“Russia’s Misfortune Offers Humanitarians a Splendid Opportunity”*: Jesuits, Communism, and the Russian Famine

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Abstract

Using archival documentation, this article discusses the beginning of the first grand international aid mission of the Catholic Church (1922–23), undertaken to assist the starving children of Bolshevik Russia. Under the auspices of the American Relief Administration (ARA), the Papal Relief Mission to Russia fed approximately 158,000 persons a day. The pivotal figure between American Catholics and the Roman Curia, and subsequently between the Vatican and the Bolsheviks, was Edmund Aloysius Walsh, S.J., founder of the first US school of diplomacy, at Georgetown University. Walsh served as papal emissary in charge of this mission, which, among other duties, entailed liaising with the ARA, keeping the Vatican informed, and negotiating with the Bolsheviks regarding the church’s position within a communist society. Walsh’s experience provides a firsthand view of the “Bolshevik world” and insight into the manner in which the Bolshevik Revolution was understood by the Vatican. The actions of the protagonists (Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, Jesuit superior general; Pietro Cardinal Gaspari, Vatican secretary of state; Mgr. Giuseppe Pizzardo, Vatican substitute secretary of state; Col. William Haskell, director of the ARA’s Russian Relief Program; Mgr. Lorenzo Lauri, apostolic nuncio to Poland; and Walsh), are revealed through their own words, which show the difficulties encountered within both the Christian and Bolshevik spheres and clarify that common objectives were often shared only in appearance.

* Maxim Gorky’s plea, July 13, 1921: “If humanitarian ideas and feelings – faith in whose social import was so shaken by the damnable war and its victors’ vengeance towards the vanquished – if faith in the creative force of these ideas and feelings, I say, must and can be restored, Russia’s misfortune offers humanitarians a splendid opportunity to demonstrate the vitality of humanitarianism.” American Relief Administration, *Bulletin*, 16, Second Series (September 1, 1921): 2.

Notwithstanding the good will that the mission's success earned for the Vatican, the attempt to establish diplomatic relations was destined to fail, due in large part to the events narrated herein.

Keywords

Edmund A. Walsh – anti-Communism – Papal Relief Mission to Russia – American Relief Administration – Włodzimierz Ledóchowski – Soviets and Holy See agreement – humanitarian funds and aids – Bolshevik Revolution – church and state separation

Preface

When discussing Jesuits and Communism it is impossible not to mention Edmund Aloysius Walsh, S.J. (1885–1956). Writings about him have been extremely varied, but, undoubtedly, looming over his long and illustrious career like an ominous “specter” is the shadow of his “anti-communism.” Some writers, in attempting to minimize Walsh's achievements, have concentrated their attention on this aspect and have analyzed it negatively, justifying their own criticism through innuendo and hearsay, and, most certainly, relying upon incomplete and often flawed research. Walsh's first-hand experiences in Russia mark the beginning of a remarkable international career, and the following article briefly outlines that world and the events with which he dealt.

A second generation American of Irish descent, Walsh was an outstanding Jesuit, a workaholic of exceptional resilience, and a steadfast and trusted papal delegate. Walsh's “missions” are an integral part of the major international events of the twentieth century: director of the Papal Famine Relief Mission to Russia (1922–23), founder and president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (1926–31); papal negotiator for the Mexican *Arreglos* (1929); papal envoy to Iraq and the founder of the Iraq-American Educational Association (1931–32); delegate to the Finnish Relief Fund, chaired by Herbert Hoover (1939–41); consultant to US Chief of Counsel, Robert Jackson, Nuremberg Trials (1945–46); Jesuit visitor general for the *Missio Japonica*, Japan (1947–48).

In the current article, we will describe his role as emissary for the Papal Famine Relief Mission to Russia. This will serve to give a firsthand view of a portion of the “Bolshevik world” and of Communism as applied in Russia, but it also provides an opportunity to trace the manner in which the Bolshevik Revolution was viewed outside of Russia, most particularly by the Vatican. We will

come face to face with the overall expression of an era that permeated daily life. Bolshevik Russia, with its turbulent reality, in continuous transformation, will remain in the background of our account, but it is interesting, however, to quote the succinct but effective analysis of events made by the authors of the book on the American Relief Administration [hereafter ARA]:

The revolution of March, 1917, which overthrew the Czar, was hastened at least, if not actually precipitated, by “bread riots” in Petrograd and Moscow. The inability of the provisional government to handle the food situation, as much as anything else, made possible the coup d’état of October 25, 1917, known as the Bolshevik Revolution. Lenin and his grimly competent associates were abler and more determined than their predecessors. But they, too, failed to solve the food situation, although they did control distribution, and thus used food as a weapon to compel support and to thwart opposition.¹

Mention is also made that reverberations from the Russian famine were already felt at the Paris Peace Conference (1919); however, the aid offered to Russia at that time was refused since civil war was under way and formerly allied armies were still operating on Russian soil. This situation had changed, however, with the great drought and famine of 1921, and this is exactly the date from which our account begins.

1 The Russian Famine: A Humanitarian and Religious Opportunity

On August 21, 1921, following Maxim Gorky’s (1868–1936) plea to the world, the Riga Agreement was signed with Maxim Litvinov (1876–1951) for Russia and Walter Lyman Brown (1865–1966) for the ARA. This agreement, which concerned only aid for children and the sick, and its particularly stringent conditions, would also provide the basis that the Soviets themselves utilized to reject requests for further concessions: only requests from those whose governments had already signed an agreement directly with the Soviet Republic were considered valid.² This is what happened with the Holy See in 1923 when

1 Frank M. Surface and Raymond L. Bland, *American Food in the World War and Reconstruction Period: Operations of the Organizations under the Direction of Herbert Hoover, 1914 to 1924* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1931), 244.

2 Delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Italy, Rome, November 27, 1923, No. 3835, N. Jordanski to H.E. Cardinal G. Pizzardo, Undersecretary of the Vatican State.

it attempted to renew the agreement directly with the Soviet authorities following the conclusion of the ARA's operations in Russia. However, we are getting ahead of events.

The operations of the ARA in Russia began almost immediately. Funds for the organization came from private as well as public sources and included a full spectrum of religious organizations. The funds donated by each religious group were individually administered in Russia by a selected American representative under the supervision of the director of the Russian Relief Program, Colonel William N. Haskell (1878–1952).³

On March 12, 1922, following a delay of approximately six months in the appointment of an American representative to oversee the Catholic contributions, the Vatican signed the agreement to enter Russia under the auspices of the ARA. The papal delegation would begin its work in Russia under Walsh's leadership in July 1922.

