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A NEW SOURCE FOR RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY: THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC PRESS, 1917–1924

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Abstract. Soviet antireligious policy not only eradicated religious institutions and their press, but also drastically reduced and distorted the corpus of historical documentation. While the state, party, and police did generate a substantial volume of materials against religious organizations and believers, the disestablishment of organized religion meant that much of the information assembled before 1917 was no longer collected. To help fill this void in the source base, it is important to draw upon materials available outside the former Soviet Union. This paper examines the American Catholic press in the first six years of Soviet power — a period when both the Vatican and Soviet authorities engaged in wide-ranging diplomatic discussions. This period was also a watershed for the Catholic press: in 1920 the National Catholic Welfare Council (the central Catholic institution in America) created what came to be called the Catholic News Agency (CNA), which collected information from around the world and provided a key source not only for American diocesan newspapers, but for the secular press in the United States and around the world. CNA gave particular attention to Russia, partly because of the Vatican's diplomatic activities, partly because of expectations that the Catholic Church could proselytize among a Russian population that, by the Catholic account, remained religious despite Bolshevik antireligious campaigns. The agency's editors, professional journalists from leading newspapers, assiduously solicited materials from Catholics still in Russia as well as those who had recently emigrated. Significantly, the American Catholic press did not closely adhere to the Vatican «line» and played a critical role in delaying recognition of the USSR until long after most European countries.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Soviet religious policy, Vatican-Soviet relations, Catholic show trial.

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Новый источник по российской религиозной истории: американская католическая пресса, 1917–1924 годы

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Аннотация. Советская власть в рамках проведения антирелигиозной политики не только уничтожала религиозные организации и их прессу, но и радикально уменьшала число исторических источников. Для расширения источниковедческой базы следует привлечь документацию, хранящуюся за пределами бывшего

Советского Союза. В данной работе изучается американская католическая пресса в первые годы советской власти — период, когда Ватикан и Москва поддерживали активные дипломатические отношения. Данный этап был и водоразделом в истории католической прессы: именно тогда она создала международное телеграфное агентство. Оно обращало особое внимание на Россию, частично из-за активной внешней политики Ватикана, частично из-за обнадеживающей перспективы миссионерской деятельности среди русского народа, по-прежнему приверженного религии. Важно заметить, что католическая пресса в Америке не всегда следила за дипломатической линией Ватикана и сыграла ключевую роль в том, что СССР был признан американским правительством почти на десятилетие позже, чем другими западными державами.

Ключевые слова: католическая церковь, советская конфессиональная политика, ватиканско-советские отношения, показательный суд над католиками.

Compared to the prerevolutionary era, so rich in institutional documentation on religious history, the Soviet period affords fewer, chiefly external sources — emanating mainly from the party, state, and police. The anti-religious campaigns may not have eradicated religion, but they certainly took a heavy toll on its history: the eradication of religious institutions and press left a gaping hole in the history of various confessions. To compensate, historians have drawn upon official archives, but so skewed a source base can shed limited light on the confessions and believers. One alternative is to add sources from *outside* Soviet Russia, but that project is still in its initial stages¹. It is by no means an easy undertaking, given the problems of dispersion and accessibility. And one key foreign source — the press — is notoriously unreliable, often filled with sensational and false reports; even respectable papers published claims about the collapse of the Bolshevik state, the flight or death of its leaders, the nationalization of women, and other eye-catching headlines².

Those failings of foreign journalism, however, do not necessarily apply to the religious press³. Indeed, the American Catholic press — with its newly founded international press agency — collected valuable information about religious conditions in the Soviet Union. And what they published was important: Catholic papers served the single largest denomination in the United States (some 17,7 million Catholics in 1920)⁴ and exerted considerable influence over American foreign policy. The Catholic press also took particular interest in Soviet Russia, partly because of the papal relief mission to deal with the Russian famine, but also because the strong — and continuing — religiosity of the common folk raised hopes of mass conversions and even a reunion of the Western and Eastern Churches.

The Catholic press in the United States first appeared in 1822 and thereafter proliferated as both official and lay publications. These publications showed a growing tendency toward «Americanism» — the view that Catholic immigrants needed to modify traditional Church teachings in

¹ Косик О. В. Голоса из России. Очерки истории сбора и передачи за границу информации о положении Церкви в СССР. 1920-е — начало 1930-х годов. М., 2013.

² Laqueur W. The Fate of the Revolution. Interpretations of Soviet History. New York, 1967, p. 9–12.

³ Thus far little attention has been given to the Catholic press. That is also true, for example, of Валентинов А. В. Черная книга («Штурм небес»). Париж, 1924, which relies on secular newspapers and news agencies (e.g., Havas and Polska Agencija Telegraficzna).

⁴ Carey P. W. Catholics in America. A History. Westport, 2004, p. 79. The figure of 17,7 million comes from the religious census of 1916, showing that Catholics represented 37,5 percent of all adult believers and were nearly five times as large as the next denomination (3,7 million Methodists). Bureau of the Census. Religious Census of 1916. Washington (D.C.), 1919, p. 31, 33. A tabulation for 1920 shows 17,9 million Catholics (38,7 percent of adult believers). Yearbook of American Churches 1921–1922. New York, 1922, p. 357. By adding «un-churched» Catholics (i.e., those not registered in a parish church), the number of Catholics rises to about 20 million. See: Shaughnessy G. Has the Immigrant Kept the Faith? A Study of Immigration and Catholic Growth in the United States 1790–1920. New York, 1925, p. 211–213.

order to fit into the special fabric of America⁵. In the 1890s Pope Leo XIII tried to rein in the Americanism and to bring the press under closer control. But Catholic newspapers (some 250 in number) also had a plethora of other problems — dearth of capital and subscribers, resulting in a tendency to print inappropriate advertisements, to forego the costs of professional management and journalists, and to mimic the yellow journalism of secular papers⁶. Given the absence of Church oversight, some were «Catholic» in name only. In 1911 American bishops founded the Catholic Press Association to combat these shortcomings as well as create an agency to distribute international Catholic news, thereby replicating secular papers in the age of globalization⁷. In 1920 the Association passed the torch to a new organization — the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC)⁸, which had its own Press Department and distributed its first newsfeed on 11 April 1920⁹. The first director at NCWC, Justin McGrath¹⁰ from the Hearst newspaper empire, proceeded to hire professional journalists and build a network of foreign correspondents in Europe and South America. Although NCWC did not have a correspondent in Russia, it relied on travelers and clergy who had recently left the Soviet Union as well as believers still inside the country (circumventing censorship by relying on coded telegrams¹¹ and transmitting materials clandestinely sent through the diplomatic pouch)¹². NCWC also monitored the Soviet press (chiefly to demonstrate the latter's anti-religious bias)¹³ as well as European newspapers, secular and religious¹⁴. It also had good

⁵ *McAvoy T. T.* The Americanist Heresy in Roman Catholicism 1895–1900. Notre Dame, 1963.

⁶ All these failings, and more, were the focus of an influential article by *Reilly, L. W.* The Weak Points of the Catholic Press. — *American Ecclesiastical Review*. Feb. 1894, p. 117–125.

⁷ *Reilly M.* A History of the Catholic Press Association. Metuchen (N.J.), 1971; *Delahaye A. N.* Elite Catholic Newspapers of the United States. Ph.D. diss. University of Missouri, 1970, p. 26–27; *Deedy J.* The Catholic Press: The Why and the Wherefore. — *The Religious Press in America*, ed. Martin Marty et al. New York, 1963, p. 74–75; *Baumgartner A.* Catholic Journalism: A Study of Its Development in the United States, 1789–1930. New York, 1967, p. 62.

