American Catholicism and the political origins of the Cold War/

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AMERICAN CATHOLICISM AND THE POLITICAL ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

A Thesis Presented
by
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AMERICAN CATHOLICISM AND THE POLITICAL ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. &quot;SATAN AND LUCIFER&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. &quot;HE HASN'T TALKED ABOUT ANYTHING BUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM&quot;</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. &quot;MARX AMONG THE AZTECS&quot;</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A COMMUNIST IN WASHINGTON'S CHAIR</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. &quot;...THE LOSS OF EVERY CATHOLIC VOTE...&quot;</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. PAPA ANGELICUS</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. &quot;NOW COMES THIS RUSSIAN DIVERSION&quot;</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. &quot;THE DEVIL IS A COMMUNIST&quot;</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. CULTS AND VOTES</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. &quot;SAUL ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS&quot;</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIBLIOGRAPHY | 172 |
CHAPTER 1

"SATAN AND LUCIFER"

When Franklin Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill at Quebec in August of 1943 the conference was publicly billed as dealing with military matters affecting both the Pacific and European theaters of war. By this time the military situation had turned decidedly in favor of the Allies. The Soviets were delivering smashing blows to the Germans on the eastern front, the North African campaign against Rommel had been successful and Anglo-American forces were completing operations in Sicily. However, the presence of American Secretary of State Cordell Hull and British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden led to press speculation that postwar political issues were also on the agenda. As the military situation became more favorable the wartime political alliance seemed to deteriorate.

Postwar political issues began taking on greater significance in early 1943, and would occupy more and more of FDR's thinking as the year progressed. In January, William C. Bullitt, former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union wrote a lengthy memorandum to Roosevelt in which he outlined his fears that Stalin would attempt to dominate Europe at the end of the war. Bullitt, in a speech at New
York in July 1941, shortly after the Nazi invasion of Russia, likened the struggle between the two totalitarian powers as "a war between Satan and Lucifer." He concluded the best course of action for the U.S. would be to let the Germans and Russians fight it out among themselves in the belief that the winner would be so weakened as to no longer threaten Europe. [1]

The very military successes which prompted the decision to meet at Quebec were at the heart of Bullitt's memorandum to FDR. It was now apparent that the Soviets not only stopped Hitler's Wehrmacht in 1942, but, with the encirclement and destruction of Paulus' Sixth Army at Stalingrad, were poised to begin throwing the Germans back in 1943. Bullitt's current concern seems to have been that Satan [or Lucifer, he did not designate which country represented whom] was about to emerge from the struggle, but not in the weakened condition originally forecast.

FDR seems to have been impressed with Bullitt's argument, who said that the closer the Allies came to defeating Germany the less influence they would have on getting Stalin to agree on any postwar agreements. Now was the time to apply pressure while "Your club would have lead in it, not cotton." He suggested that FDR threaten a Pacific first strategy, reduction in aid to the Soviets, possible
difficulty in providing postwar aid to rebuild the Soviet Union, and expressing full opposition to "predatory Soviet policy in Europe and Asia." He also advocated striking against Germany through the Balkans rather than France, but only if that decision were based on sound military considerations. FDR met with Bullitt to discuss the memo and asked him to continue to keep him informed on his thinking regarding the political situation as he saw it. [2]

The President also raised the issues contained in Bullitt's memo with British Foreign Minister Eden in March. He asked if Eden believed that Stalin's ultimate aim was to dominate and communize Europe. Eden responded there was no way to know for sure, but that even if that were his intention the Allies should continue to work with him and assume he intended to honor his treaty obligations. Eden added he was surprised by Roosevelt's belief that Poland would not prove to be a difficult question to resolve at the end of the war. FDR felt territorial concessions of East Prussia and parts of Silesia would make Poland a net gainer if the Curzon Line were accepted as its eastern border. According to Eden, FDR was also prepared to accept Russian demands on Finland and the Baltic States, but hoped the Russians would conduct plebiscites to ratify their actions.[3]
Complicating the political situation was the German announcement in April of the discovery of a mass grave in the Katyn Forest of eastern Poland. The grave contained the remains of some 10,000 Polish army officers. The Germans claimed the Russians massacred the Polish officers after occupying eastern Poland in 1939. Stalin immediately denied the charge, claiming instead that the Germans themselves had killed the Poles. FDR and Churchill supported Stalin's position, arguing the Germans were attempting to sow dissension among the allies, and also to distract worldwide attention from their own massacre then underway of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. However, in London, the Polish government-in-exile requested an investigation of the charge by the International Red Cross. Stalin immediately severed relations with the London Poles, further complicating the situation.

While the Allies were struggling to maintain a semblance of unity in the face of the Katyn accusations FDR began making plans to meet with Stalin one-on-one. While Churchill had already held face-to-face meetings with the Soviet Premier, the President had yet to meet his Russian counterpart. In early May, as FDR and Churchill were preparing for the Trident Conference, to be held in Washington, the President sent former Ambassador to the
Soviet Union Joseph Davies to Moscow. Davies was to relay to Stalin the President's desire to meet sometime in July, without the presence of the British. Stalin initially agreed to the meeting, but expressed doubts to Davies that such a meeting could take place in the absence of the opening of a second front in Europe.

Davies reported to FDR that failure to open the promised second front would have far-reaching consequences on Soviet attitudes on the prosecution of the war and their participation in the peace. Stalin's trust in his allies was obviously diminishing. Whether he believed the Allies were deliberately holding back and letting the Germans and Russians slug it out, as Bullitt had publicly suggested, is uncertain. He did believe that the Soviets were carrying the brunt of the fighting, and expected another major German offensive in the summer. He also believed the successful North African campaign and the Allied air offensive against Germany were insufficient substitutes for the promised cross-Channel attack.[4]

The results of the Trident Conference were exactly what Stalin feared. Churchill persuaded FDR to postpone the cross-Channel attack in favor of securing the Mediterranean, and possibly driving Italy out of the war. Stalin sent an angry reply to Roosevelt's cable informing him of the
Trident decisions. The Soviets could not consent to these agreements, again reached without Soviet participation, "and without any attempt at a joint discussion of this highly important matter and which may gravely affect the subsequent course of the war." Churchill, now aware that FDR was planning to meet with Stalin without him, began pressing for a Big Three meeting. Stalin refused, citing pressing needs on the eastern front which required his presence, although the Germans had not mounted a major summer offensive as expected.[5]

So as FDR and Churchill came together at Quebec for their sixth meeting of the war the political alliance seemed to be coming apart. Stalin's reaction to this meeting was as acrimonious as his earlier cable to FDR, "To date it has been like this: the U.S.A. and Britain reach agreement between themselves while the U.S.S.R. is informed of the agreement between the two powers as a third party looking passively on."[6]

The Soviet Premier continued to express growing distrust of his allies. Quebec demonstrated his allies growing distrust of him. The conference produced a secret agreement regarding the Tube Alloys Project - the atomic bomb. The agreement stipulated that the weapon would never be used by either partner against the other or against a
third party without the consent of the other. It also stipulated that information about the project could not be passed to a third party except by mutual consent. This in effect gave both FDR and Churchill a veto over informing Stalin about the development of the bomb or sharing information about it.[7]

FDR did press the British about committing to the cross-Channel attack in the Spring of 1944 at Quebec. They also agreed to pursue a meeting of the Big Three later that Fall. When the meeting broke up both men took short vacations before returning to Washington for further discussions. Historians have repeatedly attempted to determine just what Roosevelt's thinking was at this critical juncture, as preparations began for the first meeting of the Big Three later that year at Teheran. The controversy seems to revolve around just how much FDR's conversations with Bullitt and Eden earlier in the year reflected his real thinking, and how much may have been pure speculation. Herbert Feis contends these early discussions were an "exercise in imagination" and that "the record of these discussions leaves the impression that they were conducted in a vacuum." Gaddis Smith, on the other hand, argues that policy was being based on a combination of naivete and stereotypes held by FDR and his advisors. This
resulted in a formulation of policy "on the basis of hopes and illusion rather than ascertainable fact." Robert Dallek presents yet another position contending that Roosevelt was indeed influenced by Bullitt's arguments and that "he was uncertain about postwar relations with Russia, he wished to assure against the possibility that Stalin aimed at extensive European control." [8]

By the time Churchill arrived in Washington on September 1, Italy had accepted the surrender terms of the Allies. The President invited Archbishop Francis J. Spellman of New York to dine at the White House along with the Prime Minister. The following morning FDR met privately with Spellman for more than an hour. The Archbishop recorded his impressions of what the President said in a two-page memo that he sent to the Vatican, to his longtime friend and mentor Pope Pius XII. This document presents a very different picture regarding the firmness of FDR's views on the postwar world. According to Spellman, FDR forecast a postwar world dominated by "spheres of influence" among the "big four." China would have the dominant interest in the Far East; the U.S. in the Pacific; Britain and Russia in Europe and Africa. However, Spellman said FDR believed Russia would dominate Europe because of Britain's "predominately colonial interests." While Chaing Kai-shek
would be consulted on "the great decisions concerning Europe" he would have no influence on them. Moreover, the U.S. would be in much the same position as Chaing on European matters "although to a lesser degree." FDR hoped the Russian domination of Europe "would not be too harsh," according to Spellman, "Although that might be wishful thinking."[9]

It is interesting to note from this portion of Spellman's memo that FDR did not foresee a major role for the U.S. in Europe after the war. Much of what the President did in the remaining months of the war takes on new meaning when seen from this perspective.

Spellman restated the President's desire to establish a personal relationship with Stalin. He would seek a meeting with Stalin as soon as possible in the belief that he was better able to reach an accommodation with the Soviet leader than Churchill. Stalin's postwar territorial aims were outlined, "He would certainly receive; Finland, the Baltic States, the Eastern half of Poland, Bessarabia." The President had decided, according to Spellman, that there was no sense in opposing these territorial desires of Stalin's because he had the power to get them anyway. In essence FDR acknowledged that he would accept the Soviet frontiers in existence on June 21, 1941, the date of the German invasion
of Russia. Stalin had been pressing for the recognition of these borders since December of 1941. He had proposed a secret protocol to Foreign Minister Eden to the treaty of alliance between Russia and Britain. Both the British and the U.S. had opposed the recognition of these borders. FDR outlined for Spellman the same position he took in his discussions with Eden in March; the Baltics would be absorbed by Russia, eastern Poland would be taken as well.

FDR then went on to outline for Spellman more far reaching consequences of the changing military and political situation, far more than he revealed to Eden. According to Spellman, FDR confirmed to him the probability that Stalin would attempt to set up communist governments in the areas not incorporated directly into the Soviet Union. The President conceded that Austria, Hungary and Croatia would "fall under some sort of Russian protectorate." When the archbishop asked if the Allies intended to support noncommunist elements in those countries to help prevent communist takeovers FDR replied "no such move was contemplated." The President seemed to be agreeing with the most pessimistic evaluation of Soviet aims outlined by Bullitt in January.[10]

The picture presented here contrasts sharply with those of an undecided, naive President about to embark on an
attempt to prevent Soviet power from expanding in Europe. Rather, he has a firm grasp of the postwar realities created by the increasing military strength of the Soviet Union. He believes the Soviets will be the dominant power in Europe. He believes the Soviets will attempt to install communist governments in several eastern European countries, and is making no plans to counter such a development. FDR told the archbishop, and through him the Vatican, that all of eastern Europe from the Baltic States to the Balkans will be either incorporated into the Soviet Union or fall under Soviet domination. Furthermore, he will do nothing to assist or support elements within those countries which might resist such a development, and the United States and Britain cannot fight the Russians to prevent their takeover of eastern Europe. The arguments put forth by Bullitt to prevent the expansion of Soviet power have been rejected.

The fact that Spellman swiftly notified the Vatican of the president's postwar outlook is clear evidence of his concern over what FDR had confided to him. The prospect of Poland, the Baltic States, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia - all predominantly Catholic countries - coming under communist influence was not something the Vatican would take lightly. The question remains why FDR would be telling the Archbishop of New York all this in the
first place? Surely he knew Spellman would inform the Vatican of this discussion. He also risked the possibility the information would leak to the press and create a storm of protest. The answer seems to lie in the fact that this was not a new initiative on FDR's part, but rather a confirmation to the Vatican of an already established trend of thinking on postwar problems. The evidence seems to suggest that FDR had reached decisions on the need to accommodate the extension of Soviet power in Europe as early as mid-1942, and conveyed this to the Vatican through his personal representative Myron C. Taylor.

In August of 1942, while Italy was still an active member of the Axis alliance, Taylor was spirited into Rome for meetings with the Pope and his top advisors. Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary of State and FDR's man in the State Department, initiated the idea to send Taylor back to Rome in the midst of hostilities. FDR agreed "that it would be useful for Myron Taylor to go back to the Vatican....But how can we get him there." Arrangements were apparently made through the Italian Government in the belief that Taylor would transmit to the Pope conditions under which the Italians could withdraw from the war. The records of Taylor's meetings with the Pope, however, reveal that much more was being discussed, and the Italian situation was
Taylor seemed intent on conveying to Pius XII, and his Secretary of State Cardinal Luigi Maglione, the nature of postwar Europe, and in particular the role of Russia. Taylor stressed the Russian signature to the Atlantic Charter "which, among other things, asserts adherence to the principle of religious freedom, and by its expressed attitude toward Poland, the Baltic and Balkan States, in the discussion of postwar settlements," had led the administration to believe "the field is open for collaboration - and generous compromise." Taylor impressed upon the Pope and his advisors the need for Russian cooperation at the end of the war without which "the future stability of Europe" would be endangered. Russia would gain security through an effective international organization dedicated to the prevention of German rearmament, and in return would be asked only to "cease her ideological propaganda in other countries, and to make religion really free within her borders." According to Taylor, the Pope and his advisors were very impressed with the fact that consideration of postwar matters was already well under way.