But what were the decisions made by the Roman church prior to this, even before Gorky's plea for humanitarian aid? States, in fact, were not the only ones to take a pragmatic view of Russia's internal reality as it developed in the aftermath of World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution. Already in August 1917, the words used by Archbishop (Count) Andrey Szeptycki (1865–1944), Ruthenian Metropolitan of Halych and Lvov (Poland),⁴ in a letter addressed to the father general of the Jesuits, (Count) Włodzimierz Ledóchowski (1866–1942), were ones of incitement to act now that “the door is open” for the conversion of Russia to Catholicism. It seems impossible—said Szeptycki, rhetorically—not to respond to this invitation from providence, but we must do so not through the Latin rite, rather the Eastern one, so as not to harm the cause of the Union!⁵

The aforesaid request and its proponent, Szeptycki, would be cited in a Report of December 19, 1921, submitted to Cardinal Giovanni Tacci (1863–1928), secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, by the apostolic nuncio of Poland, Lorenzo Lauri (1864–1941). His analysis was a lucid and extremely precise examination of the new reality created by the disappearance of the czarist empire and the dismembering of significant parts of the territory previously included within the borders of Imperial Russia: “Certainly the work of

Congregatio pro negotiis ecclesiasticis extraordinariis [hereafter AA.EE.SS.], Pont. Comm. pro Russia, Sc. 72, Fasc. 324.

3 Harold H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919–1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration* (New York: MacMillan, 1927), 112–13.

4 Roman Aleksander Maria Szeptycki had studied in the Jesuit seminary of Kraków.

5 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [hereafter ARSI], *Missiones Pontificae, Russia 2001-I, Sub Russia, Russia 1910–21*.

the Mission in Russia will succeed more easily if conciliation can be obtained between the Poles and the Ruthenians, yet, up to now we are still far distant from this.”⁶

The prelate warned against the rise and revitalization of nationalisms, which would not benefit the cause of Catholicism, especially at the moment when the Bolsheviks were ferociously attacking the very foundation of religion in Russia. Moreover: “It will also be necessary to separate the work for conversions in the territory subject to the Polish Republic from that in the territory forming part of the Russian State.”⁷

Monsignor Lauri warned against the fact that, behind apparent religious guise, there were political movements that wished to extend their influence in all those regions where they might find related ethnic concentrations. Therefore, the Poles fear the Ukrainian-Ruthenians because in them they see only Little Russia intent on attacking the heart of Latin Catholicism, of which they are the representative in the midst of “Orientals”:

For this reason attempting to bring about a return to the Greek rite of the hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of Podlachia and Chelmno who for 16 years have lived under the Latin rite, and who in large part find themselves content with it, is impractical, aggravating and dangerous, more so since the priests who would have to carry out the work would be the Ruthenians of Galicia, who in this moment the Polish unfortunately consider much more as political agitators than as missionaries and shepherds of the soul.⁸

On the other side are the Ukrainians who view themselves as the “papal appointees” for overcoming the schism, but fear that within their own country they harbor the onset of internal struggles borne by Polish enemies, as well as by the Russian Orthodox and by the Germans settled in the area of the Volga. The point of contention is eastern Galicia, but there is yet still more in the way of the devoutly wished mass conversion.

The documents furnished for use by the “Apostolic Delegates in Russia”⁹ present a brief treatise on the rite with comments that are extremely clear but

6 AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 626, Fasc. 1.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Notes on the rite for use by the Apostolic Delegate in Russia. How to prepare and help conversions. News to the Superiors of the Congregation concerning the Russian mission. Catholic formation of the young. AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 626, Fasc. 1, 80–90. Emphasis added.

equally “divisive,” even today. Point C speaks of the recommended manner of dealing with the religious spirit of the Russians, reminding the reader of how particular that is and how the people have perfect knowledge of the intonation of every chant and of every gesture of the officiate: “At Constantinople, in 1921, the Russian Bishops refused to continue officiating with the Greeks because to them the nasal chant of the latter seemed Jewish. [Continuing to point D]: The low mass of the Ruthenians disgusts them more than a sacrilege.”

Lauri does not limit himself to refuting Szeptycki’s analysis, which tends to identify Ukraine as the departure point for overcoming the schism and returning the lost sheep to the fold. Lauri also warns against Polish nationalism, and he remarks on the action of a prelate whose difficulties will be closely linked to Walsh,¹⁰ to the Papal Famine Relief Mission in Russia, to the return from Moscow to Rome of the relics of Blessed Andrzej Bobola, and, not least of all, as we shall see, to considerations raised in his regard in the Ponenza of December 17, 1923. The prelate in question is Archbishop Jan Cieplak (1857–1926), about whom Lauri, as apostolic nuncio, writes to Pietro Cardinal Gasparri (1852–1934).¹¹

In summary, all are in agreement on overcoming the schism, in the sense that Russia should return under Roman guidance, but the form, the means, and, above all, nationality divide them.

1.1 *The Conditions in Soviet Russia*

Superior General Włodzimierz Ledóchowski’s missive to the cardinal secretary of state serves as our initial guide in deciphering the conditions the thirteen missionaries of the Holy See¹² would encounter once they arrived in Russia to

10 Giovanni Battista Cieplak had already come under police surveillance during the czarist era for suspicion of Polish nationalism. He was arrested twice before the famous Soviet trial eventually occurring in 1923, in which he, his Vicar Konstantin Budkevich, and various other priests and lay persons were prosecuted and condemned. Budkevich was executed by the Soviets shortly after the trial ended. Marisa Patulli Trythall, “Pius XI and American Pragmatism,” in *Pius XI and America: Proceedings of the Brown University Conference (Providence, October 2010)*, ed. Charles Gallagher, David Kertzer, and Alberto Melloni (Berlin: Lit-Verlag, 2012), 67.

11 Warsaw, March 4, 1922. AA.EE.SS., Pos. 626, Fasc. 1.

12 In the group departing for the Mission in Russia, there were five Jesuits (including Walsh), three Salesians, three missionaries of the Divine Word, and two Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Their nationalities: three Italians, two Americans, two Spaniards, two Germans, two Czechoslovakians, one Yugoslav, one Greek. AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 659, Fasc. 40.

carry out their work. The news that had arrived at the Vatican was fragmentary but unequivocal: the situation was grave and terrifying.

1. Given the current conditions it seems useful to obtain permission from the Soviet government for the delegates of the Holy See to enter Russia for charitable works and, therefore, the negotiations already begun should not be interrupted except in a situation of dire necessity. 2. On the other hand, it is necessary to obtain the maximum assurance of freedom of conscience and cult, not to protect the lives of the Delegates, who must always be ready to expose their lives for the good of the Church, but so as not to give the appearance that the Holy See, in order to obtain a few useful concessions, would close its eyes to the inhuman persecution of Religion on the part of the Soviets.¹³

He then discusses the indicated essential points:

Some reasons to confirm the points indicated above: Ad 1. – The immense good that the work of charity can bring to the Russian people thereby gaining hearts for the Holy See [...] Ad 2.–a) There is no doubt that in fact the persecution is atrocious, as results from the eye-witness testimony of various nationalities from all parts of Russia. [...] it would greatly harm the good name of the Holy See among the Russians, who are profoundly religious by nature, if the Church did not protest against such persecutions. b) We must insist on having very explicit guarantees, so that, if they do not maintain their word, we will have all the evidence required to compromise them before the world.¹⁴

He continues, noting:

Fear or the hope of some gain is the only means of obtaining something; there can be no trust in their promises, since their perfidy has been proven by their actions. c) It is clear that a principal item of the Soviet program is to destroy every religion and all Christian culture; nevertheless we might perhaps, through expediency, obtain a delay to that execution, and this would already be a great gain.¹⁵

13 Letter and notes from Ledóchowski to Gasparri, May 13, 1922. AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 626, Fasc. 1.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid. Emphasis original.

