room, where every brother had his own little table. When at last in 1954 the 'brothers' building' was completed, parallel to the chapel, they too acquired their individual rooms.

In 1967 the minor seminary was closed down, and along with that the wing from 1934 served another purpose. For many years the Katholieke Leergangen (Catholic Educational Institute) rented the buildings with the classrooms, until it was decided in 1974 to convert them in a 'Klooster Bejaarden Oord' or KBO (Cloister for the Elderly). MSCs who needed care because of old age or for health reasons, could be housed there. For the necessary renovations the architect Jos Bijnen from Oss was recruited. He left the outside structure intact as far as possible, although a storey had to be placed over the stage hall. The contractor, Heerkens van Bavel from Tilburg, began work on the interior. In October 1976 the first occupants took up residence in the KBO. The KBO formed an independent community, with 36 rooms, spread over three storeys, a recreation and meeting room, a chapel and a central dining-room with adjoining space overlooking the garden.

the construction which started on August 16, 1889, about one hundred and thirty workers were involved. They continued working so hard that four months later the building had been roofed. A monastery stood 68 by 15 metres, was 22 metres high and had walls half a metre thick.

The move from the Veldhoven took place in the summer of 1890. On August 13 of that year Dean de Beer of Tilburg blessed the house and the temporary chapel. Seven years later the left wing would be improved with the building of a neogothic chapel. The new house had been so expensive that this had to be delayed. The daily *De Tijd* gave, on August 14, 1890, an extensive report of the blessing. On that occasion W. Mutsaers , a member of the Lower House from Tilburg, made a bragging speech:

> Our industry is favourably known throughout the world but further and better still our undiminished religious sense will become renowned, when Tilburgers, either by birth or education, will proclaim to the farthest boundaries of the world together with the name of Jesus Christ the praise of the faith and benevolence of Tilburg… Whenever I think that these magnanimous religious and prospective missionaries will sprinkle the distant and barbaric islands of the Pacific Ocean with their sweat, many perhaps with their blood, then on my behalf and that of our beloved town, I am more than proud of this blessed house.

The mission house would indeed amply prove its worth. It became the pivot of the Northern Province of the MSC and then of the Dutch Province throughout the twentieth century up to the present century. Quite a number of fathers and brothers for whom the mission house has become their final home, had once started there too. In 1894, there were 106 residents in the house in Tilburg. They were chiefly students of the junior seminary, 30 brothers, 25 scholastics and only 5 priests. The house at Antwerp-Borgerhout was the largest, with approximately 150 residents, among them the novices of the congregation, while the establishment in Salzburg-Liefering with about eighty occupants could also be called large.

## To a Northern Province

The congregation had rapidly grown to such an extent that there were bound to be tensions. From a French congregation it had become an international one, and having started with a charismatic, personal leadership, it was now necessary to set up a representative and democratic administration. Under normal political circumstances this transition would probably have gone more smoothly. Guidance by the General Council and the General Chapter would then have been enough but the circumstances were now extraordinary. They caused conflict between generations and tensions based on nationality that were eventually settled by the foundation of a northern province of the MSC.

### *Malcontents*

Every six years a general chapter was to be held. One was due in 1885 to draw up future policy. In consultation with Rome, however, the meeting did not take place because the members of the congregation were so scattered on account of the international political situation. This meant that the status quo would be maintained until the next general chapter in 1891. Some young priests were dissatisfied with this state of affairs. Moreover they had some further grievances against the administration, experienced by some as authoritarian and aloof. They raised for discussion the legitimacy of certain decisions taken after 1885 - such as a number of new strict rules - as no general chapter had preceded them. The priests in question set out their grievances in a memorandum which they addressed to the Holy See on February 20, 1889. The MSC leadership did not remain ignorant of the document for long, because Rome passed it on two weeks later to Jouët.

Chevalier felt betrayed. He did not understand why the Fathers had acted behind his back. He considered the memorandum as tarnishing the reputation of his congregation. The young fathers had chosen to submit their complaints to a higher authority instead of directly to Chevalier, because they did not trust that he would really listen to them. The extreme pressure of work on Chevalier made the tone of his letters at that time rather hard and curt. The authors of the memorandum wanted a 'fatherly' vicar general alongside Chevalier who, as far as they were concerned, should remain superior general.

In January 1891, a general chapter was held. Chevalier's term of office had been extended to twelve years in 1890 at the request of the general council. Again at the request of the council, Chevalier had written new constitutions and guidelines. To the dissatisfaction of the houses in the north, these texts had already been presented to Rome for approval. The malcontents wanted to take the opportunity of the chapter meeting to prevent arbitrary acts of the general council in the future. They felt that the old guard cared little about the rules and they desired a more democratic structure. Theofiel Reyn, superior of Borgerhout since 1889, acted as their spokesman. Linckens, Klotz and Peeters also belonged to the critics' camp. Just like Reyn,

Linckens was thirty years old and worked in Borgerhout as director of the junior seminary. Franz Xaver Klotz was three years older and had already held the appointments of superior of Tilburg and of Salzburg-Liefering. At the time of the chapter, at which he acted as secretary, he was a professor at the scholasticate.

Klotz aimed his arrows especially at the legal aspects of the matter. He noted that Chevalier's term as superior had also not been officially prolonged over the years 1883-1889. Following up this argument, all professions from that period were then strictly speaking invalid. This held true for three of the thirteen chapter members and so the validity of the chapter was then at issue. It was decided to dissolve the chapter and to submit the matter to Rome. The breakdown in trust was meanwhile so great, that the secretary kept the acts of the chapter to himself. Klotz did not want Rome to get the documents through the generalate, but insisted on handing them over himself. Moreover, Klotz called in a lawyer in order to defend, if necessary, the rights of the malcontents before the Holy See.

### *Conflict*

Not all the Northerners stood behind the malcontents. Some considered the critical attitude was not in keeping with the religious spirit of obedience. Such feelings had also been held from the very beginning by Chevalier, Piperon and Jouët. While the pronouncement from Rome was pending, Chevalier and Piperon wanted a declaration of loyalty from the MSCs in Tilburg and Antwerp. Chevalier personally visited both houses in July 1891, bringing a compromise with him. A 'sanatio' should be applied to all vows made since 1883 and all members were also asked to sign a declaration to the effect that until the next chapter the administration should stay on and have the authority to deal with all the wrongs. According to Chevalier and Piperon, whoever refused to sign indicated de facto that he no longer wanted to be an MSC. The scholastics and brothers obeyed, but several fathers asked (and received) time for reflection. Some believed that Rome would agree with them any way at the resumption of the interrupted chapter. From Antwerp, Chevalier wrote to Jouët that the situation of the fathers in Antwerp and Tilburg was bad. 'I fear that they will persist in their stubbornness. It is a revolt, both against Rome and against us.'

In this chilly atmosphere the general council deemed it better to move the novitiate to Chezal-Benoît. It was also decided to move the scholastics to Issoudun, where Chevalier could personally keep a careful watch on them. Since the anticlerical attitude of the French government had somehow weakened, training in France had become possible again. The administration, whose authority continued to be recognized by Rome, hoped to protect the religious spirit with these measures. The Northern houses protested. According to them nothing could be undertaken as long as the internal difficulties had not been resolved. In Rome, Jouët, as ambassador of the old guard, and Klotz, on behalf of the malcontents, opposed each other. Jouët became for Klotz more and more the rigid face of the administration. Even

the sabotage of the chapter was imputed to him. Hadn't his 'party' managed to obtain the greatest advantage from the dissolution of the chapter? It had given the old guard a licence to simply continue as before. Peeters was in any case haunted by this conspiracy theory. He thought it fit to write to the internuncio, Rinaldi, about Jouët's 'true nature'. However, Rinaldi handed over the letter to Jouët. The latter was deeply hurt by Peeters' character assassination. Piperon impressed on his friend that he considered the scathing criticism of his person as nothing but the hard feelings of school boys.

There was some truth in it. Jouët, in his remarks that French and Catholic were nearly synonymous terms, had been oblivious to the sensitivities of the non-French. These had felt ignored for a long time because what had become a multinational congregation remained so French orientated. 'Our training had been entirely French. Everything that was Dutch was belittled,' recalled Geurtjens himself at that time. 'All this stirred up ill-feeling.' As director of the junior seminary at Borgerhout, Linckens turned firmly against French as a medium of communication for his Dutch and German speaking students. But from Issoudun resounded always, 'Il faut que la congrégation reste avant tout Française.' (The congregation must remain French before everything else.) Also the scholastics staying there, among them Geurtjens, grumbled that they 'had joined the congregation not to become French but missionaries'. For this reason they wanted to go back to their own country.

The archbishop of Bourges, under whose authority Issoudun fell, kept careful watch on the situation. In 1893, Mgr Boyer wrote to the authorities in Rome informing them that Chevalier no longer had the congregation under control and as a result had lost the trust of many members. An atmosphere of anarchy had arisen. On receipt of the letter, Rome designated Boyer as mediator. The latter ordered Chevalier to stop treating his critics as rebels and to adopt a more balanced attitude. Initially, Chevalier thought that the mediator was entirely on the side of the opposition. Jouët confirmed this view and urged Chevalier not to make any concessions.

Between the two parties lay three dividing lines, interwoven with each other, of nationality, of age and of mentality. The old guard had grown up in a time of revolution and violence and by persevering firmly had managed to do much. The young people, having grown up in smoother waters, stepped into an existing organisation and had been longing to make it both more efficient and more modern. Far more than their teachers, they were open to the modern ideas. Thus, Reyn had frequent contact with the socially committed bishop of restless Luik. The bishop wanted a foundation which would have as far as possible direct contact with the workers. In 1893, Reyn devoted himself to preparing for it, even though he had just been appointed assistant general of the congregation and superior of Issoudun. So far Boyer had thus succeeded in reconciling both parties with each other. However there was still some friction. Reyn resigned from his post of assistant general before the end of 1893, because he no longer trusted Chevalier's administration. Shortly afterwards, in 1894, during a meeting in Issoudun, he made known his decision to leave the society. There was no longer a hostile atmosphere in evidence. Reyn knelt before

Chevalier and asked for his blessing.

In his wake others also left, among them six scholastics. Immediately after his departure, Reyn established in Schaarbeek (Brussels) the diocesan congregation Aalmoezeniers van de Arbeid (Chaplains of Labour). Four confreres, among them Klotz, followed him from the MSC to the Chaplains. In 1895, they took their vows and the seven members chose Reyn as superior. The Limburger, Brother Petrus Onckels, also left the MSC. In 1896, he founded a congregation for brothers which concentrated especially on poor children. Some confreres joined him, but the congregation kept no tally.

Jouët had had so much criticism from so many people, that his position within the MSC had become untenable. Chevalier wanted to kick him upstairs elegantly by sending him to Watertown, but Jouët took the honourable way out. Without actually leaving the society he stayed subtly in the background from then on.

### *Northern Province*

With the departure of Reyn and especially that of Klotz and Jouët, the sting was taken out of the crisis and a dialogue could begin again. The scholastics indicated their preference to return to their native countries, and Chevalier showed understanding for that. The chill was out of the air. Chevalier and his supporters threw their fear of rebellion and separation overboard, because they realised that the congregation and especially its work had been helped by decentralization. The Northern houses, of all places, considering their robust growth and ever expanding range of activities, were to be called a sensational success.

It was decided to unite the houses and the members of Tilburg, Antwerp and Salzburg into a Northern Province. The foundation took place on May 5, 1894. A Frenchman, Célestin Ramot, was appointed as superior in order to guarantee the link of the new province with the central administration. Antwerp became the seat of the Northern Province, later followed by Tilburg. Linckens had been appointed as secretary of the Northern Province. For a long time he had wished to create several provinces with a certain autonomy instead of maintaining one organisation under a strong central authority. Almost immediately after the establishment he was sent to Germany as procurator for the mission in New Pommeren (see next paragraph). The Northern Province had wanted very much to have its own house in Germany and Linckens was charged with preparing for such an establishment.

What a decade earlier had not worked in Germany succeeded this time. In the 1880s, when Bismarck depended on conservative support, he toned down his fight against the Roman Catholic Church. During that time the MSCs had just started to do missionary work in the German colonial area. The German government was indeed wise not to prohibit the successful mission, but in the course of time made it a condition that the missionaries had to be Germans. That prompted the congregation in 1896 to decide to promote immediately the German section to an independent province. No mutual disputes lay at the basis of this separation, quite the con-

trary. Precisely because matters had taken a favourable turn, a new province was considered organisationally desirable.

Linckens chose Hiltrup in Westfalen, to build a new house. In 1897, the new house was occupied and the German province under the leadership of Linckens saw the light of day. From then on, the Northern Province consisted of the Netherlands and Belgium. In 1897 the province came under the leadership of Clemens Offermans and would continue to exist for more than twenty years.

The direction of the congregation in the nineteenth century had been totally French. An international breakthrough in the general administration did not come until 1905. That year the Alsatian, Eugène Meijer, became superior general of the congregation and the general council consisted of an Italian, an Austrian, a Dutchman and a German. Also the secretary of the administration and the general treasurer were non-French. This closed a phase clearly which had left a number of MSCs, especially Peeters, with anti-French sentiments.

The Netherlands remained represented in the general administration up to 1993, twice in the person of the superior general. Adriaan Brocken (1920-1932) succeeded Meijer and half a century later, Kees Braun (1981-1993), a Dutchman, was at the helm of the congregation. The Dutch general assistants were:

Jozef Wemmers 1905-1911
Jan Zandvliet 1932-1947
Joop Verdonk 1947-1958
Koos Nouwens 1958-1969
Jo Groenen 1969-1981

Wemmers and Zandvliet were also general treasurers. The function of general treasurer was held by Willem Muijsers in the years 1911-1920.

Chapter 2

# 'Land of the Wicked People'

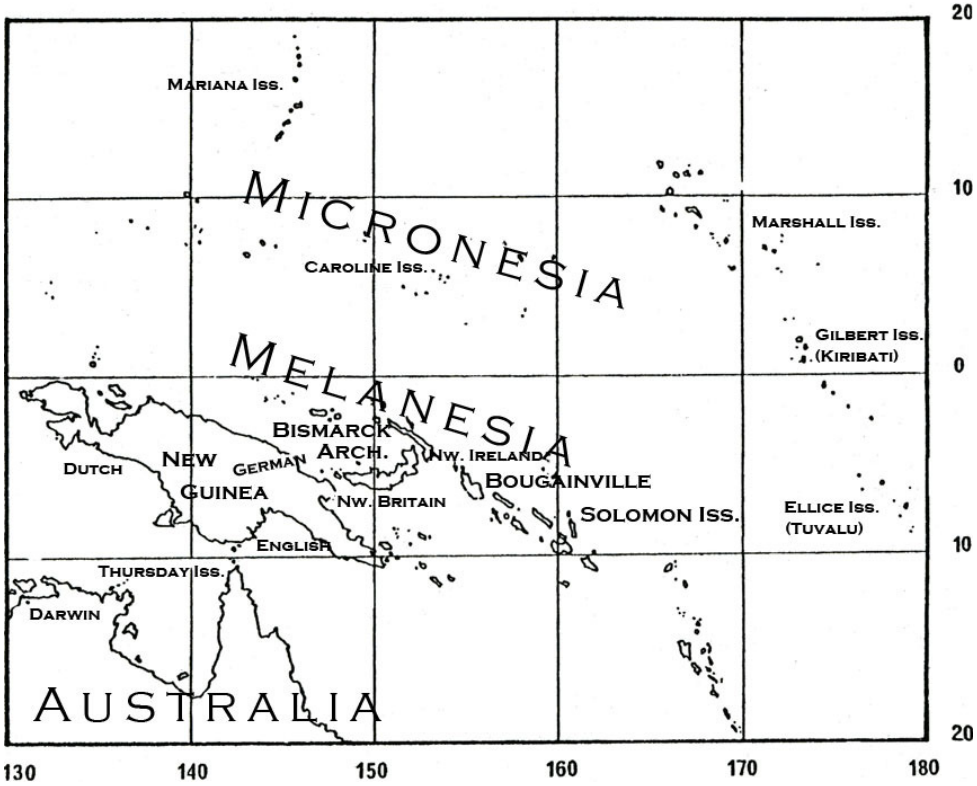
Chevalier's aspirations had always extended beyond Issoudun, France and even Europe. 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved' was his motto, with the emphasis on 'everywhere'. After years of building up, expansion and finally papal recognition, the time was ripe for evangelisation in a foreign, non-western civilisation. This opportunity presented itself in 1879, when, through Cardinal Simeoni, prefect of Propaganda Fide, the request reached the MSCs to take on the mission at Auckland in New Zealand. The excitement was great, but they failed to agree as to whether the intended missionaries could leave without detrimental consequences on their work in Europe. While this discussion was going on, Propaganda Fide found another solution. Two years later, in 1881, a new opportunity presented itself and the congregation decided to accept the mission to Oceania.

## The MSC and Oceania

The mission covered the widespread island groups of Melanesia and Micronesia in the Pacific Ocean, which Rome had already considered as mission areas in 1844. Melanesia covered the area between the equator and the line of latitude 12 S and between the meridians 138W and 160W. Micronesia covered the area between the parallels of latitudes 12 N and 4S and the meridians of longitude 169W and 175W. For the sake of convenience, but less precisely, the mission area was also defined as New Guinea and neighbouring islands. There was little known about 'the land of the wicked people' as it had been called in 1844. The MSCs willingly accepted the extensive area from Leo XIII, even if Chevalier had to admit not knowing exactly what fell under the name of Micronesia.

### *Expedition of Navarre*

The first journey of the MSCs to their mission started under an unlucky star. Four French MSCs set out for Oceania from Barcelona on September 1, 1881. Frs Durin, Navarre and Cramaille and Bro. Fromm had joined hands with the dubious Marquis De Rays. The latter had promised them a free crossing if they would offer




4. From: J. De Kerck, *De MSC-congregatie in de 20e eeuw* (Asse 1985) 2.

spiritual support in his new still to be founded colony, 'La Nouvelle France', in Port Breton in New Ireland. De Rays acted entirely on his own authority, even against that of the French government, which reacted by trying to thwart the expedition by withdrawing the passports of the participants. Thereupon the MSCs assumed Spanish identity in order to be able to leave as soon as possible. They had no idea that it would take a year before they reached their destination.

Upon arrival in Manila it was discovered that the Spanish passports were false. The fact that no jail sentence followed was due to the mediation by Spanish priests with the authorities. The plan to go from there to Amboina - 'New Guinea and neighbouring islands' was dropped when the MSCs found out from the Jesuits in Manila that Dutch confréres of theirs were already there. The party decided to go via the Dutch Indies to New Guinea, where they would first comply with their obligations to De Rays in Port Breton.

Joseph Durin, superior in Watertown, was head of the MSC quartet because of his good knowledge of English. His nephew, Georges Durin, who had prematurely left the novitiate in 1881, had joined the party as secretary. For both the Durins the venture lasted only a few months. Joseph was laid low by sickness on New Year 's Day, 1882, and all agreed that it would be better for him to return to France. Georges accompanied his uncle and André Navarre took over the leadership of the

group.

Durin was not only physically impaired, but his morale had also been affected. In fact he did not see from the beginning why so soon after the start of the American mission, a new and much more difficult area had been accepted. Once in the Far East, he had become openly pessimistic over the chances of success. In a letter to Chevalier he was emphatic in his advice to abandon the New Guinea mission. He argued that it would be better to stop halfway than to persevere in error. He cited especially the unhealthy climate as the reason - even the Dutch government had not wanted to establish a prisoner colony there. Cramaille too, was initially in low spirits: the climate would in no time reduce the personnel as well as the resources and for what after all? For what could be done when fanatical Muslims on the one hand and 'savages' on the other did not want anything to do with any civilisation?

Navarre made a stand against these fatalistic ideas. He communicated to the home front that there had not been any contact yet with the 'savages' and that one could not label in advance their conversion as hopeless. Another argument to persevere was that Protestant missionaries meanwhile could score successes unhindered. Giving up would also be an insult to the Holy See and, not least, would mean an enormous loss of face for the congregation. The climate was indeed hot and they had misjudged Port Breton, from where no good news came, but both setbacks were in Navarre's eyes not insuperable.

Durin did what he could to keep Navarre and his two companions from plunging into misfortune. Navarre wanted to reach Melanesia via Sydney or Cooktown. The Durins set sail for Europe on January 6, 1882, but not before Joseph Durin had instructed the priest at Surabaya and Mgr M. Claessens, Apostolic Vicar of Batavia, to refuse permission for the three to depart for Australia. Eventually it was five months before they could leave Batavia.

Navarre in turn secretly sent a letter to Chevalier via a ship that put to sea the day after Durin's departure. He was apprehensive about the undoubtedly negative impression which the Durins would create in Issoudun and Rome and wanted to strike a contrary note. The leadership of the congregation got wind of the difficulties in February on receipt of Durin's letter in which the latter announced his return. Chevalier immediately ordered Jouët to keep the writer of the letter upon his arrival in Rome or to send him to Barcelona. Under no circumstance would he be allowed to hang about in Issoudun or to return to Watertown. The MSC administration did not as yet consider the missionary adventure a failure, certainly not after the more encouraging news from Navarre, but it was afraid that Durin's negative attitude would damage the good spirit of the congregation. The less publicity given to the setbacks of the missionary journey the more it was to the liking of the administration. For that reason also Georges Durin had become more or less a *persona non grata* for the congregation. Back in Europe he conceived the plan to become an MSC brother, but Piperon refused to accept him in formation. 'He thinks that your presence will have a detrimental effect,' Chevalier let his 'cher enfant'

know, adding that he could certainly try again after a couple of years.

For five months Navarre, Cramaille and Fromm were the guests of the Jesuit Fathers in Batavia, awaiting authorisation of the Dutch government for their passage. For Navarre the life-style of his hosts was an example of how it was not supposed to be. They were in fact civil servants, because they enjoyed a government income and they were also considered to live according to a certain style: a decent meal three times a day, servants, their own carriages and horses. All went with it. Navarre observed that such a status stood in the way of the missionary work and in his subsequent handbook for missionaries he would therefore stress the maintenance of an independent position towards a secular government.

At last, in July 1882, the MSCs were able to continue their journey to Australia, from where they went first to New Ireland. De Rays' colony appeared abandoned and after a stay of some days they crossed in September to Rabaul in New Britain. On September 29, 1882, the three celebrated the first Mass in Matupit (near Rabaul).

It did not end with this one station. A year later a second was set up on Thursday Island (October 1884), followed by one on Yule Island in 1885. In the meantime reinforcements had come in the person of Fr Henri Verjus and two Italian brothers. Verjus had sent off the expedition in Barcelona in 1881 and had then been filled with indignation over the luxury on board. How different the circumstances were now! The climate, the hunger and the poverty made a severe attack on the health of the missionaries, which was further undermined by their hard work. Their medicines did not sufficiently protect them against the frequent fevers. The energetic and generally appreciated Verjus died in 1892, at the age of 32.

Navarre was appointed in 1887 the apostolic vicar of Melanesia and administrator of Micronesia. Because this was a much extended vicariate for just one head, Rome decided in 1889 to divide it into New Guinea and New Britain. For the latter vicariate, the first choice was Verjus but as he had made himself indispensable in the New Guinea mission, he was appointed Navarre's coadjutor in January 1890, with the right of succession. Louis Couppé became apostolic vicar of New Britain.

The name of this separate apostolic vicariate had been already rendered out of date by recent events at the establishment. The period 1870-1914 was the time of modern imperialism, in which the ascendancy of Europe in the world reached a peak. The pursuit of expansion by the great European powers made itself felt in these regions. Thus Germany had appropriated in 1884 the north-eastern quarter of New Guinea and more than 200 islands in an easterly direction. Since then this area was known as the Bismarck Archipelago. New Britain was renamed Neu Pommern, whereas New Ireland was Germanised to Neu Mecklenburg. Until the First World War they would continue to be part of the German protectorate. Thus in 1890, the MSCs (in the person of Msgr Couppé) had been in fact put in charge of the apostolic vicariate of New Pommeren.

Besides New Guinea and New Pommeren, the first MSC missionaries had established a third main station in the Gilbert archipelago (1887). The Gilbert and Elli-

ce Islands did not fall into German but into English hands. In 1892, they got the status of protectorate of Great Britain and in 1915 the Gilbert archipelago became an English colony. Initially the MSCs had placed the administration of this station under the vicariate of New Pommeren, but in 1897, the Gilbert archipelago was also elevated to an apostolic vicariate. Mgr Louis Leray was put in charge of this third apostolic vicariate under MSC supervision. The procurement office for the three missions had been set up in Sydney, where two parishes were served and a school had been established.

### *Dutch Missionary Brothers*

On October 20, 1886, the first Dutch MSCs embarked for the Oceania mission. From the very beginning the brothers had been of vital importance. Without their practical competence in different crafts and their willingness to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the mission, it would not have got off the ground. Many of these brother pioneers were Dutch.

The home front was kept well-informed about their experiences, thanks to the publication of their letters in the *Annals*. For the readers it was exciting fare. Moreover, it inspired respect for the idealism of the brothers. The letters – which incidentally hardly needed editing – inspired many boys and men to follow the example of the writers to become missionaries.

Before 1900, certainly no less than 33 Dutch MSC brothers worked in the mission, most of them in English New Guinea (15), the others in New Pommeren (11) and the Gilbert Islands (7). Only one of this group would live long enough to spend his retirement in the Netherlands, the rest died out there with their boots on. They counted veterans among them like Jan van Adrichem, who stayed no less than 62 years on Gilbert, or Jan-Baptist Henkelman and Henri Adan who chalked up 58 and 45 missionary years, respectively, in New Guinea. On the other hand there were also those for whom death came quite early. Thus the mission adventure for Jan Berkers and Rients Bosma lasted only a few months. Both died at the age of 34, one in the Gilbert Islands, the other in New Guinea. Another brother, Jan Kras, fell victim to malaria only after a few months in New Pommeren, just after his 25th birthday. Four brothers in their thirties, although they died young, had at least a stay there of a few years: the cousins Zwarthoed from Volendam (New Guinea), Petrus Lemmens (Gilbert Islands, drowned) and Herman Huser (New Pommeren).

### *Thursday and Yule Islands*

Five years after the very first MSC expedition of Navarre and one year after Verjus' arrival in the mission, the first Dutch brothers departed from Marseille. They were Hendrik Adan and Frans van Rooij from Brabant. When their ship cast anchor for a while off the coast of Yemen, Adan was able send a letter to his mother:

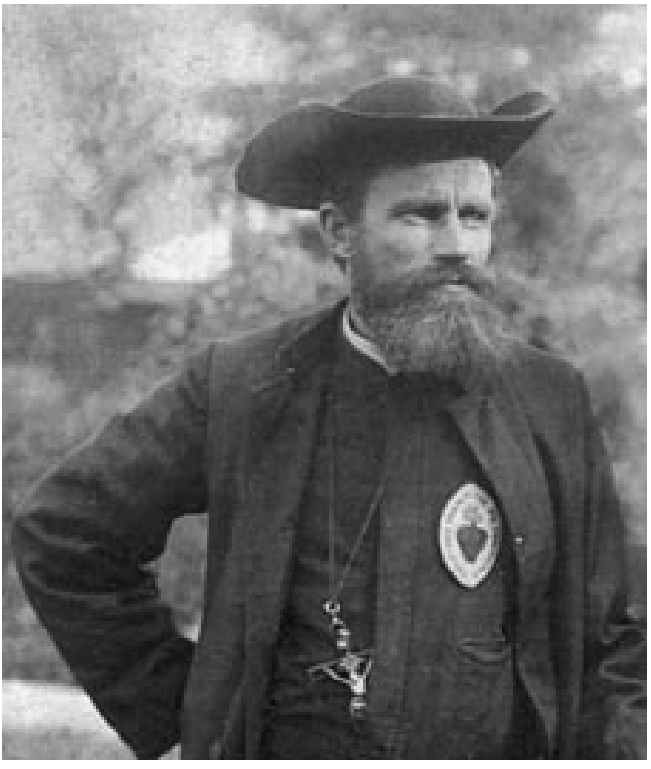
> We have been through the most dangerous sea, Mother, the Red Sea. There are a lot of rocks in it, and so high, that the clouds float against them. I was seasick, but for only two days... If one ever goes travelling this way, then one sees first that the world is big and one sees better also the omnipotence of God. The Europeans still play the boss everywhere here and the Negroes just have to work... I have seen Arabs, Negroes and all other kinds of people, but they are all dreadfully ugly and afraid of the Europeans.

In January 1887 Adan and Van Rooij reached the new station on Thursday Island:

> The island is very small, nothing but wood grows here. There are almost no fruits. The ground too cannot be cultivated; it is made up mostly of high rocks with grass and wild trees, where a host of snakes live. They are very large, yet not dangerous, because they are not poisonous.

They ate bread, tortoise and what they called 'wild chickens', which they obtained from a nearby island. The acquaintance with the inhabitants, for whose salvation it had after all begun, did not disappoint Adan:

> Our savages are better than I had thought... I admire their good-heartedness, but don't laugh at it. If they have something, then all share in it. So for example, if someone has a cigar, he lets everyone draw on it until it is finished.



5. Hendrik Adan (1858-1931), the first Dutch brother MSC.

The brother admired their great strength and praised them for being so obliging, although he also found them lazy.

Adan and Van Rooij did not stay more than a couple of months on Thursday Island: on May 13, 1887, they went with two other brothers and Navarre to Yule Island. 'Everything goes there as a picnic', so said Adan the same month.

> Our Kanaks are good for us. They are children, who are also sweet, so long as one does them good. They are always bringing fruit and fish and they are paid with tobacco for them... Please request Fr O. to give me his baptismal name. Then at the first opportunity I will let a little black boy be christened with his name, because I am often the godfather. Two have already been christened with the name, Henri, after you, and one after me.

In reply to this letter Peeters (then editor of the *Annals*) sent a few names of benefactors for use as baptismal names.

Behind the lively descriptions a lot of misery lay hidden. In the first months on Yule Island all newcomers were tormented with fever several times. At a given moment four of the five were sick. Adan went temporarily to the healthier Thursday Island to convalesce. There the brothers succeeded, under extremely primitive circumstances, in building a church and a hospital.

In the *Annals* of 1891 Adan was called dean of the brother missionaries. The number of Dutch brothers in Navarre's New Guinea mission had by then increased to six. They had their regular, sometimes varying, tasks. Adan did carpentry mainly; Van Rooij worked especially as a reed thatcher. Simon Wagemans was both blacksmith and port master, and Jan Vereijken and Rients Bosma, besides being bakers, were responsible for the cattle and water supply. Jos Morees worked alternately as a printer and rower and assisted the other brothers wherever possible.

Rients Bosma was the oldest Dutch MSC brother in age and, after Hendrik Adan, also in years of service. Bosma did not last long in the mission; he died in 1892, the same year as Verjus. Also Adan, who that year was back on Thursday Island, died in his mission area, but not until 1931. During all those years he returned only once on leave to Europe (1901).

### *Gilbert Archipelago*

It was Jan van Adrichem (1871-1961) who stayed abroad even longer than Adan. In 1884, this young MSC propagandist from The Hague had come to Tilburg. His studies for the priesthood failed to go smoothly, whereupon he applied in 1891 as a brother in Borgerhout. After one year Van Adrichem, who took the name Brother Eligius (or Eloy), was put into service in different places in France. To his great joy he got permission, in 1897, to go to the missions in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. A few Dutch Brothers had already preceded him, of whom two met an early death (Jan Berkers, alias Brother Justinus and Petrus Lemmens, alias Brother Bernard).

It was considered an arduous mission, consisting of sixteen islands difficult to reach and difficult to cross (atolls). The mail came only three times a year and the

very first letter which Van Adrichem received (June 1898) informed him of the death of his mother. Even in 1950, an air mail letter took between three months and six months to arrive. Jan van Reusel (Bonifatius), Antoon van den Eijnden (Mathias), Conrad Weber, Stefan van de Zande and Mart. van der Zanden worked beside van Adrichem in the Gilbert Islands. In 1899 came the last Dutchmen, Bro. Jan Maas and Fr Tinus Hoogstraten. In the twentieth century not a single Dutch missionary went to the Gilbert archipelago.

Hoogstraten was one of the five fathers who went to the mission from the Netherlands before 1900. The other four worked in New Pommeren. English New Guinea was regarded as a real mission for brothers. In the twentieth century only one Dutch father was sent there. As long as no mission area of its own had been entrusted to the Dutch province, most of the fathers went to New Pommeren. This mission was often referred to simply as Rabaul, the capital of New Pommeren.

*New Pommeren*

Mgr Couppé (1850-1926) had great plans for his vicariate as was already clear from his first report to the Propaganda. When he took office, the situation on New Pommeren was as follows. The Tolai, a Melanesian coast people, had come from New Ireland to New Britain and had pushed back the original Baining population further and further into the mountain area, which was difficult to access. Both groups had entirely different cultures and the Tolai succeeded in imposing on the Bainingers a system of vassalage and slavery through a divide and rule strategy. The Bainingers, who lived closest to them on the first plateau, became vassals. They rendered services and provided the Tolai with food, and also provided slaves whom they caught among the Bainingers from the high mountains. The slaves were totally without rights and could be killed or eaten by their master. This latter, however, hardly ever happened after 1880. The value of coconuts (and the copra obtained from them), as it happened, had increased enormously since then, which meant that the slaves were badly needed for agriculture, and then cannibalism stopped as a matter of course. On the coasts more and more white traders turned up, who gave the tambu (mussel money) which was precious for the Tolai, in exchange for coconuts and copra. To the Tolai the quality of life after death depended on the quantity of tambu which they managed to amass. Therefore more people were enslaved to guarantee the supply of tambu.

Couppé wanted to buy off the slaves, especially the young men and women, and once freed to give them a Christian education. Those bought off had to be trained, in a mostly protected area, to be manual workers and catechists. They were also encouraged to marry. Couppé wanted in this way to found Christian families, which in turn would set up Christian villages in their regions of origin. "Thus, it is a new people which we hope to found," was how Couppé defined the aim of his multi-year plan.

To raise the money required, the project was actively publicised in Europe, espe-

6. Msgr. Louis Couppé with the Baining boys 'Donatianus' and 'Rogatianus', ca. 1890.

cially in the *Annals*. Couppé lent weight to the campaign by bringing to Europe two Baining boys as adopted children from the mission and to go with them on tour. In 1891, the bishop and the little Donatianus and Rogatianus returned to Rabaul, together with new missionaries, two brothers and a few sisters. One of the brothers was Jan Kras from Volendam. During the long hard trip, Kras, alias Bro. Anselmus, took care of the children. He proved he knew how to handle them so well that Couppé intended to let the brother serve as a catechist. This, however, was not to be. Upon arrival in New Pommeren Kras was already ill and a few months later, on Easter Day of 1892, he died of malaria. Five years later another brother from Volendam died on New Pommeren - Klaas Kieft, alias Brother Jacobus.

The missionaries and members of their families knew all too well that sickness and death lay in wait in the distant regions. They were prepared to run this risk and however much every single case of death was mourned, it was no surprise to anyone. It was different when death was caused not by sickness or, for example, by drowning, but by violence. This happened to a group of ten missionaries on Rabaul. They were killed on August 13, 1904 by their 'own' Bainingers. Among the victims was a Trappist brother. The rest belonged to the MSC: five Sisters from Hiltrup, the Dutch Brothers Schellekens and Plasschaert, their compatriot Father Rutten and the German Father Rascher, at 35 the senior of the Rabaul mission. This event had a devastating effect on the whole congregation, especially in Germany and the Netherlands where the massacre was frequently discussed and recalled to memory,

by among others, Peeters.

*The Martyrs of Rabaul*

It was definitely established that a certain To Maria had a hand in the murders. This son of a Baining tribe chief had ended up as a young slave with a white man, who handed him over to the mission. After working for a few years for the German New Guinea company, he entered into the service of Matthäus Rascher at St Paul's as overseer of the sawmill, hunter and cook. "But To Maria was born tired," according to Peeters,

> and he had gotten it into his head to become the chief. He was not stupid at all, but spoilt, and it did not please him that the whites, and especially Fr Rascher, criticised him and found fault with his shameful behaviour. He had run away with a married woman (Savunut), but he had to bring her back. He decided to do a general clean-up of the whites, and started a smear campaign in order to sow dissatisfaction everywhere, and to plan his conspiracy.

The lynching party, led by To Maria, took place at St Paul's on August 13, 1904. The tenth victim fell in the station Nacharunep, where Rutten was shot in front of his house by a boy known to him, to whom he had just lent his rifle... Indoors lay the book in which Rutten had been reading, still open, *The Martyrs of the Coliseum*.

The murdered missionaries, as Peeters impressed upon the parents of Henri Rutten, had died martyrs' deaths, not 'that he [Henri] was killed because of our Holy Faith, but in the sense, that a missionary, who goes to regions of savages, must be and is prepared to die a violent death'. In general people agreed that the ten had become victims of a foul act of revenge, but their violent deaths were seen as the ultimate consequence of their missionary ideal. Brother Piet Vermee, whose brother was married to Rutten's sister, sent from Borgerhout a letter of condolence:

> Is it not an honour for a father and a mother, for brothers and sisters, that their child, their brother, sacrifices himself wholly for the salvation of souls and for that may give his life?

Four years later, Vermee himself would meet a tragic accident during the move from Borgerhout to Deurne. While pulling up the last lead pipes out of the rain drain he slipped and drowned.

In MSC circles an effort was made to get this group recognised as martyrs but from the investigation by Reiner Jaspers MSC into the background of the drama, it seems painfully clear that the mission itself could not be held blameless. According to Jaspers the whole Rabaul affair was a striking illustration of 'the whole problematique of colonial mission' in which a colonial government stood to arms at the request of missionaries when a population resisted the missionary method being followed. The tabula rasa method which the missionaries themselves practised and the deployment of soldiers provoked the Tolai and the Baining into joint action, initia-

ted by the former and carried out by the latter.

In September 1896, Couppé and Rascher urgently requested the German colonial administration to take action. A big slave hunt, in which about fifty people had perished and thirty to forty had been taken along as slaves, was the immediate cause. The soldiers acted in strength by levelling the Tolai settlement of Ramandu to the ground, and by rescuing all those who had been taken as slaves. Some weeks later a missionary post at Vunamarita was established in one of the most important slave hunting grounds (Massava). Vunamarita had been planned as an intermediate station on the way to the establishment of the first Christian village. This became St Paul's (1898), a reservation that was under the management of the German, Father Rascher. From there the hinterland, from which the slaves came, would have to be liberated. In St Paul's problems arose quite quickly. There were not enough Christian Baining girls for the marriageable redeemed slaves, who were thus compelled to marry pagan girls. This did not help to support the Christian quality of the family and village (leading to plenty of frustrations. See Savunut - To Maria). Moreover the inhabitants were dissatisfied with the poor conditions and the small reward which they got for their work.

Meanwhile the anti-slavery policy of the mission and the subsequent measures taken by the government stirred up bad feelings. Also the slaves themselves were indignant: many had become like their masters and could not stand life in the reservation. For this reason many freed slaves fled from St Paul's back to their masters. The German government was exhorted repeatedly by the MSCs to take drastic action against the slave hunters and their buyers. In contrast to the mission the government did not even have its own ship and for this reason it undertook its punitive expeditions using vessels belonging to the mission. Because of the cooperation between the governor, the court and the mission, both the Tolai and Baining people could not discern the difference between them. Most of them thought that all whites had the same interests and that Rascher was the big man behind their display of power.

Another clash of cultures concerned the veneration of the dead by the Baining people. They believed that they enjoyed daily the protection of a deceased ancestor, provided that they remained faithful to the Baining customs. If not, then the protecting ancestor would turn against them and would even ruin them. From the beginning Rascher gave much too little leeway by prohibiting categorically the worship of the dead. Instead he stressed the first commandment - to honour one God. The Baining people understood that affiliation with the missionary meant throwing overboard their own customs and thus renouncing their protectors, who as a consequence became their destroyers. This dilemma had been insufficiently recognised by Rascher and Couppé and their St Paul's concept was basically unrealisable. The old Baining thinking was not to change so quickly into a Christian world view. Not sufficient points of contact were sought with certain Baining values, which perhaps could have led to a common ground, while under the Tolai they could at least hold on to those values as usual.

*The Calm Before the Storm*

It is against this background that we must see the downfall of the idealistic newcomers, who were not aware of this complex set of factors and knew nothing of the Baining world view. The New Pommeren mission had a good press and, with its tight organisation and healthy finances, was used as a favourite example by the Propaganda in Rome. No wonder, the missionaries went there with high expectations. Rutten from Tilburg had been ordained priest on August 5, 1900, by Mgr Couppé, with whom he left over two months later for New Pommeren. The bishop was now flanked by the 'black boys Lilis and Lama'. Besides Rutten, the Dutch Brothers Volkert Deen, Eduard Plasschaert and Norbert Hamers also went along. The German province provided for this expedition five priests, three brothers and two sisters.

Rutten's destination was the mountainous Baining land. At times he stayed at Toriu in the middle of the jungle, where Couppé wanted to set up a steam powered sawmill. A year later, Father Henri Nollen observed that on account of this project the bishop was 'in deep, deep trouble with all the debts which that ugly machine has put upon the mission'. Rutten found Brother Thomas (alias Hendrick Geboers) in Toriu, who had already spent thirteen years at the mission. Brothers Cornelis Schellekens and Piet van Moorsel were also there with about twenty 'boys or black workers from Neu Mecklenburg'. Van Moorsel remained attached to the fatal sawmill as a blacksmith for another six years, while Schellekens acted as 'cook, laundry woman and landlord'.

In a letter to his brother in November 1901, Rutten tells how Geboers had shot a good-sized crocodile which they were only able to drag out of the river to land a day and a half later:

7. Farewell photo before the departure for New Pomerania, 1900. Father Henri Rutten (seated) and Brother Eduard Plasschaert (left) were killed there in 1904. The other two Brothers are Volkert Deen and Norbert Hamers.

> As soon as we cut it open, it started to smell mercilessly; thus we had lost 300 kilos of fresh meat. Two days later we had a pig in a trap; it was a wild boar, thin as a piece of wood, but still tasted good; after that a cassowary, an old fully grown chap, tough as shoe leather; it tasted good as soup, and later a good roast. We ate of it for two days.

With the coming of Father de Jong to Toriu, Rutten could go again to his beloved Baining.

His new station Nacharunep, on a high hilltop, was not yet opened up and Rutten started the construction of a road with his own hands. By the end of October, 1902, he already had six boys in apprenticeship (and boarding with him). The father was in his element in the primitive circumstances and only went when it was really necessary to the developed Vunamarita, where he was the odd man out:

> So in the capital I looked like a real robber, with my dirty grey trousers tied up with some rags through which my white skin peeped out here and there. Fortunately I still had a jacket in my backpack, but that had not been to the laundry in three months. My broad felt sou'wester was no longer decent, and the only part that was still intact was the brim; the crown showed off five holes, which it still has. As to my shoes – the poorest beggar in Tilburg would not have picked them up on the street.

The criticism of other missionaries did not seem to hurt him. After one of their extremely rare visits to his station he wrote thus: 'My road was highly praised as dangerous, my hut as poor and miserable, my mountains as exquisite and the view without equal.'

This visit resulted in the Brothers Schellekens and Adriaan van Beerendonk being sent to Rutten with others to build a house and a church-annex school. Chickens and ducks were successfully kept and on the other slope of the mountain the isolated station at last had neighbours when two Trappist brothers came to live there. Rutten's school programme included reading, writing and singing. In December 1903 there were more than twenty boys as boarders, and he hoped to bring the total to sixty in the following year. His lessons attracted even more people, sometimes as many as eighty. Rutten's first baptism ceremony, in which he baptised 21 boys, took place at Easter of 1904.

So in Nacharunep everything seemed to get better and better a few months before the drama would be enacted. When Rutten attended in 1903 the unveiling of a monument in Vunapope in memory of a murdered German woman with her child, he remarked: 'Such things can happen only in the capital, where after all a police troop of 100 soldiers is stationed. Here where no police set foot, we live 100 times more safely than at Herbertshöhe'. Ironically enough he reassured his family with the words: 'It will never occur to my parishioners to do away with me, even though I am alone.'

### *Escalation*

In spite of Rutten's confidence the tensions increased. A few weeks before the mur-

der of the missionaries, Father Rascher reported to Couppé that a military operation had taken place to capture a wanted man. The houses of those who had hidden him were burned down and their pigs taken away. Also, twelve of them were taken prisoner. Afterwards rumours, which also reached the fathers themselves, rapidly went round that To Maria was after them. The missionaries shrugged it off and continued with their work.

The inadequate care and reward, coercion to marriage, the strict regulations and punishments – all this indicated to the Baining people that their protectors had turned against them because they had renounced their customs and conformed to the wishes of the missionaries. To Maria, who as son of a leader had gone on to play a sort of leadership role himself under Rascher, thought that he had to go back rigorously to traditional customs. He also wanted to show that he was a powerful Baining and thus capable of great deeds, like killing another big man - Rascher, who had humiliated him regularly and in public with scolding and confinement. He wanted to kill Sister Anna as well, because she had punished Savunut for her relationship with To Maria. He took the return to the old custom so seriously that for years he played along with Rascher and companions in order to be able to strike all the harder afterwards. The Tolai, who wanted to maintain their system of slavery, were behind it all, but stayed literally out of range. During the punitive expedition after the massacre they refused to accompany the police soldiers to point out the guilty Baining people, whereupon the soldiers fired at every Baining whom they


8. The sevenfold killing in Rabaul. Drawing by Frans Lazarom: "A martyr's death of the missionary, 13th of August 1904. So I suffer all in order that they too obtain the salvation, cf 2 Tim 2, 10."

encountered and destroyed their villages. Also Peeters made a report of the reprisals against the Baining people 'under the heavy-handed German discipline and especially under the black military police's barbaric and more and more unbridled action'.

For Couppé this had not settled the matter. Perhaps the drama could have been prevented if the colonial administration which was more Protestant orientated, had adopted a more proactive attitude instead of waiting for requests from the mission before acting. Couppé wanted to sue the government on the score of dereliction of duty. For its part the government had in its possession incriminating reports about the mission (particularly concerning the bad conditions in the reservation) which it threatened to publish. Both parties did not want to damage each other and out of fear of each other decided in 1906 on a compromise that kept hidden the deeper causes. As for the cause of the murder it was simply stated that To Maria had hoped, after the murder, to be free to live in the mission post as owner and to keep Savunut as his wife. The superior of the German province had some difficulty keeping Mgr Couppé in harness. His steam driven sawmill was to Linckens already a thorn in the side when he visited the mission in September 1904. 'In November a gentleman from Leipzig will come and investigate. I would gladly sell him the whole lot, but Mgr Couppé still builds nice castles in the air, which unfortunately cost much money.' In the same letter Linckens confided to his fellow countryman, Wemmers (superior of the Northern Province), that in his visitation report 'the colour black would be the main colour for [marking] the management of Mgr Couppé both for the spiritual and the material part of the mission'.

That spiritual part had been harmed by the massacre. It never reached the point of beatification although up to the seventies of the twentieth century there have been attempts to get such a process going. That endeavour came to an end for the time being with the results of the investigation of Jaspers. These did not fail to indicate, that together with the missionaries, a number of Baining people had been killed, because they had refused to participate in the murder. In the proposals for beatification they had been entirely bypassed, whereas it was precisely they, according to Jaspers, who were 'in the true sense martyrs [blood witnesses] of their new faith', because they did not want to leave the Christian way.

The murders did not halt the progress of the mission – rather the opposite. In fact the German province outstripped in those years the other provinces in numerical strength and activity. In September 1905 the mission area expanded with a separate vicariate for the Marshall Islands. Mgr Couppé remained at the head of New Pommeren, not to the satisfaction of his younger Dutch confréres. Perhaps the loosening of the French dominance in the congregation also played a part. Couppé had been one of the fathers who had accompanied the exiles in 1880 to the Netherlands. Besides Linckens, Nollen also expressed his feelings to Wemmers concerning Couppe's way of acting : 'How rash when the bishop acts and such mad plans when he makes them! French fury! The time has come for a more practical man with cooler judgement to examine that affair one day.'

## A Dutch Mission

Whereas a lot of missionaries of Dutch origin were active in the colonies belonging to other European states, it had not been possible for them to venture into Dutch New Guinea. This situation changed with the papal decree of December 22, 1902, assigning to the MSCs the apostolic prefecture of Dutch New Guinea. This area included not only the western part of the island of New Guinea, but also the whole area of the Moluccas. As far as the Dutch government was concerned, however, the MSCs had to limit themselves to areas where the Protestant mission was not active. In fact that left only South New Guinea and the Kei Islands. The missionaries would not resign themselves to that, and later managed to shift the boundaries.

In 1903, they occupied their first station at Kei, in Langgur. Two years later a station was established at Merauke in New Guinea. This had been considered to be their main objective. The work on the south coast brought along so many difficulties, that initially it was mainly the Kei mission which flourished. The name of the apostolic prefecture was thought by many to be misleading. That opinion was also held by Mgr Aerts, who was the head of it in 1921. The title made

> very many people, if not most, think that the Kaya-kayas have got a bishop, who has nothing to do with the Moluccas.

### *In Waiting*

Propaganda Fide had entrusted New Guinea in 1881 to the spiritual care of the MSCs, and it seemed to include the whole island then. In 1882, Propaganda clarified, however, that the Dutch part fell under the jurisdiction of the apostolic vicar of Batavia, Mgr Claessens. The latter asked the government of the Dutch Indies in July 1891 for permission to establish a Catholic mission on New Guinea. Claessens had already informed Navarre that as far as he was concerned the MSCs were welcome to venture into the enormous territory of his vicariate. A number of Dutch MSCs were in fact very keen to follow this up.

Among them was Peeters, who immediately wrote a letter to Chevalier from Tilburg. Would it not possible in the short term to offer Claessens one or two Dutch fathers and two brothers? According to Peeters, they would then be able to move to a post near their confréres on English New Guinea. He offered himself to be the first missionary:

> If you judge me worthy, then I gladly desire to be the first Dutch missionary in our Guinea, just as I was the first student of the Little Work of Charity.

The answer from Issoudun said that Peeters' letter had been discussed in the General Council, but that Dutch New Guinea hardly formed a part of the MSC apostolic vicariate. On the other hand, Peeters was very welcome to go and work as a missionary under Navarre in the part assigned to the MSCs, for the congregation was already far too stretched to man the mission territory of English New Guinea, and

the new proposals of the energetic Leo XIII could not be entertained. Chevalier even wished in 1893, due to lack of personnel, that Rome would entrust to others the island groups around New Guinea and New Britain. Besides he had his hands full with internal problems which led in 1894 to the establishment of the Northern Province.

A couple of years later it was Chevalier himself who urged the Northern Province to start missionary work in Dutch New Guinea. It so happened that an arrangement with Rome was within reach. In spite of all the harsh words from both sides during the crisis, Chevalier showed from the beginning that he took the Northern Province seriously. By the end of February, 1896, he informed the provincial superior (Ramot) that Rome would gladly entrust Dutch New Guinea to the MSCs. Chevalier pointed out that such a move would undoubtedly promote vocations in the Netherlands. On March 4, 1896, the provincial council in Tilburg took the basic decision to accept Dutch New Guinea as a mission for the Dutch members. No formal arrangements had yet been made, but the news went around like wild fire. On Langgur there was already talk of an impending transfer from the Jesuits to the MSCs, but it would be years before it actually happened. Probably Mgr Navarre felt somewhat worried that the missionary flow from the Netherlands to his vicariate would then dry up; in any case he warned the superior general in detail of the severe, if not impossible, situation awaiting the Dutch in Western New Guinea. In any case the Jesuits had as yet hardly been able to do anything.

As far as the vicar in Jakarta and the Jesuits there were concerned, the MSCs would be welcome. There were, however, problems between the Dutch government and Propaganda Fide, because the latter wanted to set up a new prefecture independent of the former. The Dutch government recognised only one ecclesiastical authority in the colony – the apostolic vicariate of Jakarta. It had no truck with missionary congregations.

While this question dragged on, J. A. Kroesen, the assistant commissioner of west and south New Guinea, got in contact with the MSCs of Thursday Island. In his report to the government he noted: 'Nothing but praise for the work of this society was given, and this included the English administering civil servants.' Kroesen played a beneficial role for the MSCs. He had several contacts with the Dutch Brother Alexis, alias Jan-Baptist Henkelman. The latter reported to the superior of the Northern Province (Offermans since 1897) the conversations which they had had in October and November 1900.

*Henkelman and Kroesen*

Henkelman, a confectioner from Helmond and trained as a brother in Borgerhout, was one of the twelve missionaries whom Navarre had chosen in 1894. On February 22, 1894, they arrived on Yule Island, the heart of the mission. Almost two years later Henkelman left with the French Father Guis for Thursday Island to set up a school for catechists. It was there that he learned how to navigate. In November 1897 he sailed, for the first time, across the treacherous five hundred kilometre long stretch from Thursday Island to Yule Island. In addition to his teaching stint and after another year of being in charge of the printing press, the brother now became a 'qualified' captain. In 1900, he had his own small boat, the St Andrew, with which he supplied the different mission posts.

At their first meeting on Thursday Island, Kroesen asked him: 'Why have we not yet been established on Dutch New Guinea?' The brother gave a non-committal answer, whereupon Kroesen told him that the initial objections of the government and Propaganda Fide had been lifted and that the only question now concerned the vicariate of the Jesuits. Henkelman was enthusiastic:

> The commissioner is an extraordinarily good man. He even asked me if I would like to make a little tour along the whole Dutch south coast. It is very probable that the government will establish a new post not far from the English border and that they will then visit Thursday Island regularly because one can get everything here and also the telegraph service on Batavia covers it. The commissioner said to me as well that whenever the mission started he would indicate both the best and healthiest places. The best and most populated according to him was the coast where the snow mountains start at the north of the Aroe Islands Yet he said to me, 'You may indeed tell your superiors to be quick, because after waiting a couple of years it will be too late.'

Islam was making a considerable advance. 'I have spoken here not only with Kroesen but also with several other persons of the government of the Indies, and all hoped that the mission would be established, and that it would be more successful than the Protestants ones on Dorei and the Geelvink Bay.'

On March 1, 1901, Henkelman wrote to Offermans concerning the intention of the Dutch government to found a station on the southeast coast at the estuary of a big river which had just been discovered with the Serdang. Officers from Java explored the river further on. Kroesen hoped whole-heartedly that the MSCs would then found a mission there: 'Just tell that to your superiors,' he said. 'I will give you every liberty, just don't interfere with my affairs, and I won't interfere with yours.' Kroesen repeated that a year later: 'Once you are there I will leave you in peace as much as possible, but you must leave me in peace also, because sometimes there are those missionaries who would want to interfere with everything, even with government affairs.'

There was a government station already at the river, called Merauke (after the river). At that time Assistant General Meyer was busy on a visitation of the missions on behalf of the administration of the congregation. After Yule, Henkelman took

him in his small boat to New Pommeren. To the disappointment of the brother they did not visit Merauke and meet the civil servant who was so kindly disposed to the MSCs. Meyer was said to have no time for that, but it was more likely that he did not want to interrupt the negotiations.

In April 1902 Henkelman reported extensively to Offermans and the brothers about Merauke:

> Two warships are sounding the waters along the coast, and another ship, the Van Doorn, remains stationed there... Apart from the commissioner, Mr Kroesen, there is also an inspector Mr Schadee, together with some officers and 300 soldiers. I believe there are 200 Javanese and Atjehese prisoners working on the land... Last week a steam boat with 1000 tons of coal and several passengers left to take a look. Now a store and a hotel are being built, and everything points to the best prospects.

In English New Guinea there was plenty of interest in the new establishment, especially in the opportunities for pearl fishing there. More than 250 pearl fishermen – all non-Europeans, and the owners of the fleets – all English, had already heard from Merauke that they were welcome there.

More than three months later, on July 30, 1902, Henkelman reported a contract which the Dutch packet company had entered into for a monthly service from Batavia to Merauke and further to Thursday Island. The Van Goens had just arrived on Thursday Island with an English acquaintance of Henkelman on board, who 'has a good Catholic wife'. From the stories of this couple, Henkelman understood that the government

> [had] little experience of savages because it is very bad that they fire some bullets at the villages for the most minor theft... It is very bad also that the government sends lots of Javanese to buy coconuts or other things, and they pay for only half of the whole lot.

Henkelman himself did not set foot on Merauke until the end of that year. However, he informed Offermans about New Pommeren, where he had just been:

> I don't hesitate to say to you that they do not have half as hard a missionary life as we have in [English] New Guinea; all the Fathers and Brothers look extraordinarily fit, no pale faces as in New Guinea. Furthermore it takes us days to go into the interior to visit the different station[s] over horrible roads, while here on the contrary one can see all the stations in one day, except those of Baining. They have splendid roads. One sees all fathers and brothers walking most of the time with white coats and trousers, which would be something amazing for us. The food there is almost as good as it is in Europe, with good cigars and tobacco. Yet one thing I find that is not so good: people at our place are simpler, and poorer, but treat each other more fraternally.

*Merauke*

Just after Christmas of 1902 Henkelman got the chance to visit Merauke. He had to wait two weeks for the arrival of three fathers whom he was to take from Thursday Island to Yule Island, and decided to use that time for a short trip to Merauke. He made two reports about this.

At that time Merauke had about a thousand souls, among whom were 350 Atjehese prisoners, 120 native and 60 European soldiers and a lot of Javanese workers. Whereas both the Papuans and the climate far exceeded Henkelman's expectations, he was annoyed with the administration. The renewed acquaintance with the commissioner was a disappointment.

> I think that Kroesen is a strange fellow... for every station to be founded, there has to be not only permission from the government, but he even reserves to himself the right to designate a post.

Kroesen had earlier refused to accept a Jesuit whom the bishop of Batavia wanted to station at Merauke, as well as a Protestant society.

Probably the person in question was Father Mertens SJ, who arrived on June 27, 1902, at Merauke (from Kei), for a scouting expedition 'to see if something could be undertaken for the Papuans in the religious area'. With him there were two doctors from Batavia who had been sent by the government. Four days later they left for Surabaya with about forty patients on board. Mertens reported that the primitive conditions in the first weeks had made many victims among the Javanese. Moreover there had been serious clashes with the Papuans: for instance 24 Javanese and Chinese had been killed and a Papuan attack had been punished with a shelling and plundering of a village. The consequence of this reprisal was that the Papuans remained in hiding for months. By the end of June they showed themselves again, very warily, persuaded by exchanging presents. Mertens said about this: 'People in Merauke are generally convinced that their friendliness is not sincere, but that they are looking for a favourable occasion to attack again.'

Six months later much of that distrust was still observed, according to Henkelman who had his own thoughts about it:

> I think that the government takes some strange measures to subdue the population, and these will be a disadvantage to the missionary work here. Three to four iron wires have been stretched around the settlement and no savage is allowed to come inside that barrier; and no whites may go far outside it. I asked Mr Kroesen to allow me to visit a village but he rejected my request. However, I have been outside the barrier and have visited a couple of hundred savages They are all strongly built fellows. They don't know anything about clothing, except the women who wear just enough to cover their nudity. The savages have made a very good impression on me, they do not look so savage and cruel as people had told me, yet they paint and smear themselves and look hideous.

To the brothers, Henkelman wrote:

> All wear lots of large beards... All of them wear their hair long and let it hang. Whatever they weave into it, I do not know, but I think that it may be roots of certain small trees. All the men, whom I have seen, are adorned a lot, although not with beautiful feathers like at our place.

Outside the enclosure of Merauke there was a market, where every day hundreds of Papuans sold 'their bananas, kangaroos, bows, arrows, doves, yes, even pigs', preferably for axes and knives. According to Henkelman the colonists paid too much (in any case prices were far more than on Thursday Island), and they were stupid to do so in view of the future: 'When later one wants to put the savages to work one will have to pay them dearly, because they will want straight away to have as wages nothing but knives and axes, which of course cannot happen because then it becomes an expensive business.'

He believed none of the stories about cannibalism. He explained that head hunting had to do with trophies and riches. He admired their courage to fight with bows and arrows against men with fire arms (whose devastating effect they already knew). The land seemed to him very suitable for sugar cane and coconut plantations. Furthermore, he did not find Merauke an unhealthy place.

> In the beginning people told me that Merauke was such an unhealthy place, but in the place itself almost everyone has assured me that few sicknesses are prevalent and hardly any fever. I find this very strange, because as a rule there is fever throughout New Guinea. It is true that here where the coast is so low, there are no mangroves which in my opinion contribute much to breed the New Guinean fever... In the newspapers of the Indies much has been written about the unhealthy state of Merauke, yet all this has been exaggerated. Several civil servants and soldiers never had any fever during their stay of more than a year, and I can assure you that such would not happen in English New Guinea.

Finally, a brother from New Pommeren reported by letter to Offermans regarding the prospective mission of the Northern Province. Brother Dominikus (alias Jan Kop) listed rather hesitatingly, in the summer of 1902, some extraordinarily practical tips. Initially he did not dare send his letter 'because I thought I was meddling with matters which do not concern me directly', but his confrére Van Beerendonk persuaded him to do so. The result was an alphabetical list of some 1,500 [!] indispensable articles. Tips about where everything could be obtained, at what price and for which purpose something should be procured, completed the overview of 'all that is being used here in New Pommeren'. This ranged from seeds, bees and silkworms to construction materials, and from medicines to coals. 'Toys to attract youngsters' was not lacking either. The letter was accompanied by a drawing of a model house like the one Couppé had built. A last urgent recommendation of the brother concerned guns:

> As I have learned, Vermeulen, the butcher, and surely a lot of others along with him, are not sparing at all in giving such little gifts - take such little presents! - and also wide range pellet guns to lay hold of a wild boar or cassowary. If you only knew, Reverend,

how anaemic the constant consumption of canned meat makes us! This, however, is not in a manner of complaining.

*Neijens and Geurtjens*

At last the decree of December 1902 held out to Dutch New Guinea the prospect of the arrival of missionaries. Mathieu Neijens from Limburg was appointed apostolic prefect on February 13, 1903. He would be accompanied by Bernard Willemsen to establish the mission of the Northern Province. Afterwards reinforcemens would come from Tilburg. 'Why rather those from Europe first,' wondered Nollen in New Pommeren. 'Why not those of us here who are after all acclimatized, and know how to deal with the people or how to start a mission because they have experienced the defects of other new missionary settlements?' Nollen, however, did not want to play the know-all and said he would wait for his turn with patience. He would need plenty of that.

Due to illness Willemsen relinquished his place beside Neijens to 'Marshland Finch', Hein Geurtjens, from Deurne. Both said goodbye to the mission house in Tilburg on September 1, 1903, and on the 17th embarked at Marseille. On No-

9. Mathieu Neijens (1968-1941), apostolic prefect of Dutch New Guinea

vember 28 they arrived at Langgur on Kei, where they would take over the station from the Jesuits. It was the 'point of departure, from where we hope soon to grapple with New Guinea, as soon as new assistants will come', Geurtjens wrote. The MSCs were accompanied by the two Jesuits still there, the previously mentioned Father Mertens, and Brother Van de Leeuwenberg.

From Langgur, Mertens described the festive reception which had been accorded to Neijens and Geurtjens with a gun salute, singing school children and speech giving gurus (teachers). He also gave his first impression of them:

> They are, I believe, both nice and very good people. The apostolic prefect strikes me as being rather full-blooded and, probably as a consequence of that, rather hot-tempered. He thinks he can do everything. I am afraid that, if he does not moderate his demands, his apostolic prefecture will not last long. The other, Father Geurtjens, is more judicious on that point and tries as much as possible to live according to the East Indian way.

Neijens and Geurtjens started to learn the language of the country together with Malay and undertook exploratory expeditions and made inventories of construction projects, which they themselves in no time expanded. The government decision of December 20, 1903, prohibited the establishment of the missionaries on Ternate, Ambon and the north and west of New Guinea. These territories had been reserved to the Protestant mission. They were allowed to establish themselves only in southern New Guinea and the Kei Islands. To Ternate and Amboina only official trips at the expense of the state could be undertaken. The apostolic prefect developed a missionary strategy:

> As far as I can assess, there are two ways in which work must be done in our mission for the triumph of our holy faith, by fixation and by excursion. By fixation: the missionary founds a station, tries to attract the people, teaches them and forms them into true solid Christians. By excursion: he tries to be ahead of the itinerant enemy [Muslims and Protestants], or at least to be close upon his heels and prevent him as much as possible from misleading the people.

Neijens was not only a thinker, but above all a man of action. His confrére, Brother Adriaan van Roessel, wrote in February 1905:

> Father Prefect is always full of fire, I have never seen such a strong man, yet I believe that sooner or later he will have to pay for it. Not only does he give catechetical instructions and singing lessons for hours on end but he digs stones, chops wood and is always at a trot. Right now he is making a landing stage, a pier, together with the boys, and wears himself out so much so that the sweat drips through his trousers on the ground.

Van Roessel worried about Geurtjens too:

> Just like Father Prefect he is full of zeal and all the little people want to be with him. I believe, however, that he does not look after himself enough. For a couple of months now he has been complaining of pain in the abdomen... you must know that he drinks no coffee or tea or wine, but always unboiled plain water and walks usually barefoot. In

> the beginning when he was in the villages on official trips, he only ate rice.

The prefect was also supposed to keep his financial records. This proved for a man such as Neijens not a very a successful combination. For fear of letting chances go by if no immediate action was taken, bureaucratic matters like the preparation of financial statements had no priority for him. But the Northern Province had to know, of course, how matters stood and remembered the frightening example of the mission at New Pommeren, which was in debt due to the costly projects of Couppé. The new provincial superior, Wemmers, knocked at the door of the Ministry of the Colonies for subsidies, and also the superior general, Lanctin, did his best to raise money for the mission. The mail between Langgur and the Netherlands generally took two months to get there and another two to come back, which made adequate consultation impossible. Neijens had sometimes to take decisions which did not brook a delay of the four months waiting for permission. In a letter of April 1905 he had pleaded for a branch in Ambon, but he was impeded in this by the government decision that advocated a separation between the Catholic and the Protestant missions. Ambon was in the sphere of the Protestant mission (see ch. 5, p. 4). Not until much later would this change.

*Own mission*

By September 1904 Neijens and Geurtjens were no longer alone. From New Pommeren the first reinforcement had come: the brothers already mentioned, Dominikus and Van Roessel, and Fathers Nollen and Jos Viegen. Brother Hammers and Father Braun followed later that year.

When Offermans was still superior of the Northern Province, Mgr Couppé had promised his collaboration once the Dutch mission became a reality. Face to face with his former student, Couppé emphasised his gratitude for what the Dutch missionaries had done in New Pommeren. If they could go soon to a mission 'of their own', then he did not want to frustrate them. However, he was of the opinion that it would be better for the congregation not to start a new mission until the territories already accepted were well provided for, and an as long as the Dutch mission had not yet started, he could actually use a few new missionaries.

About the same time Nollen predicted to Offermans that the acceptance of the new territory would certainly cause an exodus from New Pommeren, as long as Couppé was in charge there:

> Msgr is not a man to make himself liked by his inferiors, or to force their trust. He deals little with the stations. What is more, the bishop is authoritarian and very high-handed in his decisions... No wonder that no Dutchman will stay in New Pommeren if it depends on him.

Indeed most of them went, when the time came, to their 'own' mission, and Nollen and Braun were the first to go. Braun had had so many clashes with the bishop that

10. Father Hein Geurtjens (1875 -1957)

his superior preferred his room to his company. Rutten had not yet made a choice, and the brothers could not be spared until reinforcements arrived from Hiltrup. Shortly afterwards Rutten, Plasschaert and Schellekens died in New Pommeren. In 1905, the Dutch brothers got the choice to stay in the German mission or move to the Dutch mission. Jan van Bussel reconsidered his original choice for the German mission, when he saw that others transferred to the Dutch territory. The superior of the German province had sympathy for that. Linckens was himself a man of experience in the congregation and wrote accordingly to Wemmers: 'In all these matters I keep myself very neutral, but I am in principle in favour of the separation according to nationality.'

## The Dutch Province

In 1908, one third of the missionaries in the Gilbert Islands and in English New Guinea were still Dutch, whereas New Pommeren had only two of them left - the Brothers Ignatius (Stevens) and Thomas (Geboers). The latter was still considering moving to the Dutch Province, although that was no longer possible strictly speaking after 1905. Up to 1905 the general administration had left the Dutch in New Pommeren free to choose between membership of the German Province or of the Northern Province. Geboers had two allegiances which proved incompatible. When in 1909 he was in Europe on leave, the brother laid his problem before Linckens in Hiltrup. 'He has set his heart and soul on New Pommeren and on the other hand he would rather deal with his fellow countrymen.' Geboers requested Linckens to cut the knot for him, but he refused.

After a day of reflection Geboers declared he wanted to go to the Philippines. In fact the brother belonged to the German Province, and because the Philippines had just then been accepted as working territory of the Northern Province, he had therefore to become a member of that province. In New Pommeren, however, people waited very impatiently for his return there, where 'he rendered so many services at the sawmill', as Linckens said.

> I personally am entirely for personal freedom in such matters. I know that people here and on New Pommeren will take it ill of me that I am not against it tooth and nail, but it is all the same to me.

Linckens wrote to the General Council in an objective way and further implemented the decision of the Council. He requested Bertus Okhuijzen of the Dutch province to do the same.

Indeed Linckens' attitude was not obvious to everyone. In 1912, it seems that the new superiors of both provinces (in the German province, Christian Janssen, and in the Northern, Adriaan Brocken), both having come into office in 1910, dealt with each other less easily on this point. Brocken complained at least to superior general Meyer:

> The big grievance that people seem to have against us is that we have always influenced our Dutch missionaries in New Pommeren to return to our province. That was our right, however, until the previous year, when we promised not to call them back. Do we perhaps have to content ourselves with those whom New Pommeren wants to send back to us because they no longer give satisfaction there?

Every province had the responsibility to provide the personnel to do the work entrusted to it as well as possible. In the first years after the breakaway of the Germans from the Northern Province, the exchange of personnel went on after successful consultation. However, the longer the separate entities existed, the more they stood up for their own interests. That development proceeded once more along the lines of nationality. This need to have one's own people in one's own territories made

itself felt within the Northern Province as well.

*Separation of the Netherlands and Belgium*

In the middle of February, 1912, the administration of the Northern Province decided to apply to the generalate in Rome for a division into a Belgian and a Dutch Province. A half year earlier some Belgian fathers had already drafted a petition to this effect to send to the general chapter, but they did not succeed in finding enough supporters.

> For some considerable time the flames have flickered and several times it has happened that they threatened to turn into a real fire of revolution,

wrote Brocken in April, 1912.

Several Belgians felt subordinated to, and discriminated against, by their Dutch confréres, wrongly, according to the provincial:

> The Belgians desire simply that we constantly keep foremost in our mind the interest of the Belgian houses and of the Belgian members, so that we never send them to one of our missions but keep them in Belgium, and wherever possible to move the Dutchmen out of the Belgian houses, as for example in Assche.

Also in his letter of April 12, 1912, to the general council, Brocken stated that the Belgians were demanding a separate status and more and more were forming a province within the province. With about thirty fathers and twenty scholastics they were, it is true, in the minority, but they still formed a group which had to be taken seriously. The Belgians did not lack missionary élan, but unlike the Dutch they had opportunities to do a lot of pastoral work in their own country. The Dutch sights had been directed much more to the missions.

It worried the Belgian confréres to be working in foreign colonies while the Belgian Congo was after all also a mission territory. In 1885, Léopold II created the state of Congo, of which the sovereign rights passed to the Belgian state in 1908. It rankled the Belgian MSCs that many fellow countrymen had their work of evangelisation cut out for them there, whereas their own congregation had still not submitted any request to be active there too. Brocken did understand that feeling and saw it also as a reason for the disappointing income and interest in Belgium. But according to him having the Congo as a new work area would not end the animosity - on the contrary. Brocken predicted that nationalism would only then just emerge, because every decision of the provincial which did not directly profit the Congo or one of the Belgian houses, would be interpreted immediately as obstruction and oppression. Already in 1897, when the German Province was established it was realized that this had consequences for the Northern Province of which sooner or later a division would be necessary. That moment, according to Brocken, had come and there should be little delay if one wanted to settle the matter in peace and amity.

Yet it took seven years before the separation took place. In 1912, the general

council, while showing understanding for the problems, judged the issue as not acute. The First World War made it impossible to make any decision in that direction until well into 1918. The Belgian scholastics were called up for the army by the end of 1915 to serve their country as stretcher bearers. Brocken consulted with superiors of other congregations which faced this summons. They reached the conclusion that, in this situation, religious had to be a paragon of obedience.

The separation issue was taken up again in December 1918. The Belgians, according to Brocken, had come out of the war more nationalistic than ever. The proposal of the Belgian government to annex Dutch Limburg and Zeeland Flanders did not do any good to the mutual relations. Brocken urged the superior general to take at least a basic decision towards separation. Finally, on January 16, 1919, Meyer declared himself in agreement by letter. The general council was moreover in full agreement with Brocken's re-organisation proposal, which he should implement together with the superiors of the Belgian houses.

Brocken stayed on one more year as provincial superior of the Dutch Province which came into being on August 15, 1919. The establishment of the smaller Belgian Province took longer because there were fewer people immediately available to man the key posts. When the staffing and accommodation had been completed and the division of property with the Dutch Province had been arranged, the Belgian Province could take off on January 1, 1921. For the first six years it was under the direction of Henri van den Lemmer. In 1924, the Belgian Province received its own mission area - the Congo. Decades later a few Dutch brothers would go to work there (see p. 122).

CHAPTER 3

# 'I am going, because I must!'

'I have always felt a longing for the far away, unknown and adventurous, in whichever capacity it may be. That could be as a sailor or as a doctor, but always far away, outside the Netherlands.' So said Theo van de Ven (born 1924) about his childhood in Oirschot.

Johan Krol (1910) too, dreamed as a little boy, of adventure. The position of his place of residence contributed to that: 'Harlingen, built in the sea, for the youth the source of inspiration to the wide world!' Also, Jan Boelaars (1915) from Tilburg loved to see something of the world. Going as a military man to the colonies did not fit in with his surroundings. Priesthood on the other hand was considered as the highest ideal. Becoming a missionary, that was the solution.

'Missionary... it was a picture of a man on a horse, a sort of cowboy who trekked through a strange world,' so remembers Antoon van Bavel (1917). Years later he could compare that romantic picture with the reality when he was sent out to Celebes. Also, for Van de Ven and Boelaars their childhood dream was fulfilled. Krol and many other MSCs would remain as missionaries in the Netherlands.

Between dream and reality lay a long road that began at home with a generally sound Catholic upbringing. For the aforementioned fathers the next step was the apostolic school (junior seminary). The Dutch Province had, since 1924, two apostolic schools, one in Tilburg and the other in Driehuis. A youth academy for brothers was not established until 1953. Before that they came to the congregation at an older age (chapter 4). The next stage was the novitiate. At the end of this trial period one decided, if one wanted, to commit oneself to the MSC. That belongs to the next chapter. This chapter concentrates on the MSC aspirants. It follows them on the way to the congregation and the apostolic school. In order to be able to place the quotes in time the birth year is mentioned next to the quoted persons.

## Vocation

Brother Kees van den Berg (1924) was attending school in Tilburg with the Brothers of Tilburg. When one of them celebrated the golden jubilee of his profession, Kees learned how at the time the jubilarian had ended up with the Brothers of Tilburg.

> The brother in question asked for the way to the Red Hearts. People explained it to him as well as possible but when he came to the level crossing of the railway, he no longer knew for sure whether he should go left or right. Since he saw there that large building of the Brothers of Tilburg, he thought that people had pointed that out to him. After he had rung the bell and had asked to join the order, he was received straight away with open arms. But after a few days he enquired if it was the place of the Red Hearts. When people explained to him that it was the Brothers of Tilburg, he stated that he liked it there after all and asked if he could remain.

The anecdote made an impression on the little boy and inspired him to a decision: 'The thought came to me that, with the possibility of a vocation, I would go in his place to the Red Hearts.'

The years passed by. Kees went to the technical school, became a carpenter and beside his work took a course on architectural drawing. Meanwhile the Second World War had broken out. Kees fell into the claws of the Arbeitseinsatz (forced labour) and was put to work in Germany. Under bombardments, once again he experienced anxious moments. 'I thought: if I survive this, I want to go and give it a try. If I do not survive, then I don't have to honour my contract. That sustained me and made me live somewhat more freely.' Kees placed the decision in God's hands.

When the forced labourers got some days of leave, he ran away and went into hiding. The war came to an end and Kees proceeded to Tilburg to visit the Mission House. On August 26, 1945, the day before his 21st birthday, he entered the Red Hearts. The pledge of the ten-year old little boy had been redeemed; a misunderstanding more than sixty years old had been put right.

### *Why MSC?*

It was a special vocation story, just as everyone had his own unique way to the MSC. Van den Berg had not made a really substantive choice for the Red Hearts, just as little as the brother from his story had done for the other congregation. The exact differences between many orders and congregations of which the Netherlands was rich, were unknown to the average Catholic. However, most of them were aware of class differences. Thus in general the old orders like the Benedictines, Dominicans, Augustinians and particularly the Jesuits were associated with the upper classes. The Jesuits had, it is true, renowned colleges, but they did not have a boarding school or minor seminary of their own. For that reason the Ignatius College in his place of residence did not feature for the Amsterdam native, Gerard Draaijers

(1923). 'I was rather naughty. I was called 'the vagrant', because I was seldom at home or at school. Without the enclosure of the religious house nothing would become of me.' His father had connections with the Capuchins, but because Gerard would then have to go all the way to Brabant, the choice fell on the MSCs in Driehuis.

Whoever wanted to receive an education to the priesthood in mid-twentieth century Netherlands could choose between fifty boarding schools. Class consciousness and money made the choice more limited. The minor seminaries of the dioceses had from way back the name of being distinguished and learned. Difficult admission examinations and rather substantial board and lodging fees stood in the way of becoming secular priests particularly for boys of simple origin. For Gijs de Roij (1926), the seventh child in a working class family from Tilburg, the seminary of the Den Bosch diocese was no option, 'at least, we thought so'. In popular thinking that seminary was more for the sons of manufacturers. 'Working class families like ours had to resort, according to the general opinion, to the seminaries of religious orders'. Another Tilburg native, Wim Verhoeven (1930), knew that the secular priesthood 'had not been granted to us people of the working class'. His parish priest proposed then that he should go the MSCs nearby.

Other than the old orders, congregations founded in the nineteenth century like the Mill Hill and the Assumptionists, recruited comparatively more among farmers and workers. Among the 150 MSCs who supplied data for this book, these sectors were very much in evidence as well, but the middle class dominates. There was a lack of academically trained parents.

A well known guide in this spiritual forest was the Pius Almanac which offered an overview of all congregations and orders with their academies. For the most part, it was the parish priest, sometimes the teacher, who looked up the Almanac when boys appeared to have a vocation. Parents seldom consulted the guide. Those of Hans and Otto Bosse (1924 and 1927) did a comparative research themselves. The family lived in Haarlem in a parish of the Franciscans. For this reason they visited at first the Franciscan seminary in Katwijk. 'When my parents were led around there, they saw that in the dormitory they still used water jugs. They said very subtly to the Father that they would still think more about it.' Subsequently they looked closer to home. The family went by bicycle to size up the situation in Driehuis. They liked better what they saw in that mission house: 'They had not only a dormitory there, but also a separate washroom containing long rows of faucets with flowing water!' On the way back to Haarlem Otto asked his parents what sort of seminary it actually was, but they had no idea.

Antoon van Bavel (1917) paid a familiarization visit with his parents to the Mission House in Tilburg. In Dongen, where his father had a tannery, Antoon's missionary aspirations had been known to several people, including Mayor Switsar. The latter had a son at the apostolic school of the MSCs. A recruiting Passionist brother had just been at the door of the Van Bavels and left behind a booklet for the 11-year-old Antoon, when the Switsar family made a suggestion: 'They would go and

visit their son Wim in the Mission House. It would perhaps be a good idea that father, mother and I would pay a visit also on that day.' The Switzars drove by car to Tilburg. The Van Bavels went by steam tram.

From the station they walked along 'the impressive cemetery' at the Bredaseweg 'with its statues of saints', until about a hundred metres further they 'stood all of a sudden before the majestic Mission House with its dark green panes in big windows, impressive and a bit frightening. 'Would I feel ever at home here?' Brother Porter brought them to the parlour where Father Superior and the Switsar family were already waiting for them. Several fathers came and introduced themselves to the party, after which a dinner with wine followed because it was All Saints' Day. For the remainder of the afternoon they looked around the house, the chapel, the playground, and the garden, and 'not forgetting the mission museum with all its surprising articles from the mission territories in which the fathers were at work'. This too left a special impression! The visit could be called a success:

> When we were sitting again in the swinging steam tram, a unanimous decision was made without further ado by parents and son: I would present myself as a candidate at the Red Hearts. There, we (father and mother as well) would feel quite at home. We had moreover been introduced to a characteristic of the Red Hearts, hospitality and acting simply. That attracts!

The Switsars signed up the Van Bavel family as subscribers to the Annals and persuaded the youngest daughter to become a propagandist. 'The whole family had been snared for the mission!' Antoon's younger brother Cor (1920) would also join the MSC.

Those interested were welcomed to the Mission House for an orientation, in which those who came from afar never had to leave on an empty stomach. Most of the time things happened a lot more simply than in the example above from 1928. Undoubtedly the distinguished connection with the Mayor played a role here. Most of the parents took a decision without a visit in advance. For them other reasons tipped the scale to let their sons go to the MSCs.

### *Trustworthy*

The most important reason for many was an already existing family connection with the congregation. For some boys it had even been their own father who at one time had sought his future with the MSCs. This was true, for example, of Jacques Beterams (1919), whose father, Gerard, had passed through the apostolic school in Tilburg and entered as a novice in 1910. Gerard was a tailor's son, but 'I wanted to study! To have the talent and the appetite to study and then to sit the whole day with the legs crossed at the cutter table!' A native of Venray, cradle of the first Dutch MSCs among whom were 'a couple of my blood relatives', Gerard opted for the MSCs. After leaving in 1911, he became a tailor. About the time of his departure somebody else was just presenting himself at the gate of the Mission House,

When Kees van de Berg at last informed his parents about his long concealed plan, his father said: 'Oh, isn't that across that water tower? I've been there also!' He had tasted a year in the religious house, only to choose again in 1912 for a life in the world.

Likewise the father of Jan, Siep and Frans van Baars had an MSC past. The Van Baars boys had been brought up with the congregation. 'Our home was a sort of centre for the MSCs in Twente, especially for fathers of the propaganda', Siep remembers. Papa Henri van Baars came from Deurne, where his father was the school headmaster. The latter had already prepared several students for the apostolic school of the MSC, among them Maurits Molenaar and Hein Geurtjens. For Geurtjens, who lost his father quite early, the school head was an important figure and he was treated by him like one of the teacher's family. Henri followed initially the same path in Tilburg, until he left the novitiate in 1907. Once he himself was head of a family of ten and director of a dairy factory in Hengelo. Henri saw four of his sons take the spiritual path. One opted for the Franciscans, the other three for the MSCs. The boys had religious connections from their mother's side; she had three brothers and two sisters who lived in a religious house.

A vocation seldom came alone. Thus six of the eleven children of the large Brekelmans family entered the religious life, following their reverend uncle, and their older brother, Ignaas (1925), choosing the MSCs. Countless examples can be given of several vocations within a family. In this respect a remark ought to be made that large families were the rule with the MSCs. The 150 surveyed came from a family with seven children on average. In the case of half of them (73) there were more than seven children at home, while nobody was an only child.

The most important recruitment areas of the MSCs, Northern Brabant and Limburg, underwent an interesting demographic development. In the nineteenth century Northern Brabant and Limburg were for a long time the provinces with the most slowly growing population of the Netherlands. Around 1875, however, the tide turned and within a few years there was already talk of the fastest growth. The already rather large proportion of Catholics in Brabant increased further still from 1900 to 1947: a number of percentage points.

### *Mission*

The fact that there was already a family member or a neighbour in the congregation worked as a magnet. The parents of Gijs de Roij found the Den Bosch seminary a little too posh. Besides, two of his uncles were already MSC brothers and an aunt was a FDNSC sister. The parents of Theo van de Ven, who wanted a thorough, preferably live-in education for their son, thought initially of the Capuchins. Theo had two uncles in the Capuchin house. Besides it was not far from Oirschot . Just like Draaijers before him this candidate too was not for the Capuchins. 'Just at that time an uncle, until then unknown to me, came back from New Guinea, with stories and drawings of the 'headhunters' of that place. That had the effect of my prefe-

rence for the MSCs, far above 'the stay-at-home' Capuchins. It remained a choice between two institutions both of which had been connected with the family, but the adventurous tale of reverend Uncle Nico Verhoeven settled the matter.

