



Statue of Our Lady in procession on October 13, 1967.

This is my first report on the Around the World trip, which I am dictating just an hour before departure for Athens from Rome. I am not going to try and tell this in any particular sequence. So far, we have delivered three Statues—the first in Berlin, the second in Prague and the third was taken, yesterday, into the Holy Father's residence at the Vatican where the Holy Father blessed it and kept it over night. We don't expect anything on the entire trip to surpass the experiences in

Berlin and in Prague. Yes, there maybe bigger crowds and greater enthusiasm, but certainly the delivery of the Statue could not have greater significance than it did in Berlin where the Pilgrim Virgin never before entered and where we carried the Statue to the Wall. After an uproarious welcome on the part of Berliners at the Templehof Airport we went to the Church of St. Mathias where a delegation was waiting to receive the Statue. The joy of our own people (constituting

Father John Loya in the procession on October 13th. Altogether there were some 300 members of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima from the United States present at the October 13th ceremonies.



Who could ever have ima

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Tense Delivery

by John M. Haffert

a rather sizeable crowd, as you would know, if you saw them altogether in one immense dining room—108 strong) and their enthusiasm at seeing Our Lady's Statue carried to the Wall, plus the impact of the first view of the Wall which is always a shock to Westerners, caught the hearts of everyone with a moment of triumphant hope as they recalled Our Lady's promise: "Russia will be converted and there will be Peace."

INCREDULOUS

Just beyond the Wall, the Red Guards stared incredulously from their Watchtower.

At seven o'clock in the evening, the Bishop of Fatima, assisted by two American priests on the Pilgrimage, said a Pontifical Mass before an overflowing crowd at St. Mathias Church. The Statue of Our Lady was magnificently enshrined in the sanctuary, surrounded by flowers and candles. After the Mass

107 members of the Blue Army of Our Lady, with the Bishop of Fatima in their midst, pose on the steps of the International Center of the Blue Army at Fatima on October 13th, the eve of their departure to carry the Pilgrim Virgin to various nations of the world.



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in the saying of the Rosary and the singing of the Fatima hymn?

the Pastor, the Right Reverend Monsignor Schutte, in his address of welcome said: "You have brought into our midst the image of the Queen of Peace. All Berliners are grateful." Speaking for the Bishop of Fatima, the Reverend J. M. Schmitz, of Portland, Oregon, expressed the joy that the entire pilgrimage experienced being the bearers of this image of the Queen of Peace to the city of Berlin, a city where the East-West conflict has come so often to the explosive edge of Atomic War. As he neared the end of his address Father Schmitz' voice broke, and there was hardly a dry eye in the entire church. There followed an hour known in Germany as the "Marian Watch" which consisted of the slow recitation of the Rosary with meditations between the Mysteries followed by Benediction of the Blessed

Sacrament. The Berliners lingered in the church, surrounding the Statue of Our Lady, some openly crying.

PRAGUE

Some of the 108 persons on the Tour said that if they had to turn back at this moment and not deliver another Statue to another Country, the whole Pilgrimage would still have been a success.

But what happened the next day in Prague was so incredible, and so wonderful, that almost all the Pilgrimage echoed that same sentiment.

We had all been surprised that the Communist Government gave visas to everyone, including the Bishop of Fatima, and landing rights for our plane. We asked ourselves: "Can it be so easy to carry an image of Our Lady of Fatima publicly into the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, whose conversion She promised fifty years ago?"

However, the Communists had plans to render our entire visit totally hopeless and impotent.