Taylor met privately the following day with Cardinal Secretary of State Maglione and again brought up the
question of Russia and her postwar attitude "which is very much in the minds of everyone here." He raised the possibility of establishing a "buffer organization of states ... between Germany and Russia" to ensure Russian security and reducing her need "to gain territory in the less rich areas surrounding her on the west." Taylor did not spell out just how this "buffer organization of states" was to be created, only that the matter was under consideration.[13]

The evidence seems to suggest that FDR developed a postwar strategy very early in the war, much earlier than historians have commonly thought. He communicated important elements of that plan to the Vatican as early as September 1942, while the Allies were still on the defensive (the battle of Stalingrad was just beginning). Historians have largely overlooked FDR's wartime communications with the Vatican as a source for providing a clear indication of what he planned to accomplish. For example, British Foreign Minister Eden was taken by surprise in March of 1943 when FDR suggested that Poland would not present a difficult problem to resolve at the end of the war. FDR suggested to him that East Prussia and parts of Silesia would more than compensate Poland for possible loss of territory to Russia in the east. Prior to Taylor's departure for discussions with the Pope the State Department prepared "a special map
of Germany" for Taylor based on "The instruction...to show the Germanized Slav sandy plain of Brandenburg." The commentary accompanying the map states "Practically all of Pomerania, Brandenburg, Silesia and the Kingdom of Saxony are still inhabited by a stock whose anthropological characteristics are basically Slav." The document goes on to state that "Polish sovereignty at no time extended over so wide an area, but stopped at the western frontier of Silesia, some miles west of the Oder River," and concluded with the comment that "For purposes of the present map, the Oder has been selected as the western limit of the Germanized Slav area," and that it approximated the westernmost extension of Polish rule. As Taylor left for Rome in September of 1942 he carried with him the outline of possible future borders of Poland which Roosevelt would allude to six months later to Foreign Minister Eden.[14]

Yet another element of Roosevelt's postwar thinking is revealed in the Taylor documents. Upon leaving Rome, Taylor went to London where he held conversations with Averell Harriman and Soviet Ambassador Ivan Maisky on the subject of developing "a brief formula that would be the basis for a declaration by Stalin that would encourage the thought that religion in Russia would actually be free." While in London he sought the opinion of one of the leading authorities on
the Soviet Union concerning the question of religion in Russia, and what effect that might have within territories occupied by the Soviets after the war. George Kennan, then temporarily assigned to the embassy in Lisbon, outlined in a three page memorandum dated October 2, 1942, the Soviet’s hostility to the Russian Orthodox Church and religion in general. Kennan related a number of instances of a "great resurgence" of religious life in German occupied areas of Russia. While acknowledging the accounts may have been exaggerated by the Germans for their own propaganda purposes, he concluded they "are naturally not without their effects on the religious populations of the other eastern European countries," and "They doubtless tend to increase the horror with which these people view the prospect of Russian occupation after the war." [15]

As a result of these wartime experiences, Kennan said it should "be evident to anyone that a greater real tolerance of religious life in Soviet controlled territories would be in the interests of the Soviet Government itself, both now and in the future." Kennan acknowledged the difficulty of "achieving such cooperation and understanding." The problem, as he saw it, lay not so much with the concept of religious freedom itself, but with the potential of foreign influence. He compared the communist
rulers of Russia with the Czars of the 15th and 16th centuries who "fought Roman religious influence, not so much out of convictions of dogma as out of fear of foreign influence on a backward and credulous people, so the present rulers tend to feel that any foreign influence, religious or otherwise, challenges the security of their rule." Kennan's memorandum concluded, "If these preoccupations could be overcome and if the Kremlin could be induced to tolerate religion at home and to receive the proffered cooperation of western religious movements in the spirit of friendliness and confidence, I believe one of the greatest barriers to a sound future peace would have been removed." [16]

Upon returning to the U.S. Taylor resumed correspondence with Archbishop Edward Mooney of Detroit, taking up with him the question of what type of statement would be necessary from Stalin. Mooney told Taylor "I am profoundly convinced that a reliable, authoritative statement on religious freedom in Russia is a 'sine qua non' of sincere cooperation between America and Russia in post war problems." Mooney, like Roosevelt, felt that Stalin was an "utter realist" and that such a statement could be obtained "if we insist." However, the bishop also believed that "an ambiguous or evidently insincere declaration would be fatal to the prestige of the President and to the
confidence which people must have in him if his high ideals for the postwar settlement are to be realized substantially." The President's reputation, and acceptance of his postwar settlements, ultimately hinged on their acceptance by the American public.

That is why FDR seemed so concerned about keeping the Vatican well informed about potential postwar territorial settlements. So much so in fact that he appears to have informed the Pope and his advisors of his thinking some six months before making similar thoughts known to his principal wartime ally. What could the Vatican do? If, as Roosevelt told Spellman, the combined strength of Britain and the United States could not prevent Stalin from doing what he wanted; the Vatican would surely be helpless.

The answer was that the Vatican was not entirely helpless. It could sway worldwide Catholic public opinion, and Roosevelt, the consummate politician, knew this. Public opinion, particularly Catholic opinion, might not have counted for much in the Soviet Union under Stalin, but it counted for a great deal in the United States under FDR. Obviously, Roosevelt was well aware of the importance of the Catholic vote to his national coalition. He had risen to political prominence in New York State, where the large, well-organized Catholic minority was important. On the
national level the same was true in several key industrial states of the northeast and Midwest, such as Massachusetts, Michigan and Illinois with their large bloc of electoral votes. FDR always had a Catholic in his cabinet; James Farley through the first two administrations in the traditionally political position of Postmaster General. When Farley broke with Roosevelt over the third term issue he was replaced with another Catholic, Frank Walker.

American Catholic opinion on the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union was ambivalent at best. The German attack on Russia in June of 1941 suddenly turned one of the European aggressor nations into an ally. Even the staunch anti-communist Winston Churchill was willing to put the past "with its crimes, its follies, and its tragedies" behind in the hope that Russia could hold out long enough to let England catch its breath. When the U.S. entered the war in December American Catholics found themselves allied with an ideological enemy of longer standing than Nazism.

Although Catholics were willing to fight Nazis alongside Russians they, along with other Americans, remained skeptical of any long-range alliance with the Soviets. Catholic newspapers and periodicals continued to remind readers of the nature of the Soviet dictatorship. Commonweal, a liberal Catholic journal reminded readers in
September of 1942, while Myron Taylor was discussing postwar issues with the Pope, that the record on Soviet occupation of Poland was much the same as that of Nazi Germany. "What's the difference between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia?" asked Polish refugee Marta Wankowicz, "In Russia it's colder."[17]

Now, a year later, FDR had confirmed to the most powerful American Catholic prelate, and through him the Vatican, his vision of a postwar Europe that confirmed Catholics worst fears. What was he willing to do? The answer to this question would unfold over the course of the remainder of the war. The story has never been fully told, but beginning with Taylor's mission to Rome in 1942 and continuing through the Yalta conference, FDR attempted to mediate a rapprochement between the Vatican and the Soviet Union. He knew the political risk of failure was great, and might result in the loss of the large Catholic vote to the Democratic Party.

Events moved rapidly in late 1943 and the long-awaited meeting of the Big Three took place in November. Teheran, more so than any of the other conferences of the war, illustrated the basic interrelationship of domestic political realities with the President's formulation of foreign policy. Shortly after the first official meeting
adjourned Stalin visited Roosevelt privately. The President outlined for Stalin his concerns about the 1944 presidential election. In March FDR had told Eden that reaching a settlement on Poland would not present a problem. But in November FDR told Stalin there were six to seven million voters in the United States of Polish extraction (virtually all of them Catholic) and as a practical man he did not want to lose their votes. He told Stalin he agreed with him on the need to restore the Polish state but he could not participate in any decision on the subject. When Stalin replied that he understood the president's position now that matters had been explained to him, Roosevelt brought up the similar problem he faced with American voters of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian heritage (also mostly Catholic). FDR told Stalin the United States would not go to war over the issue when the Soviets reoccupied the Baltic Republics, but the issue for Americans would be the right of self-determination. FDR raised the possibility of holding a plebiscite, as he had with Eden and Spellman, and told Stalin he believed the people of the Baltics would vote to join the Soviet Union. Stalin replied that the Baltic States had no autonomy under the czars and he saw no reason why the issue was being raised now. When the president said the
public "neither knows nor understands" Stalin told him "They should be informed and some propaganda work done." [18]

The "realism" the president spoke of to Spellman in September was manifesting itself in terms of American presidential politics in November. The reality was that FDR did not want to risk losing the Polish Catholic vote, and possibly the entire Catholic vote, over the Polish border issue. FDR was well aware of the impact a president's foreign policy decisions could have on domestic political alignments. As a vice presidential candidate in 1920 he had seen the mass desertion of Irish Catholics from the Democratic Party in the northeast that resulted from Wilson's pro-British foreign policy and the crushing of the Easter Rebellion. The evidence presented from the Taylor mission of 1942 clearly suggests that FDR was thinking in much larger terms than simple ethnic considerations.

This work will attempt to analyze FDR's postwar policy within the context of his relationship with American Catholics. Throughout his Presidency he confronted many issues, both domestic and international, which hinged on finding a political solution acceptable to Catholic voters and the Catholic hierarchy. Virtually all of these involved accusations of communist sympathies on his part, or within his administration. To fully appreciate the perspective from
which FDR was operating during these critical war years it is necessary to review these incidents and the impact they had on his decision to attempt the seemingly impossible: a rapprochement between the Vatican and the Kremlin.
NOTES
CHAPTER 1


5) Ibid. p.403.


10) Ibid.

11) Memo, FDR to Welles, July 15, 1942, President's Secretary File Diplomatic (hereafter referred to as PSF Diplomatic), Vatican, Taylor Myron C. 1942, FDR Library.

12) Memo of Myron Taylor for Discussion His Holiness Pope Pius, Cardinal Maglione, Monsignor Montini and Monsignor Tardini on the Russian Post-War Position, September 1942, Taylor Papers, FDR Library, 1942 Volume,p.76


16) Ibid.


18) Burns, Soldier of Freedom, p.413.
CHAPTER 2

"HE HASN'T TALKED ABOUT ANYTHING BUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM."

John Adams once remarked that "papists" were as rare in his hometown of Braintree as comets and earthquakes. The scarcity of Catholics in the new American Republic did not prevent the founders from worrying about the provisions contained in Article Six of the proposed new constitution. This article prohibited a religious test to hold office in the new federal government. Major Rusk of Massachusetts "shuddered at the idea that Roman Catholics, Papists, and Pagans might be introduced to office." A delegate to the North Carolina ratifying convention took a more long range view arguing that he "did not suppose that the Pope could occupy the President's chair," but that in "four or five hundred years," it was possible "that Papists may occupy" the Presidency. [1]

In fact, it would take only 140 years for a Catholic to seek the highest office in the land. By 1928, When Alfred E. Smith left Houston with the Democratic Party nomination, the face of America had changed. The great waves of immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century transformed the nation. As if the sheer size of the
new immigration were not enough to provide native Americans with a sense of being overwhelmed, the origin of the new immigrants was even more frightening. Prior to the 1880's, 95 percent of new immigrants came from northwestern Europe. The new wave was coming from southern and eastern Europe: Poles, Italians, Russians, Lithuanians, Czechs, Rumanians, Spanish and Portuguese. As one historian has noted "most spoke no English," and, perhaps more importantly, "Protestantism was foreign to most." The bulk of the new immigrants were Catholics, Jews and Eastern Orthodox.[2]

Such huge numbers of Catholics seemed to many to present a clear and present danger to the American way of life. A midwestern scholar expressed his fear of the new immigrants religion: "The church to which he [the southern immigrant] gives allegiance is the Roman Catholic, and, however much the Catholic Church may do for the ignorant peasant in his European home, such instruction as the priest gives is likely to tend toward acceptance of their subservient position on the part of the working man." The American ideal of the rugged individual as the basis for American democracy was clearly challenged by the traditional paternalism of the Catholic church. [3]

The great waves of immigration also transformed the nation from predominantly rural to predominantly urban. The
census of 1920 marked the first time a majority of Americans were found to be living in cities. By 1900 the population of seven of America's largest cities: New York, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and Milwaukee, was over seventy percent comprised of foreign-born stock. Along with the demographic shift came a shift in political power.

Smith's nomination was a harbinger of that change. Political power was shifting from rural to urban America, and urban America was where Catholics were primarily concentrated. This is dramatically demonstrated by figures released in 1936 which showed that of the fifty largest cities in the U.S. forty one listed Roman Catholics as the largest single segment of the population including Providence with 52 percent, Newark with 45, Boston 40, Pittsburgh 35, Cleveland 32, and Milwaukee and St. Paul with 29. [4]

Smith's nomination revived all the old fears of papal conspiracies and anti-Catholic sentiment previously manifested in the nativist movement of the 1840's, the Know Nothing Party of the 1850's and the cry of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion" which characterized the election of 1884. The political resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920's was associated with the anti-urban, anti-foreign, anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic response to the great immigration in addition to the anti-black orientation of the original Klan.
The crushing defeat suffered by Smith cannot be attributed solely to his Catholicism. Rather, as historian Richard Hofstadter has pointed out, no Democrat could have defeated Hoover in 1928. The combination of prosperity, prohibition and anti-Catholicism combined to make Hoover's victory overwhelming. Smith's candidacy represented to most Americans all the evils associated with the immigrants: Catholicism, corrupt big city political machines, saloons, crime and vice.

The importance of Smith's candidacy, however, lies not so much in his defeat, but in his ability to obtain the nomination in the first place. Smith's nomination secured the urban ascendancy within the Democratic Party, and that ascendancy assured Catholics a major role in the selection of any nominee of the party. A Catholic might not be able to be elected President, but no Democrat could hope to be elected without the support of the major urban political machines, which were predominantly Catholic.

Franklin D. Roosevelt understood this political shift in power perhaps better than anyone. His campaigns and leadership reflected it. He rose to political prominence in New York state where the large, well-organized Catholic minority was important. He stayed on good terms with Tammany while at the same time not becoming identified with its
practices. He nominated Smith for the Presidency in 1928 with his famous "Happy Warrior" speech. Campaigning vigorously for Smith he criticized both the Klan and the religious bigotry of the campaign. This resulted in a large residue of support for FDR among Catholics as the 1932 campaign opened.

As the depression deepened and the response of the Hoover administration continued to rely on the traditional American value of individual responsibility, and the ability of business to eventually correct the situation, Americans began questioning the very basis of American culture. The cultural clash between the "rugged individualism" of native Protestant America and the "paternalism" of the huge numbers of Catholic immigrants seemed to collapse in the face of millions of unemployed, hungry and hopeless workers. In May of 1931, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical Quadragesimo Anno marking the fortieth anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Rerum Novarum ("On the Condition of Labor"). Pius reaffirmed the teaching of his predecessor affirming the right of private property, and condemning the socialistic concept of communal ownership. However, Leo also condemned the concentration of wealth and the evils resulting from the modern industrial process. He asserted the obligation of
owners and employers to provide their workers with "reasonable and frugal comfort." [5]

More importantly, both pontiffs asserted that if employers failed to recognize their obligations to provide for their employees "the public authority must step in to meet them." In October of 1932, with unemployment approaching 13 million, FDR made a speech at Detroit quoting approvingly from Pius XI's Quadragesimo Anno calling it "one of the greatest documents of all time," and "just as radical as I am." Was the candidate hinting at the need for government intervention in the economy on a broader scale than his previous campaign statements suggested? [6]

While FDR generally received support from American Catholics on New Deal issues, which affected them directly, he soon found himself embroiled in a host of foreign-policy questions which would place him in conflict with one of his most important constituencies. The new President had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Wilson administration when the U.S. broke off relations with Russia following the Bolshevik Revolution. Three succeeding Republican administrations continued the nonrecognition policy, in spite of the fact that most major world powers had come around to the reality of dealing with the Soviet government. During the campaign FDR sidestepped the question of
recognition, but early in the new administration it became obvious he was seriously considering the possibility. The Catholic press and members of the church hierarchy openly questioned the wisdom of such a move.