⁸ For a brief period, NCWC encountered opposition from a handful of bishops, worried about a loss of their prerogatives and concentration of power in the NCWC. The latter fought back and persuaded the pope to recognize its authority. See: *McKeown E.* Apologia for an American Catholicism: The Petition and Report of the National Catholic Welfare Council to Pius XI. April 25, 1922. — *Church History*, v. 43, № 4, 1974, p. 14–28.

For the formation of the NCWC and its Press Department, see: *Slawson D.* The Foundation and First Decade of the National Catholic Welfare Council. Washington (D. C.), 1992; *Gribble R.* Roman Catholicism and U. S. Foreign Policy — 1919–1935: A Clash of Policies. — *Journal of Church and State*, v. 50, № 1, 2009, p. 74–75.

⁹ Catholic News Agency (hereafter CNA), available at: <https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org>

¹⁰ *Baumgartner A.* Op. cit., p. 80–86; *Hall F. A.* Justin McGrath: First Director of NCWC News Service. — *Catholic Press Annual*, 1962, p. 28–41.

¹¹ On the use of codes (to evade censorship and interdiction of telegrams), see: *Hull H. L.* The Holy See and Soviet Russia, 1918–1930: A Study in Full-Circle Diplomacy. Ph. D. Diss. Georgetown University, 1970, p. 134, 146.

¹² *Bassow W.* The Moscow Correspondents: Reporting on Russia from the Revolution to Glasnost. New York, 1989, p. 36–39; *Tuxuï K. T.* Американцы о стране Советов. Владивосток, 2000, с. 19–25. For example, during a first trip to Moscow in 1922, a Vatican representative (preparing for the papal relief mission) sent a report from Moscow to Rome through the diplomatic pouch of the American Relief Association (ARA). See: *Trythall M.* Pius XI and American Pragmatism. — *Pius XI and America*. Ed. C. Gallagher et al. Berlin, 2012, p. 55. In April 1923 the Soviets intercepted the ARA pouch and arrested the courier, who was carrying letters from the papal relief mission to the Vatican (Pittsburgh Catholic, 3.V.1923, p. 9).

¹³ CNA, 9.VII.1923, p. 1 (with a citation from «Известия»).

¹⁴ CNA, 14.VI.1920, p. 16 (citing the *London Times* and *London Morning Post*). Diocesan papers also drew on the secular press, such as an article in *The Nation* about the venality of the French press (which received payments from the tsarist regime and Provisional Government). The Shame of a Venal Press. — *Catholic Advance*, 16.II.1924, p. 1.

connections in the Vatican as well as the U. S. State Department. NCWC quickly became a going concern. Within a few months forty Catholic newspapers (a number that soon doubled and later grew exponentially) subscribed to receive a weekly newspaper, cables, and lengthy mimeographed supplements¹⁵. NCWC enabled the American Catholic press to go global¹⁶.

This study assesses the American Catholic press from the revolutions of 1917 to the show trial of Catholic clergy in 1923. It draws upon the «newsfeeds» from NCWC as well as three diocesan papers: *The Witness* (Dubuque, Iowa), *The Catholic Advance* (Wichita, Kansas), and *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). The focus is on several key questions. What were the dominant tendencies in its reporting on religious conditions under the new Soviet regime? Did the American Catholic press overcome its earlier «Americanism» and faithfully reflect the views of the Vatican? What impact did the Catholic press have on policymaking and public opinion?

Revolution and Civil War

The status of the Roman Catholic Church was anything but privileged under the *ancien régime*. Like other non-Orthodox confessions, it suffered from discriminatory restrictions, most notably a ban on conversion and proselytizing. But Catholicism was a target of special repression because of its presumed ties to the Polish national movement, especially after the rebellion of 1863. The decree of 17 April 1905 on freedom of religious conscience brought some relief and enabled 232,849 nominally «Orthodox» to convert to Catholicism¹⁷, but that did not mean end to all discrimination and repression¹⁸. Many Catholic clergy, including three ranking figures (Eduard von Ropp, Jan Cieplak, and Constantine Budkiewicz), were targets of police surveillance¹⁹. After the February Revolution of 1917 the Provisional Government did promise a radical improvement in the status of Catholics²⁰. Specifically, it adopted a proclamation of full religious freedom, released key leaders from detention (enabling von Ropp's appointment as metropolitan of Mogilev diocese and thus senior hierarch in Russia)²¹, raised expectations of full equality and the restitution of property²², and fueled hopes of converting believers disen-

¹⁵ For a report on its early growth, see: NCWC Press Department Completes Successful Year. — NCWC. Bulletin, v. 1, № 9 (May 1921), p. 7–8; NCWC. Tenth Anniversary of NCWC News Service. — NCWC Review, v. 12, 1930, p. 6–7, 13.

¹⁶ *Reilly M. L.* A History..., p. 65, 72. By 1962 the Catholic news agency had become a global powerhouse, with 267 correspondents and 550 subscribers in 65 countries. *Hall F. A.* Op. cit., p. 38–41.

¹⁷ For 1905–1911 official records show that 232,849 converted to Catholicism (79.0 percent of all converts). Российский государственный исторический архив (далее — РГИА), ф. 797, оп. 75, отд. 2, ст. 3, д. 402, л. 1–4.

¹⁸ For a full list of grievances, see the letter from the acting head of Mogilev diocese (Jan Cieplak) to the Minister of Justice, A. F. Kerensky, on 7 April 1917: Католическая церковь накануне революции 1917 года. Сборник документов. Сост., ред. М. Радван. Люблин, 2003, с. 529–545.

¹⁹ РГИА, ф. 821, оп. 128, д. 324 (Budkiewicz, 1911–1913), д. 1037 (Cieplak), and д. 928 (von Ropp). For an inventory of police files on Catholic clergy, see: *Požarski K.* Historia Kościoła Rzymskokatolickiego w Rosji i Polsce w Imperium Rosyjskim (XVIII–XX w.) w dokumentach Rosyjskiego Państwowego Archiwum Historycznego, t. 1. Saint-Petersburg — Warsaw, 1999, p. 237–252.

²⁰ For a convenient compilation of documents, see: Конфессиональная политика Временного Правительства России. Сборник документов. Сост. М. И. Бабкин. М., 2018, с. 297–374.

²¹ In April 1917, for example, Catholic Advance reported the release of Andrei Sheptytsky, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Uniate Church, but committed a shocking blunder: it referred to a postcard from «Suzdal», which it misidentified as «a monastic prison of the Orthodox Church in Siberia». Catholic Advance, 14.IV.1917, p. 1.

²² Конфессиональная политика Временного правительства..., с. 297–374. See also: *Filene P. G.*, Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917–1933. Cambridge (MA), 1967, p. 73; *Zatko J. J.* The Russian Catholic Church and Its Legal Position under the Provisional Government in Russia in 1917. — Slavonic and East European Review, 1960, v. 38, № 91, p. 476–92; *Карлов Ю. Е.* Советская власть и Ватикан в 1917–1924 гг. — Россия и Ватикан в конце XIX — первой трети XX века. СПб., 2003, с. 158.

chanted with an Orthodox Church that seemed «but a creature of the crown»²³. The American Catholic press reflected this general optimism for an end to the persecution that Catholics have suffered «almost continuously» from the time of Peter the Great²⁴.