The exciting tales of MSC missionaries were an important reason to choose this very congregation. Van de Ven: 'It did not occur to me at any moment that I would not be sent out to the missions, and perhaps I would not have stayed if it had been otherwise.' Also Jozef de Kruif (1939) considered himself during his school days as 'a tough and danger defying missionary', preferably in the interior of New Guinea. By far most of the MSCs when applying had the idea of becoming missionaries. The congregation profiled itself very strongly as a missionary congregation. The foreign missions radiated an enormous recruitment power. Lex Degenhart (1931) wrote: 'I entered because of the missions. The life of a religious was an announcement for it. Seculars and monks did not go to the mission.' Piet van Mensvoort (1934) puts it still rather more sharply: 'In order to be a missionary I took religious life into the bargain.'

The boys of the first half of the twentieth century were brought up with the missions. It permeated Catholic life. For children there were special mission magazines and mission films. On special occasions, like for example the annual childhood processions, missions were invariably an important topic. A faithful participant in such processions of the youth was Antoon van Bavel: 'I have been once a White Father and a mandarin from China.' Also in their capacity as Mass servers at the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of Dongen the Van Bavel brothers came in contact with the missions. On the way to the chapel they always passed a corridor which was covered with photographs depicting the mission areas of the sisters. At the elementary school it was the same. The brothers, from whom they received lessons, had missions in Indonesia and spoke about them with great regularity.

As the twentieth century progressed more and more MSCs did not end up in the missions, but the missionary image remained proudly stressed. Illustrative of this is a campaign issue of the Annals entitled With Might and Main which was published in 1949 with the special aim of recruiting brothers. The brothers, 'that sturdy battalion of spiritual muscular soldiers' are consistently called missionaries in this publication. Although a faithful picture of activities of brothers is given and it is not concealed that they were also in the Netherlands, emphasis lies more on the 'real' life of the missionary. Thus the author raises a warning that brothers must be prepared to be content with a totally simple life and gives as an example: 'How can I make myself most useful for these black, lazy people? How can I get the little church finished without good help, how can I persevere?' For Gerrit te Wierik (1934) this campaign issue tipped the balance to join the MSCs. He wanted to go to the missions.

While Van de Ven was motivated by Verhoeven, a number of MSCs were inspired at one time or another by Kees Meuwese. He visited school classes in the whole country where he spoke in a lively manner about his missionary adventures with the Papuans. 'Afterwards the whole school wanted to become missionaries,' Toon van

Lith (1936) from The Hague remembers. Jac. Schreurs (1893) had a similar memory of Mathieu Neijens. As a little boy he experienced at home a visit of Neijens who had been a classmate of his mother. Schreurs would later describe this visit in his book The Glass Toy Horse:

> So in one night everything has ripened; after an evening in which open-mouthed and open-eyed he has sat listening to a missionary, a fire-eater who had come out of the blue, had stuck his legs under the table and for a couple of hours without interruption made severed heads roll like coconuts left and right through the room.

The principal character of the book, Schreurs' alter ego, Hermke Dobbelsteen, dreams that night of a stay in a tropical area: 'In the far distance, as a picture on a wall, Hermke saw the missionary in the sunlight standing on the veranda of his house, his arms crossed, the sparkling cross on his breast'.

### *Touched*

For Jac. Schreurs the missionary ideal remained a child's fantasy. He was not cast in the same sturdy mould as men like Neijens. While studying he distinguished himself mostly by his pen.

The nice thing is that his lyrical talent, which he could develop to the full as an MSC, subsequently inspired others to join the congregation. Kees Braun (1926) and Theo Schouw (1939) are examples of this.

Schreurs was doing pastoral work in the MSC parish of Overhoven-Sittard (see p. 321). Other outstanding Fathers there were Maurits Molenaar, Keube (Jac.) Jacobs and Janus van Croonenburg. As a little boy André Gijsberts (1930) met these men at close quarters: 'We had always MSCs visiting our house or they asked me to do something. My father was active in a mandolin club in the parish in order to beg for money for the new church to be built.' The dealings with these fathers persuaded Gijsberts to report to the same congregation. The same goes for Karel Veeger (1924), who, nota bene, came from a non-religious family. When the Veeger family moved from Rotterdam to Overhoven, Karel desired to be baptised there. His acquaintance with Fathers Schreurs, Molenaar and Jacobs determined eventually the remainder of his path in life. Last but not least, Jan Maas, the old brother of the community, was an important source of inspiration, because of the long time that he had spent on the missions (Gilbert Archipelago).

First contact with the congregation often occurred via MSCs who served the parish in which one lived. As an altar boy one had automatically somewhat closer dealings with them. Kees Böhm (1935) was an altar boy in Santpoort, where fathers from Driehuis came regularly to assist. He found them sympathetic and they had their junior seminary near his home. Becoming a missionary in New Guinea appealed to him, but he met fierce resistance from his parents. 'On Mother's side most of my uncles and aunts had already 'lapsed', and they did not understand it at all. Only Granny (Mother's mother) was in the clouds.'

The latter was also true for the grandmother of Jan van de Geijn (1922) from Rotterdam. She was 'a very active propagandist of the MSC' and took along her grandson to the Propagandists' Days in the Mission House (see ch. 8). 'I knew no other congregation and found it very pleasant in the Mission House in Tilburg. The fathers of the propaganda came regularly to our home to keep the little fire going. Propaganda reached the Catholic families especially with its magazines. Several interviewees attribute a big role in determining their choice for the MSCs to the Annals, the Almanac and Jeugdjuweel (Youth Jewel).

Especially for the Tilburg boys the MSC was tangibly present. Antoon Smulders had a direct view of the mission house from his parental home. Theo Mulder (1917), too, met the MSCs regularly – in the church, at school, in the neighbourhood. Their visible activity and the knowledge that they worked in distant countries, made him want to join. Eugène van Vught (1930) let himself be dragged along at first by his buddies:

> When classmates from the elementary school told me during the singing practice of the church choir that they were going to 'turn themselves in' that Sunday afternoon at the Mission House, MSCs came slowly into my life. That whispering in secret during the singing lesson disquieted me to such a degree (now I have lost my buddies!) that I decided to report myself also.

For some time the missionary idea was already alive in Van Vught, because of 'the Redemptorist missionary, a former seminary companion of my father, who had placed a mission collection box in our home and came from time to time to empty it. His beard and his stories made quite an impression on me then'.

Also for Jan Boelaars it was a foregone conclusion that he wanted to become a missionary; the question was only in which congregation or order. On a visit to the MSCs on one occasion he experienced the procession of the Blessed Sacrament (on the Feast of Corpus Christi). 'Jan is enchanted by the splendid carpets, made of coloured sand, along which the procession solemnly moves. He is captivated by the decorated wayside altars and the solemn music of a small brass band. His decision is made; he wants to enter here.' For Koos Zwaanenburg (1937) the mosaic in the chapel of Driehuis settled the matter. His father was headmaster in Beverwijk/Bovenkarspel and received regularly recruitment brochures. The ones of the MSC attracted Koos enormously and he made up his mind: 'where that mosaic is, that's where I want to study!'

In general the congregation attracted active men rather than the contemplative minded types. The latter chose the more contemplative orders, or transferred to them later. Theo Mulder joined the MSCs especially 'because at least they did something!' Piet Vergouwen (1939) too was driven by the longing for action. During the Zeeland flood disaster of 1953 he lived opposite the major seminary of Hoeven. At that time the evacuees were housed there.

> People who had lost everything because of the bad weather, crying, asking, hoping, em-

> bittered... The many hands which were then available to help... And all those strangers who helped had the very same collective purpose in mind. That made an impression on me.

From then on it was certain for him that he would go to the MSC, 'because by way of that road I could help black people who were also in need'. Such ideals came to be at odds quite often with the training practice especially with regard to the brothers.

*Family Expectations*

For most of them the family stood squarely behind the choice, even if they had not suggested it themselves. Jan Baptist van den Berg (1918) was born on June 7, the feast of the Sacred Heart. For his mother and aunt, who was a nun, that day determined his future, which they impressed upon him from childhood onwards. Ben van Oers (1931), eldest child of a plumber's mate, knew that his parents had prayed for a priest son even before his birth. 'I myself have never wanted anything else than to be a religious priest, who was going to convert the savages.' He followed in the footsteps of his reverend uncle, Harry van Oers MSC. Sometimes the expectations could be so unrealistic, that the person who had to fulfil all those dreams was in danger of a breakdown. The distance from his parental home, his steadily demanding study and the speed of his proximity to ordination could estrange the family members of such a boy. An ordinary open contact with him became impossible for them; there was only room for adoration. In such cases the person in question often did not dare to leave the MSCs until at a later stage.

The pride concerned especially the priesthood. It was a distinctive honour to have a priest in the family. For example, for the sister of Jos Turkenburg (1928), in spite of her marriage and her motherhood, the day on which her brother was ordained priest was the most beautiful day in her life. A son or brother who was 'on study' lifted the whole family to a higher plane. The other family members were very willing to make the necessary sacrifice. Antoon Revers(1927), the carpenter's son, recalled: 'I got complete support and although it was financially very difficult for the family, they never complained about that.' Henk Groenewegen (1934) also experienced warm support from his family: 'During the daily praying of the rosary a decade was always said for me and for my older sister in the Dominican order. They came to visit me regularly when there was an occasion for it. Furthermore I always went 'to say Hello' towards the end of my holidays. My uncles and aunts knew that I hoped to get 10 or 25 guilders from them to help my parents with the expenses for my studies. None of them ever refused - quite the opposite.'

The religious life often appealed to the young far less than the years of study and the priesthood. As a priest - or in training for that - one enjoyed social standing, but as a religious in a religious house one became an unknown. This danger was particularly threatening for the brothers. The parents of Huub Giesberts (1934) were ada-

mant in their opposition to his choice of state of life: 'My father has had two brothers who worked as brother helpers in religious houses in Limburg and as a result the whole family had some very annoying experiences.'

The parents of Toon van Lith were not enthusiastic about their son's intention to become an MSC brother. They saw to it that he first learned a trade so that he had something to fall back on should he ever turn his back on the religious life. Toon went as an apprentice to a big piano business, in order to train, just like his father, in piano and organ building. Afterwards as a 17 year old he applied to the MSCs. Because he had no nationally recognised diploma, people there saw him rather as a house worker than as someone who could undertake professional training. His mission ideal would never be fulfilled.

Parental worries were often over financial/economic matters, especially in families where it concerned the eldest or the only son. 'For mother it was a hard blow, because I earned almost as much as my father,' recalled Kees van de Berg. The family of Albert Smit reacted positively, but 'were afraid of the financial consequences, because we were not very well off'. He was the eldest of six in a working class family. Gerrit te Wierik as a 17 year-old moved from his father's farm to the MSCs. 'Because I was the eldest [of 12] at home, they felt my choice badly in the beginning, especially the brother after me.' The youngest brother, Theo, followed him later.

The concern of parents was related mostly to the child himself, especially if he was still only twelve years old. Many parents impressed repeatedly on their sons that they could always come back home if it did not work out. The saying 'better to stop half way than to persevere in an error' is relevant here. Anyone who had made the perpetual vows and afterwards decided to leave disgraced himself and his family in the eyes of many.

### *First Steps*

After the choice for the MSCs had been made, the application then followed. In his recommendation in 1926 a curate in The Hague wrote: 'My little candidate is good, learns well, has a delightful boy's character and desires fervently to be admitted to Driehuis! Very Reverend Father, make us both happy.' A favourable testimonial of the parish priest was a requirement for acceptance into the apostolic school. This did not have to be a lengthy epistle; it was more like the candidate leaving his calling card.

A good reference was also required from the school, so that the congregation could assume that the candidate could cope with the educational demands. 'Antoon Kueter is one of my best and most cheerful students,' so begins a letter from a teacher writing from Alkmaar in 1928. After an enumeration of his outstanding grades in his school report, he continued: 'he attends Holy Mass daily and goes to communion very often. Is helpful and is esteemed by his classmates.'

Finally the candidate had to submit a baptismal certificate, a doctor's certificate

of medical fitness and vaccination. Good health was not only a requirement for the sending out later to one of the distant areas, but also for being able to cope with the apostolic school. Much was demanded from the boys, both mentally and physically.

All the more remarkable is the favourable evaluation of the candidate from Haarlem, Jozef Hegge, in 1926. The doctor's certificate mentioned a light asthmatic bronchitis which, after the initial contact with the MSCs, had developed into a heavy bronchitis, and also measles. Moreover his school grades were 'not brilliant', according to Muijsers. 'In ordinary circumstances one would turn down such a candidate but this case seems so very special to me.'

Willem Muijsers was the superior of Driehuis. He had become acquainted with the fervent Catholic family of the boy and was impressed with their son ('very sympathetic, seemingly of gentle nature and really pious'), who wanted nothing better than to become a Missionary of the Sacred Heart. Because his health and school results actually ruled out admission, Muijsers brought the matter before the provincial superior. He wanted to accept this candidate so much, that he interrupted the provincial's retreat to discuss this case. 'Jozef seems to me no ordinary child, but one of those gifted ones who, although physically weak, are totally permeated by the supernatural spirit and who, too good for earth, are transplanted to heaven after a short life'. Hegge was accepted and did indeed die three years later (see p. 17).

*Entrance Examination*

A boy was never admitted only on the basis of documents; the congregation always wanted to make sure that he was suitable. For that he had to do an oral entrance examination. Later there was a written examination at the Mission House. The candidate was presented with questions about religion, the Dutch language, arithmetic and general development. In addition to the examination grades, it was especially important that a general impression of the candidate should be obtained. Father Willem Woudenberg examined the 11-year old Antoon Kueter. In a special form intended only for internal use he filled in the following list:

| | |
|---|---|
| Physique (build, posture etc.): | robustly fat, fit, eyeglasses. |
| Good breeding and manners: | fair |
| Intellectual ability: | good, reflects well, |
| Memory: | fair |
| Impression of temperament: | joyful |
| Special talents: | - |
| Further remarks: | shall very well become naughty. Fairly free, absent- minded. |
| Result of examination: | Passed. |

Some days later the Kueter family received a note from Father Superior, that their son had been found suitable for the academy.

Letters of gratitude from one or two parents have been preserved, in reply to Father Superior'report. Antoon Smulder's father wrote thus in 1932:

> After a series of many anxious years a sigh of relief now comes from our parental hearts and we thank the good God that he has desired to accept the sacrifice of my son and we express the hope that he will be a jewel for the honour of God, for the Congregation to which he has committed himself and for our happy family; that he shall have reached within a couple of years his ideal of priest-missionary and shall be allowed to work hard in the vineyard of the Lord and win a lot of souls for heaven. For our whole life long he shall be at the centre of our prayers so that he may bring in a rich harvest of souls.

### *Outfit*

The report of admission came together with an outfit list. All articles had to be marked with the enrolment number of the candidate and his initials. An outfit list for the apostolic school around 1930 included four complete suits, three pairs of sturdy shoes, a pair of gym shoes, six towels and cutlery. The list also stated explicitly what one must not take along: 'books for reading and study, watch, cuffs'. The first were provided by the school, which liked to supervise what was read. The watch and the cuffs were probably considered inappropriate.

Often it was not easy to get all the things of the list. Huub Giesberts had started in good time with the preparations: 'I still hear my father say, 'If you want to be a religious, then you must go and work first, and see that you get the money together.' Giesberts did go and look for work and became an apprentice plumber. 'I earned 19 guilders a month, and my mother saved the money in order to be able to buy that outfit.'

The mother of Kees van den Berg was worried by the clothing list: 'so many socks, even long socks, and I did not have them'. So mother started knitting and often bought wool with textile coupons and began knitting again. 'When I was already here,' Father Van den Heuvel said at one time when she came to bring some more, 'this is the last, the congregation just has to take care of the rest.'

### *Uniform in the 19th Century*

In the nineteenth century the students of the apostolic school still wore a uniform. Henri Peeters remembered that in France they had the so-called 'cache-misère' [hiding of misery]: jackets of black calico, a heavy, glossy cotton fabric. The uniform had been introduced because the boys were walking around looking 'sometimes very odd and extremely different' in their worn-out and frequently mended clothing. The jackets were worn with a belt (later a fabric belt) around the waist. Dirt or grease stains were not noticeable on a cache-misère, and that was lucky because it was worn every day, summer and winter, outside and inside the home. 'Overcoats were just as unknown as underpants, just as luxurious as collars and cravats.'

11. Students of the Little Work of Mercy (the apostolic school) in The Veldhoven, (Tilburg), 1886. Standing at the school board is Henry Rutten (1873-1904), see fig 7.

Shortly after the arrival in the Netherlands, during the Veldhoven years, the black jacket was replaced by a real uniform. It was made of blue worsted and studded with copper buttons. Pierre Vullings was jolly proud of the uniform which 'draws all those eyes to us'. In the summer of 1889 he was with Henri Corsten and Piet van Aerssen in Venray; the last two were still at the apostolic school, while Vullings was about to go to the novitiate.

> What a pleasure it was for the three of us to walk through Venray and how people gazed in wonder at the three blue jackets as their joyful and satisfied owners sauntered around there like brothers. How our hearts beat proudly in our chests when people took us last week at Geisteren for young soldiers, who were still waiting for shining buttons and badges.

Asked by his mother whether he did not prefer to put on something else, Pierre had answered that he would then prefer to walk the streets in a nightgown.

The uniform did not have a long life. Possibly under pressure from the considerable increase in students, when it became expensive to take all those boys' measurements for uniforms, it was no longer worn in the twentieth century.

In the early years of the congregation parents did not pay for board and lodging. They simply could not afford it. It was the age of the benefactors and the men from the very beginning were moreover accustomed to live in poverty. The fund of the Little Work of Charity had been set up especially for the apostolic school. Without the support of the Ursulines, however, Peeters and his companions from the town would never have ended up in Chezal-Benoît. In later years of the congregation, benefactors remained important. Higher standards were being set for upbringing and education and the costs increased accordingly. Parents were requested to pay the tuition fees annually in advance, but often this was a problem and then an arrangement was made with the parents. Apparently this happened frequently in the twenties, judging by a remark of Muijsers. It was in Jozef Hegge's favour that, apart

from his personality, his family had no trouble paying the full tuition fees.

The MSC could pay a part of the costs from its own resources, but a maximum effort was expected from candidates to meet the remaining costs. It concerned hundreds of guilders per year, and as many channels as possible were tapped in order to raise that amount. Perhaps a well-to-do family member or a number of acquaintances were prepared to contribute. Tilo Deijns and Piet van de Berg well remember how, in 1948, they went on a money raising campaign in Montfoort. Tilo got a small list from the parish priest with names and addresses of possible sponsors and a personal letter of recommendation. With that he set off. 'An extraordinarily difficult expedition. To beg! To acknowledge that you were poor!' First Tilo visited Kuyf, the baker.

> He gave 100 guilders straight away. Next he went to the notary. That yielded something also, another 100 guilders, I believe. And then I did not dare to ask for more money in that way. You still had a Canon van Schaik Fund that also paid something. What clings to my memory is that quite a lot in pennies and dimes was scraped together by my parents.

Piet van de Berg remembers 'a somewhat aloof Miss Wolters', who had a great doubt about his vocation. Also for him Kuyf, the baker, and especially Warnink, the notary, were generous. After a short visit to the latter, Piet was finished with his campaign. 'He would take care that it was sorted out, indeed.' Who knows whether the good reputation of Piet's reverend uncle, the MSC Piet Hoeboer, played a role here?

The Canon van Schaik Fund was an institution of the Catholic Labour Movement. More of such funds were available for students for the priesthood. Most of the time the allowances remained rather small. In the early forties Wim Verhoeven was helped out by the Petrus Donders Fund, which paid 25 guilders in cash per trimester.

> That was rather humiliating. Three times with your father or your mother you had to go and show your marks. So and so was sitting there as a director behind a very large table in a very big room. That always upset us as you had to hold out your hand, after all.

After the Second World War the desire grew among the seminaries and apostolic schools to see their academy accredited as a secondary school and therefore to receive a subsidy just like any other legally accredited educational institution. For that they had to meet quality standards, such as the availability of sufficient qualified teachers and good accommodation. Jan van de Geijn, appointed in 1955 as headmaster of the apostolic school in Driehuis, succeeded in 1957 in getting his school recognised as the R.C. Secondary School 'Mission House Driehuis'. After the new building had been approved as well, the school received a subsidy as from 1 January 1959. The Tilburg academy continued to hold the status of apostolic school.

*Mission House Driehuis Comes Into Existence*

After the First World War more candidates applied for the apostolic school than the Tilburg house could absorb. For this reason the Dutch Province of the MSCs decided to establish a second school, preferably above the rivers, so that also the north could be served properly. After consultation with Mgr Möllman - then vicar general of the diocese of Haarlem - the MSC, Janus van Croonenburg, got in 1921 from the provincial council the assignment to look for a suitable location in the Haarlem Diocese. Just like more than thirty years earlier the congregation decided to build an entirely new mission house.

The search yielded some good building sites, all located in the parish of the parish priest, Van de Meer, in Driehuis. His sister, with whom he resided in the rectory, was a former propagandist of the congregation. Unlike most of the priests of his diocese Van de Meer was very enthusiastic about the coming of the fathers and their apostolic school. Van Croonenburg had made his search in civilian clothes, 'otherwise Protestants might object to selling us anything and the danger existed that they would ask far too much'. The provincial superior, Mathieu Nijsters, came to the north to examine the options. He too struggled into a civilian suit, to the great hilarity of the parish priest who offered lodgings to the two MSCs. The inspection of the sites took place by bicycle, a second forgotten habit of Nijsters who bumped into a small ice cream cart.

The construction site which seemed the most suitable was owned by the N.V. Visscherij I and II [Fishery I and II Inc.]. For safety's sake Nijsters and Van Croonenburg secured the support of a middleman as buyer, a brother of their confrére, Willem de Wildt, living in the locality. He presented himself at the company as someone interested in starting a bulb farm in the area of 6 hectares together with a partner. Only when he had reached an agreement with the sellers and the notary wanted to know in which name he should put the deed, did de Wildt name the Mission House of Tilburg. The sellers reacted angrily that they would never have agreed to 58,000 guilders if they had known that earlier. Another suspenseful moment occurred when the formal permission of Mgr Callier was long in coming, but a few days before the execution of the deed the coveted document arrived.

The construction was to become a Brabantine affair. The trusted Fr de Beer was recruited as architect and the contractors were the Van Lieshout Brothers from Helmond who had worked earlier in Stein. The progress was monitored closely by the *Annals* which started a campaign in 1923 among the subscribers to support the project financially. Promotional construction photographs added weight to the campaign in every issue. This was no luxury, for the finances of the province by themselves were inadequate. On October 2, 1924, the house was ready to be blessed by the bishop of Haarlem. The chapel was not ready for use until 1930.

## The Apostolic School

After the summer holiday time was up – 'at last', to the feeling of one, 'a choked throat' to the feeling of another. Walter Grol (1915) remembers his farewell to his mother as the hardest moment in his life. Gerrit Poels (1929) had homesickness to contend with, a feeling that did not leave him during his entire seminary time. Ben van Oers (1931) finally started his training in a rather very chaotic time. His classes started on January 7, 1945:

> The war was still on. From the parish priest of Valkenswaard my parents had received a letter from the mission house. Because there was hardly any train or bus in service, we had to make our own way to the mission ouse between January 6 and 12. I felt terrible in fact. I enjoyed my freedom very much: no school, everything was in disorder - houses and factories were totally or partially destroyed. And there were all sorts of things to do with the Canadian soldiers who were quartered at our home and in the street.

Ben dreaded very much the discipline of life in the boarding school. What he had not yet thought of was that he would find there partners in adversity. After travelling deep through Belgium because many bridges were still damaged or destroyed he arrived at the Mission House. 'A group of about twenty boys from Limburg were already there, ahead of me by almost a week. They had crawled from under the grenades and had experienced true war, seen people being killed, seen many dead bodies and had experienced much fear during bombardments and tank attacks. I felt at home and could talk about my own war stories. In that first week I made a couple of close friends.'

### *Boarding School*

Once 'inside' the life of the boys changed drastically. The mammoth building was in itself imposing enough, but the dormitory and the refectory had a marked effect on the newcomer. To each boy a senior student was assigned as 'guardian angel', to show him the ropes in the beginning. That was badly needed because life in the Mission House took place according to a multitude of rules.

Everything was different from home. Before the arrival in the Mission House life took place in different environments: sleeping and eating you did at home, for study you went to school and for work to a boss. Furthermore you visited regularly the parish church and there were several places and possibilities to go for recreation. In a boarding school all those separate worlds came under one roof.

From that point on, the contact with the family was restricted mainly to the holidays. One free week followed Christmas and two weeks after Easter. The summer holiday lasted five weeks. Outside the holidays the MSC schools organized one visiting day every trimester. Too frequent contact with the family could throw the boys off balance and damage their feeling of solidarity with their classmates and partners in adversity. In order not to cause the loss of a religious vocation, it was

12. Mission House Tilburg

necessary to keep them in protected surroundings and under supervision. For this reason the directors preferred family members to come to the Mission House rather than seminarians to go out, for the outside world awaited them there with its many temptations for growing up boys.

Even in the summer of 1955 all parents of the students of the Tilburg apostolic school received an A4 page paper listing tips for the holiday. The prayer life of the boys had to be continued as much as possible, and the letter contained a short special prayer to Mary for protection during the holiday. Moreover the parents were asked to take care that the free time was well spent so that the seminarian did not forget

> that recreation does not mean 'doing nothing' but 'doing something different from the usual', thus something else than studying (although an hour a day can do no harm).

Chores in the house and the garden were suggested as appropriate activities, 'out of gratitude also to father and mother'. Physical exercise out of doors was recommended, but never alone, always 'in decent company and in appropriate surroundings'. Mixed swimming places or the beach were definitely excluded. Holiday travels were not yet in vogue in the fifties, but camping in one's own country was and stay-overs were common. If school comrades came and saw each other during vacation, they could stay with each other provided that the rector knew about it, so stated the written vacation tips. Camping had been permitted only in the company of one's own family, unless it concerned a group that was led by a priest.

At special family occasions, such as a wedding or a burial, the boys usually got permission to go home. They had to be back again preferably the same evening. For other important events recognised by the Church, such as the first communion or

13. Mission House Driehuis

the confirmation of a little brother or sister, usually no permission was given because in large families such events occurred too often for them to be seen as exceptional. The superior decided in all these situations, and one might be more strict than another. This could be an omen of religious life to come. Thus Henk Rijnja (1915), shortly before his first vows, did not get permission to attend the priestly ordination of his brother and confrére, Johan (1909).

Life in the apostolic school was depicted in the Annals of 1893 in such a way, that 'the desire might possibly come over many a one to envy the children of the Little Work of Charity'. After an ode on religious formation the writer wanted to make very clear that there was abundant room for entertainment:

> Healthy refreshing walks, preferably through shady woods, jolly funny dramatic performances and music, where humour and jest and the useful and the pleasant usually come first, a cigar ... and more similar surprises, which the good fathers manage to provide for their children at times and on occasion, prayer and study alternate continually, and all that in a cheery, pleasant house, with an open wide playground, with airy, healthy, spacious classrooms, study rooms and dormitories!

Half a century later the Dutch Province still paraded the apostolic school as above all a convivial institution. Not the qualitative content of the training but the pleasant atmosphere came first:

> If a boarding school has to approximate as much as possible to family life as being the normal environment for upbringing wanted by God, then our apostolic school has a

> good chance of being the ideal boarding school, thanks to the love which it has as the all -important principle with its fruits: conviviality and homeliness.

The brochure from which these words are taken clearly tried to fight stereotypes linked with boarding schools. At the MSC one did not have, for example, to fear a strict regime:

> The students experience in fact no punishments, except as a last resort... The cold, stiff word 'director' or 'professor' does not suit them; they speak preferably of 'fathers' ... who consequently take care of them in a 'fatherly' way... Surveillants, who monitor them because they are not to be trusted, are unknown to them, but only priests who, by sharing their life and their play, try to keep them as much as possible in the love of Christ's Heart.

In 1949, when this brochure appeared, the MSCs had to compete with approximately fifty academies for the priesthood. The MSC profiled itself by its nearly casual dealings between the staff and the students. Harry Smeets experienced the transfer in the thirties from Rolduc to the apostolic school in Tilburg as a relief: from a strict boarding school with as many as three hundred students and mostly elderly instructors to the much more intimate and friendly Mission House with young, enthusiastic teachers.

Still, however much the Fathers did their best, the apostolic school could hardly be called a home replacing that of the family. The differences were too great for that; for example, the lack of any female element, whereas by contrast in most families the mother was the central figure. The tightly regulated life and the constant immersion in a group of contemporaries made another significant difference with family life.

### *Community Life*

'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved!' This slogan started the day. The seminarians so awakened answered in chorus: 'Now and forever. Amen.' Later in the day, when the boys descended the outside staircase in two rows for recreation, this salutation was repeated. The motto applied to fathers, brothers and students, in short to the whole community.

Community life was lived every day along the same lines (the exact times varied with the years, but not much):

| | |
|---|---|
| Rising | 5:15 a.m. |
| Holy Mass | 6:00 a.m. |
| Breakfast | 6:55 a.m. |
| Midday-meal | 12:00 noon |
| Afternoon snack | 16:30 p.m. |
| Supper | 19:30 p.m. |
| Evening prayer | 20:30 p.m. |

Four times a day they gathered in the refectory. They ate together, although fathers, brothers and students sat separately at their own tables. The brothers served the hot main meal in the middle of the day, at twelve o'clock. Later in the afternoon, between four o'clock and four thirty, there was tea with a double slice of bread. The designation 'goûter' still points to the French origin. The evening meal consisted of a sandwich, sometimes with warmed up leftovers from the noon meal. For the duration of a trimester one always sat at the same place at table. The most senior at table took care of a fair apportioning of the slices of bread and butter. Breakfast and supper lasted twenty minutes, the main meal half an hour. This consisted of three courses, during which talk was forbidden. One listened to the edifying word or otherwise instructive story that was read aloud in the refectory. It was only on special feast days that the 'silentium' did not apply. Before completion of the meal, the saint of the following day was introduced with a biography read in French.

On Sundays and feast days different times applied. The Sunday timetable of 1926 allowed for rising three quarters of an hour later. At 6.45 a.m. Mass was celebrated, followed by the High Mass at 9.00 a.m. On the first Friday of the month the whole community followed an adapted timetable. Directly before or after the goûter, they attended exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for a quarter of an hour, followed at 5.15 p.m. by the rosary recited in the chapel.

The last communal prayer every day was the evening prayer in the chapel. Afterwards the students went to the dormitory where each one disappeared into his own 'cell'. The beds were separated from each other by wooden partitions, to which curtains had been fastened. In this way four rows of small rooms had been created separated by two passage ways. Up to the following morning the 'magnum silentium' ('great silence') applied, supervised by a surveillant who took care that the great silence was indeed observed. The surveillant making his rounds was often not conducive to sleep. Some made a sport of jerking the curtain open at the least sound, but, said Antoon Smulders, there were more sensitive types as well, 'who now and then just held your curtain aside a bit and gently asked: 'Is everything all right?' or: 'Do you feel unwell?' To that category belonged Fr Gracianus van 't Westeinde. When the 13-year old Smulders just could not go to sleep, the former quietly approached him and gave him a kiss on his forehead, with the words 'By order of your mother'. Such a good-night kiss was highly unusual. Although it did him good, such a gesture seemed to Smulders at the time bordering on the allowable. 'As if it had been something improper, I did not dare tell anything to anyone, not even to my mother!'

### *Faith Experience*

The prayers that most of the boys had learned at home were increased in the apostolic school by regular religious exercises. Morning meditation, Holy Mass, examination of conscience, rosary and spiritual reading were on the daily programme. As in most seminaries, all students made an annual retreat shortly after the start of the

school year. It meant that for three days they had spiritual exercises instead of lessons. Every trimester the school tried to breathe new life into the reflections gained in the retreat by a special day of recollection.

Both apostolic schools had a sodality of Mary, of which enthusiastic and devout boys could become a member. They committed themselves to a special devotion to Mary, who was asked for support and protection. This type of association strongly reminds one of the Knighthood of the Sacred Heart which Jules Chevalier had set up during his own training for the priesthood. That association continued to exist in the MSC for a long time together with that of Mary. The younger boys became members of the sodality of Mary and the older ones joined that of the Sacred Heart. In the Annals of 1893 one could read a report of a celebration in the chapel on the feast of the Annunciation, during which twelve new members promised to dedicate themselves to Mary:

> Was it heavenly joy or deeply stirred emotion which made these pure children's voices tremble so much? Oh! What inexpressible blissful moments our holy religion is indeed capable of bringing to her children! Ah! What does the poor worldling do, who worries day and night, unfortunately in vain, in order to find happiness. Ah! Why does he not know them?

The Annunciation of Mary (25 March), which was also the foundation feast of the apostolic school, was celebrated with due solemnity in the twentieth century as well. Much attention was given to Church feast days and jubilees, especially the feasts which had a special meaning for the congregation. The elaborate celebrations offered relaxation and kept the faith alive. The MSCs kept up the special celebrations on May 31 (Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart) and December 8 (Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary), the foundation day of the congregation.

The high point was, however, the feast of Corpus Christi, which was celebrated on the second Thursday after Pentecost. The writer from 1893 describes the solemn procession through the garden and the Te Deum sung in the chapel afterwards. The benefactors, for whom the report was intended, could rest assured: 'In that truly Christian fashion do celebrations in Tilburg take place.' Corpus Christi Day was celebrated exuberantly throughout the entire existence of the apostolic school. The students had been involved way ahead of time in arranging the garden for the procession: the paths were decorated with figures of coloured sand and over the whole route arches and small altars were placed. The centre was the large wayside altar at which a solemn benediction was given by way of concluding the procession.

The death and the funeral of Jozef Hegge must have made a great impression on the Driehuis students. The chronicle, which the students themselves kept about the events in their school, reported his illness and death on October 14, 1929, in Haarlem. The next morning his body was brought to the Mission House and placed on a bier in the 'soberly decorated vestibule'. Hegge was buried in the grounds of the Mission House in Driehuis amid great interest. 'The true Roman Catholic attitude of the parents and close relatives during what was for them so sad a funeral ceremo-

ny and burial was admirable,' so did the chronicle relate in the characteristic language of that time.

Although his illness was not endured in Driehuis itself, it appeared clear from the chronicle how much the fathers involved the boys in the suffering of their schoolmate. They talked much about it and especially prayed often together. After the funeral the fathers gave the boys the opportunity to let off some steam: at noon they took a walk, during which the boys were treated to cigars. The day after that was the feast of St Margaret Mary Alacoque (October 17) in which the high altar was decorated with more flowers than usual on that day on account of Hegge. The boys were offered 'feast tobacco' in the evening and also the following evening 'once again the opportunity to suck at a pipe'.

Jozef Hegge was not forgotten. In the 1949 brochure of Driehuis he was commemorated as 'that real boy with his impish remarks, his beautiful character, his high ideals and virile fear of God'. Muijsers' presentiment that a long life would not be granted to the boy had come true. How the piety which Muijsers saw in him would have developed, remains guesswork of course, but it is certain, that his premature death and his grave in Driehuis' own cemetery incorporated him in MSC history. Thus he served as an example to the other boys. In that sense piety and Jozef Hegge were indeed joined together.

Although the boys had made no vows, their school was all the same 'a real religious seminary'. The staff did everything they could to ensure that the students felt governed 'not by a law, but by a rule of life'. Following that line the students called themselves 'with a certain pride from the first year a.MSC, aspirant Missionary of the Sacred Heart', according to an MSC brochure from 1949. 'They aspire to that congregation with heart and soul.'

### *A Grammar (Secondary) School*

When Driehuis was founded in 1924, Muijsers was rector and there were 59 boys, divided into the four lower classes. New recruits of twelve- and thirteen-year-olds came mainly from the two provinces of North and South Holland, especially from Amsterdam and The Hague. Besides Muijsers and Fr Antoon Tillemans the bursar, six fathers and a scholastic had been placed in Driehuis as instructors. The fathers taught several subjects. Thus Willem Zeegers gave lessons in Latin, Dutch, German, religious doctrine and music. It is striking that there was never talk of teachers but of 'professors', a reference to the French root ('professeur'). Twelve brothers had to manage the housekeeping of the rapidly growing community.

In 1926 Driehuis had a complete academy at its disposal. In September of that year the school started with 93 students. The six classes from bottom to top were referred to in seminary jargon as follows:

the Minor Figure or Sexta
the Major Figure or Quinta
Grammar or Quarta
Syntax or Tertia
Poesis
Rhetorica

The minor seminary until the fifties has been referred to as a cross between the medieval Latin School and the French School from the Enlightenment. The apostolic schools in Driehuis and Tilburg were no exception to this. The programme of study was like that of the official gymnasium Alpha. Mathematics and natural sciences ranked for a long time as a lower order. That such subjects were taught at all apparently needed an explanation in 1910. In a little snap shot of a lesson in zoology it was explained to the readers of the Annals:

> What is absolutely necessary? Oh so little, but it is useful and that's why. After all a priest needs to know something more than saying Mass and praying the breviary... a priest must also be a developed man, who truly belongs not only at the altar and in the confessional, but in the whole of society.

The sacred and theological element of the priesthood, however, weighed more heavily than the social. The classical languages were important, especially Latin. One started that in the Quinta . In the training much attention was given to aesthetics, and therefore poets like Homer and Virgil were read as well as Herodotus and Cicero. For many boys the world of art and culture was entirely new. The apostolic school on the whole succeeded exceptionally well in imparting love for the arts to the students. Thus Karel Veeger (1924) 'had been struck most by the talents of Fr Adriaan Bomhoff in the Poesis, who emphasized the aesthetic aspect of life. The message he gave us was 'Live beautifully!'' Most of the interviewees recalled the cultural formation as an enrichment of their lives.

French was the most important of the modern languages. At set times French was even used as a medium of communication outside the lessons. In that way a remnant of the MSC's own history was kept alive, but it was also an aftermath of the time when speaking French was a sign of a good upbringing. The apostolic school was strongly attached to manners and, just like the study subjects, marks were given for good manners and conduct.

A great effort was expected from the students. Outside the class hours, study hours were obligatory every day in a separate study hall. Everyone had his fixed place, where he prepared lessons and made his assignments in silence and under the supervision of a supervisor. To stimulate the students the training had been imbued with competition. Dating from the French time there were the weekly and monthly 'notes', as the marks given were called. The prefect of studies or Father Rector read these out in public, from high to low and often with the necessary comment. Everyone was thus informed of other people's performances and did his best not to dangle at the bottom of the order. With the marks for behaviour, on the other

hand, students felt often embarrassed if they turned out to belong to the most exemplary. Whoever performed well could win prizes. In 1926, the book prizes were replaced by 'cards' and 'cards of honour'. A big event was made of the prize-giving. In Chezal-Benoît the archbishop graced the festive gathering in 1875. Peeters, who had won six prizes then, received symbolic crowns instead. The money for the prizes had been given to the poor who had lost everything during the flooding of the Garonne earlier that year.

Rewards were customary in schools everywhere in the Netherlands, but in the apostolic school they were given out not just for the regular programme. For a 'real student' was 'no lazy person. Just as he is active in making fun, so he is always active during study time'. For this reason everyone was encouraged to do extra study time, 'for once for oneself, to plod away and try what one can do in his favourite subject or in several subjects'. Not the teachers but a 'college' of students from the highest class marked the extra work which the younger students delivered. This committee carried the name 'Academia Leonina' in Tilburg, the 'Petrus Canisius Academy' in Driehuis. Twice a year an open session of the Academia took place in the auditorium, and the best works and their authors were commended. Individual performances helped the group. The class which had gained the most 'honour points' at the end of the school year walked off with the prestigious 'shield of honour'. In Driehuis the highest challenge prize between the classes was a gilded silver Canisius medal.

The pressure to perform lifted the boys often to a higher plane. They were trained to obtain the maximum out of themselves, something that they experienced in their later life as a great quality. Also students who easily attained a high level were encouraged to perform at the top of their ability. But such a system has also a down side: the danger of demanding too much of one's strength.

### *Teachers*

Much was demanded not only from the students, but also from the teachers. Teaching in the apostolic school was certainly no sinecure. Besides their lessons the teachers were expected to perform their priestly tasks and their duties as religious. Before breakfast, Kees Ligtvoet had already finished, for example, meditation in the chapel of Driehuis and assistance in one of churches nearby. His teaching day had then to begin and he had long hours as a teacher of classical languages. The classes stopped at four o'clock in the afternoon, but then the work of checking and the preparation of the lessons for the following day had still to be done.

At night he took his turn in making the rounds in the dormitory and there were still spiritual obligations to fulfil, such as spiritual reading and evening prayers. In addition during the weekends, Ligtvoet conducted parish work in places situated further away like Edam, Lisse and Amsterdam. Albert Janssen combined teaching in Driehuis with selling the Jeugdjuweel (Youth Jewel) in the primary schools of the

large cities in the provinces of North and South Holland. Lastly, Ad van Beers was teaching French and at the same time he was the organist.

Whereas the teaching of 12-18 year-olds could be called a demanding occupation, few teachers had actually aspired to take up the teaching profession. What they had been trained for was the priesthood and not becoming a teacher. Teaching at the high level to the students for the priesthood in philosophy and theology was more positively regarded. Such an appointment came also as less of a surprise, because for this the more studious MSCs were approached. Whoever was appointed to the apostolic school resigned himself to the job, often in the hope that it would be only temporary. In the course of time perhaps there would be the prospect of mission or parish work. Particularly in the flowering time between the wars this was no vain hope. As long as the teachers had not specialised and could be used for several school subjects, they could be replaced easily but once the province invested more and more in a quality preparatory training of its teachers, the perspective narrowed.

Gerrit Poels had the feeling that the leadership did not know what to do with him in his last year of theology and therefore appointed him a teacher at the apostolic school. With his arrival, other teachers would be able to take time off to study for a qualification. His first year (1955) was hard. He had to fill up all kinds of gaps in the timetable and, in keeping with it, had many lessons to prepare and correction work to do. What was more, for that year he had no room of his own, only a cell in the student dormitory. On the one hand Poels felt very much at home in the apostolic school. His own school experiences made him 'see and feel the same dichotomy among students'. But even as a teacher he felt himself imprisoned in the 'old French boarding school model'. He had difficulty with the many rules and regularly clashed with confréres if he had been, for example, absent from a spiritual exercise. Nevertheless until its closing in 1964 he remained connected to the apostolic school where he was very popular among the students.

### *Mens sana in corpore sano*

The programme of the apostolic school left the students very little free time. Between the lessons and study hours 'recreation' was indeed on the time table, but it was only partly free to spend in one's own way. On ordinary days there were three short recreations of approximately a quarter of an hour. During the longer one, every day, physical exercise in the open air was obligatory. When the weather was bad, recreation was allowed indoors : hand ball or volleyball, or in the recreation room table tennis, billiards, bridge or chess. Fretwork, wood carving or making rosaries for the missions took place during recreation.

A typical MSC sport, dating from way back, pursued on the 'cour' [courtyard] during recreation, was hunter ball, called after its' French origin 'balle au chasseur'. It was played with a small rock-hard rubber ball. Antoon Smulders: 'The Father Surveillant called out the names of the hunters, and the game started. The rules

were simple: two hunters agreed on whom to catch with their ball. Each time they had caught someone he had to stand with his back to them, about three metres away. Then the best and hardest thrower would aim at his calves. This was no small danger because we little students were wearing short pants and our best hunters often threw the ball as fast as a machine gun. This ceremony made him a member of the hunters' club, and then the three of them would go after the rest until they had all been caught and made members of the hunters' club. After such entertainment you went always happily back to study.' In the second school year, Smulders devised a method to wriggle out of the hated game: 'I eagerly let myself be caught and diligently took my stand to receive their shot, but I did not react to their painful shot, as if I had not felt anything. They waited until it became too much for them! After two days they no longer found it worth their while to involve me in their game.'

The training attached great value to physical exercise and fresh air. Illustrative in this respect is an issue of the Annals from 1910, in which the apostolic school was praised. Under the pretext of 'fresh air and free movement keeps them healthy', gymnastics and football get as much space in the article as the studious side of the training. The article even quotes an apparently famous expression of Brother Willem van Meurs (1856): 'Better an ass dull but strong, than a philosopher able but gone'!

Two afternoons per week the open air recreation was spent outside the Mission House. It meant going out for a walk, playing football or taking a swim. For the boys of Driehuis the swimming pool of IJmuiden East had been reserved once a week. The Tilburg boys went each week to Mariaoord where they had three football fields at their disposal and a stretch of woodland. They had beautified this area along the road to Gilze by digging a pond. Inter-year games were played, for example, between students of the poesis against a team of the tertia and quarta, but also against other institutions. The high point in football was the annual match between the two apostolic schools, alternatively at Driehuis and Tilburg.

Besides physical exercise the director considered music to be indispensable in their education. It was a strongly held conviction that music belonged to a rounded development. Certainly future priests had to be brought up with music. For this reason all students of the apostolic school received singing lessons twice a week. The best voices got a place in the choir. There was also singing during walks. The song collection contained well-known repertoires like 'Klokke Roeland' [Roeland Bell], 'Lorelei' [Loreley] and 'De Zilvervloot' [The Silver Fleet], and more specific works like 'Roomsche Blijdschap' [Roman Joy] or 'Missielied' [Mission Song] with militant texts as 'Our blood is still young and warm and red, it tingles with courage and daring.' If sport was not pursued, the recreations were used for choir and instrument practice. In both Driehuis and Tilburg students were encouraged to learn how to play the piano, organ or harmonium. 'I had to fill up the few daily free half-hours with piano and organ practice,' so said Kees Böhm. There was little time left for real relaxation, just not having to do anything.

Both apostolic schools had not only a choir, but also a brass band. In Driehuis the 'St Engelmundus' was replaced in 1945 by an orchestra. Intramural events like a prize-giving received invariably added lustre with music. The brass band partly defined the face shown to the outside world. It took part in events outside the school, like the Tilburg Procession and the Sacred Heart Tribute at the Heuvel [central square]. Their own school outings were clearly audibly and visibly accompanied by the brass band. They had frequently a spiritual destination, such as a particular church or a pilgrimage place. In 1924, a visit was paid to Nieuw-Herlaer, where the senior classes had been housed temporarily. On the way the company made a stop in Vught to pay a musical tribute to the mother of Provincial Superior Baptist who was celebrating her birthday.

The most important outing was the so-called long walk, the 'nec-plus-ultra' [ultimate] in the area of relaxation. Every year the date and destination remained a surprise until the very last moment, but it was invariably 'a day of fresh air and of play, culminating in a grandiose picnic'. The walk itself proceeded according to a previously determined order. Everyone had a fixed position in the procession, which was led by banner bearers and the brass band brought up the rear. Once at their destination that order of rank was lifted and everyone could move freely. In 1930 the students marched from Tilburg to Moergestel. Near a pool, they pitched camp and the boys got a noon meal of rice, pancakes, a meatball and a small bottle of lemonade. Afterwards there was a game, in which a few went fully dressed into the water. Finally in the grounds of the Ursulines, sandwiches and coffee were served, and after some more music and short speeches the group walked back to Tilburg. After a long day they arrived in the Mission House at nine o'clock at night. The long walk of the Driehuis people was usually to the dunes of Zandvoort. Until 1950, a part was specially reserved for them in the Waterleiding [Waterworks] dunes, so that they did not mix with other seaside visitors.

A second annually recurring high point in seminary life was the feast day of the patron saint of Father Superior. The Mission House took this occasion to show to the outside world that the students were culturally well-grounded. Well in advance the students practised songs which had been written specially for the superior, but more important was the play that the boys performed. In 1931, for example, the choice had fallen on 'Maskaroen' of Gerard Walschap (who had been with the Belgian MSCs). A neatly printed programme underlined that it was a serious performance, which drew invited guests. The evening before the feast of the patron saint, a reception was held in the Mission House. On the day itself there was a High Mass followed by a procession through the garden. The schedule also included an extended dinner, an informal get-together and as a finale the students performed their play in the evening. The next day everyone was given some time of rest to recover.

It was not the only performance of the year but certainly the most important one. Shortly before the students of the rhetorica left school, the poesis played a piece by way of farewell. In addition lustre was added to jubilees by means of a play. Also on St Nicholas' Eve [Dutch day of the exchange of gifts] a play they had writ-

ten was performed, in which St Nicholas himself appeared. For the carnival celebration on Shrove Tuesday, the students chose a carnival prince from their midst. They ate doughnut balls and played games like sack race, bite-the-cake and, in 1929, running in fancy dress.

In the daily life of the apostolic school clubs pepped things up. Above all, the mission clubs were very popular, in which every club concentrated on an area where the Province was active. Thus boys of the Brazilian club occupied themselves with Brazil and the work that was being done there. They thought up campaigns to support the fathers and corresponded with them. The mission ideal was reinforced by missionaries who on a visit during their leave spoke about their work, 'above all in the field of education and social work', according to Hans Kwakman, 'and these became somehow the great examples: Verschueren, Meuwese, the guys from the Philippines, from Brazil'. This happened regularly, because very often one or another MSC had just come home to the Netherlands, temporarily or for good. Not until his formation after the apostolic school did Kwakman get 'a better view of what was actually happening in the Netherlands and of its needs'.

In Driehuis and Tilburg the emphasis had been mostly on the distant mission. A research in 1953 among the students of both schools pointed out that most of them hoped to become missionaries. That applied to two thirds of the boys in both Tilburg and Driehuis. Up to the fifties the schools had in fact propagated that ideal.

### *Behaviour and Attitude*

A very tight rein was kept on the life of the candidates. Outside their study, group activities such as sport, music and stage play were most heartily supported. A hobby like writing met with more difficulty in the apostolic school. Writing a play or contributing to the school newsletters De Spin [The Spider] in Tilburg or Driehuis, helped the whole community and were therefore welcomed. But anyone who tried his hand at poetry quickly aroused the suspicion of pride. In spite of the attention to culture, the poetic types therefore did not have it easy, according to Theo Schouw. An all too serious pursuit of the art was easily taken as vanity. L'art pour l'art was not the intention, which applied to the practice of visual arts as well.

The enjoyment of art required an expert's guidance according to the school. For this reason the vacation tips of 1955 strongly advised against visiting a museum, as well as attending a theatre show. There were strict directives for television and radio broadcasts, in accordance with the episcopal letters about them. Reading, a highly individualistic activity, was considered dangerous without adequate guidance. Restrictions had been made in order to prevent the boys from being confused by what they read. In 1934, the sixteen-year old Kees van de Burg was removed from school, because he had been browsing in the library of the fathers.

'Herewith I come to ask your decision for a very unpleasant case.' So started the letter of Gulickx, superior of Driehuis, to the Provincial concerning this question. The student from Syntax turned out not to be in his cell on Tuesday evening after

the evening prayer. He was sought everywhere until the surveillant came upon him on the staircase on the way to the dormitory. Kees said that he had had a bloody nose and had been in the hall downstairs. When he stayed in bed the next morning because he was not feeling well, Gulickx decided to question the boy, upon which Kees admitted he had not been in the hall but in the library of the fathers. 'And at a second interrogation it came out that he had seen there a book of the author Cats and that he had been there for a while also last week.'

The matter was discussed in a teachers' meeting, where nine instructors voted for dismissal. Only Van Doornik found that measure too severe, whereas van de Lisdonk was undecided. Gulickx himself was also inclined towards dismissal.

> I consider the fact as very serious, both because of the hour and because he admitted to me that he had been there for the book of Cats. A boy in the years of passage will experience trouble from what one calls unhealthy curiosity, but that he went so far 1) at such a moment 2) to go to the library of the fathers, shakes greatly one's faith in the future... My general impression is that that boy does not give truthful, solid guarantees, but must this fact be decisive? All the more I want to know your opinion.

The provincial reacted by express delivery, but this note has not survived. Evidently he confirmed the director in his views, because the latter replied three days later with a report of the dismissal. The mother and an uncle of the boy came in the evening and tried to make Gulickx change his mind. 'They were painful hours, the three hours that they have been here... The uncle has returned this morning to fetch the boy.'

That Kees went in search of titillating reading matter was one thing, but that he broke the rules meant he had gone too far. That violation of obedience scored very heavily against him because the apostolic school aspired not only to educate the boys but the shaping of character was at least as important. In this respect the school direction thought that it could make great demands upon future priests. Stronger still, according to the regulations of 1941, the lack of intention to become a priest and religious was itself a reason to dismiss someone from school. Not only for the study side of the training did the fathers give 'notes' and prizes, but also for behaviour – observance of the rule, the relationship to authority, the association with fellow students, posture and manners, order and tidiness, diligence.

In the books containing the weekly and three monthly grades there are a lot of remarks on the behaviour of the boys. The most recurrent complaints were chatting, playing around, eating sweets, sloppiness and laziness. Hands in the pockets or under the bench, sagged down socks, nail biting, everything was noted down. Outside the classroom the fathers also paid attention to their behaviour; aloofness in sport and play, association with older students and not staying in line during walks come up frequently in the books. No boy escaped the spying looks. There was nearly always something to comment on, even on Jozef Hegge, who after all had been admitted to Driehuis in 1926 for his pure character. In his first year he was called outright 'insufferable'. Most of the trimesters he was reproached mainly for chatter and

a lack of seriousness. Also the tendency to hang out with another boy kept coming back: in the Sexta 'too much with Weetink', in the Quinta with Picard and in the Quarta with Van Gorp. This latter said more about the scrupulous attitude in seminaries with respect to friendship than about the boys in question.

*Special Friendship*

The regulation for the apostolic school of 1914 stipulated: 'All friendship is most strictly prohibited.' In the regulations of 1926, the year Hegge came to Driehuis, that was changed to a prohibition on 'particular friendship'. For the same reason, though a couple of years earlier, two highly musical students were allowed to play a duet only under the supervision of a third person. The then current explanation for this was that the priest's heart had be open later for everyone and not for one more than for another. Hence friendship with a particular person should also be discouraged.

At least as important as the characteristic of exclusion was the danger that a strong friendship developed an erotic charge. Not that this was explained to the students - it was only impressed upon them that two boys had better not spend too much time together. A big taboo rested on intimacy. That erotic feelings existed among growing boys was in itself no shame as long as they were not expressed. By day there was hardly any danger of that, because the programme was full and the boys were supervised all the time. All seminaries used the rule 'numquam solus, raro duo, semper tres'– never be alone, seldom with two but always with three. At night a boy was inevitably alone. In the dormitory supervisors could prevent boys coming together, but what took place in the privacy of the individual cell was outside their reach. The little handbook which all students were given as guidelines for life in the apostolic school, tried to provide for that gap. The chapter 'Behaviour in the dormitory' (in the edition of 1941) impressed on the boys that the beneficial, relaxing effect of sleep was important not only for the here and now 'but also for eternity', and for this reason 'one must proceed with some circumspection'. It was recommended to imitate 'the sleep of innocence' which would have characterised Jesus 'as a growing up lad'. The boys should try to fight their playing-up hormones with pious thoughts. 'He who wakes up at night may quietly think of Jesus in the Holy Tabernacle. He is then possibly the only one in the whole house, perhaps in the whole country, who greets Jesus.'

The best way to protect a boy against himself was by being in the company of others, and rather with more than two, to prevent what Smulders experienced in 1923. A classmate who practised with him for the brass band repeatedly made advances as soon as they were alone. Because the boy made light of Smulders' fending him off, the latter decided to consult his confessor, who referred him to the superior. The 15-year old Antoon was more overcome by his going to the superior than by the sexual approach. Although the regulations stipulated that a boy had at any time access to the director, the threshold for doing so was high. 'It would be the

first time that I was going to knock at the door of my highest boss, the superior! What should I say, what should I do? All that went through my head while I was climbing those two steep stairs. I stood before the door... what a silence... what a monastery! I thought, he had better be there, because a second time...' Gulickx's response to Smulders' report made an even greater impression:

'As if hit by a shock he rushed past me to his prie-dieu in the other corner of his room, looked up at the crucifix and bent his head in his hands. I just stood there, deeply impressed.' Antoon felt intensely sorry for the superior. He remembered how Gulickx had encouraged the boys to talk during the recreations on the cour [courtyard], 'and Cor as someone coming from The Hague liked to make good use of it. When the conversations flagged, the superior looked often with a friendly enquiring look in Cor's direction and most of the time it had an effect. Yes, in the end he was really sympathetic to him, and quite understandably so. And now there was the superior sitting before his crucifix ...'

After some moments Gulickx stood up and addressed Antoon again: 'Well done, boy, thanks, and you will hear about it.' Two days later the classmate had left. 'That did not mean that my peace of mind returned at the same time. After all I felt terribly responsible and wondered time and again: Could I not have done that rather differently? Have I not been rather too rash in acting?' His confessor tried to remove the doubts, 'but this did not mean that the last word had been said concerning this affair. People just remained wondering what had actually happened, that all of a sudden he just disappeared without a trace, without anything even being heard about it!'

The sending away of a student from school always happened as quickly and quietly as possible, without goodbyes or an explanation to the classmates, who naturally started to speculate about the reasons for the absence. They did not occupy themselves with that for long, because no answer would be forthcoming anyway. A casus dimittendi [dismissal case) became a hush-hush affair, the one sent away ignored.

### *Closedness*

In spite of all the opportunities which the students got to develop themselves and in spite of the many jointly undertaken activities the apostolic school nevertheless remained 'a closed world', according to Nico Tromp. He regrets that during the training which he received in the forties, there 'was little appreciation for affectivity and an almost phobic fear of 'particular friendship', banning in effect all friendship for many years'. It was a remark often made, especially by those who, unlike Tromp, did not stay in the congregation. The group which started the Sexta of Tilburg in 1948 assessed at a reunion the influence of their apostolic school years on their later civilian life. The shadow side emerged that most of them had experienced problems in the emotional and affective area. The taboo of particular friendships and of sexuality in general stood for a long time in the way of all intimate contact, according to one of the reunionists, and caused great clumsiness in relationships

with girls.

Of course, within the congregation, other views about friendship and intimacy existed, but these did not influence the rules. The directors often showed a lot of understanding at the level of the individual. Wim Voesten, in the Twenties, could safely tell his superior that he had got sexually aroused during a slumber party. Nothing had happened in fact, but it concerned a boy from a junior class at the school, with whom he had slept during the summer holiday in the same bed. The superior reacted laconically, without reproach or concern. 'His comment was that this was quite normal, and that I would probably look for a girl in civilian society.' The rules remained strict in this area, however, although sometimes attempts were undertaken to change them.

In 1935-36 an anonymous writer in the MSC magazine, Ons Geestelijk Leven [Our Spiritual Life], cautiously denounced the emotional burden placed on friendship. The article discusses the views of the mystic St Aelred about friendship, whereupon the author ventures:

> Would it not be as desirable now, that superiors and directors of souls applied themselves to guiding, to extolling friendship, especially among the young, rather than suppressing it, which after all but half succeeds? ... What do people's hearts, especially young people's hearts, need more than affection?

That the writer broached a delicate topic should be apparent from the fact that he did not publish under his own name. Moreover, he made in the first footnote of his contribution the big reservation

> that at least there may be cases, in which the guidance method here explained can produce delicious fruit. Wanting to use it without distinction in all circumstances would naturally be more than nonsense.

Twenty years later 'friendship within religious walls' came up again for discussion in the same publication in two articles of Piet van Belkom under that title. The father in question was the teacher of Dutch and co-rector in Driehuis. He was well-liked among the students because he took them seriously. Van Belkom had been confronted every so often with an 'absolutely negative attitude' towards friendship in the seminary, so much so that for once he wanted to elucidate the positive sides. To be sure:

> intense affectivity, strong passionate feelings, were not exactly the most suitable basis for a life of continence, but on the other side a rich inner life, a normal affectivity, is necessary for real gentleness, warm-heartedness and love. If charity is rightly the most important characteristic of Christianity – more important than the vow of virginity – it surely merits attention to deal with this problem seriously one day.

Trust and openness are the key words in the argumentation. Van Belkom saw friendship, in the form of intimate conversations with a real kindred spirit, as a necessity to personal and spiritual growth. Expressly, he did not mean sexually tinted

'particular friendship', but unfortunately in many religious communities 'all friendship was in practice devalued to particular friendship'. That turned friendship into a straight taboo:

> Even where no express prohibition exists, a negative atmosphere towards friendship often dominates in such a way that by psychological inevitability it is doomed to grow deformed into eroticism or sentimentality.

'Erotic side effects' in a starting friendship caused him no concerns per se, because they were seldom of a lasting nature. Were this not the case friendship had to be prohibited.

Van Belkom broached a topic that in the fifties was still emotionally charged as is clear from the same issue of Ons Geestelijk Leven. The editor, in the person of Antoon Munsters, felt that Van Belkom's opinion could not remain unchallenged and let his piece be accompanied by a postscript. After an enumeration of moral, social and spiritual dangers of human friendship in a closed community, Munsters decides that the only permitted friendship must be 'supernatural and based on the love of God for the relationship to God fascinates the spiritual man and demands all his psychological strength'.

Van Belkom and Munsters represented different generations within the Dutch Province. Munsters interpreted, more often than not, 'the voice of the tradition'. This voice was in the fifties still dominant, although a change of mentality had already set in and the new period pressed forward inevitably. Hans Kwakman said about that period:

> When I was in Driehuis naturally I sometimes came in contact with contemporaries who attended other schools. Driehuis had been much closed up to the latter years; it was all still very rigid, a real boarding school. It was in fact only during the last years, when Father Eijkens became its superior (1955), that things changed considerably. The atmosphere became more open and pleasant. A clearer distinction was also made between the older students and younger students, which at first hardly existed: the older ones got a bit more freedom, a bit more independence.

Van Belkom left the congregation in 1966 and married. As a teacher he had made an indelible impression on many students. His contagious enthusiasm had imparted to them love for the Dutch language and literature.

In this Van Belkom was a true exponent of MSC education. The criticism of the closed system leaves the fact undisputed that the training in general had been of a high quality and much appreciated. Tromp was grateful for 'the broad cultural formation which included music, stage, cabaret and sport'. The earlier-mentioned reunionists stated that for financial reasons some of them would never have enjoyed a good schooling if it were not for the apostolic school. They considered the cultural formation as an enrichment of their lives and noticed that the instilled discipline had stood them in good stead in their later careers.

Nearly all those cited in this chapter were still children when they reported to the mission houses. Just as in other seminaries, a minority of the students continued with their study for the priesthood after they left the apostolic school. Just like many brothers these boys matured into adults within the congregation. The formation which they had received from home and as MSC aspirants left a large stamp upon their later actions. From an early age their mission motivation had been fanned and kept burning. The urge 'to go', of which the title of this chapter speaks, can hardly be understood without the knowledge of the atmosphere in which they had been nurtured.

'I am going, because I must' was borrowed from the poem, The Missionary, by Anton van Duinkerken dating from the 1930s. The motivational background speaks clearly from the verses:

> For I carry nothing, which I have not received
> Across the mountains and across the sea:
> Each is slave of a hereditary desire
> And carries his past to everywhere.

CHAPTER 4

# 'Ama Nesciri'

The novitiate was the bridge to the religious life. In the novitiate MSC candidates were tested for their suitability as religious and their ideals were put to the test. The motto of Thomas à Kempis, after whose words this chapter is named, was strongly connected with the religious state: 'Love to be unknown', the translation reads.

A novice who made temporary vows at the end of the novitiate belonged to the congregation. Then the study for the priesthood commenced for the 'fratres' or 'scholastics', which forms the subject matter of a later section. Before that, the brothers who walked upon a far from uniform road, come up for discussion. Their training and practice were not in as clearly distinguished fields as those of the fathers. For a long time there was a clear distinction between brothers on the one hand and fathers on the other. They experienced the novitiate separately too. That of the fathers has been the better documented, and is dealt with below.

## The Novitiate

> The novitiate is the furnace, from where the soul comes out entirely reformed, purified of the big defects which marred its beauty. It had been attached to its will; it has become pliable. It was selfish; it has become self-sacrificing. It was sensitive and sensual; it has become strong, brave and mortified.

After the summer holidays of 1929 Antoon Smulders was ready to commence the novitiate. He met the other recent graduates of the minor seminary of Tilburg at a hotel-restaurant in Berg en Dal, from where they intended to walk together to the novitiate house. The group attracted the attention of the other guests, among whom was a club of female students from Nijmegen. It became a lively afternoon with much conversation and singing, but eventually duty called.

'Coming outdoors we saw our castle-like novitiate building standing in the distance. Treading on the hotel pavement we turned round quickly for a last farewell. This was to become a true farewell from the world: so many people with visible sympathy and nice youngsters behind the windows, tangibly pitying, with here and there a hesitant waving of the hand.' Spontaneously the would-be novices started to sing their own 'student toast':

14. 'De Wijcherd', Berg en Dal

MSC lifts the glasses singing
MSC wishes welfare and health
Wishes happiness to the wise and the fools
Up with the glass, and sing with us;
Welfare and health, and health, and health!

Just then the postulants of Driehuis got off at the bus stop. 'They joined in immediately, calling 'Encore! Encore!' which we complied with immediately, now with full choir. Those in the restaurant started to tap on the window panes, laughing, and waving us off. The novitiate could begin.'

It was an exuberant start at the threshold of a year of practising silence and mortification. The location was absolutely splendid. Since 1927 the novitiate had been established in 'De Wijcherd', a country house dating from 1907 comprising of 15 hectares of land (with woods). The MSCs had been able to buy it for half of the asking price, not because the salesman was so well-disposed towards the congregation, rather the opposite. According to an easement De Wijcherd could not even be sold to a Catholic institution. This provision was bypassed by having the Tilburg architect F. De Boer act as middleman. The price had dropped to a hundred thousand guilders, because, according to people from the surrounding area the place was haunted. The original occupant who commissioned Architect Hanrath to build the country house was a certain Wendelaar who lived the life of a hermit. In 1921, on the eve of a trip to Spitsbergen, he shot himself through the head in De Wijcherd.

Since then, it was said there was a curse on the house.

The new batch experienced a bridging month first, the postulancy, in the same accommodation as the novices. During this trial period the novices showed the postulants how to behave. Eugène van Vught wrote: 'If you dropped a spoon or fork during meals, a novice would drop on his knees beside you. You understood from that that in the future you yourself would have to kneel on the ground at such a 'misdemeanour'.' The new way of life initially stirred wonderment among the postulants: 'When I entered I hardly recognized my fellow students, who had entered the year before. I and my companions in misfortune were shocked by the metamorphosis, both in their appearance and in their conversations, their 'piety'. Our reaction was: this will not happen to us! But after a year matters were no different with us,' according to Arie Dijkzeul (1917).

On September 20 the trial month was over and the solemn investiture of the new batch took place. They were going to wear the cassock and with that the postulants became novices. This happened in the evening, in their own church, which also served as the parish church. The next day the old batch completed the novitiate by making their temporary profession. This group set off for the scholasticate.

### *In Cassock*

'I have worn the cassock for just a couple of hours,' wrote Pierre Vullings (1868) to Henri Peeters. The very first letter that he was allowed to write as a novice went naturally to his friend from his home town. Vullings saw in him a sort of older brother and during the summer holidays in Venray he had often visited Peeters' mother. Vullings was full of good cheer, but he asked his friend for support:

> Help me forget the world. I desire no more of it, or at least, I don't want to desire anything more of it. I must learn to live with Our Dear Lord only, yes, I must and I shall and I want to.

His extreme state of mind reflects the intensity of this trial year:

> I feel a strength of will that I have not known until now. My fight is heavy; a thousand shortcomings, oh, much more perhaps, crowd before my eyes. With all that, however, I am so cheerful, so free in heart. I laugh more in one day than I used to in a year.

Peeters himself retained bad memories of his novitiate of 1877. He and his classmates were just sixteen years old when they became novices in St Gérand-le-Puy. 'No one can ever justify this decision to me with French gesticulation and sentimental devoutness.' According to Peeters it would have been better had the leadership allowed three more school years to pass by in order to get a bit more mature novices.

But also for those with a longer preparatory schooling it was a considerable transition from the apostolic school to the novitiate. Unlike Vullings, who was used to wearing a uniform at the Little Work of Charity, it gave Kees Böhm (1935) 'a ludicrous feeling to walk on the street, at the age of 19, in a cassock and wearing a hat'.

Not only externally, but also with respect to content, the novitiate differed radically from the apostolic school. Jacques Janssen (1936) wrote: 'Until then training had been directed at finding one's way around in culture, at getting the taste for what is beautiful in nature and culture. From now on what it was about was to consider all that as inferior.' The novitiate was a test of the spiritual life and the novices had to learn to renounce the world.

Most of them had not been fully prepared for what awaited them. Nico Tromp wrote:

> To test the novices, that is, to check on their obedience and pliability, unreasonable demands were made, unreasonable punishments imposed. The candidates, who usually did not realize that a 'spiritual life' was expected of them (they wanted to work, to become missionaries), got as a result a false picture of their future life.

That certainly held true for Böhm, who only in the novitiate realised that an MSC was assumed to aspire to be a religious, while he had only aspirations to be a missionary. In the first month Böhm was very homesick. 'I was prepared to crawl back home. Yet I did not want to come home with my tail between my legs and be told: all the sorrow afflicted on mother for six years has been for nothing!'

The daily exercises of the apostolic school - morning meditation, Holy Mass, examination of conscience, rosary and spiritual reading - were continued in the novitiate, even increased with the office of the Blessed Virgin. The pressure of examinations and preliminaries ceased and made room for reflection and deepening of the spiritual life. As religious, the novices had to live according to the rule, i.e., MSC constitutions, and become familiar with ascesis. 'It stirred up much in me, I felt myself become 'tougher'', Kaandorp (1928) remembers of his novitiate. 'I discovered a lead in my life.'

Study time now consisted mostly of preparing papers and writing essays (or learning how to do so) from conferences and spiritual reading, relating what had been read and reflected upon in a spiritual lecture or book. Every Thursday evening there was a Holy Hour, an hour of adoration that went back to Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Olives. The knowledge acquired at the apostolic school had to be kept up to date once a week, so that those subjects would not totally fade away, but for the rest the adage was the time-honoured 'ora et labora'. The latter consisted of daily work in the garden and in the house, an hour before noon and three quarters of an hour in the afternoon. The sports accustomed to in the apostolic school had been reduced to walking the country estate twice a week. Only in July, the holiday month, could a lot more time be spent outdoors. The number of lessons and compulsory conferences were reduced, so that there was free time left - to be spent, though, entirely on the Wijcherd compound.

Quarterly reports monitored the progress of the novices that centred on two questions. How was the spiritual health? The novice was evaluated on his critical ability, character and will. Equally important was whether he had a religious spirit. To determine this no less than eight qualities were put to the test:

- piety, religious life
- regularity
- detachment, mortification
- sense of sacrifice, dedication
- obedience
- attitude towards authority
- relationship with confrères
- pursuit of perfection

Finally every novice was evaluated on zeal, attitude and manners. Did he have any clear shortcomings and did he do his best to combat them?

If everything went according to plan, the novice asked in writing at the end of June for admission to the vows. The novice master drew up on the basis of the reports a recommendation for the provincial superior. If this was positive, the novice received after one month a testimonial formulated in Latin which he had to fill in. With the approval of the general administration in Rome he could then in September, in the presence of the provincial superior, take the three simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. With that he became a member of the congregation.

### *Other Worldly*

'I went there with the idea: If I only get through. They may do as they please; it lasts after all but one year. Seen with the eyes of today, it was rather narrow-minded. I found some things rather strange, like having your head shaved bald,' according to Jan Prins (1918). The batch of Sjef van de Sande (1926) got the novice master to promise 'not to have us shaved bald and not to treat us like children'.

Bald or not, Prins acknowledges: 'Just the same, a basis for the development of the spiritual life has been laid there.' This was mostly due, according to him, to the Thirty Day Exercises of St Ignatius. While the novices had had an experience of three-day retreats in their junior seminary, now the 'big retreat' opened up for them in Lent. After ten days of total silence the novices had a day when they could talk and smoke, a sequence which was repeated two more times. Retreats of a week's duration each were conducted after the arrival of the novices and before they took their vows.

Outside the retreats speaking was allowed for only an hour in the afternoon and another hour in the evening. Though he found it difficult then, Ton Zwart acknowledges after the event that to this he owes his love of silence. But 'the novitiate was also a year in which we laughed tremendously'. His group rebelled against the First Fridays, with the multitude of exercises which were part of them. 'We went on strike to reduce this to spiritual acrobatics of a lesser degree,' a pressure tactic that was unthinkable before the sixties, however much dissatisfaction may have existed among the novices. Jacob Haan (1932): 'Not a bit of an introduction into contemplative life. The novitiate was purely a training in blind obedience.' Right after Haan's year the Dutch province thought that the programme needed some adapta-

tions.

For a long time it had held on to the directorium (guidelines) from 1926 and to a work of spiritual readings from 1915. The need for something more modern, however, had made itself felt for quite some time as well. A commission consisting of Adriaanse and the former novice masters Kouw, Van Maanen and Verzijlberg, made changes in the directorium in 1952, which they presented to a trio of confréres. The comment told it straight: 'I believe that this booklet will do more harm than good to the candidates; they will just take a dislike to all that pious stuff whose meaning, importance and coherence they do not see.'

In the first place the three commentators had been astonished that the draft was given only 'to a few old dopes', namely, Zandvliet (71), Van Mierlo (68) and Muijsers (80). Why was advice not asked from the young confréres schooled in psychology, Pennock and Lion, 'who are trained at great expense to the province and may then keep their wisdom to themselves?' Muijsers in particular criticised the mentality that he noticed in many MSCs and of which the commission seemed to be an exponent. Was it not first and most importantly needed to debate the method of the novitiate, given the large numbers of those who almost immediately afterwards requested release from their vows? 'The latter question seems not to have arisen at all; we just adopt once more the old 'tested' system, it saves time and effort; and all that new stuff nowadays, those psychologists and their depth psychology, all nonsense. Look at those old fathers of ours, they are the great men and they did it without the Directorium.'

The aged Muijsers put into words what he heard, to his irritation, all about him. Also Zandvliet thought that the directorium was not that important as long as the why of the exercises was explained to the novices. Both critics were convinced that this was the real problem. The proposed change made the impression 'as if the world has stood still since 1915, while if there has been life anywhere it is notably in the spiritual area'. They advised that the spiritual readings of Marmion be given to the novices instead of the moralising Rodriguez, 'the résumé of which they tear to pieces as soon as the gate of the novitiate swings closed behind them on September 21'. It will not do to confine novices of the fifties within the atmosphere of 1915 as if 'the young have not changed at all since that time and two world wars have gone by unnoticed'.

Nico Tromp, who experienced that novitiate of the old school, says about it:

> In general the candidates were dealt with rather frivolously and amateurishly. The reasons for dismissal were frequently arbitrary and critical spirits in particular were not well liked. The novitiate year in that form was in fact a wasted year The spiritual formation provided was average, if not below the mark, although the intentions were sublime.

Also Piet Smout (1927) found the introduction to the religious life difficult:

> I felt becoming estranged from the world... Afterwards I realised that the training did not actually succeed in awakening in me insight and a real commitment to the essence of a life dedicated to God.

The novitiate of 1944/45 took place under extreme bizarre circumstances. With the best of intentions every effort was made even then to try to keep the world out. Theo van de Ven:

> The parachutists landed in Groesbeek around mid-September, near the Waal Bridge, near our house in Berg en Dal. The older novices who took temporary vows on September 21, could not depart from the house and were forced to stay, something for which 'the tradition' had not been prepared, resulting in all kinds of improvisations. The novice master, for God knows what reason, already an exceptionally nervous man, got upset and became still more bizarre. Because the soldiers failed in crossing the Rhine at Arnhem our house found itself in the lines of battle with the Germans behind and the Americans in front of us. For safety reasons the entire region had to be evacuated and after some wanderings we arrived at the convent of 'our Daughters' in Tilburg, where just previously the German military occupation had ended.

After this followed months of too many people in too small a space, in the midst of 'a noisily merry-making neighbourhood which celebrated its 'liberation' exuberantly and tangibly'. A number of novices had under these circumstances great difficulty in staying and decided to leave, but because the north was still occupied, a number could not go home yet. Thus the novices who persevered lived together with boys permitted to go out in the streets and who did not have to live according to the rules.

In the memory of Piet Schreurs that novitiate is remembered especially

> by the total news blockade which the novice master, Verdonk, had imposed on his sheep. The less they knew of 'the world' and were involved in what was going on, the more they could know of God and love him... Even the map, with the marks of the fronts, which hung beside the radio in the coffee room (where we had to clean once a week), was completely covered on cleaning day. We were young guys of about 20 years of age, and in many areas of the world, sometimes just some kilometres away, thousands of contemporaries of ours were suffering and dying daily at the fronts... but we were not allowed to know it!

### *The Novice Master*

The largest dropping-out among novices in the history of the Dutch Province took place in the years 1942-1947, 47 in all. Joop Verdonk, novice master since 1940, was replaced by Antoon Verzijlberg in August 1946. In that messy year of the changing of the guard eleven boys quit. The contrast of a world at war as compared with the closed novitiate undoubtedly played a part in the high fall-out rate. Also the group element seems to have been a factor, in view of real peak years in which continually nine or ten quit: 1937, 1951, 1959, 1960 and 1967. If the chemistry in a group did not work and a few were dominantly on another track, all were influenced negatively. But in addition the role of the novice master cannot be underestimated. Siep van Baars (1924) felt

> completely at the mercy of the whims of the novice master; much teasing and even pestering by this man who himself seemed unbalanced; you never knew whether he was joking or meant something to be taken seriously. We said to each other: we won't leave on account of him, we'll stick it out. To be honest I must say that his meditations, especially during the long retreat, were outstanding.

While in the apostolic school one had dealings with several fathers, during the novitiate there were but two: the novice master (magister) and his assistant (socius). The former in particular determined the atmosphere. It was partly a question of the character of this person and his method to appeal to a novice. While the novitiate of Jan Boelaars 'was a horror, with a fool as a novice master', in the eyes of Nico Wijte the same person was no less than 'a giant of a man, who made something of it'. The subject here is Jan van Maanen, who to Wijte's delight was a passionate magician:

> He could exaggerate situations a bit, but he did that, I believe, because otherwise life would have been altogether ethereal. He had enough jokes and pet subjects – imagine yourself in that job for twelve consecutive years! You would probably also start to think and act a bit strangely. At that time we considered it as fairly normal, but I believe that actually it was already abnormal then. Nevertheless the majority endured it rather well and realised the relativity of it.

Still no less than twenty-two novices left in the years 1937-1939, the largest peak of the thirties. This was probably the reason why another novice master was appointed in 1940. Dirk Kouw, who took office after Verzijlberg, Verdonk's successor, would occupy this position also for more than a decade.

Naturally those who were novice masters for years in succession could change their conception of the job. Clearly that was the case with Kouw. In his very first year as novice master he 'dealt with us in a very ordinary way', according to Wim van Betuw. Also Kees Braun labels Kouw's early regime as 'very mild' – certainly in proportion to 'the rather rough novitiate at the Capuchins' that Braun had first experienced. Ten years later that same novice master was the reason for another 'kouwboy', Koos Zwaanenburg, to leave the novitiate:

> One marking event in the novitiate had been the deciding factor for me to stay, exactly at the moment that I had actually decided to pack up and clear out because of the many absurdities which we had to endure from the novice master. When I could not bear it any more, I fled to the grape glasshouse. Brother Janson found me there. He said that I had better stop crying, because otherwise we would get salty grapes. I had expressed my decision that I wanted to go away, whereupon the novice master had said, 'Of course I cannot stop you, but you leave when I give permission, because I am your superior!' After having poured my heart out to Brother Janson he said: 'Do you persevere to become a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, or do you leave, just because of a superior who today sits on the throne and tomorrow will probably be an ordinary soldier again? Or do you desire it because you love the Heart of Our Dear Lord?'

The brother advised him to go and sit in the chapel. 'You don't even have to pray,

just listen, and the answer will come by itself.'

> As I left the glasshouse with that advice, he added: 'Do not forget that those people also have the booklet they must follow!' Once in the chapel, the meaning of Brother Janson's words lit up in me. When the day came when the novice master called me and said: 'You can go!' I answered at first in order to make him angry: 'I am not going!' He did not become angry, but said as if he couldn't care less: 'Well, it's up to you.'

Lambert Janson made the difference for Zwaanenburg between leaving and staying. Before the forty year old brother ended up in Berg en Dal, he had worked among other places in the missions (Tanimbar) and during the Second World War he was a nurse in the Klokkenberg. Henk Groenewegen (1934) remembers how he managed to get around the speaking prohibition between brothers and novices. 'When Brother Janson wanted to tell you something he washed his hands and said to the faucet what he wanted to tell me beside him.

Zwaanenburg completed his formation and became a missionary in Brazil. More than thirty years later during a holiday he visited his novice master at the home for elderly religious in Tilburg.

> He sat in his wheelchair, looked at me and said: 'I say, Koos, it is you. How nice!' He recognised me and called me by my name after more than 30 years! I was flabbergasted. After twenty minutes talking, he suddenly grasped me by the arm and asked: 'At that time in the novitiate, I did not come down too hard on you, did I?'

Zwaanenburg answered that he would not like to repeat that part of the formation, but that he and others could now laugh heartily 'about so much stupidity'.

> 'So,' Kouw said, and remained somewhat quiet. Then he grasped my arm and said: 'Yes, that, I must say, was exactly the intention, you see!'

*Probatio*

Although Zwaanenburg describes the novitiate as 'one big institution of idiocy', he adds to that immediately: 'Nevertheless it has prepared us to be able to be steady in all sorts of idiocies of life so far!' In that sense Kouw had been justified.

The probatio, the testing of the novice, was a fundamental element of the novitiate. This ranged from training for obedience and exercises to bend the will to physical discomfort or even pain. As late as 1960, the once obligatory self-chastisement (flagellatio) was strongly recommended as a morning ritual. In any case it was presumed that on Fridays everyone was to use pain clamps or rod on himself in the privacy of his cell. On the personal level Ad van Beers (1921) experienced a sudden terrible toothache in the week before the first religious profession at Berg en Dal.

> Requesting the novice master if I could go to the dentist, he answered: 'Now, would that not be a beautiful last little sacrifice of your novitiate year ?' I said: 'Thank you very much, Father!'

Eugène van Vught has a vivid recollection of the 'childish assignments'. 'A broken plate? That is against poverty, so on your knees for half an hour with the shards in your hands!' Dijkzeul remembers that whoever made a noise with the cutlery during meals, knelt beside his chair until the novice master or the socius permitted him to continue eating. Finally, Böhm speaks of

> medieval situations in the field of hygiene and health care - taking a shower and changing underwear once in three weeks. The cassock was never washed. Furthermore it was prohibited to drink outside meals, even while sweating profusely after heavy work.

After 1957 another wind blew. The caprices and absurdities, in short 'the theatrical hypocrisy' (Tromp), were over and done with. Time had caught up with the old tested system but also the person of the new novice master fitted in very well, Willem Jaspers. His novices speak of him in superlatives: 'very sympathetic', 'very wise', and even 'a holy man' in the eyes of Jan Koopmans (1938) and Ton Zwart. Not that under Jaspers' regime all were now entirely satisfied (judging by the strike already mentioned), but the excesses of the novitiate had given way to humaneness. Nevertheless Jaspers was an ascetic, 'terribly strict, especially on himself', but he combined this with 'a disarming sense of humour' and he adopted an understanding attitude towards his novices. This made him very well-liked. Pieter Rozemeijer wrote of him: 'Jaspers won me over for the MSC.'

The novitiate of Rozemeijer in 1959-60 went through a 'tragic demolition'; more than half of the class quit. The time of the massive departures of priests had come. In his next function as provincial superior Jaspers got plenty to do with those departures; in seven cases it concerned priests who had been his novices. One of them was Harry van de Ven (1940). Ordained in 1965, he left as early as 1968, among other things because of 'the suffocating, dogmatic framework of the Roman Catholic Church'. The novitiate, in spite of 'the very sympathetic direction', was actually already an omen. Van de Ven describes that period as 'a survival journey, a formidable challenge, but also distressing'. Herman Vernooij (1939) missed 'real dialogue' and felt himself for this reason very much alone. Also Kwakman, in spite of his praise for Jaspers, speaks of 'a grey period of my life... It had all been based on the traditional spiritual exercises, with a strong emphasis on the exact fulfilment of all obligations, but there was very little personal accompaniment'.