Many Catholics were shocked when Al Smith testified in favor of Russian recognition before the Senate Finance Committee. He favored more trade with the Soviets, and dismissed their repudiation of World War I debts to the U.S. He noted that the U.S. sent troops to Russia to help put down the revolution although both countries were technically at peace. Reverend Edmund A. Walsh, vice president of Georgetown University, and a leading Catholic authority on communism, opposed recognition. Father Walsh headed the Vatican Relief Mission to the Soviet Union from 1919 through 1924, during which there had been much speculation that the mission signaled a willingness of the Vatican to enter into a concordat with the Soviets. This Vatican mission was affiliated with the American Relief Administration headed by Herbert Hoover. The Russian experience left Walsh a rabid anti-communist. In 1950, at a dinner in Washington, he would counsel the junior Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph R. McCarthy, to make anti-communism the focus of his reelection campaign: advice McCarthy would follow wholeheartedly. [7]
FDR sent a letter to Russian President Kalinin in October 1933 requesting a representative of the Soviet government be sent to discuss outstanding issues between the two countries in the hope of reaching a settlement. Foreign Commissar Maxim Litvinov was given the assignment. On the same day Roosevelt met with Father Walsh to review the issues. The President asked Walsh to prepare a report on the state of religion in Russia which he said would be used when serious negotiations began. Walsh quoted the President as saying "leave it to me Father; I am a good horse dealer." At the same time the Vatican was expressing its concern about the possibility America would recognize the Soviet government. Cardinal Hayes of New York was asked to express to FDR the Vatican's hope that he would raise the issue of religious persecution in Russia during his talks with Litvinov. Hayes submitted a list of proposals for Roosevelt to discuss. These included: freedom of conscience for Russians and foreigners; freedom of worship, public and private; liberation of persons imprisoned for their faith; and cessation of propaganda against God. [8]

Catholics were not the only Americans opposed to the recognition of Russia. This division was reflected within the administration where Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace, both Protestants,
joined with Postmaster General James Farley, a Catholic, in opposition, although Hull's opposition was based largely on the potential political consequences of alienating large segments of Catholic Democrats. Hull proposed negotiating with the Soviets to permit freedom of religion for American nationals living in the Soviet Union. At this stage Auxiliary Bishop of Boston Francis Spellman was brought into the negotiations. While a student at the American College in Rome, Spellman became the protege of Cardinal Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli. Spellman received a letter from Count Enrico Galeazzi, a financial advisor to the Vatican, asking him to convey to Roosevelt the Pope's desire to insist upon religious freedom in Russia as a prerequisite to U.S. recognition. Spellman appears to have communicated the Pope's wishes through FDR's son James.[9]

When Litvinov finally arrived in Washington for the talks which would lead to U.S. recognition, he was surprised by the President's insistence on including the issue of religious freedom in the discussions. Years later, in 1938, Spellman recounted in a letter to his brother the astonishment Litvinov expressed to William Bullitt. According to Bullitt, after three days of talks Litvinov exclaimed "I can't understand the President; he hasn't
talked about anything but religious freedom to me, and I want to talk about important things like trade relations." [10]

After nine days of discussions FDR and Litvinov exchanged formal notes which extended recognition to the Soviet Union. In the notes the Soviets agreed to cease subversive activity in the United States, to permit American citizens in the Soviet Union free exercise of religion and to negotiate a final settlement on financial claims. The agreement seems to bear the imprint of Secretary Hull's position in that it recognized the right of Americans to worship freely in Russia. At the same time the agreement seems to have satisfied American Catholics. Monsignor Keegan of New York congratulated Roosevelt on the manner in which he upheld "the vitally sacred principles which we Americans hold so dear." Bishop Spellman recorded in his diary, "Jack Kelly and Mr. Galeazzi, whose names will never appear in history did much to get President Roosevelt to insist that American citizens at least should worship God as they wished in Russia." [11]

The resolution of the recognition of Russia question established a precedent which would play an important part in the future relationship between FDR and American Catholics. First, Catholics did not get exactly what they
wanted. They had sought virtual total recognition of freedom of religion in Russia. The recognition agreement provided only for the right of Americans in Russia to worship freely, which amounted to the right of the embassy staff to worship, as there were virtually no other Americans in Russia. At the same time the President did raise the issue of religious freedom repeatedly and vigorously, as testified to by the comments of William Bullitt. The fact that FDR even took into account Catholic sensitivities was a major departure from previous American administrations. His ability to reach a compromise they found acceptable would become a feature of his administration. Finally, the issue of religious freedom in the Soviet Union would continue to be a central feature of Roosevelt's future dealings with the Soviet Union, and an important element of his thinking on the future postwar settlement.
NOTES
CHAPTER 2


3) Quoted in Baritz, The Good Life, p.25.

4) On foreign stock for America's cities see Baritz, The Good Life, p.27, and on Catholic populations see George Q. Flynn, American Catholics and Roosevelt, p.232.


8) Flynn, American Catholics and Roosevelt, p.135ff.


11) Ibid., p.98.
CHAPTER 3
"MARX AMONG THE AZTECS"

As the issue of Russian recognition was being favorably resolved for the President another, more perplexing problem arose which would haunt the administration throughout FDR's first term. American Catholics had been concerned about the fate of their co-religionists in Mexico since 1913. The Church in Mexico was closely aligned with the regime which was overthrown in the revolution that year. The new revolutionary government wrote a constitution in 1917 containing several anti-Catholic provisions. The hostility of the Mexican government expressed itself in repeated instances of anticlericalism. Several priests were murdered and churches burned.

The election of General Plutarco Elias Calles as President intensified the problem, and injected the issue of anti-communism into the fray. Calles was arguably the most radical in a series of revolutionary Mexican Presidents. A true believer in the social and economic aspects of the Mexican Revolution in 1925 he called for enactment of new laws to enforce the land reform provisions of the 1917 constitution. One such law allowed foreigners to purchase land, but only if they renounced all rights of protection by
their own government. The second law, called the petroleum law, declared subsoil deposits, such as oil, were the "inalienable and imprescribable" property of the nation. Several American oil companies, used to having their own way in Mexico, refused to comply with the new laws. Calls for American military intervention in Mexico increased, and the press picked up on the charges of the need to prevent the spread of bolshevism. The oil companies argued that Mexico was going the way of the Soviet Union, and would soon provide a base for the spread of communism throughout Latin America.

American Catholics were just as upset as the American oil companies. Calles began enforcing the anti-Catholic provisions of the 1917 constitution which were largely ignored by his predecessors Carranza and Obregon: nationalizing church property, expelling foreign priests and nuns, prohibiting religious instruction in private primary schools and limiting the number of priests allowed to perform religious functions in the various Mexican states. When Calles refused to compromise on these issues the Pope took the extraordinary measure of authorizing an interdict against Mexico, prohibiting the performance of public religious rites.

When FDR took office in March 1933, he appointed his old friend and boss from his days in the Navy Department,
Josephus Daniels, Ambassador to Mexico. The appointment was initially well received by both the Catholic press and spokesmen who viewed the appointment of such a close friend as an indication that FDR would use the ambassador to exert his influence in Mexican affairs. In late July 1934, Daniels gave a speech in Mexico City, before a seminar on education, in which he quoted from President Calles on the importance of education in Mexico's future: "We must enter and take possession of the mind of childhood, the mind of youth." To this Daniels added his own thoughts: "To the carrying out of that aim, which alone can give Mexico the high place envisioned by its statesmen, the government is making the rural school a social institution." [1]

What Daniels thought an innocent phrase comparing Mexican efforts in education to the widely respected American public school system provoked a furor among American Catholics. Many immediately called for his resignation. Father Coughlin told his huge radio audience that the U.S. government "from Wilson down to our President Roosevelt, has aided and abetted the rape of Mexico." The issue was quickly transformed from a question of the rights of private schools to the question of whether Mexico was following in the footsteps of Russian communism. The issue would not go away, and in November, Commonweal, in an editorial entitled "Mexico follows Russia," stated that "The
ruling powers of Mexico are seemingly determined to follow Russia's example to the last and most bitter degree." The editors argued that Americans were witnessing just across the border "a full demonstration of the most anti-democratic, anti-libertarian, anti-religious tyranny known in the modern world outside Russia itself." [2]

Unlike the recognition of Russia question, which centered almost exclusively around the official position of the church hierarchy, Catholic lay organizations became actively involved in the Mexican issue. In New York, Catholic students picketed the Mexican consulate. The Catholic Evidence Guild, Ancient Order of Hibernians, Catholic Daughters of America, Holy Name Societies, the National Council of Catholic Women and even the Massachusetts League of Catholic Foresters sent letters to the White House. The group which took the lead in criticizing the President, however, and which refused to let go of the issue, was the Knights of Columbus.[3]

Throughout 1934, 1935, and into the election year of 1936 the 500,000 member organization kept up a steady stream of criticism of the Roosevelt administration. Michael H. Carmody of New Haven, Connecticut, head of the organization, requested a meeting with FDR in January of 1935 to discuss the Mexican situation. The President instead arranged for Carmody, and the executive committee of the Knights, to meet
with Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Following the meeting with Hull the group termed the discussion "very satisfactory", but continued to lobby influential Catholic members of congress. Through the efforts of Senator David Walsh, from Carmody's neighboring state of Massachusetts, Senator William E. Borah of Idaho introduced a resolution in the Senate calling for an investigation "Into the persecution of Christians... now being practiced in Mexico," and for senate resolutions protesting the "anti-religious campaign" being conducted in Mexico.[4]

Catholic newspapers editorialized in favor of passage of the Borah resolution, and several prominent members of the Catholic hierarchy spoke out in favor of it. In an editorial of February 15, 1935, Commonweal acknowledged that the Borah Resolution was not expected to pass. But the editors took issue with the Protestant periodical The Christian Century, which had criticized the role of the Catholic Church in Mexico, claiming the church had "underwritten a blanket denunciation of socialism and socialistic education." Commonweal's editors argued that a "common-sense" distinction had to be made "between the 'socialism' of social reformers and the 'socialism of say, Marx, Lenin, Bakunin and their modern exemplars in Russia and Mexico." [5]
Only a week earlier, on February 8, 1935, Commonweal carried an article by William T. Walsh entitled "Is Communism Dangerous" in which he compared General Calles to Stalin and criticized Daniels for his public praise "...in favor of a Communistic plan to transfer all control of children's education from the parent to the state." But, perhaps even more ominously for FDR, Walsh quoted an article in the Saturday Review to the effect that "collectivism in some form is inevitable...sovietism, fascism and President Roosevelt's 'New Deal' will be found in the long run, despite apparent divergencies, to have been fundamentally the same thing." Not only were readers being asked to equate Mexico's revolution with Soviet Russia, but also to equate Roosevelt's New Deal with soviet style collectivism.[6]

The administration took the position that the Borah Resolution represented "a premature indictment of a friendly neighboring government," and would hinder the development of the President's Good Neighbor policy. Nonetheless a petition in the House garnered 242 signatures which was presented to Roosevelt. The President needed to say something and put the issue behind him. A second request for a meeting with the President was sent by Carmody in April, and again was referred to the State Department. This time, however, FDR requested a reply be prepared that could be sent over his signature. Commonweal returned to the issue that same month
with an article entitled "Marx Among the Aztecs." The author, Dixon Wecter, equated Mexican and Russian socialism and collectivism, and reminded readers that "In 1927 Secretary Kellogg sought to convince the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate that Communism was receiving official encouragement in Mexico." Official encouragement? Was Wecter implying that FDR was encouraging communism in one of our closest neighboring states? The evidence seems to suggest that this is precisely what was happening. The association with New Deal social programs promoting collectivism, reluctance to challenge the Mexican government and the Russian recognition issue were leading many Americans, both Catholic and non-Catholics alike to the conclusion FDR's sympathies lay with some foreign ideology. In May Bishop John F. Noll of Fort Wayne, Indiana, expressed this concern in a letter to Roosevelt asking him to take a strong public stand on the religious freedom issue and "end rumors of Roosevelt sympathy for communism."[7]

Finally, in early July, the President met with Carmody and a delegation from the Knights of Columbus. The group again asked the President to speak out publicly against the persecution of the church in Mexico. FDR, however, would give the group no specific promise. After the meeting, the Knights told the press he had been gracious but noncommittal. Eight days later the President met with a
Congressional delegation on the same subject, and used the opportunity to issue a statement on religious freedom which said he wished to "make it clear that the American people and the Government believed in freedom of religious worship not only in the United States, but also in other nations."

The Catholic press seemed relieved by the statement. Most took the position that Roosevelt had spoken directly to the Mexican situation, although he had not mentioned Mexico. Commonweal praised the statement as the forerunner of an international pact on religious freedom. The Catholic journal America editorialized that "a major objective of our campaign on Mexico was achieved." It seemed as though a collective sigh of relief was taken by Catholic opinion leaders. The President had said something—anything—and they could now return to cementing relations with a President they believed was taking a genuine interest in Catholic issues.

It seemed the President had put the issue to rest. However, the Knights of Columbus were not so easily mollified. At their annual convention at New York in August the Knights passed a unanimous resolution authorizing Carmody to send yet another letter to the President expressing their regret at the President's apparent lack of concern over matters in Mexico. In October, the National
Board of Directors sent a vigorous letter of protest to FDR arguing that the President's statement on religious freedom fell far short of what was needed. The letter concluded, "You cannot escape responsibility for throttling the Borah Resolution... for the endorsement given the Mexican Government... by your ambassador... for nonaction on behalf of bleeding... Mexico." [9]

This time the Knights had gone too far. The political activism generated by the Mexican situation was calling into question who had the authority to speak for the church. Archbishop John J. McNicholas of Cincinnati issued a statement to be read in all churches of his archdiocese stating that the Knights "in no sense speak for the priesthood or for the Catholic laity of Cincinnati." McNicholas was correct in stating that the Knights did not speak for the entire Catholic community. The anti-communist rhetoric which dominated much of the issue surrounding education in Mexico would now be brought to a close with a symbolic gesture from American Catholic education. Chicago's liberal Cardinal George Mundelein would play a key role in bringing the clamor created by the Knights latest letter to an end.[10]

In November of 1935, the University of Notre Dame, the most prestigious Catholic university in the country, invited Roosevelt to receive an honorary degree. Frank Walker, Mayor
of Detroit and a close political advisor to FDR, and a Notre Dame graduate, appears to have been closely involved with the decision to present the degree to the President in the midst of the swirling controversy over the Knight's letter. Notre Dame president John O'Hara was delighted with the prospect, and traveled to Washington to complete the arrangements. Cardinal Mundelein presided at the presentation at South Bend on December 9, and said his presence was to insure the President he was "among friends." The Cardinal, in a direct reference to the Knight's controversy, said no one group had the right to claim to speak for all Catholics. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes confided to his diary that the Cardinal's speech amounted to "a pretty complete endorsement of the President." For his part FDR gave a ringing endorsement of the concepts of "Freedom of education and freedom of religious worship" as a necessity for "true national life." The sight of the President receiving an honorary degree from Notre Dame from a Cardinal of the church would surely put to rest the idea that the President was secretly encouraging the spread of communism. FDR was thus able to move into the election year of 1936 with what Arthur Krock of The New York Times described as a Catholic endorsement of the President. But 1936 would bring the President into yet more controversy
with American Catholics, and again the issue would be communism, at home and abroad. [11]
NOTES
CHAPTER 3


3) Flynn, American Catholics and Roosevelt, pp.154-155.

4) Ibid. p.157.


9) Flynn, American Catholics and Roosevelt, p.167.

10) Ibid. p.167.

CHAPTER 4
A COMMUNIST IN WASHINGTON'S CHAIR

The 1936 Presidential campaign began in earnest in January when Al Smith addressed a glittering gathering of the nation's wealthy at Washington's Mayflower Hotel. The sponsor of the evening was the American Liberty League, a self-proclaimed nonpartisan political group organized in 1934. The organization's principal sponsors, however, included business and industrial leaders including Irenée du Pont, John J. Raskob, William S. Knudsen and J. Howard Pew. The Liberty League was opposed to virtually every aspect of Roosevelt's New Deal, viewing it as "creeping socialism" at best and outright communism at worst. The League managed to recruit both Smith and 1924 Democratic presidential candidate John W. Davis as their spokesmen hoping that having two former Democratic presidential candidates telling the nation that the New Deal was a betrayal of American principles would cause a split in the party and possibly deny FDR the 1936 nomination.