Then the Jesuit Father General completes this thorough examination with a confrontational tone:

As to 3 – It is also evident from the last answer given to the Memorandum from the Holy See, that the Soviets fear it more than any other power. Profit must be drawn from this, showing them that the Church does not fear anything and that it is ready to use all of its moral power against them, if need be [...]. Since this concerns such a large people, who undoubtedly will always have great influence on all the other Slavic peoples and possibly on the peoples of the East and West, a good and secure information service should be organized in Rome itself, with men of complete trust whose role should be to study the Russian and Slavic questions in order to provide the necessary information at any moment.¹⁶

He closes with a surprising reading of the phenomenon of the Bolshevik Revolution:

c) It seems necessary to always keep in view that the present revolutionary government of Russia was not, as happened in other revolutions, born from the economic and social conditions of the country itself, but from a foreign government, Judaic, with a splendid international organization, which intends to destroy Christian civilization to assure the Israelites the absolute domination of the world.¹⁷

This is a means of lifting the political and moral weight of the revolution from the shoulders of a people, meaning the Slavs (from whom great things are expected), to load it on those of a minority which, as such, can do little to make itself heard.

This particular reading of the Russian Revolution, however, was not the exclusive preserve of Ledóchowski writing to the Vatican's secretary of state. We also find telltale traces in the Archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the reports sent by Colonel Balduino Caprini (1861–1947) of the Royal Italian *Carabinieri*, which precisely identify the religious origins of the families of Soviet authorities.¹⁸ Similarly, there are discrete traces in the reports of the

16 The Pontifical Russian College of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, known as the Russicum, would be founded in Rome on August 15, 1929.

17 Notes from Ledóchowski to Gasparri, May 13, 1922. AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 626, Fasc. 1.

18 Confidential Personal Memorandum, Constantinople, September 27, 1922, "I have the honor to transmit to H.E. the combined biographic information on the new provisional president of the Council of Commissars of the People of Moscow: Kameneff-Rosenfeld,

apostolic nuncio in Germany, Mgr. Eugenio Pacelli (1876–1958), that indicate the religious identity of the Soviet government staff members for diplomatic relations with whom he enters into contact.¹⁹ This is to cite two authoritative sources from two quite different provenances, a clear indication of the fact that this was a commonly used language, and, in addition, that it was evidently given credence, considered to be a simple affirmation of irrefutable facts.

Walsh himself, in his personal travel diary, prepares a historical analysis of the Czarist period and of the endemic causes of the influences that brought about the nation's collapse, noting statistical data on the population present in Russia and making this distinction:

Slavs (or Russian proper), Cossacks, Poles, Jews, Mongolians comprising Finns, Turks, Tartars, Bashkirs, Kirghizes and Kalmucks. In Religion these people were Greek Catholic (87,000,000), Roman Catholic (11,400,000), Protestant (6,500,000), Jews (5,100,000), Mohammedans (4,000,000) and Pagans (500,000).²⁰

This is a distinction according to race, which precedes the religious and then the political choices. As in the instances mentioned above, when writing in his diary, Walsh also cites the known list of the components of the Bolshevik government (which replaced that of Kerenski in October 1917), indicating the Jewish surnames of several of them in parentheses to reveal their true “nature.” In this, he too was a man of his time.

1.2 *Objectives of the Mission*

This was Ledóchowski's description of the Mission's objectives:

1. The aim of the expedition is triple:

1st Explore the terrain and then report to the Holy See on the present state of religious and social affairs in Russia and suggest the most suitable means to again unite these peoples with the Roman Church.

originates from a family of rich Jewish merchants; born in 1883 at Tbilisi,” Box 1930, Archivio Diplomatico Storico MAE, Russia 1922.

19 “Berlin, June 25, 1924, [...] *Bratman-Brodowski* (Jew, according to what Sig. von Gülich has confided to me, as is Ambassador Krestinski) in fact came to see me this morning at 10:45 AM [...]” AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 659, Fasc. 41.

20 Diaries 1912–24, 2:125, Edmund A. Walsh Papers [hereafter EAWP], Georgetown University, Lauinger Library, Special Collection Research Center, Washington, D.C. [hereafter GUSCRC].

2nd Profit from the concessions provided by the Soviet Government by creating technical, agricultural and such-like schools.

3rd Distribute the aid from the Holy See and the Catholic world in the most efficacious and suitable manner.

N.B. It appears that the activity of the first Missionaries should be entirely concentrated on charitable works which will be the distribution of aid [...]. This charity will be the most effective means, as Jesus himself said, to draw the people to the true Church and prepare the ground for future apostolic activity which, for the moment, would be imprudent.²¹

Parenthetically, we have a statement dated November 17, 1922, which, perhaps, gives an insight into the Soviet government's view of the Roman church's objectives and hopes in Russia. It would seem to quote (Karl) Radek (1885–1939), member of the Soviet government. Use of the word “seem,” however, is mandatory because nothing in the document, which is unsigned, assures us that it is definitely attributable to him. Even the author of the missive is clothed in anonymity:

M. Radek, Israelite and known communist, recently presented himself to a foreign diplomat in Moscow and, among other things, made the following declaration: “I find that the Vatican and the Soviets actually have very similar objectives: the destruction of the schismatic Church in Russia. However the dignity of the Russian State does not permit it to place Catholicism in a situation any better than that of the schismatic church.”²²

1.3 *The Obstacles of Bolshevik Legislation: State and Church, Separated under the Same Roof*

The basic articles of law that would change the daily organization of all Russia were few but concrete. As was inevitable, they were founded on the altered conception of the relationship between state and citizens, which could no longer be mediated by someone not directly appointed by the directional center of Soviet Authority, i.e. the party and its hierarchy. The specific norm of 1918 stated:

21 Some suggestions for the pontifical expedition in Russia, ARSI, Russia 2002-11, A¹ ad 17. Emphasis added.

22 Unsigned letter, November 17, 1922, ARSI, Russia, 2002-1, and in *Santa Sede e Russia da Leone XIII a Pio XI, Atti del simposio organizzato dal Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche e dall'Istituto di Storia Universale dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Mosca* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), 147.