The latter proved to be the greatest 'probatio' for most of the novices, irrespective of the period in which they made their novitiate. 'The suppression of the person, in order to make him toe the line', elicits even from Frans van Baars (1931) the comparison with a concentration camp. What is certain is that in the novitiate the 'ama nesciri' ideal was being tested to the utmost.

**Novitiate: locations and novice masters since 1880**

*Students for the Priesthood*

Haaren 1880-1882: C. Piperon
Tilburg 1882-1886: C. Piperon
Borgerhout1886-1890: C. Piperon
Tilburg 1890-1891: F. Klotz
Chezal-Benoît 1891-1897: C. Piperon
Tilburg 1897-1899: C. Lindeboom and B. Okhuijzen
Arnhem 1899-1911: B. Okhuijzen and W. Muijsers
Tilburg 1911-1912: J. Wemmers
Arnhem 1912-1915: A. Feijen
Someren 1915-1917: A. Feijen
Oosterhout 1917-1922: A. Feijen and W. Muijsers
Arnhem 1922-1924: W. Muijsers
Berg en Dal 1924-1927: H. Corsten
1927: L. Houtepen and B. Okhuijzen
1928-1940: J. van Maanen
1940-1946: J. Verdonk
1946-1949: A. Verzijlberg
1949-1957: Th. Kouw
1957-1963: W. Jaspers
1963-1966: P. Gommeren

*Brothers*

The novitiate of the brothers was initially done together with that of the students for the priesthood and up to 1890 it was directed by Piperon. Afterwards the brothers' novitiate was moved to Tilburg. The only item recorded up to 1900 is that Clemens Offermans was novice master in 1893. The twentieth century had a complete record:

Tilburg 1900-1907: H. Peeters and C. Vullings
Leuven (Louvain) 1907-1914: H. Corsten
Tilburg 1914-1920: H. Corsten
1920-1925: A. Roxs
1925-1927: M. de Lange
1927-1929: H. Corsten and P. Gulicks
1930-1939: P. Arts
1939-1942: A. Verzijlberg
Stein 1942-1946: A. Verzijlberg
Tilburg 1946-1953: H. van de Heuvel
Stein 1953-1965: J. van Beek and A. Verzijlberg
Brummen en Stein 1965—1967: A. Vugts

## Brothers

Up to the fifties most of the brothers made their novitiate after a much shorter preliminary stay with the MSC. Their religious life started with the postulancy, a trial period during which the necessary spiritual stock-in-trade was given to them and which was deepened and expanded in the novitiate. For a while the novitiate for brothers lasted two years. In this way they acquired a degree of familiarity with the congregation when they took their vows and thus became members. Up to 1969 it was customary for the brothers to affirm their temporary vows after three years for another three years, whereupon perpetual profession followed.

In 1933 the brothers were called 'noble youths', who

> too old to study, or without liking for it or success in it, but want to put their sturdy limbs rather than their slow brains, their vigorous physical strengths, their practical sense, in the service of their Dear Lord.

They were the workhorses of a congregation which numerically and administratively had always been dominated by the fathers. Although founded as a congregation for priests, Chevalier expressed as early as 1855 his desire to involve also lay people in it. Instead of placing them in a separate foundation, he wanted to give them the chance to join the MSC as brothers. They could take responsibility for the more material side of community life. Moreover he saw fitting activities for them in the Archconfraternity of our Lady of the Sacred Heart and in the primary education of children. In 1869 (Formula Instituti), it was laid down that the brothers could use the same title as the fathers; all were Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Henceforth the brothers should take off their civilian clothes and wear a cassock, be it a different one to that of the fathers.

Perhaps in this way Chevalier wanted to make membership more attractive for them, because initially there was no particular rush to join. During the first twenty-five years of the congregation hardly any candidates presented themselves to become 'frères coadjuteurs'. In 1864 they numbered only three, in 1879 just five, as against 29 Fathers and as many scholastics. Shortly afterwards the tide would turn. The departure from France and the spread of the congregation across Europe made the congregation better known and increased its numbers in several countries. At the same time the start of the missionary work exerted a tremendous attraction. The pioneer work in Rabaul (1882), Thursday Island (1884), Yule Island (1885) and the Gilbert Islands (1887), translated itself immediately into more vocations. Germany and especially the Netherlands proved to be a veritable breeding ground for brothers. Up to 1900 the Netherlands trained 81 professed brothers as compared with 73 scholastics..

There was so much to do! Klaas Kieft, for example, applied to the congregation in 1889 and as early as 1891 he departed for the Bismarck Archipelago. The almost 40-year-old from Volendam was an experienced shipmaster and the earlier he could sail over there, the better. Also Henri Adan, some years younger, an able carpenter,

had gone very soon to Papua New Guinea. Both made their perpetual professions in the tropics when they were already experienced missionaries.

*Volendam*

In 1888, Henri Peeters received an invitation from J. A. de Rijk of the Hageveld seminary of the Diocese of Haarlem, to visit Volendam. De Rijk thought that Volendam could provide enough shipmasters for the mission and he was encouraged in that idea by his former student, Jan van der Weijden, curate in Volendam. Peeters and De Rijk proceeded to Volendam on September 16, a Sunday, because then the fishermen of Volendam were not at sea. The curate introduced them to Klaas Kieft, an experienced shipmaster, who was interested in managing a boat on the missions. Once Kieft had taken the lead, more applications followed:

1) Klaas Kieft = Jacobus (1852) Prof. March 5, 1890 † 1897 New Pommeren
2) Jan Kras = Anselmus (1867) Prof. May 15, 1890 † 1892 New Britain
both were clothed with the cassock on Feb.10, 1889 and they adopted a religious name.

3) Piet Zwarthoed = Edmundus (1861) Prof. May 7, 1891 † 1898 Yule Island
clothed with the cassock on June 30, 1889.

4) Jan Pooijer = Aloysius (1869) Prof. Oct. 4, 1891 † 1922 New Guinea
5) Evert Zwarthoed (1870) ill as novice returned home, † 1893 Volendam
both clothed with the cassock in 1890.

6) Kees Zwarthoed = Arnoldus (1869) Prof. Aug. 15, 1893 † 1908 English NG
clothed with the cassock in 1892

7) Kees Hansen (1881) Prof. Sept. 24, 1899 † 1911 Yule Island
clothed with the cassock in 1898.

Hansen, the last one to join, was under the threat of being sent home in 1902. From Borgerhout he begged the Provincial to reconsider because he really had a vocation: 'I have started to follow the crucified Jesus; should I now leave his dear children, the Kanaks, to their ignorance? Oh yes I have often been stubborn, but I promise you, I will mend my ways.'

In the nineteenth century it was mostly twenty-year-olds and thirty-year-olds, who had completed their studies and mastered a trade, who applied as brother candidates. What was desired from them above all was that they contributed their energy and craftsmanship. Contrary to the proportions in the congregation elsewhere, more brothers than fathers kept coming from the Netherlands and Germany until the First World War.

A small report from 1907 shows the following proportions (arranged according to the country of origin):

| | Priests | Scholastics | Brothers | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Netherlands | 72 | 28 | 103 | 203 |
| Belgium | 19 | 15 | 8 | 42 |
| Germany | 73 | 47 | 92 | 212 |
| Italy | 18 | 8 | 4 | 30 |
| France | 114 | 23 | 15 | 152 |
| Great Britain | 10 | 1 | - | 11 |
| Spain | 5 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Australia | 5 | 30 | 2 | 37 |
| U.S.A | 4 | 5 | - | 9 |
| Canada | 1 | - | 5 | 6 |
| Total | 321 | 159 | 231 | 711 |

Kieft and Adan were sent out to practise their trade in the missions. With that aim they had applied to the congregation but as the number of brothers increased it became more difficult for everyone to find appropriate work. Moreover more and more students were applying to the apostolic school and the MSCs spread out over several formation houses in the Netherlands. All those communities could be kept going only with a maximum effort of the brothers. Henri Peeters acknowledged in 1907: 'The services they render are immensely great in all respects. The whole house, garden and stables testify that the brothers are all real Dutchmen and have no need to be taught by housekeepers or maids how to clean and how to maintain cleanliness.' There was work in abundance but often not in accordance with their preferences. The domestic work especially seldom appealed to the ambitions and ideals with which brothers had come to the MSCs, a fact which had not escaped Peeters either:

> Who reports and describes to us with what an intense longing those religious workers long for the wide mission field... Especially with a view to those missions and those services the brothers are accepted in large numbers and trained in all kinds of trades. What a profound shame that the mission box fills up too slowly and so many cannot reach their enthusiastically desired goal, or only years later.

Some were heavily weighed down by the practice which deviated so much from the missionary ideal, although nothing of it could be noticed in the Tilburg house according to Peeters: 'You shall see men who gladly and cheerfully are always busily up and about, real missionary blood, people in a hurry without a fuss.' In reality of course a great danger for the vocation lurked in the disappointed expectations. Whoever did not manage to get over his disappointment left the society. Others tried to make the best of it. In 1923, Jos Steengraver reacted to his assignment to Stein with a joke. In the first letter he wrote from the new house to the brothers in

Tilburg, he parodied the travel reports of missionaries. From Tilburg he had set out

> straight across the large Sahara desert of North Brabant. Yes, I must tell you that I was really glad when our train travelled on and at last from afar we caught sight of the majestic banana and palm trees of our so beloved mission field. The first port where we landed was Weert, a splendid city located between the palm and coconut trees with dense foliage on the bank of the Zuid-Willems Canal. In this city one finds big iron factories and foundries and the highest tower of the island Limburgia is located there.

Almost twenty years later, though, Steengraver would leave.

### *The Barrier*

A second potential source of tension was the fact of being a brother in a priests' congregation. The Redemptorists had almost been ruined as early as 1756 due to that dichotomy. Brothers had risen in revolt against their being put into second place to the fathers, but they had to back down. However, during the whole history of the Redemptorists that tension remained a factor of consequence. The MSCs did not stay free of it either, although it never came to a revolution. However, in 1896 Petrus Onckels from Limburg left, followed by a few other brothers, to found his own congregation (See chapter 1). The brothers' congregation wanted to address itself to the apostolate among poor children, and thus expressed having aspirations in the social welfare area. In the Dutch Province frustrations seem to have developed mostly into personal dramas: whoever felt seriously underrated did not call the system into question, but left.

Just as with the Redemptorists, MSC brothers and fathers were members of one and the same congregation, but this did not mean that they were each others' equals. A publication of the Dutch province dated 1933 spoke of 'a great privilege of lay brothers who belong to a priests' congregation: that they always have the guidance and support and example of their own confréres'. An MSC Brother may consider himself fortunate for

> the good guidance of his reverend brother priest, who at confession or direction will preach to him the beauty of the common vocation, and present and explain to him the congregation's own resources.

In the spiritual exercises and the day-to-day contacts both limited themselves as much as possible to their own group, so that in the big houses they actually formed two separate communities. The quotes prove clearly that a hierarchical division indeed existed. The fathers formed the first class because of the prestige of their ordination, whereas the brothers formed the second class as lay members. That distinction in itself was for a long time not a point at issue. In 1907 Peeters could write calmly:

> They are Christian enough not to desire familiarity with priests, and they understand very well that the religious life may not remove the barrier wanted by God and the

> Church, between priest and layman.

Far into the fifties study and scholarship commanded respect in the law-abiding Netherlands. Added to that for a priest was the fact that through his study he had not only proved to have a good mind (and therefore to be an educated man), his ordination made him above ordinary mortals in the eyes of Catholics because it put him in a position to administer the holy sacraments. The priest represented Christ on earth and lay people needed his mediation in order to come to God. Fathers had thus sacred spiritual tasks to perform, whereas practical work, but just as important, was awaiting the brothers.

The 'social question' at the beginning of the nineteenth century was mostly outside the church, and hardly touched, according to Peeters, the 'devout workers who sanctify themselves through the vows and manual labour'. Nevertheless, deeper in Tilburg, another congregation took the decision to convert into a strictly lay congregation. Until 1916 the Brothers of Zwijsen had consisted of both priests and brothers, but the cooperation left so much to be desired that it led to a separation. Unlike the MSCs, the priests constituted the minority in their congregation and the field was dominated by the brothers. Furthermore, the Brothers of Zwijsen could tackle the problem a lot more decisively, because their organisation was not so complex with branches in different countries and having the central administration at a distance.

### *Second Class*

Within the MSCs the fathers determined the policies. They made the appointments and saw to the observance of decisions. Up to 1969 the distinction between the first and the second class remained formally in force. The outside world, 'superficial people' according to the publication from 1933 quoted above, felt mistakenly sorry for the brothers and their 'Cinderella jobs', for in reality brothers and fathers 'had fun together sharing what they had been told about the brothers' so-called deplorable destiny in their work of service: rich fathers and poor brothers!' It was again the fathers who combated the negative representation, frequently with a skilful pen. According to the author quoted here, Jan van den Bergh, the atmosphere was one of:

> 'Thank you, Brother', 'At your service, Father'- it reflects so nicely the good relationship of the two members of one and the same congregation. Twin brothers know what to expect from each other, they understand each other better than outsiders, they help each other wholeheartedly.

In this context, many years later, another father, Jan Bovenmars (1923), remarked: 'From the current point of view I can say that although we cared about our brothers they were considered too much as workers, and too little as brothers. Frans van Baars (1931) typifies the earlier contact as:

> in fact inhuman. The brothers were often like slaves. I remember once when it was raining a father called the brother who had to scrub the recreation room all sorts of names and kicked over his buckets because the room was not available.

Henk Groenewegen (1934) too remembers an almost feudal relationship, with situations as 'a brother painting on a step-ladder and being asked by the father who was sitting in his easy chair: 'Brother, can you hand me the matches?'

Bovenmars observes correctly that 'the brothers have suffered much' from the attitude of several fathers. Until today a number of brothers find the subject too painful to touch, or one that stirs their emotions: 'Up to 1980 I have very bad memories of it; to think about it, gives me a terrible heartache all over again.' Others have had no nasty personal experiences or went imperturbably their own way, like Kees van den Berg. He remembers how his confréres in Driehuis reacted with shock when once as a house worker he gave a father a sound lecturing. The latter attempted to go the shortest route which had just been mopped instead of taking another stairway.

> The others said: And what if he still would have passed that way? I said: he could very well have done that, but then I would not have gone after him anymore, I would have simply continued working. They can also understand, can't they, that if it is wet, they must not splash through. But what if he were the superior? He should go the other way too, even if he was the Pope.

Later, as a carpenter in the mission, Van den Berg was often faced with extreme economy. In Mindiptana (Dutch New Guinea) he was not given what he needed without much ado. 'At a given moment, when I asked for a thing or two, I was told: 'follow the example of Brother Ariëns who had to hammer bent nails straight and file new points.'' Van den Berg, who had known Marius Ariëns (who had meanwhile left the society) in his last mission years, reacted vehemently:

> 'You can cite what you want, but do not use someone who has left us and probably through our own fault, because we have not given him what he needed. Or is it the intention that I leave also?' I heard nothing more of it!

While priests were easily compared with Christ, and Jesus in his younger years was held out as an example to the students of the apostolic school, the comparison with men of action in his service was rather obvious with regard to the brothers. In his piece from 1933 Father van den Bergh came up with as many as three examples with whom the brothers could identify: Simon of Cyrene, St Christopher and (the most popular) St Joseph, one by one 'strong, sturdy Christ's bearers'. As long as their work was appreciated, most of the MSC brothers had no difficulty with these role models. Actually, contrary to strict regulations, fathers and brothers often got on with each other cordially.

Especially in the missions the mutual differences became blurred. If the MSCs lived there in communities at all, these were small and people fell back much more on each other than in the hierarchically organized Dutch houses. The brothers there

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had less freedom, had more fixed defined tasks and they belonged more clearly to the second class. The rules were followed more strictly there in general than in distant regions, where often it came down to improvising. That difference was experienced by Mathijs Tops, who in January 1924 had a collision with the superior in Stein, Father Willem Geerts. The 51 year brother suffered from the cold in the house at Stein and the only room where he could write letters that winter was an unheated classroom. Tops had worked in the mission and had been weaned apparently not only from the cold but also from such treatment. He made his complaint by letter to the provincial superior.

> Then I said that brothers were also people after all, but one would not say that here. Perhaps I should not have said the latter, but it just came out... After all, if some 15 rooms are empty, not counting the visitors' rooms, and if it is then still too much that you go and write a letter in one of them, it seems to me they wished that I was not there at all.

Tops would go to New Guinea once more in 1930.

Unlike the Fathers, brothers had no rooms of their own. In Tilburg a change did not come until 1953 when the new wing was built. A special edition of the Annals in 1949, meant to recruit brothers, warns plainly that they had to be prepared to put up with a very simple life, 'without human ambition, without personal advantage'. That warning pre-eminently applied to the brothers as was proved that same year at the silver jubilee of Mission House Driehuis. The anniversary was at the same time a jubilee for two residents who had been there from the very beginning, Father van Baar and Brother Krul, who as a teacher and a baker respectively served 25 years in Driehuis. Former student Kees Böhm still remembers very well how both were honoured. 'Two texts were hanging down, one on either side of the stage: Father van Baar: "I FIND the Mission House okay" and Brother Krul: "I MAKE the Mission House okay."' That was how the relationship was summed up. The

directive of Thomas à Kempis to seek no renown and even not to be known may have applied as an ideal to all MSCs, but in practice it applied more to the brothers than to the fathers. Antoon de Graauw (1919), who was a secular priest for almost twenty years before he became an MSC at the age of 43, remarked about his initial period: 'Through their subordinate and serving function the brothers gave me as a newcomer the better and clearer picture of the vow of poverty and the vow of obedience.'

### *In and Out*

As long as the 'Great Mission Hour' was in force, growth offered no problem indeed. After the Second World War change set in, slowly but surely. Beginning with the fifties the Dutch province had to recognize that the number of vocations was declining all over. A recruitment commission was set up to make an inventory of the problems in attracting brothers and students for the priesthood and put forward possible solutions. The commission sought refuge in prayer first, because 'Our Dear Lord certainly brings us vocations and the more so the dearer our religious community is to him. Because of the members living a sound religious life the Sacred Heart shall surely bless us.' The first Wednesday of the month was observed as a special day of prayer for the brothers and one hoped to get vocations for brothers through the intercession of St Joseph.

But trusting in Providence alone was not enough. Where it concerned the recruitment of brothers, commission member, Father Antoon Vugts, pleaded for honest information:

> Do not raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled, namely a prospective departure to the mission. Several brothers feel in this respect disillusioned, not to say duped.

Instead of concealing the serving character of their function, this aspect, according to Vugts, had to be fully emphasized in order to underline the heroism of their vocation. The commission wondered by way of conclusion if fathers ever made propaganda for the brothers' state of life. Did a certain contempt for that status hold them back? Did not a problem lie in the rude treatment which the brothers often experienced on the part of the fathers? Just the same, this self-criticism leaves unchanged the fact that the recruitment commission always consisted of fathers only, even in later years.

On the one hand new recruits were lacking and on the other hand the departures from the society did not stop. 'For heaven's sake what are we going to do for our brothers in order to keep them in our houses?' Willem Jaspers wondered in 1952. The reason for this lament was the decision of Brother J. Ariëns to leave. It concerned here 'Mies', the older brother of the earlier mentioned Marius. Professed in 1928, Ariëns took this step shortly before the silver jubilee of his religious profession. A medical test in 1938 had shown that his blood pressure made him unsuitable for living in warm regions. That must have been an enormous disappointment,

because from then on he seriously considered leaving. The only thing that held him back was 'that going back home would mean death to his father and mother'. Once both had died, he felt free to go. Three years later his younger brother Marius also left the society.

*Motivation*

Years later, after Jaspers had become the provincial superior, a brother lifted a tip of the veil. 'Knowing how to create trust, and especially not to consider the brothers as cheap manservants or workers,' that was what Bram Werkhoven (1905-1975) understood in 1967 by 'good governance'. The brother reacted to a questionnaire on the renewal of the constitutions which had been sent to all members. Werkhoven knew what he was speaking about. Of the 42 years which until then he had spent in the congregation for more than thirty of them he had had to endure the authority of

> people who had no understanding of physical labour... Hearing from a bishop or priest, 'This must be done in this way and you must do that in that way', is for a trained craftsman rather maddening at times.

Werkhoven was a lathe operator with experience in bridge construction when he reported to the MSCs at the age of twenty. He worked for ten years in different Dutch houses, the first five of which, to his surprise, were in the kitchen. In 1936, he got an appointment for Celebes, where transport and the care of the motor vehicles were one of his tasks. Later he bore responsibility for the water management.

Werkhoven was already over fifty when according to himself he could really blossom, and that was after his time in Indonesia. He was lent to the Belgian MSCs and got an appointment in the Belgian Congo, where he worked with great satisfaction. The brother built there among other things a hospital for lepers. His construction workers were lepers who received wages from the Belgian government. Henk Rijnja came as Brother Architect to work in the Congo for no less than 25 years. After the Congo, Werkhoven continued his construction activities with the Australian MSCs on Yule Island and in Port Moresby, again with great satisfaction. 'Bishop Copas manages to profit from my craftsmanship through the confidence that he gives me. Working here makes me more enthusiastic each day.'

Finally, a third Dutch brother in the Congo was Huub Giesberts. He also had good memories of his three year stay, although initially it had not been simple after having been a cook in different houses for 25 years.

> In the Congo with the Belgians, I have become independent. That was poles apart from here. I arrived, and the superior said: 'Now Brother, there is the warehouse which is your work. The boat lies there and the truck is standing there. Draw up your plan, go ahead.' I came from the kitchen; I had never driven a car! Then with that superior I went and practised driving a car first, and very gradually I got the knack of it. It was the same with the warehouse and with making purchases. I had to work together with two Belgian

> fathers and that went outstandingly well, magnificent. Even now I am still in contact with them. There I became self-reliant. I was someone.

The agreement was that he was on loan for three years. Before that period expired, the superior general, Fr Cuskelly, came on visitation. Fr Cuskelly told him that the cook in Rome was about to leave and asked Giesberts to come and replace him. Thus the brother ended up at the generalate in Rome for the duration of twelve years. He looks back on this period as his happiest time. Back in the kitchen again, but very different from his time in the Netherlands. 'You had much more living space. As long as food was ready, you had plenty of time in between in which you could go your own way. There was a more easygoing atmosphere there. This was, according to him, also due to the fact that the superior was Superior General Cuskelly, an Australian, who found, for example, travelling the most ordinary matter in the world - unlike the Dutch who needed a meeting first before spending money on a trip. 'Such a difference, inconceivable!'

Just like Werkhoven, Giesberts felt himself taken seriously outside the Dutch MSCs. Both felt liberated by making a new start outside which was for them the familiar but sometimes oppressive structure. Not surprisingly, Werkhoven ended his letter regarding the renewal of the constitutions with a cry from the heart:

> I expect from the renewal more appreciation for the cooks, tailors, house workers. A brother who keeps the toilets clean is just as important for the community as the classicist who takes home a salary of 1,200 guilders per month.

Jaspers agreed wholeheartedly with that proposition but he thought it was the brothers themselves who thought differently about that:

> They have got the impression here rather quickly that the work which they are able to perform here in our houses, even as a craftsman, would be performed anyway, even if they were not there. And they think that this is different in the missions; if they are there, work is being done; if they are not there, it is not being done.

*Juniorate*

Meanwhile the Dutch Province had carried out a substantial change in the training process. When the number of vocations for brothers plummeted after the Second World War, the plan was to recruit potential brothers at a younger age. The recommendation of the recruitment commission of 1953 to open a juniorate came that same year. In April 1953, a juniorate was established in the Mission House of Tilburg, a community for twelve to seventeen year olds, who were made familiar with the religious life while they had schooling or took professional training at the same time. Also, boys who experienced difficulties in the apostolic school but preferred to remain with the MSCs, could be admitted. After the juniorate the novitiate followed in Stein. Not only the Dutch but also the Belgian, French and Australian pro-

vinces had a juniorate. The juniorate of Tilburg was, however, the largest in the congregation.

The brother candidates followed an educational programme over a number of years in which some took lessons elsewhere in Tilburg, especially at the trade school and the advanced elementary school (4 years). Also schools outside Tilburg were visited such as the graphic school in Roosendaal and the agricultural school in Boxtel. The Mission House remained the home base. The juniorate was directed by a Father Director. The first was Toine Meuwese, who was succeeded in 1957 by the young Henk Arts. The latter was committed 'to do something special in culture and sport'. The result was a musical ensemble under the lead of the talented Brother Toon van Loon, and the boys had their own football team, trained by someone from outside and they played in the youth competition of the Brabant Football Association.

In 1954 there were twelve boys, in 1961 thirty-eight, ten of them newcomers. Just like the students of the apostolic school the boys started that year with their own paper, Klimop (Ivy). Most of the contributions were of a technical nature: essays about the composition of paint, about types of wood and certain crops or animals. The paper ended always with a well written little chronicle of the preceding half year. All sorts of activities outside the walls of the Mission House were noted, from collecting money for Memisa (a Medical Charity for the Third World) to helping at archaeological diggings. The third and last director was Kees Koppers. On June 30, 1967, the juniorate was officially closed.

Besides an external training the tested system of apprenticing to older brothers remained effective. Thus Piet Vergouwen learned tailoring from Willem Gerrits and Nico Beerens. Toon Gerardu became a typesetter and practised his trade in the printing shop of the Mission House. Years later he became head of the household service and studied for it through courses.

The students in the juniorate were not entirely free in their choice of a profession. When Arnold Smits changed over to the juniorate in 1953 after a year at the apostolic school, he had two aspirations. He wanted to be a missionary and was interested in youth welfare work, but in the recently established juniorate the candidates had to learn a trade and Smits decided to become a carpenter ('those people went to the mission to build'). Because there was no vacancy on that course, he took up training to be a painter. When he had completed it, he could switch courses and start the carpenter's training. It never came that far, however, as meanwhile the new building for the brothers had been completed and his help as a painter was badly needed there.

Also his ideal of youth welfare work had to wait. After the novitiate Smits was appointment to Brummen, with the promise that he could follow a correspondence course. The superior of Brummen turned out not to be in favour of that and wanted the brother to become a cook - Smits had replaced the actual cook temporarily and with apparent success. The brother now asserted himself: 'I demanded to know at last what the congregation had in mind for him [the cook] and me. I also asked the

question what was to become of my aspirations.' Smits then received an appointment to Tilburg and took part in the running of the juniorate as supervisor. At last he was able to follow an elementary course in youth education. When the juniorate was closed, he got an appointment for Indonesia and his other ideal was attained. Smits applied himself moreover to administration and bookkeeping.

Another student in the juniorate from the very beginning was Piet Vergouwen. He came to work in Tilburg, Berg en Dal, Stein and Driehuis as a tailor and in the Mission Procurement Office in Tilburg. He had some comments about the training:

> With all due respect to the formation received - I had not wanted to miss it - I found the training aimed more to being of service to the priest so that the latter could perform his duties undisturbed, and too little to the personal ideal one has set for himself. We had searching discussions about faith and morals. Bible texts and Church Fathers were called upon to defend propositions and to deepen the faith. Yet there was no word about how practical things are done and organised in the tropics, or whether the ideal you set for yourself was realisable at all within the congregation.

The latter made him decide to leave in 1971. Vergouwen's duties kept him within the walls of the religious house, whereas he had set himself the goal of 'being able to help people in need'. No matter how well he got on with the brothers and fathers in the different houses, 'the vows were for me not the aim of my life, but it was the only thing with which I was confronted continually'.

### *Outside and Inside*

The novitiate was concluded with the taking of vows followed by a year of juniorate, which was meant to let the new brothers get used to their new life. In 1964, Sjaak Veken and Frank Willemsen returned for their juniorate from Stein to Tilburg.

Their superior Picard took care of the spiritual formation, which according to Veken was tantamount to religious instruction at secondary school level. The superior advised them further to pay attention to the old hands, especially Jo Broers and Jan Bogaers, 'because they gave a good example'.

The bursar informed them about the work they had to do. For Willemsen this turned out to be tailoring and the post of sacristan; for Veken it was initially housework and subsequently work in the office of the propaganda for administrative activities, such as mailings and updating the mailing lists. Before their proper work the youngest brothers had household chores to do early in the morning for three quarters of an hour in which the toilets, among other things, were cleaned. Veken remembered having done that for around ten years without much objection. After all the fathers had supply work to do as priests before they started their teaching task.

In his first years as a brother, Willemsen was appointed to the houses of Stein

and Tilburg respectively. It was in the sixties, 'a good time. We were urged in discussion groups to go and work outside the walls of the mission house'. As a result, Willemsen was increasingly getting the feeling of being on a dead track with his religious life in the Netherlands. In his eyes the policy of the Dutch Province was especially directed to foreign lands. In 1967, he was appointed to Brazil. There he felt much at home. His activities in the apostolate steered him to undergo training for the priesthood in Rio de Janeiro, where he was ordained in 1982. Nine years earlier his confrére Jan van de Zandt had preceded him. For van de Zandt too, the transfer from brother to priest was one from a closed world to an open atmosphere. The pastoral work among caravan dwellers became his main occupation.

Veken on the other hand found his destination precisely within the religious community. In 1975, he took over the office work of Jan van Beek who for years had been the bursar of the Mission House. Veken preferred working 'within the walls' in a religious community of people with whom he knew himself to be connected. The community bond was boosted in 1976 by the decision to abolish the father-brother distinction. This included among other things the choice of the individual as to which recreation room to use. Veken says about this:

> If in the evening one of the brothers felt like going to the coffee room of the fathers, that was possible. It did not happen, but the fathers did go downstairs in big numbers! Even before that there were always a number of fathers who usually spent the evening recreation with the brothers.

The attractive feature was the conviviality of the brothers. They had a long tradition in that area. Community life had been developed chiefly by them for unlike the fathers, their activities in the Dutch houses were nearly exclusively directed towards those within, towards their own community. Veken believes that the close ties which the brothers forged among themselves in Tilburg, Driehuis and Stein may well have been the main reason for the continuation of community life.

### *Emancipation*

In 1990, Veken was appointed superior of the Mission House by the provincial council. He would remain in this office for two terms (up to 1996). It was the first time that a brother held this position. Martien Rijkhoff acted as roving rector whenever priestly tasks had to be performed. Veken's appointment took a lot of effort. Superior General Braun in Rome had to contact several times the Congregation for Religious in order to get the required dispensation. Furthermore Veken's appointment letter was posted in their own Home for Elderly Religious, because some fathers had difficulty accepting this break with tradition. Veken himself could understand this, all the more because their criticism had not been meant personally and they adopted a courteous attitude towards him.

As superior, Veken tried to facilitate the celebrations, retreats and funerals as well as possible making it a point to be always present himself for contact purposes.

Another task he set for himself was the stimulation of community prayer which he considered indispensable for a religious community. His confrére, Gerrit te Wierik, praises Veken's communicative skills: 'Through those skills he averted irritations, incomprehension and tensions.'

Finally, what became of the last member of the juniorate among the MSCs, Theo te Wierik (1951)? On April 12, 1967, the provincial council decided to discontinue the juniorate as soon as the current school year had been completed. For the new school year after the summer only two candidates had applied and they had made a poor impression. Instead of phasing it out over one more year with around eleven boys (15-18 year olds) the council preferred to settle the matter straight away. The older ones, like Kees Elbertsen (1950), were allowed to join the renewed novitiate in Station Street a little earlier than usual (where Groenen was novice master). For the younger ones Father Director had to find another solution. He thought he had found that in Zevenaar, where the Brothers of Maastricht were running the juniorate of St Stanislaus. Also the Montfortans had transferred their brother candidates there, where they formed a group within the group.

The boys who were affected reluctantly paid a short familiarisation visit to St Stanislaus'. They saw themselves confronted with a fait accompli, for, according to te Wierik, no other solution had been suggested.

> It was really a bit of a surprise assault and I found that very unpleasant. We had to be dropped somewhere. They wanted to get rid of us, I cannot explain it differently.

It galled him that no efforts were made to keep them one way or another within the congregation. His two companions in adversity pulled out, but Theo and his parents did not let things go at that. After a conversation with the rector of the apostolic school, Pim van Deenen, he was allowed to spend the bridging year there, familiar surroundings for him, because just like Verhoeven and Smits he had started in the apostolic school.

It turned out excellently. Te Wierik felt welcome and at ease with his contemporaries, even if they followed another route. By day he did his chores and cleaning work, in the evening he went to school. Beforehand there were apparently big doubts about this solution. The juniorate journal reports Te Wierik's return to 'the priest students' group':

> Even though he does not have the capacity to study for the priesthood, that is not his intention. In the mission house he stays active in the carpentry apprentice system and in the training towards a sacristan's certificate B. The director of the juniorate does not agree with the odd situation of Theo te Wierik being together with the students for the priesthood and he did not want to cooperate with it in any way. He just respected in this matter the responsibility of the decision made by the parents and the rector of the apostolic school.

With a Certificate of Secondary Education in his pocket Te Wierik again attended an evening school course, Intermediate Vocational Education in Social Services. By

day he was still a house worker, at the weekend sacristan at the church of St Anna in Tilburg. In 1970, the church was closed and the parish community became part of the Capuchin church in the district. For the by then twenty year old brother new possibilities arose for which the Mission House gave clearance. The young parish priest, Hans de Visser OFM, Cap., entrusted more and more responsibilities to him in the parish. Thus Te Wierik helped with setting up work groups and he was put in charge of the six-evening programme for the youth and he made many house visits, particularly to the sick and elderly.

Out of this practical experience he decided in 1976 to follow a training course in social work. It was his confrère Lescrauwaet who persuaded him to go and study theology. Where Te Wierik hardly suspected qualities for study in himself, Lescrauwaet was convinced that theology would suit him very well. Te Wierik finished his study in four years, and continued with a pastoral training for another three years. On September 10, 1983 he was ordained priest by Mgr Bluyssen in the chapel of the Mission House.

## The Scholasticate

The novitiate was concluded by the taking of the temporary vows. Now one belonged to the congregation, which would later be confirmed by the perpetual vows. For those with priestly aspirations the scholasticates of Philosophy and Theology of the major seminary followed the novitiate. The Dutch Province had had its own seminary up to 1966. The standard was high, judging from the many academics among the MSCs. The Dutch Province made great demands on its professors who were encouraged to take a doctor's degree at the university. With the closing of its own seminary the theology students went to the Gemeenschappelijk Instituut voor Theologie (GIT) (Joint Institute for Theology) in Tilburg, for which the MSCs as participants could easily provide professors.

The curriculum for the priesthood did not deviate from that of other major seminaries. Faithful to the general directives of the Church the same subject matter was taught everywhere, although each teacher had different emphases. Just after the Second World War the standards for priestly education in force for years were considered no longer a matter of course. The theology department of the MSC especially presented itself then as fairly progressive, and the philosophy department began to dwell on modern day questions of life. This had consequences for the MSC identity. Jo Groenen (1929) said, 'Traditional devotion passed through a crisis during my study years. As a student I had the opportunity to work and collaborate on a renewal of it.' In Groenen's fourth year of theology, 1954, Koos Nouwens took the initiative of organising a Sacred Heart congress in Tilburg, where scholastics and teachers together tackled their own identity and the spiritual direction which they wanted to follow. The congress drew attention to the centenary of the congregation at a time of doubt among scholastics about their vocation. Since 1950, twen-

ty one had left, most of them (thirteen) in 1953-54.

Rome had watched with concern how the Dutch system of education for the priesthood went its own way and made a countermove. In 1955, by order of the Vatican, the Jesuit professor, Dr S. Tromp, visited the Dutch seminaries and Catholic universities. Of the diocesan seminaries only that of Roermond could stand the test of criticism. The clamour for a priestly education in a more open environment instead of the closed seminary resounded especially in the Netherlands. Voices were raised for the abolition of celibacy and also to bring the education to a higher scientific level. Only the latter was acceptable to Rome, provided that the improved quality remained within ecclesiastical thinking and ambitions. The MSC students and teachers, however, did not want to set aside just like that their spiritual growth and acquired modern insights. Their priestly study continued meeting the requirements set by the authorities, but in addition to the prescribed teaching materials the instructors kept making room for alternative insights. While the renewal congress of Nouwens had borne fruit, it did not bring to a standstill the departures from the society and a peak such as that of 1953-54 occurred again in 1963-64, at the time of the Vatican Council.

A great unrest had arisen in the Church and the questions which came up for discussion at the Second Vatican Council engaged the MSCs. Besides scholastics a lot of priests left in the sixties. Meanwhile the number of new students had fallen so much that a school of one's own was no longer viable. Nearly all Dutch seminaries closed their doors in the sixties. Henceforth one could only study in the theological faculty of the Catholic University of Nijmegen or in one of the theological colleges. For Jan Jetse Bol (1943), who had taken his vows in 1964, this meant a transfer from the MSC's own formation houses in Brummen and Stein to GIT. This institute had been established by a number of orders and congregations, the MSC among them. In 1967, in cooperation with the dioceses of Breda and Den Bosch, the GIT set up the Theological Faculty of Tilburg.

Many MSCs were teaching at the GIT. Piet Zonneveld and Kees Braun taught philosophy; Jos Lescrauwaet and Louis van Rijen taught dogmatic theology; Nico Tromp taught Old Testament and Hebrew; Martien Rijkhoff taught New Testament and Charles Goossens Church History. Cor van Boekel as a lecturer of psychology and philosophy was attached to the experimental school of the GIT for problem-driven education.

A number of this group transferred to the newly established theological faculty. Lescrauwaet became professor of dogmatic theology, Van Rijen (1972) professor of moral theology. Tromp left in 1978 when he was appointed professor in Utrecht. That same year Lescrauwaet went to the University of Louvain. Ton Scheer, lecturer on liturgy, got an appointment as professor in Nijmegen (where Sjef van Tilborg and Leo Lion taught exegesis and psychology respectively). Piet Cools played an important role as a librarian of the faculty. Behind the scenes, finally, their confrére, Johan Krol, arranged for government recognition and financing in 1973.

The path which Bol followed meanwhile would have been unthinkable before

Vatican II. During his theology study he got involved with Pax Christi and took part in street theatre. In 1970, he passed cum laude the final examination at the theological faculty. Unlike his older confréres he finished theology without priestly ordination. It was only in 1976, that he was ordained a priest, after having worked for five years as youth pastor in Scheveningen.

The closing of the seminaries was accompanied by the setting up of boarding houses for students for the priesthood. By letting them live together in a protected environment there was a counter balance to the outside world where they attended classes among lay people. Boarding houses were established near the theological colleges in Utrecht, Amsterdam, Tilburg and Heerlen. In the garden of the Mission House bungalows were constructed for MSC students which they themselves helped build under the direction of Brother Theo Bakkum.

Not happy with the spiritual formation in Heerlen, Bishop Gijsen of Roermond decided in the seventies to restore the integral major seminary. The pope welcomed this initiative, and Msgr Ter Schure of Den Bosch adopted most of the Roermond model in the eighties (the seminary of Haaren had been discontinued in 1967). For the establishment of this new-styled major seminary Ter Schure and Rome approached the MSC Groenen. The latter had been in Rome from 1969 to 1981 as a member of the General Council. As a consequence of his study years in Rome he was an exponent of both cultures. As Groenen himself noted, he had a fairly progressive reputation, while in the Netherlands they found him rather conservative. Together with the secular priest, Jacobs, Groenen set up in 1987 the Sint Janscentrum (St John Centre) in Den Bosch. They started with three Sisters and four students. The centre expanded and in 1995 Lescrauwaet also joined the company, after having been auxiliary bishop of Haarlem for more than ten years.

### *Entourage*

The scholasticate proceeded in an atmosphere which was in many respects a continuation of the apostolic school, deepened by the novitiate year. Those who had attended their previous schooling elsewhere had to join a group of young men who had already lived together since the age of twelve or thirteen. Sometimes that fell short of expectations. Ben Bergen (1935) remembers: 'You missed something of the 'old comrades'.' For Leo Lommen (1925) the transfer from Nijmegen was mostly a relief. After the 'much more contemplative and more conservative Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament' he experienced at the MSC 'a fresh air instead of a suffocating atmosphere, and more possibilities for personal development'. Kees Braun (1926) arrived at the MSC at the age of twenty-two. After his novitiate he could start theology straight away because he had already done philosophy in Warmond, the major seminary of the Diocese of Haarlem. 'After my experiences elsewhere I came to the MSCs impressed by the quality of the teachers. I liked to study very much and everything to do with Sacred Scriptures and spirituality especially appealed to me.' For this reason he found it initially difficult that he had to specialise

in philosophy. Braun became lecturer in philosophy in the MSC's own seminary, from 1954 up to 1966.

The scholastics of the Dutch Province studied in splendid locations. The philosophy department moved from 'Villa Hippica' in Arnhem during the Second World War and established itself in 'the Nijenhuis', a 17th century castle between Wijhe and Heino. Eugène van Vught (1930) remembers especially the cosy recreation room, the study room with its large round iron stove, but also the ice-cold dormitory. In 1952, a transfer followed to a more comfortable house in the landed estate, De Wildbaan in Brummen. Ton van der Meer (1940) remembers it as 'a big country-house, where wild stags still walked around'.

The latter had also good memories of Stein, where the theology faculty had been located since 1922 in 'a real castle [ruin] with a terrific defensive tower'. One could skate on the castle moat and pond in winter and sail on it in summer. Moreover, during their theology years the MSCs got a room of their own for the first time. After nine years of dormitory that was an enormous luxury for the students. In the philosophy years they had still to study in a common area.

In the theologate everyone conducted recollection and spiritual reading by himself, from a book of one's own choice. Because priesthood was coming closer, one prepared for independence in greater freedom. The protection, at times scrupulous, against the outside world was given up more and more in the theology years. Stein was 'a paradise' according to Van Vught. 'Some independence and privacy did me a lot of good.' From Stein it was possible to make trips to Belgium and Germany, and Maastricht was near for the musicians and artists among the scholastics. Groenewegen (1934) occupied the corner room on the fourth floor, 'where the many volumes of the postage stamp collection were kept and maintained'. The MSCs grew flowering plants for their own use and for sale. 'From the proceeds, we could pay for the heating,' according to Groenewegen. In 1966, the MSCs' own seminary was closed. Castle Stein came to be marked out as a house for vacation and reflection run by FDNSC sisters and MSC brothers, under the charge of Fr Van de Berg and his confrére Picard, the superior of the house. The holiday makers were mainly family members of the religious who could stay there for a modest amount with several families at the same time.

### *'Side Activities'*

The scholasticate breathed the same MSC atmosphere which had been imparted to the students in the apostolic school: studious, but with much attention to the development of other activities. The big houses and gardens offered space for hobbies and jobs. Physical exercise was promoted and culture was held in high regard testified by music, acting, writing and drawing. Both scholasticates had study clubs and student papers.

Philosophy:
*Jong Arnhem (Young Arnhem)* 1900-41
*Salland* 1943-51
*De Fakkel (The Torch)* 1952-64
*Flammae Amoris Indices (Signs of the Flame of Love)* (publication of the Brummen mission club) 1952-56

Theology:
*Stein* 1922-66 with Supplement Stein (1950-67) and the extra sheet Wilde Vaart (Tramp Steamer) (1943-67)
*Idealism (Idealism)* (1922-29)
*Vliegende Blaadjes (Flying Sheets)* 1932-63
*Casus van de week (Case of the week)* 1946-60

The monthly magazine, Jong Arnhem (Young Arnhem), dealt with very divergent subjects from the beginning. In 1908, for example, essays alternated about Lord Byron, the insurance business, feminism and electricity. An odd joke or a pious poem and illustrations lightened the magazine. Stein contained theological articles. 'In the Vliegende Blaadjes (Flying Sheets) you could give full rein to you own opinions and open them to criticism by others,' according to Groenewegen. For years the philosophers had the St Augustine Circle in which they practised debating, whereas the theologians prepared two-day conferences.

Karel Huiskamp (1925) praises the cultural quality of the MSC education. He could engage himself in music to his heart's content and the organisation of all kinds of events. Huiskamp got so busy with side activities, that his study was in imminent danger of being crowded out. Superior Jaspers reacted surprisingly to his proposal to drop some activities: 'Just take care that you obtain a six for your subjects and continue doing the rest, because it will later do you more good than an eight or nine for all subjects now!' Also Hans Kwakman put a lot of time into literature, evenings for art, music and declamation, Sinterklaasfeest (feast of St Nicholas) and farewell parties. 'There was much room for those things and that aspect of formation has always helped me a lot.'

The mission clubs in the scholasticate played an important role. Everyone joined a club of his preference: the Philippine club, the Brazil club or one of the areas of (former) Dutch Indies. Later a club was added for the work being done in the Netherlands, particularly aimed at Una Sancta. By means of correspondence with the confréres who were working in the areas concerned the students got information first hand, which raised their involvement. They tried as much as possible to acquire knowledge about the area in order to disseminate it again, and they carried out chores to help 'their' mission. Groenewegen and his companions collected old paper, which, pressed into blocks, was sold for the benefit of the missions. In addition some visited schools to enkindle love of the missions.

16. 'Het Nijenhuis', Heino.

*Ordinations*

The religious celebrations played an important role in group cohesion. The scholastics went though several rites of passage. After the first year of theology they took the perpetual vows. These were always preceded by a retreat. The ordinations, divided into four lower and three higher ones, took place in the MSCs' own chapel.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2nd year | at the start | **Ostiariate** (Porter) |
| | | **Lectorate** (Reader) |
| | Passion Sunday | **Exorcistate** (Exorcist) |
| | | **Acolitate** (Acolyte) |
| 3rd year | Passion Saturday | **Subdeacon** |
| | Passion Sunday | **Deacon** |
| 4th year | First Sunday September | **Priest** |

*Education*

Philosophy had no more than two to four professors. Beside the strictly philosophical subjects they also provided some knowledge in other areas such as biology and chemistry, experimental psychology, economics, aesthetics and exegesis of the New Testament and fundamental theology. The theology faculty had a lot more professors who together took care of fewer subjects than their confréres of the philosophy faculty - dogmatic theology, moral theology, liturgy, aesthetics, exegesis, canon law and church history. Hebrew was a subject which could be chosen. Those

*Ons Geestelijk Leven (Our Spiritual Life)*

The MSC major seminary left a mark with the journal Ons Geestelijk Leven (Our Spiritual Life). Set up in 1921, it continued to exist until 1993 (with a change of name in 1988 to Geest en Leven (Spirit and Life). The journal made an important contribution to spirituality in the Dutch Ecclesiastical Province. In his overview of the philosophical life in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, Struyker Boudier praises the high quality of Ons Geestelijk Leven.

Initially, a 'specialist journal' and a 'safe guide' for religious, according to Jac. Nouwens, the scholarly content was increased in 1934. Also under the influence of the competing journal, De Kloosterling (The Religious), since 1929 it was converted into a periodical for priests in the first place, followed by that for religious and educated lay people. A few authors came from outside the MSCs' own circle, although up to the sixties most of the contributions continued to come from the MSCs.

Ons Geestelijk Leven was defined in the first forty years of its existence chiefly by Willem Muijsers and Antoon Munsters. The former was connected to the house of philosophy. Munsters was professor of ascetical and mystical theology in Stein (1932-1966). In 1930, he started working as Muijsers' editorial secretary and from 1944 up to 1964 he was editor-in-chief. Apart from this Munsters made a name for himself as an archaeologist and a butterfly collector. The 'Father Munsters' Archaeology Foundation was named after him and the entomology department of the University of Amsterdam took over the management of his precious butterfly collection after his death.

The journal had been strongly connected with the major seminary, and along with the merging into the GIT and the Theological Faculty it became a mouthpiece of those who were connected to them. Ons Geestelijk Leven did have lay people among the subscribers, but most of them were priests and religious. The decrease of this target group translated itself directly into a declining number of subscribers. Geest en Leven (Spirit and Life) was heavily subsidised by the MSCs and disconti-

who aspired to further training in singing had the opportunity for extra lessons.

Nearly all MSCs sing the praises of the academic and intellectual quality of their education. It stood comparison very well with other institutes and universities. Because its own education was not accredited, the congregation had several people studying in Rome - mostly as a supplement to the theology faculty, but Willem Jaspers, for example, was sent immediately to the Gregorian (1928) after philosophy. Four years later he obtained a doctorate in theology there and another one in philosophy in the Angelicum. 'Two doctorates in four years with only two written and oral examinations, without a proper dissertation - that was possible in Rome in those days,' according to Jaspers. Struyker Boudier, to whom Jaspers wrote this, calls this a striking description of 'the poverty of the educational system' in the first

decades of the twentieth century. Jaspers did not feel that the scholar was learned according to Roman criteria. That testifies to modesty, but it says also something about the high criteria in force within MSC education. It must be said that Rome too raised its criteria in 1932. Jaspers started that year as professor of philosophy in Arnhem and up to 1945 he taught diverse philosophy subjects (ontology, theodicy, cosmology, psychology, history of ancient and medieval philosophy).

Until the fifties education for the priesthood had a strongly Thomistic slant As early as the thirties the MSC, Koos Bomhoff (1903), collaborated in a critical letter to the Pope about philosophy education. The signatories opposed the one-sided scholastic slant and the total disregard for thinkers like Hegel and Kant, who were listed in the index. In 1939, Bomhoff left. Later he took his doctoral degree in the Sorbonne (on the Dutch poet Vondel) and became professor in literary theory in Leiden (1957-1974). The changes which he envisioned needed a world war first and the unmistakable effects it had on thinking. In the seminary education an increasing appreciation for the human sciences and a growing openness to contemporary questions was visible.

A number of instructors were open to modern views which came through in their lectures especially in the fifties. 'The philosophy and theology were of excellent quality,' according to Tromp,

> and excelled above the 'supplement' which I underwent in Rome because our school was not accredited. Rome had significantly less contemporary theology at its disposal than Stein.

About this time existentialism made its entrance into philosophy. In this regard Tromp's contemporaries, Jacques Kruunenberg and Ben van Oers, remember with respect Gerrit Oltheten, who taught metaphysics, theodicy and history of philosophy. In 1963 Oltheten published with Braun Hij die is (He who is) 'based on the course given to their confréres, as well as intended for a theological instruction of the Una Sancta'. Kruunenberg considers the MSC education, 'even looked back on now, as in general reasonably up to date'. Van Oers appreciates that in theology there

> were initiatives to relativise everything that was happening. We learned to read Schillebeeckx and Küng and to integrate them in practice. What we learned from existentialism (especially from Oltheten) was an enormous help.

*Pattern*

But there was a downside to the new ideas and demythologising. Precisely 'the developments in theology, shifts in moral theology and the growing autonomy of believers' would contribute to the subsequent leaving of Kruunenberg.

> I became more and more convinced that a kind of prefabricated morality with concrete rules and ecclesiastical precepts which always apply is intolerable and merciless and ren-

> ders one infantile.

Gradually Kruunenberg became 'a convinced proponent of situation ethics - the considering and balancing of ethical decisions ever anew in each situation'.

Moral theology was problematic for many students. At the end of the forties Pim van Deenen managed to appreciate 'the awakening openness to the new theology', ascribed particularly to the moral professor, Henk van Mierlo, and to De Gier, whose ideas showed a strongly ecumenical influence. But for many moral theology in itself was directed too one-sidedly at 'what was not permitted and then still mostly in the sexual area', according to Jacob Haan. His classmate Jan van Goozen speaks of 'legalistic, Victorian, strict, completely unsuitable for the subsequent work of pastoral care'. He experienced the remaining philosophical and theological formation in the second half of the fifties as 'terrifically good', but moral theology 'no longer fitted the age for a long time - for example, the rubbish over contraceptives'. Finally Martien van Beeck cites 'the moral aspects of the French kiss' as an example why he did not think moral theology in the sixties worth his time.

On the personal and psychological area, the words of Henk Kroon about the seminary system held good up to well into the fifties: 'The tradition was not questioned; the tradition questioned you.' Both the MSC scholastics before the war and those after the war observe in hindsight that insufficient attention was given to personal experience. The system had been directed at the group, not at the individual. No goodbye was said to those who dropped out; they disappeared quietly. Dijkzeul remembers that at the time he thought that totally normal. For most the critical personal questioning came only after the completion of their training, when away from the familiar pattern they had to find their own way in life.

The spell of that pattern was clearly noticeable in the sexual area. At the MSC sexual morality was on the programme in the second year of theology. Harrie Smeets remembers from the forties the way in which Van Mierlo interpreted this subject. For the would-be priests it was mostly a preparation for the confessional. As a farmer's son from Brabant (from Deurne), Van Mierlo told without much ado what kind of things priests got to hear, including the vulgar terms which the penitents sometimes used. 'That was it all,' according to Smeets. 'We had nothing to do with sexuality; that did not touch us.' This may have applied to some only in the theoretical sense, but others, according to Smeets, experienced that also in practice. 'If you function well, have your hands full with your work and draw from that also a certain honour and appreciation, then you do not have time.' He himself got an appointment for the propaganda.

> As a propagandist I travelled for years calling on co-operators, through whom I came in contact with hundreds of young women in order to encourage them to sell almanacs door-to-door. That has never brought me temptation.

In Stein the General Practitioners Govaart (father and son) provided medical courses, because missionaries frequently worked in areas where there were no medical

provisions. Wim Voesten (1906-1989) noticed that some fellow students did not have the slightest idea of the anatomical and physiological differences between the sexes. Later he wondered: 'What meaning could the vow of chastity have, if one did not know what it was all about?'

*Aggiornamento*

According to Van der Meer the sixties were 'wonderful times to study theology':

> Whereas some lecturers served up courses which had been tested for years, others let us taste the newest developments. The lecturers had to study hard to keep up with all the subtle distinctions in their field. 'Aggiornamento' was the key word. We had the luck of some lecturers who were closely involved in what was occurring at the Second Vatican Council. We got information firsthand about shifts and nuances. We learned to interpret the many interventions and responses in the light of the overall Vatican happening. A booklet like Congar's For a Poor and Serving Church was required reading. We learned to recognize that some absolutist representations of the Church had been strongly coloured by certain historical contexts. Concrete experience was taken seriously in practising theology.

Theology became 'dynamic' according to Van der Meer, and the transfer to GIT was experienced as 'the most normal thing in the world':

> Old, trusted packages were offered to us and we were at the same time challenged to digest the most recent offer. You learned how to handle the offered theological material. You learned how to place that against the background of a certain place and time and so studying theology became a liberating reflection about God and the world. These two subjects, God and the world, did not have to be separated as absolutely as often was presented in former theology. In this context it is understandable that theological education stepped out of its own self-satisfied, closed, small world.

*Theory-Practice*

For a long time, however, MSC education followed the usual pattern of the major seminaries and suffered the same defect of the discrepancy between theory and practice. 'For teaching and education I stood empty-handed and for pastoral work, especially, I had to unlearn,' according to Ben Droste (1933). For Wiro Gruijters (1919) in the forties, actual practice started in 'a bit unworldly' way:

> Without experience we came all of a sudden from a protected environment into contact with all sorts of people - in confession, through preaching and catechesis - whereas we were didactically not well-grounded.

Everyone was left to find his own way and place in the work. Most of them experienced painfully only then the gaps in their education. Henk Arts (1927) felt that he was 'formed as a little theologian; that he had not learned to think independent-

ly. Real life had still to start'. Kees Böhm (1935) also missed a number of things in formation:

> For example, never a word was spoken about catechesis or catechetics. Also, 'how to present a Scripture reading' was never discussed and nothing about composing a business letter, parish administration, preparation for marriage and baptism, and the like.

Everyone assigned to pastoral work ran into this difficulty. Those who got appointments abroad experienced an even greater transition. Piet van Mensvoort (1934) and fellow scholastics had asked the provincial superior in vain to include subjects in their schooling which would prepare them for the mission work. De Gier answered that all the given time was needed for a sound general formation in the theological area. Possible specialisation could be pursued when the appointments were known.

In order to meet a similar criticism the Dutch Province had added a fifth year, a pastoral year, to the formation in 1940. The young priests got the opportunity to gain some practical experience by means of supply work and hearing confessions. Lescrauwaet (1923) went through that in 1949-1950, when it 'was still in an exploratory stage and weak in teaching didactics and personal, pastoral communication'. Van Vught (1930) took Javanese lessons in his fifth year from his older confrére Antoon Grootveld and gained practical experience in teaching catechism at a school in Arnhem. He was also trained for some months in the St Michielsgestel Institute for the Deaf, because there was a school for the deaf in the area for which he was appointed.

### *Training for Mission?*

However much one undertook in such a fifth year, the time was too short to close all gaps. Especially missionaries seem to have been faced with that. Van Mensvoort:

> In practice it emerged that being without a training in cultural anthropology there was a lack in understanding of the social world of the people in Papua to whom we offered the gospel. There have been even missionaries who never realised that it was a lacuna in their formation. That was even more terrible!

The criticism which in retrospect Theo van de Ven, back for good from Brazil, had of his training was of a very fundamental nature:

> What did we do with French, German and English in those countries of the East or in the interior of South America? What did we do with our western and so-called classical philosophy in those eastern lands with still older and even richer ways of life, and in the 'uncultivated' Africa? What did we do with our Greek way of thinking and Thomistic theology among Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus and other religious convictions and cultures?

According to Antoon van Bavel (1917) the great religions and their history and cul-

tures were actually touched upon in the formation, 'but afterwards it can be said too little in fact or not explicitly enough. That held good also for the history of the countries where the mission work was taking place and the history of the church in those places'. In their last year (at the beginning of the war) Van Bavel and his confréres followed a missiology course which had to deal with this.

The students in the fifties studied missiology culled from different sources and in several ways, according to Böhm:

> We tried to learn many things in clubs during our theology study, without the professors. We even had the missiologist, Father J. Glazik MSC, from Germany give guest lectures. On our own initiative we also went to schools in the area to give information about the missions.

The study programme offered room for a medical training by a general practitioner. According to Van Bavel the missionaries in particular benefited from that and likewise from the first aid course. Van der Meer remembers from the sixties 'that we even got a formula for making up a medicine against venereal diseases'.

If it was hard indeed to infer from the study programme that it dealt with a missionary congregation the latter appeared all the more in the atmosphere and motivation. According to Van Bavel training had been

> certainly aimed mentally at sending us out as missionaries to foreign countries and as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and that started already from the first years that we got acquainted with the MSC at the Little Work of Charity.

That foundation laid in boyhood days can hardly be overestimated.

'Former missionaries were our teachers,' according to Grooten.

> They had always much to tell, even if the study material concerned other things. The lessons of the army chaplains, Arts and Van de Vrande, were known everywhere. Among other things it was theologically justified to set the fire hose on the Koreans killed in action as a sort of general baptism.

Also Jos Turkenburg speaks of a foremost strongly missionary orientation:

> That's why you let your beard grow, as if saying 'let me go!' Was 'conditioning' and 'colonialism' not part and parcel of 'vocation'? He who preferred to stay in the Netherlands did not have the sympathy of everyone!

All this had definitely changed in the sixties. Along with it the formation changed considerably by a better tuning in to the subsequent practice. Ton Zwart appreciated a course for development work and community building. Later in Manila, a study in sociology was the next step for him. At the GIT, 'community development' became an important subject. To the experience of Van der Meer, 'It was a real revelation.'

> All our own wisdom was shown up in a relative light. We learned how we had to deal with people, even though it was still a theoretical approach. By means of case studies about hydraulic pumps, hygienic toilets, raising of chicken and small vegetable gardens we learned which techniques to use to stimulate a possible material improvement. Let the projects arise from the community. Imposed from the outside they have no permanent impact. Try to induce people to make an analysis of their own situation... Now we learned that people themselves had to take the initiative.

For a congregation which covered so many different areas, geographically and in content, it was impossible to offer an education that was adequate in every respect. In the words of Siep van Baars:

> The preparation for actual practice could not be broken down into people who would go to the missions – 'and which area then?' - and people who would remain in the Netherlands - 'for which task then?'

Specialisation was also at odds with the MSC mentality of being employable everywhere, prepared to do any good work. Anton Gielen came to the following conclusion:

> The intellectual and spiritual-mental preparation and stock-in-trade were good to build on, to do your work and to be happy with it. There were defects (too little knowledge of cultural anthropology, management, leadership), but with ordinary common sense and the will to make something of it, you get a long way. Our sense of responsibility, the passion from within, was there, thanks to the education.

CHAPTER 5

# Mission

The mission, whose beginnings are recounted in the second chapter, expanded enormously in the twentieth century. The MSC created a sharply distinct profile for itself in the Dutch Indies, and also accepted work in the Philippines and Brazil (chapter 7). Central to this chapter is the mission that the congregation had accepted in 1902. We follow the development up to the war with Japan when the work became practically impossible. The mission received a hard blow: thirty Dutch MSCs were killed in the war, among them Mgr Aerts who with twelve confréres was murdered.

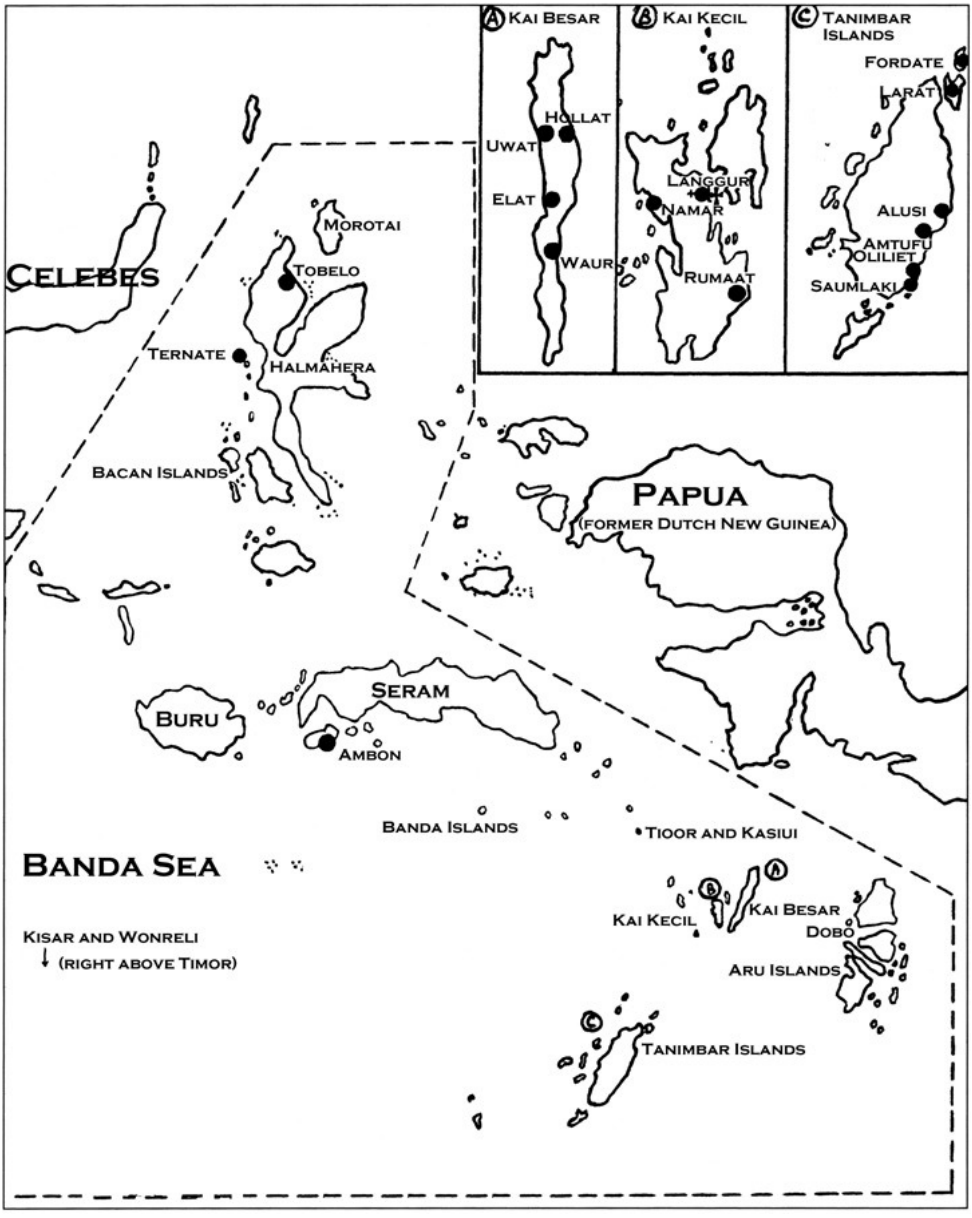
## Pioneering Stage

### *First Occupation*

Up to December 22, 1902, the apostolic prefecture of Dutch New Guinea, which had been entrusted to the MSCs, formed a part of the enormous vicariate of Jakarta. The Jesuits had already done some mission work on which the MSCs could continue building. When Neijens and Geurtjens took over the work, Kei had already 1,170 Catholics, concentrated especially around Langgur.

With the arrival of the MSCs from New Pommeren (see p. 66) and from the Netherlands, the Catholic villages could now be served. In January 1905 four brothers and three fathers arrived in Langgur followed a month later by five Franciscan Sisters of Heijthuizen, for whom Neijens had worked. The sisters would go and educate the little girls of Kei. Whereas on Kei one station was occupied after the other, the work in the other part of the prefecture progressed more laboriously.

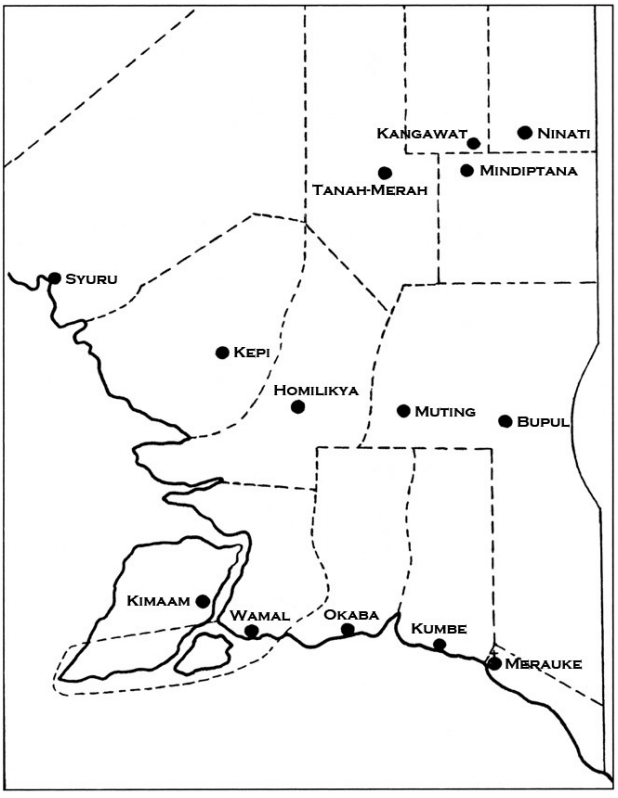
In New Guinea work had practically to be started from scratch although the Jesuits had ventured there. Le Cocq d'Armandville from Delft stayed some time in the sparsely populated west coast (Kapaur, Fak-Fak), where he baptised 73 children. A reconnaissance expedition to the south coast in 1896 in search of more people and a suitable location for a station was to prove fatal for him. According to one version the small boat capsized and Le Cocq was drowned, but it is more probable




17. From: *MSC over de wereld 1854-1954* (Tilburg 1954) 17.

that the crew, who were tired of the endless exploring and wanted to go home, killed him. The station in Kapaur was closed down shortly afterwards.

Hardly anything was known about Dutch New Guinea which is almost twelve times larger than the Netherlands. The Dutch government established administrative posts in the lower coastal area, but for the time being it left the virgin forest and the massive mountain chain which extended across the interior as they were. The




18. From: *MSC over de wereld 1854-1954* (Tilburg 1954) 21.

first administrative posts were Manokwari and Fak-Fak in the northwest (1898) and Merauke on the south coast (1902). Whereas the Protestant mission started its proselytising from Manokwari, the government assigned the south coast to the Catholic mission.

In 1904 Neijens paid an exploratory visit to New Guinea. On August 14, 1905, Fathers Nollen and Braun manned the first station, in Merauke. The administrative post was a colony of soldiers, civil servants and traders. The MSCs went in search of the native population for whom after all they had come but they were not the only ones. Also, hunters of birds of paradise, adventurers and traders were out on lucrative contacts with the Marind, as the Papuan people at the south coast were called. With sorrowful eyes the missionaries had to look on and see how the contact with the pu-anim or 'shoot-people', which name the Marind had given them by experience, did the Marind more harm than good. The people were afflicted by a sexual disease which probably as early as 1902 had been transmitted to the women by Australian labourers. It was not until 1920 that the venereal granular tumour, which manifested itself in big open wounds, would be diagnosed as such by a specialist. From the beginning the MSCs took care of the victims of this sickness. In the person of Petrus Vertenten they would come moreover with a solution which prevented the extinction of the Marind (see p. 6).

That does not alter the fact that some fathers were bewildered by the culture of

the Marind which differed completely from their own Christian value system. Braun was not at all keen in getting involved with the population, so much so that in 1906 he was transferred to Kei. His confrére Eduard Cappers wrote in 1907: 'Often when I see the people doing things, sometimes witnessing disgusting scenes of immorality, a feeling of deep contempt comes over me.' He was none the better for it two years later:

> A Kaia-Kaia is at heart a dirty fellow... The Kaia-Kaia male is a bastard to the highest degree and the Kaja-Kaja female is a prostitute, an unclean being.

That same year Cappers left for Kei. As we shall see there were also confréres who kept an open mind and these succeeded in founding a couple of stations on the south coast. To the irritation of the MSCs the Dutch administration hardly concerned itself with the Papuans. Jozef van de Kolk spoke of a

> 'never mind system'. In the more than ten years that the Government has been established here there is still nothing, just absolutely nothing, done for the direct improvement, uplifting or civilisation of these people.

*Competition*

The prefect had explored the west coast of New Guinea, where he met inhabitants who had been baptised by Le Cocq fifteen years earlier. Formally this area fell under the sphere of influence of the Protestants, but Neijens had reason to think that the west could not remain closed for the mission. Assistant resident Dumas had given him documents to glance over from which it appeared that the Utrecht Mission Association had had to turn down government proposals that it should go and work in West New Guinea because of insufficient manpower and resources. In consultation with Dumas, Neijens submitted a request to the governor-general to be allowed to establish mission posts there.

Neijens was in a hurry to stay ahead of Islam and Protestantism in his prefecture. In Kei the thousand Catholics were still faced with a lot more Muslims. According to an official census of November 1906, 3,411 of the 12,000 inhabitants of Great Kei belonged to Islam. In the Netherlands, Peeters shared the concern of the prefect. He formulated the challenge which the MSCs had entered into as follows: 'Worst of all, it seems to us, is the religious orientation.'

> If we were up against pagans only with their nature religion, however deformed and disgusting, our task could still be called easy in comparison with what it has been made for us. The most feared enemy is no doubt Mohammedanism or Islam, which has made some islands as good as inaccessible to the Catholic religion, and even to this day it is spread with real fanaticism.

But the Protestants, who had made a head start with their many stations in the Dutch Indies, asked for action. The request of the prefect for West New Guinea to do missionary work remained unanswered for a year and a half and was eventually

19. Brother Norbert Hamers (1872-1913) at the grave of Brother Willem Verhoeven, who died just three weeks after arrival in Merauke (1907).

rejected. In the meantime Neijens aimed especially at Tanimbar. The Protestant mission and Islam had not yet asserted themselves there and the prefect wanted to go in to do missionary work. Even before the Dutch government had been able to give authorisation, the prefect sent the Fathers Eduard Cappers and Joseph Klerks to Tanimbar. In order to avoid problems with the Protestants they passed themselves off on this trip as butterfly catchers. Besides Tanimbar, Neijens had cast his eye on the 'forbidden' Ambon. Frequent shipping connections made Ambon less isolated than Kei. Moreover the Keiese were dependent on Ambon if they wanted to attend school, with a conversion to Protestantism often as a consequence. Neijens concluded: 'This place would be much more suitable than Langgur for setting up a training school for catechists.' At the same time he wanted to found a technical school.

*Neijens*

Neijens' pushing roused the necessary commotion not just in Protestant circles. The administrators of the congregation also had difficulty with their prefect. Some feared that such high-handed behaviour would snub the Dutch government and the provincial council had big objections against Neijens' manner of administering. The

council wanted more insight into the spending of the resources. Neijens for his part blamed Tilburg in that its propaganda showed the mission off but that the money which was readily given for this purpose benefited the mission directly only to a small extent.

In 1908, the prefect was called to Rome to account for his financial administration. Superior general Meyer told him that the provincial council no longer believed in good cooperation but if Neijens were prepared to reconsider his position, Meyer would use his personal connections in Rome to get him 'a bishop's mitre'. After returning from Rome Neijens was interviewed in Tilburg. The dispute was settled when both parties exchanged views openly about the expansion of the mission and the spending of mission money. The matter of trust, however, had not been healed and Neijens felt that both the general and the provincial council were waiting for him to tender his resignation which could then be accepted honourably. But Propaganda Fide, through Cardinal Gotti to whom Neijens brought the matter, did not want to hear of any resignation on such grounds.

In 1909, Neijens returned to his prefecture. To his frustration the Protestant mission had managed to make a hit in Tanimbar during his absence and to establish itself in Larat. Neijens threw himself into the work. He addressed himself especially to the expansion in Tanimbar and Ambon and exerted great efforts to obtain a government subsidy for the mission schools.

The successful advance in Tanimbar came to a standstill in 1911 when the supply of missionaries from the Netherlands dried up. For the time being the provincial council wanted to send no new manpower. The year before, Wemmers, former provincial and member of the general council, had sighed about the 'work for souls in our mission':

> What a manpower, what loads of money are needed for that or, rather, are spent on that... The Jesuits had two men in Little Kei. Now there are about ten fathers with the same number of brothers and sisters, and I don't know if the situation has become five times better.

From 1911 Neijens had to do without extra personnel for some years. In New Guinea after years of toiling the prospects had only become worse. Neijens wrote in 1914 that if things in New Guinea had looked in 1904 just as they looked now, he probably would have left it alone. In June 1914 the prefect tendered his resignation, forcefully requesting Propaganda Fide to accept it. It was honourably granted to him half a year later, after which Nollen succeeded him as prefect.

Meanwhile the First World War had broken out and this made it impossible for missionaries to come from Europe. In 1915 the acute personnel shortage forced the new prefect to transfer missionary workers from New Guinea to Kei, and moreover he got reinforcements from the Philippines. With this the work in Kei had been saved. The mission had more to lose there than in the still practically unexplored New Guinea. There was no question of giving up New Guinea. Three MSCs stayed behind, Vertenten and the Brothers Johannes Joosten and Driek van Santvoort.

20. Brothers Hamers, Melchior Oomen (1869-1906), and Adriaan van Roessel (1860-1930) combine spiritual reading with mending, circa 1905.

*Nollen*

On February 24, 1915, Henri Nollen, to his astonishment and not exactly to his liking, was appointed prefect of Dutch New Guinea. In fact the new prefect was faced with a number of difficult tasks. In the first place there was the matter of restoring relations with the administration of the congregation. Although he had great respect for his predecessor and had not turned against his policies, Nollen followed, by the nature of his personality, a more careful course. In his first letters he assured the congregation of his loyalty because 'it provides the manpower and helps in the acquisition of the means of support. I find it therefore only fair that I as Prefect consult the Congregation, especially in important matters'.

A second lingering question that he inherited from his predecessor was the relationship with the Franciscan Sisters, or rather with their authorities. To the great irritation of Neijens and Nollen, the sisters had been told explicitly to occupy themselves only with education and not to deal with the care of patients. For this reason the MSCs preferred to see them replaced by their 'own' sisters, the FDNSC, but it took until 1920 for that to be done. The First World War considerably slowed down their arrival, and had moreover far-reaching consequences on the entire mission.

The connections with Europe were hampered more than ever and the financial aid had to be suspended. Because of this the 'gurus' could not be paid. These were young Keiese whom the mission had trained (since the Jesuits' time) as teacher-catechists. As it turned out, their significance for the mission work was of incalculable value. Wemmers had an eye for that in 1910:

> Instead of multiplying the missionaries and distancing them for three, two and one hour and a half from each other, I would multiply the catechists and sharply reduce the fathers. The heathens could be sufficiently taught by the catechists and in a much clearer manner than by the fathers who were too much above them to be understood by them.

This preference for gurus over the fathers was for this congregational leader not entirely separate from the higher costs of the commitment of extra missionaries.

In July 1916 Nollen made a formal request to the administration of Netherlands Indies to establish the Catholic Church in Ambon. Shortly before that the prefect had visited the approximately sixty Catholics on the island. The governor-general had the final say on the establishment of new stations. On the basis of an article in the government regulations of 1854 about 'double mission' he was in a position to keep tight control over Catholic as well as Protestant missionary works. What was originally behind it was the possible fear of disturbing the calm in the colony. Apprehension too over different creeds fighting each other played a role. Finally, the administration was not keen on the establishment of a Catholic or Protestant mission in an area with which it itself was not yet familiar, for the government had to come into action as soon as problems with the population arose, which was in conflict with the policy of restraint in operation for the outlying possessions. In the beginning of the twentieth century the Dutch extended their authority more and more over the Malay archipelago and with that the actual raison d'être for article 123 lapsed.

Still, it took up to 1926 before the first Catholic church on Ambon could be consecrated, but the prefect meanwhile succeeded in arranging that the mission could undertake tours of duty to Ambon at the expense of the government. In 1919, Nollen found a suitable location where missionaries could establish themselves. The pressure to delete the contested article increased and mobilised a Catholic lobby in the Second Chamber in 1920. Meanwhile the MSCs played their part in keeping the small fire burning. Not satisfied with the treatment of the request for an establishment on Ambon, Nollens' successor exhorted the provincial superior in 1921:

> They are afraid of publicity, especially if it gets into the Dutch newspapers. For this reason it would be good that once in a while the matter of Ambon is recalled in the newspapers when one or another occasion arises.

These were the words of Jan Aerts. In 1919, Nollen requested Propaganda Fide to release him from his task, which was granted a year later. It had been the years in which he had had to make the most of the small number of personnel and the little

money at his disposal, but he seems to have been even more affected by the persistent suspicion of some of his confréres, among them Neijens, that he had played a positive role in the dismissal of his predecessor. In order to avoid any semblance of partiality in the future, Nollen hammered home in 1920 that his successor had to be someone who did not come from the ranks of the small mission group.

The choice fell on Aerts who had just begun to work in the Philippines. An important affirmation of the mission work which had begun under Neijens as first prefect came from Rome. It was decided to raise the apostolic prefecture of Dutch New Guinea to an apostolic vicariate. In order to be the head of the vicariate Aerts was ordained bishop on November 30, 1920.

Also the Jesuits appreciated the way in which the MSCs had tackled the work in the mission area. In 1919, they requested the congregation to take over their work in Celebes so that they could concentrate more on Java. It concerned especially the Minahassa, the north-eastern part of Celebes, where the Jesuits had worked, particularly in Tomohon and Manado. Leadership for the venture was again entrusted to the hands of MSCs who had first been appointed to the Philippines. In 1920, Gerard Vesters became apostolic prefect of Celebes, succeeded in 1923 by Walter Panis. The chief town of the prefecture was Manado. The educational activities of the Jesuits were extended considerably by the MSCs. Manado would play a central role in the formation of Indonesian MSCs (see p. 198).

*South Coast*

Meanwhile the three missionaries in the area in which it had all begun, New Guinea, were having a hard time. In 1918, the Spanish influenza raged, with disastrous effects; in only two weeks one fifth of the inhabitants of the south coast died. Why was no progress being made in the work among the Marind? In one of his studies Father Jen Verschueren advances the character of the people as the primary reason:

> No feeling of dependence or inferiority has ever arisen in their heads. Perfectly pleased with themselves and their own customs, they simply would not dream of adopting those of strangers, certainly not when that involved such imponderables as a new religious doctrine.

Their social-religious system, being at odds with Christian values, formed a second reason. Most of the missionaries experienced revulsion particularly by the prominent role that sexuality played in this society. They dismissed this custom too easily, according to Verschueren, as 'vulgar immorality'. Only Geurtjens immersed himself in 1924 in the ritual meaning of the sexual customs, acknowledging their important function for the Marind. Years later Verschueren and Boelaars especially would make a serious study of this.

Among the Marind atrocious practices were in evidence such as headhunting, child murder and the burying alive of the sick and the weak. Even today it is ob-

vious that a hundred years ago the missionaries could not let this pass. Some tried while intervening to get behind the reason for such customs. Thus Van de Kolk and Geurtjens recognised that burying alive happened not out of cruelty, but out of the idea that the dying were already living in another world. Both fathers also differed from their confréres in their assessment of headhunting. While Vertenten dismissed it as a brutal strategy to impress potential enemies to such a degree that they did not dare to attack, Van de Kolk and Geurtjens thought that magical powers were attributed to the hunted heads. Later this would be the subject of extensive studies by MSCs. Vertenten and Geurtjens did agree again in their admiration for the colourful art of the Marind and the way in which they decorated themselves. Vertenten, a good painter, recorded as much of it as possible.

Van de Kolk began to plant coconuts in 1910 and tried to get a school off the ground in 1911, but before long the latter served only as a warehouse. In the same year he tried to encourage people in the station of Okaba to wear clothes. He did not bother with their style of hairdressing and head decorations (which gave them a savage appearance in European eyes) out of fear of rebuffing the population. The population took offence at the admonitions of the missionaries about headhunting and refused to wear the new clothing.

The decimation of the Marind, already mentioned, came on top of the enormous cultural differences. The dejection which had come over the missionaries was reinforced by the attitude of the government. The latter wanted to concern itself as little as possible with the 'work of civilisation'. Admittedly military action had to be taken eventually against headhunting to maintain order, but the government refused to help the mission in setting up the first model villages (1911). The intention was to replace the separated worlds of men and women by family units. That change was revolutionary in a society in which the individual person had hardly counted, where everybody's life had been entirely attuned to one's own men or women group. According to Verschueren, this change brought about the change of mentality which ultimately managed to pull the Marind through. Verschueren found Dr Jan van Baal on his side as regards that opinion. As anthropologist and high administrative officer Van Baal knew New Guinea and the mission work well. In 1937-1938 he worked as inspector on the south coast and in the years 1953-1958 he was governor of Dutch New Guinea.

Of course the medical aid which was put into service by the government around 1920 was essential but not the beginning of change.

### *Rescue plan*

Vertenten alarmed politicians, both in Java and in the Netherlands, with fiery articles about a New Guinea that was dying. He was not exaggerating. While in 1908 the area counted some 25,000 people, by 1920 they were reduced to just 5,000. With an article in the Java Post Vertenten eventually succeeded in getting the government to take action.

> The mission can save individuals who approach it of their own accord and these are almost exclusively youngsters from the immediate surroundings. The others, by far the biggest number, are beyond our influence, for they choose to remain at their own sago and coconut gardens... Only coercion can bring deliverance here and only the government is in a position to coerce.

Vertenten let himself be inspired by the model kampong which Van de Kolk had established in Okaba in 1913. In this model village the population lived in family huts which, just like the clothing and an area for the gardens, were provided for by the mission. The experiment was thwarted by the First World War but after the war it was developed further by Vertenten.

In his plan twelve model kampongs were built as a start. The men and women houses existing until then were demolished to be replaced by family units. In a culture where men and women had always resided and lived in separate worlds, this was an incredible change. Education was also provided for in the villages. The teachers (gurus) came from elsewhere in the vicariate. Most were of Moluccan origin and some came from Manado. The people themselves had to help (under the supervision of the brothers) with the construction of the family homes. Whoever came to live there had to get dressed, and whoever already wore clothing had to go and live in such a kampong. Also everyone who was married was obliged to settle in a model village. There was no coercion to go to church or attend religion classes, but in practice most of the inhabitants did.

The rescue operation proved effective, although inevitably the method was criticised. Vertenten defended himself fiercely against that:

> Coercion in short? Of course. One does not ask a child who is drowning, if he wants to be saved and if father and mother do approve of it... What do you want? Either healthy, clothed people who have children and save the race, or people adorned with all their often interesting but very rotten customs, without children, languishing away in filth and stench.

As a result of his article in the Java Post Vertenten was summoned to Java, where both his oratorical and drawing talents made a great impression. At a palace conference there on January 29, 1921, he explained the first prosperity plan for the south coast, for which the government offered a five-year subsidy.

The mission work among the Marind and the model kampongs received the usual criticism. Vertenten and his people were blamed for taking the Marind out of their natural state and for restraining several practices with the help of the military. The fact remains, however, that the population which had shrunk by two-thirds managed to hold its own in the kampongs. In any case what the MSCs could not be reproached for was that they had come purely to win souls. They had not hurried, for example, to baptise as many people as possible. On the contrary, the first baptismal feast of the Marind did not take place until 1922. The 29 persons who were baptised on that occasion came from the model kampongs and from the boarding school for boys which had been founded in Merauke in 1909. They had years of

religious education behind them.