The October Revolution soon quelled this optimism. After first nationalizing land (including that of churches) and secularizing marriage and divorce, on 23 January 1918 the Bolshevik regime promulgated its famous «Decree» on the separation of church and state. That edit disestablished religious organizations, denied them the status of a juridical entity, and recognized only the right of believers to sign a contract for the use of their local church. A detailed «Instruction», published on 30 August 1918, marked a new phase of systematic implementation. Over the next three years, as the Civil War raged, the regime conducted an antireligious campaign, primarily against the Orthodox Church – with large-scale repression (arrests, executions), closing of Church institutions (consistories, seminaries, parish schools, and monasteries), and desecration of relics (most notoriously through the exhumation of saints).

The antireligious campaign formally applied to the Catholic Church, but to a far lesser degree. As a French priest who had recently left Russia confirmed in a NCWC report of November 1920, the Bolsheviks have arrested some Catholic clergy but in general «have proved themselves far more harsh and tyrannous toward the Russian Orthodox clergy than toward us»²⁵. Central authorities in fact restrained local antireligious zealots, as in Petrograd, from unnecessarily perpetrating «excesses» toward the Catholic Church²⁶. The harsher treatment of the Orthodox Church was partly due to its close ties to the tsarist regime and, at least from the Bolshevik perspective, counter-revolutionary tendencies. The Catholic Church, by contrast, had no such fondness for the *ancien regime* and thus did not seem likely to become a bastion of reaction²⁷. Moreover, authorities found that applying one key provision of the Decree to the Catholic Church was highly problematic: the transfer of power from the institutional «Church» to the parish «church», whereby believers were to sign a «contract» (договор) recognizing nationalization and assuming responsibility for the local church. While that requirement proved easy to impose on the Orthodox Church (the parishioners had already assumed control in 1917)²⁸, such was not true for Catholics. Specifically, canon law (just codified in 1917)²⁹ ascribed all property to the «Church» (i.e., the pope and hierarchy) and precluded the mandatory «contract»³⁰. Catholic prelates in Russia expressly rejected this provision in the Decree and warned that its implementation by force would lead to

²³ Catholic Advance, 3.II.1917 (N.S.), p. 8.

²⁴ Ibid., 31.III.1917 (N.S.), p. 14.

²⁵ CNA, 1.XI.1920, p. 2.

²⁶ For attempts by the «Liquidation Department» (VIII Отдел Наркомюста) to restrain Petrograd authorities, see: Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 2, с. 436, 455–456.

²⁷ According to Vatican notes, at the first meeting of the under-secretary of state in December 1921, the Soviet representative (V. V. Vorovsky) made the following statement: «Soviet authorities have made mistakes in religious matters, but that is something in the past. Now we not only have freedom of religion, but also freedom for foreign missionaries. We have more trust for Catholics than for the Orthodox, insofar as the Catholics have no feelings of nostalgia for the tsarist regime» (Карлов Ю. Е. Указ. соч., с. 173).

²⁸ Freeze G. From Dechristianization to Laicization: State, Church, and Believers in Russia. — Canadian Slavonic Papers, v. 57, 2015, p. 6–34; Фриз Г. «Воцерковление» 1917 года: церковный кризис и приходская революция. — Государство, религия и церковь в России и за рубежом, т. 37, № 1/2, 2019, с. 30–57.

²⁹ After thirteen years of preparation, the new code of canon law was promulgated by Pope Benedict XV on 27 May 1917. See: *Woywod S.* The New Canon Law: A Commentary and Summary of the New Code of Canon Law. New York, 1918.

³⁰ See, for example, the multiple declarations in: Конфессиональная политика советского государства, т. 1, ч. 2, с. 366–368, 549, 552; Римско-католическая церковь на Северо-Западе России в 1917–1945 гг. Сост. М. В. Шкаровский. СПб., 1998, с. 149–152.

«inevitable disorders» and thus only inflict «extreme harm on Soviet power itself»³¹. Foreign policy also was a factor in the «softer» line on Catholics. As the civil war drew to a close, the regime sought to build international ties (for diplomatic and economic reasons) and saw the Vatican as a useful factor. For example, Georgy Chicherin (the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs) argued that negotiations with the Holy See «would make a great impression abroad and reduce the opposition of our enemies»³². The American Catholic press was perfectly well aware of the Soviet interest in diplomatic ties to the Vatican. NCWC reported, for example, that the Bolsheviks prized these contacts with the Vatican as potentially useful leverage and would serve to «strengthen [the Bolsheviks'] position with the Christian countries of Europe»³³.

The «softer» line notwithstanding, American Catholic newspapers were highly critical of the new Bolshevik regime. One reason was the virulent antireligious campaign, which the press saw as a determination to excoriate all religion. In May 1919, for example, *The Pittsburgh Catholic* quoted from anti-Bolshevik sources in Siberia in an article bearing the headline «Bishops and Priests Tortured by Bolsheviks»³⁴. The diocesan paper in Kansas published a pastoral letter from Polish bishops declaring that «Bolshevism is the anti-Christ»³⁵. The Catholic press also drew attention to the Bolshevik family policy, especially the liberalization of divorce, and offered a detailed critique of Bolshevik family propaganda in an article devoted to A. M. Kollontai's *Communism and the Family*³⁶. A. M. McGowan of NCWC published a pamphlet that contrasted Catholic social engagement (even socialism) with radical Bolshevism and cited the latter menace as an argument for timely reform to ensure social justice³⁷. Catholic newspapers also pointed to the subversive activities of Bolsheviks and, as support for diplomatic recognition gained momentum, strongly endorsed politicians who opposed that step³⁸. The press also used «Soviet» and «Bolshevik» as pejoratives. Catholic papers, for example, labeled as «Soviet» an Oregon law that mandated attendance at public schools and that clearly intended to drive parish schools out of existence³⁹.

The Catholic press also reported that popular religiosity had increased, not declined, and precisely because of the Bolshevik antireligious campaign. To cite a report from NCWS: «Strangely enough, the more intense the propaganda against religion in Russia becomes, the more the Russian people flock to the religious exercises of the old Orthodox Church»⁴⁰. The

³¹ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 2, с. 459, 457.

³² Chicherin memo to the Politburo, 12 Oct. 1920. Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории, ф. 17, оп. 163, д. 98, л. 6.

³³ CNA, 1.V.1922, p. 24.

³⁴ Pittsburgh Catholic, 8.V.1919, p. 1.

³⁵ Catholic Advance, 2.II.1921, p. 14.

³⁶ CNA, 11.X.1920, p. 28–30.

³⁷ McGowan R. A. Bolshevism in Russia and America. New York, 1920. NCWC popularized the McGowan: Pamphlet Explains Bolshevism in Russia and America. — NCWC, Bulletin, v. 1, № 1, 1920, p. 14–15.

³⁸ NCWC, which followed Congressional debates, endorsed the speech of one senator declaring that the Bolsheviks «have utterly destroyed marriage, the home, the fireside, the family, the cornerstone of all civilization, all society» (CNA, 3.V.1920, p. 7–9). See a further anti-recognition article a month later in CNA, 21.VII.1920, p. 24–25.

³⁹ CNA, 12.XI.1922, p. 20. On the important Oregon controversy, which NCWC eventually won in court, see: Shelley T. J. The Oregon School Case and the National Catholic Welfare Conference. — Catholic Historical Review, v. 75, № 3, 1989, p. 439–457. When Michigan emulated the Oregon example, the diocesan paper in Pittsburgh compared those advocating the close of parish schools «to the reds». The Pittsburgh Catholic, 20.XI.1924, p. 7.