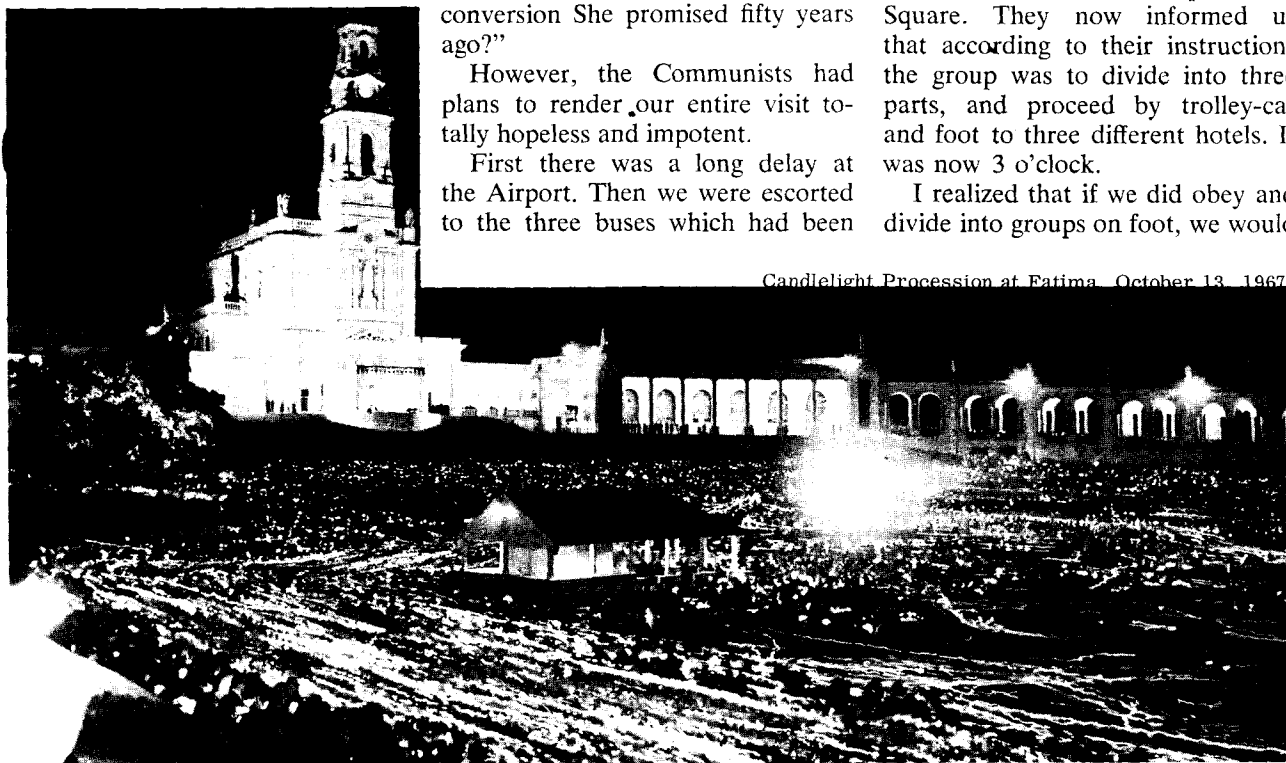
First there was a long delay at the Airport. Then we were escorted to the three buses which had been

waiting for us for over two hours. Of course, we expected the buses to follow the schedule which we had outlined more than a month before, and which was entirely prepaid—namely, a tour of the city of Prague, and then Mass at the Church of the Holy Infant, and finally rooming at our hotel.

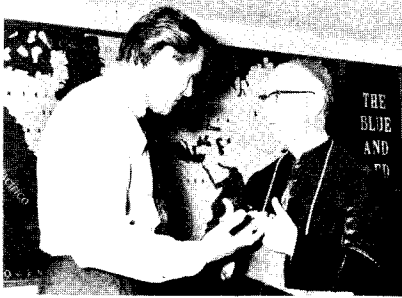
To our surprise, one bus after the other arrived at a small Square in the Heart of the City and all the passengers, all the luggage, and the Statue were discharged into the street and the buses went away.

There were four guides attached to our service. One of them admitted that she thought the buses were going to take us to the hotels. But the other three, as we learned in the course of the afternoon, had been given instructions to wait at their homes at their telephones and then, at about 2 o'clock, they were notified to come to this particular Square. They now informed us that according to their instructions the group was to divide into three parts, and proceed by trolley-car and foot to three different hotels. It was now 3 o'clock.

I realized that if we did obey and divide into groups on foot, we would



Candlelight Procession at Fatima, October 13, 1967



Against the background of the world, John Haffert discusses details of the Around-the-World trip with the Bishop of Fatima on the eve of departure. Just visible over the Bishop's shoulder are the words, The Blue And The Red World. Lines on the map in the background go forth from centers of Communist power to different parts of the world, and from centers of the Blue Army of Our Lady, promoting the Message of Fatima through the world.

have no transportation in Prague to take the Statue anywhere. Taxis are so scarce that later in the evening, when we did need one cab, it took over an hour to get it!

