

RED TERROR IN SOUTH CHINA.

150 VICTIMS DAILY.

PRIESTS RESCUED BY BRITISH WARSHIP.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

HONG-KONG, Dec. 28.

H.M.S. Seraph, which was dispatched to Swabue [a seaport of Kwangtung, 80 miles N.N.E. of Hong-kong], has brought back a party of Italian and Chinese Roman Catholic missionaries, who had been imprisoned since Thursday by Reds. Their mission, convent and orphanage were ransacked, but the Reds allowed them to depart.

Refugees report that the Red terror is extending in the Hoifung and Lukfung districts [which lie inland from Swabue], where the Reds are mostly young people of both sexes. These are killing on an average 150 victims daily, including capitalists and Christians as well as opium smokers, gamblers, and others.

According to latest advices, Li Chai-sum's troops have not yet reached Canton.

HONG-KONG, Dec. 28.—A Chinese Christian from Swabue, who arrived here on Boxing Day, reported that Father M. Robba and Father L. Bianchi (Italians) and seven nuns (three Italians and four Chinese) were being held prisoners at Swabue, and that Father Wong, a Chinese priest, and a British subject born in Hong-kong, was to be executed on Christmas morning. All had been arrested for preaching and practising



Christianity. Father Wong was chained by his neck and feet and kept with the other prisoners in a filthy gaol, from which prisoners were led out daily for execution.

Bishop Valtorta, on hearing the refugee's report, asked the Governor for help, and at midnight the Seraph (Commander R. B. Wilmot-Sitwell) steamed from the harbour carrying Bishop Valtorta as interpreter.

The Seraph reached Swabue at dawn on Tuesday, and a rescue party, under Commander Wilmot-Sitwell, put off in a motor-boat and a whaler. On approaching the shore, some 200 or more soldiers were seen. They appeared to be taken by surprise, and gesticulated to the sailors not to land. Bishop Valtorta held up a letter in Chinese, addressed to the Chief of Police. He told the crowd that they need not be afraid; the letter simply asked for the surrender of Father Wong and the release of the other missionaries. Wading knee-deep into the water, a soldier took the letter from Bishop Valtorta. A reply was received that the authorities were ready to surrender the Europeans, but that, since Father Wong was Chinese, he must be dealt with under Chinese law.

CAPTIVES SURRENDERED.

A second note was then delivered to the Chinese saying that the Seraph had come specially for Father Wong, who was a British subject. Father Wong's immediate release was demanded, and a time limit was fixed for the reply. In half an hour a written reply arrived, saying that since Father Wong was a British subject he would be handed over. The reply contained a protest that the Seraph had no business in Chinese waters without permission, and a threat that if the visit was repeated the Chinese would fire on the warship.

Soon after, all the captives were handed over, including two Chinese foundlings from the convent. The head executioner accompanied the party to the warship and shook hands with Father Wong before his departure. While the negotiations were proceeding the Seraph was cleared for action, and landing parties were ready for service if needed.

The rescued party said they believed that the Communists feared an attack by Canton anti-Red troops, and that they had seized the missionaries as hostages, and would have put them to death in the event of an attack.

The European priests give terrible accounts of the cruelties they saw. The only days on which there were no executions were the four days of last week when the Revenue launches were anchored off Swabue. The victims of the Reds were often led in procession, bound with ropes, and with rings through their noses and ears. On Christmas morning nine men and four women were executed, their offence being that they were on friendly terms with the priests. One woman was put to death for helping the sisters working at the Chinese Foundlings' Home. This woman knelt down before the executioner and begged to be shot instead of decapitated or put to death by the slicing method, and her request was granted. An old Chinese friend of Bishop Valtorta, aged 80, was barbarously done to death by the slicing method.

The heads of the victims were placed on the walls of the Communist headquarters, which were painted red. It was publicly announced that Father Wong would be executed by the slicing process. The priests said that a boy of 18 in Hoifung had executed 90 persons, and a girl boasted that she had killed at least ten persons.—*Reuter*.