⁴⁰ CNA, 10.I.1921, p. 21. In October 1920 NCWS denounced «federalization» of education (as another route to secularizing schools) as equivalent to «Sovietization» (CNA, 18.X.1920, p. 43).

revival was most apparent in the countryside. In September 1920, for example, the diocesan paper in Kansas reported that «one of the most serious factors facing the Bolsheviks in Russia is a religious revival among the peasants, which is taking the form of a determined opposition to the anti-Christian ethics and ideals of the Bolsheviks»⁴¹. But the religious revival had also spread to the working class. The NCWC correspondent in Vienna, for example, quoted an engineer from the Donbass about «a significant religious movement among the working classes»⁴². Another NCWC newsfeed headlined popular opposition («Russians Resent Bolshevik Acts against Religion») and, citing a report from Odessa, described how parishioners in Petrograd repulsed troops sent to arrest an Orthodox priest: «The crowd was armed with sticks, shovels and kitchen pokers; they threatened the troops, and after a parley the soldiers withdrew, and the priest was left unmolested». Given the surge in popular religiosity and the devastation wrought on the Orthodox Church, the Catholic press concluded that the promise of a new religious era «seems to lie with the Catholics»⁴³. In good measure that was due to what the Catholics saw as the weakness of the institutional Orthodox Church. According to one Russian Catholic priest: «Even today the religious movement is strong in Russia, but it does not spring from the leadership of the Orthodox clergy. If the churches are crowded, it is not due to the clergy, but to the people themselves... All the activities of the Church are guided by the people who have formed parish and diocesan councils»⁴⁴. Hence the prospects for Catholicism seemed extraordinary. An NCWC report from Rome, bearing the headline «Russians Receptive to Catholic Teaching», averred that «the plain way forward is religious union with the Catholic Church»⁴⁵.

Famine and the Papal Relief Mission

The onset of famine in 1921 triggered active Catholic engagement in Russia. Once the Soviet regime publicly recognized the magnitude of the problem and Maxim Gorky issued a plea for international assistance⁴⁶, the papacy was quick to respond. Although the American Relief Agency (ARA) was the principal source of famine relief⁴⁷, the Catholic Church also acted to mobilize assistance, beginning with a donation of Vatican funds and an appeal by Pope Benedict XV for contributions⁴⁸. The Holy See insisted that assistance be available to all the starving, regardless of religion or nationality. In December 1921 the Vatican opened negotiations with a Soviet representative and, after Benedict's death the following month, his successor — Pius XI — continued that initiative. On 12 March 1922 the Vatican and Soviet representatives signed an agreement to authorize a papal relief mission, detailing the responsibility of each side, but also stipulating that the papal emissaries not proselytize or come from a hostile country⁴⁹. NCWC, the mother organization of the Catholic News Agency, nominated Edmund Walsh,

⁴¹ The Catholic Advance, 11.IX.1920, p. 7.

⁴² CNA, 21.III.1921, p. 1.

⁴³ Ibid, 16.VIII.1920, p. 1. Even in 1917 the Catholic press saw Russia as a great opportunity for missionizing: «Now let thirty Jesuits go to Russia and the whole country will submit to the Pope». — The Catholic Advance, 2.VII.1917, p. 8.

⁴⁴ The Catholic Advance, 18.IX.1920, p. 1.

⁴⁵ CNA, 13.IX.1920, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Gribble R. Cooperation and Conflict between Church and State: The Russian Famine of 1921–1923. — Journal of Church and State, v. 51, № 4, 2009, p. 636–639; Edmondson C. The Politics of Hunger: The Soviet Response to Famine, 1921. — Soviet Studies, v. 29, 1977, p. 506–518.

⁴⁷ Gribble R. Cooperation and Conflict..., p. 640–647.

⁴⁸ Hull H. L. Op. cit., p. 79; Gribble R. Cooperation and Conflict..., p. 648–649.

⁴⁹ Full text see: Hull H. L. Op. cit., p. 159–162.

an American Jesuit and regent of the School of Foreign Service (Georgetown University)⁵⁰, to serve as director of the papal mission⁵¹. Acting under the aegis of ARA, the papal relief mission operated for seventeen months (August 1922 – November 1923), spent some two million dollars, employed 2500 Russians, and at its peak in June 1923 fed 158 000 per day⁵². The Vatican monitored the mission closely; the pope himself met nine times with Walsh⁵³.

NCWC gave extensive coverage to the famine and the papal mission⁵⁴. Walsh, as mission director, used the press to mobilize support, first in an NCWC article with this headline: «Russian Famine Horrors Depicted by Father Walsh»⁵⁵. NCWC distributed another report from Walsh under the title «Papal Relief Plans for Russia Outlined by Priest in Charge». The article was specifically «written for the NCWC News Service» and described the assistance that the mission had already provided⁵⁶. The following spring NCWC distributed another article from Walsh summarizing what the mission had achieved since the previous fall⁵⁷. Local diocesan papers printed these reports⁵⁸ and repeatedly disseminated the papal appeal for donations⁵⁹. American Catholics did indeed respond favorably; the diocesan paper in Pittsburgh, for example, boasted that its diocese had raised \$32,621 (a sum exceeded only by three dioceses)⁶⁰. NCWC not only solicited funds but emphasized the intensity of popular religiosity, as in an article contributed by Walsh: «At heart the Russian masses are deeply religious, and even in the last four years of their wretchedness they have clung to their faith»⁶¹. In an article written toward the end of the mission and published by a Jesuit periodical, Walsh reiterated that «the great masses of the people have preserved their faith»⁶². Indeed, «the deep religious element in the Russian people», he argued, helped to account for the popular «resistance to the 'requisitioning' of their churches and convents and sacred vessels»⁶³.

Walsh was referring, of course, to the confiscation of church valuables that commenced in February 1922, even as the Vatican and Soviets were concluding an agreement for the papal relief mission. The regime concentrated the seizure of values on the Russian Orthodox Church, ostensibly because of its great wealth in precious metals and stones, but also because it sought to expose the clergy's avarice and indifference to the suffering Orthodox masses. But this time the regime abandoned the soft line on Catholicism and included the Catholic Church in its

⁵⁰ Walsh's assistant at the mission published the first biography: *Gallagher L. J.* Edmund A. Walsh, S. J. New York, 1957. See also a later biography, defended earlier as a doctoral dissertation: *McNamara P.* A Catholic Cold War: Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., and the Politics of American Anticommunism. New York, 2005.

⁵¹ *Trythall M. P.* Russia's Misfortune Offers Humanitarians a Splendid Opportunity: Jesuits, Communism, and the Russian Famine. — *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, v. 5, 2018, p. 76n. The mission members spoke eleven languages; four of the twelve were fluent in Russian. *Gallagher L. J.* With the Papal Relief Mission in Russia. — *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, v. 13, № 49, 1924, p. 45.

⁵² *Hull H. L.* Op. cit., p. 215; *Gribble R.* Cooperation and Conflict..., p. 660. For his final report of February 1924, see: *The Catholic Advance*, 9.II.1924, p. 10.

⁵³ *Witness*, 14.II.1924, p. 1.

⁵⁴ *CNA*, 21.VIII.1922, p. 1; 4.XII.1922, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.VII.1922, p. 2; *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, 8.VII.1922, p. 1; *The Catholic Advocate*, 10.VII.1922, p. 10.

⁵⁶ *CNA* newsfeed, 18.IX.1922, p. 1. *The Catholic Advance*, for example, published the article on 23 Sept. 1922 (p. 3). Walsh published another letter, dated 6 November 1922, under his own name: *Walsh E.* Papal Relief in Russia. — *Woodstock Letters*, v. 52, 1923, p. 32–41.

⁵⁷ Dr. Walsh Writes on Papal Relief Work in Russia. — *The Catholic Advance*, 21.IV.1923, p. 7.

⁵⁸ *The Witness*, 17.II.1922, p. 6.