While I was arguing with the guides, the Bishop of Fatima, standing in his episcopal garb and wearing the Pectoral Cross which Pope Paul VI had given to him at Fatima last May 13th, began to pray the Rosary, and all the pilgrims answered. Then the Bishop intoned the Fatima hymn, and 108 voices lustily responded with the Ave, Ave, Ave Maria! Windows opened all around the square and people began to gather.

ON THE SPOT

The Cedok people were getting more and more concerned. With rising voices they insisted that we could not stay in the square.

"But you put us here," I answered, "and we will stay even all night if necessary until the buses come."

For two hours the group prayed and sang in the square, and more and more people came. Some, on seeing the devotion of our people, wiped tears from the corners of their eyes. Who could ever have imagined a statue of the Blessed Virgin on a public square in Prague, with the Bishop of Fatima in all his robes leading 108 pilgrims in the saying of the Rosary and the singing of the Fatima hymn?

Suddenly — as I expected — three buses arrived. But again a delaying action was planned. We were told

"Yes, today we carry a cross. But in the cross there is light, there is hope, and finally — there will be victory!"

that all the luggage would have to be separated and mounted on the buses. And now it was getting close to sunset.

I simply ordered everyone to get on the buses at once, and then, I spoke to the guides about the amount of money it had cost for visas and hotels to come to Prague and that we had to leave in the morning, and these people had only an hour now to see something of the city. I insisted that I only wanted them to go up to the Castle for a view of the city — but fortunately I knew Prague, and knew that the Bishop's House was next to the Castle.

I presume that no harm was seen in the idea of going up to the Castle for a view of the city, since now the day was almost spent. At any rate, suddenly it was decided to leave the luggage, and the buses began to move from the square.

OUTSMARTED

At the Castle, we did take a look at the city, and a brief entry into the castle courtyard, but then I led the entire group over to the Bishop's House. The guides held back. Of course they could not know that before our coming to Prague we had received a letter from the Bishop, the Apostolic Administrator of Prague, who said in guarded terms in his letter that he would welcome us, and would welcome a statue of Our Lady of Fatima.

Again the strategy of a mass of people gathered in one spot waiting for something to happen took effect. I rang a great bell at the automobile entrance to the Bishop's House again and again. The bell sounded throughout the whole square. Finally someone appeared, and when we made it known that

the Bishop of Fatima was here with 107 American pilgrims, soon doors began to open and we were ushered upstairs to the Bishop's protected private area. Instead of receiving us just in the parlor, the Bishop took us all into his private Chapel, the doors were closed, and the exchange which then took place between the Bishop of Fatima and the Apostolic Administrator of Prague will probably prove to be the highlight of this entire pilgrimage.

SOME STILL HOPE

The Bishop said extemporaneously, and from an obviously sincere and open heart, his eyes shining: "Our Lady of Fatima fifty years ago promised peace to the world, and it brings us great joy to carry Her publicly and deliver Her here to Your Excellency."

In response the Apostolic Administrator said: "Our people have a great devotion and a great love for Our Lady of Fatima. Now, in many homes, the Rosary is said daily because Our Lady of Fatima asked for it. You bring us the statue of Our Lady. In this Sign we shall be victorious!"

I had been translating to the group as each of the Bishops spoke, and because I had been translating in phrases I cannot remember the full speeches, but I remember in particular the closing phrase of the Apostolic Administrator:

"Yes, today we carry a cross. But in the cross there is light, there is hope, and finally — and his voice rose — there will be victory!"

The Bishop of Prague seemed a little concerned when we said that we now wish to carry the statue down publicly to the Church of the Holy Infant for a Pontifical Mass,

but he gave his permission, having first asked us if we would not first leave the statue with him. We promised to return it later in the evening.

