

An Interview with the Tinsmith

Here is author Father Joseph Pelletier's account of his interview with Arturo Santos (*op. cit.*, pp. 153-154).

"I met the Administrator, Senhor Arturo de Oliveira Santos, at Vila Nova de Ourem on Sunday, July 30, 1950. By way of self-introduction he said: 'I am a Christian but don't go to Mass or Confession.' With him and another man, a member of the actual district administration, I visited the town hall where the three children of Fatima had suffered so much. The Tinsmith pointed out his old office where he had questioned the children. But he would not admit having put the seers in prison. Indeed, he always quickly diverted the conversation whenever the topic of the prison was mentioned. However, the government agent, seeing my interest in the matter, took me alone and showed the room directly across the hall from the Tinsmith's old office — which was used as a prison in 1917.

"While in his old office, which is still being used as an office by the actual district administration (circa 1950), the Tinsmith pointed to a recent copy of an Ourem newspaper which was on a desk. On the front page is carried a short article he had written. The article was signed *Joao de Ourem*, 'John of Ourem.'

"By the man's face which carried a two-days beard, his shabby suit, and neglected looking house for which he felt obliged to apologize, I gathered the impression that he was not very prosperous.

"I took several pictures of the Tinsmith, both in black and white and in color. He asked me to send him some of the pictures, and gave me a Lisboa address for that purpose. What he does in Lisboa I do not know. I talked with him for about thirty minutes in all. In the course of this time he rode with me in a taxi from the town hall to his own home, the same home where the children slept and ate when he kidnapped them.

"I did not go into his house but he entered it and returned with two pictures that he showed me. When he talked it was with an affected air of grandeur, and I could not help feeling sorry for the poor fellow who seems to live in the past, when he was really somebody. People told me that I was extremely fortunate in finding the man so friendly and communicative because as a rule he absolutely refuses to talk of the Fatima events to anyone and he refuses with equal firmness to pose

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for pictures. Incidentally, he said that he was known all over the world 'and in Russia too.' I got the impression that it would not take too many prayers to bring the man back into the Church."