⁵⁹ *The Catholic Advance*, 3.IX.1921, p. 16; *The Witness*, 26.X.1922, p. 17.

⁶⁰ *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, 12.IV.1923, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.VII.1922, p. 1.

⁶² *Walsh E.* Papal Relief in Russia, p. 38.

⁶³ *CNA* newsfeed, 5.VII.1922, p. 2.

campaign of confiscations⁶⁴. Critical was the demand that, in accord with the Decree, Catholic parishioners sign the standard contract, acknowledging state ownership and vesting responsibility in the laity⁶⁵. The ranking prelate, Archbishop Cieplak, rejected this requirement (as a violation of canon law) and successfully directed parishioners not to comply⁶⁶. A further point of contention was the ban on religious instruction for Catholic children⁶⁷. As a report from Odessa in May 1922 emphasized, the Bolsheviks now treated the Orthodox and Catholic the same: «both are persecuted, robbed and massacred with utter impartiality»⁶⁸. The pope offered to buy the sacred items, but his effort came to naught⁶⁹. By September authorities in Petrograd had grown increasingly impatient, demanded vigorous measures to bring the Catholic Church in line, and appealed to central authorities in Moscow for support. Moscow complied: it ordered that the Decree be «implemented strictly and without exception», that clergy and laity who resisted be remanded to a revolutionary tribunal, and that any church which failed to sign the mandatory contract be closed⁷⁰. The confrontation came to a head in December, when authorities arrested Cieplak and other clergy and closed all the Catholic churches in Petrograd and three in Moscow⁷¹.

This intense anti-religious campaign provoked fierce criticism in the American Catholic press⁷². The NCWC correspondent in Vienna, Dr. Frederick Funder, did not mince words in castigating the «barbarous persecution of clergy and looting of church property by Soviet Russia»⁷³. NCWC also distributed an article from its Paris correspondent, summarizing the appeal of the bishop of Dijon about the plight of believers in Russia and the atrocious sacrilege

⁶⁴ Беглов А. Л., Токарева Е. С. Судебный процесс над католическим духовенством 1923 г. в освещении посланца Ватикана в России. — Электронный научно-образовательный журнал «История», т. 9, вып. 4 (68) (дата обращения 20.08.2019). For the contentious disagreement between the commissariats of foreign affairs (which favored special treatment for Catholics) and justice (which insisted on uniform, strict implementation), see the exchange between G. V. Chicherin and P. A. Krasikov in: Токарева Е. С. Отношения СССР и Ватикана от переговоров к разрыву 1922–1929. — Россия и Ватикан в конце XIX — первой трети XX века, с. 262–263.

⁶⁵ See the complaint from Archbishop Cieplak to the Petrograd soviet, dated 24 February, that some raion soviets were demanding the parishioners sign the obligatory contract: Католическая церковь..., с. 661–664.

⁶⁶ See Cieplak's memorandum to the Central Executive Committee from 22.IV.1922, reiterating that canon law precluded obeying the Decree and adding that neither the Russian state nor the Russian people had a claim to this property — which had been accumulated by the poor from Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. Since only the pope had authority in this matter, Cieplak asked that the «coercive expropriation» be delayed until he had time to consult with the Vatican. Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 2, с. 149–151. See also: там же, т. 1, ч. 2, с. 149–153, 339; ч. 4, с. 300–302. See also Budkiewicz's report to the papal nuncio in Warsaw: *Zatko J. J. A Contemporary Report on the Condition of the Catholic Church in Russia, 1922.* — *Harvard Theological Review*, v. 53, 1960, p. 277–295. Parishioners heeded the archbishop's directives; see the declarations of parish councils in March 1922 refusing to sign a new «contract» in: *Pożarski K.* Op. cit., т. 2, s. 483; Государственный архив Российской Федерации, ф. а-353, оп. 6, д. 6, л. 10.

⁶⁷ CNA, 1.V.1922, p. 2; The Pittsburgh Catholic, 22.VIII.1922, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.VII.1922, p. 1. For an early case of Catholic repression (in Minsk), see: Токарева Е. С. Отношения..., с. 268.

⁶⁹ For the attempt to ransom the valuables, see: Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 2, с. 152. The pope's offer was not confidential; reports quickly appeared in the American Catholic press (for example, The Catholic Advance, 26.V.1923, p. 6).

⁷⁰ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 2, с. 122, 50.

⁷¹ See the complaint from Archbishop Cieplak to the Central Soviet Executive Committee (VTsIK) on 7 December 1922 in: Католическая церковь..., с. 664–666.

⁷² The Pittsburgh Catholic, 25.I.1923, p. 2.

⁷³ Ibid., 5.IV.1923, p. 5.

perpetrated by militant atheists, such as the erection of a statue in honor of Judas⁷⁴. The Catholic press supported Patriarch Tikhon (publishing some of his pronouncements)⁷⁵ and displayed a strong aversion to the «Living Church». NCWC's Vienna correspondent, for example, wrote that the renovationists had no popular support and derided their «absolute servility to the domination of the Soviet ruling power» as a sign of «political opportunism»⁷⁶. By November 1923 NCWC published a report from Moscow that the Living Church was «rapidly becoming nonexistent»⁷⁷. The Catholic press was especially incensed by the assault on the Catholic Church and reported instances of violent resistance, like this confrontation in late May 1922: «At Kamenetz-Podolsk 18 000 Catholics, mostly Poles, surrounded the churches to prevent their violation. The churches were taken by storm, and several Catholics killed or wounded»⁷⁸. NCWC also informed readers that the regime's goal in confiscating church valuables was not to provide famine relief but to destroy religion⁷⁹.

Despite the unprecedented assault on the Catholic Church, the Vatican continued to seek an accommodation with Soviet authorities. The historiography has offered several possible motives: shield the 1,6 million Catholics under Soviet control, avoid jeopardizing the papal relief mission, enable Catholic proselytizing amidst a weakened and divided Orthodox Church, and buttress the Vatican's influence in international affairs. The Vatican did succeed in reaching a compromise formula to satisfy the Decree requirement for a parish contract⁸⁰. Whatever the motive, the Vatican made clear its priority to Walsh (its authorized representative in Russia), as in this instruction from Giuseppe Pizzardo, the Vatican deputy secretary of state: «Even if Catholic churches are plundered and native Catholic priests are arrested, you may not do anything; instead you must watch with folded arms»⁸¹. As tensions mounted, Pizzardo admonished Walsh not to threaten a termination of the papal relief mission: «We deem it opportune that you should not speak of eventual suspension of the Relief in case of religious persecution. The food supplies are sent through a spontaneous spirit of *charity*, to the suffering people of Russia, without distinction of religion, while requests made to the government in favor of the condemned Catholics are to be based on Justice and Equity. It would be wrong to suppose that the Pontifical aid is being sent to Russia for the purpose of obtaining greater regard for Catholics». Aware of Soviet sensitivities to Polish connections, the Vatican directed Walsh to send communications through the German (not Polish) ambassador and even to avoid traveling through Poland⁸². That the Vatican continued to negotiate with the Soviets, despite the confiscation of church valuables and repression of priests and parishioners, ignited widespread speculation and accusations of collaboration⁸³. Rumors were rife, with a clear anti-Catholic and anti-Jesuit animus; even the U. S. High Commissioner in Riga reported to Washington that the Bolsheviks were seeking to strike a blow «at Orthodoxy by an agreement with the Vatican»⁸⁴.

⁷⁴ CNA, 12.XI.1923, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.VII.1923, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 18.VII.1923, p. 1.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 12.XI.1923, p. 27.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 19.VII.1922, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 24.VII.1922, p. 25; The Catholic Advance, 29.VII.1922, p. 16.