A national radio audience heard the onetime "Happy Warrior" of the Democratic Party denounce the inflationary spending policies of the administration, call for a return to the principles of state's rights and the need to honor the constitution. Smith said the choice was clear; America
had to choose between "Washington and Moscow, the pure air of America or the foul breath of communistic Russia...the stars and stripes or the red flag of the godless...Soviets." Smith said the President himself was not a communist or a socialist, but was being misled by those around him. [1]

Jim Farley, again heading the president's campaign, claimed Smith had made a major mistake aligning himself with the very elements which had fought against his run for the presidency four years earlier. Farley believed Smith had alienated himself from the very working-class constituency which once formed the basis of his strength within the party.

While Smith, the only Catholic ever nominated by a major party to run for president, had broken with FDR over the New Deal early on, another important former Catholic supporter would soon do the same. Father Coughlin was becoming more critical of FDR with each passing week. Farley, fearful of the priest's growing political strength, attempted to reconcile the two. He arranged a meeting in early January, but other than inquiring about the health of their respective dogs, nothing was settled. Shortly after praising the President's State of the Union address the radio priest made his final break with FDR, charging that the President's Brain Trust was communist infiltrated, virtually the same thing Smith was saying. He apologized to
his radio audience for his earlier support of FDR and told them "The slogan 'Roosevelt or Ruin' must now be altered to read 'Roosevelt and Ruin.'"[2]

The Catholic endorsement of Roosevelt proclaimed by Harold Ickes and Arthur Krock the previous November now seemed in doubt. Two of the most popular Catholics in the country were both accusing Roosevelt of leading the nation down the road to communism. How would the President respond to this new challenge?

Farley made the decision to take on the Liberty League in a direct confrontation in the Spring state primaries. The League was boasting of its strength in New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Minnesota. Although well financed, the League was an easy target for Farley and the party bosses that remained loyal to FDR. He concentrated on the nature of partisan selfishness expressed by the League and its attempt to set class against class. According to Farley, "The American people resented the idea of a league formed by organized wealth to further its own political interests, regardless of what happened to other classes in the nation." [3]

The Spring primaries which demolished the hopes of the Liberty League created a more disturbing problem. Father Coughlin had turned his National Union for Social Justice,
which he claimed had more than five million members nationwide, into a political movement. Coughlin announced the Union would endorse congressional candidates that espoused its principles. In Pennsylvania Coughlin endorsed twenty Democrats and twelve Republicans. Twelve of them won, including Representative Michael J. Stack in Philadelphia, who was opposed by the local Kelley machine. However, ten of the twelve were incumbents, and with the economy beginning to show signs of recovery, incumbency was a strong position to hold for congressional races. In Ohio, the radio priest endorsed seventeen Democrats and fifteen Republicans. Fifteen of the candidates won, and the Cleveland Democratic machine was defeated along with two incumbents. Coughlin claimed similar victories in Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Michigan and Maine. While a Coughlin endorsement did not seem to guarantee victory both parties were surprised at his apparent ability to translate his public popularity into votes. [4]

By the summer of 1936 Coughlin had allied his National Union for Social Justice with the remains of Huey Long's Share Our Wealth Society, under the leadership of the Reverend Gerald L.K. Smith; Dr. Francis E. Townsend of California, the spokesman for a movement advocating monthly old age pensions; and Congressman William Lempke, spokesman of neopopulist plains state farmers. Lempke would be the
candidate of the Union Party, as the new organization was called. But the real threat to Roosevelt, if there was one, lay in the possibility that Coughlin could translate his huge radio audience into a national voting block. On June 19, Coughlin announced the formation of the new party and his support of Lempke for President on a special nationwide broadcast. Claiming a "new day for America" Coughlin called on "agriculture, labor, the disappointed Republicans and the outraged Democrats" to join the new party and help "avoid the treacherous pitfalls of red communism." [5]

In early August the followers of Dr. Townsend convened for their convention. Reverend Smith spoke to the delegates in a speech that was to set the tone for the upcoming campaign. The country was faced with a choice "in the presence of atheistic Communistic influence...It is the Russian primer or the Holy bible...the Red flag or the Stars and Stripes...Lenin or Lincoln...Stalin or Jefferson." H.L. Mencken said he had never heard a more effective speech. The next speaker, Father Coughlin, was not about to be upstaged. He told the crowd that FDR stood for "Franklin Double-crossing Roosevelt," a charge which drew both cheers and boos from the audience. The Sargent-at-Arms called for arder, and Dr Townsend asked that the "booers" be put out. Coughlin resumed by asking the crowd why the American Communist Party was supporting Roosevelt for President.
Ripping off his Roman collar, he called FDR a "liar" and a "betrayer." [6]

Church leaders were taken aback by the ferocity of Coughlin's attack on the President. His immediate superior, Bishop Michael Gallagher of Detroit, was about to leave for Rome and discussions with Pius XI. Questioned about Coughlin's speech, Gallagher said he did "not approve of the language Father Coughlin had used in expressing himself on the President." The bishop said he did not believe Roosevelt was a Communist and that disagreement over policy was not a reason to call a man a "liar." However, Gallagher said he could not censure Coughlin and he would not be discussing the priest with Vatican officials "unless they speak of it." [7]

The Vatican would indeed "speak of it" when Gallagher arrived in Rome. While Gallagher and his traveling companion, Bishop Joseph Schrembs of Cleveland, were en route to Rome the Vatican released a statement saying that Coughlin's characterization of Roosevelt as a liar was a "painful expression." Coughlin took the opportunity to publish an apology to the President in the form of an open letter to FDR in his newspaper Social Justice. Coughlin said "in the heat of civic interest..., in righteous anger...I used the word 'liar.' I now offer the President my sincerest apology."[8]
On arriving in Rome Gallagher and Schrembs denied rumors that Gallagher had been called to Rome specifically to discuss Coughlin and went so far as to defend Coughlin's "fight for the preservation of American democracy." The bishops would quickly change their tune. After meeting with Vatican officials, including Monsignor Giuseppe Pizzard, the Pope's closest political advisor, Gallagher announced that he "personally, would favor Mr. Roosevelt more than any other candidate at present," and that he and Schrembs "have been advised to cease talking about Father Coughlin." [9]

Coughlin did not appear ready to compromise. Taking to the campaign trail in early August he continued to hammer at FDR, now referring to him as a "scab" President leading a "scab army" of relievers. Coughlin claimed the New Deal was "surrounded by red and pink Communists and by 'frankfurters' of destruction," a pointed reference to Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, appointed by Roosevelt. He became threatening in Providence, R.I., claiming there "would be more bullets in the White House than you could count with an adding machine" if FDR were reelected. In New Bedford, Ma. he told an audience of 12,000 that he had been instrumental in removing Herbert Hoover from the White House and "I will be instrumental in taking a Communist from the chair once occupied by Washington." [10]
Returning to Cleveland for the national convention of his National Union for Social Justice in mid-August, both he and Smith returned to the familiar theme of Roosevelt and communism. Smith gave one of the most dramatic speeches of his career. The New Deal was led by "a slimy group of men culled from the pink campuses of America with friendly gaze fixed on Russia...and the had the face to recognize Russia, where two million Christians had been butchered." Smith concluded to a roar when he announced that the election was really meaningless to him: "My real mission is to see that the red flag of bloody Russia is not hoisted in place of the Stars and Stripes." [11]

Coughlin appeared angered at the enthusiastic response given Smith's speech by his National Union members. But his flair for the dramatic would once again come to his rescue in his battle of one-upsmanship with Smith. Speaking under a hot sun the following day Coughlin told his followers that both Roosevelt and Rexford Tugwell, a key Roosevelt advisor, were "communistic." Referring to the campaign as a "war" he advised the National Union members "to go to your homes as to a trench." He then collapsed and was assisted from the stage. He was treated for a mild case of exhaustion and advised to rest. [12]

The political threat that Coughlin and the Union Party presented to FDR was beginning to take a back seat to the
threat to the church presented by his activities. The specter of a revived anti-Catholicism which had dominated Presidential politics as recently as the 1928 campaign began to surface. A faculty member of the Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary stated publicly that "the voice behind that radio priest is the voice of his church." At the same time the New Republic, a liberal periodical, reported that "the Union Party marks the deliberate entrance of the Roman Catholic Church into national politics," and suggested that the Vatican was backing Coughlin because it was depending on the financial support of "wealthy American Catholic families," and that "influential and wealthy Americans such as Al Smith and John J. Raskob, think he can help defeat Roosevelt." [13]

Both the Vatican and the American Catholic hierarchy were concerned with distancing themselves from Coughlin and assuring all Americans that his views were not those of the church. On September 2, Osservatore Romana criticized priests who challenged the constituted authorities in the countries in which they lived, and pointed out Coughlin's attacks on the President as an example. The article also took issue with Bishop Gallagher for stating that the Vatican approved of Coughlin's activities. Both Coughlin and the press were on hand when Gallagher's ship returned from Rome. Seemingly overwhelmed by Coughlin's presence the
bishop was quoted as saying "It's the voice of God that comes to you from the great orator from Royal Oak. Rally round it." The bishop denied the report in Osservatore Romana was accurate. Coughlin was overjoyed with this seeming endorsement, but then was shocked to hear Gallagher claim that Roosevelt was the best-qualified candidate for the presidency. When asked about the Osservatore editorial Coughlin claimed it was only "one newspaper's opinion." The Vatican then took the unusual step of sending a note to all press organizations confirming that the Osservatore editorial represented the official Vatican position on this issue.[14]

Just how much of a political threat the Union Party represented to FDR is an open question. The President was at the height of his popularity despite the sniping and accusations of communist sympathies. Publicly, Farley dismissed the third party movement, privately he was taking no chances. He was continually monitoring the Union Party strength through his vast network of personal contacts, party workers and even postal authorities. FDR had instructed Farley to monitor postal receipts for Royal Oak to keep tabs on the priest's popularity. Several states were reporting great strength among Coughlin supporters. Both the nation's conservative and liberal press were taking the new party seriously. The conservative Los Angeles Times
suggested that "Lempke's third party may defeat Roosevelt." The liberal New Republic editorialized "this party is far more formidable than Al Smith's Liberty League....It might prove that the New Deal has not been radical enough to satisfy popular discontent." The Minneapolis Tribune suggested that Lempke's popularity in the farm states would challenge FDR's earlier vote. A New York Times survey revealed Townsend's popularity in Washington, Oregon and California would disrupt traditional Democratic and Republican voting patterns. [15]

Unquestionably, Coughlin's strength rested with Catholic voters. Massachusetts political leaders were virtually unanimous in their fear of Coughlin's support. Governor James Curley, Congressman John McCormack and Senator David Walsh all reported to Farley that Coughlin's popularity would translate into a large Lempke vote. The President's son, James Roosevelt, claimed Coughlin was "stronger in Massachusetts than in any other state." Farley disagreed, stating that Ohio was the strongest Coughlin state. Reports were coming in almost daily of the threat Coughlin forces represented in Cleveland, where Coughlin's endorsement in the Spring primaries had been attributed to defeating the local machine candidate. The priest was demonstrating great influence among both German and Irish Catholics. One party worker claimed: "I am not
anti-Catholic,...but go into any Catholic settlement in Northwestern Ohio and you will find a lot of strong Lempke sentiment and following." [16]

Farley was undoubtedly ready to call in all the political IOU's. Catholics had been one of the groups to benefit most from FDR's patronage. The percentage of Catholics appointed to the federal judiciary increased from four percent during the combined administrations of Wilson, Harding, Coolidge and Hoover to 29 percent under Roosevelt. Many prominent Catholic politicians were calling on the American Church to take a public position against Coughlin. Edward J. Flynn of the Bronx was reported to have threatened to leave the church if the clergy did not repudiate the priest. Joseph P. Kennedy, Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and Frank Murphy, Governor of Michigan and a former close friend of Coughlin, were assigned to work against the priest among Catholic laymen. [17]

While Catholic politicians and laymen were busy solidifying FDR's position among Catholic voters the clergy was no less active in making its position known. In July, shortly after Coughlin's opening attack on the President, Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy of Catholic University wrote to Roosevelt informing him that his "friends are not ignoring the calumnies of Father Coughlin." Sheehy told FDR of a meeting he had attended in New York attended by four bishops
and three monsignori at which Coughlin's attacks on the President had been the topic of discussion. The result was a plan on "how this matter might be handled most effectively and we have taken action." [18]

Although Sheehy's letter to FDR did not outline the plan of action discussed at New York it soon became clear that the Church hierarchy intended to refute Coughlin at every turn, and disassociate his campaign rhetoric from any official sanction by the church. Coughlin continued to attack the President as a "communist" and the New Deal as a communist-inspired program developed by the President's advisors. He told the public that in voting for Roosevelt "We are voting for the Communists, the socialists, the Russian lovers, the Mexican lovers and the Kick-me-downers."

Before a crowd estimated at 100,000 in Chicago he decried the "Commies" in the administration: "Rexie Tugwell...hand shaker of Russia, plow-me-down Wallace,...Josephus Daniels - the man who applauds the slaughter of priests and nuns in Mexico." He was raising again all the issues associated by Catholics with communist influence in the years of the Roosevelt administration.[19]

But now his remarks were not going unchallenged. When Coughlin gave a speech in Cincinnati in which he declared Roosevelt a "dictator" and said it might become necessary to use "bullets" instead of "ballots" Archbishop McNicholas
responded that he "cannot let pass the advocacy of the use of bullets and I condemn such remarks." South Dakota's Bishop Bernard Mahoney publicly called Coughlin a "Cultural vulgarian," and Boston's Cardinal William O'Connell spoke out against him. [20]

In early October the anti-Coughlin campaigns of the Catholic politicians and the Catholic clergy converged. Senator Joseph O'Mahoney of Wyoming reached Monsignor John Ryan of Catholic University with a request that Ryan make a radio speech rebutting Coughlin's charges of communists in Washington. Ryan agreed to make the speech and submitted several drafts to O'Mahoney. FDR himself seems to have had some input into the speech. An early draft, with a specific reference to Coughlin was edited to delete his name, then it was put back in "reportedly at the direction of the President.[21]

Ryan went on the air on October 8, addressing himself to "the wage earners" and "toilers" who had suffered most from the depression and benefited most from the New Deal. This category of course contained the great bulk of working class Catholics who had made up the great waves of immigration concentrated in America's urban areas. Ryan dismissed Coughlin's charges that FDR and his advisors such as Felix Frankfurter and Rexford Tugwell were communists. Ryan charged that Coughlin's explanation of what was wrong
with the American economy were "at least 50 percent wrong" and his solutions "at least 90 percent wrong." He concluded by begging "the toilers of America" not to abandon Roosevelt in the coming election. [22]

The Vatican now stepped into the picture. On September 30 it was announced that Cardinal Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli would visit the United States for a three week "vacation." The American hierarchy was taken completely off guard by the announcement, with the exception of Boston's Auxiliary Bishop Frances Spellman, who was secretly notified of the visit in August. The bishop confided to his diary his reservations about the second most powerful prelate in the Vatican visiting the United States in the midst of a heated election in which Catholics were playing such a prominent role. Spellman realized, or knew, that this visit would not be confined to a simple "vacation." A nationwide tour for the Cardinal was organized. Pacelli spent four relatively quiet days at a secluded Long Island estate before embarking on a trip that took him to Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, St. Paul, Los Angeles, San Francisco, St. Louis, Cincinnati and back to New York. Pointedly omitted from the Cardinal's itinerary was the Diocese of Detroit, Father Coughlin's home base. [23]

