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## A GENERAL CATALOGUE OF THE REDEMPTORISTS

In any large organisation, whatever its purpose, personnel files are obviously of the greatest advantage. It is always necessary to know on what resources one may draw, so as not to be like that imprudent king, who did not wait to see if his ten thousand troops were sufficient to withstand the twenty thousand of the invading army. (cf. Luke, XIV, 31-32). Personnel files, in fact, have generally been inclined towards the strictly pragmatic, how many are there here and now available. Useful as the information undoubtedly is, it can be quite frustrating for the historian, who so often finds that a man he is investigating seems simply to have disappeared from the records. This is particularly the case when it is question of someone who has been dismissed from a religious institute or has otherwise departed. Among Redemptorists an excellent example springs to mind, that of the intriguing Russian scholar and preacher, Father Vladimir Pecherin<sup>1</sup>.

With a view to assisting future students of the Congregation an international congress of Redemptorist historians decided to commission a general catalogue<sup>2</sup>. It was an ambitious project, an attempt to list all the members from the beginning at Scala on 9th November 1732 to the present time. In a work of such comprehension hazards appear only after the labour has been taken in hand; and one such has made it necessary to conclude the catalogue with the year 1954. The reason is that in the general archives records of the various provinces go only as far as that year, as was explained to the congress, along with much other useful and interesting information, by the

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<sup>1</sup> On Father Pecherin and the studies of his career in recent years, both by Redemptorists and others, cf. S.J. BOLAND, *A Dictionary of the Redemptorists*, Rome, 1987, 282-283.

<sup>2</sup> SH 35 (1987) 175-221.

archivist, Father H. Arboleda<sup>3</sup>. There is some compensation in the fact that there is being prepared under the direction of the general curia a file of current members. It is fervently to be hoped that their work will fill the gap of the sixties and seventies of this century, a period that is bound to be of interest to a future historian. For the present we may look at what is now being made available, what resources were to hand and how they have been put to use.

At the beginning, however, let us note that the catalogue, in the slightly restricted form imposed by circumstances, is being made available through the Redemptorist Historical Institute in Rome. It may be consulted on application to that body. Helpful as we hope it will prove to researchers who will use it, that large body of material does not seem to have a sufficiently broad appeal to justify its being published in book form. The catalogue, therefore, is being processed by computer, which will make it easy for an enquirer to consult it, either personally or through some responsible person.

### *Personnel Files*

For Redemptorists the keeping of personnel files was a matter of legislation from the times even of St. Alphonsus. Some may recall the books of the professed that were to be kept up to date by provincial and general secretaries<sup>4</sup>. One blushes to confess that before 1936, the last promulgation of these prescriptions, they were no longer being observed by the general curia. The records of names with dates of profession and ordination and the meticulous crosses, two for a deceased and one for a man dismissed or dispensed from his vows, had been growing more and more perfunctory before ceasing altogether in 1910. Records according to provinces continued a little longer before they, too, expired in 1929. Needless to say, their lack makes the task so much the more laborious for one who tries to compile such a general catalogue as has been described.

After 1929 it is necessary to supply the information about personnel from the annual reports of professions sent by each province. These were of two kinds, a report prepared by the novice master on

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>4</sup> *Constitutiones et Regulae Congregationis sacerdotum sub titulo Sanctissimi Redemptoris*, Rome, 1936, nos 1095, 1096 & 1344. The beginning of this legislation was in the constitutions of the general chapter of 1764. Cf. *Codex Regularum et Constitutionum C.S.S.R.*, Rome, 1896, nos 896-899. It was reaffirmed by the chapter of 1855. *Ibid.*, 1937.

each candidate with the votes of the provincial and his consultors as well as his own, and the list of those actually professed. The latter is obviously the more important for the catalogue; but more often than not it is sadly missing. The reports before profession are also far too frequently incomplete. The omissions can be supplied only from the published catalogues.