⁸⁰ Петракки А. Папская миссия помощи России. — Россия и Ватикан в конце XIX — первой трети XX века, с. 237–239, 242–243, 252–259.

⁸¹ Stehle H. The Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917–1979. Athens, 1981, p. 43.

⁸² Hull H. L. Op. cit., p. 165–166.

⁸³ The Catholic news agency reported rumors that Vatican-Soviet relations were so good that the regime was willing to allow missionaries. CNA, 17.IV.1922, p. 1.

⁸⁴ Report dated 29 May 1922 in: Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1910–1929. Washington (D. C.), 1960. Reel 94, unpaginated.

That Vatican diplomacy did not elicit support in the American Catholic press. To be sure, the press did seek to refute accusations of Vatican collusion⁸⁵. In defense of the Holy See, NCWC emphasized that the pope had advanced core principles in defense of religious freedom and restitution of ecclesiastical property, and that he had no illusions about the «real condition of Russia»⁸⁶. In June 1922 *The Witness* and *The Pittsburgh Catholic* published a NCWC newsfeed denying accusations that the Vatican was «flirting» with the Soviet regime and published a letter from Pius XI firmly defending the principle of religious freedom⁸⁷. Sometimes the defense was less than stalwart. For example, one diocesan paper advised readers to treat reports of negotiations «with great reserve» and could only muster a «highly doubtful» comment on reports that «the Vatican is equally well disposed to come to direct terms with a power that has set itself so violently against all forms of Christianity»⁸⁸. To put it mildly, that was hardly a full-throated defense of the Vatican's policy toward the Soviets. In 1923 the gap between Rome and the American Catholic press became still more pronounced in the wake of a show trial that put ranking clergy in the dock.

Catholic Show Trial

The tensions between Russian Catholics and Soviet authorities came to a head in a famous show trial in March 1923. Although the Catholic churches held relatively modest collections of valuables, their resistance was unrelenting; vicar Budkiewicz personally concealed valuables on the premises of the Polish representative in Petrograd⁸⁹. The laity was no less adamant, resulting in disorders that even involved «the workmen of the Putilov works in Petrograd, where the parishioners of the church of the Immaculate Conception have established a permanent armed camp and guard their church night and day»⁹⁰. But the main issue was the Decree's requirement of a parish contract. The Vatican and Walsh made continuing attempts to finesse the issue by revising the «contract» (dogovor) as a «receipt» (raspiska)⁹¹, but these efforts foundered on opposition by Archbishop Cieplak⁹². Indeed, in Chicherin's view, the prelates were seeking not to compromise but to incite: «Cieplak and Budkiewicz used their influential position and the church apparatus under their control to stir up sentiment against the Soviet government»⁹³. The Soviets were also hypersensitive to Catholic connections ties to Poland; according to Chicherin, Budkiewicz was «particularly close to the Polish government»⁹⁴. After several months delay, the regime finally put the Catholic leadership on trial on 21–25 March 1923. The sixteen Catholics

⁸⁵ On newspaper reports of alleged Vatican-Bolshevik collusion, see: *McCullagh, F.* The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity. London, 1924. P. 102.

⁸⁶ CNA, 15 May 1922, p. 28.

⁸⁷ *The Witness*, 15.VII.1922, p. 12; *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, 15.VII.1922, p. 1. The articles derived from NCWC newsfeeds of 8.VII (CNA, 12.VI.1922, p. 1) and 12.VII (CNA, 12.VII.1922, p. 1).

⁸⁸ *The Catholic Advocate*, 6.V.1922, p. 2.

⁸⁹ Зерно из этой земли... Мученики Католической церкви в России XX века. Сост. Б. Чаплицкий. СПб., 2002, с. 100–108. For a full account of Budkiewicz's views (notably, strict adherence to canon law) and leading role in Catholic resistance to Bolshevik antireligious activities, see: *Чаплицкий Б. О.* Константин Будкевич (1863–1923). СПб., 2004.

⁹⁰ *Gribble R.* Cooperation and Conflict..., p. 659.

⁹¹ See the summary account and documents in *Петраки Дж.* Указ. соч., с. 237–239, 252–259.

⁹² Cieplak to Walsh, 6.XII.1922 and 19.XII.1922 (*Szczesniak B.* The Russian Revolution and Religion. Notre Dame, 1959, p. 103–105).

⁹³ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 3, с. 503.

⁹⁴ Там же. Indicative of the sensitivity to the Polish connections, the police compiled a special file on 189 clergy for the «Polish affair» (*Pol'skoe delo*), which included Cieplak and Budkiewicz (*Požarski K.* Op. cit., t. 2, s. 544). Given the ethnic profile of Soviet Catholics (80 percent were of Polish nationality), that sensitivity – especially in the context of Soviet-Polish war – was not surprising. *Tokareva E. S.* Vatican and Catholicism in Russia in 1920–1930. – *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2016, v. 236, p. 379–384.

on trial included the ranking prelate, Archbishop Cieplak, his vicar-general Budkiewicz, and the Uniate Exarch Leonid Fedorov, along with twelve priests and one lay adolescent.

Despite Soviet efforts to stage this «show trial» and monopolize coverage⁹⁵, the Catholic press succeeded in generating an independent account. As director of the papal relief mission, Walsh managed to obtain tickets to the trial and gave one to Francis McCullagh, the correspondent of the *New York Herald*⁹⁶. Both Walsh and McCullagh made detailed notes, emphasizing the bias of the chief judge (M. V. Galkin), the provocative anticlericalism of the prosecutor (N. V. Krylenko), and the courage of the defendants⁹⁷. During the trial McCullagh sent daily telegrams to his editor (which, the *New York Herald* noted, never arrived), took advantage of the diplomatic pouch, and produced a lengthy account portraying the whole affair as a «religious trial and not a political one»⁹⁸. With the permission of the *New York Herald*, NCWC disseminated the McCullagh transcript and strongly urged Catholic papers to take advantage of the opportunity: «This information ... will make one of the greatest news features the American press, secular or religious, has printed in many years... Any Catholic paper that neglects to give this wonderful story full display will be missing the greatest opportunity for news distinction which probably has ever been afforded the Catholic press in America»⁹⁹. The diocesan press did indeed seize the opportunity. *The Catholic Advance*, for example, carried the materials on the trial with the banner headline «Reds War on Religion in Prelates' Trial»¹⁰⁰.

The trial was but a prelude to the ending: draconian sentences — the death penalty for Cieplak and Budkiewicz, plus long prison sentences for others. The result was a storm of worldwide protest¹⁰¹. Except for a handful of Protestants, hardly anyone accepted the Soviet claim that the clergy were convicted for political, not religious, activities¹⁰². The Catholic press, indeed virtually all newspapers, shared NCWC's view that the true intent of the show trial was «to crush religion»¹⁰³. Many churches and governments mobilized protests in an attempt to mitigate the plight of the defendants and, above all, to have the two death sentences commuted. The Catholic press reported the strenuous efforts of the Vatican, Britain, and Poland to prevent the executions¹⁰⁴. Catholics and leaders from other confessions lobbied the American government to do the same. In response, the U.S. secretary of state instructed the ambassador in Germany to explain to the Soviet representative there that «the execution of the sentence against these ecclesiastics cannot fail to have a most unfortunate effect»¹⁰⁵. Even figures like the influential Senator William Borah (Republican, Idaho), who was well disposed toward recognition, warned a

⁹⁵ See the texts in Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 4, с. 406–424.