Bishop Gallagher was angered at the snub, and traveled to Cincinnati along with his friend Bishop Schrembs of

64
Cleveland seeking to meet with Pacelli. Although the two arrived early in the morning they were informed that the Cardinal was already in a meeting with McNicholas. The two bishops were left to cool their heels most of the day and then informed the Cardinal would not grant them an audience. The next day, however, Gallagher was informed by Pacelli "to exercise more control over Father Coughlin and to inform him that he was not to participate in political campaigning once the 1936 election was over." Gallagher seems to have finally gotten the message. On October 30, with Pacelli still in the country, Gallagher forced Coughlin to make a public apology for calling Roosevelt a "scab President." He also implied that Coughlin would no longer be allowed to participate in politics after the election, something which Coughlin later confirmed. [24]

When the votes were counted, Roosevelt won an overwhelming victory. The President carried 46 states with a popular vote plurality of over 11 million votes. Coughlin's Union Party had not been a factor in the outcome. The evidence seems clear that Farley had pulled out all the stops to keep Catholic voters from deserting FDR in favor of the popular Coughlin and had succeeded dramatically. Election analysts agreed that Catholics voted for Roosevelt in huge numbers. They disagreed only on the exact magnitude of the percentage that voted for FDR. George Gallop
estimated the Catholic vote for Roosevelt at over 70 percent. R.M. Darrow said of Catholics voting over 80 percent voted for FDR. [25]

In the midst of Pacelli's whirlwind tour of the country Spellman noted in his diary on October 24: "Joe Kennedy arranged for President to invite Cardinal to lunch with him on November 5th and so told me, but I said to have Cardinal invited directly and through neither of us." The day after the election Roosevelt met with Cardinal Pacelli at his home at Hyde Park. The guest list for the post-election day luncheon hosted by the President's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, was surprisingly limited; the President, Cardinal Pacelli, Bishop Spellman, Bishop Stephen J. Donahue representing Cardinal Hayes of New York, Count Galeazzi, Joseph P. Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy and Frank C. Walker and Mrs. Walker. In a letter to his brother Bishop Spellman said such a meeting "before the Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, would have been considered fantastic." The President elect and the Cardinal sat before the fireplace and discussed a wide range of topics. "This was a great day for America and for Catholic America," Spellman concluded. [26]

Little else is known of the events of that day, or of what the President and the future Pope talked about in front of the fireplace. A crowd of reporters gathered outside the
President's home waiting for the Cardinal to emerge. They speculated that the two men discussed Communism, Father Coughlin, and the possibility the President would recognize the Vatican: sending an envoy to the Pope. Their hopes for a quote on any of these matters were dashed when the Cardinal emerged. The following day The New York Times reported that Pacelli left the meeting with FDR and greeted the waiting correspondents. However, attempts to question the Cardinal "were stopped before a single question could be completed."
The Cardinal's escort, Bishop Spellman, "declared that the Cardinal had given no interview and should give none now."
Despite efforts to convince the Cardinal that questions he did not want to answer would be considered "as not having been put" Bishop Spellman "firmly declined." [27]

The lesson of the day was not lost on either the press or President Roosevelt: Bishop Spellman carried great weight with Cardinal Secretary of State Pacelli. This would become increasingly clear in future years as FDR relied on Spellman as a private channel of communication to the Vatican, circumventing normal diplomatic channels such as the Apostolic Delegate in Washington and other, higher ranking members of the American Catholic hierarchy. It was just such a message which Spellman sent to Pius XII outlining FDR's postwar plans in late 1943.
Although Roosevelt was overwhelmingly reelected and the Union Party crushed in the 1936 election it would be a mistake to view the election results as a complete repudiation of Coughlin. Analysts have correctly pointed out that the Union Party faced more than the usual obstacles placed in the path of American third-party movements. There was never a real political organization associated with the Union Party: no cadres to get out the vote, no workers to canvass and identify potential votes. Both Coughlin and Smith used the party to advance their own personal agenda rather than attempting to foster a new political movement. The party managed to get on the ballot in only 36 states, and in six of those states the party label did not appear on the ballot. As the campaign progressed the dissension within the party became evident until even Dr. Townsend recognized the problem and switched his support to Landon. Voters were faced with the usual third-party dilemma, would their vote be wasted? All these problems contributed to the crushing defeat suffered by the Union Party.

There is no measure to determine how much of the public believed the charges of communist influence within the New Deal or the accusation that FDR himself was a communist. But the charge hung in the air, and although Coughlin was under orders not to become actively involved in politics again he was not under orders to stay off the air
with his radio show. He would continue to be a thorn in the side of Roosevelt and his radio program would continue to draw huge audiences. The issue of communism would not go away. And for Catholics the issue would become more critical very soon.


4) Bennett, *Demagogues*, pp.82-83.

5) Marcus, *Father Coughlin*, p.113.

6) Bennett, *Demagogues*, p.19


8) *Ibid.* p.254, and Marcus, *Father Coughlin*, p.120.

9) Marcus, *Father Coughlin*, p.120, and Bennett, *Demagogues*, p.254.

10) Bennett, *Demagogues*, p.255.


20) Bennett, *Demagogues*, p. 228.

21) Ibid. p. 256.


23) Ibid. p. 226.


CHAPTER 5

"...THE LOSS OF EVERY CATHOLIC VOTE..."

The President barely had time to celebrate his reelection before Catholic anti-communism was once again thrust into his decision-making process. Events at home and abroad were again beginning to focus around the fear of the spread of international communism, and around charges that FDR was fostering communism within the U.S.

In July of 1936 General Francisco Franco led a revolt of the Spanish army against the democratically elected Popular Front government, which included elements of the Spanish Communist Party. The Popular Front received only 46 percent of the votes cast in the Spanish elections. However, the proportional representation used to allocate seats in the Diet resulted in the Front receiving almost two thirds of the seats. The anti-Catholic sentiments of the extreme left within the Front quickly manifested itself in widespread incidents of anti-clericalism: churches were burned, religious education attacked, and priests, bishops and nuns murdered. Catholics argued that Franco's revolt was based on the fact that the democratic elements within the coalition had "succumbed to the extreme Leftist groups" and was founded "on the legitimate ground that the government had betrayed the electorate."[1]
Franco's revolt was widely viewed as the latest manifestation of European Fascism challenging the rule of democracy. Therein lay the problem for American Catholics. Commonweal opened the new year with an editorial on January 1 taking issue with its Protestant counterpart, The Christian Century, which had editorialized in late 1936 that the Catholic Church was conducting a world-wide campaign against Communism because "The Holy See is really concerned with supporting Fascism, 'with its inevitable accompaniments of autocracy and brutality, and for the special privileges which the Roman Catholic Church is able to enjoy under Fascist governments.'" The editors of Commonweal found this charge incredible, and pointed to the opinion of the editor of Der Angriff, Joseph Goebbels, who charged that Cardinal Pacelli's visit to the United States was part of a plan to set up a "Catholic Center Party" in order to prevent the spread of National Socialist doctrine, and that FDR's reelection was "one anointed by the Vatican." The Commonweal editors doubted both views could be correct.[2]

The Church's condemnation of Communism was not political, according to Commonweal, but religious. Communist propaganda, as in Spain, embodied in the slogan "Join with Communism against Fascism to save democracy" was a false issue. The real issue was not between Communism and Fascism but between "democracy and all forms of totalitarianism,
including Communism." Fascism was nothing more than a reaction against Communism, without which it could not exist. The editorial framed the issue for American Catholics and would form the basis of the Catholic approach to Spain as long as the civil war went unresolved. More importantly, the Catholic attitude would carry great weight with FDR. [3]

Isolationist sympathies in the United States were greatly strengthened following the revelations of the Nye Committee in 1934. These hearings produced the 1935 Neutrality Act prohibiting U.S. arms manufacturers from supplying belligerents in any foreign war. FDR attempted to apply the act to the Spanish Civil War, but the act did not mention civil wars, and U.S. arms manufacturers began to make shipments to both sides. When the administration's efforts at moral persuasion failed FDR asked for an amendment to the 1937 renewal of the act that would include civil wars and expand executive discretion in applying the act. Congress willingly approved the inclusion of civil wars in the act. The extension of executive powers was another matter.[4]

FDR opened his second term with perhaps the most serious political blunder of his years in office: his attempt to pack the Supreme Court. Much of the congressional debate surrounding the extension of executive powers sought
by the President in the Neutrality Act revolved around his attempt to assume "dictatorial powers." Senator Hiram Johnson, an ardent isolationist, said Roosevelt's attempt to alter the nature of the court would lead to him making himself "an absolute dictator in fact." The court fight spilled over into the Neutrality Act fight over the question of extension of executive powers. The nature of the Spanish fight was also changing. In March Italian troops were captured at Guadalajara proving the charges that Italy and Germany were actively supporting the Franco "Nationalists."

As the civil war in Spain intensified, American opinion on the Neutrality Act began to shift. The Guadalajara incident shifted the argument from direct help to the Loyalist government to imposition of the Neutrality Act against Italy and Germany. At the same time the Vatican was clarifying its position on the conflicting ideologies involved in the struggle. In early March Pius XI issued back to back encyclicals. The first, Mit Brenneder Sorge, (With Burning Sorrow) was an open attack on German National Socialism. The encyclical charged the Nazi government with violating the 1933 concordat concluded between the Reich and the Vatican, and with sowing "suspicion, discord, hatred, calumny" and "secret and open hostility to Christ and His Church." The Pope attacked the racial and religious policies
of the Third Reich and predicted "destructive religious wars...which have no other aim than...extermination." The concordat of 1933 had been negotiated by Eugenio Pacelli, then serving as Papal Nuncio in Germany. It guaranteed freedom of the Catholic religion and the right of the Church "to regulate her own affairs." The Reich broke the concordat within five days of its signing. Thousands of priests and lay leaders were arrested and confined to concentration camps, church property was confiscated, Catholic publications suppressed and the sanctity of the confessional was violated by the Gestapo. [6]

The second encyclical, Divini Redemptoris, attacked "the principles of dialectical and historical materialism" and condemned Communism as "intrinsically wrong, and no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever." This "plague on both your houses" attitude of the Vatican may explain why American Catholic opinion was split on the question of Spain. With Communists on one side and Fascists on the other, Catholics were being forced to choose between the lesser of two evils, as Commonweal suggested. The American Catholic hierarchy, however, had no difficulty in choosing sides. Increasingly, the struggle in Spain was portrayed in terms of the Communist faction within the Loyalist coalition. While the Catholic press was highlighting the anti-clerical atrocities
of the Loyalist government, bishops throughout the country were associating the government's activities with the spread of international Communism.[7]

In late April the bombing of Guernica thrust the entire question of the embargo back into the spotlight. It also exemplified the confusion surrounding the entire matter for American Catholics. German made planes bombed the Basque city for several hours leaving 1,654 people dead and another 889 wounded. Calls immediately went out for an embargo against Germany and Italy. The Basque region was largely Catholic, and the bombing should have outraged Catholic opinion in America as it did the rest of the country. But the Basques were fighting for the Loyalists, which meant the communists. German planes being used to bomb Spanish Catholics who were fighting for the communists? It was enough to confuse any Catholic.[8]

In the meantime FDR finally worked out a compromise with Senator Pittman regarding the extension of the Neutrality Act. The President was forced to accept less of the discretionary power he first sought under the act in the face of Pittman's objections to the expansion of "dictatorial powers." On May 1, the permanent Neutrality Law went into effect. Norman Thomas met with the President in June after returning from Spain and observing the war first hand. When Thomas raised the issue of the war in Spain and
the embargo the President told him his position "had been and would be guided by what he thought was the attitude of the Catholic Church in America." [9]

Was the President's position on Spain a payback for the role the Catholic hierarchy played in the '36 election? Catholic public opinion was, and would continue to be, split on the question of what to do about Spain. The hierarchy of the Church, however, was virtually unanimous. The debate over the civil war in Spain would continue through the rest of 1937 and 1938. FDR continued to refuse to apply the embargo to Berlin and Rome, and to lift it against Spain. He did this in spite of polls indicating the overwhelming support such a move would have with the American people. A Gallop Poll conducted in December of 1938 asked: "Which side do you sympathize with in the Spanish Civil War?"

Nationally, 76 percent sympathized with the Loyalists, while only 24 percent sympathized with Franco. When broken down by religion, however, only 42 percent of Catholics sided with the Loyalists, compared to 83 percent of Protestants. Franco was favored by 58 percent of Catholics compared to only 17 percent of Protestants.[10]

For FDR, however, the issue was framed in terms of the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy. Clearly, Catholic lay opinion on Spain was divided, as the poll indicated. As the congressional elections in the fall of 1938 approached, FDR
put the matter in purely political terms. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes was furious when Roosevelt failed to act on lifting the embargo against Spain. He recounts in his diary how he overcame FDR's logistical objections to lifting the arms ban only to have the President relate that he had discussed the matter that morning with congressional leaders and they feared that to raise the ban "would mean the loss of every Catholic vote in the coming fall elections." The Interior Secretary exclaimed in his diary "This proves up to the hilt what so many people have been saying, namely, that the Catholic minorities in Great Britain and America have been dictating the international policy with respect to Spain." [11]

Clearly, FDR's position was political, as any President's would be. It was also consistent, as the two conversations with Thomas and Ickes demonstrate. The thrust of both conversations, coming over a year apart, indicate that the President was unwilling to risk losing the Catholic vote over the issue of Spain. They also demonstrate that his fear was that the Catholic hierarchy's strong anti-communist position on Spain was the deciding factor. The ability of the hierarchy to offset Coughlin's influence in the '36 election was a lesson not lost in the White House. Some historians argue that recollections of private conversations with FDR cannot be taken at face value because he had a
tendency to tell people what they wanted to hear, and then did what he wanted. Clearly, what FDR was telling both Thomas and Ickes was not what they wanted to hear, and what he did was not what they wanted him to do, but rather what he felt he needed to do.