### *Published Catalogues*

The legislation that provided for records of the members to be duly kept further required that the general secretary publish a catalogue every three years<sup>5</sup>. When this constitution was introduced in 1855, it was not entirely possible, since on account of its internal tensions the Congregation had been divided by the Holy See into Transalpine and Neapolitan sections<sup>6</sup>. The chapter of 1855 had been of Transalpines only; and the catalogues that immediately followed excluded members in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies until the year 1869, when reunion was effected<sup>7</sup>. Prior to that date published catalogues were of the Transalpines. Of these the first was that published in Munich in 1852 and reissued in 1886 by Father J. van Rijckevorsel with lists of members at irregular intervals from 1793<sup>8</sup>.

The regular catalogues prescribed in 1855 began in the following year and continued until 1867. With the reunion of the Congregation two years later it became possible to compile lists of all Redemptorists; but such did not begin to appear until as late as 1884. From that date they were published regularly at roughly three year intervals until 1936. World War II interrupted the series. The catalogues were resumed only in 1948, and then in a new and very much improved format. The edition of 1948 was under the capable direction of Father Prosper Meerschaut of the Belgian province, following instructions given by Father Bujs, Superior General. This and the succeeding catalogue, which appeared in 1955, also edited by Father Meerschaut, are by far the most informative of all, offering in particular precious historical information about important events

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Constitutiones et Regulae*, 1936, no. 1344. This constitution was introduced by the chapter of 1855. Cf. *Codex Regularum*, no. 2055.

<sup>6</sup> S.J. BOLAND, 112-113.

<sup>7</sup> A complete bibliography of published catalogues has been provided by A. Sampers, "Bibliographia catalogorum C.S.S.R. tam generalium quam provincialium" in SH 4 (1956) 204-213.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

in the history of the Congregation, with data concerning candidates for beatification and canonisation and Redemptorist bishops from the time of St. Alphonsus, as well as brief but excellent notes on the foundation and activity of houses and provinces<sup>9</sup>. Those which followed in 1960, 1969, 1975 and 1983 have differed in presentation from one another as well as from all preceding productions. That of 1975 is especially disappointing in that it omits even the list of the deceased since the preceding catalogue.

In the use of these catalogues, and for that matter, of our present general catalogue, it is necessary to keep in mind the wise caution suggested by Father Sampers in his review of Father Meerschaut's excellent production of 1955. "A work of this kind simply cannot be compiled altogether without error, as the experts themselves know so very well"<sup>10</sup>. In such a long list of names a critic would have little difficulty in discovering omissions, similar names confused with one another, dates wrongly given and no doubt many another case of human error. Defects like these can creep even into the wonder machines of this computer age of ours.

Beyond question the most serious omission in the earliest published catalogues is of members in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. For a period of some fifteen years the Congregation was divided, and the published catalogues ignored the confrères in the lands of Redemptorist origins. When, as late as 1884, there began the due listing of the entire membership, there had been left a very large void of thirty years or so to be filled with the names of Redemptorists of southern Italy. There is another deliberate omission, which occasions much tedious searching, more often than not, it is feared, to no avail. When a man left the Congregation by dismissal or dispensation, the fact was duly noted in the manuscript records with the single cross by his name, for as long as they were maintained; but in the published catalogues the name simply disappeared. And yet a thorough study of the Redemptorists must not overlook cases of this kind. It would be a very poor account of the Congregation in England and Ireland that failed to give much attention to Father Pecherin. In our present general catalogue an attempt has been made to remedy the defect; but it must be admitted that much remains to be desired.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Review of the 1955 catalogue in SH 4 (1956) 196.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Repairing the Omissions*