⁹⁶ McCullagh's byline for his detailed account did not go unnoticed: he was subsequently expelled from the Soviet Union (*Tuxuy K. T.* Указ. соч., с. 78). Walsh later helped McCullagh arrange publication of his book «Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity», most of which was devoted to the trial (*McNamara P.* Catholic Cold War, p. 48; *Trythall M. P.* Pius XI and American Pragmatism, p. 83). McCullagh's volume included not only a detailed account of the trial (p. 99–281) but also appended a host of documents, including the indictment, the prosecutor Krylenko's speech, Soviet press reports, and the sentence itself (p. 154–171, 122–132, 329–353, 361–360).

⁹⁷ A photographic reproduction of Walsh's report on the trial appears in *Hull H. L.* Op. cit., p. 267–292. The Vatican version is to be found in: *Безлов А. Л., Токарева Е. С.* Указ. соч.

⁹⁸ CNA, 9.IV.1923, p. 29–37.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 14.V.1923, p. 33.

¹⁰⁰ The Catholic Advance, 26.V.1923. See also: The Witness, 12.IV.1923, p. 1–5.

¹⁰¹ CNA, 2.IV.1923, p. 2.

¹⁰² *McNamara P.* Catholic Cold War, p. 37–38; *Filene P. G.* Op. cit., p. 84–86.

¹⁰³ The article («Bill of Indictment Shows on Its Face that the Prelates Did Not Plot Revolution») was distributed by NCWC (CNA, 21.V.1923, p. 2–28).

¹⁰⁴ The Pittsburgh Catholic, 29.III.1923, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Office of the Historian. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d669> (accessed 28.03.1923).

Soviet representative that the latter dutifully reported to Moscow: if the sentence is carried out, this «will terribly stir up religious passions in America and bring irreparable harm to his work in favor of recognition of the Soviet Government, while nullification of the death sentence will immediately simplify Borah's work and create for him strong support among those who seek his assistance»¹⁰⁶.

The Politburo's response to the international uproar was mixed. The death sentences indeed came as a surprise to the Politburo, which had adopted a resolution in November 1922 that Cieplak be given the «maximum punishment», but with the explicit stipulation «not to apply the supreme measure [execution]». It therefore issued «a severe reprimand to comrade Krylenko and the entire composition of the court for violating the directives of the Central Committee»¹⁰⁷. But the Politburo made only a semi-retreat. It did commute Cieplak's sentence from execution to ten years' incarceration, with the rationale that he had suffered persecution under the tsarist regime and that the capital punishment could be seen by the «backward part of Catholic citizens» as unwarranted. In the case of Budkiewicz, however, the Politburo argued that he had engaged in counterrevolutionary activities with a hostile bourgeois state (Poland) and therefore rejected the appeal for clemency¹⁰⁸. The execution, carried out on the night of 31 March 1923, was quickly disseminated around the world by NCWC¹⁰⁹.

The result was universal condemnation. In an overview of the American press («Press of Nation Voices Horror at Moscow Murder»), NCWC catalogued the fierce condemnation in secular as well as religious publications¹¹⁰. A diocesan paper like *The Pittsburgh Catholic* published an article with the headline «Entire Christian World Aroused by Sentences Passed by Soviet on Catholic Clergy in Russia»¹¹¹. Other religious groups joined the Catholic condemnation: the Federal Council of Churches joined in the criticism and the Episcopalian bishop of New York castigated the execution as «barbarous»¹¹². The condemnation was not only in America; in Germany, for example, both Catholic and secular papers denounced the execution¹¹³. Details on the execution itself only deepened the furor¹¹⁴; Walsh himself provided an especially lurid account of Budkiewicz's execution by a «Mongolian»¹¹⁵. The U. S. Government, responding to domestic demands, retaliated by cancelling the visa recently issued to M. I. Kalinin's wife to come to America and solicit funds for famine relief¹¹⁶.

The trial and execution had decisively shifted the momentum against diplomatic recognition and such was to remain the American position for another decade — long after most European countries¹¹⁷. As the Kansas diocesan paper wrote after the Budkiewicz execution,

¹⁰⁶ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 3, с. 528–529.

¹⁰⁷ Там же, т. 1, ч. 1, с. 282, 284.

¹⁰⁸ Politburo session of 29 March 1929 (там же, т. 1, ч. 2, с. 91).

¹⁰⁹ CNA, 2.IV.1923, p. 33 («Moscow, 30 March»), even before the public announcement in «Известия», 3.IV.1923.

¹¹⁰ CNA, 9.IV.1923, p. 20–21.

¹¹¹ *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, 5.IV.1923, p. 1.

¹¹² CNA, 2.IV.1923, p. 33–34.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 30.IV.1923, p. 8.

¹¹⁴ Citing a Russian newspaper in Paris, NCWC provided an article entitled «Details of execution Reveal Barbarity of Russian Slayers» (*The Pittsburgh Catholic*, 17.V.1923, p. 1).

¹¹⁵ *The Catholic Advance*, 10.V.1924, p. 2 (without NCWC attribution); see also the Walsh address to Catholic Converts League (CNA, 5.V.1924, p. 2).

¹¹⁶ CNA, 16.IV.1923, p. 1. For the official record (communications between the secretary of state and President Warren Harding), see: Office... — URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d672>.

¹¹⁷ Soviet officials failed to appreciate the scale of Catholic influence, as reflected in Chicherin's query reported in *Hull H. L. Op. cit.*, p. 198.

«Russia's Chance of Recognition [by the United States] Is at an End»¹¹⁸. NCWC spread the same message in a newsfeed declaring that the execution «has closed the door on the growing controversy over the question of the recognition of the soviet government of Moscow»¹¹⁹. The unofficial Soviet representative in the United States, B. E. Skvirsky, confirmed the universal condemnation of the Budkiewicz execution¹²⁰ and, with good reason, «confessed to great dejection on the subject [of American diplomatic recognition], saying that all his work in this country for recognition had now been undone by a single act»¹²¹. A. M. Kollontai reported profound outrage in Norwegian society and concluded that «the verdict brought us more harm than good». The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs compiled a summary of the international response, all devastating in its critique¹²².

But the Bolshevik leadership proved totally unprepared to deal with this diplomatic disaster. Chicherin, when confronted by three foreign correspondents demanding evidence that Budkiewicz colluded with the Polish government, was unable to respond¹²³. He was no more forthcoming in his brusque response to a polite query from the Holy See (for the official text of the interrogation and the motivation for the sentence): citing the «vicious campaign against us», he declared that the Soviet government will not provide any materials on what is already a closed case¹²⁴. The Soviet government was outright rude in its response to an official note to the British government, reminding London that this was a domestic matter of a sovereign state and asserting that the whole furor was due to the machinations of a «neighboring state» (Poland) for «national-political» purposes¹²⁵. The Politburo, however, could not overlook the gravity of this self-inflicted wound, but could only issue a lame instruction to various functionaries that they intensify «the necessary counter-agitation with regard to the execution of Budkiewicz»¹²⁶.

Despite the execution and ensuing uproar, the Vatican continued to seek an accommodation with Moscow and on 9 April 1923 confirmed that there was to be no curtailment of its relief work because of the Budkiewicz execution¹²⁷. The Anti-Religious Commission specifically noted the papacy's moderate response: «It must be noted that, during the campaign raised around the case of Cieplak and Budkiewicz, the pope himself and those around him acted most decently». It claimed that, in discussions with the Soviet representative in Rome, the pope declared «a willingness to enter into every kind of agreement in the question of the Catholic Church». It also noted that all of the Catholic churches had recently signed contracts, as required by the Decree¹²⁸. The Vatican's tempered response worked, at least in the short term: a Vatican archive report on Leningrad in 1927–1928 showed that, whereas 54 percent of the Orthodox churches had been closed, only 7 percent of the Catholic churches had suffered this fate¹²⁹.