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While the controversy over lifting the arms embargo against Spain was raging the question of communist influence within the administration would not go away. Father Coughlin briefly left the air following the 1936 election, as he said he would if the Union Party was not victorious, but quickly resumed his broadcasts and supervision of his Social Justice newspaper. By July of 1937 Coughlin was again on the attack against communists, this time within the Congress of Industrial Organizations. He labeled the entire CIO as a "Moscow tool teeming with communists" and charged they were taking instructions from the "Communist Central Committee of the United States." Earlier, Coughlin labeled CIO head John L. Lewis a "labor dictator" and "a communist tool being used to prepare the way for the eventual victory of Marxism in the United States." [12]

With Coughlin back in stride questions began to surface in places generally considered more congenial to the President. Writing in Commonweal in September Oliver McKee, Jr. denounced the "class prejudice" being fostered by the
New Deal. McKee argued that FDR's "political strategy and
many of his policies have...tended to incite class
prejudice, and create in the public mind the impression that
property is necessarily the foe of human rights." McKee does
not charge that FDR is a communist, or even being influenced
by communists, but the suggestion that the New Deal is
promoting class warfare and "appeals to class consciousness
to win popular support" demonstrate that even the liberal
Commonweal was beginning to question the aims of the New
Deal. [13]

In early 1938 Coughlin was again attracting
considerable attention, so much so that the Gallop Poll
conducted a survey in an attempt to gauge his strength. The
poll revealed that some 8.5 million American families with
radios listened to Coughlin either regularly or "from time
to time." This represented one-third of the 24 million
households with radios. More importantly, 83 percent of
those listening to Coughlin "approved" of what he said. The
survey was crude by today's standards, and did not break
down the audience by religion, income, region or other
indicators of where Coughlin's message was having an effect.
[14]

Clearly, large numbers of Americans were still
listening to Coughlin and agreeing with what he was saying.
At the time of the poll Coughlin's attacks on FDR and the
New Deal were becoming increasingly vitriolic. In October of 1937 Coughlin commented on the "personal stupidity of President Roosevelt" in an interview while on the same day an article in his Social Justice declared that Catholics could not belong to the CIO because "Catholicism was as incompatible with the CIO as Catholicism was incompatible with Mohammedanism." He now added a new aspect to his attack on international communism, associating it with "international Jewry." The pages of Social Justice became filled with anti-Semitic articles and pro-German sentiments placing him in direct opposition to the anti-Nazi position asserted by Pius XI in his encyclical "Mit Brennender Sorge". [15]

The communist threat was everywhere according to Coughlin: in labor unions, colleges, and the administration. The political atmosphere, poisoned by Coughlin and others, which continued to surround the inability of the New Deal to bring the depression to an end manifested itself in the summer of 1938. The House voted 181 to 41 for the creation of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Ostensibly, the committee was chartered to investigate extremist political activity on both the left and right. However, under the chairmanship of Martin Dies of Texas, the committee focused almost exclusively on the question of
communist infiltration of organized labor, education and government.

The committee issued its first report in January 1939, defining UnAmericanism and Communism. Citing the "Trojan Horse" tactics of Communism, the report suggested communists infiltrated existing organizations or set up "front organizations" dedicated to popular causes, but in reality under the direction of Moscow. Witnesses identified 640 organizations, 483 newspapers and 280 labor unions which they said were communistic, including the Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls and several Catholic organizations. At least one member of the committee branded the New Deal itself as communist. Representative J. Parnell Thomas, a Republican member of the committee claimed the New Deal was "working hand in glove with the Communist Party" and that it was "either for the Communist Party, or is playing into the hands of the Communist Party." [16]

One of the "experts" on communism called to testify before the Dies Committee was Father Charles Coughlin. In his ongoing battle with the CIO he released to the committee a copy of remarks made to him in a private conversation with Homer Martin, former head of the United Auto Workers, in which Martin claimed most of the leadership of the union were communists. When Martin was forced to acknowledge the comments in public it made the split within the UAW
irreversible, providing Coughlin with a sense of victory over the CIO.[17]

The fact that a standing committee of the congress was leveling the same charges as Coughlin, and providing him with yet another forum for his attacks, could do nothing but lend credence to his charges. The criticism leveled at the tactics of the committee, and the ridicule of some of the testimony by the press, was not keeping the public from being impacted. A poll conducted in November of 1938 showed that 60 percent of the respondents had heard of the committee, and 74 percent of those familiar with the committee felt its findings were "important enough to justify continuing the investigation." A year later, a similar poll found support for continued funding of the committee at 75 percent. [18]

As FDR approached the midpoint of his second term he found himself embroiled once again in charges that he was a communist or under the influence of communists within the New Deal. He openly admitted to both Harold Ickes and Norman Thomas that his policy on Spain revolved around the position of the Catholic hierarchy, which was based on the now official anti-communism of the church, and the need to keep Catholic voters in the Democratic Party. A resurgent Father Coughlin was continuing his attack on the New Deal and the President. Conditions in Europe were rolling toward war and
speculation was beginning to mount that the President would seek an unprecedented third term. Having seen the effort FDR made to keep the "Catholic Vote" in the '36 election, and his position on Spain designed to keep it in the '38 midterm elections it seems clear that a pattern is developing in the President's political relations with American Catholics, centering around the issue of anti-communism and leading to Teheran and Yalta.
NOTES
CHAPTER 5


3) Ibid., "p." 258.


5) Ibid.


7) The Papal Encyclicals

8) Dallek, Roosevelt and Foreign Policy, p.141.


15) Marcus, Father Coughlin, p.140.


Events in Europe were rapidly deteriorating in early 1939 when Pope Pius XI died on February 10. While the college of Cardinals began to assemble in Rome to choose a successor, Hitler was pressing the government of what remained of Czechoslovakia. The Munich agreement, which had "guaranteed peace in our time" was falling apart under the onslaught of Nazi demands.

On March 2, the traditional puffs of white smoke arose from the Vatican announcing to the world the selection of a new Pope. Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli had been elected and chosen the name Pius XII. The former Papal Secretary of State who sat by the fire with FDR at Hyde Park after his reelection in 1936 was now the leader of worldwide Catholicism. The election of a new Pope whose career within the church centered on Germany and diplomacy was widely regarded as a signal the church planned on playing a role in seeking a peaceful solution to the problems in Europe. The election also initiated a series of events which would alter the relationship between FDR and American Catholics.

The new Pope was immediately faced with a crucial decision concerning the American church left by the sudden death of his predecessor. The most powerful position in the
American hierarchy had been vacant since the death the previous September of Cardinal Hayes of the archdiocese of New York. Speculation on a successor to Hayes centered on Archbishop Edward Mooney of Detroit and Archbishop John McNicholas of Cincinnati, both longtime friends of FDR. However, barely a month after being named Pope, Pacelli turned to his old friend the Auxiliary Bishop of Boston, naming Francis J. Spellman the new Archbishop of New York. Under Spellman's tutelage the chancery office of the archdiocese would come to be known as the "Powerhouse" by political leaders of both parties and all religious denominations.

With the deteriorating European political situation the new Pope needed as many friends in high places as he could find. By the end of March Czechoslovakia disappeared from the map of Europe, absorbed by Germany, Poland and Hungary. Hitler was now turning his attention to Poland. The attitude of the new Pope toward the Third Reich was of great interest to the Fuehrer. Pacelli served as Papal Nuncio in Germany from 1917 to 1929, and negotiated the concordat between the Reich and Vatican in 1933. There were some 35 million Catholics in Germany (including Hitler who was a nominal Catholic), and they, along with the Socialists, had provided the main support of the Weimer Republic. Hitler despised the political nature of the German church, and
immediately outlawed the Catholic Party upon taking office. In spite of the concordat confessional schools came under attack, along with Catholic Action Leagues, Catholic labor unions and the Vatican itself as a non-German foreign influence. [1]

While Hitler was completing the destruction of Czechoslovakia the German Foreign Office was completing an analysis of the new Pope. The memorandum on Pacelli stated "His advocacy of an orthodox church policy repeatedly brought him into conflict with National Socialism on matters of principle." The Foreign Office regarded Pacelli as a "Germanophile" as a result of his long tenure in Germany. He admired German culture, philosophy, music and literature. The report also drew attention to the fact the new Pope seemed particularly affected by the appellation "Papa Angelicus" associated with his reign. The term referred to the prophecy of St. Malachy which attributed to the 106th Pope a revival of Apostolic simplicity and zeal which would inaugurate a new age. [2]

While Hitler continued his pressure on Poland his Axis partner Mussolini took the opportunity to invade Albania in early April. This move solidified the resolve of Great Britain and France as both countries guaranteed the borders of neighboring Greece and Yugoslavia. FDR meanwhile sent a letter to Hitler on April 15 listing 31 countries and asking
the Fuehrer "to give assurances that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory" of any of them. The President sought the support of the Vatican to his peace initiative. Undersecretariat of State Sumner Welles approached the Apostolic Delegate Ameleto Cicognani through Monsignor Ready of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The Vatican already had been approached by both Britain and France to support the proposal. The Vatican, however, took the position that the President's letter reflected an unneutral attitude, would be rejected out of hand by the Axis leaders and that a Vatican endorsement would reduce the Pope's influence in Germany. [3]

Hitler's response to FDR's peace proposal indeed took the form of the total rejection the Vatican predicted. The Fuehrer publicly rebuked the President before the Reichstag on April 28. William Shirer called Hitler's speech that day "the most brilliant oration he ever gave," and that "for sheer eloquence, craftiness, irony, sarcasm and hypocrisy, it reached a new level that he was never to approach again." [4]

The Fuehrer's rejection of FDR's proposal did not deter the Pope from putting forth his own peace plan in early May. The Pope's plan was given to the Fuehrer by the Apostolic Nuncio in Berlin, Cesare Orsenigo. According to the German report of the meeting the Nuncio told Hitler of
the Pope's concern about the tension in Europe, and his desire to do all in his power to prevent the outbreak of war. He suggested a conference of the five great powers of Europe to discuss the German-Polish and Franco-Italian problems before they got out of hand. Hitler responded that the danger of war was exaggerated by propaganda, and in any event he would have to discuss such a proposal with Mussolini first. He concluded by saying he would "In a very short time...let the Pope have his answer." [5]

The five great powers of Europe included in Pius' plan were Britain, France, Poland, Germany and Italy. The British Foreign Minister, Lord Halifax, in a conversation with the Apostolic Delegate in Britain, expressed regret that the Russians were not invited to attend the conference, and was told "that in no circumstances would it be possible for the Pope to consider such an approach." His predecessors encyclical effectively banned any cooperation with the Soviet Union. This official Catholic anti-communism would become an increasingly difficult problem for FDR and American Catholics to deal with in coming months. [6]

However, despite Halifax's admonitions, the British were in something of a quandary themselves at that moment as to what role the Soviets were to play in the European situation. Foreign Commissar Maxim Litvinov approached both the British and French in April with the possibility of
forming an alliance of the three governments to protect all the nations of central and eastern Europe which felt threatened by Germany. When the British government had not accepted the proposal by early May Winston Churchill was openly critical stating "there is no means of maintaining an eastern front against Nazi aggression without the active aid of Russia." [7]

On May 17 Berlin Nuncio Orsenigo was finally given Hitler's response to the Pope's peace initiative. Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop told the Nuncio that while Hitler and Mussolini were "very grateful to the Holy Father for his benevolent intervention on behalf of universal peace...they think the moment is not yet ripe for a conference" to discuss the outstanding issues between the various nations. The Nuncio reported that when questioned on the current international situation Ribbentrop replied that "Poland, if she judges badly enough to provoke a war, will be crushed in less time than it takes to say it." He also offered that Germany was not afraid of war with France and England which would not be able to penetrate Germany's defense in the west except at a cost of a million men. More importantly, Ribbentrop raised the prospect of Germany reaching an agreement with Russia. Noting Stalin's displeasure over the British and French position and the dismissal of Litvinov he said "We have no quarrel with Russia except about
Bolshevism, in other words we do not want its perfidious propaganda for a world revolution...but should Russia drop this propaganda nothing prevents us from drawing closer together." [8]

While the Pope "in no circumstances" would approach the Soviet Union, and the British were putting off responding to Soviet overtures for an alliance against Germany, the German Foreign Minister was acknowledging to a Vatican official the prospect of a German-Russian accommodation. The prospect of an alliance between Hitler and Stalin must have seemed so remote as to border on the preposterous. There is no indication in the Vatican documents that this information was passed on to any other European embassy.

FDR meanwhile reopened the prospect of establishing some type of permanent diplomatic relationship with the Vatican. Sumner Welles had been meeting regularly with the Apostolic Delegate to Washington, Ameleto Cicognani, and Msgr. Ready of the National Catholic Welfare Council. Welles was expressing the continued desire of the President to convene a conference aimed at resolving the European situation, and that the "United States government was prepared to take part in a conference of nations to adjust the present causes of world unrest." FDR seems to have been disturbed by the exclusion of the U.S. from the Pope's
original proposal for a peace conference, and was indicating a firm wish to be included in any future plans. [9]

In August, FDR asked Welles' opinion on the advisability of establishing diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Welles responded that the Vatican had access to valuable sources of information "particularly with regard to what is actually going on in Germany, Italy and Spain" which the U.S. did not possess, and the ability to get that information "was of considerable importance." The U.S. had maintained official diplomatic relations with the Vatican prior to 1867, when congress reacted against an unpopular President and a more unpopular Pope by cutting off funds for the mission. The subsequent loss of the Papal States removed the justification for maintaining relations with the Vatican as a foreign state, but the Lateran Treaty had returned that status to the Vatican. Speculation that FDR intended to reestablish diplomatic relations with the Vatican had been high at the time of Pacelli's visit to the U.S. in 1936, and indeed FDR discussed the possibility with Archbishop Spellman several times over the next two years. [10]

In October, after the outbreak of war, the President again raised the issue with Spellman saying that "he was looking for a moment and occasion suitable for a persuasive appeal to the American people." Spellman said that the present situation in which both the Vatican and the U.S.
were working for the similar aim of restoring peace seemed "favorable and propitious." When Spellman raised the possibility that such an action would undoubtedly raise criticism the President agreed, but added "I think that every moment brings us nearer to the conclusion of this matter." The President obviously had a plan, which he then outlined to Spellman. He projected that the congress would adjourn sometime in November after taking up the revision of the Neutrality Act, and would not return until January 3. He felt an announcement during that time would be appropriate and that it could be justified by his belief that "such an association would be of great help to the peace of the world, as in effect it is." He also suggested the mission could be viewed in terms of assistance to the refugee problem. [11]

That the President had already made up his mind seems clear. He then discussed the question of funding such a mission, and proposed that it be considered a "special mission of the United States Government to Rome accredited to the Holy See" because special missions did not require an Act of Congress for funding, "but once the mission has been launched, if everything goes well, Congress could be induced more easily to vote the funds for a permanent mission." FDR had already narrowed the field of candidates to head the mission to Myron Taylor and former Ambassador to Italy
Breckenridge Long. Spellman said either man would "be suitable" because the Pope already knew Taylor and Long had substantial diplomatic experience. [12]

If the President had not already decided on Myron Taylor to head the mission to the Vatican at the time of his meeting with Spellman he soon did. Taylor was almost the perfect candidate for the job. A Protestant, Episcopalian with Quaker ancestors, he would not be accused of being pro-Catholic. He could also not be accused of being a wild-eyed New Deal social reformer. Formerly Chairman of the Board of United States Steel, he still sat on the Board of Directors. He was also a Director of American Telephone and Telegraph and The First National Bank of New York. In addition he had his own villa in Florence and could take care of his own expenses if need be until government funds were provided.