Thanks to the painstaking efforts of Father Minervino we now have to hand information about the Italian Redemptorists, especially those of Naples and Sicily, from the beginning to the present<sup>11</sup>. Since the appearance of his two volumes in 1978 and 1979 many a student has had occasion to bless the author for having made so much easier the search for information about early members of the Congregation. In the quest for the departed the manuscript catalogues of the general archives have naturally proved most helpful. Unfortunately, they fall silent in the year 1929. After that date the principal source of information is the published catalogues. The most they can tell us is when a name ceases to be mentioned. The precise dating of the departure ought to be available in the listing of the *dispensati* of each province; but, sad to say, the files under that heading are almost invariably incomplete. One is forced as a consequence in most cases to depend simply on the disappearance of a name from the published catalogues. It is necessary, however, to make one reservation, and that an important one. After 1936 and more so after 1955 very many names of Redemptorists of Czechoslovakia and the Ukraine are no longer mentioned for the good reason that knowledge of them had been lost, by no means because they had ceased to be Redemptorists. Generally speaking, in fact, the Congregation in Eastern Europe, so far from having been obliterated by oppression, seems to have been more flourishing than it was prudent to proclaim in public. With that one honourable exception, lack of mention may safely be taken as sufficient indication of departure.

### *The Present General Catalogue*

For the use of the general catalogue now made available it seems necessary to offer a little information. Those who consult it will be helped if they know something about the method of its compilation and the sort of data provided.

At the very beginning it was discovered that in addition to the

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<sup>11</sup> F. MINERVINO, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi d'Italia 1732-1841 e dei Redentoristi delle provincie meridionali d'Italia 1841-1869* (*Bibliotheca Historica C.S.S.R.*, VIII), Rome 1978 and F. Minervino, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi della provincia napoletana 1841-1978* (*Bibliotheca Historica C.S.S.R.*, IX), Rome, 1979.

inevitable defects that creep into catalogues in spite of the best endeavours of their compilers, there are special problems in the case of Redemptorists. The earliest lists of members appear somewhat haphazard. It is probably understandable enough that they should be so, and that the effort to supplement them should be a normal task for an investigator of the origins of a religious institute. In the case of the founding members of the Redemptorists and their immediate successors one is indebted to the diligence and competence of Father Minervino. As regards the earliest Transalpines much work remains to be done.

In spite of the efforts of Father van Rijckevorsel there are omissions and errors in his information about the community in Warsaw after 1787 and of the band that wandered with Father Passerat through Switzerland before finding a home in Valsainte. Of those who joined Father Podgorski in Piotrkowice apparently he had no knowledge whatsoever<sup>12</sup>. Of these early and confused years there was clearly much to be discovered.

The richest vein of information for these times is to be found in the massive documentation of Father F. Kuntz<sup>13</sup>. The twenty-one handwritten volumes of his *Commentaries* contain valuable details about Redemptorists and their activities up to the thirties of last century. He drew on the store of material available to him as general archivist. Of particular value are the lists he gives year by year of the candidates coming to the institute, both in southern Italy and among the Transalpines, often enough with useful personal information. He is also careful to indicate regularly those who died or were dispensed. Father Kuntz was a source used to excellent effect by Father Minervino.

Very important also are the lesser manuscript catalogues in the general archives. Numbered from I to XII, they vary somewhat in the information they offer, nos I to V being the most useful. None of them, however, can be ignored, as any one of them might throw light on some person or other unknown from other sources. Those concerning southern Italy have provided much data for Father Minervino. Of especial interest are those compiled by Father Sabelli<sup>14</sup>. From 1822 until he was expelled by the Garibaldians in

<sup>12</sup> Concerning Piotrkowice cf. SH 7 (1959) 118-151.

<sup>13</sup> For information concerning Father Kuntz and his work cf. S.J. BOLAND, 190.

<sup>14</sup> Concerning Father Johann Josef (Giovanni Giuseppe) Sabelli cf. S. BOLAND, 332-333. Information about the manuscript catalogues is to be found in SH 2 (1954) 11.

1861 with his royal penitents he was closely associated with the Rectors Major, Transalpine though he was.