1. The Church is separated from the State. 2. Within the confines of the Republic it shall be prohibited to issue any local by-laws or regulations restricting or limiting freedom of conscience, or establishing privileges or preferential rights of any kind based on the religious creed of citizens. [...] 13. The property of all church and religious associations existing in Russia is pronounced the property of the People. Buildings and objects especially used for the purposes of worship shall be let, free of charge, to the respective religious associations, by resolution of the local, or Central State authorities.²³

Everything that was distinctive, particular, and personal would now find space only in private life, but, from the beginning, it was understood that no one would have a private life anymore. Buildings were subject to police inspection, to scrutiny by any entity with authority over something. This is Edmund Walsh's report written during the final stage of his mission in the Fall of 1923, describing the house in Moscow destined as residence for a prospective Apostolic Delegate:

New House – Although the Foreign Office signed a contract to turn over our new house on October 1st, since we are paying all expenses for it and have expended much money in repairing it, they have failed to keep their word up to the present, Nov. 2. Their purpose has been to tire us out and force us to go in to the house with the eleven persons still living in it, so that the Foreign Office would have an abundance of informers to report what goes on in the Vatican headquarters. On my refusing to accept such conditions, they have temporized, promised, procrastinated for two months. Finally, on my returning the contract on the first day of November

23 “4. State or other public functions binding in law shall not be accompanied by the performance of religious rites or ceremonies. [...] 6. Nobody is entitled to refuse to perform his duties as a citizen on the basis of his religious belief. [...] 9. The School is separated from the Church. Instruction in any religious creed or belief shall be prohibited in all State, public, and also private educational establishments in which general instruction is given. Citizens may give or receive religious instruction in a private way. 10. All Church and religious associations are subject to the ordinary legislation concerning private associations and unions. They shall not enjoy special privileges, nor receive any subsidies from the State or from local autonomous or self-governing institutions [...] Signed: President of the Council of People's Commissars Ulianov (Lenin). Published in No. 15, Gazette of the Workmen and Peasant Government, January 23, 1918,” Boleslaw B. Szczesniak, *The Russian Revolution and Religion: A Collection of Documents Concerning the Suppression of Religion by the Communists, 1917–1925* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 34–35, emphasis added.

with formal notice that we could not delay any longer, they moved 8 or 9 persons out of the house. But the Foreign Office sent a special delegate, a Mr. Florinsky to make a formal request that we retain the Commandant, (janitor) and his wife. Now, it is well known among all foreigners and Foreign Missions that the first function of these so-called Commandants is to act as special agents of the police and report to the authorities all that goes on and who visits the Mission. This form of espionage has become so intolerable during the past year that I find it impossible to conduct the business of the Holy See under such conditions. I therefore informed the Foreign Office that we would furnish our own Commandant and guarantee the proper care of the property. At first they refused, but on definite notice that I could not accept the house on any other conditions, they have yielded and we shall at last be free (to a greater extent, though not wholly) from spies. But we are not in the house yet, though we have been in theoretical possession since August 1st.²⁴

2 The Selection of Walsh

The choice of Edmund Walsh came eight months after Maxim Gorky's appeal of July 13, 1921, and after repeated requests by Pope Benedict xv (1854–1922, r.1914–22) to the National Catholic Welfare Council for the name of an American to be placed in charge of supervising the Vatican aid to Russia.²⁵ We might never have heard of Walsh, however, were it not for a recommendation from Paray-le-Monial by another Jesuit, Stjepan Sakač (1890–1973).²⁶ He pointed out Walsh's organizational achievements (Student Army Training Corps, 1918;²⁷

24 E.A. Walsh, SJ, Moscow, November 2, 1923, Report No. 81, EAWP 6:387, GUSCRC. Emphasis added.

25 In this regard see: Patulli Trythall, "Pius XI and American Pragmatism," 25–85.

26 Sakač, a Croatian Jesuit, extolled Walsh's virtues, indicating him to the General Curia as *aptissimus* to fulfill the unfilled role of Catholic representative for the aid to Russia. ARS1, Russia 2002-1/1–4, 1.

27 In support of the war effort, the United States government asked for the cooperation of all the social and religious components of the nation, including colleges, which were asked to organize in situ military training for draft-age youth. Specific courses were arranged for the purpose: this was the Student Army Training Corps. Georgetown was among the 350 colleges east of the Mississippi to make their faculty and structures available, and Walsh was subsequently appointed as regional director of the participating New England colleges: Boston College, St. Joseph's College, Holy Cross College, and Canisius College. As Louis Gallagher recalled on p. 11 of *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.: A Biography* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1962), "Entrusted as he was with supervisory authority, and with all

founding of the first school of diplomacy in America, the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, 1919), as well as his intellectual and spiritual qualities (professor at Georgetown University, conversion to Catholicism of Colonel Haskell, Director of the ARA's Mission in Russia).²⁸ Sakač added that his proposal was further strengthened by the fact that Haskell himself had indicated Walsh as exactly the right person to resolve the impasse created by the National Catholic Welfare Council's delay in choosing a representative and concluded his letter by noting that both his own suggestion and the offer by Haskell had been declined by Walsh. Walsh recounts the situation in the following letter:

He [Haskell] is indignant and distressed that no Catholic representative is with him as a member of the Relief Commission; by an understanding between the U.S. and the Bolsheviki Government, each religious profession of U.S. is entitled to one representative in sight to look after their religious interests in Russia at this time. He says he is ashamed when he sees every sect on his staff, Protestants, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Quakers etc. but not a Catholic in sight. Knowing the present state of mind of the Russian people, he says that now is the time to create good will, as they are about ready for conversion, and he thinks it a shame that we are not taking the opportunity, which is unique, to have someone there, a member of the Relief Expedition, to prepare the way for Catholics [...].²⁹

In February, however, the Jesuit superior general, Ledóchowski, called Walsh to Rome and, on the first day of March 1922, Walsh, accompanied by Ledóchowski, entered the Vatican to meet with Secretary of State Gasparri.³⁰ At that moment Walsh was nothing more than a capable and well-organized American Jesuit who had met the general only days before on February 27. The same day that Walsh met with Secretary of State Gasparri, Ledóchowski wrote to Pizzardo:

I am sending H.E. the *curricula vitæ* of three Fathers and one Brother destined for Russia. However it seems it will not be necessary to propose

New England universities and colleges open for his inspection, he did something more than adjust the *curricula* of studies to Government demands; he outlined a plan for future Government necessities, in time of peace as well as during periods of war ...The immediate result of his interest in diplomacy and in overseas service in general was the opening of the Foreign Service School in 1919."

28 Colonel Haskell had married the sister of John Farrell, S.J., who had entered the novitiate in Frederick, Maryland together with Walsh, in 1902.