*The Preparers*

At first sight it seems a meagre result that so few persons received baptism in a period of seventeen years, but it is not without reason that Verschueren called those who worked in the mission in this period 'the preparers'. They tried to become very close to the people, to understand them and to win their trust. The next batch of missionaries could profit from the investments in the pioneer phase. Verschueren himself belonged to that batch.

Verschueren could not sing more highly the praises of several of his confréres from the preparatory phase. The 'herculean-built athlete', Neijens, 'with the intellect and the perspicacity of a scholar and with the heart of a saint', was naturally in front. But Verschueren expressed his appreciation also for 'the restlessly active, fiercely realistic Van de Kolk as well as for Van der Kooij, 'quiet and gentle, the serene go-getter'. The latter, according to Administrative Officer Van Baal was 'respected by everyone for his intrinsic goodness'. Finally Verschueren sang the praises of Vertenten, 'the expert in the art of living, the good Fleming with the golden heart and never losing faith in God... the inveterate optimist'. The missionaries who came after them encountered the same challenges which these pioneers had faced. The difference was that the later generation were better prepared, having learned from the experiences of their predecessors.

In practice the missionary proceeded usually according to more or less the same pattern. A first-time meeting was always tense, because strangers could be enemies and if white faces were also present it was completely confusing, because then literally another world suddenly revealed itself. For the carriers and helpers of a missionary a meeting with another tribe was a sensation as well, and he had usually to work more on them (to allay their fear and also to keep them in line) than on the hosts; the latter took flight sometimes, and the helpers could then go plundering. What mattered was to show good will as soon as possible by giving presents and, after a couple of meetings, to help wherever possible, especially by caring for wounds and giving attention to the sick.

Once he had won over the local leader, the rest followed more easily. The missionary selected a strategic place to stay and started to study the language and observe the customs. Some of them, such as headhunting, had to be abolished, but it was necessary to put something else in their place - another community ritual, with a feast afterwards. As an example of what should not be done, Verschueren mentioned the prohibition on native dances that the Protestant mission applied, because a couple of them had a clearly sexual charge. Seen from the point of view of the Papuans it was the European ballroom dances, in which man and woman held each other, that were truly outrageous. In short, at the initial stage the ideal missionary should prohibit something only if it could really not be otherwise and never without putting something else in its place. Geurtjens realised that even ahead of Ver-

schueren, and also, Van de Kolk and Viegen succeeded sometimes in working with existing customs skilfully.

In the course of time, the missionary could no longer manage it alone. Once some sort of balance had been reached and the missionary had begun with some religion lesson and prayers, he could use assistance. As soon as youngsters showed themselves sufficiently receptive a modest school was started. In places where the government regulatory presence was stronger a qualified teacher was commissioned, but the mission itself also trained teacher-catechists. The missionary acted as a school manager, whereas the so-called 'guru' maintained direct, daily contact with the children. What followed was the time for baptism, starting with the young people. Once the young generation had been won and the parents had come gradually within the Christian sphere of influence, the faith could spread over the whole kampong.

*Keiese Gurus*

In Langgur the MSCs had taken over the training of gurus from the Jesuits. The missionaries tried above all to form their students into 'good people', and not primarily into smart ones. The ideal aimed at was that the students would later serve as examples. For those with aspirations to become teachers (gurus) themselves the MSCs founded a boarding house along with the school. The curriculum was as follows: 'catechism, Biblical history and some Church history are number one on the programme, then the Malay language, arithmetic, Arabic writing, geography, physics, drawing, music, disciplinary exercises, etc.' This enumeration of Cappers in 1919 included all subjects which the government set as compulsory for native teachers. In this way legal equalisation with the public school was a prospect for this three-year school. The school supervisor, Jac Grent MSC, and his staff had worked hard for this.

Those who came from the guru school were helped by the mission to a post. Naturally, they had to receive a salary and a subsidy was necessary for that. In 1918, fifty gurus were working in Kei, earning together six hundred guilders per month. Half of that amount was paid with a government subsidy; the other half had to be provided for by the mission.

The guru was more than just a teacher. According to the superior of the mission, Van den Bergh, he was 'teacher and catechist at the same time, and in addition presider and chorister, sacristan and church warden and bell ringer or gong beater, village secretary and propagandist'. Preferably a guru was married, so that he and his family could give the good example in his station. The wife of the guru occupied herself often with the girls and women and tried to teach them some needle work.

As right hand men of the missionary the gurus were of vital importance for the success of the mission. Schreurs has already pointed out the (unintentional) side effect of this, namely, that by their commitment the church in this mission advanced as a 'lay church'. The Keiese gurus began to work not only in Kei, but were sent

21. Brother Herman Kamerbeek (1887-1970) in Tanimbar pulls out a tooth (1930's).

by the missionaries to work in New Guinea.

For these gurus education and religion got so interwoven, that they often saw their work as a holy mission. They made themselves indispensable in the period which followed the preparatory phase, the exploration period of the forest walkers and the canoe sitters, roughly from 1922 to 1950.

## Exploration

The twenties witnessed a change of the guard at the south coast. Of the trio only Brother Driek van Santvoort remained. The carpenter still worked in Merauke up to 1950. Van Baal got to know him as 'a firmly built person in his fifties with a grey beard and always with a bright smile... an extremely sociable talker, who could tell all sorts of things about yesterday and today in south New Guinea'. The other brother, Johannes Joosten, went on leave to the Netherlands in 1922 and later worked

in Kei. Vertenten finally joined the Congo mission of Belgium.

In 1921 another old hand, Hein Geurtjens, established himself as parish priest in Okaba. Geurtjens and Van Santvoort got reinforcements in Brothers Toon Piëtte, Toon Vincent and Stien van Hest. The latter built a house and boarding school in Merauke for a later group of missionaries. In 1928, the first FDNSC sisters arrived, and they applied themselves to education and the care of the sick.

Geurtjens had no high expectations of his new appointment. On the contrary, he felt as if he had been assigned 'to go and add lustre to a burial or funeral'. There was little pastoral care to attend to. It was just a year since the first baptisms had been administered. The population consisted of trekkers and hunters. During the dry season they stole into the forests and hunted for pigs, kangaroos and the like. During the wet season they went to the coast to avoid the mosquitoes. The schools had been intended mostly to supervise the children so that they did not roam the forests aimlessly. Since the rescue plan they had received government subsidy. In order to make the children attend school the missionaries could ask the police or the military for assistance. Finding teachers was more difficult, but from now on the guru school of Langgur provided for that.

Meanwhile the young priest, Nico Verhoeven, had come to Merauke as well. In 1925 Mgr Aerts appointed him as successor to Vertenten, with whom Verhoeven had already corresponded extensively. Mgr Aerts assigned him to investigate where people were living in the hinterland. Rather quickly Verhoeven proved to be cast in the same mould as Neijens and Geurtjens. Under the leadership of this 'organizer and expander who could never be appreciated enough' (the words of Verschueren), the work was greatly expanded.

The career of Verhoeven as an MSC was impressive. From 1923 to 1935 he worked in the mission and afterwards he was appointed provincial superior. Having become seriously ill in 1942, he stayed on the sidelines as superior of Overhoven until the end of the war. After the war he worked first as mission procurator and in 1947 he was appointed as Apostolic Vicar of Manado. His episcopal motto was 'Nil Nisi Christum' (Christ Only), and people complained occasionally that with Verhoeven the good cause often took precedence over persons. Joosten defined him as 'a born leader', 'with vision, with business acumen, with bold policy... impulsive, enormously strong-willed, honest and open'. In the positions which he held he could carry out his vision, and by leading the way himself he managed to inspire others. His pronouncement, 'A missionary must fight, and continuously so, and often against everything at the same time, and for the most part alone' is illustrative for those who went to work in this new phase.

### *Exploratory Expeditions*

Verhoeven had received the assignment from Aerts to go in search of people in New Guinea. His attention was drawn to the hinterland of Merauke. By means of the Bian, Kumbe and Maro rivers Verhoeven undertook three long expeditions in 1925

always with Muting as his destination, where the year before an administrative post had been established. He ascertained that the areas of the said rivers lay practically open and that it was only a question of waiting for the needed manpower. In 1926, while travelling along the coast he felt that the swampy Frederik Hendrik Island had to be next. Verhoeven himself did not go far there. He heard the people taking flight and lost his small boat.

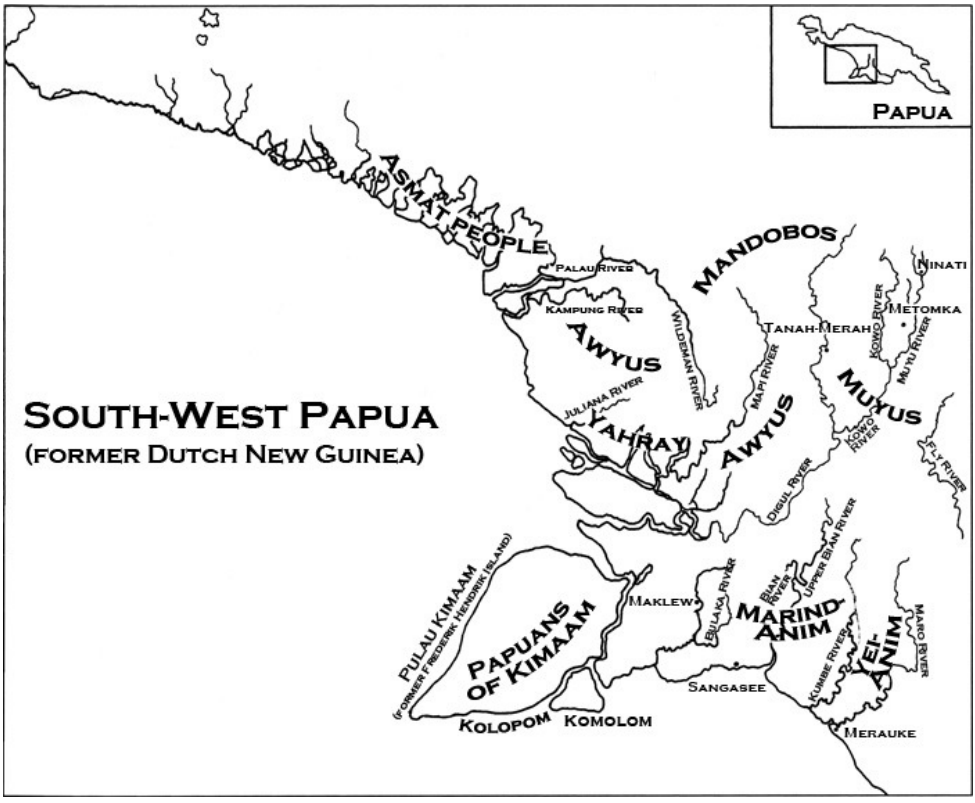
This was not the end of Verhoeven's explorations. In 1927 an expedition brought him into the centre of New Guinea, the Digul area (particularly the land of the two streams, the Kao and Muyu rivers). With a doctor, an inspector and a former sergeant he travelled to Tanah Merah. The government had just set up a camp there for rebels from Java. 'In the beginning it was anything but easy for the officers and men. They came to this place covered with jungle, whereas the communist men [nationalists] do not come until everything is ready and set for them,' Verhoeven wrote in his report about this expedition.

> Fortunately the camp does not lie in a centre of population, so that they do not have much opportunity to come into contact with people. Otherwise, these fellows could have made life funny here for the work of the government and for the work of the mission.

On this expedition the missionary received every cooperation from the government who wanted to get the unknown territory under its control. With ten policemen he set out into the forest. The company made a surprising discovery: as many as ten thousand people must have been living in an area of only 80 sq. km. That was rather something different from the thinned- out tribes distributed over an enormous territory, among whom the MSCs had worked in New Guinea until then! Full of enthusiasm, Verhoeven made a report about this area with its unprecedented possibilities. If Aerts provided a priest and a brother to the Muyu, Verhoeven would take care of the teachers, 'even if I have to beg and deplete the whole world'. Verhoeven did not fail to mobilise the home front. The Dutch propaganda immediately founded a Digul fund, while the scholastics gave up their cigars for it every first Sunday of the month.

The mission and the civil administration pulled together here. The government had decided in 1926 to subsidise the work on the south coast for another five years, impressed as it was by the model villages, complete with school, rectory and church, which the brothers together with their work people had built along the coast. That is why Verhoeven received full cooperation in his exploration from the camp/administrative post of Tanah Merah. While the mission followed the administration there, on Frederik Hendrik Island it went the other way around. A government representative did not come and settle there in the mission post of Kimaam until 1935.

After the exploratory expeditions it was next a matter of manning the principal places with priests who were capable of further exploration. Verhoeven thought Piet Hoeboer to be the right person for the river basin of the Bian. Together they set out




22. From: J.F.L.M. Cornelissen, *The Father and the Papuan. Encounter of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart with the Papuans of Dutch South New Guinea (1905-1963)* (Kampen 1988)

for it from Merauke in 1930, fraternally sharing a bicycle. After a considerable stretch of cycling one of them would leave the bicycle behind for the other and continued the journey himself by foot. When the other then cycled and caught up with him, it was again the turn of the first to ride on the bicycle and that of the other to walk. In this way they reached Hoeboer's station, the administrative post of Muting. For the Maro and Kumbe rivers Hoeboer got assistance from Fr Jen Verschueren. The latter had been intended as artist and writer for the propaganda in the Netherlands and he had come to the mission on a familiarisation trip. Rather quickly he was found to be at home in New Guinea, whereupon provincial superior Zandvliet changed his appointment. Mgr Aerts had, however, his objections:

> He is too fickle and too fiery for the population; on the other hand he has indeed talents and easily masters the details of one matter or another. He would succeed better as a propagandist than as a missionary in the mission. He is a very good speaker, has a loud, beautiful voice, is audacious and can be expected to inform himself of the situations of the missions in the Indies, if he is given the opportunity to do so.

Verschueren took the River Fly area at the border with Papua New Guinea under his care. In 1931 Willem Thieman began to occupy himself with Frederik Hendrik Island from Wamal.

In 1933 a start was made in the area of Verhoeven's last journey above the Digul river. In his Bian area Hoeboer had met migrants from the Muyu and the Mandobo areas who sought the protection of the administrative post. Through them the priest was well informed about the different villages in their land of origin. In 1933 Hoeboer and Brother Galiart set out for Tanah Merah.

### *Field Work*

While Galiart was busy building a respectable residence in Tanah Merah, Hoeboer went deep into the forest with four Keiese gurus. A high-speed motorboat had brought the company more than one hundred kilometres from Tanah Merah along with their crates full of tools and articles for barter. To shelter for the night they moved into an empty pile-house. The Muyus lived six to fourteen metres above the ground. As the piles and beams of their houses had had their days and the rattan bindings had dried out, they were forced to look for some other spot for a new house. Because of their regular moves, whites assumed for a long time that the Muyus were a nomad people.

The baggage was firmly secured with rattan downstairs, out of fear that the river would sweep away their belongings. A heavy downpour could make the water overflow the river banks in a couple of hours. Indeed the next morning a box with tools was found sitting half covered in the water. Meanwhile the owners had not remained unnoticed. From several directions Muyus came flocking to them full of curiosity. They immediately fixed a temporary shelter for their guests, and already the next day Hoeboer offered the first Holy Mass, 'for my own sins and for those of the public'. The first days were taken up mainly with material matters and everything went in harmony with the village headman. It was decided to make this place, Ninati, the main station. One of the gurus stayed at Ninati. For the two others the village headman had two places in mind where people had gladly gathered in a kampong. While Hoeboer installed his men there and worried where he would place the fourth guru, an inhabitant of Ogemkapa went to meet him with the message that the guru was already expected there. Although Hoeboer had not met anybody from that place, people there had started with the construction of a school and a house for the guru! One of the inhabitants, who had once been in Merauke and knew of the existence of the MSC, happened to be in Tanah Merah when the gurus arrived there. Immediately he hurried to Ogemkapa and called for an early start to the construction.

The disadvantage of the new main station was that Ninati was located deep in the jungle and far from Tanah Merah, the civilised world, but on the other hand it was the most northerly place that could still be reached by motorboat and it had a central position in a densely populated region. In such a settlement the missionaries

23. Dwelling on stilts.

had to be self-sufficient. Brothers Tops and Piëtte proved to be the right men in the right place. They completely transformed the station. With locally sourced materials Tops erected a house, a church, sheds and workshops in only three years. Around them were the enormous gardens which had been the work of Piëtte.

Father Hoeboer also turned in a top performance as a forest walker. While every one else took at least a week for the journey on foot from Tanah Merah to Ninati, Hoeboer walked the 110 kilometres in four or five days. How hard that journey was can hardly be gathered from his own reports but far more so from those of others. His confrére, Hendrik Cornelissen, speaks of crawling over tree roots

> along a continuously winding uneven path under musty deathly trees, which do not let the sky or sunlight seep through, often sinking in the mud up to the ankles and now and then to above the knees.

Cornelissen mentions also the horror and fear of treading on the 'numerous half-decayed small trunks, which lie as little bridges metres high above the turbulently flowing streams'. Next the walk went on for 'hours and hours over narrow, monotonous crests of hills, covered right and left by those dense forests', with never more than a few metres of visibility,

> without ever encountering a mortal being, without discovering the track of some game, without hearing any song of people or birds, without hardly any ray of light from the glorious sun which is on the outside of the forest.

Verschueren, who just like Hoeboer had an unbelievable walking ability, compared this journey with going in and out of a damp cellar time and again:

> Panting, you crawl up a hill where you detect at the top a small piece of the sky. Then

> you hope invariably: now we will get a view... and you can go down again through a similar tunnel!

Verschueren, stationed some three hundred kilometres further on, visited his confréres in Ninati for the first time in the middle of 1937. He was impressed by what Tops and Piëtte had achieved and by the way in which they had managed to involve the Muyus in this work. Not only were these strongly individualistically inclined people not used to such labour - and in groups at that- due to malnutrition they initially hardly had the required fitness. While at the beginning the workers left the work place invariably for their own premises to recover from the exertion, many chose eventually to continue working in the main station for a half year or longer.

Hoeboer became extremely adept in finding his way through the jungle, and managed it without guides. In this way he had taken twelve villages under his care in 1937, where always on the average about forty children attended the lessons of the gurus. The first baptismal feast of eighty Muyu children was the Christmas of 1936. His choice for Ninati as principal place had proved to be the right one.

Meanwhile not much credit was to be gained in Tanah Merah, where few people lived around the camp. For Fr Meuwese, who had come there as school administrator, it was a reason to go and work more and more in the Mappi area and to establish himself there (Kepi) at the end of 1946. From then on Tanah-Merah had to get by with a travelling priest (Drager from Mindiptana). A motorboat of its own, made in Langgur and towed to Tanah Merah in September 1937, was of enormous value to the mission of Upper Digul. From now on provisions did not need any longer to be transported for days over land.

While Hoeboer was waiting for a subsidy for his fifteenth school, the flow of money was in danger of being cut off because of the need to economise due to the war. In July 1941 Mgr Aerts had come and administered Confirmation to Muyu inhabitants, but a half year later contact with Kei was no longer possible. Now one was dependent on the willingness of the gurus to continue working without pay. New gurus could not come, and Hoeboer thought that the time was ripe to train Papuans for this work. The school was established in Mindiptana. Fr Drabbe studied the two most important dialects and in addition gave religious instruction in the training school, enabling the gurus from the crammed training to go and work with a catechism in their own language. Their level of training lay definitely below that of the Keiese gurus, but a big advantage was that they were working among their own people. The first ones started their work in the villages in July 1942 and at Easter of 1943 they requested Hoeboer to ask their children and adult students to undergo an examination. Examination followed on examination and one baptismal party was celebrated after another. Those were big parties, with hundreds of people receiving baptism each time. A consequence of this success was that Hoeboer's travelling around became more difficult. The number of Catholics in his extended area amounted to four thousand in 1946. That year he was six weeks on tour during which he walked for hours daily and heard the confessions of about 2,200

people, administered 70 baptisms and blessed ten marriages, apart from the inspection in every village of both the teaching of catechism and the school administration.

Meanwhile beside Drabbe, Herman Tillemans had arrived to reinforce the ranks in the Muyu who, to Hoeboer's satisfaction, 'set to work immediately, the way he is capable of doing, as if he would have to work here the rest of his life'. Tillemans, having started in the Mimika area in 1930, had amply won his spurs. In 1936, he played a key role in the discovery of the Wissel Lakes - an expedition in which government and scientists took part - and afterwards in opening up the central highlands.

### *Pacification*

Not only did the MSCs map a lot of 'new' area, but their explorations had also a pacifying function. The forest walks of Fr Hoeboer, for example, brought people in contact with others whom they normally did not trust. By visiting all kinds of villages and showing his face there again and again on a regular basis Hoeboer became a trusted character and people got to know his porters as well. Gradually the fear disappeared, according to Verhoeven:

> They had at least one friend in this barren woodland who was a common friend of all, who made small talk and invited ... and finally they went and it turned out so much better than expected - no quarrel at all, only friendly faces and that in a village, where before they had only enemies. And unintentionally there grew in these primitive people a bond with others, a quiet fraternisation.

In 1950 Verhoeven himself was struck by the metamorphosis at a reunion with those whom he had got to know as youngsters twenty years previously. He recognised them still clearly, but he found that the look in their eyes had completely changed and they had become calm. Both the dedication of the missionary and his courage compelled respect from the people whom they visited. Verschueren experienced that, for example, in Gab-Gab. On one of his journeys in the River Fly area he had been almost killed. When saying goodbye he showed himself undaunted by announcing that he would return again within a few months. He made good that promise, but with great fear. To his surprise the formerly hostile inhabitants prepared for him a big pig feast, out of admiration for his courage.

To a great extent the Dutch civil administration depended on the missionaries to keep the peace in areas where people were out to kill each other. From 1930 police posts were established along the Digul in an attempt to combat headhunting. For a considerable time the Marind could no longer undertake headhunting trips from the south coast to Digul. Now this danger came from the west beyond the Mappi river. Advancing Yahray (a marsh people from the Mappi area) established themselves at the estuary of the Digul and undertook headhunting trips across this river. The government could only applaud that the mission dared to open the Mappi area.

24. Father Piet Hoeboer (1904-1982).

Jac. Grent, Verhoeven's successor, and Piet Rievers (parish priest of Okaba) travelled in May 1936 to the Digul and were taken by guides from two already well-known villages to the people of the Mappi and the Digul. At the beginning of 1937 the first teachers for this area arrived, followed in the middle of 1937 by Kees Meuwese. He had worked in Babo (Vogelkop/Doberai) and was able to leave there when the MSCs transferred this mission to the Franciscans. It was Meuwese who succeeded in really opening up the area and in making contact with both population groups (Awyu and Yahray). Because matters in this region seemed only to escalate following harsh action by the administration, the administration left this task for the time being to Meuwese and his confréres after consultation with the MSCs.

On Frederik Hendrik Island Van Baal had experienced the trust that the missionaries enjoyed. For the construction of the administrative post in Kimaam inhabitants had been employed on a payment in tobacco. Moreover they worked for the mission. In 1935, Willem Thieman had already established a post there. He paid in durable articles like axes, knives and clothing. The builders thought that they were underpaid with regard to the administrative post and were also unhappy about the hard-handed treatment by the foremen. The population ran away and abandoned Kimaam in order to return to their gardens. They had barricaded their escape route in case the administration tried to go after them. Van Baal went indeed after them with five policemen and Frs Grent and Thieman, 'since I badly needed the help of the mission for the pacification'. The rebels were found to be willing to talk.

> They stated their position very clearly. They had nothing against the mission. The parish priest and the guru could stay as far as they were concerned... But the administration and the police had to go and they would not return to Kimaam as long as they remained there.

Although Van Baal understood their point of view very well, he could not agree to their demand. The stalemate was broken by Van Baal who promised better payment and at the same time set a patch of forest on fire to show that there could be no further negotiating with him and that the people had to come back to Kimaam. Unlike what happened in the Mappi area this strong-handed treatment did work here.

*Relation Mission – Government*

At the end of his period as inspector of South New Guinea, Van Baal wrote:

> For the Marind as a people only one way out is open, namely, that of complete reception of Christianity, in this case in the form of Roman Catholicism... Let the mission understand that much has been demolished here by the administration, but always in the expectation that the former would be constructing. It is the only one that can do that. The administrator cannot lead at a work that requires local knowledge in a gigantic area for which he is all alone, whereas the mission has eight missionaries.

Since Vertenten's rescue plan the MSCs had considerable credit with the government but because the objectives of both institutions differed, they were regularly in disagreement. Van Baal speaks of 'a relationship in which prudence prevailed', because both needed each other. Initially he had to get used to a lot of 'what comes across sometimes as the boorish manners of these missionaries, who spend their whole life in a society of men'. It is clear that in the end Van Baal most liked the so-called forest walkers, especially Verschueren, 'an intelligent but at the same time an awfully troublesome country parish priest, who always walked around in a dirty cassock and spoke with a dreadful Brabantine (from Bavel) accent'. Over time he got to know him better as 'a man of feeling and a clever artist' with whom he loved to have discussions.

The contact with other MSCs did generally not go that deep and it was precisely the formal relations that caused irritations with Van Baal.

> With respect to policy, the mission expected that the administration, if it did not actually offer the helping hand to the mission, it would nevertheless adopt at least a benevolent attitude towards it in all things. In practice it came down to this that the inspector was expected, like a Brabantine mayor of that time, to do what the parish priest said.

According to Van Baal that applied particularly to the leading parish priest Grent: 'He had one aim steadily in view: the Church and its greatness'. The mission and the administration clashed regularly particularly over the competition with the Protestant mission.

25. Fathers Nico Verhoeven (middle step, right), Jac. Grent (left under), Piet Rievers (middle front) and Franz Kowatzky (left on top). On the topmost step Brothers Matthijs Tops and Antoon Galiard, middle left Piet van Dam. Merauke, 1930's.

*Double Mission*

The matter came to a head especially in New Guinea where in 1925 the demarcation line of 1912 was ratified. Catholics in West New Guinea had asked Neijens and Capper, when they visited, for a Catholic school. The latter visited the four kampongs concerned, but he was immediately rapped over the knuckles by the assistant resident. Cappers found it impossible to explain Article 123 to the people. One of the kampong chiefs expressed his incomprehension about the point of view of the administration:

> We may become Muslim, we may become Christian (Protestant), we may remain pagan, why may we not become Roman Catholic? By order of the Company we have come to live by the sea, we pay tax, we perform labour services; would that the Company leave us free in everything else.

It stung Cappers, but also Protestants in Fak Fak, that the administration did not

object at the same time to two kampongs which adopted Islam. Cappers' account reached the Dutch Catholic press in 1925, whereupon members of Parliament, Blomjou and Moller, raised the question with the minister, Baron van Boetzelaer van Dubbeldam. The minister was in principle opposed to double mission. This position was repeated three years later by the governor of the Moluccas in a meeting with Aerts and Cappers on the one hand and the Utrecht Mission Society (Protestant) on the other. Instead of the 1912 separation line the administration and its mission representative would like to see a partitioning of New Guinea into work areas. Aerts on the other hand expressed his preference for 'healthy competition'. In the end the result was that Cappers was permitted a number of official trips to West New Guinea (except to the so-called Vogelkop/Doberai). On the other hand the south was then no longer prohibited territory for the Protestant mission. This was the reason that in double quick time the mission provided each of the villages by the Kumbe river and elsewhere with a school and a teacher. In his attempt to guard Kimaam against the Protestant mission Thieman explored the entire interior of Wamal, in the course of which he came across two villages that were occupied immediately (Wap and Molu, 1934). In 1935, he managed to establish himself in Kimaam Just two years later he had discovered all places of residence on the swampy island.

The mission work expanded also in Fak Fak. Cappers' successor Adri, de Jong, settled there permanently and got reinforcements from Meuwese to enlarge the work in Babo. De Jong, quite fresh from the Netherlands in 1930, needed to get accustomed to his new parishioners:

> Everyone comes and shakes your hand and most are covered with scabies from top to toe. It is a bit creepy to shake the hand of such people... they grasp your hand firmly, only for a second, then withdraw quickly and smell their hand thoroughly, then brush it once more extra vigorously under the nose and then over the breast. Some also make a sign of the cross.

At the time twelve gurus worked for the mission in the vast area and De Jong decided to make an exploratory expedition to Babo. This meant sitting in a canoe for three weeks and only spending the night a few times on land. From Babo a government boat undertook a journey to the Vogelkop with two assistant clergymen on board. De Jong wanted to join this expedition very much, and by canoe tried to reach the boat which had already set off but no matter how much he waved with his handkerchief, the boat steamed on. Later he heard from the captain that the latter had ignored him because there was no more room on board. The competition between Protestant missions and Catholic missions caused a big row in this area because the Vogelkop had been earlier declared explicitly a prohibited area for the Catholic mission. In Babo, however, several kampongs approached the priest in the thirties with the request for a guru and so the mission had a foothold nevertheless. Before long its influence spread via Meuwese up to the Vogelkop (1936).

Before 1930 the Protestant mission worked among migrants on the south coast

in Merauke and Okaba, but not yet among the native population. In that year the MSCs celebrated the silver jubilee of their mission work in New Guinea. Verhoeven had done his best to gather people together from all areas, even though he was terrified that there would be fights. The attendance was enormous. For many population groups it was a first acquaintance with others. On this occasion a statue of the Sacred Heart was blessed. The feast was in full swing when the news reached Verhoeven that Protestant gurus had profited from the absence of the Catholic staff and were trying to occupy several villages. Assistant minister Hessing of the Protestants had made some exploratory expeditions along the coast in 1929 and now saw his chance to push through into the interior. Verhoeven interrupted the feast and ordered all gurus to return immediately to their kampongs, so that they would be ahead of the newcomers: 'Whoever could row the fastest would get hold of the village!' Many of those present had come only very recently within the sphere of influence of the MSCs and they joined hands just as easily with a Protestant as with a Catholic guru. According to Hessing the people themselves had asked specifically for an 'Ambon guru'. Verhoeven reacted sarcastically:

> Everyone with a little knowledge of the Kaya-Kayas will really be flabbergasted by that news. I myself must honestly confess that it came as a surprise to me. I can imagine a Kaya-Kaya who craves for a nice chew of tobacco, or a vigorous dance, or a big feast with many fat pigs, but one who craves for a pure spiritual good... I must say, they exceed my expectations, and yet I thought I already knew these people a bit.

Undoubtedly, the people did indicate that they wanted to have a school - but about the existence of two types of gurus they knew nothing as yet.

Verhoeven went to Batavia to complain about this raid. 'Did this not contravene the article on double mission?' he remonstrated with government representatives. He was, however, advised against making too much fuss about this, because the Catholics had resorted meanwhile to the same tactic in Celebes. 'Article 177 proved once again to be a double-edged sword,' Verhoeven wrote later. In the regulations of the State of the Dutch East Indies the old Article 123 had been incorporated meanwhile as Article 177. In any case he succeeded in getting the government subsidy for the mission work on the south coast renewed. It concerned only the existing work (the continuation of Vertenten's rescue plan), not the new little schools which the MSCs had hurried to found in the interior. The Protestant mission on the other hand had to do without government subsidy in south New Guinea and also in its 'own' area of north New Guinea.

At the time feelings continued to run high regularly. In Larat in the Moluccas it got even to the stage that a Protestant guru shot his Catholic counterpart. The government had to intervene regularly. In 1937, Van Baal, administrative chief in Merauke, visited a kampong which the Protestant guru had decided to quit. The Catholic mission had now placed a guru there, 'who started immediately a rather superfluous campaign against his Protestant colleague who had not yet left'. Van Baal felt compelled to intervene in this bickering. With at the back of his mind the

26. Muyu man. Photo by Jen Verschueren,

disputes between the two sides since the Church schism in European history, Van Baal was against a double mission. 'Not until later did I get to see that the population, educated differently than we were, had generally little difficulty with that phenomenon. In fact it was one of the few amusements which the civilisation that had descended on them had to offer'. For himself, and also for the Catholic and the Protestant missionaries, there was little amusement in it. Although they realised that the quarrel about the Christian creed was in contradiction with the message of salvation which they were assumed to bring, they could hardly dissociate themselves from the formation which they themselves had received in the confessionally divided Netherlands. This polarisation was exported to a totally different world.

When Aerts spoke out against the strict partitioning in work areas, the Protestant Church of the Dutch East Indies decided to start a mission in south New Guinea, under the aegis of the regional synod at Ambon. 'It was, of course, not a distinguished mission motive and they were not willing to invest a lot,' according to Van Baal. A native teacher was sent to Merauke as minister of the local Protestant congregation and gurus resided in several villages. The teacher in question, however, turned out to be corrupt and the gurus had been left to sink or swim. No wonder that Pastor Tutuarima of Ambon, who visited Merauke at the beginning of 1937, concluded that it would be better to withdraw. But the Moluccan Church (formerly a regional department of the Church of Dutch East Indies that had meanwhile become independent) 'considered it as its duty to continue this work, if necessary on a more modest scale. A few of the gurus who had already been called back returned to their posts and so the double mission continued to exist,' according to Van Baal. The latter was not happy with it and even less so with the full support which the

Moluccan mission got from Resident Jansen, who according to Van Baal 'let himself be guided more by his sympathy for the Amboinese than by the interest of the Papuans'. The Catholic mission had little to offer instead, for it had left the area nearly unmanned after the initial departure of the Ambon gurus. According to Grent this had to be done because of lack of money and personnel, but Van Baal saw in it a proof that the motives of the mission were not always the most noble either, or, as he articulated it ornately, 'the holy fire of the propaganda of faith burns better on the unholy fuel of competition than on the holy oil of the spirit'.

Just the same the vicariate of Dutch New Guinea had gotten itself into a true crisis. The expansion impulse to be ahead of the Protestant gurus had yielded countless little Catholic schools, which to a large extent had to be maintained by the mission fund because by no means did all satisfy the subsidy requirements of the government. The civilization school did not present itself until 1938. After occupying as many villages as possible the logical step was to consolidate the power, but that needed more personnel. Verhoeven, who had become provincial superior in 1935, concluded: 'We must be aware of our responsibilities. We can no longer cope with the work in New Guinea.' Following this the Franciscans were prepared to take over from the MSCs the mission in the north of New Guinea.

On December 22, 1936, Caminada (OFM) and Verhoeven (MSC) signed an agreement in Tilburg in which the Franciscans would take over 'the area of the Ternate and Manokwari (the former Ternate residency) sections, including the islands of Ternate, Batyan, Tidore, Halmaheira and the neighbouring islands, north New Guinea with neighbouring islands, the Vogelkop, the Babo, Kokas, Fakfak, Kaimana (and Mimika) areas'. According to the civil classification the Mimika area belonged to this territory, but geographically it was more connected to south New Guinea. In fact the Franciscans did not take over the Mimika until 1952.

### *Once Again The Gurus*

As already stated, the MSCs had set up a native framework for education at an early stage. For the development of New Guinea these gurus played a very important role, although there were a lot of snags also. Gurus who had been selected for such difficult areas, occasionally went to the extreme in the understanding of their job. Van Baal speaks in this respect of a 'terror of virtue'.

He had to hand it to the MSCs that from the beginning they had attached value to education. The importance of literacy, according to him, was 'certainly not recognized generally' in the first decades of the twentieth century. 'Colonial authorities were willing to take charge of education, but what was learned at school had to have a function in society and that function was but a very small one for large parts of rural society.' However, he was less happy about the power which the gurus had.

> Of course I knew just as well as the Mission that little had originated from the kampong chiefs appointed by the Administration, but that is still no reason to institutionalise their failures by letting the guru carry on a terror of virtue.

He found the Keiese 'hard and rigid; they have always come across to me as Ambonese without humour'. Several times he experienced gurus, from the Protestant as well as from the Catholic side, who had considerably overstepped the mark. Such folk in fact looked down on the Papuans, whom they wanted to civilize forcibly if need be. Some regarded themselves almost as rulers and did not let themselves be moved easily from their place.

On the other hand they succeeded in bringing groups of people together and forging them into a community. They were active in all areas. They gave religious instruction to the kampong youth, gave attention to music and taught the population a thing or two in the field of hygiene and organisation. They also acted as mediators with outsiders. For the parish priest the guru kept a journal of the most important events as the former was usually on the road. Arie Vriens wrote about the importance of the guru for the mission in southwest Irian:

> Always present day and night - he was somehow the superior of the parish priest... and many a parish priest had to back down at the unfolding of plans or in adjusting to the ongoing development. I reckon that until the fifties people have perhaps more to thank him for than the parish priest who was in charge of the district.

Only around 1950 did education proper receive full attention and the other activities of the guru recede into the background, and thus also his influence in society.

For the Catholic mission the Keiese gurus proved to be faithful allies in the competitive rivalry with the Protestant mission (See later). During the Second World War their loyalty was again proved. When the Netherlands was occupied by the Germans in May 1940, it became practically impossible to send personnel and goods to the colony. The gurus could no longer be paid. Nevertheless almost all schools remained open, because after an appeal by Aerts most of the gurus contented themselves with payment in kind by the kampong chiefs and parents of the students.

### *Civilization Schools*

The quality of education of many small guru schools in New Guinea left much to be desired in the mind of the school inspector. The teaching package consisted largely of music (singing and flute playing) and work in the school garden. Often they did not meet the standards used by the general subsidy regulation for the whole Dutch Indies (1924). Van de Kolk was annoyed at the short-sightedness of the government in setting criteria which could not possibly be attained in a large part of the colony. For this reason the MSCs had even turned down a government subsidy

for a trade school, 'in order not to be tied down by exaggerated and impractical requirements'. According to the former mission superior a too European and too specialist programme was imposed on the population, with the risk that it would spoil the people and turn them into 'swollen-headed would-be westerners'.

Support for this point of view came about ten years later and from an unexpected source. With all his criticism of the gurus and of the system Van Baal had to acknowledge

> that the schools and the gurus fulfilled an indispensable function in the socio-cultural order that had developed here during the prohibition regime of the fight against granular venereal disease. The social activities of the village teachers formed the only positive contribution to public mental health which the cooperation of the government and the mission had to offer. Without schools and gurus there was only prohibition and boredom.

Van Baal made out a case for a subsidy arrangement for a so-called 'civilization school', in which gardening, handicraft and entertainment received much attention because of the beneficial effects on the community. In November 1937 Van Baal wrote to the Inspector of Colonial Education:

> Establish a hundred hospitals and take away the schools and in no time south New Guinea will die out... If a school gets dilapidated, everything goes to ruin and the end cannot be different from a return to prohibited paganism, to prohibited rituals and orgies, which are a serious danger to public health... The destruction of the old culture is only justified by the construction of a new one. As a matter of fact real results have been achieved only in the villages which have been most strongly under the influence of the mission.

Van Baal did not need much effort to convince Wiggers, the education inspector of the Reformed Protestant Church. In 1938 the civilization school was a fact. The direction remained in the hands of outside gurus up to 1953 when the first so-called Papuan forerunners were deployed. Only in the Muyu area did Fr Hoeboer begin in 1942 with the training of Papuan gurus because the war halted the supply. After the war these emergency gurus received a follow-up education in Merauke.

## Native Cadre

Since the end of the nineteenth century Rome propagated an offensive-minded and expansionary Catholicism. Leo XIII had an eye for worldwide dimensions and emphasized that every person could come to Christ and to salvation only through the Church in among others the encyclical Tametsi Futura (1900). Mission among the heathens, wherever in the world, was high on the papal agenda. What mattered was the planting of the Church just like the one that existed in Europe with its strictly hierarchical structure. In practice the missionaries often put first the interest of the people for whom they had come, but they did not lose sight of planting the Church. Until the Second Vatican Council the globalised model of the Church was the ideal, in which everywhere one came across the same catechism, seminary set-up, devotions and associations.

In their mission encyclicals Benedict XV and Pius XI had passed over other religions and over the right of self-determination of peoples but they did warn against nationalistic influences in the mission work, and argued emphatically for admission of the new Catholics into the ecclesiastical organisation. This call found a sympathetic ear among the MSCs with Apostolic Vicar Aerts in the lead.

In December 1924 he visited the conference of parish priests in Langgur. The biannual meeting had as its theme: to what extent the missionary could accommodate the Keiese adat (custom). Van den Bergh, the mission superior, brought the formation of a Keiese elite up for discussion: investment in children who are eager to learn in order to develop them into priests and religious, into kampong chiefs and administrators. Mgr Aerts fully agreed: 'Perhaps we shall experience in our time the expulsion of the Dutch from the Dutch Indies, and then the native church of the Moluccas and New Guinea should have been established.' If one really wanted to go into the formation of priests, one could not start early enough. Because of the prolonged education, the harvest would keep people waiting for another fourteen years! Eventually it would not be until 1944 that the very first Keiese was ordained priest. This was Eusebius Yamco who was a secular priest. The year after witnessed the ordination of the second Keiese priest, and he became an MSC - Engelbertus Dumatubun.

In the meantime Aerts had made a beginning with the foundation of Keiese sisters and brothers. In Langgur he founded a congregation of native sisters, which he dedicated to Mary Mediatrix. As early as 1924 it made a start with four postulants under the guidance of Sr Angelina van Zeijl, a Dutch FDNSC sister. The congregation exists to this day and is flourishing. Shortly afterwards the Apostolic Vicar initiated a foundation for Keiese brothers, also in the mission area of Langgur. The members were trained by MSC brothers, and the intention was that they would assist the latter in the mission work.

*The Brothers of the Sacred Heart*

The congregation made a start with three boys who had completed their training as gurus. The supervision was in the hands of the Dutch brothers, Dominicus Kop and Adriaan Peeters. Aerts kept himself personally informed of their progress on his regular short visits. On September 5, 1926, the novitiate began for the first group of three. For Ambrosius Lefaan, Cantius and Donatus Tuju it was an emotional event – this was the beginning of the very first native religious community! It was established in an old house in the mission area of Langgur near the boarding school of the sisters and the primary school (a continuation of the village schools). The three made their first vows on May 12, 1929.

Just as the MSC candidates used to do in the Netherlands, they maintained a chronicle from the beginning. They needed a regular reminder, however, not to neglect the journal. For instance for the period January-May 1934 it only says:

> Because the authors of this chronicle started to slack, Brother Superior told them not to neglect this history, because it is very important for the times to come.

The daily schedule resembled strongly that of Tilburg: work, spiritual exercises and many feasts and jubilees, which justified special leave. Apart from that also an event such as the arrival of a small aircraft or a particular boat was reason for leave. The Queen's Day, profession days, feasts of patron saints, mission jubilees - their chronicle reviewed everything. The trades in which they became skilled under the guidance of the Dutch brothers were the trades familiar to the brothers as well: tailoring, carpentry, shoemaking and bookbinding. The intention was that this work would earn the congregation a bit of cash for its own maintenance, but in September 1933, for example, one can read that 'the shoemaker has too little work because one prefers to wear cheap rubber shoes'.

The growth was not going smoothly. Most of the few postulants who applied went away again. To keep the morale of those who stayed high, Aerts visited them from time to time, played a game of checkers, taught the young men how to make cigars and he helped with the improvement of the poultry house. Fr Drabbe came to photograph and film them extensively, and also the provincial superior honoured them with several visits during his visitation. They also had frequent contact with the MSCs stationed in the vicinity, as well as with the neighbouring sisters in their boarding school (for example they did their retreat together with Keiese Sisters) and the trade school in Langgur. The brothers were regularly invited by the families of the gurus.

The next to make their first vows were Leo Rumangun and Alfons Meteray on December 8, 1933. These novices got Dutch lessons from their confrére Ambrosius. That year Brother Superior (alternately Kop and Peeters) acquired a shuffleboard, so the chronicle mentions, 'because it is not easy with seven people to keep the conversation going during the recreation'. The following year the small company left the nest. On August 22, 1934, Aerts informed them of their appointments: Cantius

27. Donatus Tuju, Brother of the Sacred Heart, at work as cobbler in Langgur, in the 1920's.

and Donatus Tuju were to go and work as head teacher and assistant teacher respectively in the boarding school of Merauke, while Alfons Meteray was appointed as supervisor in the carpentry shop of the trade school. The other brother from the very beginning, Ambrosius Lefaan, was assigned to Watsit (Great Kei) in 1935 to build houses for lepers. He was accompanied by three carpentry apprentices of the trade school.

In answer to the German invasion of the Netherlands, the brothers and postulants attended a prayer service in the boarding school chapel on May 10, 1941, in the presence of both Dutch and native administrators of Tual. The chronicle mentions how the Dutch brothers hoisted the flag in Tual on that occasion, as a sign that the Dutch administration would resurge. That year Fr Grent became the general superior of the Keiese Brothers. Shortly afterwards the congregation came to a temporary end. On the black day of July 30, 1942, the brothers of the Sacred Heart were rudely awakened by the Japanese and had to look on powerlessly when their spiritual father, Mgr Aerts, and other well-known missionaries were taken away.

Initially Ambrosius and his confréres were left in peace but on November 24, 1944, they were charged with using flag signals. Forced labour was imposed on them, and in the camp two of them gave up celibacy. After the war, only Ambrosius and the three brothers placed in Merauke (Donatus Tuju, Alfons Meteray and Leo Rumangun) remained in the congregation, the rest had returned to their kampongs.

The Brothers of the Sacred Heart never grew into a big congregation. In 1963, it

was absorbed by the MSC. At its abolition the congregation had fourteen brothers with vows and three novices. Aerts' foundation followed Dutch patterns completely; the system used would not have been out of place in Tilburg! The candidates who eventually left the congregation had possibly the feeling of having ended up in a vacuum between two worlds. They had left the old Keiese adat (custom) behind, but in the process of alienation the new life style in surroundings that were not theirs, did not prove as yet to be a good fit.

*MSC or Universal Church?*

Of course Aerts noticed that things did not go well with the congregation. As early as 1937 Aerts suggested affiliation with the MSC as a solution (which was realised in 1963). 'Through contact with us' the brothers would receive a better formation. At an early stage he had complied with the papal call for the formation of 'a native cadre' but, on second thoughts, Aerts expected better results and more commitment, if that native cadre were to be formed within the context of an already existing congregation. He was supported in this by Mgr Panis of Celebes, who longed for a training in the Dutch Indies for native MSC priests. The Celebes mission, a vicariate since 1934, had concentrated especially around Manado. In 1937, that became a separate vicariate, while the CICM accepted the southern part of Celebes. In the area of Manado (Woloan) Fr Hein Croonen had started a modest minor seminary as early as 1928. Panis would have liked to see the students moving on to a novitiate and scholasticate of the congregation in the east itself. In 1937, the minor seminary of Manado acquired a more spacious accommodation in Kakaskasen, where the education was complemented with philosophy. The request of Panis to start one's own theology training was rejected by the provincial council which also turned down Aerts' proposal with regard to the training of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

Panis and Aerts met opposition especially from Provincial Superior Verhoeven and one of his predecessors, Zandvliet. Both based their arguments partly on Rome. The subsequent popes, Benedict XV and Pius XI, wanted many indigenous priests who would empathise better with their own people and could be engaged in a more fruitful apostolate because of their better knowledge of the language. Moreover, Rerum Ecclesiae indicated that this was usually the way to establish the Church in the mission areas. The survival of the church would be ensured in case missionary orders or nationalist movements were driven away. According to Rome seminaries had to be established in those areas. As a matter of fact, according to Verhoeven, seminaries for secular priests were intended.

Zandvliet wrote: 'The mission aim, after all, is to make us superfluous and whoever succeeds in this first has done the best missionary work. The earlier a hierarchy of natives is formed the better. It may take as long as 50 years, but each seminarian who is directed to the regulars makes for more delay.' In the same letter to Panis he continues:

28. The minor seminary in Woloan (Manado), 1928-1937.

> The Church does not count in years, but looks forward in decades or entire generations. By directing the students to foreign congregations, which is the case now, we are not cooperating with the intention of the Church, but we thwart that intention. It is not a question of sentiment but of well-founded objective reasons like those stated in the encyclicals.

That did not alter the fact that several times in the thirties talented young men were brought to the Netherlands to be educated there. This had started with the Filipinos, Victor Viola and Vicente Celeste, who made their first vows in the Netherlands in 1930. Four years later their compatriots, Crisogono Napana and Venancio Portillo, followed. The Philippines was not a mission area where the church had still to be planted. In that sense the candidates differed from the three Javanese who received training in Stein in the same period.

### *Padmo and Purwokerto*

The first of them was Padmowidjojo (1909-1973). At his baptism at the age of fourteen, Padmowidjojo chose the name Theodorus, but he continued to be known by his Javanese name Padmo. Although coming from a strict Islamic family he had become a Catholic under the influence of his oldest brother who had passed through the teachers' training school of F. van Lith SJ (1863-1926) and, against the wishes of his parents, had talked the other children from their large family into the new belief. Repudiated by their parents they came under the care of their brother who had meanwhile become a teacher.

In 1925, Padmo went to the minor seminary of the Jesuits in Muntilan. He was inspired by the work of Vertenten who just then had been the talk of the town. Soon Padmo came in contact with MSCs when on November 1, 1927, three fathers of the congregation established themselves in Middle Java (Purwokerto). Bernard Visser, Maarten de Lange and Bernard Thien took over that area from the Jesuits who had made only pastoral visits. In 1932 it became an apostolic prefecture under the direction of Visser. The mission work proved extremely difficult and for a long time their pastoral care only reached the Europeans who populated Java in great numbers. Under the Javanese, Islam had more success. To the irritation of both the Protestant and the Catholic mission the Dutch government had done practically nothing to stop the expansion of Islam.

> Humanly speaking, as long as we Dutch toil here, it remains doing only half a job. That is something for which I ask people here to pray occasionally: for many priests from their own people.

When Theo Tangelder wrote this, Padmo was in training in Stein. The Dutch language and habits were familiar to him and his fellow students found it interesting to have a Javanese in their midst. Also, the Dutch students were friendly with the Javanese who came after him, Putu and Soma.

In 1938 Padmo returned as an MSC priest to Java. 'Too suddenly,' he himself thought,

> 'because I did not feel much like departing from Europe, or rather Holland, so soon, perhaps because the financial forays had gone rather well - but not only that, it was also because I would have liked to carry out several plans to collect books, etc.'

Little came of his intention to write often to the scholastics in Stein, so much was he taken up by his work. A case that made a great impression on him was

> of a dying person who was no longer going to church, firmly bound as he was to a strictly Mohammedan family; he lay waiting half unconscious for the end as long as 25 days. The day before his death he regained consciousness, asked for a priest and just after I had anointed him in the evening, he died.

In his letters to the Java club in Stein, Padmo addressed Putu and Soma in particular.

> If I may advise you, during vacation translate useful booklets for catechism or for preaching, or try to put together in Javenese a lot of those practical sermon conferences for Marian associations and for the Eucharistic Crusade. You will later achieve much with them.

They had to learn as much as possible about Islam, 'and if you have time, also learn some Arabic. Last year, unfortunately, not much came of this intention'.

Besides the competition from Islam, the rivalry with the Protestant mission was still going on. The different stations of Purwokerto had to do without chapels and

schools for lack of resources and personnel. Padmo wrote on August 4, 1939:

> We hope that a third parish priest will come because, without one, it is not sustainable... I would like very much to set up a couple of dessa (village) schools in the neighbourhood of Purbana where the Protestant mission has no less than four schools and still more in several remote corners of the regency, where there are no public dessa schools as yet ... But in the country of the brown people, even this brown work horse cannot pull it off.

The laborious work seemed hardly to affect Padmo's morale. He kept his sense of humour and his energy. Thus at the beginning of 1940 he managed to get a teacher training school established, which for the time being was led by lay people, for lack of Javanese brothers. It was therefore not a matter of course that the congregation would contribute financially to this, but 'in order to touch Monsignor's weak spot, I have called the school St Bernard's School. As a result I may spend ten guilders from his fund for the school, and the school gets f 5 subsidy from him". The monsignor in question was Bernard Visser who gave something in encouragement, but probably did not want to take on responsibility for the school itself.

### *Training in the East*

While the Dutch scholastics had to wait and see where they would be appointed, no misunderstanding about that could arise for the Javanese. Their training in the Netherlands was to serve the establishment of the church over there but the pope insisted on founding indigenous congregations, not on connecting with existing European ones. From Th. Bekkers, the national director of the pontifical Society of St Peter in the Netherlands, Verhoeven had heard confidentially that early in 1936 Rome even wanted to withdraw its entire support from the Dutch East Indies, because all native priests there entered the orders. Bekkers managed to obtain a provisional exception for this area, among others, by pointing out that the training of native priests had only just been started. The MSC could hardly do without financial support; it was not without reason that the congregation transferred, at this very time, the work in north New Guinea to the Franciscans. Setting up its own training at this time was far from expedient: the construction and the management of buildings that it involved, the appointment and the support of professors and students – all that entered into it. And what could the congregation do with all those MSCs? It would not be possible to employ them outside the Dutch Indies, which meant that in the future it would have to become a section of its own, just as had been brought about recently in Brazil (1936). But the question for Verhoeven was whether such a move could succeed in the east with the areas situated far apart and the great mutual differences between the students.

In the Dutch Indies ecclesiastical territories had been generally entrusted to particular priest congregations. Verhoeven thought it was basically wrong if, in MSC territories, candidates for the priesthood could only go to an institute for the training of MSC priests. That was not the case with the Javanese who were in training

in the congregation; they had opted explicitly for the MSC in a Catholic environment of secular priests.

Not satisfied with Verhoeven's statement, Panis wanted a pronouncement from Rome about its thinking on training for religious, to the irritation of the provincial. 'I believe that exactly that question and that answer have set back the possibility for our own training for some years.' Verhoeven was not categorically against such training in the East, he only believed to be in a transitional stage. In April 1937 both the general and the provincial superior took the position that potential MSC candidates had first to be trained as secular priests, after which they could enter the MSC at an indeterminate time. This path needed to be followed for a number of years in order to ensure the foundation of a secular-clergy Church. As early as 1937 Zandvliet made it a matter of consideration that Japan could very well take possession of the Dutch East Indies and the secular-clergy Church had to be established there for that eventuality. Whoever was serious in becoming an MSC had to be patient for a while, in any case until after his priestly ordination. For this reason in 1938, after the seminary and philosophy in Manado, the Lengkong brothers went to Java for further studies. In Java Mgr Willekens SJ had established a seminary for secular priests, where boys from all over the Dutch Indies were welcome.

After the general chapter of 1938 Nico Verhoeven made a visitation of all MSC areas in the east. A meeting with the superiors concerned concluded the trip - Mgr Aerts (New Guinea and Moluccas), Mgr Panis (Celebes), Mgr Visser (Java) and Vrakking (representative of the Philippines). After more consultation in December 1939 with the provincial council, these discussions resulted in a policy paper in which the basis was laid for an MSC training facility of its own in the east. It included the erection of a canonical house by the Dutch Province for novitiate and theological studies for candidates who had already completed philosophical studies and had an MSC vocation. The candidates would be accepted on the recommendation of the mission heads and after completion of their studies were to be considered as belonging to the mission of the mission head in question. The congregation would not bear all the financial expenses - the four missions also had to contribute to the costs. This did not preclude that attention would also be given to the formation of native secular clergy. It was agreed upon to await the developments around the war before taking any further steps.

## World War II

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (December 8, 1941), the Netherlands, as an ally of America and the United Kingdom, was at war with Japan. In the same month the Japanese set foot on Celebes (Sulawesi) and arrested the Dutch who were there. At the end of January 1942 the attacks on Ambon began. Father Schuur MSC and two sisters ended up in a prison camp. The Netherlands capitulated on March 8, 1942, but the KNIL troops (Royal Dutch East-Indian Army) who had fled to Australia, were planning a re-conquest of the colony, with the knowledge of the Dutch authorities. Accordingly on July 12, 1942, the capital of Aru Islands (Dobo), which had not yet been occupied by the Japanese, was reinforced militarily from Australia. Such an action was not in keeping with the surrender and the Japanese had reason to believe that the presence of the Dutch in Kei, Tanimbar and Aru pointed to a planned counter-attack. The arrest of the administrator, Theo van Nieuwenhuysen, in Tual, Mgr Aerts did not seem to be aware of the fact that as far as the Japanese were concerned all the Dutch in the archipelago were potential enemies. In any case he impressed on the missionaries to remain at their posts, even if all civil servants should leave the colony. The assistant resident of Tual (Van Kempe -Valk) offered them the last opportunity to escape to Australia, but Aerts turned this down: 'As long as the Japanese would allow it, his duty ordered him to remain with his flock.' Meanwhile in Langgur the repair shop of the mission was going at full speed. Ship engines and even weapons were repaired there.

### *Execution*

At the crack of dawn on July 29 the Japanese came by ship to Tual and early in the morning of July 30, they occupied the mission grounds. Ambrosius, Brother of the Sacred Heart, recorded the events of that day.

> We were called outside and stood in line on the pendoppo [veranda]. We had to hold our hands up and one went down the line of faces with a centre stick, asking the question: 'Where do you come from?' We answered: 'We are people from Kei, from Indonesia.' Then they entered the rooms and checked everywhere for the presence of Dutchmen. Brother Superior [Peeters] was standing there in his cassock and was pushed outside and Fr Akkermans told us: 'The Japs do not need you, they are looking only for Dutchmen, so just go back to sleep!'

The soldiers rounded up everyone at the entrance to the chapel, including the Keiese brothers:

> At 5 o'clock we received an order to get chairs from the central house for the bishop and the Japanese officers. All the priests, brothers and sisters sat on the pendoppo of the chapel on the cement floor, and the bishop with the Japanese officers in the small front yard.

Aerts was questioned about the purpose of his presence and the nature of his activities. The officer accused him of lies about weapon possession. At first Aerts denied the presence of guns in his grounds, afterwards he said that there were only a few broken shotguns. Another source mentions also accusations of anti-Japanese activities and colonial oppression.

The interrogation was still going on, when a certain Achmet - a Muslim from Makassar, according to the Keiese brother - came with a letter. After reading it the officer informed the missionaries of his sentence: all would be killed. 'Only Fr Münster received the order to go and sit in the chapel, while the sisters all remained standing in front of the chapel.' Being a German, Münster was spared, while his Dutch confréres were driven blindfolded to the beach. The Keiese Brothers looked on helplessly. 'Up to three times we asked for the officer, through the mediation of Raja Augustinus, but he refused us and threatened to shoot and kill us. The thirteen missionaries (bishop, four fathers and eight brothers) were lined up in a row along the pier facing the coast.

> Around nine o'clock all the missionaries were shot. Only Fr Berns, who had not been hit badly, could still call out: 'For Christ our King!', and he too fell, riddled with bullets.

Another witness report continues:

> The commander ordered the people who were present to throw the bodies in the sea. Brother van Schaik was still alive and he still said something. Next came the command: 'Whoever wants to bury these bodies is a criminal and will be shot dead.'

For two days the thirteen bodies were floating in the sea, until inhabitants dared to bury them at the risk of their own lives. The youngest was Fr Jacques Ligtvoet (27), the oldest Brother Joosten (70). A fourteenth MSC, Fr French de Grijs was staying in Watraan during the arrest. Informed by a witness about the drama, he reported the next day to the Japanese in Tual. There he was locked up and maltreated. On August 2, three days after his confréres, De Grijs too was executed together with some Dutch soldiers by firing squad.

*Martyrs*

Aside from Aerts, Berns, Van Schaik, Ligtvoet and Joosten who have been mentioned, also Fathers Hendrik Cornelissen and Jacques Akkermans and Brothers Adriaan Peeters, Cornelis Beijer, Frans Raaijmakers, Antoon de Rooij, Willem Houdijk and Theo Fölker met their deaths on that 30th of July. The group of fourteen MSCs have gone down in history as martyrs, but is that correct in the strict sense of the word? Fr Karel Bedaux MSC believed they were: 'As for me, I am firmly convinced that they were killed out of hatred of the faith. Some Mohammedans had raised false charges against them. The Japanese took no time to examine the charges.'

Just like in the drama of Rabaul (1904) the propaganda of the MSC did not

leave room for any misunderstanding about the martyrdom. A biography of Mgr Aerts in 1957, intended for children, has this to say:

> The Japanese had actually an order to intern the Dutch only, but a false accusation raised by Muslim opponents of the mission, was the reason the commander of the Japanese decided to execute them all by firing squad without any form of process.

On the other hand this question was critically examined within their own MSC circle, just as in the case of Rabaul. Schreurs pointed out that this execution was not an isolated case. Elsewhere in the archipelago non-military men were killed by Japanese firing squad, and even women and children fell. The Muslim messenger belonged possibly to those who had maligned the mission to the Japanese but did the 'traitors' act out of hatred towards the colonists or towards the Christian faith? The fact was that Brother Van Schaik as a skilled mechanic had lent a helping hand to the Dutch administration, among other things in the setting up of a military radio transmitter.

Nico Wijte, however, objected to Schreurs' comments: 'We who have always lived there know that it was for more than political reasons. If it had been only for political reasons, it would not have come to that point.' When Wijte began to work in Indonesia in 1947, the killings were still fresh in the memory of the people. Every year a Requiem Mass was celebrated on the black day. 'But after about eight years we said: We have a full turn-about, we just make a feast of it, the glory of those people who have died the martyrs' death.' After the war Grent asked Van Keeken, the 'assistant resident' (local government official), for an investigation into the facts, according to Wijte.

> 'You are also Catholic, so seek ways to find out why they have been killed?' He got the point, but later he saw that there had been an Islamic smear campaign in those lands and that Muslims were to blame. But he could not use that because he continued to live there. He did not go back to the Netherlands, because he was married to an Indonesian woman and had children. He did not want to shoulder the responsibility for providing proof that the Muslims were to blame for the murder, and said: "Mgr, I have no more time, this is a transitional period for me too, I must hand over my affairs to Indonesians and I want to live in peace; I do not want to bring the odium on me.

Whatever may have been the exact facts of the matter it is undeniable that this group had been killed totally defenceless and were to the end faithful to their vocations.

The damage which the mission experienced from the Second World War was enormous; first of all in human lives: a quarter of the hundred Dutch MSCs who worked in Indonesia in May 1940 did not survive the war. Most of them were killed in the Moluccas. Aside from the fourteen victims of Langgur there were fatalities during a bombardment of allied forces on Camp Tantui. It killed Frs Thien and Klerks and four sisters. The old brothers Gerrit Jeanson and Dries Clement, both

born in 1874, and an FDNSC sister, succumbed to the hardships of the camps.

Also the island of Celebes had fallen prey to the Japanese. Mgr Panis and his confréres ended up in a camp. Six of them did not survive captivity: Brother Antoon van der Linden and Frs Hein Croonen, Nol van der Meijden, Willem Lemmens, Anton Bröcker and Eduard Cappers. The latter two died in Cimahi. In this camp near Bandung in Java the heads of the Dutch administration and business had been housed. Also Fr John Burger MSC, who was working in Java, met his death there (1944).

Besides disease, lack of food was a big cause of death in the camps. Bram Werkhoven did everything possible to fight hunger. His record as a cook, but especially his courage and capacity for improvisation, came in useful in the severe circumstances. In a drain pipe the brother had dug an open hearth where he sporadically prepared caught rats, dogs and cats. Sometimes Werkhoven crawled through the same drain pipe under the fence of the camp in order to come up again in the bushes on the other side. There the native sisters managed to provide him with coconuts or fruit, with which he crawled back to the camp. His food excursions cost him thrashings by Japanese soldiers several times. Besides the loss of his teeth and a broken jaw he was left with a permanent back injury.

In the mission area of Rabaul three Dutch MSCs lost their lives. Fr Bernard van Klaarwater was killed in 1943 with the other prisoners of a Japanese war ship. In addition two very old brothers died: Volkert Deen (1944, from his wounds) and Gerard van der Zanden (1945, in captivity). Lastly in the Mimika area of New Guinea, where the Japanese entered in 1942, Fr Jan Laaper had a fatal accident during his flight to the mountains.

CHAPTER 6

# Transfer

In several respects the Second World War caused a rupture in the work of the missionaries in the Indonesian archipelago. The Dutch Indies ceased to exist. They no longer had to deal with the colonial government but with the Indonesian government. During the armed conflict up to 1950 and the highly explosive tensions up to the transfer of New Guinea, the MSCs took a neutral position. The political complications were not the cause of the transfer of the mission work to Indonesians (the MSCs had already started that before the war), but they did accelerate the process. From 1961 onwards there was no 'mission' anymore. Indonesia had its own ecclesiastical hierarchy and the former apostolic prefectures became independent dioceses. Just a little earlier a beginning had been made with the foundation of an independent Indonesian province of the MSC which was completed in 1971.

## *Proclamation*

On August 17, 1945, three days after the capitulation of Japan, Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta proclaimed the independent state of Indonesia. The Dutch government refused to recognise it. Well before the Second World War the Dutch government had tried to suppress all nationalistic expressions in Indonesia, such as the PNI (Indonesian Nationalist Party) which Sukarno had established in 1927. Those who held leading positions in the independence movement were exiled. There was hardly any Indonesian cadre, because the Dutch had placed few Indonesians in administration, civil service and the army.

The Japanese occupation was welcomed by most of the exiles as a step to independence. Prime Minister Tojo, especially, who came to office in February 1944, showed understanding for the striving towards a state of their own. The Indonesian population, to be sure, suffered from the occupation, but for the first time Sukarno and Hatta were given the opportunity to visit the other islands and from September 1944 the Indonesian flag could be hoisted beside the Japanese flag. Tojo's support for the nationalists was also intended to get Indonesia on the side of the Japanese in the war. As the threat of a direct attack on Japan increased, in which the Americans could possibly get the support of the Russians, independence was speeded up. In preparation for this status Japan set up a committee composed mostly of Indonesi-

ans in March 1945. As a consequence when the Japanese finally capitulated, Sukarno and Hatta were ready to take over the rudder as president and vice president.

Their unilaterally proclaimed state had been founded on the Pancha Sila (five pillars), a set of five values which should keep together the world's largest archipelago: belief in God, nationalism (with an emphasis on cultural solidarity), a humanist idea of internationalism, democracy and social justice. For the time being there was however little time to give shape to these principles because this was the start of the true difficulties with the Netherlands. The Dutch government considered the Indonesian leaders as traitors and collaborators. During the war it had not reckoned on the scenario of an independent state and decided to assert its power. Outside Java the Netherlands could occupy again its pre-war position without big problems, but in Java the army had to step in. Also the English, who came to disarm the Japanese on behalf of the Allied Forces, met fierce opposition in Surabaya particularly from young Indonesians. More than the somewhat older republican leaders, the militant youth were strongly opposed to the Netherlands and its (alleged) allies, and they feared that the revolution might be undone.

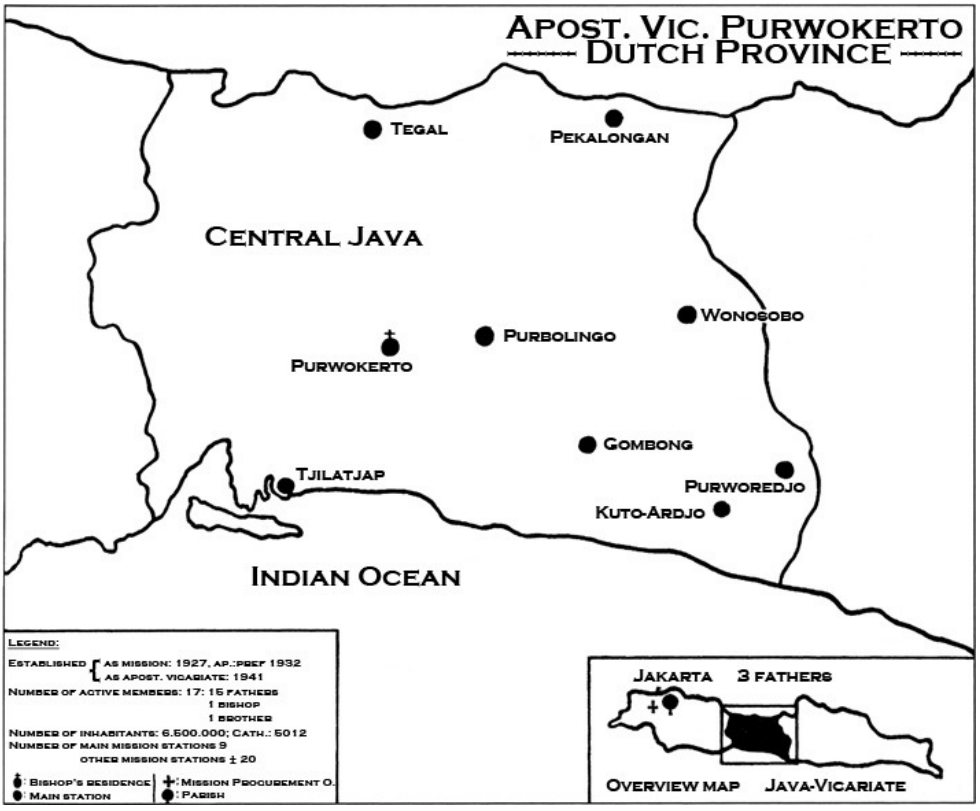
## Purwokerto

### *Javanese Priests*

The end of the Second World War did not bring the peace to the east which the Dutch had imagined. The whole pre-war structure was under review and the outcome was uncertain. The changed relations were most clearly noticeable in Java, the headquarters of the nationalists. Being a rather troublesome mission area in itself, after the war it became more difficult for the MSCs to work there. Islam enjoyed a lot more success. The choice of this religion was partly political for many. Colonialism had brought about an anti-Christian front which expected liberation and prosperity from Islam. In order nevertheless to find acceptance with the native population the MSCs had put their hopes in their Javanese confrères.

The importance of native priests and religious had been proved during the war. Right ahead of it a historical appointment had taken place. On June 25, 1940, Mgr Albertus Soegijapranata SJ was put in charge of the vicariate of Semarang in Central Java. For the first time an Indonesian was at the head of the Church. While the Dutch had to flee or were imprisoned during the Japanese occupation, Soegijapranata and the Javanese priests could remain in office. In Purwokerto, Padmo was solely responsible for the pastoral care and the administration of the vicariate, but Soegijapranata provided assistance by lending him a secular priest. From February 1944 that assistant was Padmo's own brother who had been ordained in that very month, showing that the ordinations in the diocesan major seminary of Yogyakarta took place as usual.

Padmo's brother continued working in Purwokerto until September 1946, the




29. From: *MSC over de wereld 1854-1954* (Tilburg) 27.

very month that Padmo wrote again to his Dutch supporters after nearly six years of silence. He still was the one who kept the vicariate running. The Dutch missionaries, it is true, had come out of the camps but the near future was highly uncertain. Especially in Java, where Mgr Visser and ten confrères had come out of their internment (Banjumas) in September 1945, the Dutch were plainly in danger. Partly to regain their strength, partly for the sake of security, Visser followed the advice of the Dutch government to stay temporarily out of the limelight. So after a month of freedom the missionaries ended up again in a camp, although this time it was for their own protection. Only Fr Piet van Bilsen, who happened to work in a hospital in Bandung, had not been interned.

The MSCs received regular visits from Javanese Catholics, who provided them with extra food and with what they needed to celebrate Mass. Just as in the war years, all the work had to be shouldered by the few Javanese personnel. Padmo had hoped to undertake the reconstruction with his Dutch confrères, not agreeing completely with their decision to seek the protection of a camp:

> I, for my part, thought that if there were still healthy [missionaries], it was necessary that at least a few stayed behind both for the sake of the mission and for the good cause of public opinion. In the time of the Japanese we always tried to show that the Holy

30. Father Padmowidjojo (1909-1973), the first Indonesian MSC.

> Church was above politics, embracing all peoples and languages, and the present offers another beautiful occasion for our Holy Mother to show that the missionaries put themselves at the service of the religious and social interests of the mission areas entrusted to them, also in these circumstances, over and above the political complications.

Because the Catholic mission had always steered its own course, apart from or even running counter to the policy of the Dutch government, most of the Indonesians did not identify the missionaries with the colonial administration. As early as the twenties Van Lith SJ had openly declared that the mission in all circumstances remained loyal to the Indonesian people, even if that attitude would not suit the government line. The active role which Indonesians played in the Catholic Church underlined once more the fully independent position of the Church. However, in the hectic happenings after the proclamation the self-chosen exile of Dutch missionaries could well be interpreted as a political stand. Padmo was of the opinion that,

although it would be dangerous, the MSCs could have shown their independence precisely by staying at their posts.

From May 1946 Padmo was no longer on his own; his compatriots Putu and Soma had meanwhile completed their training in the Netherlands. 'The return of our two Javanese confrères is a relief to me. Putu is now in the North (Pekalongan) and Soma in Purworedjo takes care of the South.' Beside the three Javanese MSCs there was still a secular priest of Kei working in the vicariate. This was Dumatubun, who joined the MSC some years later (see p. 194). Padmo ended his letter with a heartfelt wish. 'I hope and pray that the ideal of Maximum Illud and Rerum Ecclesiae slowly become a reality in Indonesia, including in Central Java.' In fact two major seminarians, intended for Purwokerto, were doing their higher studies in Yogyakarta and two boys from the vicariate were studying in the minor seminary.

### *Police Action*

At the political level the situation seemed to become somewhat quieter. Negotiations between a Dutch government delegation and the Republic led in March 1947 to a provisional agreement: the Republic consisting of Java and Sumatra was to form a federal state together with Borneo and East Indonesia. A Union under the Dutch crown joined the United States of Indonesia to the Netherlands, Surinam and Curaçao. In both countries, however, there was little enthusiasm about this agreement, and the republic did not seem to live up to it. In order to safeguard its own interests the Dutch government commissioned a military operation on July 20, 1947. During this police action Sumatra and a part of Java fell quite quickly into Dutch hands. Two weeks later the Security Council of the United Nations ordered the Netherlands to end its military operation. Because of the police action the Netherlands gambled away its international reputation and turned public world opinion against it, because other powers had already recognised the sovereignty of the republic. The Vatican for example had appointed an apostolic delegate to Indonesia on June 1, 1947, and in this way signalled that the new state should be taken seriously.

Under American pressure both parties entered into a truce in January 1948. Two months later, however, the Netherlands fabricated a federal government without involving the republic. In the Netherlands a new cabinet had taken office. The cabinet in the person of Sassen (Minister of Overseas Territories) proved itself an opponent of the Republic.

The anti-Indonesian attitude did not help the status and safety of the Dutch missionaries in Java. They had returned again to their posts, but their range of action did not extend far. In August 1948 Putu reported that the Dutch could not come to the villages. For a year now he had a Dutch confrère as companion, initially Harrie van Oers, the superior, and at the time of his letter, Willem Zeegers. In East Java an MSC, Kees van der Linden, served the Dutch soldiers as army chaplain.

The field work was still the responsibility of the Javanese. Putu writes, more for his own encouragement:

> Our Dear Lord did not say to me that I must convert the whole of Java, not even the entire Pekalongan, but only that I work for him. His is the success. The failure? The people's and also ours, but not for the biggest part we hope.

'It will become even more difficult,' predicted Putu, 'but then Our Dear Lord has to help even more.' The communists had meanwhile begun to increase in Indonesia. The republic had therefore to wage a fight on two fronts. The Netherlands asserted itself in December 1948 again with a police action, during which Sukarno and Hatta were put in prison. Just as before the war the Netherlands treated them as rebels, not as heads of government. Quite rapidly a stalemate arose in which Sukarno's troops had control of the countryside and the Dutch controlled the cities.

Around Christmas of 1948 Putu went on a pastoral visit of five days. The curfew and the lack of transport impeded his journey to a great extent, but it proved to answer a need. A number of churchgoers had walked for four hours to be able to attend Mass. Putu went back home with them to visit their sick. 'We went up and down the mountain under the burning sun, through forests and cultivated and uncultivated fields.' It turned out that 'in climbing mountains a cassock was a somewhat cumbersome piece of clothing and easily stained brown-yellow from the mud, especially now in the rainy season, but they just have to get used to seeing a priest.'

During the second police action, Putu wrote to the scholastics in Stein. The discrepancy between the studious atmosphere of the scholasticate and the mission work in practice clearly stands out in that correspondence. The Dutch colleagues had plied Putu with academic questions which he had left unanswered:

> Life here is very complex. You have simply no idea how complicated the situation is. Of course there are social questions here, otherwise communism would have no success. Of course there are linguistic questions, otherwise the Indonesian language would not have to be introduced. Of course there are dogmatic questions and moral questions and legal questions, but honestly I am too incompetent to write about them. I wish I were well-read in dogma, then I could mould the Catholic faith in a Javanese form. I wish I were well-read in Catholic morality, then I could be an authoritative judge on Javanese customs. I wish I were well-read in canon law, then I would not need weeks to look for a solution to a marriage question. I wish I were well-read in Church history, then I would be able to imitate the conversion work of the first Christian era. But as it is I just row with the oar that is available to me, and it is up to our Dear Lord to give his blessing... I wish that every Java missionary specialised in one or another subject, but above all that he mastered Javanese and the Javanese customs.

*Transfer of Sovereignty*

Meanwhile the second police action was sharply condemned worldwide. The UN Security Council intervened again. The United States even threatened to put a stop to the Marshall Aid for the Netherlands. The American sympathy for the republic had increased because in September 1948 the troops of Sukarno and Hatta had succeeded in quelling a communist rebellion.

In 1949 the Dutch government and that of the republic found themselves again at the negotiating table. After laborious discussions the Netherlands was at last ready to transfer sovereignty on December 27, 1949. Place after place in Middle Java was transferred to the republic. That year Putu was stationed first in Pekalongan, then in Tegal and finally in Gombong. For as long as ten months after the second police action, there had been no parish priest there and the parishioners had had to leave their homes. Under difficult circumstances the catechist had taken care of the Church property. 'I still come across a missal, a wooden candlestick, an altar stone and the like. Please note, the catechist himself has lost all his belongings.'

Putu said Mass and visited the homes as much as possible. This was no solution because the parishioners lived far apart, and 'every fifty metres you have pot-holes in the road two metres deep'. Javanese or not, 'such a tour of duty really makes some demands on your adaptability'. 'Moreover, I have been with you over there for twelve years and that says a lot about my training.' But even a secular priest from Yogya who had never been in Europe confided to Putu that he could not live in the village any more. 'And I understand that. But we know how to do it, while you still have to learn it even theoretically.' In any case while Putu might have had his doubts about the adaptability of his Dutch confrères, another Indonesian priest found the MSC, Van Oers, in Tegal 'entirely up to date with a balaclava and a long pipe'.

At the end of 1949 the former colony started out as a federal state, just as had been agreed, but the Indonesian leaders were anxious about separatist inclinations among the federal states. In April 1950, the Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS) was proclaimed in Ambon, and in January of that same year the Dutch Captain Raymond Westerling had attempted a coup in Bandung. On August 17, 1950, exactly five years after the earlier proclamation, Sukarno's government proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia - not a federal but a central state. Within that year the country was recognised as a member state of the United Nations. Only New Guinea remained outside the transfer of sovereignty. The Dutch government had wished to do so mostly out of frustration over the loss of the rest because until then it had not-over exerted itself for 'the stepchild of Dutch East Indies'.

In the Javanese mountainous city of Wonosobo, Van Bilsen was the only European resident. Slowly but surely life returned to normal. The tank traps in the road had been filled in and obstacles were cleared away. In February 1950 the presbytery and church were fully repaired. Van Bilsen took care of five deaf-mute children and was aided by a catechist. In Cilacap four FDNSC sisters had established an orphanage in the former Dominican Sisters' convent into which they had moved. Also in

Purworedjo 'our sisters' had established a convent with a training centre and there was a Javanese congregation of brothers that had a place for sheltering orphans. The three Javanese MSCs had set up schools in their stations.

The transfer of sovereignty did not 'liberate' Indonesia from Dutch influence. In the economic and cultural area the Netherlands was still amply present, although from 1950 an Indonesianisation process began, by which Indonesians replaced the Dutch. The hierarchical relations changed. Whereas formerly the Dutch were in charge, from now on they could only be subservient at best. Also the use of the Dutch language was pushed aside by Bahasa Indonesian becoming the new national language. This natural process assumed a grim character as soon as political disputes arose between the two countries. At such moments acute resistance was felt against the use of Dutch legislation, language and exercise books, or against Dutch people holding important posts. Whereas most of the Dutch, including Protestant pastors, left Indonesia in the fifties, the Catholic missionaries continued their work. For them the transfer of sovereignty boiled down to a matter of flexibility. On the other hand there was now political clarity at last and with the departure of the colonial government they could shake off that odium.

### *Education*

Karanganjar was located in Putu's area. In the thirties the congregation had managed to acquire there a fine bank building and land attached. At the time of the purchase the apostolic prefect and the MSC superior were thinking of establishing the novitiate there, but as long as their own formation was still under discussion they established a training school there for catechists. The first police action had reduced the building to ruins. 'Only the towers and the walls are still standing,' Putu reported in February 1950. In May he talked despairingly about the instruction of Msgr Willem Schoemaker (vicar of Purwokerto) to start the training school again:

> ... without roof, without pieces of furniture, without teacher, without benches, just bare walls and a host of snakes... For a week now we have started to clean the 'kitchen' a bit, because once that is finished, we can let the catechist live there for the time being to guard the rest, although there is nothing but walls and sand.

A month later Putu was still busy with the kitchen but he had three thousand guilders. Besides this task he had been instructed to reform the educational system in the vicariate. The reason was that the mission schools of the Dutch brothers and sisters were attended mostly by Chinese children. Javanese pupils lagged far behind in numbers because

> the Dutch educational congregations did not prepare themselves for changes expected for a long time, namely, the introduction of a nationalist education, with an Indonesian orientation. There is too little contact with the Javanese, and that in Java!

A bitter conclusion, which did not surprise Putu himself in the least:

> During the occupation period I said already that the Dutch educational institutions are very much behind the times, and now they are feeling it too, and painfully so... In August [1950] the new school year starts and the new system with it. In our vicariate not a single school will still have Dutch as the language of instruction; all brothers and sisters must teach everything directly in Indonesian, under penalty of not receiving any subsidy.

As far as the inspection was concerned the quality of the mission schools had to be above that of the state schools in order to be considered for subsidy.

Putu conducted the negotiations with the government on behalf of the Pius Foundation (into which the mission schools had united). The demand was highest for the Sekolah Menengah, the Advanced Elementary Education.

> In Gombong there are more than 250 candidates, while there exists only one government S.M. and one private Moslem S.M... Now the time has come for the mission to establish as many secondary schools as possible, if only you can get good personnel. If the Dutch educational institutions, especially the brothers and the sisters, have their members work hard to learn the Indonesian language well (Why can't we?), then a wide field of labour is open to them that would no longer be available in ten years time, because by then Indonesia would have helped itself in the area of education. If you are already established now, they will not throw you out easily.

In this time of reconstruction also Padmo saw education as the key for reaching the non-Catholic Javanese. The MSCs did their part in this area:

> In Kutoardjo we have a group of ninety youngsters (already working on the state railways) in our secondary course, run by our Catholic lay teachers. In the villages you try to reach people by fighting illiteracy.

In Kutoardjo the sisters ran a typing class for about ninety students, varying in age from fifteen to thirty years. Dumatubun reports (see p. 187) that in January 1951 as many as twenty of them, all Javanese, were in the process of becoming Catholics. The hunger for education was satisfied by the fathers and brothers wherever possible, also outside the curriculum. Van Oers, for example, gave lessons in German. Dumatubun said, 'Whether they have this or that diploma, they did try and in this way they gained the trust of the people.' In the middle of February 1951 Putu could report that the training school of Karanganjar had been put into use.

### *Difficult Mission*

Padmo was teaching 34 hours a week in 1952 and also visited the stations. He had been fourteen years in harness in Central Java without seeing any reduction in his workload nor any spectacular increase in the number of Catholics. The considerable growth in the number of missionaries after the Second World War, which he had

hoped for, had also failed to materialise. He felt that more attention was given to other areas: 'Our Province has an extensive territory to work in, yes even too extensive so that the youngest mission of the Province, Java, gets the impression sometimes of being of no account.' Padmo admitted timidity in propagating the work in Central Java among the MSCs in training:

> The mission work here is not as adventurous as in New Guinea or around the North Pole circle. You try to sow and the harvest comes slowly, not profusely, just at times a shoot here and there. Therefore, nothing very romantic can be told about it. For those, however, who want to pioneer and are willing to make the effort, there is plenty of work here. You do not gather the Catholics here in their thousands as in the Philippines or in Brazil, but you must build, raise buildings with a few stones from among the thousands and millions of people. In the North Pole one can travel hundreds of kilometres without meeting a soul; such a missionary feels lonely. Here you may travel kilometres among millions without meeting any Catholics, any people who are the carriers of God's grace as Christ intended. And then you feel lonely, perhaps even lonelier than at the North Pole, in the realisation that God's grace has still to conquer the millions of hearts here, while you yourself are in the midst of those people.