While FDR was working out the details of this mission to the Vatican the war in Europe seemed to come to an end as abruptly as it started. The Nazi Blitzkrieg overwhelmed Poland just as Ribbentrop told Orsenigo back in May. The lull in the war was now being dubbed Sitzkrieg, or the sit-down war, by the western press. Hitler was making overtures to the British that the war need not continue. The Foreign Office was taken completely by surprise by the Pope's latest effort to secure a peaceful settlement to the
conflict. Sir D'Arcy Osborne, British Ambassador to the Vatican, informed the Foreign Office in late November that Pius had been approached to act as an intermediary for a discontented group within the German Abwehr led by Colonel Hans Oster. This group contacted Monsignor Ludwig Kaas, former leader of the German Centre Party living in exile in Rome with a proposal for a military coup against Hitler involving members of the General Staff. The conspirators sought the Pope's guarantee that if the coup were successful the British would negotiate a peace based on the restoration of Poland and non-German Czechoslovakia, but leaving Austria as part of Germany. In other words post Munich Germany would remain intact, but without a Nazi government. [13]

Notes went back and forth between Halifax, Chamberlain and Osborne. The Foreign Office wanted to bring in the French, but the Pope wanted to keep knowledge of the plan to as limited a number of people as possible, and was convinced the French would go along if the British agreed. The negotiations dragged on until March with the Foreign Office apparently vacillating between taking the matter seriously, and then raising doubts about the nature of the conspiracy. Osborne's diary relates his frustration with the long process of communicating questions from Halifax and Chamberlain to the Germans through the Pope and then their response. The Germans in turn were attempting to find out
who would be acceptable to the British in a non-Nazi government. The whole thing collapsed as the Generals involved, including Beck and Halder, put off acting as final preparations for the Spring offensive in the west drew nearer. [14]

Meanwhile, on December 24, FDR announced he was sending Myron Taylor to Rome as his "personal representative to the Pope." The President was still clearly worried about reaction to his announcement. He sent a letter to Pius informing him of Taylor's appointment, and a similar letter to Dr. Charles A. Buttrick, President of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, and to Rabbi Cyrus Adler, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The President couched his appointment of Taylor in spiritual terms, seeking the Pope's opinion on matters of peace and guidance in these troubling times. He also asked Buttrick and Adler to do the same. The difference, however, was substantial, as pointed out by Cicognani: "the President is sending a Representative to the Holy See, while to the two above mentioned gentlemen he is extending a simple invitation to call on him." [15]

The American Protestant community also noted the difference. Buttrick's organization called for Taylor's immediate recall. Protestant groups throughout the country condemned the appointment, some in open anti-Catholic
hostility, others calling on the tradition of the separation of church and state. Dr. George Truett, President of the Baptist World Alliance said the Pope "has in fact no better title to receive governmental recognition from the United States than...the head of the least of the Baptist associations in the hills of North Carolina." FDR weathered the criticism, cracking jokes at a press conference about just what an ambassador to the Vatican would do each day. The strategy he outlined to Spellman worked, however, and congress raised little objection to the Taylor mission when it returned. [16]
NOTES
CHAPTER 6


3) Ibid., pp.18-19

4) Shirer, Rise and Fall, p.471.


6) Ibid., p.21.

7) Shirer, Rise and Fall, p.479.


9) Ibid., p.196.

10) Memo, Welles to FDR, August 1, 1939, PSF Diplomatic, Vatican: Myron C. Taylor, 1942, FDR Library.


12) Ibid.


14) Ibid.


By late spring 1941 FDR was faced with the prospect of yet another foreign policy decision which hinged on overcoming American hostility to communism, and in particular American Catholic anti-communism. Virtually all intelligence information was pointing to the fact that Hitler intended to invade the Soviet Union. This information was given to Soviet Ambassador Constantin Oumansky by Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles in early March. Welles later commented that Oumansky "turned very white" upon hearing the news, but in Welles' judgment Oumansky was poorly informed by Moscow on German/Soviet relations, and he doubted Oumansky ever passed the information on to Moscow.[1]

On June 22, the rumors turned into reality as the Wehrmacht drove into Russian territory along a thousand mile front extending from the Baltics to the Balkans. Churchill had his eastern front at last, and immediately announced that Britain would "give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people." The President and the State Department waited a full day before making an announcement. Historian Walter LaFeber described the statement released by the State Department on June 23 as "less than enthusiastic; for
example it criticized the Soviets for not allowing full freedom of religion." This is something of an understatement. The text stated "that freedom to worship God as their consciences dictate is the great and fundamental right of all people." This right was "denied to their peoples by both the Nazi and Soviet Governments." The "communistic dictatorship" of the Soviet Union was as "intolerable and as alien" to the people of the United States as the "Nazi dictatorship." [2]

The key to FDR's thinking at this crucial juncture of the world crises is contained in his only modification to the statement prepared by the State Department. The final sentence was added at the President's instruction: "Hitler's armies are today the chief dangers of the Americas." The President approved the stress on religious freedom contained in the State Department draft and highlighted the greater threat presented by Hitler's Germany for two reasons. He was not yet convinced that Soviet military capability would permit them to hold out very long against the Germans, and he knew that offering assistance to the Soviets would raise a firestorm of religious-based criticism, particularly among American Catholics. Three days after the statement was released the President wrote to Admiral Leahy. "Now comes this Russian diversion," he said, "If it is more than just that it will mean the liberation of Europe from Nazi
domination - and at the same time I do not think we need to worry about any possibility of Russian domination..."[3]

The American Catholic community was as divided as the rest of the country concerning the great isolationist vs. interventionist debate. But even Catholic interventionists would have difficulty overcoming the moral question of aid to the Soviet Union in light of Pius XI's outright condemnation of atheistic communism and prohibition against working with communism "in any undertaking whatsoever." The immediate problem was compounded by Hitler's assertion that his attack on Russia was a "crusade" against godless bolshevism. Most observers believed this was an open attempt to gain the support of the Vatican for the German war effort. Both sides of the issue were quickly addressed by members of the American hierarchy.

Bishop Joseph P. Hurley of St. Augustine gave a speech on July 6 in which he attacked those he called "Nazi sympathizers over here" who were attempting to cast the new conflict in Europe as a "holy crusade against communism." It was not a crusade, Hurley said, and "its standard is not the cross but the swastika which a great Pontiff called the foe of the Cross of Christ." Hurley, who spent 12 years in the Vatican Secretariat of State prior to being assigned to St. Augustine, concluded by calling Nazism the number one enemy of America and the world. [4]
Francis J.L. Beckman, Archbishop of Dubuque, spoke out for the isolationist wing warning that "communism, communism, communism [is] everywhere gaining ground," and asking how one could "account for the coddling of Communist agents and dupes in every responsible branch of our government." Beckman charged that Britain had allied herself with a devil and was not fighting "the Battle of Christianity." The pages of Father Coughlin's Social Justice were filed with anti-British and anti-communist statements since the outbreak of the war in 1939. With the German invasion of Russia the newspaper congratulated Churchill for enabling "Stalin to dagger Hitler in the back." [5]

By August FDR was so concerned about Catholic reaction he had Myron Taylor meet with Archbishop Mooney and Msgr. Ready of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Both men expressed concern "that the announced policy of aid to Russia creates a delicate situation in the United States." They were concerned with the activities of the America First Committee "and their willingness to exploit to the full every possible source of support." The Catholic groups associated with America First were utilizing Pius XI's statement on atheistic communism while ignoring his equally strong condemnation of Nazism. A possible crack in the statement was argued in the context that it "refers to the domestic rather than the international field." This argument
was already under attack, however, "as a compromise in principle and failure to accept a clear pronouncement of Papal authority." Both men feared that "any academic or unofficial interpretation of the Papal statement" would "create a definite and disastrous cleavage in Catholic ranks, both clerical and lay." The only way out of the dilemma would be "some word or gesture on the part of the Holy Father himself" that would clearly indicate the possibility of cooperation with communism on an international level. [6]

In early September America First began a national campaign to draw attention to the papal encyclical. Letters went out to all local chapters, newspaper ads were prepared showing the persecution of the church in Russia and the national headquarters agreed to finance a national poll of Catholic clergy to assess opinion on the administrations policies toward the Soviet Union. FDR, however, was ready to act on the advise of Mooney and Ready and seek a clarification from the Pope on the exact meaning of Divini Redemptoris. The personal relationship established with Pacelli in 1936, and the diplomatic connection established in 1939, was about to pay a dividend in domestic politics. The President sent Myron Taylor back to Rome carrying a personal letter to Pius. [7]
By the time FDR wrote to the Pope he had received the optimistic report from Harry Hopkins that Stalin was indeed prepared to continue the fight against Hitler in spite of the continued Russian reverses. The Russians were putting up a stiffer resistance than either the British or American military projected, but the opinion still prevailed that they would not last long, in spite of what Hopkins reported. The letter Taylor carried to the Pope explained that he was prepared to "discuss with Your Holiness certain matters with regard to which I am very desirous that he explain my feelings and American opinion." The first matter on the agenda was the "attitude of the Russian Government and the Russian people toward religion." The President said he believed there was "a real possibility that Russia may as a result of the present conflict recognize freedom of religion in Russia." This recognition would of course exclude the possibility of intervention in educational or political affairs. This would also mean religion in Russia would be "on a much better footing than religious freedom is in Germany today." [8]

The President said Russia was "governed by a dictatorship as rigid in its manner of being as the dictatorship in Germany," but the "Russian dictatorship is less dangerous to the safety of other nations" than the German model. Propaganda was the biggest threat presented by
the Soviets, which the Germans used also, but had "undertaken the employment of every form of military aggression outside of its borders for the purpose of world conquest by force of arms." He went on to say the survival of Russia was less dangerous to religion, to the church and to the world in general than the survival of Germany. He concluded by saying Taylor would explain his feelings "in order that Your Holiness may understand my position in this respect." [9]

The official Vatican response clearly indicates the Pope and Cardinal Maglione did not share the President's belief that Russian Communism constituted a lesser threat than Nazism. The elimination of both would clearly result in a "period of tranquility for Europe," but if one of these evils remained an active force Europe would soon find itself in the same situation it now faced. If communism triumphed there would be no resistance to its spreading to "the Germanic peoples, the Slav races and finally among the Latins." The Vatican pointed to the invasion of "Poland, Esthonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Bessarabia" as evidence that Russian Communism was as militaristic and aggressive as Nazi Germany. Finally, the Russian resistance so far in the Russo-German war was ample evidence of the "immense war preparations which Communism has made." [10]
In spite of all the objections the Pope realized the political problem the President faced. Taylor must have conveyed the President's belief, still prevalent in his military advisors, that Russian militarism simply was not the same thing as German militarism. Taylor must have also conveyed the sentiments of Mooney and Ready on the need for some clarification from the Pope on Divini Redemptoris. In an allocution delivered in late September the Pope, while confirming the Church's condemnation of Communism, made a distinction between the communist government of Russia and his "paternal affection" for the Russian people. Taylor was informed of the Pope's speech, and the Apostolic Delegate in Washington was informed of the "elaboration of the meaning of Divini Redemptoris. [11]

FDR had once again managed to reach an accommodation with the Catholic hierarchy in support of his policies. Archbishop McNicholas of Cincinnati sent a letter to all the priests and laity of his diocese stating the "clear distinction that Pope Pius made between the system of atheistic communism, which he condemned, and the Russian people, whom he loved, we shall be able to rid ourselves of much perplexity regarding the Russian situation." The reaction was much the same throughout Catholic America, with the exception of Father Coughlin who continued to vilify the
President and promote a vicious pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic position in Social Justice. [12]

On December 7 the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war. On December 6 the Russians began a counterattack along a 350 mile front, inflicting the first severe setback to the Wehrmacht since the war began. The Russian front was going to be more than just the "diversion" FDR hoped for in June. When Myron Taylor returned to Rome the following September he was no longer trying to assure the Pope the Soviets would not dominate Europe after the war, he was telling him they would get what they wanted, and it was necessary to find a way to work with them.
NOTES
CHAPTER 7


3) Dawson, Decision to Aid Russia, p. 119 and 139.

4) Ibid., p. 89.


6) Telephone message to the President from Myron Taylor, August 30, 1941, PSF Diplomatic; Vatican, Myron Taylor Folder 1941, FDR Library.

7) Dawson, Decision to Aid Russia, p. 231.

8) FDR to Pius XII, PSF Diplomatic, Vatican: Myron C. Taylor Folder, 1941, FDR Library.

9) Ibid.

10) Memorandum on Russia by H.E. Monsignor Tardini presented to Mr. Taylor, September 1941, Taylor Collection, 1942 Vol. p. 74., FDR Library.

11) Dawson, Decision to Aid Russia, p. 267.

12) Ibid.
CHAPTER 8
"THE DEVIL IS A COMMUNIST"

The evening before the final session of the Teheran Conference FDR dined with Churchill and Stalin. When dinner was over the President excused himself from after-dinner coffee and cigars claiming he was not feeling well. Churchill, Eden, Stalin and Molotov engaged in general conversation which eventually turned to the question of Poland. According to Eden the discussion went favorably with both sides believing the sooner the issue could be resolved the better. The problem lay in the fact that the "Americans are terrified of the subject which Harry [Hopkins] called 'political dynamite' for their elections." Eden told Hopkins the situation would only get worse the longer it was left unresolved and that in six months, with Russian armies in Poland, the elections would be that much closer.[1]

The conversation turned to generalities about the progress of the war during which Churchill remarked that he believed God was on the side of the allies. Stalin grinned when he heard the translation of the Prime Minister's remark, and interjected that the devil was on his side "Because, of course, everyone knows that the devil is a Communist, and God, no doubt, is a good conservative." Over coffee and cigars on the final evening of the Teheran
Conference the stumbling blocks of the postwar peace were outlined: Poland, religion and the American election. [2]

The President returned from Teheran in time to present his annual Christmas message to the American people from his home in Hyde Park. He told the nation that he had gotten along fine with Marshal Stalin and believed in the future "we are going to get along very well with him and the Russian people—very well indeed." As events unfolded in early 1944 the public optimism the President expressed in his Christmas message began to give way to the hard political reality of dealing with Stalin's demands. [3]

The stalemate which existed in Soviet/Polish relations since the previous April took on new significance on January 4 when Soviet forces entered Poland. Now that Soviet troops were returning to eastern Poland the London Poles were anxious to resume relations, and establish a basis for cooperation between the advancing Red Army and the Underground Home Army. In Washington, Jan Ciechanowski, the Polish Ambassador of the government-in-exile, was told by Secretary of State Cordell Hull that in his opinion "the British Government, as an ally of both Poland and of Russia, was in a better position to initiate appropriate steps than the American Government" in terms of mediating a reconciliation between the Soviets and the government-in-exile. Hull was conveying to the London Poles
the same message FDR had given to Stalin at Teheran: he could not take a public stand on the Polish issue. Averell Harriman later summed up the President's thinking at this point, "The 1944 election was fast approaching and he preferred to postpone the Polish outcry until after the votes were counted, leaving Churchill to take the lead meanwhile." Britain's formal treaty obligations the British had with both Poland and Russia provided FDR with an excuse to avoid taking a public position on Poland. [4]

It soon became evident that Hull had not delivered the U.S. position to the Poles too soon. The offer of the London Poles to resume relations with the Soviets and coordinate activities between the Red Army and the Home Army was tersely rejected. The Soviets also rejected the "erroneous affirmation" by the London Poles that the area the Red Army was operating in was part of Poland. It was well known, they said, that the "Soviet constitution established a Soviet-Polish frontier corresponding with the desires of the population of western Ukraine and western White Russia... [and]the territories...were incorporated into the Soviet Union." In other words the Soviets were operating within their June 1941, borders. [5]

On January 22, Churchill met with the Premier of the Polish government-in-exile, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, and proposed a five point program as the basis for renewed
recognition by the Soviets. The Premier was told that if his
government would agree to the acceptance of the so-called
Curzon Line as the basis of the western Polish frontier:
linking the eastern frontier to the grant to Poland of East
Prussia, Danzig and Upper Silesia to the Oder River, Poles
on the Soviet side of the eastern frontier would be granted
the right to return to Poland, all Germans within the new
Polish frontiers would be removed, and the guarantee these
agreements would be honored by the three principal United
Nations, relations with the Soviets could be resumed. In
reality this was the agreement the "Big Three" had reached
at Teheran. It was also the outline of the new Poland Myron
Taylor had carried to Rome in September of 1942. [6]

Churchill kept Stalin apprised of his negotiations
with the London Poles. He also cabled Roosevelt on the
position he was taking with Mikolajaczk. He informed the
Polish Premier that even though England had gone to war over
Poland they had not done so for the sake of "any particular
frontier," but rather for the existence of a strong, free,
independent Poland." Churchill said Stalin also supported
this view, and that even though England would have continued
to fight Germany alone "the liberation of Poland from the
German grip is being achieved mainly by the enormous
sacrifices and achievements of the Russian armies." Poland
would have to accept the fact that the allies would have a
large say about "the frontier of territory she should have." The Poles were willing to consider the matter, according to Churchill, but they refused to settle border issues prior to a general peace conference after the war. [7]

The border issue became secondary in early February. Stalin informed British Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr that at least three of the members of the Polish government-in-exile were unacceptable to him and he would not deal with them. FDR was anxious where this latest difficulty would lead. On February 7, he cabled Stalin that he appreciated his desire "to deal only with a Polish government in which you can repose confidence," and while public opinion was still solidifying around the "broad principles subscribed to at the Moscow and Teheran conferences," it would be better to allow the Polish Prime Minister to make changes in the makeup of that government "without any evidence of pressure or dictation from a foreign country." [8]

While the question of Poland was beginning to heat up the President found himself embroiled in yet another issue highlighting the ability of the Vatican to bring both domestic and international political pressure to bear on American public opinion: the bombing of Rome. While Italy formally surrendered to the Allies in September of 1943 stiff German resistance continued in that country. As Allied
forces began to move up the peninsula in early 1944 bombing raids in Rome and other military targets resulted in damage and casualties within Vatican City, the Papal Villa at Castelgandolfo and the Abby of Monte Casino.