29 E. Walsh to R.P. Hanselman, January 15, 1922 ARSI, Russia 2002-I.

30 Diaries, 2:125, EAWP, GUSCRC.

the curriculum vitae of Fr. Walsh, if His Eminence the Cardinal of State approves the proposal of Cardinal O'Connell,³¹ it means that Fr. Walsh would be the Catholic Church representative on the American Commission and at the same time one of the Delegates of the Holy See. But in any case I would like to ask that Fr. Walsh would be Superior of the Company's group, first for reason that he has already given proof of great organizational talent and second because I hope that, because of his close relationship with the head of the American Commission, he will be able to render great service not only to Our Fathers, but also to the others.³²

Within a few days the situation seems substantially changed. We understand this from a new letter from the general to the secretary of state:

The most urgent matter seems to me to be the appointment of an Apostolic Delegate, who in the name of the Holy See can immediately occupy himself with this affair. For this office, permit me to propose the Major of the Camollesi of Frascati, Don Giovanni B. Valenziana, whom I believe will be well known to His Eminence the Card. Secretary of State. Prior to becoming a Camollesse, he was Mayor of Frascati; he knows the world and as a member of such a strict Order he will draw great respect among the Russians.³³

At this point, Walsh requests that all which has been told him, be put into writing. He also asks to meet the pope and receive a filial blessing. Accordingly, the general's letter continues:

Before leaving for the American Commission in Moscow, Father Walsh would like to present his formal respects to Your Excellency and also to His Excellency the Cardinal Secretary of State, and if possible see the Holy Father for a moment and receive his blessing [...]. In addition he would like to have a recommendation from the Holy See, which could be prepared in the manner indicated on the sheet of paper which I attach. It would be desirable that the recommendation is written on official paper of the Holy See and provided with seals, something to which the Russians give great importance.

31 William Cardinal O'Connell of the Diocese of Boston.

32 Ledóchowski to Pizzardo, Rome, March 1, 1922, ARSI, Russia 2002-1-3.

33 Ledóchowski to Pizzardo, Rome, March 8, 1922, ARSI, Russia 2002-1-3.

Walsh is not a “superior,” a fact that could seem a disadvantage in serving as leader of the relief mission, but which instead, precisely because it does not infringe on the possible hopes or the positions acquired or desired of others in the Roman Curia, makes him the right man at the right time: “Since Fr. Walsh is now going as American representative, the former request to have him enter as Delegate of the Holy See can be withdrawn.”³⁴

The text of the written recommendation for Walsh, sent to the Vatican by the general and signed by the Holy See, is an exercise in curial style:

The Holy See authorizes Mr. Abbot M. Edmond Walsh to occupy himself with organizing the pontifical relief for Russia. It blesses all of his efforts, which he will carry out to better demonstrate to the Russians the love that the Holy Father holds in their regard, and prays God to recompense those who would aid him.³⁵

By March 19, 1922, the organization of the mission was at a good point and once again, albeit in an indirect manner, the general re-proposes Walsh.³⁶

As concerns our Company, I would like to assure H.E. that even though, as I said yesterday, I believe that Fr. Walsh would be truly well suited for organizing the central office having given proof of great organizational talent both as founder of the first commercial consular school in Washington and also in the time of war, nonetheless we would be equally content if the center were entrusted to others, because our only wish is to serve this great cause well according to the will of the Holy See and to help others.³⁷

34 Ledóchowski to Pizzardo, Rome, March 8, 1922, ARS1, Russia 2002-1-3.

35 Secretary of State of His Holiness, N. 626 March 8, 1922, signed by Gasparri. ARS1, Russia 2002-1-3. Ropp's authorization letter took a different tone. “Authority conceded to Father Walsh, who is leaving for Russia, by the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Mohilev, E. de Ropp, on the day March 8, 1922. For our part we concede to the Reverend Mister Edoardo [*sic*] Walsh, delegate of the Holy See in Russia, all of the authority which we have assumed in extraordinary form both for ordinary jurisdiction and for periodic powers (triennial and quinquennial) for the time of the revolution. We also desire that the Reverend Walsh should present these prerogatives to our assistant, RR. DD. Archbishop Giovanni Cieplak, so that they can have effect. Written in Rome this day March 8, 1922. Signed Edoardo Archbishop.”

36 Ledóchowski to Gasparri, Secretary of State for His Holiness, Rome, March 19, 1922, AA.EE.SS., Pont. Comm. pro Russia, Scat. 73, Fasc. 335.

37 In 1773, when the *Dominus ac Redemptor* of Pope Clement XIV (1705–74, 1769–74) suppressed the Society of Jesus, Tsarina Catherine II of Russia (1729–96, 1762–96) refused to

We will not occupy ourselves specifically with the Russian famine or with the relief work carried out by the papal mission. It is sufficient to recall its size and extent:

At its height, the Papal relief effort had 701 feeding points (public kitchens, orphanages, hospitals, refugee camps) with the capacity to feed from 125,000 to 158,000 people daily – the great majority of whom were children – in five geographical areas: Crimea (Eupatoria and Djankoy), Moscow, Krasnodar, Rostov and Orenbourg.³⁸

3 Confidential Correspondence

Within a few months of the arrival of the papal mission in Russia, the Father General is still concerned about its organization: who is the official head, who coordinates and guides it? Walsh's three-month appointment by the National Catholic Welfare Council, the verbal assignment from the pope, Ledóchowski's own written one, signed by the Vatican's Secretary of State, plus the authorization by Archbishop Eduard von der Ropp (1851–1939) place Walsh in a position of duty solely towards his aid distribution group (Moscow), towards all the other groups for coordination of purchases, and the secure delivery of mail to the Vatican with responsibility to the Jesuit General Curia, the Vatican secretary of state, as well as to the good name of Georgetown University and the National Catholic Welfare Council. Here, we reveal a first "confidence" from Ledóchowski,³⁹ the recipient of this missive is Cavalier Giovanni Belardo:⁴⁰

As H.E. referred to me yesterday, it will certainly be useful to remind Fr. Walsh to manage bit by bit to render the Pontifical Delegation always more independent of the American Commission. I would like to observe, however, that Fr. Walsh, as he repeatedly assures me, also wishes to render the Pontifical Delegation ever more independent, and he energetically

promulgate the papal bull within her reign. Constantin Simon, "I Gesuiti e la Russia," *La Civiltà cattolica* 140, vol. 3346 (November 18, 1989): 355–67.

38 Marisa Patulli Trythall, "The Little Known Side of Fr. Edmund Walsh: His Mission to Russia in the Service of the Holy See," *Studi sull'Oriente cristiano* 14 (2010): 165–89, here 175.

39 Rome, October 19, 1922, AA.EE.SS., Pont. Comm. pro Russia, Sc. 73, Fasc. 335.

40 Belardo was the writer for the Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs Section of the Secretary of State. See *Annuario pontificio* (1923): 667. For other links related to Belardo, Walsh and the Soviet Authority, see Patulli Trythall, "Pius XI and American Pragmatism," 25–85.

works to obtain this objective. He works to make known throughout all of Russia that there exists a Pontifical Delegation [...]. From the beginning, some Pontifical Delegates, immediately seeing the dependency on the American Commission, openly said to Fr. Walsh that in these conditions it would be better not to come to Russia, since it is not the aim of the Holy See to assist the Americans, but it seems to me that these words derived only from a certain discouragement of some of the Delegates and from ignorance of the true state of affairs. Without the assistance of the Americans, it would have been very difficult for the Pontifical Delegates to begin work.