So once again we went down to the coaches. The Bishop of Prague accompanied us and the joy of the group was simply indescribable. We went to the Church of the Holy Infant—where the statue of the Infant King could be joined by the statue of the Queen Mother, crowned Queen of the World at Fatima by Pope Pius XII in 1946, reaffirmed by the Pilgrim Virgin in 1947 of which this same Pope said: "She goes forth as though to claim Her dominion and the favors that She performs along the way are such that we can hardly believe what we are seeing with our eyes."

As we all knelt there during the Pontifical Mass, our eyes straying from the statue of the Queen to the statue of the Infant King, we felt that we were a part of this exclamation of Pius XII — wonders which we could hardly believe.

INVESTIGATE "CRIME"

Little by little the church began to fill with local people, and again the experience of the church in Berlin was repeated. The Czechs were sad to see the statue of Our Lady carried from the church, but we assured them that it would stay in their country.

The next morning when we left the airport, several high-ranking Red officers came to the airport to ask us where the statue was that we had carried into the city the day before. "Which organization received the statue?" one of the principal officers asked me.

"We delivered it to the Bishop of Prague," I replied.

They asked me which bishop, in which house, and of course I did not fear to reply because our Cedok guards already knew.

So the plans they had made to render our visit "harmless" merely served Our Lady's ends. If we had planned every detail of the program, it could not have been more wonderful. Because our principal purpose in bringing the statue to Prague was not just to have a Pil-

grim Virgin for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, but primarily to carry Her publicly through the Iron Curtain.

And public indeed it was!

ROME

His Eminence Cardinal Thomas Cooray of Ceylon had worked ardently to arrange a private audience for the group with the Holy Father. However, the Holy Father's illness, in addition to the intense work of the Synod, finally forced the Cardinal to send us a telegram saying that the audience was impossible.

However when we arrived at the airport, a telephone call had come from the Vatican that very morning saying that the Holy Father would receive the statue and bless it, symbolical of the entire Around-the-World Pilgrimage.

In the afternoon, the Bishop of Fatima, accompanied by a Canon of St. Peter's and myself carrying the statue, took one of the statues up to the Holy Father's own residence, where His Holiness not only blessed it, but kept it overnight.

In his message relayed through the Bishop of Fatima, the Holy Father through the symbolism of the one statue blessed all to be delivered to the various nations, and blessed the entire Pilgrimage of Peace.

THE BEGINNING

This tour of the world actually began not only at Fatima, but also at Lourdes because on the very day the group left Fatima it stopped at Lourdes and the Most Rev. Msgr. Theas, Bishop of Tarbes-Lourdes, had arranged his schedule to be at Lourdes to receive the group and the Bishop of Fatima. It was the first time that these two Bishops, of the two most important sanc-

tuaries of Our Lady in the world, simultaneously gave their blessing to a pilgrimage. "The Bishop of Fatima is your chaplain," Bishop Theas told the group. "But you need two. Take me along as the other one!" We responded in the name of the group that the plane was entirely full, but we would carry His Excellency along in our hearts.

Then the group went down to the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, kissed the stone upon which She appeared, and carried away that deep feeling of intimacy with Our Lady which seems to flow from the very rocks and fountain of this very holy place.

THE PURPOSE

That morning, before leaving Fatima, the Bishop of Fatima said Mass in the Chapel of the Apparitions at the Fatima shrine. It was the first time that a concelebrated Mass had ever been permitted in the Chapel of the Apparitions. The Bishop was assisted by the two American priests accompanying the pilgrimage. At the Offertory, the Bishop came out of the chapel to address the crowd and announced the entire purpose of the pilgrimage:

"I am saying the Mass of the Immaculate Heart of Mary," His Excellency said. "In the gospel are repeated the words of Our Lord to St. John, 'Behold Thy Mother,' and each day throughout this pilgrimage, at the Consecration of the Mass as I lift up Our Sacred Lord, my prayer will be that through the Pilgrim Virgin all the peoples of all these nations will hear the words of Christ, 'Behold Thy Mother.' And also in this gospel I repeated the words of Christ to Mary: 'Behold Thy Son.' And we shall also pray in each Mass that the peoples of the world hear Our Lord saying to them: 'Behold Thy Mother.'"

Crowd in the Cova at Fatima on Oct. 13, among whom were the 107 members of the Blue Army pilgrimage.