¹¹⁸ The Catholic Advance, 14.IV.1923, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ CNA, 9.IV.1923, p. 27.

¹²⁰ Тухий К. Т. Указ. соч., с. 77.

¹²¹ Chief of Russian Affairs to the secretary of state, 13.IV.1923 in: Office... — URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02/d675> (accessed 27.05.2019).

¹²² Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 3, с. 546, 528–530.

¹²³ Тухий К. Т. Указ. соч., с. 75.

¹²⁴ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 3, с. 533–536.

¹²⁵ Там же, т. 1, ч. 1, с. 286–87.

¹²⁶ Там же, с. 285.

¹²⁷ CNA, 9.IV.1923, p. 39.

¹²⁸ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 1, с. 556–557 (report of Sept. 1923).

¹²⁹ Weir T. H. A European Culture War in the Twentieth Century? Anti-Catholicism and Anti-Bolshevism between Moscow, Berlin, and the Vatican 1922 to 1933. — Journal of Religious History, v. 39, 2015, p. 285.

The Vatican's diplomatic response may have impressed Soviet leaders, but not most in the West: criticism of the Holy See intensified sharply¹³⁰. The invective came from all sides: on the one hand, from the conservative Polish press (which complained that the pope had failed to act energetically to save Budkiewicz)¹³¹ and from the leftwing German weekly *Die Weltbühne* (which berated the Vatican's «enormous interest in not losing the connection with the Russian rulers»)¹³². American Catholics were more restrained in their rhetoric, but plainly at a loss to explain or defend Vatican policy. Even the head of the papal relief mission, Walsh, broke ranks with the Holy See¹³³. Contrary the Vatican's categorical commitment to the mission, Walsh — widely regarded as an authority on the Soviet regime — expressed his intense antipathy toward the Bolshevik regime. Despite the pope's commitment to the relief mission, Walsh wrote the Vatican secretary of state in May 1923 that such assistance «only releases equivalent sums of Soviet money for revolutionary propaganda for the overthrow of established governments in Europe and elsewhere»¹³⁴. Not long afterwards he warned the Vatican not to negotiate with the Soviets: «The duplicity of these people is unbelievable if not actually experienced on the spot. Lying is the ordinary refuge and it simply renders normal intercourse, whether diplomatic or commercial, almost impossible»¹³⁵. He became increasingly caustic toward the end of his tenure as head of the papal relief mission. In September 1923, for example, he wrote his superior at Georgetown University that dealing with the Soviets was «a continual penance of the most pronounced type, as the Bolsheviks are the lowest type of humanity I can imagine. I have been instructed by the Holy See to keep up the usual diplomatic form in dealing with them, but I assure you that it is like casting the proverbial pearls before swine»¹³⁶.

The animosity was mutual: Soviets became increasingly impatient with Walsh's attempts to defend Catholic interests. In a note to the Soviet representative in Rome (dated 12 November 1923), Chicherin complained bitterly about Walsh: «I am sending you today a telegram regarding the insufferable behavior of Walsh. Every two or three days he thinks up new scandals and raises these to the highest level. Each time he sends me letters and demands that I receive him, with a threat to leave and with the warning that this will spoil the relations that have been developed between the USSR and the Vatican»¹³⁷. How did the Vatican respond? In October 1923 the Vatican undersecretary of state, Pizzardo, wrote to Walsh summarizing the complaints of the Soviet representative and urging that he adopt a more tempered behavior:

He (the Soviet envoy. — *G. F.*) made no reference to a new contract for relief work nor to his authority to treat of this matter. He did, however, enter a complaint that your manner of dealing with the Soviet authorities was somewhat rude, that you did not have sufficient consideration for the mentality of the new Russian regime and for the difficulties it was encountering, and finally that you give no evidence of a full understanding of the Slav mentality. He finally concluded by formally demanding that the Holy See replace you with an agent who had a better understanding of the overall situation¹³⁸.

Pizzardo endeavored to reassure the Soviet representative in Rome that he had «just written him (Walsh. — *G. F.*) to recommend that he moderate his behavior in his relationship with

¹³⁰ *Zatko J. J.* The Vatican and Famine Relief in Russia. — *Slavonic and East European Review*, v. 47, № 98, 1963, p. 60.

¹³¹ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 3, с. 533–534.

¹³² *Weir T. H.* Op. cit., p. 285.

¹³³ *McNamara P.* Catholic Cold War, p. 24. On Walsh's frustrating experience with Soviet officials and police monitoring, see the materials cited in *Hull H. L.* Op. cit., p. 134, 146.

¹³⁴ *Hull H. L.* Op. cit., p. 212.

¹³⁵ *McNamara P.* Catholic Cold War, p. 45.

¹³⁶ *Hull H. L.* Op. cit., p. 225–226.

¹³⁷ Конфессиональная политика советского государства..., т. 1, ч. 3, с. 558.

¹³⁸ *Gallagher L. J.* Op. cit., p. 64.

Soviet authorities». To that he added, sheepishly, the explanation that «this somewhat rude way of acting can be explained by the fact that Prof. Walsh is American»¹³⁹.

Although the main thrust of the papal relief mission was winding down, the Vatican continued its efforts to seek an accommodation with the Soviet regime. But the anti-Bolshevik consensus in the United States continued to prevail for another decade, as sentiment against recognition of the USSR only hardened¹⁴⁰ and Walsh emerged as a leading opponent of recognition¹⁴¹. The Great Depression eventually proved a critical factor; although NCWC remained adamant foes of recognition, by 1933 some 63 percent of the American press favored recognition¹⁴².

In conclusion, this examination of the American Catholic press during the first years of Soviet rule suggests several conclusions. First, the American Catholic press not only provided much reliable (and otherwise unavailable information) to Western readers; whereas the American diplomats relied principally upon the Soviet press¹⁴³, the Catholic press had an array of unofficial sources and acquired these through a variety of subterfuges (including the diplomatic pouch). These reports certainly had a significant impact on public opinion, especially in the United States, but increasingly abroad as well (as the international clientele of NCWC grew). Significantly, the American press was strongly anti-Bolshevik, hardly given to defending a more flexible line toward the Soviet Union. Although the press enthusiastically supported the papal relief mission, it was hostile to the Bolshevik regime and adamantly opposed to recognition. Indeed, the press helped to form a resilient consensus opposed to the recognition of the Soviet Union; not until November 1933, in the wake of the Great Depression, was F. D. Roosevelt able to break the logjam and establish diplomatic relations. For more than a decade, the Catholic press — and its large constituency — was able to repulse efforts to establish diplomatic ties and facilitate access to economic opportunities in the USSR.

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¹³⁹ Trythall M. P. Pius XI and American Pragmatism, p. 84.

¹⁴⁰ Gribble R. United States Recognition of Soviet Russia: 1917–1933 — Church and State Responses. — American Catholic Studies, v. 119, № 4, 2008, p. 21–51.

¹⁴¹ McNamara P. Russia, Rome, and Recognition: American Catholics and Anticommunism in the 1920s. — U. S. Catholic Historian, v. 24, № 2, 2006, с. 71–72.

¹⁴² Gribble R. United States Recognition..., p. 21–51.

¹⁴³ The reports from the High Commissioner in Riga often consisted of little more than translations from the Soviet press. Records, reel 94, passim; Чаплицкий Б. О. Константин Будкевич (1863–1923). Жизнь и деятельность. СПб., 2004.

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