Ledóchowski further clarified his ideas on the subject:

Your Excellence knows that the Jews of all Russia are aided in an admirable manner by the Jewish members of the American Commission who, in virtue of the American agreement with the Soviets, assist their coreligionists not in the name of the American government but in the name of the Israelite people. The Protestants of all nations do the same thing; up to now, only the Catholics do not have well organized aid.

Here is a second “confidential” letter from the superior general to Pizzardo, December 14, 1922:

I would first like to insist in all humility that a true head of the Pontifical Delegation in Russia be appointed as soon as possible [...]. One must deal with a horrible government that compounds the Byzantine perfidy of the former Russian government, which history has shown was always highly astute at deceiving, “with the Judaic hate towards all that is Christian.”⁴¹ Certainly they will have already noticed the lack of unity in the Pontifical Mission, I imagine not without satisfaction, and they will profit from it for their ends [...]. It is most certainly correct that the Pontifical Delegation should increasingly render itself independent from the American Mission [...] but this again requires a strong organization, impossible without a head. And it does not seem possible to me that this can be done from Rome, although it should be clear that the head must be in continuous contact with the Holy See, faithfully execute all its orders.

41 Superior General to Pizzardo, Substitute Secretary of State, Roma, December 14, 1922, AA.EE.SS., Pont. Comm. pro Russia, Scat. 73, Fasc. 335.

And we arrive at the crux of the question:

A representative,⁴² such as Father Walsh has been until now, is not enough, and places him in a false position which consumes a part of his energies. It is not possible that all the individual heads deal with the Moscow central government, the representative must do it. But if he then has no authority to enforce acceptance of what has been determined, I think the damage is also to the Holy See, it being seen that the Pontifical Delegation lacks the same unity and discipline found in the others [...]. As concerns the identity of this head, H.E. knows that from the beginning I did not think of one of our Fathers, but proposed a member of another order [...]. It is clear that Fr. Walsh cannot be considered, but perhaps he could still serve as procurator for the new head, who must clearly inform him of defects and instruct him, otherwise he will not be able to serve well. Certainly he does not have experience in handling diplomatic affairs, but I think that in addition to a more than ordinary level of energy, he also has an uncommon gift for organization. I also do not think he would be autocratic in character; not being a Superior, something that he understood very well, he believed that, given the circumstances, his duty was to give certain instructions to the others, and this perhaps created ill feelings.⁴³

And not to forget from whence comes true civilization: "Furthermore he is a cooperative man, of very great devotion to the Holy See. As H.E. knows, the Americans have their defects but also great qualities with which, I believe, they can render very great service to the Church, if they are well directed."

He then underlines the conditions of great stress under which Walsh himself is operating and suggests that to find another person, as capable and faithful a servant as Walsh, will not be easy. Although the possibility of appointing an apostolic delegate to head the Papal Famine Relief Mission was frequently discussed, no appointment was made. Walsh handled the organizational duties of the mission as well as represented the Vatican in its direct negotiations with the Soviets throughout his tenure with the mission.

42 The underlining is as in the original text.

43 Walsh, alien to the sophisticated curial language, had, on the contrary, understood the Pope's words as a total endorsement: "He confirmed all faculties given and said 'Charity supplies all', then added 'I communicate to you all faculties and powers which I can communicate'. He did not add for Russia – hence, strictly speaking, they are not geographically limited." EAWP, Diaries 2:125, GUSCRC.

4 The Background of the Cieplak Trial

Once the extensive Papal Relief Mission was organized and functioning, Walsh was required to turn his attention to the central point of division between the Vatican and the Soviets: freedom of worship. The personification of this problem was to be found in Archbishop Cieplak (1857–1939, in office 1908–26) and the events which led to his trial and condemnation. What follows is an extract from the text of the Ponenza prepared for consultation during the Cardinals' Assembly of December 17, 1923,⁴⁴ describing the events at the origin of the imprisonment and conviction of Archbishop Cieplak and his vicar, Mgr. Konstantyn Budkiewicz (1867–1923).⁴⁵ After the Russian revolution a basic law nationalized all the properties of the Catholic Churches in Russia. This measure was equally applied to all buildings of the Orthodox, Lutheran, Mohammedan cults, etc., and also to all private property.

Already in August of 1922, before the Papal Famine Relief Mission had departed from Rome, Mr. Vorovski indicated the difficulties arising in Russia concerning the use of the churches. He was clearly answered that in the case that churches were closed, the Holy See would solemnly object.

According to further information provided by Mgr. Cieplak, the Catholics could only have use of the churches for religious purposes under obligatory conditions imposed by the Soviets—conditions that were settled by a contract in the form of a receipt for the use of the church.

The formula proposed for this receipt by the Moscow central government was unacceptable because it contained the explicit declaration that the building was nationalized and that the civil authority was intervening in the exercise of worship. A suitable formula was reached only after long negotiations between Fr. Walsh and Commissar Krassikov [1870–1939], the officer of the Department of Justice who was responsible for the matter.

Krassikov temporarily accepted the formula so that the churches (which had been closed) could be reopened for the Christmas celebrations, with

44 Organized to decide whether the papal mission to Russia should continue and under which conditions.

45 The trial launched by the Soviet authority against Cieplak, his Vicar Konstatyn Budkiewicz and numerous priests of his diocese, filled the pages of international newspapers thanks to Walsh's astuteness. The reports on the trial stirred reactions of public indignation and stimulated actions by the chancelleries of several nations. Of interest is the article published by *Pravda* and *Izvestia* on March 30, 1923, the text of which is described in Edmund Walsh, "Cathfund Moscow Report No. 38," ARSI, Russia 2002-I, Report 38, 33.

the reservation that there would be future negotiations with the Holy See for the *definitive legal status*.

A Catholic lay delegation that arrived in Moscow from Petrograd with Mons. Budkiewicz as head considered the formula very opportune. Mons. Cieplak also said that the formula was very favorable given the spirit of freedom that Father Walsh had been able to introduce. Krassikov personally took the *formula* and delivered it to the Catholic delegation, adding a letter of recommendation for the Petrograd Local Authority, which said: *If the Catholics sign, you can "open the churches."*

At this point a mysterious event took place, for which there is as yet no exact explanation: the delegation of Catholics departed for Petrograd but did not sign the formula nor did they deliver Krassikov's letter to the local Authority of Petrograd, even though it was addressed to it.⁴⁶

This very serious fact (which *the Soviets asserted had occurred under direct orders from the Polish Legation in Moscow*) was, in the opinion of Father Walsh, the principal cause of his inability to save the life of Budkiewicz who, it should be noted, was charged with delivering Krassikov's letter to the Petrograd Soviets.