Islam remained the invincible competitor. The political branch presented big problems to the Indonesian government which had its hands already tied by the communists. It concerned the Darul Islam. In August 1949 this movement proclaimed the Islamic State of Indonesia in West Java out of dissatisfaction with the fact that the nationalists had not adopted Islam as the state religion. The rebellion was crushed, but Darul Islam expanded in other places outside Java, including Celebes. Father Joos Jötten had to contend with some militant supporters there in December 1954. He was kidnapped together with a German doctor on a tour of duty. The hostages were moved from one Islamic village to another, where they had relative freedom of movement. 'What they found most difficult to cope with was the daily association with those rude, wild fellows, a couple of psychopaths, consisting exclusively of natives, no Ambonese or former KNIL men,' so says the Annals - clearly words geared to the experience of the Dutch readers, which do little justice to Jötten's own level-headed attitude. The kidnapping lasted no less than nine months. The rescue by government troops involved an exchange of fire in which Jötten and his companion were wounded, the priest lightly, the doctor seriously. Until the sixties the Darul Islam continued to make the countryside unsafe by such actions.

## Moluccas

After the murder of Mgr Aerts, Jacob Grent had been designated as his successor. On July 10, 1947, he was officially appointed apostolic vicar of Dutch New Guinea. In 1950, the mission area of the MSC was split up into two vicariates. South New Guinea together with Frederik Hendrik Island [Kimaam] became the aposto-

lic vicariate of Merauke led by Mgr Tillemans, while Grent headed the vicariate of Amboina which covered the Moluccas.

Langgur, the former capital of the MSC mission, had been totally devastated during the war. In Great Kei and Katlarat damage had been limited, but in Little Kei and Tanimbar everything had to begin all over again. All mission buildings of Langgur had been razed to the ground and the seminarians had been scattered. The villages lay abandoned. The population of Little Kei had had to perform forced labour for the Japanese occupiers. Not only sickness and hunger had taken their toll but 161 people in Kei had been killed.

The reconstruction in Langgur was undertaken energetically by Brother Herman van Haren and the Keiese Brother (of the Sacred Heart), Ambrosius. A certain competition with the sisters, who likewise had to see to the repair of their mission, led to the total stripping of Japanese structures. With an enormous effort the brothers succeeded in rebuilding everything as it once had been. 'A gigantic task,' said Karel Sträter, 'because each nail had to be made of small pieces of barbed wire.' In Ambon, Brother Galiart headed a working party consisting of Papuans and Keiese. Brother Galiart had already rebuilt bombed Merauke with the help of the Brothers Tops, Piëtte and Van Dam. At the end of 1948, there were mission buildings everywhere again in Kei, Tanimbar and Ambon, although some were only temporary.

Grent had been working in the vicariate as early as 1921. Being a qualified teacher he had always busied himself intensively with the schools in the vicariate. At the time of his appointment as apostolic administrator (1943) he was working in Merauke. In the Moluccas he was assisted by Sträter and Nico Wijte. The latter had recently arrived from the Netherlands.

> I arrived in the Kei Islands on December 12, 1947, and on Christmas Day two weeks later I was already in a parish, all by myself. From the very beginning I felt at home, because you noticed that you were needed so terribly much. Education or Church community, organisation of this or that, you could make yourself useful there a hundred per cent. Splendid!

In the office of the bishop Sträter ran the secretariat, while Wijte was entrusted with the management of approximately one hundred Catholic elementary schools. His task as school administrator alternated with pastoral work.

The internment of the Dutch missionaries had in no way put an end to Catholic life in the vicariate during the Second World War. Just as in Java, it had been the native Catholics who kept the Church in Kei and Tanimbar going but, unlike the situation in Java, there was no priest. For four years it was the lay people, led by Philippus Renaan, who looked after things. With the return of the missionaries, however, this spontaneous initiative turned to passivity, according to the MSC, Karel Bedaux. The change in attitude was not blamed so much on overbearing manners on the part of the missionaries as on the changed circumstances. The gurus

found it no longer a matter of course that besides being teachers they were also catechists. That extra task had been dropped because of the neutralisation of the educational system which took place during the war. A role too was played by the awakened national consciousness and the uncertain outcome of the fight for independence. In that respect the Moluccas were divided among themselves, Ambon on the one hand and the remaining islands on the other.

### *Ambon*

Ambon was often seen as representing, pars pro toto, the entire Moluccas and it behaved accordingly. It was inclined to speak on behalf of the Moluccas without consulting the other islands. That attitude stemmed from a long tradition. After all Ambon had held a special position in the colony until independence. In Ambon the government administration and the Protestant mission had worked hand in hand, resulting in a well-trained population which maintained strong links with the Netherlands. The Ambonese had the ability to make a career in the army, the civil service and the health care system. As such they held key positions elsewhere in the Moluccas. After the Second World War their political allegiance did not lie with the Indonesian Republic. On the contrary they preferred their own state, the Republic of the South Moluccas (RMS). The Netherlands deplored the fact that in 1950 the federal state structure had been dropped and showed sympathy towards the aspiration of the above mentioned RMS. Also in 1950 it widely supported the refusal of soldiers of the Royal Dutch East-Indian Army (KNIL) to be demobilised in Java.

The separatist aspiration for a Moluccan republic was not shared by the other islands, except by some Ambonese working there. Quite the contrary, rather than being dominated by Ambon, the Keiese and Tanimbarese preferred to belong to the republic which was administered from Java. In 1950 Ambon became a theatre of war between the government and the RMS troops, causing the recently rebuilt city to lie in ruins again. The MSC, Westerkamp, and six sisters could not return to the city until December 1950 and found at least the school still intact. During this time of fighting Ternate had remained neutral and could fall back on Manado, but Kei and Tanimbar were completely isolated. In Makassar a new missionary, Dumatubun, was waiting until he could travel to his region of origin.

### *Dumatubun*

In 1946, Dumatubun had helped in the vicariate of Purwokerto as a secular priest. He decided to become a member of the MSC congregation and travelled to the Netherlands in 1949 to make his novitiate. On September 21, 1950, he took his vows and he returned to Indonesia, where the vicariate of Amboina had just been set up. As early as 1952 Dumatubun was made deputy vicar (of Amboina) and superior of Tanimbar. The other MSCs in Tanimbar were Fathers Theo Deuling and Gerard Draaijers. Dumatubun was in charge of about twenty schools and forty tea-

chers. Letters from him to the Amboina mission club in Stein have been preserved.

His letters breathe a completely different atmosphere than those of his Javanese confrères who were sometimes close to despair about the lack of response from the population, while the MSCs of Amboina had no complaints in that regard. Dumatubun tried to connect the liturgy as closely as possible with the experience of the population. On Good Friday he let the people 'cry in church: they mourn over Our Dear Lord'. At his first Easter celebration in Kei this had proved a success and that was why he repeated it subsequently in Saumlaki (Tanimbar):

> Four old ladies enjoyed the privilege of mourning over Our Dear Lord. On a sort of catwalk of pillows I had laid a large crucifix, lying on very old Tanimbarese kain [woven cloth], because Our Dear Lord is a noble dead person. I explained the ideas of the Improperia to those four women and they themselves versified those ideas into a splendid lamentation in Tanimbarese style – simple, yet full of emotion. They mourned over our Dear Lord for only five minutes but the effect was tremendous, more than a Passion meditation of one or two hours. The whole church, even the little children, were impressed by this lamentation. The effect was like being with a real dead person.

Dumatubun concluded the month of May with a torch light procession in which nearly a thousand people took part.

> The Tanimbarese is obedient and religious. A bit on the loose side, he loves a drink and likes to feast, but he has a good heart. He is given to externals and for this reason we need try to work here on the deepening of the faith by way of the exterior. 'Per sensum ad intellectum, ad corda [through the senses to reason, to the hearts], just as you have surely demonstrated already in your studies. That is why our work in Tanimbar is a little sensational by organising quite big feasts.

That was also the experience of Deuling and Draaijers, who had taken part in a Marian feast in Wowonda. The statue of Our Lady was taken around in procession through the village for no less than three consecutive days, always to a different house. At the conclusion on the third day some five hundred men entered the church dancing with the statue.

Unlike Padmo, Dumatubun felt confident to extol Tanimbar to the scholastics as a true ambassador:

> A splendid country for walkers, for people with a taste for art, also for people who specialise in birds, etc. Come on, I can use you very well. Our Tanimbarese are spontaneous people, resembling Portuguese or Spaniards. Today they cry buckets full at the death of Our Lord and tomorrow they are wild with joy, hardly containable, because of Easter. That is Tanimbar! What is more – there are beautiful panoramic views! You can go on splendid journeys here. We do not do it for pleasure, but we enjoy it nevertheless. Whoever loves sailing finds himself in the right place here. Plenty of wild pigs and carabaos [water buffalos]! All of you like to go to New Guinea, but equally beautiful work can be done here. We can make use of everything, school wizards most of all. We have a great shortage of educators because we cannot get any teaching congregation for our Vicariate.

31. Inhabitant of Tanimbar, 1930's.
Photo by Petrus Drabbe.

In July 1953, Dumatubun described Ambon as the biggest parish, 'because it includes the diaspora, namely, the islands of Seram, Buru, Banda and Catholics are widespread, everywhere on these islands, so that it is quite a job to visit them'. Once more he appealed to the adventurous spirit of the young MSCs: 'It is not only in New Guinea that pioneering work is being done. Here too, at our place, one can do pioneering work. Seram and Buru still have impenetrable forests like New Guinea - we just need people to make a start.'

*Government Support*

After the war the competition with the Protestants was taken up again in Tanimbar and Ambon, while in Kei, according to Sträter, the missionaries had mostly to deal with Islam. It was a source of concern to the Catholic Church that several Islamic leaders rejected the Pancha Sila. In an Islamic state there would be no place for Catholicism. However, time and again the religious were given official reassurances on this point. Thus the government of Jakarta, once the RMS had been defeated, made a clear gesture, by granting a subsidy to Ambon for the reconstruction of the Protes-

tant main church, the Catholic church and the mosque. The Catholic church was ready for consecration by Mgr Grent on December 16, 1956.

'The Indonesian government has simply recognised the Catholic religion as one of the religions of equal rights - freedom of religion', Wijte reported. 'As far as I am concerned, the independence of Indonesia has made things easier. They always had respect for, and listened to, the Catholic Church.' Sukarno praised the Catholic Church in public for its commitment to the Indonesian population in the area of education and in the field of social charity. Wijte witnessed this personally several times:

> Sukarno and his wife maintained contact with bishops, fathers, brothers and sisters and with Catholic schools and hospitals. They had respect for the sisters [Sukarno's wife had received her education at the sisters' school in Flores] and for the Catholic religion. Sukarno was sympathetic towards it and also towards us. That made itself felt in the rest of society. People knew about the president and thus gained appreciation for the Catholic section of the population and the Church. I often experienced the fact that he made a point of it by approaching you and shaking your hand, for you were so clearly recognisable in your long white cassock. He left the line for a moment to shake the hand of the parish priest and that made an impression on the people.

On September 3 , 1957, Sukarno was even the guest of honour at the opening of the MSC formation house in his country. The special occasion was also graced by the presence of the ambassadors of the United States, Pakistan and Egypt, as well as the Philippine consul. The location was Pineleng in Manado.

## Manado and the MSC Formation

In 1947, Mgr Verhoeven had succeeded Mgr Panis as apostolic vicar of Manado. The forest walker and former provincial was ordained bishop on March 13 , 1947. That year the Dutch province of the MSC tackled again the training of home-grown religious leadership. Those who participated in the meeting with the provincial council were the vicars Verhoeven (Manado) and Grent (New Guinea and Moluccas), as well as the superiors of the Philippines (Van Es), Purwokerto (Van Oers) and Manado (Rosmüller).

At that time seven native MSCs belonging to the Dutch province worked in the Philippines and in Indonesia. Given the political circumstances the question presented itself, particularly for the latter mission area, whether expansion was wise. Yes, the meeting thought, because:

> All natives will be able to stay, as far as can be seen now, and in that case it will be highly desirable, that these natives feel united with one another by a congregational bond.

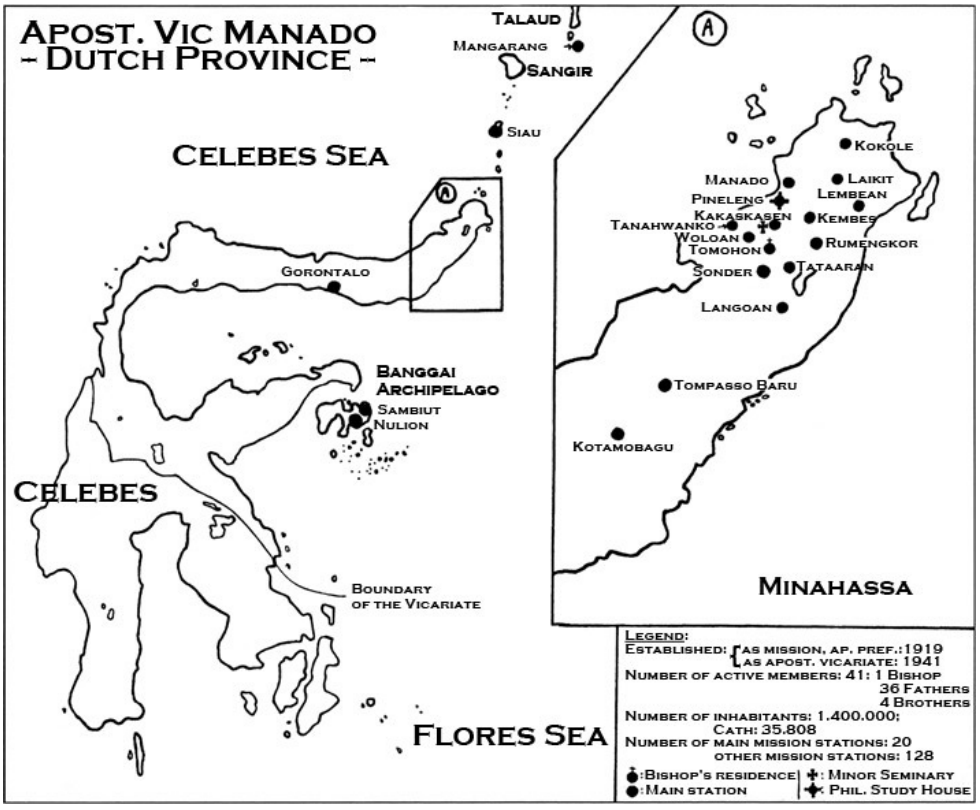
In short, preference was now being given to the training of MSCs, while in the thirties the provincial council had given priority to the formation of a secular clergy:

> An important, generally recognised objection is that secular priests are easily influenced by their families and take up the cudgels especially for their financial burdens. Further, the results show that those who have been trained in the context of a religious community prove in their pastoral work that they have received a better spiritual formation.

What still had to be decided was where the training should be set up. For the lower forms – a (common) minor seminary and the philosophy department – the choice fell on Manado. Although the buildings in Kakaskasen had been razed to the ground, it was decided in 1947 to breathe new life into the school, be it now as a formation centre open to all vicariates. Java had had a minor seminary for a long time and Filipinos could attend that part of their training in their home country, so few candidates were expected from those areas.

There was a longer discussion about the location of the novitiate and the theology department. In the end the choice fell on Manila, because of the 'distinctly Catholic environment'. According to the meeting a second advantage was that a place outside Indonesia would not aggravate the animosity between the different Indonesian regions. As the medium of instruction, Malay, Dutch or English had been considered, but the choice for Manila settled the issue in favour of English.

At the end of 1947 Verhoeven started the reconstruction of Kakaskasen. After completion of the training there those with priestly aspirations had two roads open to them. Whoever opted to become a secular priest could continue his studies in the major seminary of Java, while the MSC candidates went to Manila to attend the novitiate and to study theology.




32. From: *MSC over de wereld 1854-1954* (Tilburg 1954).

*New Plan*

This plan was thwarted by a proposal of the papal internuncio in Indonesia. Mgr De Jonghe d'Ardoye visited Manado in 1951 and explicitly asked Verhoeven to set up a major seminary there. The new foundation had to serve the apostolic vicariates of east Indonesia, as there was a major seminary (regular) only in Flores. The papal representative left the question open as to whether it had to become a secular or an MSC seminary, but he promised to ask for support in Rome. Confronted with this message, provincial superior, Van Erp, considered it no longer opportune to continue with the plan for Manila as that was going to cost a lot of money.

Verhoeven started the construction of a major seminary in Pineleng. Beforehand he had checked on the availability of staff and a sufficient number of students. Van Erp promised that the Dutch Province would take care of the instructors, while the bishops of Makassar, Amboina and Manado would send their candidates to Pineleng. Only in Java was there little enthusiasm. Mgr Schoemaker felt that Javanese candidates would have little inclination to go to the remote and unknown Manado. Likewise the superior, Van Bilsen, preferred the seminary in Java, where many other congregations and orders had established themselves. Manado was far away from

other centres of theology, catechetics and pastoral studies, but Verhoeven held the trump card of the Roman subsidy in his hands. On the other hand the MSCs were in danger of losing good Javanese candidates. A visit by Van Bilsen to Manado in 1956 brought no solution. On the contrary the mutual prejudices became only greater.

There had been no decision as yet to what extent the major seminary would provide a specifically MSC formation. Verhoeven was advised by Mgr Sigismondi, the general secretary of the Propaganda, not to press Rome for a pronouncement about this, because undoubtedly he would then get the message that formation would be exclusively for secular clergy. Verhoeven was already familiar with this strategy. As a Provincial Superior he had had a collision about this in the thirties with his predecessor in Manado, Panis (see p. 178). For the annual subsidy in future Verhoeven reported to Rome only the total number of seminarians of Pineleng, without distinction between secular and regular. Not until ten years later was this going to cost him a reprimand. From 1969 the subsidy from Rome was reduced. Sigismondi had died in the meantime.

Political relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia came under pressure again when Joseph Luns assumed office as minister for foreign affairs. The biggest bone of contention was New Guinea. The Dutch government set out to guide the people of New Guinea to independence. Without being able to produce a clear plan for this involving set deadlines it was the spearhead of the foreign policy. On the other hand Indonesia felt that New Guinea belonged to the Republic and that the Dutch government had to hand over this last remaining part of the colony. Both parties were irreconcilable on this point. The way in which Luns conducted the negotiations was hard to take for the Indonesians. Also the Dutch support for the RMS (Republic of South Moluccas) and the former KNIL soldiers was a thorn in their side.

The relationship between the Indonesian ministry of religion and the missionaries suffered from the unbending government. In September 1953 notice was given that new missionaries were no longer welcome. Those without prior contact with Indonesia by that time were prohibited from entering. The MSCs were in danger of suffering personnel problems. The number of trained indigenous men was still too small and in order to provide them new hands were needed for their training. The consequence was that several places were left undermanned or even had to be given up altogether.

Still in 1953 Verhoeven founded in Manado a teaching congregation for native brothers - Murid Kristus [Helpers of Christ]. In this regard he had taken to heart the advice of his confrère Putu. Verhoeven succeeded in getting the Brothers of Tilburg, who were also working in Manado, to take on the formation of the brothers. Beside Murid Kristus there was in Kei still another native congregation – the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. From time to time missionaries requested the provincial council to accept MSC brothers in Indonesia. During a visitation in 1952, this request was again made to Van Erp. Initially he reacted unfavourably, but in 1955,

he signed a draft contract not only for the establishment of a novitiate 'first class' (for future priests) but also 'second class' by which the brothers were denoted. Anxiety about the expulsion of Dutch missionaries from Indonesia undoubtedly played a role here. It was a reason also for other international congregations to admit native personnel,

In 1954, the philosophy department was opened in Pineleng for candidates to the priesthood from Manado, Amboina and Makassar. For the novices and MSC theology students in Pineleng separate places of accommodation had to be built. This part of the major seminary would become the property of the Dutch Province. Together with the vicariates of Manado, Amboina and Purwokerto the Dutch Province bore the costs as well. Only Mgr Schoemaker, still unhappy with the choice for Pineleng, initially objected to this financial obligation. Purwokerto had been rated at one-eighth of the costs. While this discussion was still going on, work started on the construction of a noviciate house in Lotta which was located near Pineleng. The theology students had already been accommodated by then. For the time being the novitiate was housed in the major seminary.

As mentioned the festive opening of the major seminary was attended by the president. The latter still got along well with the missionaries, but his government had meanwhile taken anti-Dutch measures, such as the decision, at the end of 1955, to stop paying off the outstanding debts to the Netherlands. In 1957, there followed strong actions against Dutch businesses and a prohibition on publications in Dutch. While fifty thousand Dutch, among whom many Indo-Europeans, had to leave the country and Dutch businesses were nationalised, the Indonesian government had to deal with internal rebellions.

In Celebes a big rebellion broke out against the central administration in Jakarta, which deployed the army to crush the rebellion. The construction of the novitiate was still in full swing, but it was stopped when the workers were fired upon by bombarding planes. There were rebellions also in Jakarta and in Sumatra. For some years contact between Manado and the Netherlands and with the rest of Indonesia was extremely difficult. This gave Purwokerto an argument for a novitiate of its own in Java, but in 1959 the provincial council rejected a request for that purpose. Before founding something new it wanted to look for more structural solutions in consultation with the general administration. When the rebellion in Celebes had been suppressed Manado got out of its isolation, but shortly after that Indonesia broke off diplomatic relations with the Netherlands. Visas for Dutch missionaries were seldom issued anymore. By that time a visit of the superior general to Indonesia was already planned.

### *Pro-Province*

This worrying background provided ample reason for consultation at a high administrative level. In 1960, the Belgian, Jozef van Kerckhoven, superior general, and his Dutch assistant Nouwens, came to Java on behalf of the general council. In Pur-

wokerto they met with the MSC bishops and superiors of the regions of Manado, Central Java and Moluccas. Due to the political situation the superior and bishop of Merauke could not attend. Provincial superior De Gier was absent as well because he had not been able to get a visa in time. After the meeting, Nouwens, using his Vatican passport, travelled on to Merauke to submit a report there.

The agenda was all about the personnel problem at that time and about the future development of the work in Indonesia. On the first point Van Kerckhoven promised to bring in MSCs of other nationalities to counteract the shortage of personnel in the Indonesian vicariates. He appealed to the Irish, Spanish and Brazilian provinces. In September 1961 the first Irish Fathers arrived: one for Ambon (who, according to Wijte, immediately wanted to go back to South Africa) and four for Great Kei Island. The last-mentioned did complete their term. It was intended that the Spanish Fathers go to Manado and the Brazilians to Purwokerto. It provided a temporary solution until more Indonesian priests became available.

Meanwhile the major seminary of Pineleng had grown into a scholasticate as more than three-quarters of the candidates wanted to join the congregation. The MSC life offered clearer prospects than the uncertain existence as a secular. As MSCs they would become part of a well-organized structure. Moreover it had been agreed with the MSC bishops that they would be assigned to work in their own areas.

The most important topic of the meeting in Purwokerto was the establishment of an autonomous MSC section in Indonesia. It had become clear that there existed sufficient enthusiasm for the congregation but an important condition had still to be complied with – unity between the different regions 'which was in danger because of the difference in points of view between Java and the other areas', according to Verhoeven. Javanese candidates were not keen on having to go to Manado. For the sake of unity and because the congregation did not want to weaken its recruitment in Java, it was decided to move the novitiate over there. In the melting pot which a novitiate should be, Verhoeven thought, 'mutual differences of opinion could be sorted out most easily. If there was no success at the novitiate, it would be useless to try it in the next part of formation'. Schoemaker made a boarding school with a piece of land available in Purbolinggo. The further studies of the MSC formation remained for the time being in Manado. According to Siep van Baars, 'Mgr Verhoeven was afraid that if the MSCs should leave Pineleng, the major seminary would no longer be viable.' It meant that only diocesan candidates from Manado and Amboina would apply, while at that time MSC candidates were by far in the majority. That provisional decision turned later into a permanent one. The scholasticate remained in Pineleng.

During the year 1960, the Indonesian pro-province became a reality, the intermediate step to an independent province. Andreas Sol, the superior of Amboina, was appointed as head (provincial administrator). One hundred and fifty-three MSCs were then working in Indonesia, including the scholastics and Brothers of the Sacred Heart – although the latter did not belong formally to the congregation

until 1963. Apart from 118 Dutch and three Germans there were 32 Indonesians, of whom 19 were scholastics, in addition to five priests and eight brothers (of the Sacred Heart).

Among those nineteen scholastics of Pineleng there was not a single Javanese. In 1961, the year of the first priestly ordinations, the first two Javanese presented themselves. They came from the Philippines, where they had made their temporary vows during the unrest in Manado. The establishment of the novitiate in Purbolingo soon provided new Javanese to Pineleng. In 1963, there were seven. It proved that Manado and living together with students from other regions was not a problem to them. All seven completed their training in Pineleng. After ordination, two of them left to study at the University of Louvain.

Jakarta was chosen as headquarters of the pro-province, where since 1938 the MSCs had their own house at Chaulan Road. The year before, Mgr Willekens SJ had offered the Dutch Province some parish work, which fitted in nicely with their need for a pied à terre. In 1960, Sol took up residence at Chaulan Road. In 1964, they moved into a new central house in the capital, after which the mission procurement office for the Indonesian MSC was set up in the old house. That same year Sol was succeeded by Siep van Baars (1964-1971). The novitiate was then moved from Purbolinggo to Karanganjar, where the building which Putu had restored after the war as a teachers' training school, became the novitiate for which purpose it had been originally purchased (see p. 190). In addition to the novitiate, Van Bilsen set up a seminary for late vocations in the same location.

By means of the formation of indigenous church workers the Dutch province made an important contribution to the 'Indonesianisation' of the Church. Rome also helped by no longer considering Indonesia as a mission area, but as a fully fledged, independent ecclesiastical community.

### *Indonesian Church*

On January 3, 1961, the hierarchy of Indonesia was officially established. It consisted of six 'Church provinces', which covered nineteen dioceses. Three dioceses were led by MSCs: Manado and Ambon constituting together with the archdiocese of Makassar the Church Province of Makassar, and Purwokerto which was one of four dioceses under Semarang. However, there were only three Indonesians among the 25 bishops.

Indonesia was no longer a mission area. One should therefore no longer speak of 'the missions' of Kei, Celebes or Central Java. From now on it was to be called 'the Diocese of Ambon', and the same held for Manado, Purwokerto and Merauke. Previously an area was entrusted in its entirety to a certain order or congregation, but now the bishop had the last word on everything. The consequence of this made itself somewhat felt in May 1960 at the negotiations in Purwokerto about MSC formation. The superiors of Ambon (Wijte) and Manado (Moor) were at the same time vicars general of the bishops (Grent and Verhoeven, respectively). As MSCs

they easily came to an agreement among themselves but the situation was different for Purwokerto. Wijte reported: 'During that meeting I listened with amazement to the precise formulas for the distribution of finances between Superior Van Bilsen and Bishop Schoemaker.'

In Purwokerto the separation between MSCs and the diocese had been carried further than in the other areas. Applicable to all former mission areas was the rule that the bishops, even if they were MSCs, had their own responsibility. Their interests were no longer automatically those of the congregation from whose authority they had been withdrawn. For the superior, however, the interests of the congregation and province should always come first. It was a question of a double authority structure: for their pastoral activities the MSCs fell under the bishop, but their personal well-being was the responsibility of their religious superior. The MSCs in the Philippines had dealt with this situation as early as 1940, when Vrakking had been appointed as bishop of Surigao. Vrakking and his successor, Van den Ouwelant, clashed regularly with the confrère who had been appointed as superior (See p. 240). Similar conflicts were to be seen in Purwokerto. In any case from then on clear agreements had to be made everywhere.

While the first bishops had been provided mostly by the order or congregation to which Rome had entrusted the area, their succession lay entirely open. The severing of the old ties gave more room to the seculars. As in Brazil and the Philippines, the MSCs now came to work under the authority of diocesan bishops. For the time being these were their own people: Grent (Ambon), Verhoeven (Manado), Schoemaker (Purwokerto) and Tillemans (Merauke). It was certain that they would be succeeded in the long run by Indonesians, but it was no longer a matter of course that these would be MSCs.

From now on the congregation had to enter into work contracts with the bishops. They made out a case for the personnel of their dioceses and agreed with the MSCs to send candidates to the seminary, provided that in principle they would work in their own dioceses. The missionaries had now become assistants of the Church which they themselves had built up. In the development of the Indonesian Church the way in which missionary work had been done left behind clear traces. Too much work had been done in separate areas, distinct from each other. There had been little contact between the different vicariates. When Verhoeven was provincial superior, he tried to enhance the mutual relations by means of Our Province, a bulletin for MSCs which he published in 1936. It contained personnel assignments and chronicles of several houses and work areas. From May 1942 Verhoeven looked for articles of a more reflective nature. The purpose was to promote interest in each other and in the work in other regions.

In practice one's own work claimed usually too much attention for that to happen. The limited focus had repercussions on the new Indonesian MSCs. The bias towards one's own area was in some regions stronger than in others. The willingness to work anywhere in the world was an essential characteristic of the congregation, but perhaps asked a bit too much from young MSCs who had grown up in a time

and country characterised by division. It worried the superior of the Dutch Province what this could mean for the congregational spirit. 'The danger that a Javanese priest will feel more Javanese than MSC is not imaginary,' Willem Jaspers said in 1963. The Dutch Province wanted an Indonesian province and not a province of Indonesians.

It had not reached that point yet, judging by the report which in 1965 the seminary of Pineleng was able to draw up for the first ten years of its existence. It had produced forty priests; most of them were MSCs, only six were seculars. The MSCs worked in their area of origin. In other words the pro-province did not try to forge a unity by mixing members from different areas, but went along with the dioceses. In fact the bishops dominated the policy. In that way Manado received sixteen MSCs, Amboina ten and Purwokerto eight . The seculars stayed in Celebes, four in Manado, two in Makassar.

It took time to get the idea of a unitary province accepted. As it was, every island clung to its own identity, not in the least New Guinea which was not incorporated into the Indonesian Province until 1963.

33. Fathers Kees Meuwese (1906 -1978) and Jen Verschueren (1905-1970) on patrol, 1952.

## From New Guinea to Irian

In 1949, New Guinea had remained outside the transfer of sovereignty and was all that remained of the Dutch Indies. Only by that time the Dutch government recognised the Indonesian Republic of 1945, but New Guinea remained under the administration of the Dutch government, which concerned itself with the area more intensely than it had ever done before. From the beginning administrator J. van Eechoud made an effort to promote the ability of the population to stand on its own. In his contacts with Papuans he distinguished himself from other civil servants; having a dislike for bureaucracy, he valued direct contact with the population who gave him the telling name of Bapak Papua (Father of the Papua).

### *Outside World*

Van Eechoud had come to New Guinea in 1936 and had accompanied Tillemans in the exploration of the Wissel Lakes. One of the later governors (Van Baal) praised his energy and inventiveness but considered him 'too animated' to hold the highest authority, which required after all 'distance and objectivity'. Not surprisingly it was not Van Eechoud – to his disappointment – who became the first governor in 1950 but S. van Waardenburg. One of the Papuan functionaries described Van Waardenburg as 'a rather stiff man, a real civil servant'. The governor for his part was kept on a tight rein by The Hague; according to Van Baal (who held this function from 1953 to 1958), 'the care for Papua served more as publicity than as an aim'.

The Dutch point of view ran up against great irritation in Indonesia which was not seeking an independent neighbour state but a transfer of power. The involvement of the Netherlands with New Guinea also led to tensions with the mission. On the one hand it got new possibilities, but on the other hand it was subjected to supervision and was more strongly tied to government subsidies. In addition the missionaries had their doubts about the consequences of the modern developments for the Papuans themselves. Verschueren blamed the Dutch state for letting the mission muddle along with the population, until the missionaries had brought a little order and had managed to win the confidence of the Papuans. Only then did the government show itself, according to Verschueren. It took the people away from the care of the missionary and threw them into the deep. Good students were 'pinched' by the non-denominational government schools, and employers hired workers for work that did not profit the population itself.

Verschueren's greatest concern was that the population did not get the time to absorb the changes, because western culture would overcome them like an avalanche. The number of missionaries and trained lay people was too small to offer a sufficient counterbalance and to provide people with a solid foundation. The mission was concerned about the key role which foreigners (from elsewhere in the east) played in economic life, while the Papuans became marginal figures stained with

34. Kees Meuwese with the Queen after the discovery in 1948 of the Juliana River named after her.

the stigma of being lazy and indifferent, because they were not familiar with economic thinking on a large scale. This damaged their step-by-step development.

Not only had the government, and in its wake, business, profited from the pioneering role which the MSCs had played, but also geographers, ethnologists and linguists benefited from the work of the missionaries who drew country maps, published accounts about the inhabitants and their customs, and studied their languages. Meanwhile their work won them the trust of the population and so they functioned as ideal intermediaries for scientists.

After the Second World War the MSCs continued to take initiatives in the scientific area themselves. As long as their maps still showed blank spaces, they did not grow tired of attempting discoveries. In 1948, Verschueren and Meuwese set out to find the corridor between the Mappi area and the Kasuarines coast. During that journey they chanced upon a river which had not yet been mapped. They named it the Queen Juliana River (Gondu River), after Juliana who had been crowned that year. Four years later they undertook another trip and this time they managed to reach the Kasuarines coast. Besides being awarded a royal distinction, opening up the Gondu area brought them into contact with new people.

In the field of ethnology the MSCs had made a name for themselves as early as the twenties. The studies of missionaries like Geurtjens were widely read, but lacked an academic basis. Provincial superior Verhoeven felt that the MSCs had to have a professional ethnologist among their ranks. This assignment came the way of Jan Boelaars. In April 1940 he was informed by Verhoeven that he had been appointed to New Guinea. His surprise was great:

> Was I to go there, small and corpulent of posture, reasonably good at studies, a city boy by birth, a bit of a pianist and amateur sculptor? Usually, as we knew among ourselves, tough guys were sent out to that rough country, students, who were remarkable more for their vigour and dexterity than for their eagerness to study.

But the provincial went on to say that Boelaars was to go to New Guinea only after a long university study of cultural anthropology: 'The civil servants study that subject at their training and we must not lag behind.'

Not all confrères saw the usefulness of so much scholarship for the mission work. In 1930, Mgr Aerts had complained that Geurtjens' language research came at the expense of the mission work and to the advantage of the Protestant competitors. But even twenty years later, when the ethnologist Boelaars could at last begin his field work, he was asked by Meuwese: 'What exactly are you going to do in the Mappi? You want to study the life of those head-hunters just when we had to stamp out their customs.'

Fortunately for Boelaars the mission leadership took a completely different view of that. In 1950 this leadership was represented by the person of Mgr Tillemans. After almost half a century of having been joined together as a Church province, Kei and New Guinea went their different ways. In 1950 south New Guinea became an independent vicariate (Merauke) under the direction of Tillemans. He allowed Boelaars to continue his field work and also gave Drabbe a free hand to make his language studies fruitful in whatever way possible. At the same time he himself found his inspiration in Verschueren and his vision of doing missionary work.

### *Adaptation*

Since 1921 the mission in New Guinea had been characterised by the establishment of village communities. Vertenten's model kampongs had proved not only an effective means to prevent the extinction of the Marind, but were also the most efficient method to proclaim the faith and to remain in contact with the different Papuan peoples who lived far apart. The 'forest walkers and canoe sitters' were always closely followed by the schools and their gurus, to whom tasks were entrusted which the missionary had taken care of himself in former days. The impulse for exploration resulted in the area per missionary becoming too extensive for him to be able to maintain a close and personal contact with the parishioners. The gurus had more success in that regard, but they concentrated mainly on the youth. Their schoolmaster mentality allowed them only moderate appreciation of the specific cultural forms of the Papuan peoples, which was of no help either in their rather limited contact with the elders.

In order not to lose hold of the older generation a preaching was needed that suited them. From the beginning the MSCs had given attention to the local 'adat' [customs]. The first missionaries had gone to the trouble of studying the languages and culture of the Papuans. The underlying idea was that a better knowledge of their social world would offer evangelisation a better chance to succeed. Thus the missionaries translated the gospels and they gave their religious instruction not in Malay, but in the language of the Papuans. From 1935 Drabbe moved from one area to another and compiled dictionaries, grammars and catechisms in several languages. Long questionnaires had also been sent out to the teachers regarding the

35. Father Petrus Drabbe (1887-1970) in Tanimbar (1930's).

'adat' and the different customs.

The pioneers among the missionaries, and to a lesser degree the generation after them, did not escape from passing value judgements on the 'adat', several elements of which were so alien to them that they rejected them. Gradually this started to change. The decades of contact raised the understanding and respect among the missionaries for the Papuans. In the meetings of parish priests in the thirties and forties the question of adaptation to local customs was discussed more and more. Out of the need to be understood clearly, the missionaries fastened on to what originated from the Papuans themselves. Especially Verschueren had an eye for that. He introduced Papuan decorations in the churches and used them in ceremonies such as the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Above all he developed a vision of doing missionary work which inevitably amounted, according to him, to an acculturation process.

> The primitive person thinks religiously first and foremost and it is to that thinking, to that ideology that is his own, that one ought to link up with, and to adjust to, in order to shape a truly new people. Seen in this way, the missionary, the one sent, is the actual and greatest reformer of primitive culture, called to reconstruct its essential elements. Indeed it is an extraordinarily responsible task, not only with respect to the primitive person himself, but likewise with respect to those many others who cooperate in the acculturation process and who will be able to expect success from their own efforts only

> insofar as the missionary managed to carry out soundly the task for which he was called. Because every primitive culture is an unbreakable unity at the same time, nobody can with impunity bring something new without keeping the whole in view and that is first of all a religious-magical whole, an ideological whole. Only through a calm, new vision of life built up from the ground is it possible to plant a new, wholesome and viable culture on the old one.

The protected world, in which the missionary and 'his' people dealt almost exclusively with each other, was over, now that the schools were growing and the western culture was seeping through more and more. The government showed its presence by means of civil servants and the police system. Students went to higher level schools, plantations sought workers and if there was something profitable to be obtained in the community, foreigners tried to rake it in for themselves.

In his area of the Maro and the Kumbe, Verschueren worked on a plan to deepen the newly introduced Christianity. He proposed courses to train ministers and catechists from the people themselves. In 1944 his idea to open an agriculture school found resonance with government delegates and soldiers. Through support from these quarters young people were trained in agriculture and horticulture, which helped the whole community. The centre did well, but after his furlough Verschueren was transferred to the Mappi and the Asmat. The transfers often aroused indignation among the missionaries, who blamed the mission leadership for conducting an ad hoc policy. Seen from the leadership's point of view it was a matter of committing the best workers where they were strategically most needed.

### *Theory and Practice*

Under Tillemans the missionaries started on a new phase which had been heralded in fact by Verschueren even before1950. After the pioneering work of the exploration period, time had now come for a deepening via the adat (customary laws). The missionaries had done their best for the well-being of the whole person and the village community. Later, another factor was the influence of the Second Vatican Council and the transfer of Dutch New Guinea to Indonesia. Gradually the missionaries no longer saw themselves as teachers of the Papuans but as companions.

Around 1950, 'professionalism' set in, which was not immediately noticeable on the shop floor. The provincial council tried to send better equipped missionaries to New Guinea, but in practice the work remained extremely difficult requiring great resilience in the first place. That was the experience of Sjef van Dongen who came to New Guinea after the war to take over Verschueren's area. He had just finished a training course on tropical agriculture in Deventer, but he was not prepared for the situation in which he found himself. Probably the prospect of taking over a parish had seemed very different from 'the mud and the misery' which turned out to be the reality. Nevertheless he threw himself into it full of dedication, and with the passage of time he noted down the following reflections.

> I have been working in that mud now for three years and I have realised that we should not set our goals too high. I took on every role myself: mason, carpenter in chapels, schools and Papuan houses. I swayed with the paint brush, acted the blacksmith, gardener, hunter, fisherman and football player. I had thought that the parish priest is a hunter of souls for eighty per cent of the time, but that is not the case here. Rather, it looks like we are day labourers who have to earn our keep with our own hands. You work and you work and that is the only thing that keeps you going. You are thin, sometimes a bit exhausted, apart altogether from that wretched malaria which drains off all your strength. Then there are those fine wounds - small scrapes become little ulcers and if they occur in the wet season when you have to go through mud and moisture, then count your blessings. But apparently that physical misery seems quite good food for the inner person.

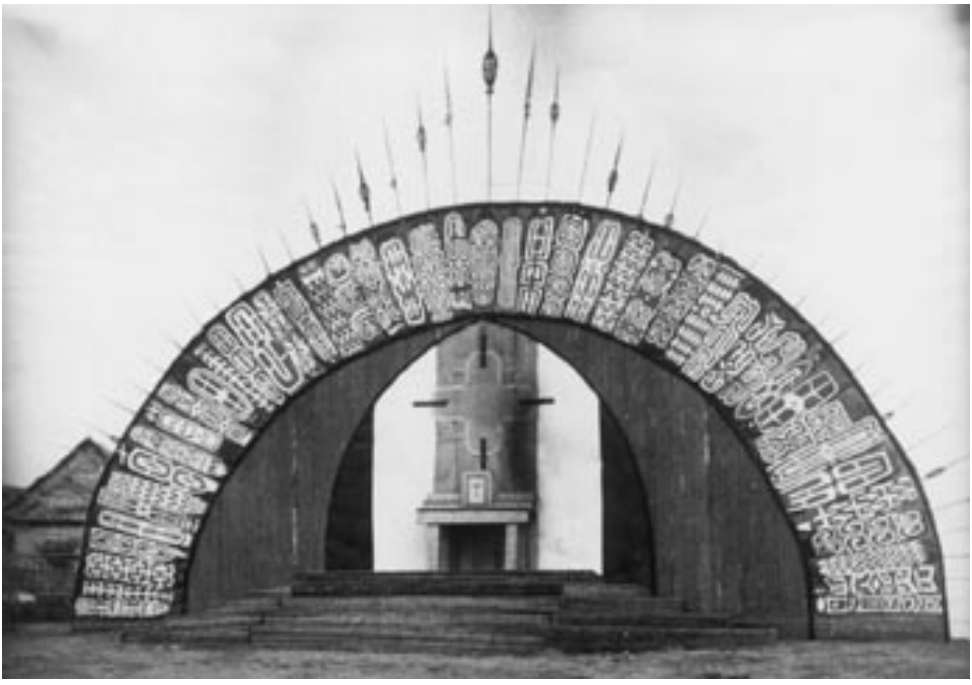
In the past Van Dongen had thoroughly acquainted himself with the methodology of the mission work, but in practice it turned out that he had little use for it.

> The work here is ever so individualistic and that is the most difficult thing. This country is too big and there are too few people to be able to work intensively. If you can visit your Christians only once in two months and if, furthermore, no Catholic action can take over the work of the parish priest and you have to rely on the quality of the school foxes [the gurus], then you no longer think of methodology, but you hope for the inscrutable ways of the goodness of Christ's grace.

*Diocese of Merauke*

Due to the lack of missionaries to serve the diocese properly Tillemans felt himself obliged in 1952 to hand over Mimika, where he himself had been parish priest, to the Franciscans, who had already taken over the north of New Guinea from the MSCs in 1936. From 1954 the area of the Franciscans formed the vicariate of Hollandia . In 1959, the Augustinians were in charge of the apostolic prefecture of Manokwari in West New Guinea. That same year Tillemans disposed of the Asmat area, which was so troublesome when it was being opened up. American Crosier Friars had declared their willingness to accept this area.

While the total work area of the MSCs became smaller, the work itself grew in intensity. In 1947, New Guinea counted only eleven priest-missionaries. By 1955 there were thirty. At the first general conference of parish priests in 1954 Tillemans showed himself a great proponent of the study of the adat. As far as he was concerned, the good in the local customs had to be taken as the starting point for preaching, celebrating and living the faith. To the unease of some people present, he deviated to a great extent from the traditional view of the priestly task, which revolved around the administration of the sacraments. The bishop made efforts to improve transportation (see picture 46, p. 288) and to promote the development of the Precursors' project (the training of catechists) already started by Hoeboer.



36. Baptismal and Peace feast in Kepi, 1951. The shields and spears have been lined up behind the altar as a sign of the peace pact between the Awyu and the Yahray.

*Feast in Kepi*

In 1949, Verschueren became parish priest of Kepi, the main station of the difficult Mappi area, where since 1947 Felix Maturbongs, coming from Small Kei, represented the civil administration. Both Verschueren and Maturbongs were to a great extent dependent on the gurus, who had become hardened and exceptionally independent after the difficult beginning in the time of Meuwese. The new parish priest succeeded in winning them over to his side by showing that he was committed to their material well-being. It was more difficult to get a hold on the population especially when headhunting proved difficult to banish in spite of all the skills by which Maturbongs managed to bond the group chiefs to himself. His wise policy could not prevent a new headhunting expedition in July 1949. Because of the heavy prison sentences (in Tanah Merah) for the main culprits, Maturbongs and Verschueren thought they had seen the last of the headhunting.

Following Meuwese, Verschueren decided to organise a grand feast in Kepi so that the villagers would experience a ritual of passage into a new period. A huge pig feast in July 1951 succeeded in getting together five thousand Mappiers and a thousand Awyuers in order to make peace with one another. The Yahray discovered that their enemies from the Awyu were in contact with the civil administration and mission in the same way, for which reason they were no longer an obvious target for

headhunting expeditions. Also Mgr Tillemans and a number of other confrères joined in the feast. For the purpose of the feast a village had been built in Kepi consisting of 32 big bivouacs. An open-air altar was adorned with Yahray shields and there was plenty of food stocked up. The week of celebrations included a number of strongly symbolic actions, such as the breaking of spears and the sharing of food. The sacraments were administered as well. There was a big baptismal feast in which 1,200 school children were baptised and on the following day marriages were celebrated.

The administration and the mission together developed the 'Mappi Prosperity Plan' to seal the reconciliation between Yahray and Awyu as well as to secure the future of the area. The Yahray who had been living far apart were housed in kampongs along the rivers. The Awyu were already living in village communities. In Kepi an agricultural training centre was established which promoted the cultivation of coffee and cocoa. While the Yahray had to be enticed to gardening by means of as many feasts as possible, the Awyu adopted it in a more structured way. Arie Vriens, parish priest among the Awyu at the Digul since 1950, attributed this to the inspiring guidance of the gurus. The Awyu adopted Monday as the fixed weekly gardening day. The whole day, young and old worked at uprooting trees, burning off the land and making it ready for planting. Only after evening prayer, said in common in the garden, did everyone leave. Likewise the guru and his pupils worked in the garden all day on Mondays up to and including the evening prayer, which according to Vriens had an 'integrating effect on the community and strengthened the bond between parents and children'.

### *Community Building*

Although the village had the appearance of a community it could not be expected that people who had always been left largely to their own devices, would spontaneously develop a sense of community. Regular common prayers were of help as well as the Sunday celebrations which in Vriens' parish involved both Catholics and pagans. 'Baptised or not, God is there any way!' was his position. 'And everyone participated and also came to the church on weekdays. We did much in their own Awyu language. It promoted the relationships between them, while the number of Catholics increased. You could remain an Awyu, you could be yourself. This had its influence on social life too. Through integration the long-standing bloc formation in the villages advanced to a real community and led to cooperation in the laying out of village gardens and the cultivation of coconut and rubber areas.'

Always starting as much as possible from the culture of those with whom he worked, Vriens sometimes came up with surprising activities. He thought nothing of blessing a new house, adapting the fire ritual of the native adat, which was taken from paganism. And while other missionaries and gurus tried to phase out the separation of the sexes in school, Vriens respected the custom by placing a separating wall in the classroom between boys and girls. Verschueren had been his teacher in

many respects. The latter, however, tried to get elements from Western Christian culture accepted by the Papuans. As a new missionary, Arie Vriens experienced in Kepi that at Christmas the musician parish priest conducted a Latin Mass for four voices! At Easter time, in the same large church, the teacher walked the Way of the Cross according to the book through fourteen stations, even if the walls were bare and empty. The year after, Vriens decided to do it differently himself:

> We did a living Way of the Cross with the texts based on well-known melodies and distributed among the nine villages, so that each village had its share. At the beginning of the village there is a transit shelter for the police or civil servants which became the palace of Pilate. Pilate sang that he saw no evil and wanted to release Christ. In the refrain my Pharisees, raising their chopping-knives, sang: 'He must go, he must die!' The Way of the Cross started and alternately the villages sang about the cross, the fall, the meeting with Mary. The latter, especially, made an impression. I got the women to the point of mourning in their own language. They did not dare, but putting on a headscarf they took courage. Moved by emotion some darted behind the houses. It all went very devoutly.

After his work in and around the Mappi area, Verschueren returned to the south coast in 1953. Tillemans had asked him to devise a plan on how to approach the Marind. The old lethargy had surfaced once more and the cult of fertility had also been revived. The mission was not alone in its responsibility. The Dutch government began a population research along the south coast at the same time. It asked Verschueren, as an expert on the Marind, to come and reinforce the research team of two government doctors and an anthropologist. This collaboration gave him cautious hope for some more jointly coordinated regional plans. According to him modern 'community development' offered the opportunity to combine education in a Christian spirit and a healthy economic development along with keeping the population together. Programs directed at the Papuans such as the South & West Pacific Commissions were, in the mind of Verschueren, primarily after material and physical well-being. However important, they omitted deliberately the foundation underlying this philanthropy, while what the Papuans needed was precisely to be able to understand the rationale. That was where the missionary entered the scene.

### *Setback*

Old problems also surfaced elsewhere in New Guinea. While peace had descended on the Mappi due to the feast in Kepi in 1951, problems presented themselves in the Asmat area. Gerard Zegwaard discovered in Agats in 1952 that within a few years there had been many cases of homicide. He wrote to the bishop that he had noticed on his last tour that all villages had been involved in fighting. Zegwaard observed nevertheless an improvement in the regions which were in contact with the mission, 'not so much through immediate influence or gained insights but because they reckon with the possibility that the catechists and the parish priests

pass on any matters to the administrative agencies'. Still the cooperation between administration and mission could not prevent an enormous headhunting expedition from taking place in the region of Miwamon.

Fathers Koos van der Velden and Karel Huiskamp started working there in 1955. Government policy had been to act gently and to respect as far as possible the freedom of the population, while Van der Velden and Huiskamp observed one abuse after the other. They stated, according to Boelaars, 'that village meetings and village councillors made well-meant attempts to raise the sense of responsibility among the people, but that one had forgotten to determine together with the leaders what penalties they could impose on those who did not carry out the orders'. The fact that the police stayed away made the law of the strongest prevail. The coconut plantation, which had developed from the promising Prosperity Plan, was neglected, and the teachers were no longer involved as gurus with the kampongs, because according to the new directives they had to concern themselves only with the school.

The discrepancy between the villages on the one hand and the administration and mission on the other increasingly widened to the frustration of the fathers. They warned the administration that the independence which the Yahray wanted for themselves was of a totally different order than what the administration was thinking of giving them. The Yahray were keen on getting hold of Western goods but only on their own conditions. A letter of Koos van der Velden in 1958 shows clearly what little attention they paid to the young parish priest. Van der Velden had been invited to attend the launching of the long canoe they had hewn for him. 'I was so stupid to fall for it.' What followed was a mad trip, in which Van der Velden had no part, neither on water nor on land. 'Those people became wilder and wilder. Nobody was normal any more, nor was I, but on my part due to misery.' Powerless to stop the dances, 'verging on the dirty', or to convince the people to row back, the parish priest was nothing more than an object. 'Nobody showed any sign of hearing me, not even my Catholics. They were unfortunately at least as crazy and wild as the rest.' At home at last 'I still had to treat the people to tobacco, because after all it had been such a terrific feast.'

The power vacuum had brought about an identity crisis among the Yahray, in which they reverted more and more to their old customs. A visit of the new governor with a film crew in March 1959 made the crisis even worse. The visitors wanted very much to see the old dances. 'On command, the grass skirts and body painting appeared but under protest, 'We are not forest people anymore,' according to Boelaars. 'But visitors shot films, and the wilder the dance the better.'

Finally on July 26 and 27, 1959, a drama took place in this region. About eighty men and twenty women and children of Citah were on the way to Kepi to barter sago for hardware and clothing when they were assaulted by men of Miwamon. Only one badly injured boy managed to escape from the massacre. While the perpetrators, having hidden the cut-off heads, showed up at the Sunday evening service, the boy was hiding in the reeds. At night with his last strength he rowed to Kepi, where he was found by a number of women who took him to the administration.

The headhunting expedition made clear that the Yahray had tried to restore their sense of self-respect. They were married in the new period without having hung a head on the arm of their bride and were ridiculed because of that. The fact that the leader of the attack had lost his brother twenty years earlier in a headhunting by men from Citah possibly played a part, but mostly it seems that the men wanted a vacuum to be filled.

For the missionaries concerned this event was a terrible blow. Karel Huiskamp, parish priest of Miwamon, felt betrayed. Many had known about the preparations, but nobody had warned him nor the administration. The missionaries blamed the administration for many years of negligence, but they also examined their own consciences. In the words of Boelaars, who together with Tillemans, informed the government and the press about the drama, 'Had one worked too extensively for fear of the Protestant mission, baptised too soon in large numbers, guided people in a too authoritarian way without sufficient attention to what was going on in themselves?' For the morale of Van der Velden the headhunting expedition seems to have been the last straw. In September 1959 he preferred a relationship with a female teacher (of the Marind) to missionary life. After a stay in the Netherlands, he returned to Upper Mappi in 1963 with his wife, as a missionary of the Orthodox Reformed Church!

### *Trust*

The work among the Awyu proceeded a lot more satisfactorily. In the fifties Arie Vriens and his catechists still had quite a bit of pioneering work to do. Those catechists were no longer the Keiese gurus, but Papuans. The MSCs invested considerably in their formation, but also learned much from them in return, not only knowledge which was important for the missionary work, but insights which were enriching on a personal level. The people of Digul appeared to have been brought up in a spirit of solidarity and honest sharing, so they found it strange that Vriens rolled a cigarette for himself in the presence of others. 'Who did actually bring civilisation to New Guinea?' he wondered at an early stage. 'The Papuans on the Digul knew the most important Christian virtue long before the Gospel was proclaimed to them!'

In 1950 Vriens started on his first post as a missionary, practically alone and far from the centre of Kepi.

> In the following years I mapped the area, because after centuries of isolation people were not waiting for us. They felt discovered and deprived of safe protection. I lost count of how often I stood at the end of the world. When we wanted to go further, they claimed that this was the very last village! My concern was time and again to guarantee the security of their existence, together with a peaceful co-existence with neighbouring villages. No blueprint was available for these new villages other than my thumb and the courage of my catechists in these new villages.

In January 1956, Vriens went around with Lau Jötten, who was due to do pastoral work in Central Digul.

> All of a sudden, at a curve in the road, I faced a number of men with bunches of arrows and some bows. I had experienced that before. Do not freeze, but walk towards them and rub chins, their manner of greeting. But now I did not get the chance. As soon as they saw me, they turned around and brought us immediately to their village!

Vriens was surprised, because he knew of their fear of a raid (especially by the police). When he asked to what he owed that blind trust, they told him that they had been informed by other groups: 'When you come across that man with the beard, everything is safe.' My beard counted here as my passport, and a valid one at that!'

After having worked for almost ten years among the Awyu, Vriens was appointed to the Muyu area. It bothered him that the people with whom he had built up a relationship of trust had now to get used to a new man who - just like him at the time – had not yet mastered the language and had to invent the wheel again in several areas.

While the interior continued to be opened up, the already established centres developed progressively. The city of Merauke provided secondary education. There was a teachers college, a congregation of Papuan sisters and a minor seminary. More and more people from the interior moved to reside in Merauke, especially people from the Muyu. Meanwhile in the Muyu and Mandobo area a beginning was made in the mid-fifties with the planting of rubber for export, while the MSCs put their stakes on education.

The importance of the schools was enormous. Much more than just education they imparted a community spirit to the students. The mission of Merauke looked after about 95 percent of the entire education in southern New Guinea. In 1962 New Guinea had a total of 1,105 schools of which 634 of these were subsidised by the government, village schools with a three-year programme. The remaining 471 village schools were the above-mentioned civilization schools (see previous chapter) , which had been set up mostly by the mission. What was special about them was that they were under the direction of Papuans. The Papuans also played a large part in the subsidised schools; there were only five Europeans teaching, with 690 Papuans and 360 Moluccans (from Kei, Tanimbar and Ambon). On the other hand the teachers college for rural teachers was staffed in 1962 almost exclusively by Europeans.

### *Irian*

During all those years the Dutch government stoutly maintained its position with regard to New Guinea against Indonesia but under American pressure it was decided in 1962 to transfer the area to the United Nations, which entrusted it within a year to Indonesia. The Dutch wish of the right of self-determination had been adopted in the sense that the Papuan people were to be allowed a referendum wit-

hin ten years to decide the question of joining Indonesia. In 1963 diplomatic relations were restored.

In a joint pastoral letter of September 10, 1962, Mgr Tillemans and Mgr Staverman as apostolic vicars of Merauke and Hollandia and Mgr Van Diepen, the prefect of Manokwari, anticipated the transfer.

> It goes without saying that the political questions interest you now more than ever, but you would not expect us to make a pronouncement about that. The mission shall remain under all circumstances.

The Papuans with whom the mission had dealt so far had more of a Dutch than an Indonesian orientation. They saw their hope for an independent future, for which they were being prepared since 1950, vanish into thin air. The aversion to Indonesia was clearly noticeable among a group of four Papuans who had completed the minor seminary course in Merauke and had just arrived in the Netherlands in September 1962 for their further training. There was none of this yet in New Guinea. In 1962 the minor seminary numbered nineteen students, who followed the political complications with close attention.

The four who Tillemans allowed go to the Netherlands studied philosophy in Brummen with the help of Father Hoeboer. The lecturers passed on their philosophy treatises to Hoeboer who went over these together with them. According to Braun, 'It was for us particularly fascinating that the audience was 'internationally' composed. It forced us to be as clear as possible.' Each one of the four Papuans came from a different region: Marind, Yai, Kimaam and Muyu.

After a year the superior, Antoon Vugts, advised his confrère in Merauke to call them back as soon as possible, 'given the danger of their anti-Indonesian narrow-mindedness which we have observed in them especially since May 1, 1963'. During their stay in the Netherlands the transfer to Indonesia had taken place. Tillemans reacted disappointedly to the attitude of his seminarians:

> The Dutch fathers, brothers and sisters have made themselves fully available to work under the new government. I believe that we must demand the same from the native people. At any rate it is now the 'authority' and we shall have to learn to work under that authority from now on.

Getting them back to Irian Barat, as New Guinea was called since the transfer, was not an option for Tillemans 'because there is no major seminary there'. He wanted them to finish the two years of philosophy as agreed upon and he put his trust further in the beneficial influence of the MSCs on their character.

> I know that Hoeboer is no friend of the Indonesians, but he can steer the boys surely in the direction of working for their own people. Whether that is under Indonesian administration like now or under a native administration, is entirely secondary. I would mind it very much if the boys were to let down their people for a political reason. The Dutch have not done that. They cannot do less.

In 1964, the four were ready for the MSC novitiate in Karanganjar. At least, Vugts emphasised that in their case the novitiate had to be regarded 'really as a trial year ... for them to have the chance to come to their senses in their new and yet proper surroundings, so that in the course of time they will be able to make a life choice in a manner that is sensible and less influenced by the political situation'. In fact only two of them, according to Vugts, were suitable candidates for the congregation,

> but for all of them the novitiate will be beneficial in the sense meant above. Even if it were to make them just into lay apostles instead of developing them, for example, into prominent politicians, which is so tempting (in the land of the blind...), who could possibly use their influence also against the Church and the Mission, quod Deus avertat [God forbid].

The aversion to politicians expressed here had everything to do with the fear of the communist wind which meanwhile had started to blow in Indonesia. Up to 1956 the administrative organisation in Indonesia had still shown many colonial features. The constitution of 1950 lasted until 1959, when the country continued as a guided democracy with more power given to the president. Subsequently it seemed quite clear that Indonesia under Sukarno was heading for a communist dictatorship. The tide of this development turned about in the middle of the sixties. In 1965-66 there was a coup and a civil war, which ended in 1967 with the coming into office of General Suharto as president.

In contrast to his predecessor Suharto opened the door wide to western and Japanese multinationals. From the over-populated Java a purposeful migration took place to what had come to be called Irian Jaya by May 1, 1963. The referendum, in which the Papuans would have been able to decide about their own destiny, never materialised, at least, not according to the 'one man, one vote' system. In the referendum of 1969, under the supervision of the United Nations, only a thousand Papuans were allowed to vote (out of a total of 800,000). The UN observers noted that the voters had been put under severe pressure. The Netherlands, however, made no objection when the General Assembly approved the result of the referendum. (August 2, 1969)

### *Father and Son*

This concluded the political transfer of former Dutch New Guinea to Indonesia without the Papuans having acquired independence. In the ecclesiastical area a time of transfer took place also, but one in which the missionaries did wish to give the Papuans an independent role. One missionary had more an eye for it than the other. Brother Piet van Dam, for example, had tried to make his best workers stand on their own feet. Vriens remembers how in such a case Van Dam encouraged them: 'Boy, you are provided for. You can make fine petrol cans. I will give you a number of zinc plates. You better start your own business!'

On July 28, 1970, Verschueren died. His death more or less coincided, almost

symbolically, with the political transfer and with the establishment of the Indonesian MSC province. Formally this brought an end to the involvement of the Dutch missionaries in Irian. In practice many continued working there as members of the Indonesian Province, such as Mgr Jaap Duivenvoorde who was appointed bishop of Merauke in 1972 as successor to Tillemans.

Part of Verschueren's legacy to the Marind was a brand new meeting centre, intended for participants from all Marind villages. The centre was opened under his successor, Vriens. Unequivocally the new parish priest announced to the gathered village leaders in 1971 that they had now to take over the work of Verschueren, under the motto 'when the father dies, the children take over'. Now that Verschueren had died, the time had come, according to Vriens, for them to take the church into their own hands. While this process was going on, accompanied by Vriens up to 1988, it became clear how much thinking had always been done for them (often with the best intentions!) and how many initiatives had been taken out of their hands.

In 1970, a provincial chapter took place in Indonesia for the first time. It adopted the proposal to request Rome in 1971 to elevate the pro-province, which would be ten years old by then, to the Indonesian Province. There were still 124 MSCs of Dutch origin working in Indonesia. They were given the choice of becoming members of the Indonesian Province or of remaining in the Dutch Province. More than two-thirds chose for a transfer to the Indonesian Province. Just like in Brazil and the Philippines the choice made no difference in practice with regard to activities and mutual relations. (See next chapter.)

On October 6, 1971, the proposal was adopted at the general conference in Rome. Chosen as provincial superior was the Javanese, Hardjasumarta, who had been a member of the council of the pro-province under Sol and Van Baars. In the first years of its existence the new province numbered more Dutch than Indonesian members. In 1976 the ratio approached equality - eighty of the 163 members were now Indonesian. From that year onwards the Indonesians gained numerical predominance. What is more, the number of members continued to increase, so much so that the Indonesian Province grew to be the largest province of the congregation. While the Dutch MSCs were being faced in their own country with a progressively shrinking group, they could feel satisfied on account of the new foundation originating from the Dutch Province.

CHAPTER 7

# Areas of Work Abroad

Because the number of priests in the Northern Province increased each year and Dutch New Guinea could no longer receive so many missionaries, the general administration considered taking on an additional area of work. The place that came to mind was the Philippines. It lacked priests and besides it would be able to provide for it's own maintenance, so that no demand would have to be made on one's own resources. Also the provincial administration had already reviewed this option, especially in 1906 when there had been some talk of accepting new stations in the United States. The Northern Province dismissed it on the grounds that it would not be popular with the public, whereas the work in the Philippines would be a welcome publicity reinforcing its own mission in New Guinea.

Superior general Meyer discussed the possibilities in Rome with the papal delegate for the Philippines, Ambrosius Agius. The latter put Meyer in contact with Mgr Thomas Hendrick, bishop of Cebu. The bishop had already knocked at the doors of 27 congregations requesting that they accept the pastoral care of Surigao (located on the large southern island of Mindanao). The Northern Province agreed to the proposal and accepted in 1911 a similar request from a Brazilian bishop.

Both the Philippines and Brazil were accepted as 'areas of work'. They were not missions in the formal sense of Church planting and conversion. It concerned parish work and education in Catholic countries, in the service of already existing dioceses. Whoever received an appointment for the mission proper could refuse, as the MSC constitutions had stipulated since 1907, because one had to be out and out motivated for such arduous work. This provision did not apply to cases of appointment to the Philippines or Brazil, but that did not mean that the work there was easy. In the following paragraphs it will become apparent how much the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart expanded their original mission and what challenges they had to face.

## Philippines

For centuries the Philippines had been under Spanish control. The Spaniards, who set foot there in the sixteenth century, introduced Catholicism which was to compete with Islam which had been passed on here and there by traders. During the next three hundred years Catholicism took firm roots in the Philippines, although it never spread across the entire archipelago. The southwest remained Muslim. Spanish was, it is true, the official language of the colony, but the majority of the population spoke one of the more than 75 other languages.

In 1896 an awakening national consciousness among the Filipinos led to a big insurrection against Spanish domination. The Spanish troops needed one and a half months to quell the insurrection but the support for independence could no longer be stopped. Added to this, in 1898, was the Spanish-American war, which initially played into the hands of the insurrectionists. Still within that year the Filipinos proclaimed the independent republic of the Philippines and then had to go to war with the United States.

New powers such as Japan and the United States fully participated in modern imperialism, with all its consequences for Southeast Asia. Thus the United States occupied positions in and around the South Pacific Sea, beginning with the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) which were made a protectorate and, in 1898, annexed by the United States. Later that year the Philippines followed. On December 10, 1898, Spain transferred its colonies to the United States. It was kind of ironic that the revolutionary élan of the Filipinos had been stirred up by a former colony which in turn was embracing annexation.

Under American influence Catholicism was abandoned as a state religion. The introduction of public non-sectarian education as well as of Protestant schools provided a further undermining of the firm basis which the Spanish presence had given to the Catholic Church for centuries. Moreover, slumbering Islam had raised its head again in the nineteenth century. The growing national consciousness paved the way for the popularity of a new sectarian movement, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, better known as the Aglipayan Church. Gregorio Aglipay, an excommunicated priest, founded it in 1902. In outward appearance there was a strong resemblance to the Catholic Church, the difference being that all bishops and priests had to be Filipinos, and on account of that it attracted Catholics, who thought of it as a modern variant of the old Church.

### *Preliminary Investigation*

Against this background the bishop of Cebu came in contact with the MSCs. While the superior general and Mgr Hendrick were already talking to one another, the provincial administration was still busy collecting information on the Philippines in order to form an opinion. Brocken had requested his Spanish confrère, Delmas, to ask the Augustinians in Barcelona for their opinion because they knew the Philip-

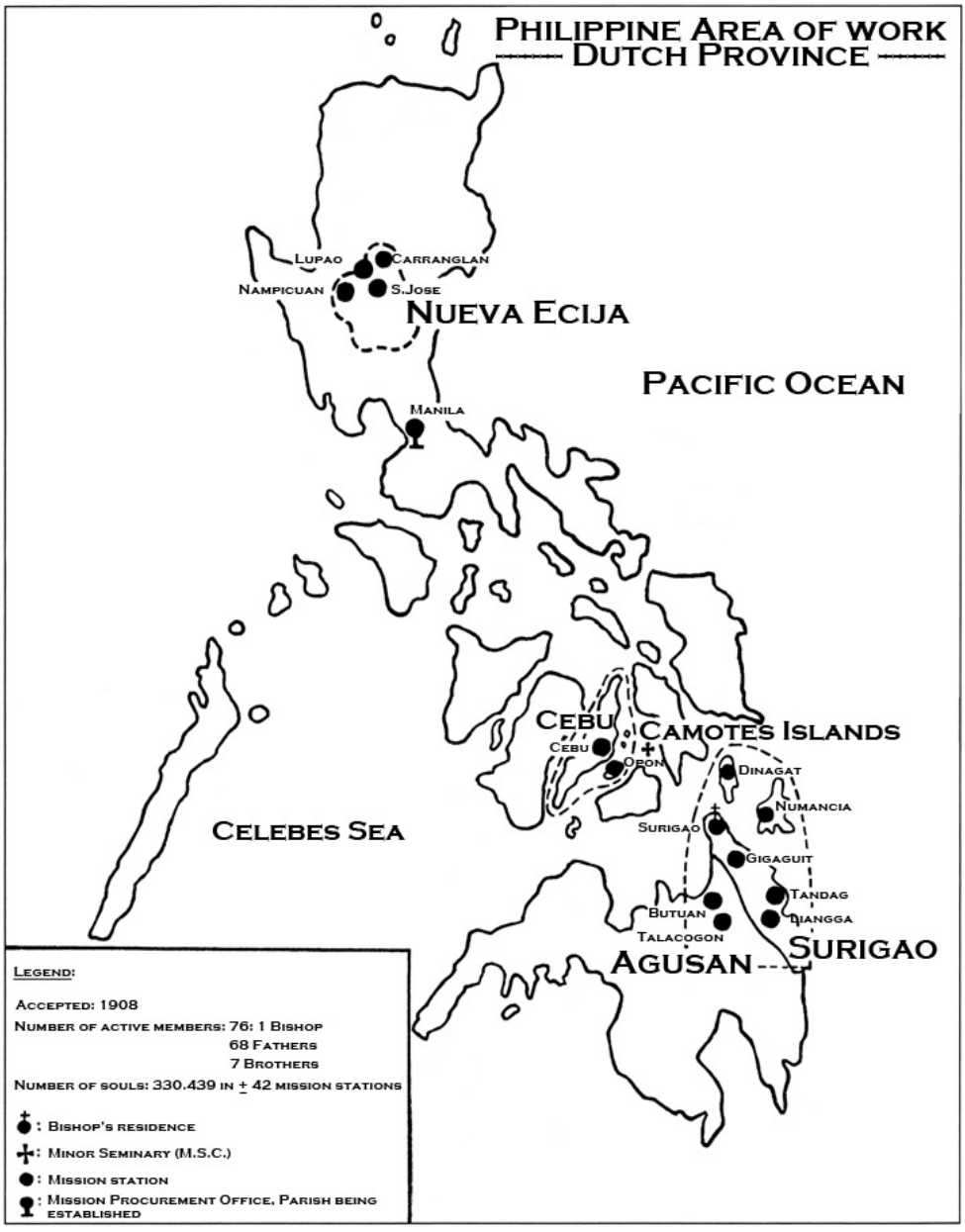
pines well. Their judgement was as plain as day: 'This mission will cause only misery to your fathers; they will die there of hunger'. Concerning the area of Surigao, Delmas reported that the seaport town of the same name was well developed. The Spanish Benedictines had accepted this mission at that time because they assumed that they would end up at the coast, but upon arrival they found the Jesuits posted there already and they had been relegated to the undeveloped interior. While they had still enjoyed protection under Spanish sovereignty, this was out of the question after 1898.

Well over a month later Delmas sent another report to Brocken, this time based mostly on information from the Benedictines themselves. The tenor was now a lot more positive. 'The life of the missionary does not differ from that of a parish priest in Spain.' The provincial administration could not come to a decision. Provincial Okhuijzen and Peeters were in favour, but the others were 'unfavourably disposed, not towards the Philippines in general, where work can be found for us, but towards Surigao, where the Jesuits have left and now the Benedictines want to leave also'. On behalf of the provincial administration Brocken then sought the advice of the Missionaries of Scheut (CICM) and from the Mill Hill Fathers in Roosendaal. Both had meanwhile accepted missions in the Philippines. The superior of the Mill Hill Fathers called it 'a real mission country where much good can be done and hard work needs to be performed, yet at the moment it is a poor lot'. The Missionaries of Scheut advised the MSCs not to accept the mission until after a thorough visitation.

The orientation phase which the Province had not yet completed lasted too long for the general administration. Its decision was clearly for acceptance. Also Chevalier, who died on October 21, 1907, was enthusiastic about the possible expansion to the Philippines. When Mgr Hendrick accepted in writing the condition that the missionaries had to be maintained by his diocese, the superior general reported to him on November 21, 1907, that the MSCs had accepted the new work area in principle – six months before the Northern Province reached a positive decision. The latter wanted to wait for the findings of the French confrère Merg who, on behalf of the congregation, went from Australia to size up the situation in Surigao.

When Merg arrived in Manila on February 25, 1908, the bishop had just left for the United States for health reasons. However, Merg did speak extensively with Agius and, of course, with the Benedictines from whom the MSCs would be taking over pastoral care. They made it clear that they would rather live in a monastery and had little affinity with missionary work. After two months Merg set down his impressions in a bulky report, on the basis of which the Northern Province decided in June 1908 to accept Surigao definitively. Priority was given in Surigao to the maintenance and deepening of the faith already sown in the hearts of the people, and to the proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers..

Entirely in accordance with Merg's advice a group of eight fathers was formed to occupy the existing parishes in pairs. Among them was Henri Peeters, who had volunteered from Borgerhout:




37. From: *MSC over de wereld 1854-1954* (Tilburg 1954) 29.

> My life here seems to me so astonishingly empty, and in spite of oneself, one becomes lazy and flabby... Also I fancied, perhaps wrongly, that it would make but a good impression on my younger brothers in the order if their elderly dean were to go on an apostolic adventure.

*To Surigao*

Matthias Nijsters, who was superior in Arnhem, was appointed superior in Surigao. The group of eight embarked at Genoa on October 22, 1908, and arrived in Manila more than a month later. The voyage had been rather tiring, particularly for Nijsters. The superior suffered considerably from seasickness and his presence and authority were completely overshadowed by Peeters, whom outsiders automatically regarded as the leader of the company. In travel reports some of the fathers questioned even the capacities of their superior and appeared impressed by Peeters. During a stop-over, the latter lost much of his credit by not showing up when the ship resumed the voyage. It was a habit of Peeters to make his own plans without consulting others, leaving his confrères extremely worried. He followed them on another ship.

In Manila the fathers were welcomed by the Spanish Benedictines. On the same day they met Agius. As he had done earlier when he met Merg, the papal legate spoke highly of the excellent reputation which the MSCs enjoyed as missionaries. He impressed strongly on the Dutch Fathers that they could consider themselves fortunate. As a token of appreciation he had granted the MSCs what (according to him) was in every respect a pleasant place, Surigao. The Missionaries of Scheut (CICM) , it is true, had a more favourable climate in the Philippine mountains but they had to do without income, according to Agius, while the Mill Hill Fathers were hard pressed both physically and materially. Thus edified, the MSCs took possession of their posts - the main station, Surigao (Nijsters and Willemsen), and the parishes Gigaquit (Peeters and De Jong), Cantilan (Menken and Van den Bogaard) and Hinatuan (Intven and Van Riel). Within four months, reinforcements arrived from the Netherlands - eight fathers and six brothers. As a result a fifth parish, Tandag, was given a permanent staff in 1909 and another five parishes could be visited regularly until these too had been all manned in 1915. By then Surigao numbered nearly fifty MSCs, 34 fathers and 15 brothers.

One of the fathers who arrived in 1909 was Jos Croonen. Unlike Peeters, Croonen had not volunteered. On the contrary he had done his utmost to get an appointment to New Guinea. While waiting for the decision of the provincial council, he had his case argued by Father Geerts:

> As little sympathy Croonen has for the fathers in the Philippines, so much has he for those in the mission... If I may add my own judgment to this, I do believe that Croonen will be more at home with the fathers in the mission than in the Philippines.

To no avail. One could be sent to countries where the Catholic Church had not yet been established only if one consented. An appointment in the Philippines and Brazil on the other hand was considered as parish work and one ought to accept. Croonen resigned himself to that but he did not find it easy:

> It is the sweetest consolation for me to know that over there I shall be in the place which holy obedience, thus God Himself, ordains... And now that holy obedience sends me, while I thought that it was better to wait a bit longer and to strengthen myself, the more I am glad now, because God's will emerges the clearer now that I do not follow my own, considering that I preferred to go to the mission. But You send me: ecce ego.

Tandag became Croonen's place of work. After six months Antoon van den Bogaard, his parish priest in Tandag, could report that admittedly the assistant had been very homesick, but that despite that he was doing well.

*Shadow Report*

The conditions in Surigao were not at all as rosy as Agius had depicted them. To begin with, cholera, typhoid fever and dysentery were prevalent. Merg had been infected by dysentery during his visitation and was hospitalised in Manila. Several MSCs succumbed to these sicknesses. In December 1910, just a month after his arrival as a perfectly healthy brother, Lambert van Otterdijk died of dysentery, followed in 1912 by Father Theo Kusters. Cholera claimed the life of Mgr Hendrick at the end of 1909 (and Father Jozef Joosten as late as 1919). Beriberi cut down Brother Peter van Loon in 1910.

Beside sickness the MSCs were confronted with great poverty. While the church had been prosperous under the Spanish administration, its servants now had to manage with what the faithful were willing to give. Added to this was the loneliness factor. There was transport only by sea and even that did not work when gale force winds blew, which was generally the case from November to March. As regards weather conditions, the first group had come in the most unfavourable season, although in the next year matters were even worse. No new food stocks could come in from November 20, 1909, up to March 12, 1910, and the fathers experienced their first powerful typhoon on December 18, 1909. During the usual four-month typhoon season it was nearly impossible to visit a neighbouring priest and one did not receive any mail either. The announcement of the death of Mgr Hendrick, for instance, reached Van den Bogaard and Croonen four months later in March 1910. It was not until 1918 that a few neighbouring municipalities would be linked to each other by short roads, whereas Surigao had to wait up to 1928 for roads to Gigaquit and Mainit (70 and 50 km, respectively, from Surigao).

All this was the reason for Peeters and Willemsen to write a separate report beside that of Merg. Superior Nijsters was prepared to put his name to it. Immediately after receipt of the letter the general council sent Wemmers to Surigao on a visitation. This confirmed the need for more money and personnel. Since the Americans had abolished the Spanish Sanctorum [a tax to support the Church] there was no longer a budget for religious purposes. From the construction of churches to the maintenance of priests, everything had be paid for from (considerably declining) Mass stipends. The help promised by the bishop had been bitterly disappointing in

practice and because the Philippines did not have the status of a 'missio apud infideles' [mission among the non-believers], no financial appeal to Propaganda Fide could be made.

Years later Propaganda Fide did pay for the passage of missionaries and all that it entailed, but for the time being one's own congregation had to help out. The fathers did not grow tired of pointing out to their parishioners that it was their responsibility as the faithful to enable evangelisation to continue. Croonen did that in Tandag so fanatically that it earned him the nickname Padre Peso. A regular source of income was the *amut*, a contribution on feasts of patron saints (town fiesta). Sometimes the MSCs had a windfall, such as in 1913, when suddenly wild rumours circulated about the end of the world. People went to church in large numbers and the increase in Mass attendance and reception of the sacraments brought money into the box. Also, through the brothers some money came in, because they did construction work for the diocese on salaries.

Four MSCs tried their luck in the diocese of Lipa, Batangas, in 1911. This was the second area that was opened for the MSCs. Mgr Petrelli had invited them to take over a number of parishes and the diocesan seminary. The cooperation did not last long. The bishop and the superior, Nijsters, got into conflict in such a way that the congregation left the diocese in 1914.

Meanwhile the feeling had developed at the level of the province and the generalate that the MSCs in the Philippines were quick to pour out their troubles. On his visit Wemmers acknowledged that indeed income lagged far behind what they had initially been led to expect, but he believed that it was their responsibility to devise solutions. For example, Wemmers wondered why no coconut plantations had been established to generate some regular income.

> Believe it or not we lay our worries too easily on Providence. We have also to learn how to take care of ourselves in providing for our keep... That is completely different from dismissing the means of our own maintenance simply because of objections linked to implementation. One objects to taking care of oneself, not to asking.

Provincial Brocken agreed whole-heartedly with Wemmers and he even 'did not mind that the missionaries in the Philippines feel a heavy burden of guilt that will temper them in their expenditure'.

When shortly after that no help could be offered from Rome and the Netherlands during the First World War, Brocken looked at it differently: 'Their great poverty is certainly the big stumbling block to that mission'. The superior general had successfully made an appeal to American Catholics to support the missionaries in the Philippines. As early as 1911, Wemmers had hinted at that possibility, from the idea that a country had the moral obligation to take care of its colonies including in the religious area: 'Let our Fathers now proclaim that same doctrine in America on behalf of the Philippines'. Money was not a problem for the Americans. Had the United States in 1910 not been good for approximately one-fifth of the total amount that had been collected for the propagation of the faith worldwide? So the

last years of the war showed relative prosperity, but it would not be until 1920 before new missionaries could come to the Philippines.

Beside the financial problems, Merg, according to the authors of the counter report, had underestimated the fight against Aglipayism. This movement was not only far more widespread than first assumed but it also charged significantly lower tariffs for services which, in the eyes of the weak in faith, were the same as those of Catholic priests. The sympathy of the local authorities was often with the Aglipayans because of their distinctly Filipino character. In 1933, fourteen per cent of the population of Surigao was counted as belonging to this church. Another rival was Freemasonry, which flourished especially in higher social circles. Just like Leo XIII had done, the MSCs portrayed this movement as an archenemy of the Church. Finally Protestantism, brought in by the Americans, hardly caught on with Filipinos. Except for a few members of the intelligentsia and some promotion-orientated civil servants, this faith appealed too little to one's imagination. In contrast, devotion to the Sacred Heart enjoyed a definite popularity but Peeters went too fast when he removed the picture of St Augustine, the patron saint of his parish, from the main altar and put a picture of the Sacred Heart in its place.

Approximately four percent in Surigao was what one called pagan, that is, six thousand inhabitants (still) not won for Catholicism. These were the Manobos and Mamanuas, peoples difficult to reach, who lived in the mountains of Northeast Mindanao. The Mamanuas, probably the original inhabitants of Mindanao, were related somewhat to the Papuans. 'They are lazy and treacherous by nature,' wrote Nico de Lepper about them in 1921. This judgement could not be based on his own experience. They led an extremely withdrawn existence since the arrival of the Manobos, who possibly had their origin in Borneo, Celebes or the Moluccas. The Manobo, recognizable by his 'long lank hair', was according to De Lepper 'lively, industrious, a competent blacksmith' and fond of 'beautiful clothes which he makes himself'. Living in the mountains the Manobos hardly showed up among the Catholic Bisayans of the lowlands. Van Odijk remembered in 1925 how about ten years earlier a group of Manobos travelling through caused a lot of consternation among the lowlanders. There were some trade contacts with them and some Manobos worked on the plantations of Bisayans, but that was about all the dealings they had with one another. For the MSCs they remained practically inaccessible.

### *Education*

The MSCs succeeded in distinguishing themselves by their attention to the sick and their readiness to visit remote and hardly accessible places. Quite soon too they turned their attention to education. Initially they tried to make their voices heard within the regular public schools which resulted in constant friction with the school authorities and the government. Therefore they decided to set up their own little schools as early as 1909.

That is what Nicasio Jansen did in Cabuntog. He did not have money for books,

38. Fr. Jan Mees (1885-1944) bandages the foot of a policeman, circa 1914.

but the local public school was kind enough to lend them to him but when the teachers wanted their material back after some time, they had problems in making Jansen do so. Peeters also showed his fighting spirit again. In Gigaquit he ran a school together with the fathers Mees and Everard Rijken, brother Thomas (Geboers see p. 66) and two catechists. He managed to get a large group of parents who had enrolled their children in the public school, to send them instead to the Catholic school. He displayed this triumph by having the children return their books *en masse* with great ostentation.

Peeters' approach was bound to lead, however, to great tensions. The mayor of Gigaquit even deployed the police on one occasion to deny the children access to the Catholic School. Peeters and his people then marched all the school children, accompanied by music, to the town hall to obtain redress. This undermining of public authority could not remain unanswered of course. A sentence of two months and 22 days imprisonment was demanded against Peeters because of insulting a civil servant on duty. Instead of keeping quiet while awaiting the verdict he wrote about the issue extensively in Libertas, an authoritative newspaper of the Dominicans. His acquittal in 1914 by a (Catholic) Manilan judge encouraged the MSCs but stirred up ill-feelings in Gigaquit among the teachers at the public school. In February 1915 it came to another lawsuit, this time with Mees in the dock. He had taken action against teachers who threw stones at Peeters' pupils. The fine which

was imposed on him was paid by the parents of the children.

