



International Conference on Communication in Multicultural Society, CMSC 2015, 6-8 December
2015, Moscow, Russian Federation

Vatican and Catholics in Russia in 1920 - 1930: communication problems

Evgenia Tokareva^{a,b,*}

^a*Institute of Universal History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Leninskiy prospect 32 A, Moscow 119334, Russian Federation*

^b*National Research Nuclear University MEPhI (Moscow Engineering Physics Institute), Kashirskoe shosse 31, Moscow 115409, Russian Federation*

Abstract

The paper is concerned with Vatican looking for ways of communication with catholic church and believers in the USSR under conditions of church and religion persecution and authority's strict control over moving home, correspondence and personal contacts between priests and congregation and different foreign organisations as well. To establish links, obtain information and provide financial and moral support Vatican used such ways as receiving information from priests moving temporarily into the country or leaving it, from cloisterers and laymen as well as involving foreign diplomats. The most vulnerable was official correspondence even if letters were delivered by embassies and consulates.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the National Research Nuclear University MEPhI (Moscow Engineering Physics Institute).

Keywords: Roman catholic; priests; congregation; believers; cloisterers; Vatican; diplomacy; communication; correspondence

1. Introduction

The position of the Catholic Church in Russia has always been complicated by a number of factors connected both with interconfessional and international relations, as well as relations between the state and the church. In Russian Empire all connections between The Roman Curia and the Catholic clergy and believers were under strict

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-917-562-2201.
E-mail address: estokareva@yandex.ru

control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. After the Great October Revolution in 1917 the situation became even worse.

The Soviet Authorities did not allow Russian Catholics both priesthood and believers contact with Vatican directly. Catholic priests were not able to come to Russia to see with their own eyes what was happening (including metropolitan von Ropp who could not come back to Russia). Financial support was also strictly prohibited. Besides, The Holy See lost its traditional sources of information in the form of European diplomats reports as the majority of the diplomatic corps had left Russia.

In the article we set the task to study the ways of recovery of communication between Vatican and Catholics in Russia in 1920 - 1930.

The communication recovery became one of the critical and vital problems for the Holy See. The following goals were set: firstly - to obtain information about the state of the Catholic Church in Russia (as well as information on general situation and the Orthodox Church). Secondly, to get requests from the Catholic clergy in particular cases and correspondingly give instructions from The Roman Curia. Thirdly, financial support was vital not only for maintaining churches in good condition and paying taxes but for helping priests in a difficult situation, especially those who had been arrested and imprisoned or exiled in 1920-30s.

2. Data and methods

The article is based on materials from Secret Archives of the Vatican, State Secretariat Fund (IV period referring to 1917-1939) and Pro Russia Commission Fund. State Secretariat Fund has both inventory information about its central authorities performance and inventory information about particular countries (including Russia). Pro Russia Commission Fund deals with the period from 1925-1941, the time of formal existence of the Commission. The materials from Archive of foreign policy of the Russian Federation have also been used. All the documents have been studied using methods of historism and classical source study.

3. Analysis

The penetration of Catholic priests into Russia was considered by Vatican as one of the means of obtaining additional information and a means of communication between Vatican and Catholic clergy and Catholics in Russia.

However, in 1920s a few Catholic priests arrived in Russia. The first group consisted of only 11 people who were the members of help mission headed by the American Jesuit Edmund Walsh sent to Russia according to the agreement signed on December 16, 1921 between the USSR and Vatican. However, under conditions of this agreement all mission members should have been considered “ambassadors” not missionaries and should have worn secular dress without any signs of religious affiliation (more about mission in Petracchi, 2003). The authorities did their best to hinder Walsh and other mission members from communicating with the locals. “Their movements were under surveillance, agents of the local authorities chased them hotfoot” (Petracchi, 2003, p.227). By 1925 mission members had been forced to leave Russia.

Solving the newly emerged question about sending to Russia a priest who would be able to provide necessary information, the Holy See tried to make it the subject of negotiations between Moscow and Rome which had started unofficially in mid-1923 in Rome and continued in Berlin in mid-1924 between Soviet diplomats and representatives of the Roman Curia. The initial aim as it was seen by Moscow was to win Vatican’s recognition of the Soviet Republic. Before giving consent Vatican suggested sending to Moscow an apostolic delegate who could assess the religious situation in Russia himself. However, the Soviet representative in Rome K.K. Yurenev claimed that the Soviet government would never accept any apostolic delegate in Moscow [A]. According to Foreign Commissar G.V. Chicherin, the main aim of negotiations was only to find “some legal means of contact between believers and their center” [A]. In his opinion, an apostolic delegate was not necessary in Russia because the Soviet government did not deal and didn’t want to deal with Rome and its priests and bishops as it used to be, but only with religious communities and their representatives that, in their turn, would contact with Rome if they got instructions from there. [A].

In this situation, the French Jesuit Michel d’Herbigny arrived in Moscow in 1925-26 three times. D’Herbigny managed to travel around the country, meet representatives of both Catholic and Orthodox Church (especially

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5125860>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5125860>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)