The trial against the Petrograd clergy, although in large part prearranged, seems to have been initiated *because of this incident*. Fr. Walsh was no longer able to delay it. Krassikov often said to Fr. Walsh: you too have been fooled, the Poles did this to cause a world scandal. And he repeated that he had given the letter to Budkiewicz in order to reopen the Petrograd churches as soon as possible, but after such an act, the priests could very well be prosecuted for embezzling an official letter of the central authority and as agents provocateurs.

Father Walsh, seeing that the churches were not being opened, believed that the fault was entirely with the Soviets; but when after a month he learned that the letter had not been delivered, he made clear the tactless nature of the act, involving as it did a letter addressed by Krassikov directly to the Petrograd Authority [the letter, whether signed or not, should have been delivered in any case]. And when, following the insistence of Fr. Walsh, Mgr. Cieplak made up his mind to sign the formula, the Soviets responded that it was too late.

After the trial, Fr. Walsh had to prepare a second formula, in agreement with Krassikov, which naturally was much less favorable [...]. The Holy See declared it tolerable, with some modification. Fr. Walsh delivered this formula to the English Legation in Moscow for delivery to Petrograd. The

46 Secretary of State of His Holiness, Russia, December 1923, (sub secreto pontificio), AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 659, Fasc. 40. Underlining and italics found in the original text.

English Legation believed it could rely on the Polish Legation's courier, which made weekly deliveries from Moscow to Petrograd.

The letter was consigned to the Polish courier on April 10 and should have been in Petrograd on April 13, or at the latest by April 18. Instead the letter arrived in Petrograd on May 5. Where had the letter been in the meantime?

Fr. Walsh, wanting an answer, summoned Cieplak's successor, Rev. Canonical Pszyrembel, from Petrograd. The latter confirmed that the letter had been delivered to him on May 5 and signed a declaration to this effect for Fr. Walsh. Fr. Walsh considered this to be a new proof of the Polish Legation's exploitation of the situation.

The Petrograd faithful received the new formula *with great opposition and resistance, also openly*, saying publicly that there should not be negotiation with the Soviets, that the opening of the churches could be interpreted as a condemnation of Archbishop Cieplak and of the imprisoned priests. They wrote to the Soviets saying that the Catholics would not open the churches if the priests were not liberated.

It seems, then, that instead of signing the second formula as approved by the Holy See, they have replaced it with another one containing modifications. There is reason to believe that some "*would prefer to keep the Churches closed rather than having the Churches open and the priests in prison.*"⁴⁷

This point marked the beginning of the final skirmish between representatives of the Soviet Authority and of the Holy See and would lead to the question posed in the Ponzona of December 17, 1923.

5 Walsh's Report for the Ponzona of December 17, 1923

The reconsideration of Walsh's subtle and tireless work during his first important papal mission will start from the conclusion of the Papal Famine Relief Mission to Russia, that is to say, from the documents that would lead to the Ponzona of December 17, 1923, interpolated with the text that was published, *sub secreto pontificio*, by the secretary of state of Pius XI.

The first document of interest is the draft agreement put together by Walsh and the Holy See and modified frequently by Soviet request prior to its signing following the cessation of the ARA's mission in July of that year. It concerns

47 AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 659, Fasc. 40. Italics are in the original text. Original translation into English by the author.

the conditions of the new agreement, to be signed for the continuation of the Papal Relief Mission in Russia in 1923.

The text prepared by Walsh briefly replicated the ARA agreement, as we see confirmed by his letter of August 1, 1923, to “Mr. H.” (evidently Herbert Hoover):

These few notes will give you some idea of the interesting but at the same time tedious negotiations of the last three months. Soviets cancelled the previous Vatican Agreement but expressed desire for continuance of re-constructive assistance. They declared no formal agreement would be made in the future as we would be obliged to conduct our operations on a mere exchange of informal letters [...]. They were absolutely set against a Contract, intimating that the time for all that was past. We insisted and towards the end of October they agreed to make a Contract, as an exception in favor of Vatican.⁴⁸

However, it was known to all that the period of drought and famine had ended and, above all, that the ARA had enjoyed the support of the government of the United States, which had guaranteed a number of organizational advantages no longer available to participating relief missions, as well as the fact that, through the secretary of commerce, its “privileged partner” would purchase essential goods only in America.⁴⁹

The second document is the one for which the Soviet Authority had requested a signature on the part of the Catholic faithful led by Cieplak and his vicar, Budkiewicz, in order to reopen the churches of Petrograd for religious service. It is divided in two parts: “Attachment No. 1” is the text that Walsh had “adjusted” so as to be acceptable to the responsible Soviet Authority (Piotr Krassikov). “Attachment No. 11” consists of a “standard” formula for authorization of use of religious places. Signature to this document was requested from all the religious denominations that wished to practice their own rite.⁵⁰

5.1 *Walsh’s Report on the State of the Church in Russia*⁵¹

There were four fundamental points to Walsh’s report concerning the following issues:

48 EAWP 6:386, GUSCRC.

49 Surface and Bland, *American Food*, 3–11.

50 Preparatory material for the Assembly of the Most Eminent Cardinals, December 17, 1923, Attachment N. 11, AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 659, Fasc. 39.

51 Report of Walsh on the State of the Church in Russia delivered to the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Sunday, December 9, 1923, I. AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 659, Fasc. 39.

- I. Political and Economic Conditions in Russia at Present
- II. Condition and Needs of the Church
- III. Possibility of *de facto* Recognition of Soviets by Holy See
- IV. Present State of the Papal Relief Mission

I will examine Point III only, concerning *de facto* recognition of Soviets by Holy See:

The Soviet officials have declared both to the secretariat of state and to Father Walsh in Russia that no solution of the many outstanding problems can be reached without some form of diplomatic recognition on the part of the Holy See. On numerous occasion obstacles have been put in the way of successful negotiation in order to emphasize the absence of formal and direct contact between the Vatican and the Soviets. More than once Fr. Walsh was told: "All these difficulties would disappear if some sort of 'concordat' and diplomatic relations existed between Rome and Moscow." Such insinuations were made during the negotiations instituted by Fr. Walsh for the liberation of Archbishop Cieplak and during the various disputes affecting the distribution of the relief supplies. On another occasion the Soviets refused the overtures of the Polish Government, made in behalf of Archbishop Cieplak, answering: The Archbishop and the priests are reserved for the Vatican. This point of view was again and openly communicated to Fr. Walsh by the private Secretary of Tchitcherine who came to Rome last week on the same train in order, as he said, to affect a settlement of the question.⁵²

5.2 *Assembly of the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastic Affairs: Are All Revolutions Equal?*

Those present at the assembly of December 17, 1923, were the cardinals: Antonio Vico (1847–1929), Gennaro Granito di Belmonte (1851–1948), Rafael Merry del Val (1865–1930), Raffaele Scapinelli di Leguigno (1858–1933), Francesco Ragonesi (1850–1931), Giovanni Tacci, and Pietro Gasparri.