The fathers in the meantime succeeded in making a name for themselves with their teaching in spite of the insufficient resources at their disposal. Unlike the situation in the state schools it was their policy to teach reading by means of the Visayan language, and the better students were taught in English as well. They received recognition from an unexpected but welcome source when the American governor general in 1914, on his tour through Surigao, spoke approvingly of the fathers' schools.

In reality the MSCs continued in the Philippines the struggle for schools which they had encountered in the Netherlands. The neutral/non-sectarian education promoted by the Americans was vigorously combated most of all by Peeters. Jansen favoured a more moderate attitude and argued even for cooperation with the public school. This attested to a sense of reality, even if Peeters and Intven concluded that, of all people, some of their own went against the Catholic schools. As long as the public schools provided room for religious instruction, according to Jansen, the MSCs could best instruct the children in that way. It made it possible to reach many more children than those who studied in the small Catholic schools and the scarce resources were more efficiently used.

Adriaan Muskens, superior since July 1, 1926, appealed to some sister congregations to help the MSC parishes in their educational work. In response, the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres came to Surigao from Manila, and the Filipina Sisters RVM offered assistance too. The 'Teresitas' [Little Theresas], dating from the Spanish time, helped out with the catechetical instruction and with church tasks.

The advance of the state schools, however, appeared irreversible. After the Second World War so many public schools were established that the Catholic schools could no longer afford to compete. In Opon no less than fifteen public schools were established in a ten-year period, which was reflected in the falling student numbers in the Catholic schools. While shortly after the war the students still numbered 1,400, in 1957 the figure had dropped to only 816. By training catechists the MSCs continued, however, to make an important contribution to education. Gerard Trienekens, Jan Ruijter and Herman van der Sman had been charged with this task. The latter founded in 1958 a Filipina congregation for the catechetical work in public schools, the Missionary Sisters of Mary (MSM).

### *Loneliness*

In 1933 the MSCs celebrated their silver jubilee in the Philippines. As many as eighty MSCs had found employment there and fifty of them were still active: 35 fathers and 15 brothers. Most of them were in Surigao, located in the northeast of the southernmost island of Mindanao. The area of work had seen a territorial expansion. In Opon, on the island of Mactan, a few MSCs had worked since 1929. The Dutch province had taken over a parish and place of pilgrimage from the Redemptorists. The substantial income from the place of pilgrimage helped the MSCs

to set up their own formation programme later.

As well as education the activities consisted for a large part in administering the sacraments. In 1933 the Catholics in Surigao numbered around 125,000, spread over 22 parishes. A parish covered as few as four and up to as many as sixteen villages. Sometimes there was also a curate to whom the parish priest could leave 'the hiking to the outposts', but in most of the parishes one father had to look after everything.

Whoever worked in the Philippines had to be able to cope with being on his own. The missionaries lived separately and everyone in his own way. To fight loneliness superior Nicasio Jansen proposed in 1929 to give the fathers in remote stations the company of a brother. Provincial superior, Jan Zandvliet, remarked in that context that if two characters did not get on with each other, loneliness could become even worse. He saw another danger as well. Placing a brother with a father led easily to a certain division of roles for which the living together was not intended. 'Impress on the fathers that they should not consider and consequently treat the brothers as servants, but as confrères'. Zandvliet advised them to keep from the brothers the real intention behind the living together:

> However, never tell the brothers that they are sent as a support, so that they do not assume the right of a sort of supervising guard. They must be guardian angels, but they do not need to know this officially.

The latter had undoubtedly remained a well-kept secret, as witnessed by the way in which the superior, according to father Jan van Berkel, treated the brothers. In 1930, Van Berkel wrote to the provincial superior in connection with a prohibition on reading newspapers:

> I objected to that. Ought one then to deprive the brothers from this as well, the only thing here that they still have in this desolation? Life for our brothers is hard enough, harder than in any other mission! They cannot even visit each other. How could one then deprive them from the one and only pleasant pastime in their spare hours?

Evidently the superior had wanted to keep up the religious spirit. According to that standard the reading of newspapers kept one too much at the transitory issues of the day which would not do any good to one's attention to the eternal.

Beside loneliness, a second ever recurring problem was the lack of resources. Every parish priest had somehow to manage his own fund-raising in order to run his parish and maintain his schools. When Kees van Berkel (the brother of Jan) approached the superior for support, the latter blamed him for collecting insufficient *derechos* [rightful income] in Dapa. Van Berkel admitted that and even took pride in it:

> I have validated a lot of marriages, civil and Aglipayan, for free and I did a lot of baptisms of those baptized Aglipayan, all for free. And if it comes my way again, the same will happen, on my own conscience.

He found it incomprehensible that he had to make a money issue out of what in his eyes was a work of conversion. His brother also felt that when it came to money the bounds of what was permissible had been crossed. For example, the superior wanted the father of Victor Viola, who as a seminarian was in MSC formation at the expense of the congregation (see p. 000), to supervise without pay the opening up of many hectares of forest land. 'Just try something like that yourself with the parents of the scholastics!' protested Van Berkel to the provincial.

Many Fathers found it hard to collect money, certainly when the parishioners could spare little. Croonen knew no scruples in that area and had a rich parish by his own account, in 1938. Still he also came knocking at the MSC treasury in Surigao. Now and then the parish priests received something from the bishop or from one or more regular benefactors. Because of special Mass intentions from the Netherlands and America certain stations even showed surpluses. Croonen's proposal to make them cover the deficits of the parishes went too far for the bursar Jan Coenders:

> We have general cash and medical insurance to think of and in many instances the surpluses serve to balance and augment the incomes and expenses of those funds, which is really necessary given the number of personnel - about 60 to 70 people.

MSC acquisitions would never have come about without gifts. Coenders argued that although there was little in the cash-drawer, a parish had never ever been refused a loan. Much as he appreciated the pastoral qualities of Croonen, he was annoyed by his unbridled ambition:

> However much money he may have, he has always more plans. In the end what his ideas come down to is that MSC is almost to be stripped of everything in favour of the parishes.

Croonen's aspirations brought him also into collision with his superior, Antoon van Odijk, and the bishop, Mgr Hayes. Against their explicit recommendation and in spite of Van Odijk's warning about the enormous costs, Croonen tried to get permission for the opening of a teacher training college, even approaching the minister of education. The request was rejected.

### *Filipino MSCs*

Where solidarity was concerned there was much to be desired. That conclusion could be drawn by the provincial even at a distance. It was partly due to the nature of the work in which everyone was responsible for his own parish. MSC solidarity would undoubtedly get a strong boost, according to Coenders, if it had its own Filipino unit, that is, if an apostolic school were to be founded. This, however, also came up against a lack of money for it would take considerable time before an apostolic school could financially stand on its own feet. For this reason Filipino candidates for the MSCs had been sent to the Netherlands until then.

Unlike the situation in Indonesia, an indigenous clergy was definitely no novelty in the Philippines but their number was inadequate to enable them to take charge entirely of the pastoral work. In Manila there was a seminary founded by the Jesuits to which at the beginning of the year 1923 the MSC fathers sent talented boys from Surigao. The first batch included a trio of future MSCs: Vicente Celeste (1906-1962), Victor Viola (1903-1965) and Filoteo de los Santos (1929-1932). Celeste indicated as early as 1926 that he wanted to become an MSC, a wise decision, according to former superior Muskens:

> He probably realises that only as a religious will he be able to persevere as a priest later on, for you know well enough what happens to the *clerigos* [secular clergy] here. The first priest of this province, ordained just a couple of years ago, has already slipped up.

In 1929, Celeste, Viola and De los Santos came to the Netherlands for the novitiate and theology. The latter appeared to have caught a serious disease in Berg en Dal. He could not take part in the regular programme of the novitiate, but in accordance with canon law, De los Santos was admitted for the first vows on his death bed. In 1932 he died in Berg en Dal as an MSC.

Muskens had clearly more faith in the formation of Filipino MSCs than of Filipino seculars. The council of the Dutch province, by contrast, gave priority to the training of native seculars in those years. Admittedly this applied primarily to countries where the church had still to be planted, but the Philippines also had by no means enough priests of its 'very own', and if regulars were to be formed, then preferably it should not be in Europe but in their country of origin. For this reason, Jansen, Muskens' successor, expected a lukewarm response to the application for a second trio of candidates for the MSC which he submitted at the end of 1932. Jansen had himself recommended two of them for the minor seminary in 1927, Venancio Portillo and Crisogono Napana:

> I hope that the question will not be brought up whether it would be possible for them to do the novitiate here in the Philippines. I do not see that possibility while there is no one available among us for the position of novice master nor has anyone had any preparation for it.

Moreover, there was not enough continuity to establish such an institution. The couple of Surigao seminarians in Manila had not yet even started philosophy, so it would take years before the next novices could be expected. For theology it was inevitable to have recourse to the training in the Netherlands, the more reason to include the novitiate there as well. In an attempt to join forces in the far east, Mgr Panis, the Vicar Apostolic of Manado, had already requested Jansen not to send candidate seminarians from Surigao any longer to Manila, but to Woloan (Manado; see p. 174). The establishment of an apostolic school in the Philippines would take another twenty years.

*Agusan and Nueva Ecija*

Meanwhile the activities of the MSCs expanded in the thirties. The jubilee year of 1933 listed work in Manila, namely in the novitiate of the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres and in Santol hospital. The two fathers who took this on moved into a newly-built house in the city district of New Manila in Quezon City (now one of the cities of Metro Manila), where room was found also for the procurement office. The most important expansion took place in 1935, when the MSCs took over from the Jesuits the province of Agusan in Mindanao. As early as 1908, this had been proposed by the Jesuit superior and it was repeated once more in 1929 by the apostolic visitator, Villalonga SJ. The latter suggested that the provinces of Surigao and Agusan should be united into one diocese and be offered to the MSCs. Brocken, the then superior general, was against this idea. Some years later Brocken, in the meantime provincial superior of the Dutch Province, did accept the take-over. This time Msgr Hayes had insisted on it, being bishop of the diocese of Cagayan de Oro, set up in 1933, to which both Surigao and Agusan belonged since then. Six years later the area of Surigao-Agusan would develop into an independent diocese.

The take-over of Agusan meant in concrete terms the care for an additional 60 thousand souls. In December 1935 six MSCs from the Netherlands arrived to take on this work. Among them were Viola and Celeste. The main station Butuan was occupied first as well as Cabadbaran and other places followed in the years afterwards. Within two years superior Van Odijk accepted another area in the north of the Philippines, the province of Nueva Ecija, one hundred and fifty kilometres to the north of Manila. This vicariate, under the direction of the Filipino, Msgr Cesar Guerrero, was located on the island of Luzon and consisted of eight parishes. A two -lane road linked the capital San José with Manila.

Several confrères thought that Van Odijk was going too fast. One of the council members of Surigao wrote in 1936 about Nueva Ecija:

> Lately I read something about troubles in that section almost every week. It seems a hotbed of communism. Actually not a place where a foreign clergy belongs, is it? The hatred for whites, which is far worse in those regions than in Mindanao, plus those communist movements, will make both life and work very difficult, if not impossible, for us.

Even before that, at the acceptance of Agusan, there had been a protest. Whereas in 1933, according to Coenders, 'the Council members and also nearly all the other fathers', had been in favour of accepting Agusan, a year later they turned against it. 'They were afraid that the work in the province of Surigao would suffer because of it,' according to Theo Keet.

Coenders saw mostly financial objections. The Jesuits did not demand the payment of chair money (payment for a seat in the church) in Agusan, whereas the MSCs could not do without it. Undoubtedly the charges would make the fathers unpopular according to Coenders. He predicted further that it was all very well for Mgr Hayes to vouch for all financial needs, but that as soon as Rome made a separate diocese of Surigao and Agusan, Hayes, as the bishop of Cagayan, would no

39. Filipino seminarians: Crisogono Napana (seated) and Venancio Portillo (rightmost). They made their profession in the Netherlands in 1934.

longer need to live up to his promises. At the division of the diocese the new bishop would undoubtedly be an MSC and financial responsibility would become even more the business of the congregation.

Indeed, the diocese of Surigao was established on June 3, 1939, covering the areas of Surigao and Agusan. The new diocese was separated from Cagayan de Oro, but Mgr Hayes remained in charge for a while until a bishop had been appointed. In June 1940 this was to be the newly appointed superior of the mission of the MSC, Mgr Jan Vrakking. The congregation could consider his appointment as the crown on more than thirty years of work. In the cathedral of Surigao, Vrakking had the pleasure of ordaining as priest his Filipino confrère, Venancio Portillo, on December 29, 1940.

### *War*

Ever since the MSCs worked in the Philippines the country had been under American administration. An important step towards independence was taken in 1934 with the forming of a commonwealth and a constitutional assembly. Instead of an American governor-general a Filipino, Manuel Quezon, acted as president and a period of twelve years was set, in which the country would be steered to independence. On July 4, 1946, the time had come. The independent sovereign Philippine state was a fact, with Manuel Roxas as first president.

Its establishment had been much more troublesome than one could foresee in 1934. The Second World War had intervened and in its wake three years of Japanese occupation. During the liberation by the Americans it became very clear how much the country had suffered. According to estimates the war had cost a million human lives. Also the material damage had been enormous. Manila came out of the war as one of the most heavily battered capitals in the world. The Philippines might have become an independent country but for many years it remained reliant on American support. The American leash made itself felt also in the political arena. The Philippines became a faithful ally against communism.

Unlike what had happened to the MSCs in Indonesia, the 73 MSCs who worked in the Philippines when the Japanese invaded (December 1941) suffered only one victim, Father Cornelis van Roessel, who died on February 24, 1945, a day after the liberation of Los Baños. He had been locked up in this camp since July 1944 together with 28 confrères. Until their arrest they had been able to continue working in Surigao, whereas the MSCs in Cebu and Luzon had been interned as early as the beginning of the Japanese occupation. Among the detainees of Surigao was Mgr Vrakking. Others managed to evade detention by hiding in the mountains of Surigao and Agusan. In the last year of the war Viola and the newly-ordained Portillo managed to continue the pastoral work.

After the liberation of Los Baños most of the MSCs went to Australia to await the end of the war and to regain some of their strength. They remained there until October. Mgr Vrakking, however, returned as soon as possible to Surigao in order to make an inventory of the damage. He succeeded in obtaining $120,000 in reparation for his badly-hit diocese.

For Vrakking and his confrères there was plenty of work to do. Not only in Surigao-Agusan but also in the parishes of Nueva Ecija all church property appeared to be destroyed. The same applied to the house with the procurement office in Quezon City (New Manila). The builders among the brothers, particularly Arie van Dam and Wim Hartog, acquitted themselves well. Van Dam would not live to witness the consecration of their cathedral in Surigao. On January 19, 1950, he perished in a boat accident, together with the superior, Klaas Hendriks.

*Reconstruction*

The dedication of the brothers in the Philippines can be well illustrated by someone like Wim Hartog. He had come to the Philippines in 1930 as a brother-carpenter. Hartog developed into an engineer, building contractor and architect, which earned him the nickname of Bill the Builder. The most important buildings which he erected during forty years - beside the cathedral of Surigao - were the Procure in Manila, the seminary in Lawaan, churches in San José, Lapulapu city (formerly Opon), Buenavista and Talacogon, the San Nicolas college in Surigao and the Urios college in Butuan. With this last building, he concluded his construction career in 1971. His confrère George Haggenburg, director of Urios College, expressed his

admiration for the enormous commitment and professional skill of Hartog:

> We had great difficulty in getting the construction permit, because he could write only MSC after his name, a title which is not recognised in the construction world. Bill became restless. The building was finished, but the construction licence was not yet there!

Just when at last an inspector was to come and examine the building, an earthquake took place.

> We went around together. There was no little crease, no tiny crack to be seen. The inspector went home. His house had collapsed. So we got the permit and Bill had completed his last and greatest work.

Urios College had thirty class rooms and three large halls. In 1972, Hartog returned to the Netherlands, where he became the doorkeeper in the MSC house of Eindhoven.

The reconstruction was accompanied by an increase of pastoral work After the war there was an increase in the birth rate and the opening of Mindanao for the logging industry brought many migrants from other islands in the forties and fifties. In 1948 Agusan had 126,448 inhabitants. Twelve years later the figure had more than doubled (271,010). Soon the newly independent state encountered problems in the socio-political field. The Philippine government met its first domestic opponent in the Hukbalahap. Arising from a guerrilla movement against the Japanese occupation, after the war it turned against the Philippine elite. Partly to prevent further atrocities the elite had adopted an as cooperative attitude towards the Japanese as possible instead of offering resistance. When after the war the large-scale landowners claimed back the lands that they had to leave during the occupation, the Hukbalahap took up arms. The 'Huks' and their leader Luís Taruc assumed that they had a standing with the Americans as an ally against Japan and expected to be consulted in the discussions about the political future of their country. Instead the Americans turned to the immediate disarmament of the Huks whom they regarded as subversive, and General MacArthur put Taruc in prison. In 1948 an amnesty was declared for all collaborators and the Hukbalahap was banned.

Militant Huks revolted especially in Central Luzon (Nueva Ecija) and Panay. At the end of 1949, growing more and more radical, they planned an overthrow of the government. Many among them had communist sympathies and soon Huks and Communists were regarded as part of one and the same movement. The murder of the widow of President Quezon and her family by the Huks lost the movement a lot of sympathisers. In May 1954, Luís Taruc gave himself up to the government. The army succeeded in defeating the militant Huks, after which they were moved to the south. In Mindanao they had to start a new life.

Meanwhile little had become of the land reforms promised by the government. Economic stagnation meant high unemployment for the Philippines during the fifties. In this episode of the cold war the different ideologies were diametrically

opposed to each other. President Magsaysay (1953-1957), who maintained close ties with the United States, conducted a strongly anti-communist policy. The fear of communists was overwhelming and stood in the way of a more socially-minded policy. It coloured likewise the vision of the Church and its representatives in the Philippines. They thought that the poor were better off by maintaining the status quo than by a communist revolution. Social criticism did not cross the minds of most of them. The Church in the Philippines, moreover, belonged too much to the powers that be. The MSCs concentrated in the fifties on continuing to perform their spiritual duties as well as possible. Another task which they set for themselves was the growth of the congregation in the Philippines.

*Expansion*

After Hendriks perished at sea in 1950, a successor had to be appointed. Theo Keet, on leave in the Netherlands at the time of the accident, was appointed the new superior. In March he sailed on the *Ruys* for Singapore, together with others bound for the Philippines. At Singapore they took a flight to Manila. 'On the *Ruys* we had time to have some talks about future policy, and among other things we decided to put MSC formation on a more firm footing,' said Keet. But not everyone agreed:

> Van den Ouwelant, vicar-general of Surigao, took sides with his bishop [Vrakking] who in his bishop's bull had been charged with seminary training. Among the priests-personnel of Surigao-Agusan there were no seculars, only MSCs. The ones who had always worked in the Surigao area showed a strong interest in its future. This was less the case for those who worked outside Surigao. We were already in Cebu, Manila and Lingayen diocese.

For that reason Keet believed that an MSC training could best be started outside Surigao, 'also because Surigao is a province unknown to the rest of the Philippines'.

In 1951, the apostolic school opened in Opon (Cebu). Gerard Trienekens, the parish priest, made the lower floor of his big presbytery (a former Spanish rectory) available for the seminarians who, as well as following the programme of his Catholic high school, were taught Latin by the fathers Adriaan Steijger and Antoon van den Bremer. Apart from seven older students who had already begun their studies at the Jesuit seminary in Manila, the formation programme started with ten new boys. The relations with Surigao remained difficult. To obtain the necessary resources, Van Odijk made twice a long trip through the United States. He even managed to arrange a subsidy there for a new seminary building which was built in Lawaan, Talisay, by Hartog in 1954 and was given the name of Sacred Heart Seminary. In an attempt to continue the subsidy Henk Zegwaard also went to the United States in 1955. He suggested to the Dutch Province that a propaganda office should be set up there in order to draw attention to the work in the Philippines. En passant he sounded the American MSCs about a possible take-over of the parishes in Nueva Ecija - his superior heard about this only afterwards, but entirely agreed with it. The

provincial council of the American MSCs and the superior general did not agree; therefore it remained at the planning stage. The propaganda office, which Zegwaard had wanted to head himself, did not materialise either.

In the meantime superior Keet had not been idle and had accepted a number of parishes, one in Quezon City and four on the Camotes Islands (Cebu). The archbishop considered the Camotes too remote for supervising his clergy and for that reason he wanted to transfer them to a missionary congregation. Keet:

> Because of our good relationship with the archdiocese which had entrusted to us a first class parish in Opon, we accepted that offer. But this was disapproved of by the older missionaries of Surigao, who had already declared their disapproval of the acceptance of Agusan and Nueva Ecija.

This expansion was a strain on the fathers and brothers, all the more so because manpower was scarce. When a Dutch father went on holiday, an assistant parish priest had to come from elsewhere to replace him for as long as he was needed. 'A holiday of five months in the Netherlands involves at least three months of travelling starting with his departure from his station - therefore eight months in all', as Viola calculated for the provincial council. The philosophy training was due to start in June 1954, but who could be released for that, he wondered. It had been settled already that not more than one person would be appointed, 'and might a possible inspector from Rome consider one man as sufficient, and have lay teachers in the apostolic school?' The failure of new personnel to come was a sign for the Filipino MSCs that the Dutch Province was not doing anything about it:

> Is Holland, and by this we mean the confrères in general, well aware of the enormous importance of the P. I. [Philippine Islands]? Are the apostolic schools of Tilburg and Driehuis of greater importance than that of Opon? We don't think so. Not that it will ever happen that we should produce MSCs here to go and work in Holland, but if this work could be more widely examined, it might be possible that Philippine MSCs would go and work together with Indonesian confrères in Indonesia, just as the SVDs have already done. The P.I. are a bulwark of Catholicism in the East. Other congregations realize that.

The SVDs had their own university in Cebu and the CICM had two seminaries for seculars. Protestant missionaries had already gone on the missions from the Philippines to Thailand and Indonesia. Viola proposed that the Dutch Province should take care of the teachers in the new apostolic school who, just as at Tilburg and Driehuis, would be appointed for the duration of eight years. 'And don't let the fathers imagine too dramatically that they are going to the missions,' remarked Viola with some annoyance. His advice was to send three or four fathers simultaneously who had already worked with each other, 'to make the transition easier'.

A provisional solution for the shortage was found by sending men who actually had been destined for Java but who could not get visas because of the political problems between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Their temporary appointment to the

Philippines, however, led some (Otto Bosse and Cor Lagerwey) to a definite posting.

Mgr Vrakking had a more structural solution for coping with the great amount of work. He thought that it was better to give Agusan to another congregation. In his eyes there were too few hands to serve both Surigao and Agusan properly, and as the diocesan bishop he had the authority to make such a decision. However his idea met with vehement resistance in his congregation because so much had already been invested in Agusan. The fathers, supported by the provincial (Van Erp), took the position that the congregation on its part had the right to look for another work area as well. In the extreme case that could mean that the Dutch Province would withdraw from Surigao altogether. The game was not played as tough as this, but there had arisen unmistakably a parting of minds.

*Vice-Province*

Vrakking and his successor, Van den Ouwelant, gave priority to the work in Surigao. They were not in favour of an MSC training in the Philippines because the assignment from Rome called for the forming of seculars and the strengthening of the local Church. Both bishops feared that their best personnel were to be 'pinched' by the congregation. The MSC superior viewed the matter from a completely different angle:

> It is no longer a diocesan affair but a national undertaking. Only if there is a major superior and one who no longer lives in Surigao, will the bishop of Surigao realise that, as far as personnel and work are concerned, he cannot demand more than any other bishop under whom MSCs work.

In these words Keet made his case at the provincial council in 1955 for a greater independence of the Philippine work area. The Dutch province rather liked the idea. After all, having started only with the province of Surigao, there had been additions to the work in Agusan, Mactan and Camotes, Manila, Nueva Ecija and finally having its own seminary in Talisay. All this work taken together justified a greater independence for the Philippine work area.

As early as November 1, 1956, the work area received the status of vice-province. The new foundation, however, was not to be under the leadership of Keet. As early as June provincial De Gier had informed him that his chances for the appointment had been reduced, because he was *persona non grata* to Mgr Van den Ouwelant. Although terribly disappointed, Keet himself knew only too well why he clashed with the newly appointed bishop. Since 1950 the establishment of an apostolic school instead of concentrating on a diocesan seminary in Surigao had been a point of issue. The expansion of works outside Surigao affected the mutual relations even more.

> Mgr is afraid that I shall not do enough for Surigao, not make enough personnel and finances available. I do have the interests of the diocese of Surigao in mind, but also the interests outside the diocese of Surigao and this is the difference between superior and bishop. The bishop sees only his diocese, and the superior must see also to the rest.

Alex Smulders became the first superior of the Philippine vice-province. He expanded the own seminary training: on May 30, 1957, the novitiate opened in Cebu (Carcar) and in 1960 a second minor seminary was opened in Angeles City to the north of Manila on the island of Luzon. The philosophy department moved there in 1963, having been established earlier in Carcar. Four years later the philosophy department transferred from Angeles City to Manila. For theology the scholastics remained dependent on Australia up to 1967. After that they attended a combined training in Quezon City, in their own country.

Shortly after the first eight Filipinos took their temporary vows as MSCs, the diocesan St Peter's Seminary opened. As its location Mgr Van den Ouwelant had chosen not Surigao but Butuan (Ampayon) which offered more space. On August 30, 1959, he opened the seminary with fourteen students. As long as there had been a lack of priests, Vrakking and Van den Ouwelant had appealed to their confrères - especially in the person of the local superior - to man the diocese. In the sixties a turn-about occurred. Now that the diocesan seminary turned out the first batch of Filipino priests, Van den Ouwelant wanted the MSCs to make way for them. That transfer came as a complete surprise to some of the people concerned. In 1963 Jan Schrama worked as an assistant parish priest in the south of Surigao. Returning from a retreat in Cebu he heard from his parish priest, Henk van Maanen, that their parish was being taken over immediately by a Filipino secular priest. It surprised Schrama all the more, because he had heard nothing about it in Cebu from the vice-provincial (Smulders) who had attended the retreat for the whole week. Schrama heard from Van Maanen as well that he had been appointed to Tago. At his arrival, however, it appeared that nobody knew of his appointment. The appointments seemed to have become a chess game between bishop and superior, where the people concerned were informed only at the very last moment.

Years later Schrama became the secretary of Van den Ouwelant. In that function he experienced the bishop at close quarters: 'As bishop he could be authoritarian, but he had also something very jovial about him. When he had had a quarrel with an MSC in the bishop's house, he would say: 'Forget it, we go to the other side (MSC house) and we are going to enjoy a game of bridge together'. Those two faces reflected clearly his double position. His role as bishop stood in the way sometimes of his functioning as an MSC. In a sense every MSC who was vested with authority ended up in a straight-jacket as far as his association with confrères was concerned. During a visitation in Manila in 1966 provincial superior Willem Jaspers pointed out to Van den Ouwelant that precisely when there were conflicting interests, an open way of dealing with one another did more good than appealing to authority.

> Change does come after all. Is it not better then that we as superiors walk the new road and even go in front? There will be a need for the proper course of things that restraining forces have to act, but do they always need to be the superiors? This new attitude asks much openness and open-heartedness. In other words, there has to be much talk, there has to be a lot of willingness to communicate, on both sides.

### *Tradition*

When Jaspers wrote this, the Second Vatican Council which opened in 1962, had just finished. Its pronouncements favoured a Church as togetherness. The conviction that the Church had to be brought up to date and ought to take its place not above but among the people, put meeting social needs on top of the Church agenda. This was palpable in the Philippines even before Vatican II, but the church had set other priorities then. This also applied to its representatives. In the *Annals* of 1958, Louis Boeren, parish priest of Opon, could still sigh: 'Social work in the Philippines! It is so necessary, but the shortage of priests leaves no time for it. Alas!' Thereupon followed an enumeration of his activities, consisting of the administration of countless sacraments and the instruction that went with it, the involvement in schools and all kinds of Catholic associations. Boeren ended his contribution to the *Annals* with the statement: 'Let the reader judge whether on top of that the parish priest can still do social work!'

On arrival in the port of Manila in 1958, Eugène van Vught noticed that the Philippines considered tradition of paramount importance. As a brand new missionary he 'had been overwhelmed by the friendliness and courtesy of the people in the port. We walked in white cassock topped by a hat. People fell back respectfully and let us through. They reminded me that I was somebody!' A telegram from Surigao awaited him: he should depart for the south as fast as possible to say Mass there. 'In the first place I thought it odd to make such a big thing out of a holy Mass on the first Friday, and, I, of all people, who knew nothing yet of the language, had to preside as a speechless foreigner. But my older confrères explained that I did not have to worry, because the Mass was in Latin after all and that was good enough, people were already happy with that!'

What was a matter of course for the fathers who had worked in the Philippines for a long time, surprised newcomers like Van Vught. In no time at all, the work required full attention, particularly the administration of the sacraments. Just like many confrères André Gijsberts who arrived in the Philippines a year ahead of Van Vught, found little satisfaction in it 'because, no matter how small the parish, it is almost always wholesale work: baptising, marrying, burying'. He obtained all the more satisfaction from the formation of lay leaders, who acquired an active role in the Church at the end of the sixties: 'Out of the twenty Church communities in my parish I could serve only two on Sundays. The remaining eighteen went to church every Sunday under the guidance of a simple local prayer leader'. Finally, Schrama, too, experienced how the daily routine swallowed him up:

> I went there in 1962 and I believed myself to be a modern theologian but when I went through my practical years in Mindanao I was totally drowned in the traditional Spanish infrastructure and I simply did my part for five years without being really critical of it. Within twelve days after my arrival in the Philippines I was in some remote barrio hearing confessions and of course I did not understand a word. Everything went in a hurry, so quickly; you were really a delivery boy of sacraments. The people expected as much, especially in the starting period when you had to go to all those outlying stations to celebrate the barrio fiestas.

By his own account, Schrama became socially aware only years later when he was rector of the scholasticate in Manila and had intensive contact with the students.

*About-face*

In the sixties an internal conflict developed between tradition and renewal among the Dutch MSCs in the Philippines. In the eyes of several confrères Schrama had become too radical. The same had been said at an earlier stage of Mat van Santvoord (1920-2003). Van Santvoord, who stayed in the Philippines for more than fifty years, went through a clear development. Having started as a parish priest who was fully occupied with administering the sacraments and keeping the parish school running, he increasingly realised the importance of social formation. For people to acquire self-confidence and to bring about a better future, they had to learn how to work together. Farmers, workers, fishermen and health workers should organise themselves and MSCs could play a promoting role in this process, so said Van Santvoord in 1963. Clearly influenced by the Aggiornamento of John XXIII (who had just died) he wrote to provincial Jaspers:

> The purpose of our religious life is not to observe a couple of rules, but to lead the people of today, according to the insights of today with the best means of today, towards union with God. Many, including our vice-provincial, see the unrest as the passing symptom of an illness that will run its course, if only one keeps going on about the old rules and statutes. Our life is changing from an accumulation of all kinds of rules and devotions to a life which is taken up in the zest of the Church life of today, where we all put our shoulders to the wheel of what Christ has started, the redemption of ourselves, humanity and of the world in which we live. Undoubtedly much will have to be experimented with, but let us also have the courage to begin those experiments - not everyone on one's own but in groups under the leadership of our authorities.

In 1963 this idea was certainly not widely accepted among the MSCs in the Philippines. 'Renewal was indeed necessary, too much had become rusty,' acknowledged Keet afterwards, and he may be counted among the conservatives:

> But many younger men were too pushy and did not see well enough that in a traditional world of less developed peoples one cannot just abolish all the old things and put something in their place that is not understood.

Most of the Filipino bishops were conservative in the understanding of their task, with Mgr Santos in the lead, the head of the richest archdiocese (Manila). 'There was not much renewal to be seen in hierarchical cooperation between bishop, priest, layperson,' so said Keet. 'In this respect Mindanao, which was being directed and managed by foreign missionaries, was an example to the rest of the Philippines'. There the work developed more and more an interparochial character and lay people played an important role in catechesis, seminars and social activities.

Mgr van den Ouwelant was such a foreign administrator. Confrères found him at times perhaps too formal in his contact with them but the people called him Mgr Carlos. 'Whenever he came across social needs, he paid specific attention to them. With respect to a lot of other bishops of that time that was in fact fairly progressive,' according to Schrama. Socio-economic initiatives which benefited the people were actively supported by Van den Ouwelant, provided no politics were involved:

> On the one hand he had a terrible phobia of communists and he had been opposed to everything that tended to revolution or the overthrow of the established order, but at the same time he showed social conscience.

Van den Ouwelant managed, for instance, to get a medical team from Manila to go to the south to offer free health care to the poor population and to perform operations. He also gave his support to socio-economic initiatives, such as credit provision and technical agriculture advice to farmers. Others, for example Keet, wondered whether priests should not limit themselves to the care of souls:

> The idea arose that missionaries have come not only to administer the sacraments, to preach and catechise, but also to educate the people on social questions. That means that they have to be instructed in planting, gardening, livestock farming and so on in the countryside, and seventy per cent of the Philippines consists of countryside. Several missionaries know nothing about such things, but the younger ones plunge into this social area and forget more or less the other. Social work is very beautiful, but it is not the main work of the missionary, ignoring the work of spiritual service.

In understanding his task Van Santvoord stood at the other end of the spectrum. Having become parish priest of Cabadbaran in 1967, he put the money which his parish had at its disposal mostly into new social activities. This was at the expense of the maintenance of the church and there were complaints. Two confrères had to try to bring him to a somewhat more diplomatic attitude. This was in vain as soon became clear. 'Mat came down hard in his sermons - clear positions were more important than subtle nuances,' according to Ton Zwart. As the Philippines were heading towards a dictatorship, the political element became inescapable. The MSCs expressed different opinions among themselves on how far to go in taking sides. Van den Ouwelant believed that politics should remain outside the work, but Van Santvoord did not mince his words and came down openly in his sermons on Marcos and America. 'It is no wonder that Mat was accused and I too, as his companion, was included in the charge.' The lawsuit blew over, but it was clear that in future the

MSCs had to weigh the risks of their work.

A difference in the interpretation of one's task did not need to stand in the way of fruitful cooperation. After a holiday in the Netherlands, Keet returned to the Philippines for the last time in 1968. He was 67 years old and planned to work for five years more. Keet got an appointment to Muñoz, situated in the centre of Nueva Ecija, 'a rapidly growing place, with the same agrarian diversity as elsewhere: some large-scale landowners, quite a few small-scale landowners and a whole lot of non-owners'. Besides Keet, Jan Boere too worked in Muñoz. 'He built a presbytery and on the adjacent lower floor he fixed up a social hall. He wanted to help poor people to earn something with small handicrafts'. Boere got assistance from the Australian FDNSC sisters and received financial support from the Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States. Whereas Boere's time and energy were spent mostly on the social project, Keet was focused more on the sacramental tasks.

The former superior regretted, however, that the formation, begun under his leadership, was changing so much in character. 'The seminaries were still attracting candidates even though something went wrong. The spirit in1968 was no longer that of the early sixties. The priest had to be different, he had to be in the midst of life! In that case you don't need minor seminaries anymore and you must send your major seminarians to the university. We have done that. Success did not follow'. The minor seminary in Angeles city was abolished in 1972. Henk Groenewegen cheered the decision, 'because we spent much effort and money and had almost no minor seminarians moving on to the major seminary, no matter how well we tried to screen them'. The former apostolic school became a four-year high school for boys, as there was a girls high school nearby already.

In 1972, 35 minor seminarians of Surigao and 31 of Butuan were housed in Butuan City (major seminarians: ten and twenty, respectively). Butuan had become an independent diocese since March 20, 1967. At the establishment of the Butuan diocese it was served by seventeen priests, among them only three Filipinos (all three diocesan). With the new diocese Agusan had at last broken loose from Surigao. From now on the parishes of North and South Agusan came under Butuan which was led by the moderately progressive bishop, Mgr Carmelo Morelos. Although Van den Ouwelant offered his resignation to the Pope as early as April 1967 and once again in July 1971 in order to make way for a Filipino, he still remained bishop of Surigao up to 1973. Far from being burned out, he still worked on as a parish priest for a long time.

An important reason for his repeated resignation offer was the fact that he could not get enough priests for his diocese, in spite of the seminary in Ampayon. The MSCs were willing but could not provide them. For this reason Van den Ouwelant wanted a successor who could fall back on a congregation for more manpower. That was the case with Miguel Cinches SVD and in the end Van den Ouwelant stepped down for the sake of his diocese.

*Filipinisation*

The new diocese of Butuan was faced with formidable challenges. Deforestation opened up new regions and drew many Filipinos from other islands. 'The diocese of Surigao was said to to be bogged down somewhat pastorally,' according to Verberne. He came to the Philippines in 1968. 'The MSCs wanted to make a new start in Agusan by bringing together a pastoral team'. This team came under the leadership of Van Vught. Fons Meijers took courses at the Institute for Social Studies, Ton Zwart went to study at the Asian Social Institute in Manila and Verberne would make his contribution in the catechetical field. Three-day training sessions (Christian Community Seminars) were linked up with the initiatives of the diocesan Social Action Centre. Farmers, fishermen and coconut planters profited from the support of the organisations involved like the Credit Union and the Federation of Free Farmers.

Ton van Santvoord, who became the new superior of the Philippine Vice-province in 1969, played an important role in the contribution of the MSCs to such plans. As Keet experienced it, the superior was only interested in Butuan and Muñoz, 'because of their socially oriented nature,' and for this reason he had little support from the older confrères.

Under Van Santvoord's predecessors, Smulders and Antoon Jansen, the council of the Vice-province had always consisted of four Dutch members and one Filipino member. In 1969, the board was reduced to three persons, with Jan Schrama as the only Dutchman. Van Santvoord and Schrama did their best to put their Filipino confrères in key positions. Also their own tasks of vice-provincial and director of the scholasticate were to be taken over by Filipinos. It was in line with the process of Filipinisation to have a meeting of the Filipino MSCs which was held in Angeles City in April 1970. At that time there were sixteen priests, nine professed scholastics and ten candidates who wanted to deliberate together about the approaching provincial chapter. The programme included the identity, the future and the aims of the Vice-province.

Thanks to this early transfer no fight for Philippine independence raged within the MSC, or at least it did so less fiercely than in a number of other congregations. Most of the MSCs thought it obvious that the congregation in the Philippines had to be led by home-grown people. What was more difficult was for the parish priests to give up their posts and make room for Filipinos. 'To realise that you are involved yourself, changes the matter completely,' according to Gijsberts:

> The ordinary man accepts us. The clergy, the intellectuals and civil servants find it more difficult; as far as they are concerned you may go, understandably, because they are the leaders. But as for you, you do not realise the problem so easily; only when it crosses your threshold, must you acknowledge it and accept the pain of it.

On June 26, 1973, a Filipino, Lope Castillo, was appointed superior of the Vice-province. The members of his five-man council were Van Santvoord and Zwart and three of his fellow countrymen. Under this council the Philippine Province was set

up on March 15, 1980. Castillo was elected provincial superior once again in 1987, as successor to Manuel Hilario. In 1973, moreover, Rome accepted the resignation of Van den Ouwelant as bishop of Surigao, in favour of Cinches. The northern part of Surigao was served by the MSCs both of Filipino and Dutch origin, and the southern part mostly by the diocesans who had their own deputy head in Tandag. In 1978, Surigao del Sur developed into the independent diocese of Tandag, under the leadership of Mgr Ireneo Amantillo CSsR.

*Marcos*

All this took place in a country which found itself under martial law. In 1965, Ferdinand Marcos had won the elections from Diosdado Macapagal, the sitting president since 1961. Marcos began with ambitious construction projects in every area and initially enjoyed great popularity. Gradually, however, it became clear that the corruption, which he had promised to combat, increased rather than decreased. After a controversial election campaign in 1969, Marcos was returned as president. The population grew more rapidly than the economy, with an increase of poverty and violence as a consequence. The communist party founded a people's militia, the New People's Army (NPA), and the Muslims made themselves heard through the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Marcos seized on these initiatives as well as the strikes and student protests to pursue a politics of crisis. On September 21, 1972, he declared martial law. Critics and activists were arrested, civil rights suspended, and Congress dissolved. In 1973, Marcos introduced a new constitution which extended the term of office of the president to six years and made re-election possible without restrictions. The Congress was replaced by a National Council of confidants. Martial law remained in effect for almost ten years. Its abolition in 1981 was a farce; Marcos made this gesture to show off to the Pope who visited the Philippines that year, but he had no intention of giving up his dictatorship. It was not until 1986 that he was forced to do so.

Marcos' land reforms did not benefit the farmers as he had promised, but consisted chiefly of expropriating lucrative plantations and profitable logging. During martial law the people's organizations, especially, had to take the rap. Zwart: 'Each movement from below was regarded with suspicion and was in no time labelled 'communist', and then you were not sure of your life'. As long as the Church did not interfere in social problems, it was an ideal ally for Marcos. In the Philippines it had belonged to the establishment for centuries. It had fought communism side by side with the political power, but especially after Vatican II it began to change its position. No longer inclined to limit itself to the spiritual, the Church set itself social tasks on behalf of the poor. Hand in hand with this development lay people were increasingly involved in parish work.

The Church was still to some extent the closed conservative bulwark, but within it there arose currents and initiatives increasingly critical of the social structure. Among the priests working in the Philippines it was especially the foreign religious

who stuck their necks out. 'As long as their own religious superiors stood up for them, they felt much freer to act boldly even towards the bishop and other Church authorities,' according to Schrama:

> The secular priests were highly dependent on the bishops who happened to be less progressive. Religious feel generally somewhat freer. In fact they have often been founded for needs which were insufficiently looked after by the established Church.

In the Philippines the MSCs did not run ahead in that respect, and it was particularly sisters who took definite positions. Schrama carries for ever the image on his retina of how during workers' demonstrations sisters dressed in habit took the flank positions in order to protect the workers.

Within the congregation not everyone was on the same track. After Vatican II there was a consensus about the need of fighting poverty and about a role for the priest in it, but regarding its interpretation opinions differed. Should one defy the established power or stay within the limits of the law? Many Dutch MSCs believed that as foreigners they should not meddle in politics, which of course did not apply to their Filipino confrères. In his function as director of the scholasticate, Schrama noticed that the young Filipino MSCs were socially aware in a more radical way: 'They had been involved more directly in everything that was fermenting among the population and had more feeling for it. It was not until then, very much under the influence of the students in Manila, that the modern, social updating of pastoral theology actually happened for me'. Schrama lived in the scholasticate with two Dutch confrères and about twenty students. They received their education not from the MSCs but in a combined theological school of the Jesuits, CICMs and SVDs. Schrama was supposed to have been professor of moral theology at the MSCs' own formation house, but this became superfluous when the combined centres were established.

> At the time of Marcos there were many student uprisings and our students also felt part of them. I went along with their concern, and I was actually called to account for that by the American Jesuits at whose school our students attended classes. The director was, as it happened, somewhat like the private chaplain of Marcos.

At one time the Jesuit students wanted to use a big festive gathering of the established power in order to make their critical voices heard. The MSC students wanted to join the protest and Schrama gave his permission. For him it was a rather delicate issue since his confrère, Cor Lagerweij, was on friendly terms with the organisers of the gathering and would be present as a guest. Just before the start of the festivities news broke that the Jesuit superior had prohibited his students from demonstrating. As a result a number of MSC students considered backing out as well. 'I asked them: Was it really your own view to demonstrate or were you just going along?' The demonstration proceeded as planned, with a more pronounced MSC signature than was initially intended. Undoubtedly Lagerweij felt uncomfortable with the situation, but he never talked to Schrama about it.

*Martial Law*

Cor Lagerweij (1925-1995) had a great record of service in the organisational field. In the Netherlands he had qualified in journalism before he was appointed to the Philippines in 1955. After four years of parish work in Nueva Ecija, his superior put him in charge of the fundraising for the MSC seminary in Angeles City. That came naturally to him. Schrama characterises Lagerweij as 'a man with an enormous flair, who managed to gain access everywhere, including rich people'. Next he applied himself to evangelisation by means of the media. Lagerweij managed to generate so much publicity that at the end of the sixties a Social Communications Centre (SCC) was set up in Manila. In the beginning of the seventies an even bigger media centre followed. To Lagerweij's irritation the superior was not keen on putting people on his media projects. The council recognised that he was an excellent fundraiser but was less satisfied with the consolidation of his many initiatives. The money for one project was needed to patch up the hole in another. Confrères also raised questions about Lagerweij's contacts. He received money from, among others, the well-known 'bacon priest', the Norbertine, Werenfried van Straaten. Just like Lagerweij, he was a well-known anti-communist. Some held it against him particularly that he maintained good contacts with the Philippine elite.

Definitely being socially committed, Lagerweij believed that he could achieve more by cooperation with the established power than by staying aloof. That did not mean that he was without any critical sense. In 1967, he had a disagreement with the archbishop of Manila, who required Lagerweij to apply for the imprimatur (ecclesiastical copyright) for his magazine *Now*. The Philippine media were almost entirely in the hands of the oligarchy, to which also Cardinal Santos belonged. Lagerweij himself did not publish all the copies of the magazines which his SCC published, but offered them as platforms for opinions which were displeasing to the oligarchy. *Ang Tao* (*The Common People*), for example, which appeared in five different Philippine vernaculars, was in effect fiercely anti-communist, but at the same time in the eyes of the elite it incited non-violent resistance in universities and sugar plantations. The magazine, *Now,* spoke out for more political openness and a better sharing of prosperity. The SCC, which was aimed at ordinary people, boasted of three regular magazines in 1970, with a circulation of over 600,000. In addition it was involved in radio and television broadcasts.

Ironically, this anti-revolutionary MSC was of all people among the first detainees in September 1972, immediately after the proclamation of martial law. Lagerweij was held responsible for a couple of critical articles which had appeared in one of the magazines set up by him. The SCC was closed temporarily. With two other priests the detained Lagerweij was summoned to the minister of defence (Juan Ponce Enrile), who treated them with every respect. General Ramos and other highly-ranked military officers were present too during the hearing. Lagerweij was given every opportunity to argue the case that 'millions of hearts and minds' could be won not with weapons but through communication for reform programmes. The next day he was summoned to the presidential palace. Lagerweij prepared a written

piece for that occasion that he wanted to give to Marcos along with a book of the SCC. 'If he wanted to adopt for his new society the social reforms as worked out in our book, we could of course work together,' wrote Lagerweij to the provincial superior shortly after his detention.

In the audience lasting three quarters of an hour 'we faced an extremely tired man, who asked us urgently to help him in his plans for a new society'. The priests set as a condition that steps should be taken towards a more social policy. Marcos read a number of pages of the book in silence, and said according to Lagerweij: 'Father, this looks like a complete government programme'. The father answered: 'Mr President, this shows that our staff is aware of the needs of the people'. After his release Lagerweij wrote to the provincial superior that Marcos had made a sincere impression on him and what was to be feared most was that through lack of financial support from abroad the matter could still go wrong. 'Under the current circumstances he is the only one capable of leading the country and therefore it is necessary that he succeeds.' He realized, however, the danger that 'martial law is going to be abused by the suppression of human rights, oppression of the worker, etc'. For this reason he thought that the Church ought to act as watchdog, but 'not without first giving President Marcos a chance to prove that he is now sincere'. His letter to provincial Joosten was at the same time an appeal 'to help me and my centre in the implementation of our national communication programmes for social reform in the Philippines'.

Lagerweij was not the only MSC who personally negotiated with Marcos. In 1975, Jippe Wiertz (1911-1986) had contact with the dictator a few times. Wiertz worked on the remote Camotes Islands and was intent on finding resources to develop a small pier for the little town of Tudela. The political situation was not unfavourable to that:

> If I may exercise a bit longer my so-called favourable influence with the high bosses in Manila - thanks to the time of no more political parties - then Tudela will become the beginning of real progress for the entire Camotes Islands because of the tourist attraction which I have discovered.

By this Wiertz meant a splendid cave which could be viewed very well by means of a small boat. But to start with, Tudela must have a landing-stage for arrivals and departures. The father had an audience with Marcos in an attempt to obtain money for this project and to broach other initiatives. 'I seem to have made a good impression on him, so that when he saw the photos of my buildings, he let slip: 'I wish that we had more missionaries like you'.' The five-minute appointment turned out to be half an hour, and resulted in paying for the pier in Tudela. A second time Wiertz obtained even double the amount. As it concerned government money, which the priest was requesting for a medical clinic, the head of state took another route.

> According to the law, because of the separation of Church and state, no aid or money may be granted to buildings which stand on church ground under church administra-

> tion. For this reason, the president sent me to the national lottery, a semi-government institution [National Charity Sweepstake] with a letter good for 5,000 pesos. Thus the president made use of a little backdoor, so as not to be accused of having used government money for Church projects. He did not give from his own money either, so as not to get me listed by his opponents as a special friend of his, so as not to cause me difficulties afterwards if ever the tide should turn. In a certain sense I appreciated that way of acting.

Wiertz wanted to help the Camotes and its inhabitants to make progress, and was proud that he managed to get support at the highest level. As long as that succeeded it did not seem to have bothered him that he did business with a dictator. Just like a number of other confrères he thought that as a priest, and a foreigner at that, he should not make judgements about politics. The Church was his terrain and he had to do his best for his parishioners. Others believed that after 1972, neutrality in the Philippines was no longer permissible. Keeping aloof as they say was grist to the mill of the dictatorship, as Gijsberts put it:

> The army and dictator Marcos thought it wonderful if you did not interfere in the social situations of the country. The Church must not get involved in politics but it was not politics at all. It is about the needs of people that pronouncements are made.

*Forming Community*

Three MSCs stirred up debate in 1975 with some progressive ideas. They had their insights couched in a 'position paper', a written declaration, which they presented to their confrères at a meeting on behalf of the Butuan Community. The MSCs working in Agusan had spoken out for involvement with the poor. Harrie van Engelen, Fons Meijers and Ben Verberne argued that in that case one's own way of life had to be adapted as much as possible to the poor. If the Church really wanted to reach out to people it would have to undergo a thorough reform. The current parish structure was an obstacle to such a reform according to the trio because the old rules and structure reduced the parishioners to an anonymous herd. At the meeting the others objected. On the contrary, if there was one place where the masses did have a name, it was in fact the parish! The parishes had a lot of value because for many the Church was the last thing they could hold on to. The Butuan group replied: 'Indeed, a last straw, more we cannot offer them.'

The Church, according to the Butuan Community, offered a consolation which was out of touch with the harsh reality. It should instead engage with that reality in order to try to seek new ways together with the people. While others might find the framework of a parish sufficient for pastoral work, the Butuan group thought that a change of track was needed. Because the Church belonged too much to the established order which kept poverty in place, its message could no longer sound true and the Church had to make amends to the poor. The Church should, therefore, be organised from below and become a brotherhood of local communities in the given

economic, political and cultural circumstances that were, according to the Butuan group, the most meaningful manner of being Church. Thus the Church would work for people in a liberating way. With faith as the basis the development of people had to be the priority. In that development, economic, political and cultural values were involved. By living really as a community, as an open community of MSCs and others, it would be easier to create a community spirit. Perhaps out of fear of coming across as presumptuous or self-satisfied the declaration ended with the remark that their aspirations had been formed thanks to others, including the MSC group of Agusan. All in all the others gave permission to the trio to start in this way, even though a number of confrères commented that the existing Church should not be rejected so categorically.

All realised that in the near future Filipinos would lead the parishes. The so-called MSC parishes would be transferred to the diocese, but as long as there were not enough seculars to take over the tasks the bishop asked the MSCs to stay. During the chapter of 1975 the tensions between young Filipino MSCs and the conservative fathers dissolved (the superior general, Cuskelly, played an important reconciliatory role in this). It was agreed upon that in partnership both nationalities would set up Christian communities, in consultation with the bishop and the diocesan clergy. The so-called *Cursillos*, in which formerly the elite were offered a deepening of faith, received an ever stronger social overtone and in Agusan they were held right in the barrios themselves. Somewhat later radical changes were made in the MSCs' own formation programme. Proceeding from the option for the poor the novices had to work for months on end in the slums. The social meaning of the vow of poverty and the preferential love for the poor had been taken over from the liberation theology of Latin America. The polarisation which had arisen in the Philippines through the dictatorship, led to the unconditional embrace of these ideals.

After the chapter the MSCs flourished, which could be seen in an increase of the number of vocations. On May 27, 1979, the Filipino father Pedro Magugat was consecrated bishop (assistant bishop of Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija) by the Pope. A year later, on March 15, 1980, the Philippine MSC Province was established. The vice-provincial, Lope Castillo, remained superior for another year and was then succeeded by Manuel Hilario. In 1983, the congregation celebrated its 75-year presence in the Philippines. There were then 94 MSCs, sixty of them Filipino. Around that time Mat van Santvoord wrote to his younger brother and confrère Ton:

> We just toil on because we believe that at some time and somewhere the resurrection shall come true, that all people can live as people ought to live. The fact that we are opposed and persecuted (there is here currently a Church persecution) is for us positive proof that we are on the right track. As Christ said, 'They have persecuted me, they will persecute you too.' For the poor people it is about time that 'resurrrection' begins, but that will be the more difficult if the West increasingly makes a turn to the right.

*End of the Dictatorship*

Eventually Marcos succeeded in remaining head of state of the Philippines for twenty years. During that time, together with his cronies, he managed to withdraw billions from the economy by means of a monopolistic position and cartel formation in agriculture, trade, the construction sector and banking. Martial law ended on January 17, 1981, but all decisions and regulations during the nine years of martial law simply remained in force. After three years of exile the politician, Benigno Aquino, returned to the Philippines where he had been one of Marcos' first detainees. While still on the airfield of Manila he was assassinated by soldiers. This assassination brought about a reversal in the attitude of resignation held by most Filipinos until then. The burial of Aquino mobilised more than two million mourners and assumed the character of a political mega-demonstration. Foreign investors started withdrawing and the country was bankrupt.

Marcos ordered an investigation into the assassination of Aquino. The archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Sin, was invited to take a seat on the investigation commission. Sin refused, however, because, as he explained in public, he had no faith in an honest outcome. To make it appear that he took every criticism seriously, Marcos organised interim (snap) elections, confident that he would win them. Corazon Aquino, the widow of the politician, however, ran as a candidate in the elections, with Salvador Laurel as her running mate. Mgr Sin had managed to reconcile both families who had been political rivals. A wave of protest arose when Marcos turned out to be the winner. For her part Aquino declared herself to have won. On February 22, 1986, two weeks after the elections, Enrile and Ramos (Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces), distanced themselves openly from Marcos calling for his resignation. By means of Radio Veritas, Cardinal Sin also made himself heard regularly. America feared a civil war and offered political asylum to the Marcos couple and their faithful followers. They made use of it on February 26, a day after Corazon Aquino had been proclaimed president in Manila. In 1987, a new constitution was put in place by a referendum and Aquino entered into dialogue with the NPA and MNLF. The subsequent elections on June 30, 1992, brought Fidel Ramos to power and he was later succeeded by Estrada.

In the eighties and nineties one Dutch MSC father after another went back to the Netherlands so as to leave the work to homegrown (and generally younger) people. This was much to the regret of the missionaries and led them to reflections like this one by Gijsberts:

> Coming from what was a strange culture to you, I was granted to live in your culture, look at it, enjoy it, find in it points of contact with the Gospel but never to understand it fully. I could love it but never be fully part of it. Now I retreat to my own culture which does not understand my life-style and my experiences.

Church and school had been the two pillars of the pastoral work for a long time. Having started with the traditional administration of the sacraments just as the Spaniards had imported it into the Philippines, followed by an emphasis on education,

most of the MSCs drifted away from that narrowly defined task interpretation. They tried to pass on to the populace the ideas of the Second Vatican Council, which in the given political situation could mean that - sometimes nolens volens - they were looked upon by the established power with distrust. The very last sermon, in which Gijsberts as parish priest of Del Monte said goodbye to his parishioners in 1997, was revealing:

> You asked time and again why I was not that strict in baptising and marrying. You know that I could not stand that apparently a Filipino has always to make his way through devotions, activities and regulations in order to be with his Lord. I wanted to lead you to the Lord, freely and on your own account. I did not want to push you, afraid that the Lord would say: André, who is the boss here, you or I?

In 1985 the Philippine province established a new MSC foundation in South Korea, at the invitation of the general administration of the congregation under the direction of Kees Braun. The South Korean foundation developed into a thriving region of the Philippine Province. The members of the Dutch provincial council, which in 1907 accepted the work in the Philippines with great hesitation, had not foreseen this offspring even in their wildest dreams.

## Brazil

Shortly after the acceptance of the Philippines (Surigao) a request was made to the Dutch province for a completely different area, Brazil. Mgr Antonio Augusto de Assis travelled around Europe in 1911 in order to recruit priests for his diocese of Pouso Alegre in the state of Minas Gerais. What mattered to the bishop was to get good teachers who were prepared to take over the college and seminary in his diocese. As early as May of that same year the first MSCs set foot on Brazilian soil. Education, particularly the training of priests, was the priority in the new work area, but parish work would become the principal part of the activities.

### *A 'European' Republic*

Brazil, having gained independence from Portugal in 1822, had proudly started its independence as an empire. The former colony held on to Catholicism as the state religion. Both in the Portuguese time and during the time of the empire, religious could enter the country only with explicit permission of the state. In 1889, this changed. Brazil became a republic with a constitution which ordered a separation of Church and state. This increased the influence of Rome on the Church in Brazil and a lot of foreign missionaries began a new and extensive field of work.

Brazil also attracted other foreigners. Especially in the early decades of its existence masses of job-seeking Europeans migrated to the republic. They arrived mainly in the south- eastern states of São Paulo, Minas Geraís and Río de Janeiro, where they grew coffee, which was the mainstay of the Brazilian economy. São Paulo alone produced half of the total world supply of coffee in 1917, and the other two states together added another quarter on top of that. The coffee plantations could employ a lot of hands, preferably European. The elite thought that the quality of the population would improve as more cross-breeding took place with white Europeans. In the long run Brazil would then become more white and as a matter of course more modern. The elite resorted more to this theory of the 'embranquecimento' [whitening] than to structural land reform.

Between 1890 and1930 over two million immigrants came to Brazil. At first they were mainly Italians followed by Spaniards and Portuguese. While in most of Brazil the old patriarchal system continued to exist, in the south-eastern states labour relations changed drastically. Contracts were made with the workers, although in practice they often turned out to be killer contracts and the working conditions left much to be desired. When for this reason the Italian and Spanish governments started to discourage migration to Brazil, Japan was targeted as a new labour market. Between 1925 and 1940 about two hundred thousand migrants from Japan and Okinawa came to Brazil.

The thriving coffee sector stimulated all kinds of employment and had consequences for the infrastructure of the south-west. The railways, ports and transport systems, and the administrative sector grew correspondingly and increased the de-

mand for services. The explosive population increase was meanwhile disastrous for the relationship between poor and rich. A yawning gap opened up between the over-populated favelas, the slums of the poor, and the villa districts situated in the most attractive coastal regions. While the elite imitated everything European in culture and mentality, the poor (and generally dark-complexioned) populace turned to the traditions of the slaves and developed from them an Afro-Brazilian culture, with the samba as its most well-known component.

The genesis of the two separated cultures, of the rich on the one hand and the poor on the other, also made itself felt in religious practice. Until the separation of Church and state Catholic confraternities had played an important integrating role in Brazilian society. Moreover they provided a role for lay people in the Church. Since 1890 the confraternities had been pushed into the background in the modern states. Rome insisted on a serious and thorough training for the priesthood in Brazil and on a more restrained and orthodox expression of the faith. Especially the elite, the middle class and the army felt attracted to it, and as a result the Church managed to reach these groups. To the poor masses the Church had become more distant. It is true that everyone continued to call themselves Catholic, but particularly in the cities most people sought their salvation from black magic priests, clairvoyants and faith healers in the favelas rather than in the official Church.

### *Van Iersel and Kauling*

Before their departure to South America the fathers sought information in Belgium where different orders and congregations already had colleges in Brazil. Adriaan van Iersel taught moral theology at that time to the scholastics of Louvain-Heverlee. The MSC house was located near *The Park* of the Norbertines, several of whose fathers were working in Brazil. It was not only there that Van Iersel went for information. He maintained contact also with Professor Emiel Vlieberegh of Louvain University. Just back from a trip to Brazil, Vliebergh was willing to help the MSCs and sent letters of recommendation to his connections in Rio.

The men of *The Park* painted a bleak picture of Pouso Alegre which was offered to the MSCs. It was in the grip of poverty, and was, in their opinion, without any future, just like the entire State of Minas Gerais. After a beginning that was doomed to fail the MSCs, according to them, should go to the modern state of São Paulo. The fathers could profit there from education subsidies and would be able to found colleges to their hearts' content if they approached the right people. The Norbertines knew that the bishop of Botacatú was looking for staff for his college, which could be a good start. Van Iersel passed this information on to his provincial, adding that the latter should ask the men of *The Park* to hold back in the presence of his companion, and

> not to paint the matter too bleak. Of course we say nothing about all of this, and if my partner, who fortunately is a bit deaf, learns something of it, I enjoin on him silence.

40. Seated: Brother Adriaan Dommelen (1892-1963) and Fathers Adriaan van Iersel (1879-1967) and Nol Geerts (1886-1959). Standing: Frs. Marinus Pover (1885-1979), Fr. van de Maas (left the MSC in the 1920's) and Eijsbrand Hartgers (1889-1933), 1917.

Van Iersel's travel companion was Louis Kauling, 'very intelligent, pious, a consummate polyglot - [he] knew the bases of at least 15 languages,' according to Van Iersel, 'but someone with a somewhat idiosyncratic character, rather individualistic, not particularly gregarious'. He would have preferred to accompany Van Hagen, a 'young, lively character, outgoing, always ready', but Van Hagen would soon be sent in another direction, to Lipa (Philippines), with Vesters.

Van Iersel and Kauling embarked for Brazil and spent most of their time on board learning Portuguese. They arrived in Rio on May 22, 1911, where they visited several religious orders and called on Vliebergh's contacts. Van Iersel had been instructed to explore the situation in Pouso Alegre first. If the introduction turned out well, he was authorised to enter into a contract with the diocese. If, on the other hand, it was not to his liking, he had to go in search for a more suitable place in Brazil, or if need be, in one of the neighbouring countries. A condition in any case was that the South American venture should not put any financial pressure on Tilburg but should pay for itself. After the disappointing experiences in Surigao this

was an important point. Moreover the warnings of the Norbertines about poverty still reverberated.

On May 27, 1911, the Fathers proceeded to Pouso Alegre. The very next day they commenced their teaching task at the episcopal grammar school and seminary. Van Iersel taught Mathematicss and Kauling, Latin. Within a week Van Iersel considered the time was ripe for a contract with the bishop. Something of his drive becomes evident as well in the protest which he made against the current breakfast:

> At breakfast we got, just like the other teachers, coffee, admittedly good coffee, and a small piece of bread. 'Mr Canon, that will not do, we cannot do our work on that. We are used to having a breakfast in the morning of bread and butter together with slices of meat, eggs, cheese, a sort of morning meal.' They kindly accommodated us and since then we have always had a hearty breakfast.

Years later, in 1918, Muijsers wrote about Van Iersel: 'Love for the congregation, talents, initiative, obliging, persona grata: one finds all that combined.

*Expansion*

After the signing of the contract with the diocese at the beginning of November 1911, Van Iersel asked for reinforcements from the Netherlands. Before the end of that year four fathers and three brothers arrived. There was nothing wrong with the brothers. August Roosen, Cornelis Leijten and Christiaan Kockx were 'of the time-honoured, reliable and dedicated breed of brothers'. But the fathers, Johan Galiard, Joseph Heijligers and French Deckers had been no longer welcome at the apostolic schools of Belgium and the Netherlands, while Father Marinus Pover was thought - according to Van Iersel, wrongly - to be too modern. In June 1911 provincial superior Brocken and Wemmers (member of the General Council) considered Brazil as a welcome outlet for fathers who no longer gave satisfaction in their own schools - at least, in the eyes of their superiors.

> Perhaps you have someone whom it would be good to transfer and who would be a suitable enough teacher over there. In this way you can retain the best among the young teachers and improve the good spirit in the province,

according to Wemmers. The provincial answered affirmatively, adding to that: 'Probably this year the clean-up will start'. It did not make the work any simpler for Van Iersel who seems to have fostered no illusions about this:

> Generally our fathers appointed to Brazil came here without any enthusiasm for the new area of work.

Of the first small group Heijligers left the congregation in 1917, but Deckers and Galiard remained active as MSCs in Brazil until they died (in 1936 and1952, respectively).

According to the contract, the direction and administration of the diocesan col-

lege lay with the MSCs as of 1912, but fairly soon there arose problems concerning competencies. In order to secure the future of the congregation in Brazil, Van Iersel looked for possibilities of setting up in another diocese. He found them outside Minas Gerais, in the State of São Paulo. Just as the Norbertines had predicted the bishop of Botucatú turned out to be wholeheartedly prepared to entrust his dilapidated seminary to the care of the Dutch Fathers. Without consulting Mgr Assis of Pouso Alegre, Van Iersel sent Kauling and Heyligers to Botucatú to take over the diocesan grammar school.

While this did not exactly make the atmosphere in Pouso Alegre any better, soon problems arose also in the new diocese. On August 1, 1912, a contract, similar to that with Mgr Assis, had been entered into with Mgr Lucio Antunes de Souza. Van Iersel managed twice to calm down emotions in Botucatú, eventually with success. On the other hand the starting position in Pouso Alegre had become untenable. In 1915, the MSCs handed over the management of the educational institutions to the secular clergy. The fathers, however, were permitted to continue parish work in the diocese, as well as in Botucatú and another two dioceses, Campinas and Guaxupé.

In the last mentioned diocese the fathers saw possibilities for expanding their work in the parish of Alfenas to include the care of the sick and education. They wanted to make an appeal to the FDNSC sisters for that. They presented this to provincial superior, Brocken, when he came on visitation in February 1916. That visit resulted in disappointment. Not only was the establishment of their 'own' sisters in Brazil out of the question, according to Brocken, but he made it perfectly clear that the New Guinea mission and the Philippines enjoyed a higher priority than Brazil. Next the fathers decided to join hands with the Sisters of Providence who were already working in Itajubá. In 1918, the MSCs completed the construction of the hospital of Alfenas and the first four sisters started work there. The year after Brocken requested that the newly established training school for teachers be entrusted to the FDNSC. The superior of the Sisters of Providence felt by-passed so much so that they withdrew from the hospital, which subsequently also passed into the hands of the FDNSC. In the period 1920-1925 eight Dutch FDNSC sisters went to Brazil.

### *Pastoral Care*

Education, and in particular the training of future priests, had been the main purpose of settling in the new work area. As early as the first years of their stay, however, this had changed and the attention shifted, partly due to circumstances, more and more to pastoral care. The MSCs were active in both the modern and the old Brazil. Since the establishment of the Republic (1889) the Brazilian governments had conducted a very energetic economic policy. Agriculture and then industry were developed not gradually, but modelled as much as possible upon the 'full-grown' west. The population centres on the coast modernised in quick tempo and

the gap with the traditional hinterland became larger, but also within those centres themselves there was an enormous gap between a well-educated elite and a large working class proletariat.

In the traditional South Minas the MSCs worked among Brazilians born in the country, whereas in São Paulo they had to deal with immigrants of different origins. It was even seriously considered in 1927 whether some MSC fathers should learn Japanese. Eventually the plan fell through on the grounds that such a move would not advance the integration of immigrants in a country where everyone was deemed to speak Portuguese.

'It was no small thing to accept several parishes in various dioceses, at a great distance from each other,' according to Father Jan van Rooyen:

> Actually those parishes had yet to be founded, because a collection of people who, it is true, are baptised, but whose religious life consists solely of some devotional practices, does not yet constitute a parish. To a large extent they lived spread over a vast area ... often without a proper church building and with weak relationships among themselves. They considered the priest as nothing more than a civil servant who baptised and performed marriages, and organized a Church feast at set times ... the religious character of which was not totally hidden, yet lay mainly in the sphere of the material interests of all who took part in it.

The parishes which the MSCs accepted were generally large and difficult. Located not far from São Paulo, quite a number of 'rough customers' came there, according to Mulder. The diocese of Botucatú was also located in that state, where Nol Geerts (1886-1959) and Heijligers began their pastoral work in Baurú at the end of 1913. Baurú lay along a railway line under construction in an area where a new coffee belt was to be developed. Van Rooyen:

> The little church of the locality had been set on fire for the sake of the designed town plan so the two fathers had to set about the foundation of the parish literally from the ground up. Apart from some good families, the majority of the inhabitants consisted of fortune hunters and less good elements, having flocked together from far and wide, so the spiritual work had to be built from the ground up as well.

### *The Thirties*

The old decentralised republic, economically too heavily dependent on coffee, was due for reform, its critics thought. The year 1924 witnessed a revolution and in 1930 the army overthrew the government. The new head of state, Getúlio Vargas, wanted to break the autonomy of the states in order to avert an economic crisis. The coffee growers and industrialists of São Paulo, especially, resisted Vargas' policy, and 1932 witnessed another revolution. The riots had no anti-religious character and so the Church kept itself as far as possible outside the political fight. The MSCs got involved to the extent that the warring parties needed chaplains. A number of Dutch priests, like the MSC, Paulo [Eijsbrand] Hartgers, became chaplains. He

41. Parishioners of Baurú in and about the auto of Fr. Nol Geerts, 1926.

resided at the border of Minas and São Paulo where, besides providing spiritual assistance to both parties, he edited a newspaper for soldiers. In 1933, Hartgers died in Itajubá.

Eventually Vargas won the day and the formerly powerful states lost much of their powers. In Vargas' 'Estado Novo' (New State) an attempt was made to modernise Brazil by authoritarian means and to transform it into a unified nation. The increasingly popular sport of football and the samba schools of the Afro-Brazilian carnival proved to be excellent tools and binding agents in the advancement of Brazilian unity. Furthermore, the propaganda depicted Catholicism as the religion of all, as expressed in 1931 by the enormous statue of Christ standing above Rio on the Corcovado Mountain. Vargas held on to the presidency for a long time. It was not until 1954 that he was forced to resign when, to the dislike of the military and the elite, he moved too much towards the side of radical populists.

In what were the turbulent thirties for Brazil, Theo Mulder (1917) attended the apostolic school in Tilburg. As a boy of about sixteen, he committed himself to the mission club for Brazil. He wanted very much to go to a distant territory, but New Guinea was too rough for him. That seemed more appropriate for the schoolmates who claimed with bravura that they would climb the tallest trees there. The MSC priests working abroad told the boys regularly about their work. Especially the Brazilian stories of Nol Geerts and Nico Ruijter (1879-1950) made an impression on Mulder. They told with relish about all kinds of difficulties which they had faced in their pastoral work and how they dealt with them. The representatives from the Philippines on the other hand came across to Mulder as rather sanctimonious. In a holier-than-thou tone and moved to tears they talked about their work and about the vocation of the seminarians.

Apart from the personal aptitudes of the fathers in question the differences between Brazil and the Philippines and between its two peoples were of course enormous but also the position which the MSCs occupied in both countries differed a lot. In the Philippines the Dutch Province had its own territory (Mindanao) and

since 1940 the MSCs worked partly under a Dutch MSC bishop (Vrakking and van den Ouwelant). In Brazil a similar infrastructure of its own did not exist: the bishops were Brazilians, the schools were under the direction of others. An MSC worked on secondment and had therefore to work continuously with non-MSCs. The work in Brazil was directed more at pastoral care itself, whereas the Philippine fathers of the thirties came across to Mulder primarily as dispensers of sacraments and heads of schools. For all that it was precisely in those years that the Brazilian MSCs were much in the limelight for setting up a training structure for future MSCs in Brazil.

*Brazilian Province*

Since the transfer of the grammar school of Pouso Alegre to the secular clergy, Campinas had been the place where the MSC central house was located. The fathers gave lessons both at the diocesan seminary and at the state grammar school. In time the formation of candidates for the MSCs came in sight as a target. Brother Jan Schippers built a minor seminary in Pirassununga (São Paulo), which opened its doors in 1932. The choice of this location had been dictated by the fact that a training college was already there, to which an agricultural school was added later.

When in 1936 provincial superior, Nico Verhoeven, and Hein van Mierlo came on visitation, they observed that the vast and growing Brazilian work area derived little benefit from an administration in distant Tilburg. For this reason Geerts was appointed in the same year as 'provincial steward' for Brazil. As the representative of the provincial administration he had authority to undertake decisive action on his own. At the same time the green light was given to expand the training. In 1937, the novitiate was established (in Itapetininga) and in 1940, the scholasticate (in São Paulo). They produced the first Brazilian MSCs who were ordained priests, the first in December 1945: Plínio Negrão, Angelo Cardillo d'Angelo, Amadeu Rodrigues Gusmão and Pedro Strabelli.

To consolidate these activities the Dutch Province had sent many people to Brazil in the last few years before the Second World War. All in all in December 1945 there were no less than 53 MSC fathers and 24 MSC brothers active in Brazil. Those in training numbered eighteen scholastics and six novices, whereas ninety boys attended the apostolic school. During the war no missionaries had been able to leave the Netherlands and because of this 1946 showed the record number of 55 missionaries sent abroad. One third of them had been appointed to Brazil.

A logical next step for what was in fact already an independently operating work area was the separation from the Dutch Province. Proposals of Geerts to this end found a sympathetic ear with provincial Piet van der Pluijm and his council, as well as with the general administration. To see if the time was ripe for a Brazilian province Van der Pluijm and Jan de Lepper came on visitation in 1946. The infrastructure was in place: there were sufficient communities, a training schedule of their own, good possibilities for means of support and sufficient members. The fact that there were then

just five native MSC fathers was not considered a problem, as long as their own training programme produced at least two or three additional Brazilian priests annually. For years that had been the average number of arrivals from the Netherlands. To give a powerful impetus to the new province the Netherlands would provide that year a considerable number of fathers once again.

On October 13, 1946, the Brazilian Province could be numbered as the latest addition to the list of MSC provinces. It came under the leadership of Father Jan Schuur, who was assisted by Father Willem Ari as his provincial bursar. Up to 1964 the Brazilian Province would be led by Dutch superiors. Successively, and always for the duration of six years, these were Schuur, Kees van de Made and Frans Janssen. The first Brazilian to become provincial superior was Aloisius Xavier Peres. The provincial board continued to include Dutch members even after 1964.

The Dutch MSCs were given the choice in 1964 either to remain with their original province or to become members of the Brazilian Province. Ninety percent of the fathers transferred to the new province. The proportion was fifty-fifty for the brothers. According to Schuur, the brothers were more apprehensive of not being able to spend their old age in the Netherlands, if they became members of the Brazilian Province. They might have thought of the complications at the time of the Northern Province (see p. 68). There was no necessity to become a member either since it had been promised that the Dutch members could continue their work in Brazil as they had until then. The massive transfer of the fathers was more obvious in view of their pastoral tasks.

### *Dutch Work Area*

Did this conclude the history of the Dutch Province in Brazil? By no means. Shortly before the establishment of the new province it accepted another work area. Before the Brazilian Province was established, the MSCs working there had aspirations to try their luck elsewhere in the country. Some, like Schuur, saw opportunities in the south, but Geerts in particular was more in favour of Muriaé (Leopoldina diocese) in Minas Gerais. Geerts knew the young inexperienced bishop from his time in Pouso Alegre and had managed to get several promises from him, namely that the MSCs would be allowed to occupy five parishes, two of them in the city of Muriaé, where they would get the ownership of a high school. If everything went well, there was the additional prospect of work in other high schools and in the diocesan seminary.

The former provincial, Verhoeven, cherished this idea as early as 1941 because the MSCs still flourished in the Netherlands, with well-filled training houses and a steady increase of missionaries who after all had to be put to work somewhere. The subsequent plan by Geerts was seen by members of the 1946 visitation as very appropriate for such a new work area. 'Likewise the usefulness was put forward, yes almost the necessity, of a foundation in Rio,' for the Barnabite Fathers in Jacarépagua, a city district of Rio, had signified their intention to hand over their place to

the MSCs. Until this happened, Jérôme Vermin, as assistant parish priest, was instructed to examine further possibilities in Rio de Janeiro. In July 1946 the Dutch work area was de facto established when Fathers Geerts and Alexander Verlaar set themselves up in Muriaé (and Vermin in Rio de Janeiro). Geerts, who had laid the groundwork of the Brazilian province for ten years, came thus to work for the Dutch Province - although he had joined the Brazilian Province.

The Dutch work area has often been wrongly looked upon as a breakaway from the Brazilian Province, while in fact both were set up simultaneously. Certainly the Brazilian Province did lend the pioneers for the new work area, while the Dutch Province did send another fourteen missionaries to the Brazilian Province. It was admittedly a bit confusing. Van de Pluijm considered asking Schuur to take temporary care of the administration of the Dutch work area but the general administration rejected that in January 1947. In the words of Jan Zandvliet:

> You can delay the appointment of a religious superior until the foundation of Muriaé-Rio has taken on some permanency. But you must not ask Father Schuur to supervise or to take care of its administration or to appoint a substitute with your approval. Let us keep the administration of the two provinces well apart. You are the boss in Muriaé and Father Schuur administers the new Brazilian Province.

After the pioneers the staffing of the work area came directly from the Netherlands. Until far into the seventies that separation remained without there being any talk of joining both work entities.

The beautiful prospects in Muriaé did not come to much. Only the parish work in the city itself and in two neighbouring small places were realised. The take-over of colleges did not take place. According to Mulder, Geerts had counted his chickens before they were hatched: 'Father Geerts had forgotten the presence of the secular Brazilian priests who did not accept that their young new bishop would go about endowing one congregation so richly, even if his father had died in Father Nol's arms' (as the latter himself had claimed displaying his sense of melodrama). The Brazilian provincial, Schuur, had very much regretted the choice of Muriaé instead of the south as the Dutch work area. He had placed a father and a brother in Santa Catarina from whom he got favourable reports. 'We have 15 candidates there for a pre-apostolic school. For the sake of recruitment we should have some parishes.' But who would occupy them now since he himself could not spare any father?

The solution came from Belgium, where the desire for a new work area had arisen as well. Jan De Kerck wrote to the provincial chapter in Belgium in 1947:

> The difficult Congo Mission remains our great work, but not everyone can handle the oppressive Congo climate. Given our numerous personnel one has to look for a work area for the less healthy,

The Brazilian provincial and the Belgian provincial, Jules Wijnants, agreed in 1948 that Belgian volunteers for Santa Catarina would be on loan to the Brazilian Pro-

vince at first. If after some years their number had gone up to about fifteen men, they could form a work area of the Belgian Province in its own right which might perhaps later develop into a new province. On June 10, 1948, the first three Belgians left for Santa Catarina. After five years a Belgian work area could be founded, be it in another region (around Francisco Beltrão and in Curitíba in the State of Paraná).

*São Paulo – Rio*

It was the experience of several MSCs who arrived in Brazil from the Netherlands in those days that the existence of a province and a work area side by side was not without problems. Walter Grol belonged to the big batch of 1946. 'I wanted very much to work in a parish, but because I came so late I could not become a parish priest; everyone had a place already. I could stop the gaps.' There followed a lot of transfers for Grol. 'I could not take root anywhere. Your predecessor said: Don't change anything, okay! I did not like that.'

Theo van de Ven describes the atmosphere in his early days as frankly 'very unpleasant, because certain rivalries between confrères were almost palpable'. The roots of these lay in the simultaneous establishment of the Brazilian Province and the work area. Particularly in the development of the latter there were too many captains on the ship, according to Van de Ven.

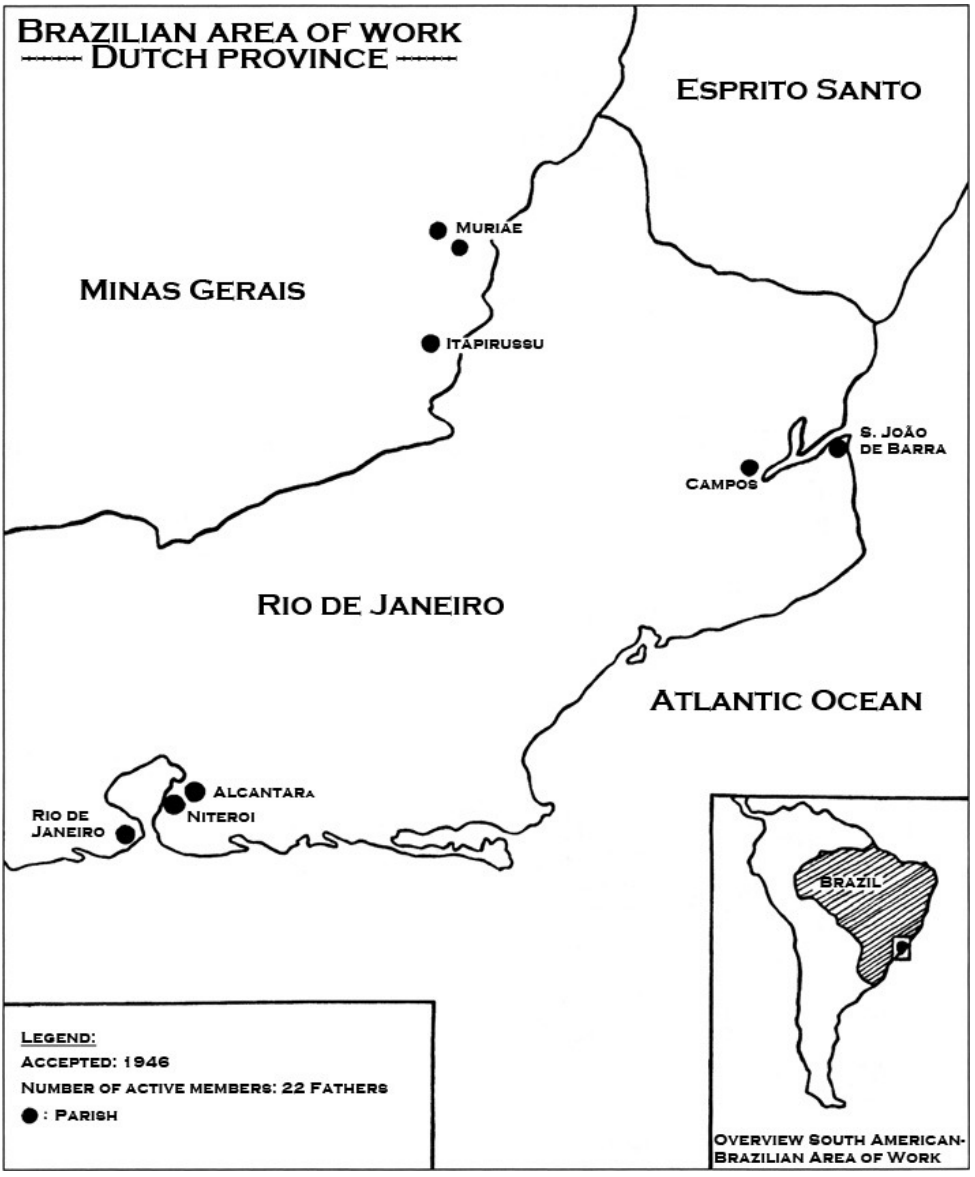
> From the very beginning there prevailed a painful, shameful rivalry over who would stay with whom, who would get most of the help, or the best, and other squabbles. I found that this atmosphere still prevailed on my arrival in 1952 and I myself unfortunately became the victim of it.

That translated itself into nine appointments during the first six years of his stay, some of which only lasted for some months or even weeks.

The Dutch of the work area (Rio) remained members of the Dutch Province, 'but in fact that 'dependence' did not mean that much', according to Gijs de Roij (1926). When he arrived in Brazil in 1953, about twenty fathers were active in the work area. De Roij got his orders and appointments from the local superior. The contacts with the Dutch Province occurred behind the scenes. In daily life most of the fathers noticed little of the financial and organisational links - they were taken up with their work and the new culture. Also Van de Ven, who had actually hoped for an appointment for Indonesia, soon became enthusiastic about Rio:

> because of the multicultural population which I encountered there, both African as well as Oriental cultures, but then embedded in, and surrounded by, the less strange western cultures of the Portuguese, Spaniards and Italians.