Information otherwise unavailable was obtained in the fifteen volumes, modestly styled *fasciculi* by their assiduous editor, of the *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*<sup>15</sup>. Names of Redemptorists, especially of Poland, are frequently mentioned in the correspondence published, and often enough they appear in police and other official reports. The thorough indexing of the work is often the only reference possible for individuals otherwise unknown. The *Monumenta* are important especially for the personnel of the Piotrkowice foundation. Though not complete, it is so far the only published source of information about this too neglected incident in Redemptorist history.

After the earliest years, that is to say after 1855, it has been possible to rely on the regular sources of information regarding personnel. In the general archives these are the lists of the professed and the reports from the provinces prescribed by the constitutions. When these prove inadequate, as is too often the case, it is necessary to have recourse to the published catalogues. These are such obvious sources of information that it seems scarcely necessary to indicate them further.

From these various sources our general catalogue has been compiled. What has resulted is not without interest, and may possibly offer some surprise. From 1732 to 1954 the tally has been in round figures 16,500. Some will surely find that figure smaller than expected. Breaking it down, we find that from 1732 to 1841, when the Holy See divided the Congregation into six provinces, Redemptorists totalled about 1500 members. During the half century before the general chapter of 1894 just under 4500 Redemptorists were professed. Naturally enough, in this latter period the greater expansion was beyond the confines of southern Italy, where the Congregation had been born and where it continued to show a healthy increase. The year 1894 has proved a suitable date for dividing our count, since after the chapter held in that year the Congregation expanded very rapidly, especially in lands outside Europe, in what used to be called the New World. The growth was accelerating most rapidly at precisely the date when with regret we must end our survey. There is reason to know that the increasing rate of expansion continued after 1954 for another

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<sup>15</sup> On Father Wladyslaw Szoldrski, compiler of the *Monumenta Hofbaueriana* cf. S. BOLAND, 378-379.

decade or so. This is a further reason for regret that we must end our catalogue just at that exciting period before and after the Second Vatican Council.

### *Arrangement of the Catalogue*

In the general catalogue the names have been presented according to chronological divisions which seemed especially significant: 1732-1841, the division into provinces: 1841-1894, the beginning of the period of greatest expansion; and 1895-1954, when the records in the general archives cease. The men listed have not been indicated according to the provinces to which they belonged. That would not have been possible, in any case, before 1841; and for a considerable time after that date the provinces did not really have much significance in practice. This was especially so in the time of Father Mauron, who would select men from various provinces for particular works, to the inevitable confusion and at times, no doubt, exasperation of the provincials. Among the first Redemptorists to preach missions in Ireland, for example, there were Dutchmen, Belgians, an Austrian, a Russian and a Scotsman. It is not surprising in such circumstances that we find a bewildered American provincial asking in 1866 who on earth was really responsible for the foundation on the island of St. Thomas<sup>16</sup>. Even in fairly recent times it has not been uncommon for men to transfer from one province to another. In the general catalogue names are given with an indication of nationality. Nearly always the place of profession and ordination shows clearly enough the province to which the member belonged, at least at the beginning of his religious life.

For each person listed the aim has been to give the most basic biographical data. That has been understood as date and place of birth, date and place of profession, date and place of ordination and date and place of death. If a person held some position of importance in the general government of the Congregation or had been a bishop, that has been briefly indicated. And, needless to say, mention has been made of beatification or canonisation, where it has been appropriate.

In the case of an individual whose career seemed to repay further study there is offered a bibliographical guide; that is to say a note as to where one might find a lead to further investigation.

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<sup>16</sup> J. G. DALY, *Conflict in Paradise*, St. Louis, 1972, 55.

Having said as much about what is offered, it seems fitting to recall the caution voiced by Father Sampers. It is, even in the opinion of experts, practically impossible in such a compilation to avoid all errors. There are omissions, it has to be confessed, in the more recent published catalogues, on which it has been necessary to a considerable extent to rely. And one would scarcely be so hardy as to deny that human error has intruded into the present work. In presenting the general catalogue of the Redemptorists, therefore, we must beg an indulgent tolerance.