The assembly of cardinals was called to express its opinion regarding the report presented by Walsh, the documentation accompanying the report, the documents communicated by the secretary of state, the opinions of Enrico Rosa, S.J. (1870–1938)⁵³ and Marquis Alessandro Corsi (1859–1924), formerly

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Enrico Rosa was director of the Jesuit journal *La Civiltà cattolica* from 1915 to 1931. Essayist and editorialist, he opposed the Fascist racial laws in his "La questione giudaica e la 'Civiltà cattolica,'" *Civiltà cattolica* 89, vol. 4 (October 1, 1938).

professor of international law at the University of Pisa, and to decide on the point under discussion: how to respond to the Soviet authority which, in order to permit the continuation of the Papal Famine Relief Mission on Russian territory, required the establishment of a common basis for bilateral agreement to ensure the protection, respect, and freedom of movement of the Vatican emissaries, on the basis of state laws and international norms on the matter. The urgency of the decision was also related to the fact that Archbishop Cieplak was currently held in a Soviet prison, along with more than a dozen other priests and prelates.

The question to be answered is recorded thusly: "Assembly of Most Eminent Cardinals for discussion of possible de facto recognition of the Soviet government by the Holy See with agreement to begin negotiations for definition of the juridical status of the Catholic Church in Russia."⁵⁴ We use the words of Rosa for greater comprehension:

The question that is now proposed is very grave, even more so for the urgency of the extreme conditions in Russia, and demands our most scrupulous examination: if it is opportune or not that the Holy See, by initiating diplomatic relations with the revolutionary and communist government of the Soviets, give them public recognition of some kind, and what that would be.

There are many other religious questions connected to this which the Russian revolution, no less anti-Christian and bloody than the French one of the 18th century, has raised and will continue to raise, repeating itself as in the times of the French revolution, when the Holy See instituted a Congregation of its own, *super negotia regni Galliarum*, for their resolution.

The thoughts of all turned to the comparison with the French Revolution. The responses of the cardinals were primarily addressed at refuting Rosa's reflections, rather than indicating a practicable course for the Holy See. Cardinal Ragonesi used strong words against the Soviets, and he also refuted the exemplifications contained in Rosa's Opinion: "It is not appropriate to cite the case of Napoleon, who presented himself as a savior. The current case of the Soviets has no comparable equivalent in history." Cardinal Merry del Val asked for prior acquisition of a written request from the Soviet Government: "so that they, being as astute as they are, cannot say that it is the Holy See that asked to enter into direct negotiations with them." Although expressing doubts that

54 AA.EE.SS., Russia, Pos. 659, Fasc. 39. All the following quotations are from this same source.

a pontifical representative in Russia could be advantageous for the Church, it would be possible to send a representative (neither a nuncio nor an apostolic delegate) charged with negotiating in exceptional cases and without episcopal character. Cardinal Tacci said that one should not take:

the responsibility of losing a good occasion to make some attempt in favor of the poor Russian population. The confidential step taken by the Soviets is already something; previously there was a Pontifical Mission in Russia, which opened the road with its charitable works and has procured great advantages. This could not have been done without contacts, at least personal, with the Soviet authority. In the current case, if certain conditions and declarations were pre-established – i.e. that the Holy See would not recognize the Government or its legitimacy in the true and proper sense, one could proceed by that route. A start could also be made with an Apostolic Delegate, with the mandate of negotiating with the Government. This might be sufficient, because the Russian Government would feel gratified by this contact. For his part, the Apostolic Delegate would gather knowledge of what their real intentions are and could do something. If, then, the Soviets were not content with an Apostolic Delegate, who does not have diplomatic character, it could be decided whether it were appropriate to do something more. The steps of the Holy See can always be easily explained. It does this for the supreme reasons of the good of souls.

Cardinal Locatelli was of the same opinion as Cardinal Tacci.

Finally, Secretary of State Gasparri spoke, illustrating in an impeccable manner the subtle diplomatic differences in the possible forms of recognition between states, *de jure* and *de facto*, essentially expressing himself in favor of following the route of an apostolic delegate, and, in any case, of continuing to maintain a mission in Russia and therefore of continuing to negotiate with the Soviets.

There was one curial voice, however, which avoided joining a faction or expressing a vote, pro or con. Cardinal Granito di Belmonte had sent a letter written in his own hand:

Before beginning negotiations with the Russian Government in a definitive manner, it would be a strong signal of great effect for Catholicism in those countries if in the next Consistory, the Holy Father would reserve [the appointment to Cardinal] of Archbishop Cieplak “*in pectore*,” and then make this appointment public after the diplomatic negotiations were concluded. The reserve made now would have neither the

significance of a condition nor of an imposition on the Government. With Cieplak freed, the Holy Father, if he called him to Rome, could entrust him with the Russian Seminary and have a good Counselor for the religious questions of those countries. Become the “Roman Cieplak,” there would not even be the complications of the *Berretta*, or other.

The list of aspirants to the cardinal's hat {beret} is so long and difficult to climb that it is not possible to create exceptions. The cardinals rejected the idea of an apostolic delegate as well as any and all openings towards the Soviets.

6 Reflections

The documents presented here are only the “visible,” selected part of those found in the consulted archives and which relate the complex of intentions and reasons that led to the laborious, slippery, and inconclusive negotiations with no agreement on plans for concrete and productive collaboration between the Vatican and the Soviet Government during Walsh's mission, 1922–23. Subsequently, the situation would get even worse. What becomes evident is the conflict between cross purposes in making even the smallest choice, too many reciprocal prejudices impeding positive relations, too many undeclared expectations and hoped-for fruits to be gathered surreptitiously by each from the other.

The printed report of the texts submitted to the consistory of cardinals clearly reveals a political action of nationalistic character, grossly cloaked in religious motivations, which at that time was kept secret, as well as an almost inextricable nexus of the said and not said, tightly connected to intentions and to actions that would culminate in the harsh condemnation of Cieplak and Budkiewicz. In fact, an analysis of the documents reveals a more prosaic reality, which is organically integrated with the course of nationalistic rivalries and their attempts for supremacy over territorial areas. This is further aggravated by motives of visceral animosity that far overstep the bounds of reason and of good government and demonstrate not a purely religious intention but rather a chauvinistic one.

Walsh's balanced vision and his ability to negotiate in the midst of this difficult and highly charged situation most certainly belies the doubts that Superior General Ledóchowski had confided in his letter of December 14, 1922, to Pizzardo regarding Walsh's diplomatic capacities. In fact, Walsh won the confidence of the Holy See to the extent that he would, throughout the next ten years, be called upon to represent the Vatican in a number of vital organizations and negotiations.