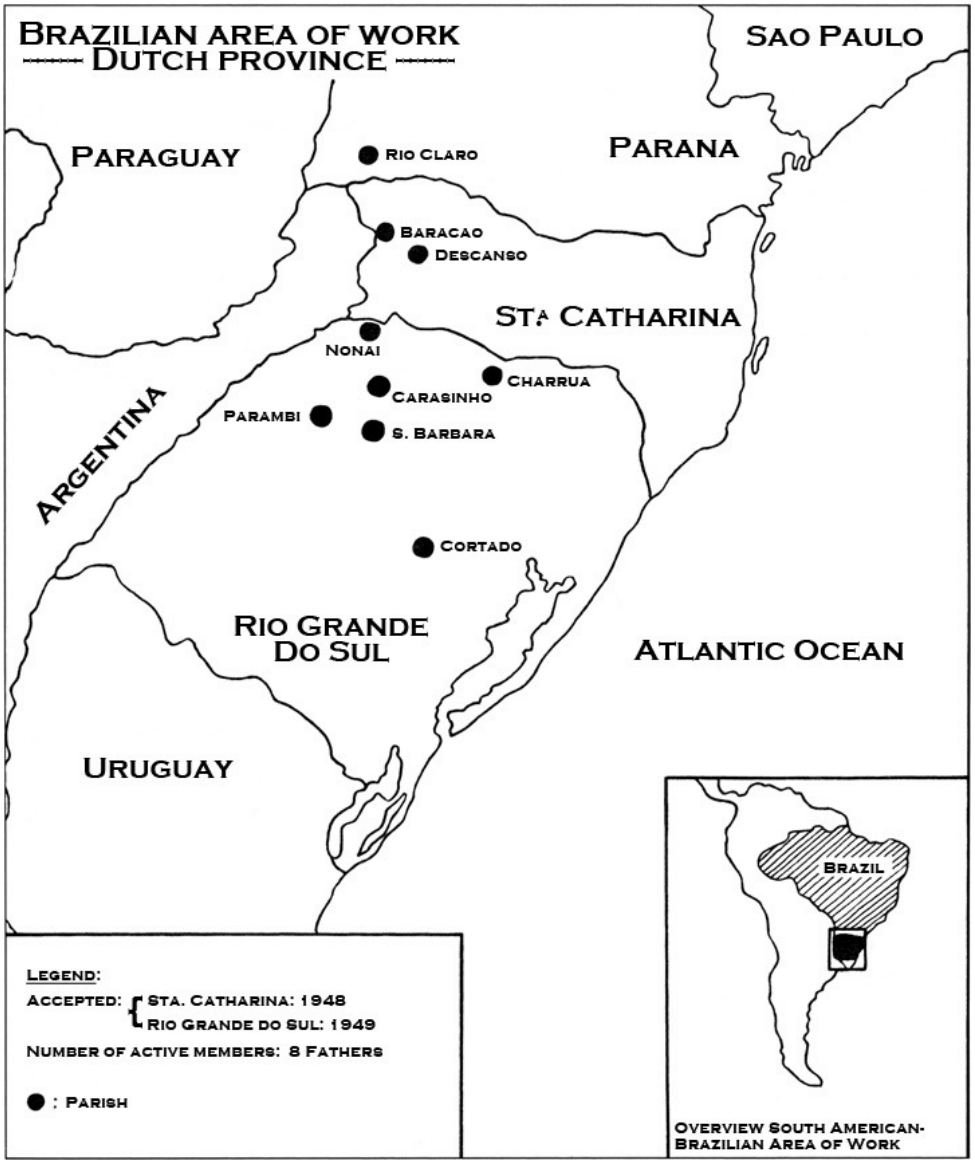
In 1970, the work area was given the status of the Region of Rio de Janeiro. Formally the region still came under the Dutch Province, but the superior had many powers. It was not until 1995 that the active intervention of the Dutch Province in




42. From: *MSC over de wereld 1854-1954* (Tilburg 1954).

the region ceased, when on December 8 it became the Pro-province of Rio de Janeiro. The general administration of the congregation would have preferred that the region should merge with the Brazilian Province, but the differences proved too great for a merger. However, both areas agreed to set up a common novitiate.

Now that Rio had become a province, the name Brazilian Province was no longer correct. It was changed to São Paulo Province.




43. From: *MSC over de wereld 1854-1954* (Tilburg 1954).

*Cultural Difference*

However positive the MSCs in general were towards the Brazilian culture, it was not easy to make concessions to their way of being Church and to break free from one's own practices. According to Grol, who had as one of his activities the training of priests:

> ... in fact, we did it completely wrong. We transferred seminary life from here over to Brazil, including the system of bad grades and I do not know what else. As for me, I was much too strict.

Also Martien van Beeck discovered that his sound training had not been enough. When he started in Rio de Janeiro in November 1968, he had been disappointed at first. 'It turned out to be ordinary parish work, only in a somewhat warmer climate.' In the Netherlands his future ideals 'had always been in a vague way heroic'. When in practice the work turned out less adventurous for him, Van Beeck began more and more to doubt the essence of it. After some time he was convinced that

> the people who sat before me during Mass had a totally different understanding of what it was all about. I could not make my customers accept anything of the theology I had studied. I came to the conclusion that my customers were convinced that I understood nothing of religion. As a priest I did earn their respect, but as regards religion I did not know the first thing about it. Later I began to realise that they were right.

In 1971, he decided to leave 'because I did not believe in a lot of things which I had to preach. It was for me terribly difficult to consciously admit it to myself'. In the end his priesthood lasted only four years, but he stayed on in Rio de Janeiro. He began a new life there as bank employee and he started a family. He felt quite at home in his new state of life. What is more, in a time in which divorces and problems between parents and children were the order of the day, Van Beeck could even conclude 'that my life as a religious has been an excellent preparation for my marriage and family life'.

Van de Ven discovered that the Brazilians had a completely different attitude to the faith than he was used to. The fact that Catholic churches were overflowing said nothing about the constancy of the churchgoers. They had no scruples about changing their religious affiliation, in order to return again to the church at a later stage - or they did not. Competition from the sects and other new groups in the seventies was not unwelcome to Van de Ven:

> After all the whole of life is religious, even if you do not believe in God. Emotions, the desire to advance in life, brotherhood, all these can be equally religious. Faith is not something of the intellect or something that clings to the Bible, but it is what you have in your heart.

As he had learned from physicians that 'the' human being did not exist, because everyone differed from everyone else in some ways, he learned in Brazil that the same applied to 'the' faith and 'the' Church. Gradually he became convinced that 'where law and imposed duty predominate or are being checked continuously, there is no room for a sparkling and healthy life'. For this reason a religious congregation like his had to proceed foremost with love and cordiality: 'We are there to let life *unfold* (at which the Brazilian is so good) and not to curtail and cut it down.'

Non-church movements thrived well in Brazil. Spiritualism, faith healing and black magic attracted many. Since the sixties the competition of the 'Umbanda'

grew stronger - a movement that combined elements from Catholicism with spiritualism and especially aspects from Afro-Brazilian religions. At that time the Pentecostal church, coming from the United States, and the Baptists, gained ground in Brazil.

The Catholic Church set up different movements to stimulate religious fervour among the laity. For instance there was the 'Cursilho da Cristandade' (Short Course on Christianity), a sort of crash course for the better off, with a rather fanatical retreat added. Later it lost its rather secretive selectivity in favour of a more social commitment. Besides that there were thriving organisations like the 'Movimento Familiar Cristão' (Christian Family Movement) and the Legion of Mary, consisting of lay people who called on homes and visited the sick and taught catechism. The MSCs too collaborated with these Church initiatives.

### *Option for the Poor*

In 1964, a coup led by General Castelo Branco put an end to democracy. Fear of communism and the bad economic situation made conservative groups choose the side of the military. Initially that applied also to the Catholic Church. When the new government (under Castelo's successors, Da Costa e Silva and Médici) turned out to be extremely repressive, this attitude changed radically. From having welcomed the military against the Red Danger the Church became one of the fiercest critics of the dictatorship. It concerned itself more and more with social problems. In part, prompted by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967), several Church representatives stepped forward as spokespersons for the silenced masses.

The 'option for the poor' was especially propagated by Helder Pessoa Câmara, who had been appointed bishop in 1964, and the Cardinals Arns and Lorschneider. The theology of liberation stated that the Church had the duty to stand up for the poor and oppressed. In Latin America a broad basis for this vision existed. A conference in Medellín in 1968 which brought together the Catholic bishops of all South America concluded with an unprecedented progressive declaration on human rights.

Father Flor Bernaerts considered these years as a break in his way of working. According to him, until then that had amounted chiefly to 'minding the shop' and taking care that the people received the sacraments regularly. Now the emphasis shifted to social work and tackling the causes of poverty rather than the symptoms.

The Catholic Church had actually two faces in Brazil: on the one side there was the closed institution that had always maintained close relations with those in political power, and on the other side there were the priests and religious at the grassroots, the field workers among the poor. The latter tried to organize themselves into ecclesial 'basic communities'. In this way a dam was raised against the influence of Umbanda and other churches, but most importantly it gave the people an active role in the life of the community and made them more self-aware. Their leaders did

not come from the circles of the Cursilho da Cristandade, but rather from discussion and Bible groups. Out of the basic communities other social interest groups developed, such as organisations of women and youth work. Because of their fragmentation such groups could not form a power block against the regime, but their members learned to become active and to speak up.

In the period 1968-1974 Brazil experienced unprecedented economic growth. Besides coffee it had at last other export articles of importance (sugar, soy beans, industrial goods). The military and the elite used this growth as a legitimisation of their power, in which they did not let the poor people share. Self-supporting agriculture turned commercial and had detrimental consequences on most of the Brazilian farmers. Now the 'Pastoral da Terra' (Pastoral Care of the Earth) became popular: the protection of small farmers, generally by means of a cooperative, against the large-scale landowners and their connections in powerful circles. This appealed particularly to a number of MSC fathers, but quite soon it became clear that they could not go this road with impunity. In May 1970 Jan Rutges ended up in a Brazilian gaol. Through the mediation of his confrères, the bishop and the Dutch government he was released after three weeks. In 1968, his confrère Karel van den Bergen, had already experienced two days of detention because of his activities at the agricultural university as a lecturer and student leader.

During Rutges' detention his confrère, Ed van de Walle, attended a course on development sociology in Louvain. Van de Walle had been in Brazil for twenty years, in among other places the capital, Brasilia, where he had set up literacy projects for construction workers and had stimulated workers organisations. When he wanted to go back to Brazil at the end of 1971 he was informed by the Brazilian consulate in Belgium that he had been declared an undesirable person. Subsequently Van de Walle committed himself to Latin America from the Netherlands via the Cebemo foundation.

During his imprisonment Rutges thought that after his release he could do much as a foreigner for the remaining political prisoners, but to his frustration he was banned from speaking in public (by the vicar general of the archdiocese and the chancellor of the Dutch embassy). Afterwards in the Netherlands he expressed his dissatisfaction with the attitude of the official Church: to keep quiet in order not to offend those in power and to prevent damage to one's own interests.

> As in the past, representatives of the official Church have been guests at the diverse dinner tables of the grand figures of Brazil, and have been afraid to compromise themselves with the true interests of the oppressed people.

There was much at stake - 'the cathedral of Brasilia which was built mainly with government money, all those colleges and institutes which are dependent on the subsidies of the government and work practically only for the upper ten per cent'.

Rutges intimated that not all persons in authority kept their mouths shut. For instance Cardinal Alfrink had expressed clearly his condemnation of the violation of human rights in Brazil but Rome considered Helder Câmara, according to Rutges,

as mostly an 'enfant terrible'. The father felt that he was getting increasingly estranged from the church of which he himself was a part. 'I want to emphasise that it does not concern persons but the institution as such, which in my opinion is taking another road than the one I want to go.' In 1973 this led to his departure. In a letter to the provincial superior Rutges explained his decision at great length. His solidarity with the people for whom he worked had put his vows in a new light:

> After all what was the meaning of a vow of poverty in the midst of the bitter poverty of those people over there? With the permission of my superior I had everything, didn't I? What was the meaning of obedience in the midst of a people who were turned into slaves by the legitimate authority and for whom each cry for freedom, each personal initiative, could mean death? I did not have to go to work 'out of obedience' as early as 6 o'clock in the morning on a hungry stomach in the sultry sugar cane [plantation]. What was the meaning of a vow of chastity or celibacy in a culture where women did not count for much to begin with and the whole marriage mystique of the Church was pious claptrap? It meant only that I was spared that problem and did not have to show how it should be lived instead.

He felt more and more connected with the poor and no longer saw any way back.

> People over there appealed more and more to my solidarity. They did so more than the congregation or the Church. There were no connections between the thinking of the Church and the congregation and the needs of those people. As a result, I was driven to them. With those people I had once again to go about believing and hoping. With those people I had once again to be poor, faithful and detached. Thus, with them I began to live differently the life of faith and the vows.

Father Jan van Leeuwen fought a similar social battle. In the seventies and eighties Van Leeuwen worked in Japuiba (RJ), a parish which covered an ample 450 sq. km. In this poor area ravaged with malaria, he got into difficulties, just like Rutges, with the civil authority when he stood up for the farmers. They had cultivated a piece of marsh and forest land that on paper was owned by an immensely rich landowner. The attempt to make it into a collective field for a cooperative was prevented by the police and the group was arrested. The issue received much media attention and all were released after interrogation. Supported by the bishops and the trade union Van Leeuwen set out for the National Agricultural Institute in Rio with a request for expropriation. The latter decided in the father's favour against the large-scale landowner, who in this matter had even resorted to a hired assassin.

Perhaps not in the tempo and as distinct as Rutges had wanted it, the Church in Brazil opted definitely for the poor. Whereas in the Philippines at the time of Marcos the Dutch had difficulty sometimes with feeling at home in the Church, the Latin American Church presented the Dutch MSCs with much less of a moral dilemma. 'I heard only now here in the Netherlands that Liberation Theology has been construed as communist,' according to Van Ven.

> There [in Brazil] it was experienced among the clergy and the bishops, and still is, as

> something good. If you know the situations of poverty, of exploitation, the favelas of Rio... then there has to be something to really counteract that from the bottom, from the inside of religion.

Koos Zwaanenburg, who since 1964 was known in Brazil as 'Padre Jacques', remarked about the attitude of the Latin American church in 2002:

> There the Church has taken to the application (and not the criticism) of Vatican Council II. I am fortunate to participate wholeheartedly in this up to now.

Antoon Revers, too, saw the number of pastoral activities multiply since the sixties. While in the Netherlands a dogged secularisation set in, Revers observed an exactly reverse development in his different appointments in Rio de Janeiro. He observed in 2002:

> The churches are full. I have four Masses on a Sunday and attendance at each Mass is about a thousand people. They are standing from the front to the back, in the passageways between the pews, and even outside. What is also striking is that a lot of young people are coming to church.

The São Paulo Province and the Rio de Janeiro Pro-province have grown out of the work of the Dutch Province. The Dutch members of the Pro-province continue to work in the cities of Rio and Niterói and in Muriaé and Belo Horizonte in the state of Minas Geraís. Their pastoral work consists, for a large part, in the care and the relief of the underprivileged. It is not only Dutch MSCs who have left behind their tracks in Brazil. Since 1970 the country has seen also a number of MSC establishments of Belgian, South-German/Austrian and Italian origin.

CHAPTER 8

# Promotion Work

The mission could never have assumed such large proportions without the publicity which had been given to it in the Netherlands. The MSCs succeeded in creating a broad backing which supported the work with prayer, money and activities. Having its name known and having money were two things without which the congregation could not exist.

*Promotion Workers*

The first MSCs in France were very aware of that. Thanks to some benefactors they had been able to realise their ideal of a congregation, be it in extremely needy circumstances. Chevalier and his people understood that regular income was necessary to develop their congregation. Vandel started a nationwide 'sou par an' action for the apostolic school in 1866. The equivalent of a penny per year was such a modest contribution that there was a massive response to his appeal. At the same time the young congregation made itself known via a confraternity and a magazine, the Annals. For the distribution of the magazine and of the devotional items of the confraternity the MSCs had to rely on volunteers. Their work also included recruiting subscribers and donors and collecting the contributions.

The same thing happened in the Netherlands with the arrival of the congregation in 1880. The Annals were published in a Dutch edition in 1883. Vandel's 'Little Work of Charity' was adopted and even before 1880 there were female volunteers working for the congregation, particularly in Sittard and Venray (See chapter 1). They were called after the French designation 'zelatrices', or 'zelateurs' for men. For the sake of convenience, because this volunteer work fell mainly on women, the whole group was generally referred to as 'zelatrices'.

One of those active from the very beginning was Jaap Degeling. After seventy years he still remembered very well how in 1884 'as a poor errand boy' he did his best to bring in subscribers in the municipality of Venhuizen (West Friesland) and managed to sign up fourteen of them. At that time the congregation in the Netherlands had a Limburg-Brabant character, but through such promotion work it acquired a name and grew in numbers in the north of the country.

Degeling was seventeen years old in 1884 and would remain a promotion wor-


44. Certificate of Zelatrice or Lady Promoter.

ker for the rest of his life. In his correspondence with the Mission House he described in his letters of later life the sacrifices which he had made to promote the work of the congregation. 'You must mention such a thing in the annals one day,' he suggested in 1949,

> but absolutely not earlier, unless I have died, because then I would have been judged anyway and it can do me no harm. Because I must not have honour or fame from it, and do not want to miss anything of it, I, who consider the sacrifice as a bill of exchange in Heaven which, at my death, will be honoured by God for the full one hundred per cent.

People like Degeling did their work with great dedication. They were cherished by the Dutch MSCs, who were fully aware of the value of this work. In 1907, the MSCs called its volunteers 'missionary', because they cooperated in 'the great work of conversion'. The 'zelateurs' or promoters could count on spiritual reward for their efforts.

> Each day all the members of all our religious communities, spread over the whole world, pray three times to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that she may use her power of intercession with the Sacred Heart of Jesus to shower upon you all the riches of love and mercy, of light and bliss, that are enclosed within it.

Besides being bound through prayer they were also bound to the congregation by means of personal correspondence and short visits from MSCs. They were fêted with excursions and a yearly promoters day, and a promoters magazine, The Bridge, was launched. Jos Kruunenberg transformed that magazine in 1954 into a house

organ of the MSCs. With Nico Akerboom, he turned it into an announcement magazine for family members and contacts of the MSCs and FDNSCs. From 1965 it was a joint publication of both congregations. Up to 1962 there was still a separate edition for the zelatrices and zelateurs.

## Promotion Work

The mission work and the day-to-day living of the MSCs did not come cheaply. The congregation tried as far as possible to be self-supporting. Thanks to the brothers that was possible to a large extent. They were the craftsmen, farmers and vegetable growers, cooks, shoemakers and jacks-of-all-trades who both in their own country and in the missions kept the houses and communities running (and frequently built them!). The congregation managed to save considerable costs on the training as well. The instructors were its own fathers, who generally produced the study materials themselves.

As a result the Dutch province was spared high labour costs but it had plenty of other expenses: the construction and maintenance of houses, schools and, in the missions, medical centres; the cost of daily living, the travel of missionaries and the transport of goods, and finally the resources which were necessary in the missions and in the training. It is no wonder that the congregation relied a lot on promotion work. On the one hand it was a tested means of apostolate and preaching, on the other hand it brought in money. Besides generating resources, promotion work had as its goal the recruitment of candidates to become fathers or brothers.

Before 1900 only two Dutch MSCs were engaged in promotion work. One of the fathers was editor of the mission magazine and the almanac, the other had been charged with maintaining correspondence with the outside world. Besides those duties both had other work as well. After 1900 the activities of the congregation and the number of persons who showed interest increased to such an extent that more MSCs got involved in promotion work.

In 1907, Janus van Croonenburg was completely released for it. In 1922, Antoon Vinkesteijn succeeded him as promotion worker. They organised mission evenings and exhibitions and maintained contacts with 'zelateurs' and benefactors. The implementation of the projects was always in the hands of their own confrères, while the promotion worker did the coordination. The mission magazine and the almanac were managed by a separate editorial staff. It was only after 1945 that promotion work would take a different line.

### *Annals*

The Dutch Province produced an enormous quantity of printed matter. Most of it was published by its own staff in its own printing press in Tilburg. An annual almanac and the Annals, the mission magazine of the MSC, brought in much money.

By means of another magazine, Ons Geestelijk Leven (Our Spiritual Life), the Dutch Province left its marks especially in religious circles. The magazine made use of subscribers, but it did not keep a direct link with the promotion work (see p. 134). Such a direct link was, however, present in the printing material for special occasions, which consisted of brochures, jubilee editions, commemorative pictures with religious representations, certificates for 'zelateurs', picture postcards, mission calendars and mission illustrations.

The first issue of the Annalen van Onze Lieve Vrouw van het Heilig Hart (Annals of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart) appeared in March 1883. After De Rozenkrans (The Rosary), a magazine which the Dominicans had started a couple of years earlier, it is the oldest known congregational paper in the Netherlands. The Annals gave the MSCs a face and made the reader familiar with the congregation and its work. The paper forged a close tie between congregation and readers. Initially it was a translation of the French Annales. Much attention was given to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and announcements were made about the international congregation and confraternity.

The Dutch edition acquired an independent character with the arrival of Henri Peeters as chief editor in 1885. At the time the paper had around six thousand subscribers. Peeters steered the magazine more towards domestic matters. Now also secular and political topics got a chance, like the accession to the throne of Queen Wilhelmina or the social questions which occupied the Netherlands around the turn of the century. The Annals at that time had about seven thousand subscribers and had the character of a family paper with a strongly missionary slant. The articles, increasingly diverse with something for everybody's taste, came from the MSCs themselves. The principal part was formed by the letters from the missions, especially from the brothers of English New Guinea and New Pommeren. Addressed mostly to family members and confrères the letters were particularly thrilling and highly readable and were further enlivened by attractive pictorial material. Also articles about orphaned children and slavery had their intended effect on the readers, as shown by the ensuing generous contributions to financially help the missions.

The first volumes of the Annals had been taken care of by different printing presses, and the need for its own printing press was growing. That came about in 1902. From then on the Annals and the Almanac were produced in the basement of the Tilburg Mission House. Thanks to its own presses and its own staff the operational costs decreased and the proceeds increased, which helped the missions. A large number of brothers learned the printing trade here and continued to use it for a long time. Jan Ligtvoet, for example, did so for no less than 34 years.

From 1903, when the Dutch Indies were opened up for the MSCs, the Annals featured mostly its own mission in Dutch New Guinea and the Moluccas. Hein Geurtjens now became the great man behind the Annals. Under Geurtjens the stories of adventures in the missions were given fuller coverage, with attention paid to the customs of the Papuans and to the history of Kei and Tanimbar. After the acceptance of work in the Philippines and Brazil the New Guinea mission had to

45. Brothers in the Printing Office of Tilburg take care of the mailing of the *Annals*, circa 1950.

share the pages with these areas.

Up to 1921 the number of subscribers increased. That year there were 22,800 subscribers. The number dropped a bit afterwards probably under the influence of the establishment of the Belgian province. From 1918 the Annals appeared no longer every two weeks but as a monthly magazine. Most of the attention was focused on the Dutch Indies, New Guinea, the Moluccas, Celebes and Central Java. The Philippines, and certainly Brazil, were far less in the limelight. What played a part here once more was the distinction between 'mission' and 'working area', where the former spoke more to the imagination. Moreover it was assumed that the readers were interested especially in their own Indies.

Because the printing press created noise and needed space, it was moved to a separate building within the compound in 1927. The productions remained limited to their own publications. In the thirties a large format printing press was installed which considerably increased the capacity and would remain in use for thirty years. Nothing of the tested formula of the Annals was altered until the Second World War. A number of MSCs, however, believed that after thirty years or so a revamp was called for. Pieces like 'A Parish Priest in the Mud' or 'Poor Beggars' had become old fashioned. That translated itself also into a drastic fall in the number of subscribers. As early as 1933, the number had decreased to 17,200. In 1941, a low point was reached with 11,775. That year Herman Gall, who in 1939 had taken over as

head of the promotion work and in that capacity also as director of printing, had to suspend the publication by order of the German occupier. The ambitious plans he had developed for the Annals could not be carried out for the time being. The printing office was closed and the space used partly as a refectory.

After the liberation of the south of the country the magazine appeared again in November 1944, but then in small format. The paper shortage resulted in it being published every two months in 1945-1946. Gall had been released for the Una Sancta work (see p. 299), after his stay in a hostage camp, where he had found himself in the company of persons from the Dutch advance guard. The Annals was now entrusted to the direction of Jos Smeets. He turned it into a contemporary look-and -read magazine, with short and spicy contributions, fragments from mission letters, translated folk tales and comic strips. In 1946, the number of subscribers rose to 16,000 and five years later up to 21,000.

In the meantime the editorial staff had a much more difficult job to do. Right after the war the Netherlands had as many as 82 mission magazines. Every order and congregation tried to win readers and to raise funds, which produced magazines of highly varying quality. The consequence was stiff competition, which made it increasingly difficult for the Annals to create a distinct image for itself. This development forced the MSCs to reconsider their position which had gone on unchallenged for a long time. The Annals of 1954 still concentrated on the centenary of the congregation, but opinions differed on how to continue afterwards. Should the magazine remain firmly associated with the MSCs or should it become more of a general mission paper, with contributions about Africa, China, Japan? The 'moderns', who felt that the Annals had to broaden its horizon, won the argument. In 1957, the Annals was given a new name, Rerum Ecclessiae (Ecclesiastical Affairs). The editorial staff explained that change to the readers as follows:

> Nothing is so healthy for the Christian than to open wide his eyes and ears to take in everything that relates to the Church, to the growth of Christ's body in the world to the ends of the earth.

In 1958, a close cooperation came about between Rerum Ecclesiae and Mission, the Flemish magazine of the Jesuits Both contained the same articles, except for the pages of announcements and news about their respective congregation or order.

In the end the new formula did not yield the desired result. The magazine scored hardly any better than the mission magazines that had not changed course. The eightieth anniversary of the Annals - Rerum Ecclesiae in 1966, gave therefore little reason for joy. Ben Koolen had to admit on this jubilee that the market was saturated. There was a lot of dead wood for a rapidly ageing reading public. It could hardly compete against the other media, especially television. In 1969, the curtain fell on Rerum Ecclesiae.

*Almanac*

A popular MSC publication with a large circulation was the Almanac. The first was launched in 1893. The Almanac had as its purpose to instruct and to entertain. Peeters described the book as 'a companionable missionary'. Mission stories, pieces of information and jokes alternated in an attractive design.

In 1913, the circulation reached 55,000, ten years later 75,000, which appeared to have been its peak. Until the 1920s the MSCs had little competition in this area, but when this changed, sales declined steadily. Just as in the case of the Annals the contents did not relate sufficiently to the rapidly changing society. When circulation had decreased to 30,000 in 1952, the Dutch Province decided on a new formula. It had to become an almanac which was aimed especially at children. Youth literature was beginning to emerge as a genre, and the MSC jumped at this opening in the market. In that year, for example, the MSCs produced 'wall newspapers', which aimed at informing young people about the world and mission work. Four hundred and fifty school subscriptions were sold, but it was clear that the zest for it quickly evaporated..

In 1953 the entirely renewed almanac came to be called Jeugdjuweel (Youth Jewel). The editorial staff was particularly ambitious and succeeded in attracting well-known writers and illustrators (Imme Dros, Max Velthuis). The result was a publication of particularly high quality. In total 29 issues saw the light which became popular nationwide. The circulation amounted to tens of thousands, once even to 95,000 copies! The distribution took place not so much by means of individual subscriptions, but mostly through MSCs who visited schools. Brother Joop Kok, for example, went to see schools in Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe and Overijssel over a number of years.

Privately there was considerable debate about the promotion work value of this youth publication. The link with the congregation was not obvious to the reader and there was no way of keeping tabs on readers, because it was not done with subscriptions. Akerboom, charged with the distribution in the province of South-Holland, remembers

> the difficulty of this work: calling on inner-city schools, hoping for a good welcome and understanding from the head of the school who had to be fetched from his class... I limited myself to delivering the book with the necessary brochures and in this way you hoped for a rather satisfactory sale of books..

The costs were no longer equal to the benefits for the congregation. In 1971 Jeugdjuweel was transferred to Malmberg Publications.

In the printing business meanwhile a high degree of professionalism had taken place. Michiel Joosten, who had been in the printing profession himself before he entered the congregation, attracted as director the first employee from the outside to assist the brothers in the large amount of work. In 1957, Frans Kolsters took over the direction from Joosten. In the 1960s Kolsters employed more paid personnel

and brought in printing orders from the outside. Most of the brothers exchanged their work in the printing office for other work. For example, after eleven years of printing press, Gerrit te Wierik left for Rome in 1962 to work in the international scholasticate of the congregation.

From then on the printing office of the Mission House was called 'Heart of Brabant Printing and Publication, Inc'. Problems presented themselves in 1967. Kolsters left the congregation with a great number of clients in his wake. The Dutch Province was now left with employees in danger of becoming unemployed. Bankruptcy of the printing office became inevitable. This led to a take-over by Klijsen Printing, Inc., which remained active up to 2002. The space of the printing office was used subsequently by an editorial staff and the factory hall was converted into work shops for visual artists.

### *Travelling Promotion Work*

After 1945 the promotion work was no longer directed solely from Tilburg, but was set up on a district basis. The Dutch Province hoped in this way to increase its effectiveness. Combinations of functions still continued to exist. Several instructors at Driehuis, for example, combined their teaching with promotion work (See below), and headmaster, Jan van de Geijn, proved to be an excellent fundraiser. His study time in Austria had left him with contacts with the Brenninkmeyer family who had set up different ecclesiastical foundations ('Liberalitas', 'Benevolentia'). Van de Geijn returned 'after a short visit' with 50,000 guilders for Mission House Driehuis.

The work directed to the outside was entrusted to someone who had no other tasks. A 'travelling promotion worker' got the whole of the Netherlands as work area. The first who fulfilled this function was Kees van Weerdenburg. In 1949 he was succeeded by Adrie Dijkzeul, who had earlier worked in the Una Sancta (see p. 317). Following Van Weerdenburg, Dijkzeul organised film shows for youth and for adults in the entire country. He also entered into a fruitful cooperation with Kees Meuwese. Meuwese had delivered a well-attended lecture in Amsterdam about his journeys in New Guinea, in particular the discovery of the Queen Juliana River (see p. 207). Dijkzeul asked him to deliver the same lecture in The Hague and Rotterdam. The promotion worker used the connections he still had from his Una Sancta days and gave large-scale publicity to the lectures. The success was overwhelming, whereupon Dijkzeul and Meuwese started a tour throughout the country in January 1950. Everywhere they met an enthusiastic and varied public, whose attention was drawn, after the lecture, to a collection box at the back of the room. Invariably there were one hundred guilder notes among the many small coins. Some years later Akerboom started a second and also successful tour with Meuwese. The promotion workers gave the money from Meuwese's lectures to the mission procurator, Tjot Neijens, because it was after all intended for New Guinea. Income from other activities was transferred to the provincial bursar.

Another lucrative initiative of Dijkzeul was the so-called rebus campaign. The idea originated from two Arnhem residents - the accountant Van der Lelie and the publicity photographer Van Onna. For the rebuilding of the Church of St Lawrence in Arnhem they had conducted an advertisement campaign, in which people could win prizes by solving a rebus. Dijkzeul managed to persuade the provincial to start such a campaign with the two inhabitants of Arnhem, the profit of which would go to New Guinea. It yielded the MSC no less than 60,000 guilders. Dijkzeul was playing for high stakes, because if the campaign had been a failure, the Dutch Province would have suffered a loss of 80,000 guilders! Assuming that the provincial would never agree to run such a risk, he decided to keep him in the dark. Another campaign with Van der Lelie and Van Onna produced around 35,000 guilders.

*Exhibits*

A regular activity of the promotion work was taking part in mission exhibitions, which were held annually in many cities and towns. They bore the character of markets in which missionary orders and congregations gave information about their work in distant regions. A lot of brochures and illustrated leaflets were exchanged there, and at one time Dijkzeul wanted to supply the MSC stand with a 'real' professional newspaper. In doing so he wanted to breach the preponderance of New Guinea and do justice also to Brazil, the Philippines and the other work areas in Indonesia. At the same time he aspired to bring economic and cultural reports alongside Church news. His colleagues doubted the efficacy of such a publication and agreed hesitantly. 'News reports' were gathered from the mission areas and a journalist was enlisted to make them suitable for the newspaper. The design and production of the newspaper came again into the hands of the Arnhem duo.

Stormenderhand (Taken by Storm) was printed at the printing presses of the Brabant Newspaper in Eindhoven and had a circulation of 500,000. Dijkzeul was severely criticised for the publication. At the heading of the newspaper were printed the names of the Arnhem duo and the journalist, while the Congregation was only mentioned as publisher on a following page. Meanwhile the director of the Pontifical Mission Society in The Hague had also expressed his concern about the newspaper for only stimulating further competition in the field of mission publicity.

With his energetic approach and plans Dijkzeul had distanced himself from his fellow promotion workers. Just like them he thought that he was in danger of becoming more a businessman than an MSC. He was convinced that the promotion work had to be taken over by specialists from outside the congregation. According to him the modern era asked for professional personnel instead of just MSCs. Because of that conviction Dijkzeul was glad to receive an appointment in 1952 as a catechetics teacher, which was more in line with his priesthood.

Harrie Smeets, whose brother, Jos, looked after the editing of the Annals, had a similar experience. He studied modern media and plunged into the world of design,

communication and publicity. Smeets had been, as it were, predestined to become a promotion worker

> because I could draw, paint, write and because theology had taught me that God's will was efficacious and because God wanted all people be happy, I concluded that therefore it was due to a wrong approach on the side of the Church servants if the conversion of the world did not succeed.

He made use of the possibilities which the promotion work offered in abundance, and the congregation allowed him to do so. The down side of this freedom was that gradually some distance appeared between him and his confrères. When Smeets was given the commission of great honour to design a part of the Vatican stand for the expo in Brussels (1958), he encountered hardly any interest in his own circle. After the expo Smeets gladly accepted the offer of the provincial superior to go to Senegal.

*Mission Sewing Circles*

In 1952, Nico Akerboom became involved in the promotion work, with Driehuis as his base. He too became a travelling promotion worker with the task to call on the benefactors and to visit and motivate the promotion workers. Whenever volunteers dropped out Akerboom had to find new ones.

> It was tough work. Sometimes for a few successive days you set out to the north of North-Holland and elsewhere. You had to stay at the homes of family members of missionaries, and you had to rely on them for your meals too. You felt like a beggar. In the parishes you had to try to avoid contact with the parish priest and his assistants, because sometimes they saw your presence as a veiled recruitment of boys for the Mission House.

In 1957, Akerboom was appointed to Tilburg, where he succeeded Piet Gommeren as head of promotion work. In that capacity he was among other things moderator of the mission sewing circle. This had been set up as early as 1906 giving rise to mission sewing circles elsewhere in the country also at the instigation of the MSCs. The one in Tilburg remained the largest and the most active. Their products provided for a great need. Father Van den Bergh sent the women a letter of thanks in 1911:

> I will not allow the dresses to transform my Keiese into affected and ostentatious girls. The new Christians of the Indies do have an inclination to show off. Those not lacking clothes, or being able to earn them by working, will not get your charitable gifts either. It is for a completely different purpose. It happened, thank God, more than once, that heathen parents, after waiting a long time, finally wanted to put their child or children at the disposal of the parish priest, but with the explicit demand that Sir has then to take care of the clothes of the little one. And then you see, such a supply of made clothes comes in, oh, so very handy. Another time, after a long delay, someone says: 'Now I do want to come, but I have nothing to wear,' and then if one has a trousers or dress available, one gives that to him or her, and one hauls the favoured one into the church.

From 1924 the women specialised in making altar cloths and church vestments, because more chapels and secondary stations were being added. The work was exhibited every year in the Mission House or in other suitable buildings. In 1949, the exhibitions were expanded to include bazaars for the first time. Attractive titles like 'Philip's Wonder Garden' and 'Golden Hands for Tropical Countries' had to draw in the public who came in great numbers. The Tilburg bazaars brought in thousands of guilders every year. In 1954 it was decided to charge entrance fees for the 7,500 visitors. In 1956 the Tilburg mission sewing circle received a papal congratulatory telegram in honour of its golden jubilee.

Until then the women had always carried out their activities collectively in groups, but from 1957 more and more mention is made of home workers. The Tilburg bazaars came to an end in 1970 because of shortage of space in the Mission House, and two years later the exhibitions stopped. The costs were no longer offset by the benefits. The mission sewing circle did not come to an end, but it vanished out of sight.

*Recruitment*

The promotion office was also used to recruit brothers and fathers. For a long time the growth of the Dutch Province passed off almost as a matter of course, but after the Second World War a slow but sure drop became evident in the number of applications. The MSCs tried to do something about it by means of recruitment leaflets like With Might and Main (1949), Letter of a Missionary (1950) and If You Dare... (1952). Also the medium of film was used. Towards the end of the forties the promotion workers travelled around with The Perpetual Renewal. The film started with the burial of a missionary, followed by a flashback on how as a boy of twelve he had gone to the Mission House and subsequently became a missionary. Dijkzeul found the 'Perpetual Destruction', as he jokingly called the film, too melodramatic and showed it very reluctantly. He expected much more to come from direct contacts with schoolboys by missionaries like Meuwese.

To tackle the problem of recruitment the Dutch Province set up a recruitment commission. The latter enquired at the apostolic schools in 1953 about the reasons for the pupils' choice of the MSCs. 'To become a missionary' was the answer of two -thirds of the pupils both in Driehuis and in Tilburg. The commission wondered in a rhetorical question:

> Is it not so that perhaps many boys leave because their original mission ideal is not being nurtured and along with this their priestly vocation also gets lost?

In addition the milieus from which the boys had been recruited were a source of concern to the commission. One-third of the Driehuis students had entered through a family member (MSC or FDNSC) and in Tilburg it was true for more than a quarter. Apart from that the boys had come to the MSC mostly through other personal ties. This 'inbreeding' alarmed the commission: 'It means a decline in

our appeal to the outside'. Not even eight percent had come by way of the official promotion work: printed matter, contact with one of the promotion workers or – relatively the biggest number – through a lecture of Meuwese.

The promotion workers were dissatisfied about the recruitment quality of the MSC publications. The Annals might have been robustly improved since the Second World War both artistically and as regards content, but could it still be called a true MSC magazine? Also Jeugdjuweel (The Jewel of Youth) had a rather neutral character. On this issue the publicity and promotion work departments were clearly opposed to each other. The latter used the drop in the number of Annals subscribers, which had reached an all time low in 1958, as a weapon. Did this fact not entitle those who commissioned the magazine to go as far as to prescribe a new direction to the editorial team?

Above all, according to the recruitment commission, something was lacking in the attitude of their confrères. There was insufficient awareness of the need for recruitment work and there was hardly any willingness to make an effort. Missionaries on leave in the Netherlands could seldom be persuaded to visit schools and give lectures. Also the MSCs working in the country did not like to be involved in 'press -ganging' during their holiday or spare time. The commission asked provincial De Gier in vain to make recruitment the spearhead of his administration, even by only devoting a special newsletter to it, because 'his authority has much more weight than that of our humble commission?'

Such a newsletter never materialised. 'De Gier was a good administrator overall, but more of a professor,' according to Van de Geijn, a former MSC. At that time Van de Geijn managed the transition of the apostolic school in Driehuis to Gymnasium Paulinum (See p. 82). In 1959, he became rector of the new foundation in which the White Fathers also participated.

> I found that the collaboration with the White Fathers showed indeed evidence of vision as far as De Gier was concerned. Whereas quite a few thought it a flimsy affair, he saw it on the other hand as a form of collaboration with fellow institutes which was valuable indeed. De Gier also brought regularly the club of all [major] superiors together, of which he was the president for a long time.

The congregations that were losing ground decided to join forces. In 1961, Van de Geijn noticed that his school had many more candidates through the White Fathers than through his own congregation. In the couple of years that they were in Santpoort they had managed to become much more widely known in North Holland than the MSCs after thirty years in Driehuis. There were 35 to 45 candidates for the White Fathers and only 14 for the MSCs. The rector urgently advised his congregation to change course, for which he made some suggestions in a report. Being himself the grandson of a female promotion worker he was only too pleased to make his own contribution to the recruitment.

At that time the MSC promotion work in North and South Holland was mostly in the hands of Fathers Janssen and Freriks. Besides his teaching task at Gymnasi-

um Paulinum Albert Janssen went around visiting schools and selling the Jeugdjuweel. Sometimes he had an opportunity to tell something about the missions and to sound the boys out if they felt a call to the priesthood. Ton Freriks, teacher of English in Driehuis, subsequently paid a visit to the boys who had submitted their names. He did this in his capacity as superior of the boarding school, not as a teacher of the school (just as Janssen was 'the Jeugdjuweel Father' to the outside world).

Bishops and parish priests objected to the method of operation of the MSCs in which parents felt sometimes taken by surprise. The fathers themselves, including Van de Geijn, were not happy either with the procedure, but they considered it as pointless to wait for an invitation from the parents. Only the White Fathers could afford that method of operation, thanks to their strong public relations. Their recruitment was mostly in the hands of Father Hensen, who, according to Van de Geijn, had a knack of being able to relate with anyone, from high to low in rank, and he had managed to establish close relationships with the scouting world. Through his efforts they introduced the badge 'missiologue', and he took it on himself to give the instructions for it. In this way Hensen maintained contacts with scouting groups in the whole country, which was supported by the White Fathers who let the scouts camp in the woodland area of their garden. Also the White Fathers adopted an open attitude to recruitment by organising weekends for secondary school boys and retreats and workshops for all kinds of Catholic organisations.

Unlike the MSCs, all fathers and brothers of the White Fathers were involved in promotion efforts. During vacation time every father was obliged to pay a number of visits, while the brothers had to be always ready to handle large numbers of visitors. 'In our congregation,' said Van de Geijn, 'one has always to reckon very seriously with the fact - and perhaps rightly so - that the brothers are already very busy with their work for our boys.' Finally, the White Fathers managed to make skilful use of their choir, 'which is not as good as ours', to provide a musical touch to mission evenings and other meetings in the whole country. 'Let our choir make a tour around North Holland and send along a good missionary speaker,' advised the rector in 1961.

Recruiting did not apparently suit the MSCs very well but it was a detail in a development which proved to be irreversible. In the end no congregation or order could withstand the spirit of the times. Growth had come to a stand-still and there was no more room for the congregation to propagate. Keeping in mind the 'Ama nesciri' motto of Thomas à Kempis, the congregation had hardly sought its own fame. All the more it had asked attention for the mission work and in this it had succeeded.

The mission interests were increasingly looked after by national organisations which replaced particular promotion offices. The Dutch MSC Province experienced a decline in the demand for help with the gaining of independence of the foreign areas, but also because there were more organisations to which an appeal could be

made - Memisa, People in Need, the Lenten Campaign, Miva, Cebemo, etc. In the seventies the promotion work of the MSCs began to consist more and more of office work and took the specific form of letter campaigns. The administration and mailing which it involved were looked after by Brothers Toon van Loon and Sjaak Veken.

## Mission Procurement Office

A department which was related to the promotion work was the mission procurement office. In fact the mission procurement office functioned as an intermediary between the mission and the promotion work. The supplies, which often had been collected thanks to promotion work, reached their distant destinations thanks to this department.

### *Activities*

It was not until 1945 that the MSCs set up a mission procurement office in the Netherlands. Nico Verhoeven was appointed director and Brother Willem van Nieuwenhuizen was charged with the shipping. Before that, however, goods had already been sent to the missions in abundance. The Annals of 1908 kept the readers informed about the departures of named missionaries and where to hand in things they could possibly take with them. Geurtjens gave a few hints to those who wanted to gladden the mission with goods. The ladies of the mission sewing circle needed to take into account that heavily lined chasubles were unsuitable by reason of the tropical heat. And why should the church linen for the mission have to be as plain as possible? On the contrary embroidery was welcome, because the liturgy would gain thus in solemnity. Tools always came in handy, and copperware might have gone out of fashion in the Netherlands, but, according to Geurtjens, it would still do well in the missions. Finally he asked the generous benefactors not to forget the missionary himself: books including illustrated ones, cigars (preferably in cans) and meat products, provided they were thoroughly smoked and packed in tin boxes, filled up with buckwheat bran - all were very welcome.

During periods of leave in the Netherlands the missionaries were very busy themselves in collecting what they wanted. Once the desired things had been collected and been brought together in the Mission House, the packing activities began. Around 1910 the direction and administration of supply and demand were in the hands of Fr Bernard Visser. The brothers who looked after the shipping at that time were not mentioned by name. If it was possible to get hold of the goods overseas, that was to be preferred. It saved bother and extra costs in the Netherlands. The provincial bursar had only to ensure that the money went to the right address. The supply of the New Guinea mission was done as far as possible from Sydney, a job Wemmers was put in charge of for the period 1915-1923. But not everything was

available there. Moreover the transfer of money was increasingly hampered by currency regulations. With the increase in demand for European (especially industrial) products after the Second World War, it was essential to operate a more efficient method of export.

Up to 1965, items for shipping had been accommodated in the Mission House, under the chapel and afterwards in a special shed in the garden. The office was the domain of the procurator. The brother in charge of shipping (there were two from 1954) was to be found mostly in the carpentry shop, the packing room or the storage room. Shipping was an enormous job. In the Netherlands one was bound by legislation and the brothers had to take into account also the way of handling and transport outside the home country. The export of the goods was preceded by copious paperwork. Sometimes import prohibitions could be skirted around skilfully by describing goods differently. In Merauke, for example, an import ban applied to clothing and cotton, both wanted articles. Cotton waste (used for machines amongst other things) and clothing (for the population) were then stuffed as filling material in the crates under the pretext of protecting the other goods.

The packing activities required careful planning. In order to keep the goods seaproof and to protect them against theft the packing material had to be extremely sound. Wood for crates, nails and strip iron were used in large quantities. The purchase of these not only cost much money but because of their volume and weight such packing materials made freight more expensive. Sea freight was calculated by volume, and the smaller the crates the bigger the total volume in packing. Because in Merauke the processing of freight was done manually, people there asked for crates of a hundred kilos at the most. Light wood, however, broke easily. Brother Antoon Schreuder, who took care of the shipping from 1952, sometimes went along 'incognito' to see how people handled a consignment. That happened, it turned out, with little gentleness and the packers had to ensure while packing that goods could be tipped over without danger.

Because of the increase in work Schreuder got help in 1954 in the person of Janus Horvers who came to work in the carpentry shop. When the work load was heavy, Frans Kuijpers helped out too, but it often happened that as many as seven or eight men had to be called in. Schreuder continued to look after the shipping for twenty-five years up to 1977.

### *Goods*

What kind of supplies went to Merauke in the period 1965-1975? Large quantities of cement, in consignments of about twenty thousand kilos at a time. Cement was ordered directly from a factory in Germany and subsequently loaded onto a ship in Hamburg. Other construction materials were eternite (asbestos cement) slates, of which over those years the mission wanted to acquire ten thousand pieces. These came from Belgium and were packed in small, but heavy crates. In Merauke wood was in abundant supply, but for tables, school desks and the like there was a de-

46. Shipping of the Billy boat to Merauke, January 20, 1950. The boat had been built in the Netherlands as well.

mand for formica plates. The fragility and the heavy specific gravity of these plates required extra heavy and sturdy packing. Then there were the hundreds of hardboard plates, much less breakable but nevertheless heavy. A lot of bolts, packs of plywood, thousands of eternite corrugated boards and bundles of water pipes found their way to the mission, as well as cans of paint and stain, and brushes.

As for food, highly nutritious and non-perishable hard biscuits of wheat flour were shipped and furthermore, of course, thousands of cans of all kinds of foodstuffs. Ten thousand fish hooks, fertilizers and seeds were despatched. Bandages of all types and sizes, an examination table and other medical aids were sent. Also, means of transport were much in demand such as bicycles, scooters, motorcycles, and in 1951, even a boat and two tractors. That year 102,377 kilos of goods were sent to the missions. The money that made this possible came mostly from contributions of the pontifical mission societies and from gifts.

Remarkable consignments were a threshing machine and a complete brass band outfit for the Philippines, which the parish of Overhoven supplied. (see p. 330) Also for New Guinea the shipping department had an interesting job. During his holiday Brother Wim van Loendersloot laid his hands on a complete forge. The challenge of how to pack it was up to Schreuder and his partner. What proved to be most difficult were the iron lathes weighing more than three thousand kilos and two

pillar drills two metres in length. Nevertheless the two of them succeeded in crating the forge equipment in a few hours. During the unloading of the boat in Merauke the crate containing the lathe broke loose from the hoists. To the surprise of Van Loendersloot, who saw this happen from the wharf, the crate turned out to be still intact. Only a considerable hole had been made in the ship's deck.

A great hunger existed for books and educational aids. Most of them went to Celebes, where the seminary was located, but also Merauke was a frequent destination. Printed in the press at the Mission House the books had to be sent out in tens of thousands at the same time. Because Indonesia had declared an import ban on printed matter from the Netherlands, the normal sea transport from Rotterdam was out of the question. For this reason, the brothers set off from the printing press with the whole cargo, seven lorries full, to Turnhout, Belgium, where they packed everything in parcels of five kilos to be sent from Belgium with Belgian postage.

In 1965 a boat, owned by the MSC itself, left the port of Rotterdam, loaded with forty tons of goods for Ambon. In response to complaints about the difficult sea transport around Ambon, Gerard de Goede had been involved for many years in the construction of the 'Bakti'. 'It became an expensive boat,' according to Akerboom, 'because of its entirely unique design.' The boat sailed to Surabaya under a hired crew, from whom Father Deuling learned the trade of master mariner while on the way. Deuling became the helmsman of the Bakti, whose capacity was later enlarged to 120 tons. In 1979, the boat was sold, because the diocese could no longer afford the annual operational deficit.

Shipping (Brothers):

Willem Nieuwenhuizen 1945-48
Mies Ariëns 1948-50
Bram Werkhoven 1950-52
Antoon Schreuder 1952-77
René de Roos 1977-97
Antoon van Lith 1997-

Procurators (Fathers, except Smits):

Nico Verhoeven 1945-47
Dirk Kouw 1947-49
Tjot Neijens 1949-61
Jan de Jong 1961-68
Tjot Neijens 1968-81
Kees Hendriks 1981-2000
Arnold Smits 2000-2003
Piet van Mensvoort 2003-

CHAPTER 9

# Mission in the Netherlands

The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were primarily associated with far away countries. Most of the boys who came to the MSCs had such a vision of the future in mind. The activities in the Netherlands were, however, full of mission as well. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century the fathers in Arnhem refused to let themselves be restrained and confined to the religious house and their own institute. This led to tensions with the diocesan priests, but particular activities flowed from this. Out of Arnhem the Una Sancta work developed, which engaged in the apostolate among people of a different persuasion and the deepening of faith among Catholics. In the Netherlands the MSCs also engaged a great deal in parish work. The way in which they went about it was well exemplified by three rectories which were entrusted to the MSCs and in which the pastoral work had to be built from the ground up.

## Arnhem

The establishment in Arnhem was related to that of the MSC German Province in 1897. Before that Germany belonged to the Northern Province, which had three training houses: in Tilburg, Antwerp and Salzburg. The latter house fell away at the separation of Germany, while the Antwerp establishment was filled to capacity. In November 1898, the Northern Province decided to look for a third location for its training, preferably in the Netherlands and north of the rivers (running through the middle of the country) so that a new area would be opened up. With the assistance of well-known Catholics, Dr H. Poels and Dr W. Nolens, a request was made to the archbishop of Utrecht, Msgr H. van de Wetering.

The bishop granted permission to establish the novitiate and house of philosophy in Arnhem, but attached at least two explicit conditions to it: the house was not allowed to have a public church or chapel and without his permission the fathers could not go on a begging trip in the diocese. The work of the propagandists remained outside this stipulation. The clear prohibition not to meddle with ordinary pastoral work worried the general administration of the congregation. 'Is there any hope that in due course you can open a college or free school and is the house

47. Mission House on the Velperweg in Arnhem.

that you want to buy suited for that?' wrote general superior Meyer to the provincial Offermans.

> We must look at the future. It looks as if within a relatively short time you will have an abundance of priests. We do not have enough work for them, neither in the country itself nor in the missions. It seems necessary for us to look for work in teaching and education.

Until then not a single order or congregation had managed to establish itself in Arnhem. The seculars, who did not want to lose their control over the channels of information and sources of income, found it quite annoying that the Dominicans were in neighbouring Huissen (since 1858). Apparently a training house of missionary fathers was taken as less of a threat. Nevertheless, Offermans closed the deal incognito wearing civilian clothing. It was decided to buy two mansions located next to each other at the Velperweg. The largest room was furnished as a chapel, the hay attic as a dormitory, the carriage garage as a refectory and accommodation for Father Director, while the horse stable of 'Villa Hippica' was converted into the residence of the scholastics and the study hall. All in all the deal had cost more than eighty thousand guilders.

After an inspection by the diocese Offermans blessed the chapel on July 12, 1899, where he celebrated Mass the following day. The very first occupants were brothers Johan de Cocq, Volkert Deen, Piet van Moorsel and Dries Clement. They had to make the house ready for about thirty people who presented themselves on

August 25, 1899: twelve postulants who would have their investiture in September and eighteen novices who for the most part would start with philosophy in September. Father Bertus Okhuijzen was superior and novice master. His assistant, Mathieu Nijsters, taught in the house of philosophy, which was under the direction of Offermans. The other professors of philosophy were Antoon de Jong, Henry van Riel (also bursar) and Pierre Vullings, who had studied in Rome and had been ordained priest there in 1896. Vullings had subsequently become the main writer for the Annals and the Almanac in Tilburg, and continued his collaboration on both magazines from Arnhem.

### *Jurisdictional Problems*

As early as 1904 the provincial administration received the first signals from Arnhem that thought had to be given to a new accommodation because it was beginning to get crowded for the approximately fifty occupants. They thought of the dioceses of Haarlem and Breda, where the congregation might perhaps be subject to fewer restrictions and possibly could set up a public chapel. For the first two years Msgr van de Wetering had granted 'jurisdiction in the most extensive way', but that changed suddenly in August 1901. The MSC superior requested renewal of the assistance of father Brocken in Velp, but was informed that the latter had to submit himself to the general examination of the curates for jurisdiction in the entire archdiocese. Brocken did not let himself be deterred and was prepared to do that, but he was not admitted because the bishop gave him the jurisdiction 'intra conventum de Arnhem' (within the religious house of Arnhem). Ten years later Brocken had become provincial superior and by letter he reminded Van de Wetering of this collision. 'Since that time we have had persistent difficulties concerning this jurisdiction, which was even curtailed,' wrote Brocken in 1912. The assistance in Velp was strictly bound to a particular person, place and time. For the smallest exception jurisdiction had to be requested. In 1906, superior Geerts made a complaint to the provincial about the bad relations with the bishop:

> According to our constitutions we have an active life and that is denied to us because we are religious. The bishop must have particular reasons against us personally to prohibit us to live according to our constitutions. It is, whatever one may pretend, a persecution of us as religious.

In fairness Geerts' predecessor, Vullings, had acted rather markedly in 1905 by making ten fathers available to teach catechism for two to three hours per week. This went down the wrong way with the seculars who saw it as an unwanted intervention in their apostolate. It was not like Vullings at all to stay within the walls of the religious house. Just like his model, Henri Peeters (see p. 105), he was assertive and in no time he made himself a well-known figure in Arnhem. His oratorical powers took him also to other places where he was invited to give lectures. It gained him the friendship of the well-known publicist, Jos van Wel, in Helmond.

In Arnhem, Vullings was counted among the critical, well-educated and mainly young Catholics of the so-called Klarenbeek Club who met regularly in the Klarenbeek Hotel near the MSC house in the years 1899-1908. Vullings, the thinker and fighter, found kindred spirits in Doctor J. van Gorkom, Baron Van Wijnbergen, the notary candidate, H. van Dalsum, and the curate H. Van der Waarden. The father developed political aspirations and, encouraged by Van Wel among others, even stood for the Lower House.

This went too far for his congregation. Father general Lanctin wrote to Okhuijzen (then still Vullings' superior) telling him that it was indeed flattering that so much trust had been put in Vullings - and through him in the congregation - but that the general administration was unanimously of the opinion that the task of a politician could not be combined with the life and motto of a religious. Vullings backed down and decided to withdraw his candidacy. He was a handful for his superior who admired his enthusiasm but had difficulty in guiding him. Okhuijzen wrote in 1905 that he was glad that his term of six years was almost finished. What follows was his appointment as provincial superior, and Vullings was made superior in Arnhem.

### *Slander*

Both appointments testify to the confidence that the congregation had in these men. Perhaps it hoped to protect Vullings against himself by making him superior - a task which bound him more expressly to the religious community and entailed responsibilities regarding his confrères. In the outside world he had made friends but also enemies. The latter carried out a veritable smear campaign against him. He was blamed for an overly intimate contact with a young woman who had asked for his help. The woman herself had given rise to the rumour. It was only five years later, when as far as Arnhem was concerned Vullings had long gone, that she recanted her story and, full of remorse, wrote that she had made it all up at the time. In 1906, however, Vullings' position had become untenable. He was replaced as superior by Willem Geerts and sent to Rome, far away, but also to a place which could indicate to the outside world another appointment and even a promotion - a well-tried ploy, in the hope that with the passage of time the rumours would die down as long as the person involved no longer showed up.

Vullings found himself in great difficulties because his confrères were uncertain what to think of the allegations. 'Would that I could cry my heart out with you for an hour some day! I am absolutely, absolutely innocent,' he wrote from Rome to a friend in Tilburg. In Rome people considered entrusting him with the leadership of a new foundation of the congregation in America, but on being asked, Okhuijzen informed Meyer that Vullings was not practical enough and did not seem cut out for being superior, entirely apart from the question of guilt. Whereas Vullings wanted to proclaim his innocence from the rooftops, the congregation imposed absolute silence on him until the whole matter died down. For the reputation of the

congregation this was undoubtedly the best solution, but Vullings was afraid that he would go crazy if he had to stay on the sideline. A sad odyssey followed. After a short stay in Rome and in America he was moved to Hiltrup on October 25, 1906, and subsequently to Thuin. The superior there, Piperon, was very sympathetic towards him and the old father requested Meyer and Okhuijzen to be more accommodating to their confrère. Thuin was struggling in 1908 with a shortage of space and as a consequence Vullings moved in temporarily with his relatives in Helmond.

All that time Vullings had stuck to the promise to avoid publicity. For years he had refused invitations to give lectures. At last, in 1910, his superiors considered that the time was ripe to give him a place in Borgerhout. Quite soon Vullings took on the Belgian nationality and felt as reborn. Immediately he threw himself into the work. Among other things he set up Abstinentia, the association of priests in Louvain. When at last in 1911 the letter arrived in which his alleged girlfriend exonerated him of guilt, Vullings insisted that provincial Brocken read it: 'You yourself have played a role in the measures which were taken to deprive me of honour and everything.'

During the First World War Vullings worked as a chaplain to Belgian refugees in Zeeland and afterwards he became one of the pioneers of the temperance society (Sobrietas) in Borgerhout. His confrère Willem Arts worked in Arnhem also as a chaplain and likewise got involved with Sobrietas. Until his death in 1942 Vullings remained a very active and appreciated member of the Belgian province.

### *Conflict with Diocesans*

In the end the question of Vullings had been resolved, but that was not the case regarding the problems with Msgr Van de Wetering. For years the MSCs considered moving the novitiate to the diocese of Breda or Haarlem. The two villas along the Velperweg would then be sold and the scholasticate housed in a more practical accommodation a bit further along the road. While Brocken and Vuijsters were looking for a place for a new establishment in the diocese of Haarlem, Muijsers informed the archdiocese that the congregation was on the look-out for another location for the house in Arnhem, preferably with a public chapel. Anticipating that the new accommodation of the house of philosophy could be ready ahead of the novitiate and that the MSCs would thus have temporarily two establishments in Arnhem, Van de Wetering let it be known: 'Under no circumstance do we allow the congregation, not even for a couple of years, to have a house simultaneously in two places in our archdiocese'. Moreover, during the construction of the new building the bishop reminded the congregation once more of the conditions under which the foundation of a house of studies had been accepted in 1899. In other words, these conditions were still in force.

On the corner of the old Velperweg (no. 96) an area of one hectare was purchased in November 1911 with Villa Plattenburg on it. The MSCs engaged Fr. de Beer from Tilburg as architect for the construction. At the end of November 1912, the

new scholasticate was ready for use and it served as such without interruption until August 1942. The MSCs left the Arnhem Mission House as late as 1970.

While in the summer of 1912 the construction was in full swing, the rector of the sanatorium, Insula Dei, wanted the MSC, Albert Feijen, to replace him during the holiday season. The bishop did not give his permission. In that same month Father Wemmers too was refused by the bishop. As of then Wemmers was novice master and about to leave for the Philippines later in the year. He had asked Msgr Van de Wetering if he could hear the confessions in the Arnhem house of all the faithful who asked for it. In an angry reaction to the refusal Wemmers sneered that he had no plan to 'hear confessions while travelling through the archdiocese'. He referred to his age and service record. Wemmers, then 42 years old, had been already provincial superior (1902-05) and general assistant (1905-11). Withholding jurisdiction 'is like stripping me of my competence ... in my entire priestly career I have never been treated in this way'.

Msgr. Van de Wetering answered by return of post. His objection concerned not the person of Wemmers, but the Arnhem Mission House. He referred to his permission in 1899 for its establishment under conditions:

> And how have the fathers shown their gratitude for this favour? By causing me all kinds of trouble almost from the beginning. Indeed I received constantly and I still receive complaints from the parish priests of Arnhem that the fathers directly or indirectly draw their parishioners to the chapel of the mission house, which certainly is not become less now that a much more spacious chapel is being built in the new mission house close to the street. At the moment begging is again being done in the archdiocese by a number of female propagandists for the construction of a new mission house with a chapel in Arnhem without asking for my permission. If one experiences such from them, who according to the assurance of the general superior of your congregation are 'les plus obéissants, les plus respectueux et les plus dévoués de mes enfants' (the most obedient, the most respectful and the most devoted of my children), then it is no surprise that the relationship does not become any more pleasant.

The bishop understood nothing of Wemmers' fuss about the refused jurisdiction, 'for quite the simple reason that I do not understand why the outside world knows or has to know that you are in the mission house in Arnhem for a visitation or for giving a spiritual exercise'.

One of the complaining parish priests to whom the bishop alluded, was J. Bos of the the parish of Sint Jan (St John) in Arnhem. In the neighbourhood of Plattenburg where the new mission house was to be built Bos had prohibited people to buy picture cards from the propagandists. He himself had confiscated the picture cards from a child who knocked at his door. Bos formally requested the MSC superior, Rateland, 'to stop the collection of little contributions', and not to allow anyone from outside their own religious community to attend Sunday Mass. As a result of these complaints the bishop, the dean and the parish priest had even paid a visit incognito to the new house under construction. They wanted to see if a door to the new chapel was being made on the street side.

For Brocken this went too far. On August 9, 1912, he sent two fiery letters, one of them to parish priest Bos. 'Having been informed that for some time you attack the honour and good name of our congregation, I request you urgently to take back those words.' The provincial threatened to file a complaint for defamation against him with the ecclesiastical court. A second, long letter went to Msgr Van de Wetering. Why was the latter expressing complaints only now for the first time in thirteen years if they had been with him for so long? The bishop had clearly never visited the old chapel, according to Brocken, because he would have known then for sure that there was much too little space to accommodate people. In the new house there was no door from the street and there were no additional seats in the chapel, only a larger sanctuary for the five altars (formerly three). As far as the begging by the female propagandists was concerned, that was the consequence of an appeal in the Annals of June 18, 1912, 'to ask for small offerings of at least ten cents for our new Mission House in Arnhem'. The propagandists worked throughout the entire country, so why not in the archdiocese? The rules of establishment had only prohibited the fathers to ask for alms as 'mendicants'. Brocken decided:

> Although our congregation has been approved by Rome not exclusively for the missions, but also for all other priestly services in these regions, Your Serene Highness has little by little made it impossible for us to exercise a single priestly service outside our own religious community.

The same bishop had, nota bene, said to Offermans at the arrival of the MSCs 'that the clergy of St John would have no reason any more to say two Masses on Sundays!'

*About-face*

A month passed by without Brocken receiving any reply to his particularly straight letter. Nevertheless his letter did seem to have created quite a stir to the advantage of the MSCs. Brocken ended a subsequent letter to Utrecht (about another question) with the request to grant the fathers in Arnhem jurisdiction for the entire archdiocese, just as it was at the beginning of the foundation. Two days later the vicar general, H. Brouwer, wrote 'that after an investigation it has become clear to us that the complaints brought against the fathers of your Mission House in Arnhem had been exaggerated'. The requested jurisdiction was granted, but with the comment in the margin that one trusted that 'not too liberal a use' would be made of it to prevent any new complaints. On Sundays and feast-days the MSCs were allowed to admit to Mass in their chapel only parishioners who could present a written permission from their parish priest. One Sunday morning parish priest Bos was even posted near the chapel to note down the names of the visitors from outside which he passed on to the archbishop. Eleven of the fifteen guests he noted were residents of the neighbouring sanatorium.

After the conciliatory answer of the vicar general Brocken informed Bos that he

no longer saw need for legal proceedings. He left it now to his 'priestly conscience to make up for what happened as well as to give back some picture cards, which Your Very Reverence has taken away from a young propagandist'. For his part Bos settled the matter by 'May our words and actions always be in aedificationem and never in destructionem [constructive and not destructive].'

Slowly but surely both parties started to soften towards each other. From the beginning the fathers in Arnhem had encountered suspicion and mistrust from the diocesan clergy. As soon as the radius of action of the MSCs went beyond their own group, the parish priests informed the bishop. Vullings and his extended network constituted proof to them that the congregation went its own unbridled way in Arnhem and surroundings. Once Vullings had been removed the affair appeared to have been settled to the advantage of the diocesans for the time being. The construction of the new building caused the conflict to flare up again, but behind the scenes dignitaries (among them Baron Van Wijnbergen of the Klarenbeek club) took up the cudgels for the MSCs. To a large extent it was due to their mediation that Msgr Van de Wetering modified the complaints in the end.

In spite of the opposition the MSC establishment had become a centre of more than local renown and the other camp gradually reconciled itself to that but it was not until 1959 that the monopoly of the seculars on parochial ministry was finally breached. In that year the parish of St Martin (Martinus) was assigned to the MSCs, with Dirk Kouw as first parish priest. Long before that the difficult relationship with the archdiocese had been resolved and if anything the situation was quite the opposite. The archdiocese had extended full cooperation to plans to settle in Raalte and then to the establishment of the philosophy house in the Nijenhuis castle at Heino, which, in 1952, was moved to Brummen. Also the extension of the Una Sancta work to Hilversum and Apeldoorn had received the approval of the diocese. Notably under Cardinal Alfrink, continuous requests were made to the congregation to fill up places in the archdiocese that had become vacant.

In fact quite soon after 1912 the fathers had become indispensable as assistants in the ordinary pastoral work. They gave talks to social and cultural associations, worked as moderators and teachers of religion at several schools and looked after the pastoral care of religious brothers and sisters. In 1924 the Arnhem community celebrated its silver jubilee. There were 61 residents: 25 students of philosophy, 19 novices, 8 brothers and 9 fathers. The latter undertook many activities which lay outside the field of training their own men. Jos Viegen was the temporary parish priest in a new parish and worked among the local poor. As early as 1921 the MSCs, Keulers and Pouwels, gave public retreats in working-class neighbourhoods in Arnhem. Three fathers provided religion courses for lay people who wanted to obtain a diploma in religion, and the aforementioned Arts devoted himself to the probation service.(Dr Ariëns association). Moreover Arts gave radio talks on the KRO (Catholic Radio Broadcast) and assisted his confrère Leo Koppert with an 'information bureau', out of which would develop Una Sancta.

## Una Sancta

In the nineteenth century conversion work in the Netherlands assumed mostly the form of prayer. Other activities directed more towards the outside were regarded as offensive and detrimental to Catholic emancipation. The advancing emancipation increased the outspokenness of Catholics and stimulated their public appearance. The Klarenbeek Club is an example of this. In 1898 the Brothers of Tilburg initiated a massive prayer campaign by the establishment of a 'Prayer Alliance for the Conversion of the Protestants in the Netherlands'. The bishops adopted this in 1910 by including from then on the conversion of the Netherlands in the official morning prayers.

In 1904 the Peter Canisius Apologetic Association (PCAA) saw the light. Well-known Catholic scholars such as Brom and Poelhekke were associated with it. Just as the name indicates, the association aimed especially at defending the faith against people of a different persuasion. Non-Catholic media were called to account for statements about Catholicism by means of contributions which served as corrections or as comments. Besides responding to remarks which were unacceptable to the PCAA, an important objective was the promotion of knowledge of the faith among Catholics, for they should be able to reply if they were attacked.

In time the militant character of the PCAA with its defensive and offensive techniques gave way to a cautious rapprochement to people of different persuasions. Information became the new means. One assumed that non-Catholics did not necessarily have an aversion against Catholicism but might possibly be interested in it and so correct information had to be provided to the 'ignorant who have been wrongly informed about Catholicism and who have been infected with all kinds of preconceived ideas by their neighbours, public opinion and the press'. From 1919 the Dominicans in Zwolle did that by means of conferences for which those interested came to their religious house. When this proved to be successful, the Dominicans expanded their activities to other places in order to accommodate the target group. They were allied to a committee set up in 1919, the 'Committee for the Conversion of the Netherlands' - a discussion group of prominent persons like Brom, Msgr Frencken of Breda and Jacobus van Ginneken SJ.

### *Information Units*

In 1924 the MSCs became involved in this movement. The PCAA approached the superior of the Mission House in Arnhem with the request to set up an information desk to coordinate the work of the apostolate. Jan van Maanen agreed immediately and the desk was established in the Mission House. Jacques Adriaanse was even freed to work for it full-time in or about 1937. The main tasks consisted of providing information about the Catholic Church and its teachings and of giving religious instruction to those preparing for baptism. The work was also aimed at baptised Catholics who had left the church. They were prepared for the solemn renewal of

their baptismal vows. Furthermore the fathers tried to awaken an effective interest in Catholicism. They were helped by catechists. Initially these were the Sisters of Insula Dei and Sacré-Coeur in Arnhem. Later it became a large group of lay people. The catechists taught interested adults and cooperated with a magazine, The Rock. They spread brochures among non-Catholics, supposed sympathizers or people who were living in mixed marriages. Those interested were invited to meetings at the Mission House.

During the war the Arnhem Mission House was forced to close. The residents moved to Velp, where the work of the information desk continued. In Arnhem just one room remained as a 'branch' for the sake of the catechumens and candidates who stayed behind. Adriaanse had opened this as early as 1939 because the Mission House was too high a barrier to cross for many. When the desk opened again in 1944, immediately after the liberation of Arnhem, it was no longer in the Mission House, but in a villa nearby. The neutral setting – which had been partly enforced by the war – was continued as a suitable base in setting up future Una Sancta houses.

The MSCs did not stop at this one desk in Arnhem. During the war three more had been added, initially under the name Information desk of PCAA for People of a Different Persuasion and in close consultation with the said association. In 1942 the MSCs opened an establishment in an upstairs flat in Rotterdam at the proposal of Adriaanse and encouraged by some parish clergy. The year after Eindhoven followed, where accommodation was found in the Gezellenhuis (shelter for unmarried young men). The congregation was already familiar with this city where it had a rectory (see p. 333). Also in 1943, a request was made for a second establishment in West Netherlands through the parish priest and dean of The Hague, Van der Tuin. The MSCs who were sent to the capital were Nico van Doornik and Jacques Bus. After they had moved into a house on Willemsstraat in December 1943, Herman Gall and Nico Wijte joined the team. The quartet named the foundation in The Hague Una Sancta.

### *Una Sancta*

Not everyone was enthusiastic about the name. The dean of The Hague had his reservations. According to Van Doornik he would have liked a name 'with something of the martyrs of Gorcum in it, something with which to impress the Protestants'. The term Una Sancta (in its full form still followed by Ecclesia Catholica) had been bandied about once in the thirties as a name for the information desk in Arnhem, but it was discarded then as something which the Protestants had used already. It did not deter the MSCs in The Hague. 'We had the one, holy, Catholic, apostolic Church; we were therefore very clearly the true church – as far as we were concerned, I mean,' so said Wijte, more than half a century after its establishment.

> But for many people, Catholic and Protestant, what was at stake was where could that one holy church of Christ be found? Where is it visible, where can we encounter that

> church? At that time much was spoken and written ecumenically about Una Sancta, and with that they did not mean 'the Catholic Church' – not at all. In fact we pinched it: 'We are Una Sancta!', but Protestant Christians saw that Church of Christ as well.

After the Second World War the other centres of the MSC apostolate adopted the name of the house in The Hague in order to express their mutual bond. The initiative originated in The Hague and, without much ceremony, became accepted around 1946-1947.

People of a different persuasion turned to Una Sancta for 'free information about the teachings and customs of the Catholic Church'. In the initial period the war imposed restrictions on the work, although in a different way at each establishment. In Arnhem one could not do much more than give information because of the restricted accommodation. In hard-hit Rotterdam it was about 'scattering seed and making contacts' by means of lectures for all kinds of non-Catholic associations, and also by way of courses for catechists and a monthly Mass with explanation. The latter was a big success in The Hague. On March 26, 1944, Una Sancta had organised there the first Mass with explanation in the chapel of a neighbouring Home Economics school. There was so much interest that three weeks later a bigger space, the chapel of the Catholic Westeinde hospital, had to be used. From then on the Masses were held monthly. By means of brochures and modest advertisements in local newspapers Una Sancta announced those celebrations.

It was no coincidence that the Una Sancta movement flourished particularly during the war years. The war reinforced in many people's minds the need for support and security. The parish clergy experienced an increase in the number of requests for religious instruction. In addition there was the inter-church cooperation necessary during the war which had brought people of a different persuasion in contact with the Catholic Church for the first time and so had aroused interest in Catholicism. The increasing demand was met by a proportionate supply. At that time a surplus of personnel turned up within the MSC, for during the war the training had continued as usual, but no missionaries could be sent out. For them appropriate jobs had to be found. Also, after the war, when missionaries could be sent out once again, there were so many of them that a number of them were temporarily assigned to Una Sancta.

In the initial period in Eindhoven it was a question of finding a right form for the apostolate. In this city the follow-up asked for particular attention to be given to the pastoral care of those who embraced the Catholic Church at a later age. The growing industry in Eindhoven drew many from outside, a number of who converted to the Catholic faith. These people needed further guidance and support after their baptism, but the converts asked for more time and attention than the clergy could give. The diocesan clergy very much wanted the fathers to take over this work. They responded to the appeal of the dean-parish priest and pondered on ways to reach out to people who had become estranged from the Church. The MSCs of Eindhoven held discussion evenings for people who 'did their Easter duty' and ma-

de house calls on Catholics who did not observe their Easter obligations.

*Visitation*

A detailed report of home visits has been preserved, dated June 28, 1945, from the hand of Hendrik van Osch. It was not a favourite occupation of the MSCs. The questioning usually took place on the doorstep or in the open doorway and generally lasted ten minutes. Much data were noted on a card: date and place of birth; baptism, first communion and confirmation; Catholic or mixed school, profession, religious voluntary organisation or other organisations; newspaper, radio, parish newsletter; and there was still space for 'other remarks', for example children courting someone of another faith or of a dissenting political inclination. Very often the persons questioned told Van Osch that they believed in God but did not go to church.

> The obligation to attend Mass was judged differently. It is something superfluous; it does not go well with the other activities etc. After I had refuted a lady's different objections, she said to me finally: We have, after all, to follow our husbands. I followed up by asking her: Would you apply that same reasoning in the case of your husband jumping into the Meuse? To this she had to answer in the negative.

'In many cases a mixed marriage has become a stumbling block,' Van Osch noticed. For instance he spoke to a woman who never went to church in spite of saying her daily prayers. Twenty years earlier she had contracted a civil, not a church marriage. The Father urged her to 'straighten out' the marriage, but she remonstrated that she did not want to damage the good relationship with her husband. When Van Osch reassured her that her spouse did not have to convert, as long as he left her completely free in the practice of religion - and also the children, if there were any - the woman promised to discuss it with her husband. Van Osch hoped for the best: 'One of these days I am going to enquire about the result. The marriage will not be straightened out immediately. She must go to church faithfully for three months first, so that by September I hope that this marriage will be put right.'

However inconvenient, Van Osch had no doubt that the home visits were extremely useful:

> It is not only a matter of explaining the catechism but on top of that of trying to form good Catholics who are an example in society and in their family. Home visits and hearing confessions provide a rich experience of practical points for the work of conversion.

In that sense he himself learned much from it:

> I may have a positive conversation also with non-practising people and in its course more is communicated to me, which I can use advantageously in the work of conversion. I reflect upon it often and my conclusion is: how clumsy after all was our teaching in Arnhem. We did give much theory but we stood outside life and left many questions undervalued.

Such a practical question which he did not know how to handle was, for example, the following:

> A short time ago a divorced man married before the law. In Church it is not possible. Both are practising Catholics and before the wedding they agreed on the following: we remain Catholics, continue to pray, go faithfully to church on Sundays, give the children a Catholic upbringing and marry in church after the death of the first wife. A remarkable combination of Catholic ethics and a sinful married life.

*'Quiet Houses'*

The MSCs concerned also went on the road in order to make the Catholic mentality penetrate the 'not-particularly Catholic environment'. For instance after the war many conferences for Catholic and non-Catholic intellectuals were held in Rotterdam under the guidance of Jan Vermelis. Organising conferences was sometimes impossible during the war with its curfews and prohibitions of gatherings. Those circumstances contributed to a new type of organisation. Instead of meetings of large groups contacts took place on a more personal basis in the form of individual visits. Those interested could get someone to visit them if they so wished, but most of all they themselves were welcome at any time to what outwardly was an ordinary, homely house, meant to put the visitors at their ease. Una Sancta houses were so-called 'quiet houses', and showed no resemblance to a convent or a church. That applied also to an organisation which worked under the name Open Door. Various orders and congregations had set up local branches under this name in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Delft and Dordrecht. Unlike Una Sancta, Open Door hardly ever worked with catechists; it adopted a more wait-and-see attitude than the MSC organisation.

> Una Sancta starts from the understandable psychological fact that a non-Catholic will not enter the Catholic Church just like that, but on the contrary this step demands much of him, because usually he must first get over many prejudices and the feelings that have grown out of them,

according to Van Doornik. Non-Catholics had to be able to feel at home and everything had been aimed at winning their trust:

> Una Sancta knows that the path to the Catholic Church is very difficult for many of those of a different persuasion and especially that first step. What things are going to happen there once you are inside? In any case you will come out differently than when you entered. Some people even believe that a priest will be standing behind the door armed with a bucket of holy water in order to turn it upside down over your head and baptise you as soon as you cross the threshold.

People managed very well to find the way to the house in The Hague. The annual report for 1946 declared that no less than 192 adults were baptised - double the number for the year before, while the number in 1944 was 51.

The upward trend was the reason for The Protestant, a biweekly newspaper pu-

blished in Amsterdam, to pay attention to the Una Sancta of The Hague. The newspaper knew from the annual report that in 1946 more than five hundred persons had applied for instruction in the faith. That was much more than Una Sancta could manage. Such resounding figures commanded respect from the editor:

> Here is a start, a start that only calls for an increased activity on our side. It does not become us to react in a negative way by trying to lessen the value of all this and belittle its meaning. Only a positive move is in order here. A harvest is about to ripen.

Among the Una Sancta visitors more than 43 percent were not baptised, so the field lay fallow here for the Protestants also! For the time being, there was enough work. The growing secularisation, as well as the increase in the number of mixed marriages, forced the MSCs into action. It was to this last phenomenon that Una Sancta owed the biggest number of its visitors.

### *The Students of the Faith*

> Most of the students belong to the ordinary middle class - minor civil servants and tradesmen, skilled workers, office girls and domestic servants. The intellectual milieu is represented mostly by economists, lawyers, engineers, not many doctors and teachers. Most of them are still students, which is consistent with the fact that the prevalent age of the visitors lies between twenty and twenty-five years.

This profile came out of ten years of experience in the apostolate in The Hague and Rotterdam. It was mostly non-Catholics who applied as students of the faith. Among them a small group could be found in whom 'prayer and grace have already accomplished a complete conviction', but they still needed additional instruction and preparation for baptism. Usually they had come into contact with the Church by way of Catholic friends. Next there was a group which felt a slight sympathy for the Church and generally came from another church or philosophy of life. Most of the students of the faith, however, were 'sent' because they were engaged to a Catholic.

Catholics often considered such people as 'suspect' because they were not attracted to the Church by itself but rather by one of its members. Because this was Una Sancta's largest target group, some Catholics considered the work of Una Sancta as 'a matter of love, a kind of brokerage for marriage cases'. Experience showed that if the relationship broke down, the student no longer turned up after a few months. Una Sancta resigned itself to that fact, for it wanted people of a different persuasion to go the way of God's grace, a way which did not allow any prescribed route.

Finally among the students of faith baptised Catholics could be found who 'had left off practising' or who had turned their backs on the Church, usually people who 'got into spiritual difficulties because of material misery', so stated an Una Sancta review on the occasion of its tenth jubilee. They were served in fact by the same programme and received the same treatment as the non-Catholic students of

the faith.

*Different Atmospheres*

In Eindhoven, where he worked up to 1950, Jacques Beterams instructed mainly non-Catholic candidates for marriage. Most of the lessons were given on a Saturday, because then not many people had to go to work. 'Everyone had his own fixed list of students. Occasionally these were visited at home as well, but only on invitation, usually for a festive gathering in honour of becoming a Catholic.' Instruction was generally given on a one-to-one basis, by means of the old catechism and the books that Van Doornik had written - Triptich of God's Kingdom and Little Triptich. 'For the rest you had to pioneer and just see what would become of it.' The fathers did not discuss among themselves any policy or approach; everyone did it in his own style. As much as possible the lessons were tailor-made for the person concerned and had the character of in-depth conversations. The intimate, often friendly atmosphere levelled the way to 'the truth'.

On the average a student took forty to fifty lessons. Weekly, each father had about thirty students under his care. Besides, as far as possible, he kept up contact with former students. In addition there was the correspondence with the diocese and the innumerable requests from parishes, religious communities and associations for supply, talks, hearing of confession and conferences. The fathers of Una Sancta also helped people with conflicts of conscience or family problems. Una Sancta work entailed the necessary administrative work, and in between all these tasks, the fathers had their own community life, with their spiritual exercises at fixed times.

After having worked for five years in Eindhoven, Beterams was appointed to Hilversum, where the fifth Una Sancta house was opened in 1951. Here too it was the dean who asked the congregation for an establishment. He made arrangements for a fully furnished house, which was blessed on December 8, 1951, by the archbishop's coadjutor, Msgr Alfrink. A branch was established in Bussum. A sixth house would follow in Apeldoorn. As early as 1949 the Veluwe Una Sancta Foundation had been set up, be it without a notarial deed. From the beginning this was not an exclusive Catholic affair. The initiators were the MSC, Willem Arts, and the Protestant, Pastor Broers, later assisted by Pastor Kooyman.

The work of Una Sancta differed from city to city - not so much the activities, as the working conditions could greatly vary. The transition from The Hague to Arnhem was too much for Wijte. In 1947 he had been appointed to lead the Una Sancta in Arnhem and he ran the branch with two confrères. Partly due to the presence of the religious house Wijte met a completely different atmosphere there than in The Hague. 'In Arnhem you still walked around in cassock all the time and especially after years of having been in The Hague I had difficulty in consenting to that.' Community life and Una Sancta rhythm appeared not to suit each other well. 'The others went to evening prayer at eight thirty and then to bed. We still had lessons to give up to nine o'clock, and afterwards we joined each other for a drink.' The Ha-

48. Una Sancta house in Hilversum, exterior.

gue was much bigger and that gave more dynamism to the work than a small circle with the same familiar faces. In Arnhem the MSCs were foremost the fathers of the religious house, in the capital they had just one exclusive task:

> In The Hague we were the 'Fathers of Una Sancta'. The administration, the church, the deanery gave us complete freedom to do our work. I remember that in Arnhem I wrote my first letter to the parish priest of the parish of St Joseph to the effect that so and so of your parish have taken the course at Una Sancta and very much want to be baptised. The parish priest replied that he intended to subject them to an examination. Of course that cut me to the core, such a lack of trust.

Wijte did not stay in Arnhem for long. To his delight he was given yet another appointment that same year for Indonesia. Beterams did remain active in Una Sancta. After five years in Hilversum an appointment followed for Rotterdam, where he was the superior for three years.

### *Catechists*

When Wijte left The Hague, the fathers were already assisted by about fifty catechists: lay people who had been crammed for the religion diploma B under the guidance of Adriaan van de Lisdonk and who spent an evening a week on evangelisation work. In modern society the fathers could not manage to work with converts just by themselves. The work of evangelisation became the business of priests and lay people together. By means of his active role in society the lay person was

> able to go with great ease to places to which a priest could not go near at all, or only with great circumspection; the layman is therefore the suitable person to make the Catholic mentality enter there.

49. Una Sancta house in Hilversum, interior.

Every Una Sancta house organised standard religious courses for catechists, diplomas A and B. The catechists also had lessons in dealing with people of a different persuasion. In the Netherlands of the fifties where traditional religious and socio-political barriers were being removed, Catholics and non-Catholics came into contact with each other more often. The experience which the MSCs had gained in the foreign missions came in useful here because for the work of conversion knowledge of the faith alone was insufficient. In order to get through to the non-Catholic, one had to make one's own his way of thinking. In 1952 The Hague even set up a 'centre for apologetic formation' that was intended to develop into an institute for the religious formation of Catholics.

It happened to arouse so much interest that within a few months the centre put together a 'theological course of instruction'. This was a course aimed at broadening and deepening the personal religious knowledge of the participants in an academic manner. The course was open to all who were interested and took place outside the five Una Sancta houses. The direction was in the hands of Simon Jelsma and the instructors were his confrères, Kees Braun, Arie Bomhoff, Johan Krol, Aloïs van Rijen, Jos Lescrauwaet and Martien Rijkhoff, all religious trained in the modern way (see p. 129). In 1955, the course numbered 120 participants.

The Una Sancta of Rotterdam also opened an apostolic centre together with the Catholic Social Centre and the Women of Bethany, aimed at religious deepening and how to deal with people of a different persuasion. Finally in Arnhem yet another apostolic course of instruction was set up, which, after two years, was intended

to give participants a clearer insight into their own religious conviction.

The courses had been meant as a preparation for oneself to give instruction in an Una Sancta house. The commitment of the catechists was great, according to Van Doornik:

> We can safely estimate the labour of the catechists in the Una Sancta houses as that of ten priests, who care little (in the good sense) about 'eight hours to work, eight hours to play'.

*Approach*

In 1957, one of them delivered a report in Rerum Ecclesiae on how to teach a non-Catholic. The first conversation was just small talk about one thing or another. It was mostly making the acquaintance in which both the student and the catechist revealed something about themselves. Next, taking into account the level of development of the student, the catechist recommended a book that they could discuss together. The purchase of the New Testament was always recommended. At the acquaintance meeting both agreed on the schedule of lessons and whether the presence of the fiancé or fiancée, if there was one, was desirable, who after all played a big role in the conversion.

At the second conversation, preferably in the presence of the fiancé(e), the catechist impressed on the student that becoming a Catholic was not a requirement for marriage: rather a respectable marriage with Church dispensation was to be preferred to a marriage on the basis of a feigned faith. Very often such an argument came as a relief to the student. After these first steps were over and done with, the lessons could start, in which the catechist assumed the role of witness, convinced of the faith in Christ as redeemer of all people. The selected book was discussed and excerpts from the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters. Church ceremonies were explained - all of this without the catechism. Prayer was an important point and the catechist told how he himself prayed in certain circumstances. Around it deeper, personal conversations gradually came up. The entire period of instruction lasted about fifteen months. In that period the student had conversations with a priest, usually once a month. It was not until after the instruction on the sacraments that the student paid a visit to the church, and subsequently attended Holy Mass and a baptismal ceremony. Once the student had been baptised, the catechist rendered follow-up care; he remained available for questions and introduced the convert to his parish priest. Ideally a friendly relationship had developed, whereby the catechist was invited to the wedding, came to visit the new house and was kept informed of additions to the family.

The figures indicate that the work answered a need and that it had caught on. In the first ten years (1944-1954) more than ten thousand interested people sought contact with Una Sancta. Almost half of them (4,796) converted to the Catholic Church or became practising Catholics again.

*The Wide World*

A direct approach was in order for those people of the non-Catholic nation who did not ring at the door of Una Sancta. In this area, notably Van Doornik in The Hague, developed a number of important activities. His target group was those secularised people who were not unfavourably disposed towards the Catholic Church and possibly wanted to hear what it had to say, but who did not wish to commit themselves. Van Doornik felt that the Church should offer this group its 'centuries-old spiritual and cultural riches', but that the contact on both sides had to be without compulsion. He propagated this attitude in a great deal of articles and writings.

Van Doornik had been a teacher of classical languages at the apostolic schools in Tilburg and Driehuis until 1943 when he began at Una Sancta. He was its head for twenty years. Under his influence the work of conversion delved more deeply into the social context and psychology of the convert. Van Doornik requested well-known converts to write the story of their conversion. These stories were compiled in 1948 under the title Pilgrims to Una Sancta. On account of his balanced position – for instance he was not categorically opposed to mixed marriages – he was a welcome speaker and author outside Catholic circles. Van Doornik was alive to the apprehension which many Protestants had that the Netherlands would become once again a Catholic nation and adopted a non-provocative attitude - though confident that the apprehension was well founded! At his death in 1984 the daily newspaper Trouw commemorated the father as someone who did not favour 'old-fashioned proselytising' and instead preferred to confront his contemporaries 'with the wealth of a Christianity that, as he himself grew older, gained in spaciousness'.

Under his leadership much was possible in The Hague. Particularly active was his younger confrère, Simon Jelsma. Together with the Redemptorist, Piet Wesseling, Jelsma acquired national fame after the Second World War as a charismatic leader of the youth movement. This movement experienced a peak in May 1949 when 50,000 young people gathered in the exhibition centre of Utrecht. Jelsma had received permission from his congregation to attend lectures in psychology and philosophy at the University of Utrecht. In the work of Una Sancta he moved a good deal outside the Catholic milieu and wanted to be well prepared for the dialogue with people of different persuasions. His study made some confrères blame him for neglecting the rule of religious life and the prescribed life of prayer. In 1951 the provincial superior thought it was time to remind Jelsma of his religious duties.

> It is far from my intention to impede you in your work, but as long as I am provincial, I must, in spite of all my dislike, come back to it repeatedly that the worthiness and productivity of our work count for nothing, if it is not God's will, i.e., in accordance with obedience.

Seemingly as an exercise in obedience, Van Erp refused to give Jelsma permission for a trip to Paris, although he could quite understand that 'this would have its purpose'. The provincial ended the letter by remarking that he was disturbed about 'the great extent of self-assurance which is evident in the letter, the arrogant tone in

which you address me, which shows little inner respect towards the authority which I represent'.

The next provincial, De Gier, blamed Jelsma at times for an obstinate attitude, usually prompted by complaints about Jelsma addressed to the provincial from the side of the official Church. At the end of 1954 the internunciature had taken umbrage at the way in which Jelsma had written about the persecution of Protestants in Spain. In his publications he had turned against Cardinal Segura who had just been fully exonerated by the Holy Office. Another complaint concerned the flyer which Jelsma had distributed in favour of the film Martin Luther, in spite of knowing that the Church authorities were opposed to giving publicity to such a film. A final bone of contention was Jelsma's ties with the PvdA (the Socialist Party), to which he was going to deliver a lecture. De Gier requested Jelsma to send him the text beforehand.

> People say that after the Pronouncement [in which the Dutch hierarchy frowned upon Catholics voting for the socialist party] Catholics in the PvdA defended their position with an explicit appeal to Father Jelsma. Not that anyone imputes membership to you, but your activity is seen, perhaps unintentionally but nonetheless real, as propaganda for the party.

*Sermons in public squares*

Jelsma's activities were strongly directed towards society but for some his involvement with society went too far. In The Hague he was allowed much space. Jelsma commenced a special action in 1953. He invited 15,000 (!) non-church young people to attend a service on Christmas Eve. Summons in the media and a specially decorated propaganda car driving through The Hague mobilised a great many people. The church was too small and a number of those interested had to be sent away. But the genie was out of the bottle, the service for non-church people was born. On the last Sunday of every month Jelsma organised a service for young people followed by a discussion evening on the following Monday with subjects such as 'Are Christians better people after all?' and 'human freedom', 'tolerance' and 'revelation'. He also published a booklet, entitled Square 1954, and in the summer of that year he went out on the streets 'in the spirit of candour and open invitation'. In that summer, every other Saturday afternoon, he delivered his 'Sermons in the Square' in front of the Supreme Court building, of which he himself gave the following description:

> The sky of all people is my ceiling. Those who come (and may go) in freedom constitute my public. I say what I think. He who wants to listen stops in his tracks. He who has no interest walks on. Nobody is forced. Because no loudspeakers are used, there is no need for anyone to hear who does not want to hear. The gentlemen on the café terraces and the shopping ladies are not disturbed in any way. On the other hand they are not kept in the dark. They can see that something is going on in that part of the square and they are

> extended a candid and open invitation by what they see. So, just as I have room, they have room as well. Meanwhile the main thing is this: one has to speak with tremendous honesty in such a square. The greater the freedom, the greater the honesty.

Jelsma did not want to convert people but made it his purpose

> to promote community awareness beyond all boundaries of the Church and philosophies of life, straight through all mutual misunderstandings, distrust and suspicion, in meetings of people with people.

The Sermons in the Square drew many interested people for years, as did the paper of the same name. The target group continued to consist foremost of young non-church people for whom the Square group also organized special issue evenings and film showings, always alert to the chance of holding an open meeting and debate afterwards. On such evenings the housing shortage could be at the forefront, or the relation between press and public, the modern West or a theme like 'Is discussion still possible with Dutch Catholics?'

In Rotterdam, Dijkzeul started open square activities in 1957, under the slogan 'Action for God'. In several districts of the city Una Sancta organised discussion evenings around themes like 'How do I reconcile the existence of a loving God with the fact of suffering in the world?' In the lively debates it always struck Dijkzeul that he never heard any negative utterances about Jesus, which contrasted all the more with expressions of hard feelings towards the Church.

### *Prejudices*

Van Doornik kept on asking himself how he could reach the outside world and fight the prejudices about the Catholic Church. The Church evoked critical questions in outsiders and sometimes downright antipathy. For instance in the fifties Una Sancta got an application form for a course returned with the text: 'Moscow is dangerous!! Rome is far more dangerous!!!', signed by 'THE PROTESTANT WOMAN, who says her piece'.

'What is the matter with our 'propaganda machine'?' Van Doornik wondered in 1957:

> Is it not remotely comparable with that of a nation, a political party, a global business, that all understand the immense value of public opinion? And don't we have in fact more valuable goods to offer than Unilever or Standard Oil?

According to Van Doornik, the ideal that priests worked on, 'Christianisation and reunification within the Netherlands', should be promoted by means of modern advertising. The Una Sancta of The Hague composed promotional texts for a campaign in the 'neutral' press, in which information was offered about the Catholic faith:

**We hear strange things about Catholics!**

Sometimes we hear it said that Catholics believe that all non-Catholics go to hell and that non-Catholic marriages are invalid...

*That they adore Mary...*
*That they themselves do not know what they believe...*
*That they are not allowed to read the Bible...*
*That they must have as many children as possible...*
*That they confuse religion with power and strive for dominion in the Netherlands...*

What remarkable stories! Ought one really to regard his Catholic compatriots as that foolish?

If you ever heard and believed such views about your Catholic fellow citizens and want to know more about it, just ask free of charge for further information. *You get no visit*, only a blank envelope. Write a postcard or fill in the coupon below.

A sizable advertisement in national newspapers or magazines such as Elsevier, Het Parool, Het Vrije Volk, yielded an average of more than three hundred responses. In 1956/1957 over a hundred advertisements were placed in forty different publications. Van Doornik wanted the entire non-Catholic Netherlands to know that the Catholics were prepared to provide written information without any payment. In 1956, no less than 858 people sought contact with Una Sancta. The Hague received most of the applications (292) and Eindhoven the least (111). Not surprisingly The Hague had the largest work force, seven fathers and 81 catechists in 1956; Hilversum had the smallest, with four fathers and 25 catechists.

The information promised in the advertisement consisted of an introductory brochure and about twenty illustrated pamphlets. Eventually they were sent to five thousand addresses. Van Doornik had started a correspondence course in brochure form in 1954, the Scripta Catholica. A week before his death in 1984 his last brochure in the series appeared, entitled Jesus is a Jew. The course wanted to give witness to the truth and the riches of the Catholic faith, always taking into account the assumed prejudices and misunderstandings among the readers. The writer entered into the world of people of other persuasions and avoided the use of words which could be associated with being after power or with superstition. The Scripta Catholica was widely read, as became clear from the correspondence which developed with readers. Sometimes such a correspondence grew into a very personal contact. 'The most frequent difficulties' from the written responses concerned Roman Catholic matters, according to Van Doornik: 'adoration of Mary, sale of indulgences, the rich Pope and the poor Christ, the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist Church, the prohibition of books and moral pressure.'

The fathers allotted much time to answer all letters as well as possible. Van Doornik considered the written discussion through the whole country as one of the most precious fruits of the apostolate. One should not turn away from the world in word and writing was the opinion of the Una Sancta leader, but remain in dialogue with non-Catholics. Persistent prejudices, which had taken centuries to take root among the Dutch people, could only be fought by associating with the world.

*Laetare*

A special initiative of Una Sancta The Hague was the establishment of a secular institute for women in 1946. The women who joined applied themselves to the apostolate among non-Catholics. They took private vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. Gall was the initiator on the side of the MSC. The first requirement for the young women was to remain lay, in appearance undistinguishable from their contemporaries, and to lead a modern life that put them in contact with non-Catholics as well. The women of Laetare were by profession stenographers, pharmacists' assistants, teachers, nurses, social workers, or in other professions for women, and worked preferably half-days so that time was left for the apostolate.

> Their house and clothing should suit the environment in which they live: no uniform, not a single identifying mark, but dressed as other young women, so without qualms outfitted with nylon, suit, plissé, swagger, sweater, pumps, flats, etc. Tasteful and charming as a living example that Christian demands can go together with joy for God's gifts, that Catholicism does not make one alien to life, stiff or odd but joyful of life, cordial; in one word, she must be perfectly normal.

The women took part in the cultural life attending concerts, film shows and sporting events. They visited their families every month as well as on holidays. For the rest they taught non-Catholics according to the method of Una Sancta, for which they had obtained the diploma B in religion.

In 1955, Laetare had two houses, one in Scheveningen and one in Rotterdam. Together these houses had twenty members, nine of them professed. For the purchase of books or clothing they needed the approval of their superior (who also had a job), to whom they turned over their income. In return they received a small amount each month. The women participated in the prescribed exercises: daily Mass with meditation, spiritual reading and examination of conscience. Their formation lasted two and a half years, of which one year was entirely in residence and one year in combination with a job outside.

It was no small thing to which the members of Laetare committed themselves. It was a life that 'asks for sacrifices, claims the whole person and one with which only truly generous girls are able to cope, those who possess a strongly apostolic drive and who have been called by God to it'. This ideal was still proudly presented by the MSCs halfway through the fifties, but already five years later, in 1960, it came under pressure.

'To be able to help a fellow human being well, one must get into his skin as much as possible,' Gall wrote in 1957. 'The less deliberately and the more naturally that happens, the better.' That year the women could look back at seven hundred students of the faith whom they had brought in with their diploma B in religion. Around one third of the students joined the Catholic Church.

Laetare had meanwhile moved its boundaries by becoming involved with the work of sheltering children and young girls in Rotterdam. The members of the lay institute, which had dynamic and competent young women within its ranks, became co-founders of three shelters. A large proportion of the Laetarists worked there. It is true that the shelters had their own administrative structure and as independent foundations they were formally separate from Laetare, but in practice the distinction was not visible. Again it was Gall who took charge of the pastoral care in the shelters. A third residence was opened specially for the Laetarists who were working in the children's homes in Rotterdam.

The activities became, slowly but surely, too much for the people involved. The actual objective of the lay institute started to get blurred. In a report about Laetare it was mentioned that the children's homes claimed all attention and that the tasks of the women had nothing to do anymore with the original work of evangelisation and conversion. Also the spiritual formation of the Laetarists left much to be desired and the position of Gall was highly controversial. On the one hand he was blamed for neglecting the institute; on the other hand he was blamed for wanting to dominate it in an absolute way. 'His will is law,' some claimed. Those who had had objections to Laetare from the beginning expressed them now aloud. Among them were fundamental objections by people who believed that in the chosen structure the members were too dependent on one person (Gall), and by people who thought that it was unbecoming for a father to become involved so intensively with young, unmarried women. Even if nothing improper happened, it would nevertheless give the outside world reason for 'all kinds of unfavourable thoughts'. In jest, confrères called the women who were living in community, 'Gallicans'.

A visitation by P. Riep by order of the diocese was highly unfavourable, judging by the report already quoted. Riep labelled Gall as a 'spiritual lady-killer', and called him 'theologically and ascetically a vagrant'. To put an end to all unrest Gall had to step down in January 1961 and the objectives of Laetare were formulated anew. The link with Una Sancta was drawn tighter: every member had to take part in the apostolate of the Una Sancta houses. That meant teaching, follow-up care, and all other tasks involved within local limits, instead of the indirect strategy in non-Catholic environments. The activities in the children's homes in Rotterdam were dropped and also the Laetare residences in Rotterdam were closed. Community life was no longer an essential element of the secular institute.

In spite of the reforms there was no real new start. In 1965, the difficulties had not yet been entirely solved, as appears from a report of Gall's successor, Michiel Joosten. Gall had left a very personal mark on his brainchild. With his departure the conflict seemed rather to have increased rather than decreased and for Joosten it

was impossible to bring about unity. The institute was in search of a concrete objective. That was formulated in the draft statutes of 1965 as 'directed at ecumenism'. Concrete activities had not been formally determined. Joosten and his congregation wanted to continue the cooperation with the lay institute, but no longer to be in charge of its direction. Eventually the bishop appointed A. Steijns SCJ to lead the institute, and he was accompanied by a 'Privy Council', in which Jos Lescrauwaet got a seat on behalf of the MSCs. Mies van Winkel, the General Leader of Laetare, had explicitly asked for that in order not to give up the twenty year old tie with the MSCs. Meanwhile Gall lived with some former members of Laetare in a community and moved to De Lier (The Hague) in 1968 where he became the parish priest. MSCs continued giving weekend talks and retreats to the Laetarists.

### *Changing Society*

The decline of Laetare was not an isolated phenomenon. The sixties witnessed radical changes in the social field. This form of apostolate proved no longer suitable. While Una Sancta closed one establishment after another, the Open Door Foundation set out on the path of social services. An important change of thought concerned mixed marriages. In the sixties a lengthy preparation was considered less necessary and the Church pursued a more lenient dispensation policy but continued to underline the importance of good pastoral counselling. Furthermore, the number of mixed marriages rose, and the people involved no longer formed a minority. As a consequence they no longer needed to be approached individually. Their questions could be addressed in the setting of the whole faith community.

The decline had set in as early as the end of the fifties. While the Una Sancta establishment in The Hague still had 454 students in 1950, ten years later there were only 288. What exactly happened to all separate establishments in the end has not been documented. In Eindhoven, Una Sancta was closed in June 1965 because of lack of personnel. Arnhem remained open up to 1970, even though from 1966 the number of applicants had decreased significantly as a consequence of the more lenient dispensation policy with respect to mixed marriages. For this reason the deanery of Arnhem consulted with Una Sancta for new ways of adult catechesis, in which more room was made for cooperation with other churches and groups. The fathers indicated that they were available for a newly conceived method of pastoral counselling of mixed marriages provided that it would be in collaboration with the parish clergy. Dean Van Rossum had other plans and wanted to appoint one of the MSCs as the deanery staff member for ecumenism. The idea had little appeal to the congregation. However, in 1967, Kees Braun was appointed by the bishop of Rotterdam, Mgr M. A. Jansen, as his delegate representing the diocese for ecumenism.

The Una Sancta activities in Arnhem approached their end. On September 20, 1970, the villa beside the Mission House was cleared out and the students had their final lessons in the Mission House. It brought to an end 45 years of Una Sancta work in Arnhem, the place where it had started.

ik met een grote boog de pastorie voorbij, voor ik de moed had de ingang op te zoeken. Zoals hij zijn er talloze anderen.

*Uw taak kan zo zegenrijk zijn*

In al deze gevallen bent U een onmisbare schakel. U kunt niet volstaan met het opgeven van een adres. U moet zich de moeite getroosten voor hen een afspraak te maken, met hen mee te gaan voor de eerste keer. U mag zich niet opdringen, maar een oprechte, fijngevoelige liefde moet U er toe brengen behulpzaam te zijn bij deze eerste stappen.

*Zij, die met U willen samenwerken*

Om al deze motieven zonden we U dit bericht over ons werk en ons adres, opdat U bij voorkomende gelegenheden een wegwijzer zou kunnen zijn. U kunt zich dan in verbinding stellen met een der nevolgende paters:

Drs. A. J. KUETER m. s. c.
J. J. A. BETERAMS m. s. c.
J. A. BOERE m. s. c.

„UNA SANCTA"
Prins Hendrikstraat 37,
EINDHOVEN - Tel. 3842



50. Una Sancta flyer 'Do people send you S.O.S. signals? Then it is your duty to help.'

According to estimates as many as one hundred thousand people must have been in contact with the conversion work of Una Sancta in the period of 1945-1960. At the end of the fifties doubts were raised about the conversion work as such, not in the least by the fathers involved in it themselves. People of different denominations became more and more interested in what united them which went hand in hand with a growing commitment to ecumenical awakening and cooperation, rather than the emphasis on conversion work. In that regard the Una Sancta

centres played an important role.

*Two Departures*

In the course of their work the MSCs who served in Una Sancta were very much in contact with the changes in society. Jelsma often stood at the cradle of new developments. For instance in 1956 he had been closely involved in the setting up of Novib (the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation), of which he subsequently became a board member. Information and publicity belonged to his portfolio. For forthcoming campaigns of aid to Greece and Sudan, Jelsma asked his provincial superior for permission to visit those countries. In Sudan he was to make contact with Catholic and Protestant missions. Van Doornik agreed, but for the provincial it was more difficult. There were so many big wigs cooperating with it (from business, the government and Catholic organisations), up to Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard as general president of Novib , that De Gier could simply not refuse. However, the activities were at odds with the 'primary duty which rests upon our Catholic part of the population to support first and foremost the Catholic mission work', according to De Gier. For no matter how much good Novib might accomplish, the work could cause damage to the mission of evangelisation through the purely humanistic mental background of influential groups.

In 1961, Jelsma approached again the edge of the permissible. He had signed a manifesto of the Committee for the Reconciliation of Indonesia and the Netherlands, after which De Gier received indignant letters from Merauke. Msgr Tillemans, especially, said that he was incensed by this political position, and the provincial pointed out to Jelsma that he was not behaving as a good colleague to his confrères over there. Jelsma's social involvement carried him further still and the tension with his own congregation which did not and could not go along with him, increased in the sixties. In 1968, Jelsma became the head of the informative programmes at the VPRO (Liberal Protestant Broadcasting Organisation). Provincial superior, Jaspers, understood that Jelsma was of the opinion 'that this appointment lies entirely within his being made free for ecumenical work', but regretted that the appointment had come about without the knowledge of the MSC community. After all Jelsma was still connected with teaching theology.

Jelsma's position within the congregation became untenable when articles written by him saw the light in which he attacked the Pope and expressed doubts about baptism. In 1970 Jelsma submitted his decision to leave the society to the new provincial, Michiel Joosten.

> Membership of the congregation is an affirmation and accentuation of membership in the Roman Catholic Church. Being a priestly member of the congregation is an affirmation and emphasis of a priesthood exclusively bound to the Roman Catholic Church. For someone who wants to give less and less emphasis to his very membership and to being a priest of the Roman Catholic Church and to make it less exclusive, this constitutes, of course, a growing problem. I agree and sympathise with those who speak of a so-

> called free position, that is to say, free from certain church hierarchical structures and, as a result, more free for the Gospel. It does seem to me to be neither correct nor realistic to combine this with a continued membership of the MSC, not even with an MSC membership that has slowly but surely become merely formal.

The process had been a lengthy one. Its cause was not hostility but mainly the nature of the work and of the developments in Church and in society. The congregation and Jelsma broke up on friendly terms. His leaving did not mean for him a break with his activities. Jelsma continued his work 'as spokesman of Jesus' Gospel, as celebrant at the Eucharist and other services with eagerness and as a matter of course,' so he let it be known in his wedding announcement on April 27, 1971.

His former confrère and Una Sancta colleague, Dijkzeul, had preceded him in 1965:

> While I had the firm conviction that the Church was the only true Christian faith community, I happened to discover, among others things through discussions with young people in the Una Sancta work, that I had never reflected on the fundamental questions of life.

During a retreat which Dijkzeul made celibacy was the central topic. The leader distinguished three levels on which celibacy could be experienced: as a personal bond with Christ, as an act of love for the Church or as consequence of a system which one underwent as a victim. Dijkzeul realised that he belonged to the last category and that as a celibate he presented a form of life to the outside world which he no longer backed. The decision to leave was for him, just as for Jelsma, not a break with his faith, but with the form in which he had once chosen to shape it. It was not for them a definite break with the congregation either, even if they were no longer members. In the words of Dijkzeul:

> That I nonetheless have been allowed and been able to work for 23 years in several areas with much effort and commitment and also with much personal satisfaction as a priest and thus also as an MSC, I thank the Dutch MSCs for, which left room for individual members to make their own personal choices regarding content and style.

After their departure Dijkzeul and Jelsma continued to follow the congregation with interest. Through their activities as members of the congregation they had ended up very much in the rapids of the social developments of the fifties and sixties. They felt that the official Church which was personified also by their congregation, failed to go along adequately with the times. The change, which they themselves had undergone under the influence of their Una Sancta activities, was no longer compatible with the direction they had previously followed. Therefore, in good faith they decided to leave.

## Rectors of Churches

In the twenties the MSCs began to do parish work in their home country in a structured way. The Dutch Province accepted three areas served by rectors: Sittard, Eindhoven and Berg en Dal. These were not established parishes which the MSCs took over, but on the contrary areas that had nothing as yet in terms of church institutions. The local population had to go to church elsewhere, whereas their number justified having a church of their own. For this reason the most important task consisted of erecting a church building where the people could attend Mass. It was a pioneering work that fitted well with the objectives of the congregation. It meant that the MSCs did not stay within their own confines but made their way out there in order to become familiar with the population. From the beginning they performed pastoral work and succeeded in forming active church communities. Although their areas of service were only raised to fully fledged parishes decades later, in practice they had functioned like that for a long time

The acceptance of Berg en Dal resulted from the establishment of the MSC novitiate at the adjoining country estate of the Wijcherd. On the other hand Sittard and Einhoven had no connection with the training of young MSCs. In these cities the Dutch Province accepted the responsibility out of idealistic motives. It saw it as its task to take on the pastoral care and to alleviate the social needs of reputedly difficult working-class areas.

### *Berg en Dal*

Berg en Dal was considered part of the parish of Beek-Ubbergen. For the residents it was quite a climb to go home after a visit to the church of St Bartholomew. The schoolchildren too had to go up and down a slope of eighty metres on a daily basis. When in 1927 the MSCs took possession of the Wijcherd estate, the local Catholics saw their way clear to ask Mgr Diepen for their own church. On August 20, 1927, this led to an agreement between the bishop, the provincial superior, Baptist, and the parish priest (P.C. van Aachen) of the parish of St Bartholomew in Beek. A public church served by a rector would be set up in Berg en Dal under the care of the congregation. The MSCs committed themselves to assist in Beek, which remained the parish church, while Berg en Dal became a chapel of ease. In other words, for marriages and funerals people had no other place to go than the usual Beek. The new entity could not decide to found schools on its own, but had to have the permission of the parish priest of Beek. Okhuijzen became the first rector. Architect, Fr De Beer, designed yet another church for the congregation which was dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and was consecrated on February 18, 1928. The next day the chapel of ease officially opened its doors to the people.

The arrival of the fathers and the establishment of its own church was an enormous stimulus for the social life of small Berg en Dal which numbered around 750 Catholic inhabitants. In 1928, a church choir and the brass band Edelweiss got

off the ground, and in 1932 a building became available for the Catholic youth group where films were shown and plays were staged. Of the five rectors who took office after Okhuijzen, Kees van den Bergh, nicknamed 'the Fat One', left the clearest mark. He took office in January 1947 and for fifteen years defined the face of Berg en Dal. In 1949, the chapel of ease was raised to the status of parish church. From then on Van den Bergh was no longer called Father Rector but parish priest, and father Joop Janssen became officially a curate. The promotion of Van den Bergh brought about a slight collision with Beek. The custom was that the old parish give an initial capital to the new one, but this was turned around by Beek. The old parish demanded compensation from the new one for the reduced income from marriages and funerals which from now on could be held in Berg en Dal.

The status of parish brought with it the right to a graveyard which became available in 1951. In 1952, Van den Bergh sent plans to The Hague for a primary school. A year later the Titus Brandsma School was a fact. The life of the community was enriched by a mixed choir, a drama club and a girls' korfball club. Curate Jansen put much time and effort into scouting. Meanwhile the church had become too small for the 1,350 parishioners. The problem was keenly felt especially in summer, when Berg en Dal turned into a tourist resort. In 1955 as well as in 1959, a side wing was added to the church. The windows were made by the artist Smeets who was closely linked to the congregation and who had also did the drawings for the glass panes in Tilburg.

Van den Bergh was succeeded at the end of 1961 by his modern confrère, Guus van Helvoirt. Van Helvoirt had worked a short time in Brazil, where he could not stay for health reasons. Subsequently he had been curate in Eindhoven and Tilburg. He encountered in Berg en Dal two practical problems: the congregation was going to leave the Wijcherd, which meant the loss of the presbytery, and the renovated church had become unsafe. In 1963 the congregation sold both the church building and the land for a reasonable amount. The architect Jan Strik from Boxtel designed a new church for about six hundred people, which was consecrated by Mgr J. Bluysen on April 4,1967.

Van Helvoirt 'arrived with the fresh wind behind him, which Pope John XXIII let flow through the Church in those days', according to the parish newsletter. His church was well-attended also by people from outside Berg en Dal. What undoubtedly played a part in this was that during Lent, Van Helvoirt invited well-known speakers, among them Cardinal Alfrink. Meanwhile, the difficulty could not be denied that Berg en Dal was in the process of ageing. Of the 149 marriages which had been contracted in the parish church in the period 1961-1968, no less than 139 couples had left Berg en Dal. The national trend of ageing within the Church had been preceded there by socio-economic causes which took place outside the Church. Van Helvoirt himself did not reach the age of retirement. In 1974, he died of heart failure at the age of 61. His successor was Fons Kanters. He became the last parish priest in Berg en Dal. For more than 25 years Kanters tried to involve the parishioners actively in all parish activities. As a help in achieving this he used

his musical talent and his special interest in liturgy. It was impossible for Kanters to reverse the increasing secularisation and the declining church attendance. After his death in 2001 a diocesan priest was appointed parish priest.

*Stadbroek-Overhoven*

The first place in the Netherlands where the MSCs established themselves without any connection with one of their houses of formation was Sittard. In 1918 Fr Keube (Jac.) Jacobs from Brabant had set out for the coal mining region to dedicate himself to the pastoral care of Belgian refugees in Treebeek. Before long he made a name for himself by his social concern and his ability to speak the language of the people. The parish priest-dean of Sittard, L. Thijssen, enlisted Jacobs' help for the pastoral care in his city. Thijssen had the former outlying villages of Stadbroek and Overhoven especially in mind. These hamlets were due for a considerable expansion as a result of the mining industry in neighbouring Geleen. At that time only about thirty families lived in Stadbroek but in 1920, 143 houses for miners were built there. Located close to the German border along the connecting road between Sittard and Tüddern, Stadbroek had always drawn casual labourers and traders. A travellers' camp was located nearby. Overhoven was larger and had a population of farmers and a small number of middle class people, but it was without its own set-up for pastoral care.

The Dutch MSC province decided to accept the work and in 1920 it gave Jacobs the company of Fathers Maurits (Maurice) Molenaar, Antoon Tillemans and Brother Arie van Schie. A refugee shed from the First World War was furnished as a temporary church. The people of Stadbroek were now able to attend Mass at least on Sundays without having to make the long journey to the centre of Sittard. The four MSCs, all in their thirties, set out to work hard. Jacobs and Molenaar took charge of the active pastoral care and the personal contacts with the population. Tillemans concentrated on the religious (for example, the Ursulines) and those who fell outside the active community due to sickness or old age. Brother van Schie kept house and took care of the church. In 1922, the diocese of Roermond combined Stadbroek and Overhoven into one unit. Msgr L. Schrijnen assigned its running to the MSCs.

In 1923 the shed in Stadbroek gave way to a wooden church on land that had been bought from the municipality for a small amount. It was dedicated to St Joseph and had the status of a chapel of ease. The larger and more well-to-do Overhoven had been designated as the place where the central church was to be built. The church was completed in 1925 and, in line with the devotion of the MSCs, it was dedicated to the Sacred Heart. The MSC community was established in the presbytery. Both churches had a provisional character and as soon as the resources and the organisation allowed it, they were replaced by more durable structures.

*Community of Writers*

Meanwhile, Ward Pouwels and Jacques Schreurs arrived to re-enforce the ranks. Pouwels came from Arnhem (see p. 297) and took over from Jacobs the pastoral care in Stadbroek, while Schreurs became the curate of Overhoven. The latter was born in Sittard, which helped the relationship with the population. Possibly for this reason he got a difficult work area assigned to him, Limbrichterveld, which was reputed as socialist and also called 'the railway colony' because it was mostly railway workers with their families who lived there. Schreurs would later turn his experiences as curate into the well-known Chronicle of a Parish, of which a film version was made entitled Diary of a Sheepdog.

With the arrival of Schreurs the small community in Overhoven had two great literary men. The national reputation of Schreurs was still to be established, but Maurits Molenaar had already earned his spurs. Molenaar had come to Sittard because he had fallen into disfavour with the bishop of Den Bosch, Msgr Diepen. Since 1918 Molenaar had worked in Tilburg as a moderator at the Catholic Institute for Higher Learning. He was on very friendly terms with the founder and rector of the Institute, Hendrik Moller. Together they set up the literary magazine Vocation in 1922. When Moller had to leave the Institute because of a conflict with the bishop, Molenaar and his students voiced a protest. After that, Msgr Diepen informed the congregation that he could not accept unorthodox ideas from a moderator and that Molenaar spent too much time in such circles. The MSCs decided to move him to Sittard, where again he became moderator and instructor at the School for Social Work through the mediation of Jacobs.

In Limburg, Molenaar continued his activities as a writer, which resulted among other works in the applauded modern hagiographies, Gertrude of Helfta (1925) and Mechtild the Beguine (1932). The younger Schreurs looked up to the inscrutable Frisian, who gave him the opportunity to publish in his magazine but who never became friends with his fellow priest-writer. Jacobs also delivered a number of contributions to Vocation. Schreurs and Molenaar had the greatest respect for him. Both were strongly inspired by Jacobs' social compassion and militancy.

Jacobs' talents did not remain unnoticed elsewhere in Limburg. He was much in demand as a speaker on social issues. Jacobs believed that Catholics had a duty to fight injustice and poverty. He became friends with Poels, the priest sociologist who, in 1910, as head chaplain of workers, became the leader of the Catholic social movement in Limburg's mining area. In 1924, Jacobs moved to Stein, where the theologate of the Dutch MSC province had been established since 1922. He combined teaching Church History with speaking engagements in various circles. Both the diocesan major seminary of Rolduc and the labour movement warmly welcomed him. In Overhoven, he was succeeded as rector by Van Mierlo, who was also a publicist and who, together with another MSC (Keulers), had been connected to the magazine Men's Nobility and Women's Honour (1910-35).

*Social Criticism*

While many Dutch Catholics expected from the mines nothing but moral and political catastrophes, Schreurs on the other hand, being from Limburg himself, had an eye for the relative prosperity which this development brought along. Now at least the men would receive regular pay instead of hiring themselves out as day-labourers far from home. Schreurs was a critical advocate who sounded the alarm over the bad working conditions and social abuses. Before long such criticism was considered as inflammatory by people of the establishment. In 1925, two publications resulted in a reprimand from the provincial superior. Rector Van Mierlo and Dean Thijssen, however, had sanctioned them, and consequently Van Mierlo took up the cudgels for Schreurs: 'Everywhere yeast has been added to the Roman Catholic mix and that is the happy result of the push given by Father Schreurs'. A sign of it was that Poels had mobilised all the deans of the surrounding area and a mass demonstration of the entire south was scheduled in Heerlen for eight days, 'to show Our Dear Lord and the socialists that the south is still Catholic'.

On the one hand the provincial superior feared that Schreurs' stand discredited the congregation and on the other hand that the young father was getting too big for his boots. Schreurs himself had an answer to that:

> The moral trouble and misery in the middle of which he [here Schreurs means himself] is present, beats his heart into a jelly and would he in the circumstances damage the good name of his congregation by serving the holy cause of Christ?... How I wished that you, Very Reverend Father, trusted me completely in one thing. In my work I give myself, not seek myself (otherwise I would be sick of it a long time ago!), and I deem those two articles neither higher nor lower than two match sticks, a bit of the spirit and a bit of the heart, for a fire that must come.

Van Mierlo agreed whole-heartedly with the concluding point: 'It is badly needed here that we openly express our judgement about actual abuses, otherwise within a few years the people of Limburg would be lost to us wholesale.' According to the rector three-quarters of the workers had totally lost their trust in the clergy.

> South Limburg is well on the way to becoming a second Belgium and a very prominent reason undoubtedly lies in the fact that we give generalised moral sermons, but sympathise little with what happens among the masses. And as long as we keep silent about what the people disapprove of, we will be considered as servants of capitalism. Also the majority of our Catholic workers are socialist in their views and the class struggle, although we do not recognise it in theory, is actually about as strong among the Catholic population as among the socialists. For this reason a bold word from the Catholic side is frequently necessary, because disapproving in the private sphere is not enough. If someone doubts the existence of the devil, he should come and work here for fourteen days or so among the people. The blasphemies that circulate here orally and in writing on a large scale week after week can only come about through the inspiration of the devil.

*Jacobs*

That 'bold word from the Catholic side', which Van Mierlo mentioned, was spoken particularly by Jacobs. He was given freedom for it as much as possible by his congregation. A significant nickname of Jacobs was 'Apostle of Labour' after his important role in the Catholic Workers' Movement (KAB in Dutch). In 1930, the KAB opened a special propaganda department intended for the training of workers. Poels succeeded in persuading his former student (also superior general) Brocken to appoint Jacobs as director of it. Jacobs also became head of Credo Pugno (I believe, I fight) and the Young Workman, Catholic storm troops which tried to preserve and extend the social achievements. Jacobs founded a magazine, also called Credo Pugno (1932-62), and led the Diocesan Association of Roman Catholic Propaganda Clubs in Limburg.

Among the workers Jacobs was extremely well-liked for his cordiality and sincere compassion. He shared their liking for bicycle racing and knew all amateurs and professionals by name. At competitions he invariably stood by the track, whatever the weather. According to Gerats, Jacobs' confrère and successor at the KAB, he was attracted to cycling by 'the opportunity it gave to the man from the masses to rise above the masses to more personal fame'. It corresponded exactly with his efforts to make the workers aware of themselves and their possibilities. Once they had been convinced of that, it followed in Jacobs' eyes that they became aware of the possibilities with respect to each other and of their place in the Church, as active people with a mission. With his great oratorical talent Jacobs was able to make them enthusiastic, according to Gerats:

> He possessed the gift to explain the loftier and the loftiest realities to people who had not received anything but primary school education, so that they could accept not only the truth, but also became real adherents of it, not a question of intellect only, but of the whole person, who was addressed in his totality. One felt moved and driven.

Jacobs' friend and partner, J. Colsen CM, noted that non-workers went along with the way in which he managed to discuss 'the really essential problems'.

Poels and Jacobs believed that the socialist sympathies among the workers were in every way understandable as long as the social need was there and the church stood aloof. What mattered was to show a Catholicism fighting for the poor and combating injustice. Indeed in Limburg they did everything they could to take the wind out of the socialists' sails. Catholics were made to understand how real the red danger was. A woman resident of Overhoven remembered vividly how the parish marched

> against those terrifying 'reds' who wanted to come down from the north. Even we children went along. I can still see myself sitting with a lot of others on a decorated flat-bottomed cart. And I can still hear ourselves singing the battle song written by Father Schreurs that ended with 'Sittard hurrah, long live Sittard! Hurrah, long live Sittard!' Together with the miners, the workers of the Young Workman and followed by the men

> of Credo Pugno, Father Jacobs went about the villages in the distant surrounding areas with his first faithful supporters and there, in meadows and orchards, where people flocked from far and near, hundreds and hundreds listened to that eloquent man, who could inspire everyone by his conviction! As a result the men literally stopped those 'reds'. With forks, rakes and shovels they went to meet them, so that those who wanted to trample Catholic Limburg underfoot, the so-called 'dark south', had to sound the retreat.

*Sense of Community*

Such marches promoted group cohesion, for which a sound foundation had been laid in the daily parish work. Schreurs, described by his parishioners as 'a poetic man, who moreover possessed the gift to touch people in their very hearts', founded a community centre in Limbrichterveld. Molenaar too was more than a man of words. Right after his arrival in 1920, he recruited a choir from among the men and the boys. Moreover he threw himself into scouting and quite soon he himself became district leader, in which capacity he exerted great influence on the very popular scouting members.

Great efforts were made for the Corpus Christi processions through which parishes created a distinct profile for themselves. Every neighbourhood wanted to be second to none. Stadbroek got permission for a Corpus Christi procession as late as 1932, following a request by Father Janus van Croonenburg to Msgr Lemmens. 'Up to now one was under the impression that the population was not of the sort to guarantee sufficient successes according to Van Croonenburg. People elsewhere in Sittard spoke out about its population in a disparaging way – no doubt because of the presence of the travellers' camp. Meanwhile, according to the father, the situation had changed for the better to the point that the people of Stadbroek felt discriminated against and rightly so. The holding of a procession would 'go a long way in raising the religious life of these simple people'.

In Overhoven this had already been proven true. Every year on Ascension Day its people set out to the basilica of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in a procession of more than a hundred girls dressed up as little brides, with a multitude of acolytes. Also Kevelaer and St Gerard Majella in Wittem were much frequented places of pilgrimage, the latter highly favoured especially among workers. Schreurs' poem, Procession to Wittem, gives a beautiful picture of such a devotional walk. The biggest annual procession for the Catholics of Overhoven was that of St Rose, on the last Sunday of August. Every family had at least a participant in that prayerful procession. Lastly in Overhoven itself there was a statue of Cornelius (later replaced by a more pompous version) who was invoked against the jitters. 'You could even become a member of his confraternity. Visitors came from all around. From every corner of the city and surroundings the mothers brought their children to have them blessed. They were welcomed with a loud ringing of the bells. Crying children and their loud chatter did not affect the ceremony.'

The patroness of the miners was St Barbara and she had an altar in the church of

Overhoven. Schreurs dedicated his poet's pen to her too. The miners took a day off work on her feast-day (December 4) and went to church in their best clothing together with their families. After Mass a copious lunch followed in the big hall which went on for hours. In the evening people came again to the hall to be entertained by a magician. The militancy of someone like Jacobs and the imaginative power which Schreurs tried to pass on, bred self-esteem and inspiration among the inhabitants of Overhoven-Stadbroek. It encouraged their creative skills. 'In the Overhoven of those days the Infant Jesus never lay in a stable. Zef Dols built rocks and caves, which were sprayed with glittering colours so that it looked like fairyland to all of us. And none of the fathers objected.' That exuberance of display was fully demonstrated at the very first priestly ordination of a boy from Overhoven, the Franciscan, Falco Wagemans, in 1926:

> In those days we simply lived in higher spheres. We were almost too big for our boots. Half of the woods of Limbricht and Tüddern were stripped bare to cover his parents' house in the main street with evergreen and pine branches. Triumphal arches were erected and the green festoons full of colourful paper roses (made and arranged carefully by the girls living nearby) made it something of a fairy-tale between all those flags and pennants. On that day of glory hundreds of red little grease pots flickered around the windows and the gate of the farmstead. All those girls in their white dresses and those poems and those speeches, and all those men 'in tailcoats' with high hats, all that music and all those happy parents and families, with a frail 'brown Father' between them was so much, that as a young girl you did not know what to do with yourself anymore.

It would not end with Falco Wagemans. The parish produced the first MSC in 1945, Wiro Gruijters. Huub and André Gijsberts followed in 1949 and 1955, preceded in 1948 by Karel Veeger. Later, also Brother Toon Janssen and Fathers Lei Jonker and Huub von Peij grew up in this parish.

### *Campaign for a Church*

A striking example of community sense was the building of the new church in Overhoven. At the beginning of the thirties the temporary building dating from 1925 was due for replacement. Schreurs was given the task of raising the enormous capital needed for the construction of a new church. Before his arrival in Overhoven he had worked as a propagandist in Tilburg (1920-22) and he had learnt a thing or two there. Even so without the commitment and willingness of the residents he would get nowhere. A key figure indispensable for the fund- raising campaign was the father of Huub and André Gijsberts. He played the mandolin and set up a mandolin orchestra with Schreurs, the Golden Orioles. Complete with uniforms the club marched through Limburg and Brabant, collecting a lot of money for the building of the church.

The fund-raising made for other lively initiatives. It happened that someone made pasture land available for a big fair which the parishioners organised with

Schreurs. The Mosa factory donated damaged porcelain for a smash stall. From another manufacturer Schreurs obtained many boxes of gingerbread in exchange for a lyric poem on the bread. A wheel of fortune and a brass band were not lacking - everything, setting things up and taking things down, were done by parishioners themselves. On stage 'Young Overhoven' excelled, composed of miners and other young men of the workers' union and Credo Pugno. Set up at the time of the fund-raising campaign, their motto read 'Build where you are, because the action is, where you are.' One evening Schreurs sat down around the table with the group of nine and wrote their first revue at that one sitting. For years the revue of Young Overhoven drew a large audience on carnival Monday (after the carnival parade in Sittard on Sunday). They also organised children's fairs with games, activities, raffles and entertainment. Schreurs managed to collect some paintings with the help of artists. The revue led to serious theatre and the children's fairs to a national lottery. The lottery tickets were expensive, but the prizes to be won were not at all bad. As main prize one could choose between a car and four fat cows. The fathers had managed to get the former cheaply but the cows had not yet been found at the time of the draw. Unfortunately, the farmer from Drenthe who won the first prize chose the cows. He did not accept the four thin ones which the organisation had managed to scrape together, prompting the sale of the car to be able to buy four fat cows.

After all these efforts the corner stone of the church was laid in 1931. The design and furnishing of the church (the altar, the communion rail, the coloured windows) were supported by donations from private individuals and associations. In 1934, the church was opened. The architect was Joseph Wielders who also had designed the former temporary church with adjoining club building and the presbytery.

### *Changes*

In 1937 the provincial council was of the opinion that the favourable results in Overhoven-Stadbroek were an opportunity for a change of personnel. The inhabitants, however, experienced the departure of three fathers as an intolerable loss. Jacobs, who had been living in Overhoven since 1930, moved to the Young Men's Home in Heerlen. Stadbroek was also hit hard by the departure of both fathers, only one of whom was replaced. Van Croonenburg moved to Berg en Dal (rector) and Antoon Smulders was appointed to Brazil. The parishioners of Sittard united to make the provincial superior change his mind. A joint letter from the members of the church council, the Roman Catholic Workers' Union, Credo Pugno, the Men and the Women Solidalities, the Young Guard, the Young Workman, the Football Club and the Drums and Pipes Corps protested at the departure of Van Croonenburg and especially Smulders:

> a big blow to social and sporting life for the only now thriving youth programme in this difficult workers' district, where after all good guidance is so urgently needed.

Another letter originated from the woman head of the community centre. She re-

minded the provincial superior of the approximately 1,300 inhabitants of Stadbroek, consisting of working-class families and some small farmers and traders.

> A third of the population is destitute. Because of the one-sided composition of the population the religious and social work is the more difficult.

It still was hard 'to get a girl from Stadbroek employed by private individuals or in convents as a maid'. She called the simultaneous departure of both priests an absolute 'catastrophe', given 'the many religious and social associations whose continued existence depends mainly on the work of the director or adviser'.

Finally the secretary of the football club let it be known that he would resign. 'Now that our football club is becoming rudderless, where will it run aground? In a non-denominational context I cannot stop this alone.' He reminded the provincial that in the Lenten letter the bishops had forbidden participation of Catholic youngsters in non-denominational clubs. 'And here you have sixty footballers, with their youth lost. Well, what do you make of this as a former missionary?'

The departure of Jacobs had consequences for his involvement with the Sittard Catholic School for Social Work which originated with the Green Cross, a health and hygiene organisation. Vermin had been assigned to replace him as instructor. The director of the school, W. Hillen, stated that Jacobs was not only a good instructor but also someone with great influence on the students. Another point was that he had worked at the school since its establishment.

> There are only two Catholic schools for social work in our country. We have nothing and nobody to go by for immediate orientation. It is a big support to know that Father Jacobs is familiar with the school and able to advise... I do want to impress on you that the scholarly level and the good spirit of our school are determined to a great extent by Fr Molenaar and Fr Jacobs.

In the end it was not as bad for the school as feared. Jacobs did not return to Overhoven until 1950, but he remained connected with the school from Heerlen - temporarily on a lower profile. Both Jacobs and Molenaar only left the school for good when they reached the age of 65 in 1953 and 1954, respectively.

In 1938 the provincial council was told once again that it had been a big mistake to take Smulders away from Stadbroek, but now by their own confrères. Jacobs and Rector Adriaanse reacted to Smulders' unexpectedly quick return from Brazil (for health reasons) and his new appointment to the parish of Eindhoven! In a confidential letter Adriaanse 'expressly and definitely' demanded him back because he appeared 'to have such a hold on the population'. The provincial council replied telling the rector that Smulders had just settled in well and was in the middle of a campaign for a new church. Sittard was told: 'Correcting a mistake (?) by making another mistake is no solution.' With the little question mark council member Verdonk left it open whether the first decision had been wise.

*Schreurs*

After the completion of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Schreurs too moved away from being active in the parish. From 1936 onwards he was given the opportunity to dedicate himself entirely to writing and composing poetry. For Schreurs writing was no diversion but a craft and a vocation and in the latter sense it was also his way to live his priesthood. The opportunity of working quietly benefited his literary productivity very much. His pen produced six novels, fifteen collections of poems (of which three were published posthumously), four biographies and two travel books. In addition his output contains 31 plays, texts for oratorios, film screenplays and a few hundred contributions for various media.

Schreurs was no hermit and he remained active and creative besides his writing. His friendship with Limburg artists who lived frequently in miserable circumstances led him to the idea of setting up a fund so that they did not have to seek their fortune in distant places and deprive Limburg of their talents. Schreurs set up the 'RC Cooperative for Intellectuals and Artists in Limburg', which he called 'The Bridge'. The plan provided for work and shelter, cultural meetings, a theatre group and a monthly magazine. In the end the ambitious project was not a success in spite of the support of the provincial superior, Verhoeven, and Msgr Lemmens, and it all ended in1939 with the liquidation of the foundation. However, the financial loss was largely made up for by Schreurs' income from occasional commissions, which benefited his congregation.

In the war years Schreurs could not remain standing on the side. According to his biographer, Theo Schouw, he had

> not set out to help Jews, refugees and persons in hiding. He certainly did not experience it as a thrilling adventure. It was a new concern from which he could not get away as a priest. Only later did that concern turn out to be called 'resistance'.

On August 19, 1943, Schreurs fell into the hands of the Germans. After a month of detention in Maastricht he was transferred to the prison in Haaren. The Haaren hostage camp had already been moved to Beekvliet, and among others his confrères, Van den Bergh and Van Helvoirt, were there, the future parish priests of Berg en Dal. Schreurs ended up in the notorious Scheveningen prison, nicknamed the 'Orange Hotel'. Instead of the execution that he expected, he was released on February 11, 1944. His friends met him 'skinny, filthy, in his worn out and discoloured soutane', and in his pocket 'a small roll of toilet paper on which he has scratched his cell poems with a nail'. Immediately he started to write again. The Ursulines' convent in Venray, where he had been a welcome guest and even had his own writing shed, had been ruined. In that sad but apposite setting the play, The Man Job, was performed for the first time on Pentecost Day in 1945.

*Molenaar*

Molenaar too continued to publish a lot. In 1951 one of his books came out which somewhat embarrassed the congregation. In The Holy Illusion Molenaar presented an alter ego (Father Godfried ten Hagen) and described his disappointments with respect to the religious community. The provincial council knew of Molenaar's criticisms – mediocrity through the absence of a truly religious atmosphere and a lack of spiritual renewal – but so far he had made these known only by letter. Now, so to say, the criticism was out in the streets. Provincial superior, Van Erp, felt called upon to add to the book a so-called concluding chapter. He went along with Molenaar's pseudo-fiction and wrote a letter to 'the superior of Father Godfried ten Hagen'. It is not known whether Van Erp meant to bring his 'concluding chapter' into the open or that his response had been intended only for Molenaar himself. The typescript is enclosed in the copy of *The Holy Illusion* in the archives of the congregation.

> The mistake that Father Godfried makes is not that there are religious communities which live a surrogate of the religious life nor that the community to which he belongs does not perhaps take religious life serious, but that he does not look for the source of that half-heartedness in a reckless yielding to the so-called demands of work.

'The father could do with some self-criticism' was the opinion of the provincial who also defended himself against Molenaar's attack on his administration:

> It is true that superiors must not stick to the letter of the law, sometimes they must be mild in allowing exceptions, but nonetheless the standard must always be: the greater spiritual advantage of the community or of the individual and not human cowardice which is not up to living out integrally the religious obligations.

Just like many other highly talented MSCs, Molenaar often went his own way. That brought him into collisions with the provincial council which he experienced as faultfinding. His superiors saw it as guarding his boundaries. 'Otherwise you drift completely to the margin of the MSC', it was said in 1930. Also outside the congregation, judging by the characterization which Hillen gave of him, he tended towards keeping his distance. During the long time she worked with him in the Sittard school for social work the lady director had got to know him as someone who 'in spite of all his connections, all his work, is a loner, who lived solely with his God'. For his literary merits Molenaar was knighted and made an honorary citizen of Sittard. However, before everything else he saw himself as a religious. In spite of all his criticism Molenaar stayed in the congregation which granted him, just like Schreurs, sufficient space. His position as editor of Vocation was questioned more than once by his superiors, but nevertheless his congregation permitted him – reluctantly or otherwise – to stay with it, for more than forty years.

*Attached to the Congregation*

Molenaar died in 1969. Schreurs had preceded him in 1966. Their confrère and model in Limburg, Jacobs, died in 1961 - his heart had not only been burned up, just as his death notice mentioned, but it had also been broken. At least that is what Colsen claimed. On his deathbed Jacobs had apparently deplored that Limburg was slowly but surely abandoning his ideal, 'the world of labour to Christ, the king of labour'. For that reason Jacobs had been a great proponent of the lay apostolate:

> We must build a new Christianity in our time. In the secular field lay people carry full responsibility; only they can Christianise the entire society. So they must do it.

He saw it as a task of the priests to mobilise the laity. This idea, which Jacobs expressed in 1947, was entirely in line with the Una Sancta work of his congregation that was thriving elsewhere in the Netherlands. His confrère, Hermans, in Overhoven, had helped in setting up the Una Sancta in Rotterdam. Hermans linked both work areas by offering a vacation in Limburg to a group of people from Rotterdam. In the post war years Overhoven welcomed 'a procession of children of dock workers and of poor or exhausted families from Rotterdam', who were accommodated at different addresses. The exchange turned out to be so successful that some remained in Overhoven and met their partners in life there.

Overhoven and the MSCs had grown attached to each other. The vocations for the congregation from this locality, mentioned earlier, witness to that. From the beginning the fathers had organized three-day retreats for the people in Spaubeek, Venlo and Heerlen. The parish numbered more than fifty female propagandists who committed themselves in various ways to the Little Work of Charity. For years money for the missions was earned by concocting, whenever necessary, 'a short play in the local dialect, which added lustre to all First Communion parties, all weddings, including golden and silver jubilees' according to a female resident who was there from the beginning.

The mission was present in the flesh in the person of Brother Jan Maas (1860-1938). After his missionary time in the Gilbert Islands, Maas came to reinforce the team in Overhoven. 'When you had done writing jobs in the fathers' house for an entire afternoon or had worked in another way, he brought you a cup of bad coffee for a boost and rewarded you, although you were already a grown-up girl, with a sugary little picture bordered with lacework.' That did not take anything away from his adventurous past and long white beard which spoke powerfully to the imagination. Father Leo Vorachen managed to further the enthusiasm of the people of Overhoven for the foreign work of the MSCs. For instance as a community they adopted a Filipino seminarian whose studies for the priesthood study they partly paid for. They even started a campaign 'Help the Filipinos to a brass band!' By selling thousands of self-made pins at an archery festival they collected 3,000 guilders. With that money instruments were bought in Limburg at a reasonable price, until a complete brass band outfit had been put together. The Overhoven consignment became

one of the most curious cargoes that the mission procurement office was given to process.

*Stadbroek*

Up to 1950, Overhoven and Stadbroek together formed one pastoral unit but there was little interaction between the two areas. Both were centuries old hamlets and this made them prefer to remain independent of each other. The MSCs respected that by giving both places their resident priests. Stadbroek, however poor and small, had a spirit of its own, but Overhoven predominates in the historical records. The situation changed only when Stadbroek stepped out of the shadow of Overhoven by having a church with a rector of its own. What is more, the development of Stadbroek progressed only after the Second World War. Previously miner families and casual workers had taken up residence there, but in the crisis years they were the first to lose their jobs. The opening of the Maurits coal mine and related industries after the war changed all this.

Yet in 1946 it was still a dark, disconsolate district according to the journalist, Will Poulssen, who came to live there at the time. The temporary wooden church was still in use. It had become dilapidated and the fund-raising did not make much headway among the poverty-stricken population. Wout van Wijngaarden, parish priest of Stadbroek since 1947, asked the bishop's permission to allow the two fathers to say more than one Mass on Sundays and feast days. Up to a hundred and fifty adults and a hundred children fitted into the small church of St Joseph, while the parish as a whole numbered more than 1,600 Catholics.

That number could only increase after Sittard expanded again with the building of a big housing complex. The new housing development included 250 units which were located within the parish boundaries. Moreover the school administration of Sittard assigned a school to Stadbroek. There had only been a small nursery school which was bursting at the seams because there were 120 children. The older children (around 250 in 1948) had to attend school outside Stadbroek. Van Wijngaarden made a case for improving facilities, including those of the church. There was already a building for the Catholic youth group and a community centre, but what happened to the plans for the parish priest's house, the curate's accommodation and the health building? In 1950, he requested the bishop to make Stadbroek a rectorate of its own, separate from Overhoven. This was granted, but Van Wijngaarden himself did not experience the renovations. He fell seriously ill and died on May 27, 1950.

His successor Bart Kockelkoren conferred with architect H. J. Palmen from Sittard, regarding the construction of the new church. At the same time Palmen had been made responsible for the two new schools which were to be established in Stadbroek. After a number of months Palmen had his first design ready which pleased the MSCs very much, but another architect lodged a protest. The latter had already made a sketch years earlier at the request of Father Jan Klein-Bluemink. The

Episcopal Building Board threw the design of Palmen into the wastepaper basket because of a lack of 'church ambience' and judged that his fellow architect was entitled to a fee for his sketch. With great reluctance Kockelkoren transferred the amount to the claimant: 'Five hundred guilders raised for a new church by poor people. Good luck to you!'

It did not do the relationship with the diocese any good. For twenty years Stadbroek had saved for a church, and now Roermond delayed its completion. The Episcopal Building Board had invited five architects to submit a design. The rector proposed a meeting in Sittard so that candidates could see the site and the developed surroundings for themselves, but the board opted for Roermond. A half year after Palmen (free of charge) had returned his commission, Kockelkoren was finally summoned to Roermond. Once again disappointment awaited him. After the board had made him wait for hours, it became clear at the meeting that two board members knew nothing of an appointment with the architects so that a decision was to be suspended.

Eventually the choice fell on J. H. A. Huijsmans from Maastricht. The municipality of Sittard promised to shoulder a quarter of the construction costs and one-fifth of the furnishing costs of the church. After some pressure the diocese subsidised one half. On March 13, 1952, the shovel was put into the ground and a month later the next setback occurred. While digging into the soil workers had run up against quicksand. As a result, construction costs became much higher than planned. A solution for the budget problem was offered collectively by the diocese, the municipality, the civil authorities of Limburg, the State Mines and Orange-Nassau Mines.

In 1954, the church was ready for use. The parish population was then about 1,800 souls (not yet half of that of Overhoven), among them many miners who moved into the new housing district. The boys school designed by the architect Palmen had been there for a couple of years and his girls school was built by 1955. (The schools were combined in 1976.) As first rector, Kockelkoren took part in their planning and guided the construction activities for nine years. In 1959, he was succeeded by Frans Louwers.

Both Louwers and his successor, Henk Arts, worked in the parish with much satisfaction. Mainly poorly educated people lived in Stadbroek. From the intellectual point of view there was not much of a challenge to the fathers, but much more on the human level. Stadbroekers wore their hearts on their sleeves and for Arts that was a welcome and instructive experience. Having come in 1968 as rector he became formally the parish priest four years later at the elevation of the rectorate to the parish of St Joseph. (Overhoven became a parish in 1972 as well.) Since 1965, Jan Vink was involved in the pastoral work until he became in 1971 full-time moderator and teacher at the local secondary vocational training school. Henk Tolboom worked at a nursing home for the elderly and assisted in the parish. Beside his liturgical and catechetical tasks Arts had a pivotal role in parish associations like The Sunflower and the children's choir. Besides, he maintained personal contacts with

his parishioners. The church attendance painted a dark picture. In 1977, more than three thousand parishioners were registered, of whom only ten per cent went to church regularly. But the non-churchgoers did appreciate contacts with Arts outside the church and by way of home visits and sick calls. Through such contacts the parish priest often noticed how deep-seated the inferiority complex of the people was who had lived for years and years in the deprived neighbourhood.

In 1980, Jan van Maanen took office as parish priest. The parish as such ceased to exist in 1998, after which Van Maanen became parish priest of Overhoven. Besides his parishes, Van Maanen had always been committed to the pastoral school in Limburg and he defended the interests of pastoral lay workers.

The travellers' camp fell outside the parish of St Joseph and had its own pastor with whom Arts got on well. At marriages or funerals the priests from St Joseph's church stepped in, but for the rest there was not much contact with Stadbroek. In 1968, the travellers' camp got the status of regional centre.

### *Eindhoven-Tivoli*

The third MSC church served by a rector showed many similarities with that of Overhoven-Stadbroek. For instance in Eindhoven too its establishment followed a development project in the area. It was here in 1929 that Philips built a housing complex on the territory of Geldrop. The workers district lay close to the boundary of Eindhoven and was named Tivoli after the villa of the same name which was its most striking feature. At first more than five hundred houses were built and at a later stage the number increased to about fifteen hundred. For the spiritual care of the future inhabitants Msgr Van Diepen set up a pastoral unit served by a rector with full parochial service on October 28, 1929. It was not surprising that he offered it to the MSC. Van Diepen had already concluded a similar contract with the congregation for Berg en Dal

In November 1929, Fathers Gerard Baptist and Adriaan van Dinter and Brothers Leo Maka and Jac. De Visser established themselves in the Leeuwenstraat where two adjacent premises had been bought. Religious services were temporarily held there until March 30, 1930, when they could put into use a small temporary church dedicated to St Joseph. Built of wood, straw and cement it got the popular name of Mission Church, partly perhaps because the primary school was housed there under primitive circumstances. The mainly new residents were, however, happy that they could let their children go to school at all. In December the FDNSC sisters established themselves in the Leeuwenstraat opposite the MSCs and opened a nursery school.

After this dynamic start, the undertaking soon had to cope with a big disappointment. Under pressure from the economic crisis, Philips decided in the course of 1930 to leave it for the time being at 512 houses. To guarantee the continued existence of his church, Baptist looked for ways to expand the work. That was badly needed. In the diary of the church he noted:

> Unfortunately in the last months the decline is all too swift and noticeable. Today mid-October, 153 houses and 4 shops are empty and there are 80 people without work. Many have gone back to their country or place of origin, others to Strijp or Woensel, in as much as the house rent, electricity, water and living costs over there are cheaper. Others are still on the look-out for work elsewhere, yet continue to live here on half rent and with support from fund and municipality in the hope that it will improve some time.

Baptist succeeded in 1931 to add part of the parish of St Gerard in Eindhoven to his area of responsibility, and in 1933 the boundaries moved still further into Eindhoven. This meant that the church, which was no longer centrally situated in the new area, had to be moved. In July 1933, Baptist's successor, Jan van den Bergh, bought a portion of a building site in Eindhoven. Now that the pastoral unit was no longer under the deanery of Geldrop but under that of Eindhoven, there was a powerful impetus to get on with the construction work.

*Expansion*

The church, manned by three fathers and two brothers, developed one activity after another. Jozef Vliegen, known as 'a mild and humble man', took on the pastoral care of the travellers camp. In 1929, a lung sickness had forced him to leave the mission of Kei and he ended up in Eindhoven. From 1930 up to 1951 he was the well-loved chaplain of the travellers people. Others marginalized by society also found him to have a sympathetic ear. From 1951 these were chiefly Moluccans, so familiar to him, who came to the Netherlands at the time and were sent from one camp to another.

Besides rendering assistance and paying visits far and wide, which boosted the reputation as well as the means of the fathers, they handled the matters of their own church in a systematic way, starting with the foundation of the Little Work of Charity. Every family was asked to contribute a ten-cent piece per week. No small amount, but it benefited all objectives for which otherwise separate collections were to be made. In 1932, the MSCs set their sights on youth work. Van den Berg said in 1932: 'Although the number of boys and girls in our area suitable for a Catholic youth group is still very small, indeed too small, we can no longer wait as both the non-denominational (in fact socialist) Youth Association and the non-denominational Neighbourhood Association of Tivoli are trying to persuade or have already persuaded our children by means of playground, football, gymnastics and handicrafts in the Eindhoven Municipal Building (Thijmplein)'. For this reason the MSCs of Tivoli started in 1934 with a building for clubs and a playground with the melodious name 'Roman Catholic Joy'. The ten-cent piece per week mentioned earlier entitled the entire family to membership, which included use of the playground, access to films, stage plays and festivities like those on St Nicolas' Day or special summer feasts. In addition, starting in 1940, members received a monthly magazine Roman Catholic Joy, a varied and accessible newsletter for the entire family.

The school in Tivoli continued to exist as a school for girls, while the boys were sent to a school taken over from the parish of St Gerard. On the new building site a nursery school was to be built first, in 1934, because that was the greatest need in the area blessed with many children. The year after, in spite of the crisis, a parish building got off the ground; in 1937 a convent for the Sisters, in 1938 a girls school and two years later a boys school. Meanwhile in December 1937 a new rector had taken office, Antoon Tillemans. Coming from Overhoven-Stadbroek, where he had been rector for five years, Tillemans knew how to crack the whip. As rector of Tivoli he devoted himself to the final building, a church. It was built by De Beer, the MSCs' resident architect, and was ready for use in May 1941.

*Parish Life*

In the crisis years the resources for a new church were definitely not available. Without a thriving parish life and all the associations (Sodality of Mary, Holy Family, Young Guard, etc.) that belonged to it, the construction would not have been viable. The situation was very similar to that in Overhoven, where a little earlier the same feat had been achieved. The area in Brabant was likewise characterised by a close-knit social community and a culture fond of festivities. For the benefit of the construction of the church a 'Flemish Fair' was organized on the playground. Tivoli enlisted Fr Schreurs for a promotional poem which was printed on a postcard and proved to be excellent propaganda. The parishioners acquitted themselves well. After High Mass they went around to sell so-called small building blocks, religious pictures and other devotional objects. Everyone contributed something. Big amounts for church construction came in through a contribution system for founders (five hundred guilders), benefactors (one hundred) and donors (ten). Certificates of appreciation carrying the names of the founders were built into the high altar and for fifty years a monthly Mass was said for them. The benefactors received that honour for only ten years.

In 1942, the Germans requisitioned the parish building. The brothers and older fathers were lodged at the sisters' place; the younger ones were taken in by parishioners. As early as September 18, 1944, Eindhoven was liberated, although the city was still hit by a bombardment the following day. Tivoli came out of it safely. In 1945, Janus Vollenberg took over as rector and Tillemans returned for good to Sittard. He had a fatal accident there in 1955 when he collided with a bus for miners.

Tivoli had profited from the ample experience which Tillemans had acquired in Sittard before he took over. More cross-pollination occurred between the two parishes. For instance, Schreurs contributed to the funding campaign for the church but the biggest impact was the arrival of Antoon Smulders. Stadbroek had done everything in 1937 to keep the young and popular curate, but his appointment to Brazil held firm. However, Smulders could not stand it there for long and health problems forced him to leave Brazil in 1938. Back in the Netherlands he was assigned to Tivoli.

While he had made himself highly popular in Limburg, particularly at the football club, Smulders proved again in Eindhoven that he had the gift of dealing with young people. Shortly before the war he formed a boys'choir and in addition he took over the baton of the already existing men's choir. Musically speaking Smulders did not have to build up the choir from zero. Unemployment had resulted in various members putting their energy into singing for years and rehearsing had benefited the quality. Discipline was not as good but the new choirmaster changed that. He combined the church choir with his one hundred strong boys' choir and managed to forge it into a fabulous whole. He himself had discovered music as a boy and full of enthusiasm he could now transfer that love to the boys of Tivoli. A difference was that in the apostolic school Smulders had experienced an ideal social climate for music. These boys were less docile and more exposed to temptations in post-war Eindhoven. By regularly organising trips and other means he succeeded in holding on to them. Gradually he could make increasingly higher demands, not only in the musical area but also where it concerned commitment. His own commitment was without bounds and commanded everybody's respect.

*Self-Awareness*

Partly due to the choir which grew bigger and more professional, church attendance at St Joseph's was so high that the fourteen hundred seats proved not enough. At the same time due to the burgeoning of Philips after the Second World War, the number of parishioners had greatly expanded. While there were around a thousand in 1930, in 1952 the number had gone up to some ten thousand. It had even become necessary to establish a group of people responsible for order, under the name 'Respect in God's House', to make attendance at Mass run smoothly. A newly founded parish (St John Bosco) in the neighbourhood offered some relief, as it meant that three thousand people became the responsibility of that parish.

The Tivoli choir acquired national fame by way of radio and gramophone recordings. It travelled abroad as well on annual concert tours. For Smulders the biggest triumph was the series of concerts held in Rome during the Holy Year of 1950. The Dutch Association of St Gregory had recommended the Tivoli choir as the representative of Dutch church music. St Maria Maggiore, St John Lateran, Radio Roma and Radio Vaticana and even a packed St Peter's during the papal audience, formed the concert podia. At that last occasion the pope halted in front of the choir and he even conducted the last bars of the 'Cantate Domino' of Pitoni. In that same year Smulders received a papal decoration, followed in 1965 by a knighthood in his own country and in 1969 by a decoration from the city of Eindhoven.

The choir was the pride of Tivoli, the cultural signboard that enabled the working-class neighbourhood to express itself with distinction. Not only did the successes advance the self-awareness of a people used to being looked down at, but the choir also raised the social cohesion of the neighbourhood. The sense of community had its reflection on the MSCs, as could be clearly seen in 1954. That year the

congregation celebrated its centenary and the church of Tivoli its silver jubilee. The parishioners celebrated this with a feast lasting no less than ten days. Near the church they laid out a special feast path, the Silver Path, that led along a string of activities.

The parish priest at the time was Piet Hermans, who was highly esteemed by parishioners for his spontaneity and energy. In addition, the Eindhoven team consisted of Fathers Herman Smarius and Wiro Gruijters. Ordained in 1945, Gruijters worked initially for Una Sancta in The Hague. Next he did a stint of parish work in Stadbroek lasting for three years and in 1952 he came to Eindhoven. In 1956 Gruijters established the Community Foundation of Tivoli, that had a building of its own from which it promoted and coordinated not only specific religious activities but also cultural and social events.. A series of volunteers assisted him.

In the sixties the community centre of Tivoli offered also accommodation to staff of all kinds of associations, to the health service, a female social worker, the music school, the theatre club, and one could go in for sports, painting and chess. All these initiatives and new activities, however, did not translate themselves into a thriving church life.

Tivoli experienced a steady decline in church attendance in the sixties, a trend which could not be reversed. Candidates for the religious life and priesthood were no more. The consequence was that parishes were combined and priests had to occupy themselves more and more with organisational structures. This could be noticed in the MSC areas of work. Just to give the example of Eindhoven: Jan Janssen became rector in Tivoli in 1969 and likewise superior of the MSC community in Eindhoven. Smarius and Hermans left for Overhoven, where the latter being rector at first became the parish priest in 1972. Janssen became parish priest of the parish of St Pius X in Eindhoven in 1982 and was succeeded as superior by Groenen, while Wim Vergouwen became the team leader of the Tivoli parish. Gert Leek took office as parish priest of the St Gerard Majella parish in 1982. Huub Hessing succeeded Vergouwen as parish priest of Tivoli in 1990 and in 1996 exchanged positions with Jacques Alkemade, then parish priest of the Parish of St Martin in Arnhem. Alkemade was the last MSC parish priest in Eindhoven. In 2004, he had to step down for health reasons. After he left Gruijters was the only MSC in Eindhoven.

### *New Ways*

The parishes described in this book were not the only MSC parishes in the Netherlands. As late as the last decades of the twentieth century the Dutch Province still accepted parish work, but in those cases it always involved taking over (and phasing out) already long-established communities. In the three places discussed above the MSCs had to start parishes themselves, to build up the pastoral work from the ground. It resulted in an interaction, by which the fathers and their parishioners inspired each other to great deeds.

Up to the war the sense of community revolved very strongly around the church and events associated with it. After the war an increase of activities outside the church took place and the Dutch moved more and more beyond the familiar socio-political divisions. A new way of looking at power relationships developed in the sixties – even within the church itself! – which prompted a discussion of hierarchy and submission. Ideals such as autonomy, freedom, personal choice and responsibility were catching on. This was accompanied on the one hand by secularisation and the exodus from the once crowded churches, and on the other hand it spurred the believers on to a more critical and consciously lived faith. Ton Zwart:

> In the period after the Second Vatican Council a great effort was made to bring thinking in line with the dynamics of modern times. It resulted in a changing image of the human person, of the church and of God. In the Dutch Church we had the Council of Noordwijkerhout and the response from the central administration of the Catholic Church in Rome which called a halt to liberal tendencies by means of appointments of bishops.

This brought about tensions for the MSCs: in themselves, in their religious communities and in their parishes. It did not change much for the parishioners, though, and people continued to leave the Church.

Letting-go of traditional ways meant that clergy and lay people had to rediscover being Church together. The consequence was an enormous range of initiatives among the MSCs also. The diversity is too great for them to be treated within the scope of this book, and they came about in a past which is still too recent for one to be able to describe them adequately. Two experiments of group living were for example Effeta and Chesed. In both communities a few MSCs lived with people who were in social need. Others, such as Jan van der Zandt and the former MSC, Gerrit Poels, set up their social work outside the religious community. After leaving in 1969, Poels acquired the reputation of the 'bread pastor', providing bread for homeless people and beggars. Van der Zandt committed himself in 1981 to the nation-wide apostolate among travellers.

It was not only outside the old parish structure that MSCs developed initiatives. In the last decades of the twentieth century more and more proved possible within that structure as well. For instance in his 't Zand parish in Tilburg, Theo te Wierik MSC, founded a work experience project for underprivileged young people at the end of the eighties and in his next parish the Vlaspit, also in Tilburg, a 'resocialisation' project (The Living Room) for ex-psychiatric patients.

# Epilogue

Many congregations bear the name of a founder, a certain saint or a geographical place. Also references to specific activities are much in evidence. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart have first and foremost Christ at their very centre: his heart, the core of his existence as the Son of God become man.

The venerations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart were genuine popular devotions in 19th century France, and they also struck a chord in the Netherlands. The immense popularity of the confraternity which Chevalier and his companions set up, testifies to this. 'May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved' was the motto that Chevalier gave to his congregation. At first it seemed to refer to the propagation of the devotion, but the founder never grew tired of pointing out that the devotion was a means to a higher purpose: to convince people of the merciful love of God. He believed that only this could combat the indifference and selfishness which he considered as the evils of his time.

Chevalier found the Pope on his side. Pius IX (1846-1878) opposed liberalism in which he saw those evils embodied and Leo XIII (1878-1903) advocated an expansionary Catholicism; the Church had to conduct an offensive to civilise the world. Christ was the only way and the only truth and outside the Church no salvation was possible. It was to missionary activity that had been assigned the important task of converting pagans, an urgent matter. In the Netherlands, where since the Reformation, Catholics had been made to understand that they must keep subdued, the missionary ideal had a strong appeal. In their own country people looked down upon them, but overseas in the missions they could show what they had to offer.

The early missionaries, just like the founder of the congregation, acted out of a rockfast belief in God's plan. It was God's work of which they were the instruments. Precisely because they themselves believed that it was no human work, they could move mountains. The primitive and difficult circumstances, under which for example the brothers worked in the nineteenth century, could only be borne if one had a deep-seated and living faith.

Faith was nurtured by spiritual exercises and devotions. Till far into the twentieth century the veneration of the Sacred Heart retained a strongly nineteenth century character, with elements which went still further back. In the eyes of later generations of Catholics an emphasis on reparation and on self-sanctification gave a certain gloominess and heaviness to the devotion. To illustrate this Ben Verberne mentions 'the severe image of Christ above the altar' in the chapel of Driehuis,' to

which Margaret Mary Alacoque, John Eudes and Jules Chevalier looked up with large frightened eyes'. This was difficult to reconcile with a spirituality of humaneness and intimacy. According to the latter the Sacred Heart is the wounded, pierced heart of Christ that radiates his dedication, personal surrender and solidarity with others. He shared in being human and showed that God is with people. 'God's last word to the world, to people, was the opened heart of Christ', according to Antoon de Graauw. The gospel, the good news, is ultimately 'a message of love. God waits for every person, whoever he is, with love.'

It did not appeal to all MSCs to single out the heart. Change in this regard came for many by a return to the sources. This stripped cultural and time-determined elements away from the core of what Chevalier meant in an attempt to make that core viable in a new time and in another culture. In this regard the publications and conferences of Father General, Eugene Cuskelly (1969-1981), have been a revelation to many an MSC. Within the Dutch Province Jan Bovenmars engaged intensively with this return to the sources. In making the devotion to the Sacred Heart the core of the apostolate of the MSCs, he found his older confrère, Antoon Munsters, opposed to him. The latter made it clear to Bovenmars that in good MSC tradition the devotion to the Sacred Heart was something personal but outwardly one adhered to the general teaching of the Church, i.e., in the apostolate to the policy of the diocese in which one worked. In the view of Bovenmars it was precisely Munsters and his companions who deviated from Chevalier's tradition of leading people to the Sacred Heart as to the source, the only cure for indifference.

The heart may be a splendid symbol or source for one, but for another it is all about the whole person of Jesus, without having any need of a specific spirituality of the heart. For example, Jos van de Linden says: 'Try to be consistently good and to do good things, that IS the spirituality of the Heart. I don't need Jules Chevalier for that very much'.

The common denominator remains that the MSCs unanimously take it as their task to be people with a heart for people. That compassion, that empathy, is already found in the earliest missionary brothers. Another essential characteristic of the MSC is contained in the motto of the founder - the willingness to go wherever one is needed. The congregation has always refused to confine itself to a specific work or to restrict itself to a geographical area. On the individual level this meant that it was not exceptional to have a series of divergent appointments to different places in one's lifetime. This demanded the necessary flexibility. For the brothers especially this was further put to the test, as far as their work was concerned, by the ideal of 'ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari' – Love to be unknown and to be counted for nothing. Until 1969 the brothers were formally second class, while the fathers constituted the first class. Here the saying 'all monks wear the same cowl' (same rights and treatment for all) did not apply. The congregation had been founded by secular priests, who chose to live in community but kept their sights outwards. Their apostolate lay in the world. The outside activities were in conflict sometimes with the community life which one was considered to lead inside. The religious spirit was

especially embodied by the brothers because of the nature of their activities.

The MSC has always been an active congregation. Study, prayer and meditation were certainly important, but it had also to serve the active life. 'The Eucharist is a Do-sacrament: Do this in memory of me,' according to Walter Grol. 'That has been my way of understanding it, the way I want to see it.' In the missions serious effort was put into making oneself familiar with the languages and studying cultures in order to transmit the Christian message as well as possible. The Dutch MSCs did not rush into baptising people and they tried to navigate a course independent of the secular powers. In Indonesia frictions occurred with the Dutch government, and when the Dutch left the country under Indonesian pressure, the missionaries stayed. They had committed themselves to the people and they did not want to leave them behind. That was also very strongly the case in Brazil and in the Philippines. The option for the poor put the MSCs there in diametrical opposition to dictatorial rulers. The solidarity with the population expressed itself also in acknowledging their own place. The training of people from the country itself and the transfer of the work to them were started at an early stage and eventually resulted in the establishment of independent provinces.

Whereas the Church and the MSC provinces in Indonesia, the Philippines and Brazil thrived, the Netherlands was becoming a mission country. The hierarchical structure of the Church and obedience as the highest Christian virtue were being challenged in the Netherlands since the Second Vatican Council. The religious discarded their religious attire, priests stepped off their pedestal and were assessed no longer according to their office but according to the way they lived. The MSCs involved in ministry were in the midst of it. One underwent a crisis of faith, another felt challenged in a positive sense, but however much they listened (instead of the preaching of earlier times), they were not able to stem the process of 'unchurching'. The MSCs were no exception to the national trend. Thirty MSC priests left the priesthood in the sixties and no less than 49 scholastics and 47 novices stopped their training. The provincial council tried to steer a middle course whereby representatives of divergent and sometimes outright opposing views could continue to feel at home. Especially through the Una Sancta work the Dutch Province had contacts in ecumenical circles. In 1966, together with confrères, Kees Braun prepared Una Sancta for ecumenism and did the same afterwards in Rotterdam as the vicar general of Bishop Jansen. In 1974, he became head of religious affairs at the KRO/RKK, the Catholic Broadcasting Corporation, and in the period 1981-1993 he was superior general of the congregation.

Since the seventies the internal policy of the Dutch Province has been directed at the increasing numbers of older MSCs in the Netherlands. There had to be facilities to provide for this. Houses were closed and competent staff was recruited in cooperation with the FDNSC sisters who were experiencing the same problem. The promotion of spirituality is another spearhead of common policy, directed both internally and externally. An example of the latter is the Missionary Service Centre of Tilburg set up by both congregations. Welfare recipients and refugees have the

opportunity to follow courses, language classes and to reflect on the art of living. As well as a few professional employees a large group of volunteers is involved. Another example is the initiative of Theo te Wierik, again shared with the FDNSC sisters, to form groups of Chevalier associates who want to live the spirituality of the heart. The initiative has established a sufficient foothold in Arnhem, Sittard and Tilburg.

Kees Braun went from Rome to Issoudun, from the administrative centre of the congregation to the spiritual centre that took shape under his leadership. It carries the name 'Cor Novum' (New Heart) and all three congregations related to Chevalier are participants. In 1999 Braun was succeeded by Mark McDonald as director and Braun went to the MSC parish of the Hoefstraat in Tilburg where a pastoral team lived community life as the basis for their parochial mission. The Epheta community has existed in Tilburg since 1979, which is also open to non-MSCs to experience community life for a while. In Nijmegen, Chesed was set up, a socially-oriented community on the basis of biblical charity and fidelity and open to troubled young people..

To a great extent the old religious institutes have had their day. For the Dutch MSC Province as such there is humanly speaking no future. It lives on, however, in the young provinces which it founded: the MSC provinces in Brazil, Indonesia and the Philippines. It remains involved with these offsprings - a number of Dutch MSCs still work there. The Dutch Province itself is being phased out. The Mission House in Tilburg will change hands and its occupants will move to several communities.

Not only the Dutch Province but also the other MSC provinces in Europe are in a process of disengagement. Cooperation between the provinces seems obvious and has been put into action. A new initiative is the establishment of an inter-provincial European MSC community, which began in October 2005 in the United Kingdom. The Belgian and Irish provinces are represented, as well as the Dutch in the person of Ton Zwart.

As long as there are human needs, missionary work does not stop. A missionary ideal that is nourished by charity and love will always manage to touch the hearts of people. That spirituality is being given shape in different ways. In the words of Jacques Janssen, 'It must be made one's own ever anew, each time getting other accents. The Spirit of God is free.'

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