By mid-February public attention was being divided between the deteriorating Polish situation and the flurry of diplomatic correspondence between the Vatican and Washington. Archbishop Ameleto Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate at Washington, was conveying the objections to the Allied bombing being made by Pius XII and Luigi Cardinal Maglione, Vatican Secretary of State, to the President and the State Department. The Vatican flatly denied Allied military reports that Monte Cassino and Castelgandolfo were housing German military personnel. General Mark Clark of the U.S. Fifth Army later confirmed that no German military personnel were using either site. Archbishop Spellman notified Roosevelt that he intended to speak out publicly on the matter, a departure from the archbishop's usually cordial relations with the President. At St. Patrick's Cathedral on Washington's birthday Spellman deplored the fact that American armed forces had attacked "the territory of a neutral state" in spite of the fact that the Pope himself had denied that German troops were ever stationed in the areas under attack. [9]
On March 12 and April 1 the archbishop spoke on the subject again, as bombing raids in and around Rome continued to damage churches and shrines. The fact that Spellman would speak out publicly against the actions of American armed forces in the midst of a popular war effort, and an election year, suggests the possibility that something deeper was involved. In fact, the Vatican was marshaling an international effort on the bombing issue. On March 15, the Irish Ambassador to the United States delivered a message from Prime Minister deValera seeking an agreement by which "Rome may be saved." The Irish vote could not be overlooked. Similar appeals came from the Spanish government, and from several South American Republics. [10]

The situation was becoming serious in the eyes of the administration. On March 18, Secretary Hull cabled all diplomatic representatives in the South American Republics to "give your serious and urgent attention to the possibility of discreetly stimulating some comment on the part of high public officials, cultural leaders, and prominent newspapers" that responsibility for placing Christian shrines in jeopardy in Rome lay with the Nazis, who continued to use the city for military purposes, and not with the Allied airforce. The administration was promoting a counterattack of world opinion. Domestically, the situation was not much better. A poll conducted in late April asked
"Do you think the Allied Airforce should bomb Rome?"

Nationally, only 37 percent of the respondents replied yes, while 57 percent said no, and 12 percent had no opinion. Among Catholics only 24 percent said yes with 67 percent saying no an 9 percent with no opinion. Protestant response was 36 percent yes, 52 percent no, and 12 percent no opinion. Clearly, a majority of American public opinion, led by American Catholics, was lined up against the administration. [11]

At virtually the same time that Spellman opposed the bombing of Rome, Reverend Gerald G. Walsh, Professor of History at New York's Fordham University and editor of Fordham's quarterly journal Thought, spoke to the Women's Press Club of New York. The theme of Rev. Walsh's speech was the postwar peace. He quoted from a 1939 speech of Pius XII: "The real lesson of history - that what is common to all men and women is that they love the place where they were born, and any future world must be planned on the premise that they want their homeland to be free." In an obvious reference to the recently concluded Teheran Conference Rev. Walsh went on to say that peace plans currently under discussion were merely "selfish nationalism based on the military force of the Big Four." [12]

A respected Catholic historian and journalist, in an election year, was publicly questioning the conduct of the
President's postwar planning in front of an influential media group. His superior, Archbishop Spellman, had just publicly questioned the President's conduct of the war. And this was not the first time Spellman had used Fordham in an election year to send the President a message. In 1940, when FDR was seeking an unprecedented third term, Spellman invited FDR to a Fordham ROTC inspection, the timing of which was widely regarded in the press as a subtle endorsement of the President. The prospect could not be ignored that a breach was developing between Roosevelt and the Catholic hierarchy he had so assiduously cultivated over the years.

In the meantime, the Polish border question continued to present problems. By early March, the cables between Churchill and Stalin were becoming acrimonious. Stalin accused Churchill of leaking confidential correspondence on the Polish issue to the London press "with many distortions which I have no possibility of refuting." Churchill responded that the leak of information had come from the Soviet Embassy in London, and in the case of The London Times had come directly from the Soviet Ambassador Feodor Gusev. At the same time he informed Stalin that he would announce in the House of Commons that efforts to resolve the situation between the Polish and Soviet governments had broken down, that Britain continued to recognize the
government-in-exile, that territorial questions must await
the postwar peace conference, and that Britain would
recognize no forcible transfers of territory. Stalin
responded by saying he considered Churchill's message "full
of threats," and accused the Prime Minister of reneging on
the Teheran agreements concerning the restoration of the
Curzon Line. He said that if Churchill delivered the speech
outlined in his message it would be considered an "unjust
and unfriendly act towards the Soviet Union." The Soviets
continued to refuse to deal with the Polish
government-in-exile, which both Britain and the United
States recognized as the legitimate government of Poland.
The Soviets also continued to claim the area the Red Army
was currently operating in was not part of Poland but part
of the Soviet Union. [13]

The President apparently thought he had clarified the
nature of the political problems the Polish issue would
create for him with Stalin at Teheran, but the Soviet
Premier was doing nothing publicly which would help solve
the President's problems. Poland continued to remain an
issue in U.S. domestic politics. Suddenly, in late April, a
Polish Roman Catholic priest from Springfield, Ma., Rev.
Stanislaw Orlemanski, arrived in Moscow, at the personal
invitation of Stalin, and was granted two private interviews
with the Soviet Premier. The State Department denied any
connection with the Orlemanski visit, saying his visa had been granted purely as a private citizen visiting the Soviet Union. Bishop O'Leary of the Diocese of Springfield denied that Orlemanski was on any mission sanctioned by Church authorities.

While the State Department continued to be rebuffed in its efforts to obtain a visa for a Catholic priest to travel to the Soviet Union to assist Father LeBraun in Moscow, a Polish priest from a small parish in Springfield not only obtained a visa but was granted private interviews with Stalin. While not well known outside Polish-American circles Orlemanski was not a stranger to either Stalin or FDR. He first came to the attention of the OSS Foreign Nationals Branch in the late summer of 1943. At that time he established a "Kosciuszko League" in his local parish to give moral support to the Kosciuszko Division which Stalin had established in Russia to fight with the Red Army. This organization quickly came to the attention of a pro-Soviet Polish-American group in Detroit which had been involved in the bitter sit-down strike union struggle of the 1930's. The leader of this group, Waclaw Soyda, invited Orlemanski to Detroit to establish a Kosciuszko League there as a prelude to making it a national organization. [14]

In early November Orlemanski delivered a speech in Detroit in which he attacked the Polish government-in-exile
claiming they had "foresworn" their right to represent the Polish people when they fled Poland. He also attacked their position on the territorial question of borders, arguing that only the "Polish landed aristocracy was interested in keeping the territory because they held great estates there." TASS issued a lengthy report on the foundation of the Kosciuszko League of which Orlemanski was named "honorary president." Branches of the League sprang up in Chicago, Winnipeg, Roxbury and West Springfield. According to an FBI report on the League all the branches were largely made up of "communists or communist sympathizers." [15]

In January, shortly after returning from Teheran, Stalin had Foreign Minister Molotov propose to Ambassador Harriman the inclusion of three Polish-Americans as part of the government-in-exile: Oscar Lange, a professor at the University of Chicago, Leo Krzycki, a leftist vice-president of the CIO, and Orlemanski. Harriman was taken aback by the proposal and told FDR not to dignify it with a response. In February, however, Soviet Ambassador Andrei Gromyko requested that Lange and Orlemanski be permitted to visit the Soviet Union. At the same time Dewitt Poole of the OSS was reporting that Orlemanski was having second thoughts about his association with the pro-Soviet groups. Poole's report confirmed that Orlemanski was not a communist but "a strange blend of naive patriot, shrewd peasant and loyal
Catholic." He viewed his pro-Soviet activity as a means of supporting FDR's position that the Soviets were our wartime ally and declared that "If Roosevelt would declare war on Russia today I would break all my sympathies for the Russian cause and as an American go against Russia." [16]

While Father Orlemanski was meeting with Stalin the political power of the Polish vote FDR was so concerned about began to make itself felt. Just how important the Poles were politically became clear when one hundred and forty-seven speeches were made in congress celebrating Polish Independence Day on May 3, while Orlemanski was still in Moscow. Jan Ciechanowski, Polish Ambassador to the United States notes in his memoirs that he was told the Polish vote was critical to the President in five states; Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York.

The connection between this analysis and the total Catholic vote is dramatically supported by a survey of religious affiliations conducted among the members of the 78th congress and reported in the Spring 1944 issue of Public Opinion Quarterly. The survey found that of 435 members of the House 80, or 18 percent, were Catholic. In addition, 63 of the 80 were concentrated in nine states, the five listed by Ciechanowski along with Massachusetts, California, Wisconsin and Louisiana. The importance of these nine states, representing 218 of the 266 electoral votes
needed to win the presidency (over 80 percent), is quickly evident for any presidential candidate. Also, the Democrats had suffered substantial losses in the mid-term elections of 1942 when their majority in the House fell from 91 to only 14, and losing 8 Senate seats. Clearly, an erosion in the Catholic vote represented by the loss of the Poles would jeopardize the President's chances for a fourth term. No wonder Hopkins had termed the Polish issue "political dynamite."[17]

The President needed some indication from Stalin that his concerns expressed at Teheran over the Polish vote, and by implication the Catholic vote, would be addressed. The answer was forthcoming from Father Orlemanski. On May 6 Father Orlemanski left Moscow to return to the United States carrying with him a letter signed by Stalin which dealt with the question of religious freedom in the Soviet Union and the possibility of cooperation between Stalin and Pius XII "in the matter of the struggle against persecution and coercion of the Catholic Church." The American Embassy in Moscow learned of the contents of the letter from Harrison Salisbury of the United Press. Orlemanski had allowed Salisbury to make a copy of the letter under the condition it would not be made public until he could discuss it with Catholic authorities in the United States.[18]
The Embassy cabled the President and the Secretary on May 9 that while Orlemanski came to the Soviet Union "primarily interested in the Polish question" he now believed the letter he was bringing back from Stalin "moved into the much broader field of general relations between the Kremlin and the Catholic Church." The Embassy reported that Orlemanski did not feel capable of dealing with a subject of that magnitude and would submit the letter to Catholic authorities in the United States. Salisbury believed the letter represented "a definite manifestation of a desire to bring about improved relations between the Soviet Government and the Catholic Church and to remove a present source of friction not only in Soviet-Polish relations but also in relations with the United States." The cable concluded by saying "The Embassy agrees with this estimate." [19]

Stalin seems to have been using the visit of Father Orlemanski, arranged by FDR, to send a message that he was willing to compromise on the issue of religious freedom in the areas of Eastern Europe that the Red Army will soon have under its control, and that FDR had already acknowledged to Spellman would remain under Soviet control. Perhaps Stalin felt this was the type of statement which Myron Taylor had requested through Ambassador Maisky in London back in October of 1942, or at least a starting point for negotiating such a statement. Stalin was well aware of the
President's preoccupation with the question of freedom of worship in the Soviet Union, dating back to the original negotiations over recognition in 1933. Clearly, Stalin was as aware as Roosevelt that Catholicism could be the key to the Polish problem. Polish nationalism and Polish Catholicism went hand-in-hand. The staff at the American Embassy in Moscow apparently believed that Stalin was sincere in this effort to relieve the mounting tension over the Polish issue. Spellman noted in his memo to the Vatican the President's hope "that the Russian intervention in Europe would not be too harsh." With this in mind, and the President's repeated efforts to assure some measure of freedom of worship in the Soviet Union, it seems fair to conclude that FDR would view the possibility of a rapprochement between the Vatican and the Kremlin as a step in the right direction in terms of relieving the "harsh" Russian intervention in Europe. Domestic Catholic reaction to such an arrangement could also be expected to be less harsh in terms of possible defections from the Democratic coalition.

However, the State Department soon had reason to doubt the supposed importance of Orlemanski's letter. On May 24 Charles (Chip) Bohlen, Chief of the Division of Eastern European Affairs, reported to the Deputy Director of the Division the gist of a conversation between Andre Visson of
the *New York Herald Tribune* and Vladimir Pravdin, head of the Soviet Tass Agency. According to Visson, Pravdin told him it was the intent of the Soviet government to support a "well organized, dynamic and state-controlled Orthodox Church which would have great influence throughout the Balkans and the Near East" after the war. Pravdin doubted the Vatican would respond favorably to the Orlemanski letter because it was too "well informed" not to recognize Soviet backing of the Orthodox Church as a much greater "threat to Catholicism than Atheistic Communism had ever been." Pravdin concluded by saying it was necessary to have "some force to combat the Vatican" and as Protestantism was too divided to do so "the only force capable of doing so was the Greek Orthodox Church controlled by the Soviet Government."[20]

In the meantime, military events were rapidly changing the context within which the political discussions were taking place. On June 4 Allied forces liberated Rome. Two days later Allied Armies landed at Normandy and the long-awaited second front was finally established. Some of Stalin's resentment seems to have given way to his enthusiasm over the landing on the continent. He cabled Churchill "the landing, conceived on a grandiose scale, has succeeded completely," and that "the history of warfare knows no other like undertaking from the point of view of its scale, its vast conception, and its masterly execution."
He was obviously pleased to have some of the pressure taken off the eastern front.[21]

On June 5, the very eve of the Normandy invasion, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, Premier of the Polish government-in-exile, arrived in Washington for talks with FDR. The first meeting took place on June 7, and Jan Ciechanowski, Polish Ambassador to the U.S. described FDR as being in good spirits following the successful landing the previous day. FDR repeatedly stressed to Mikolajczyk the need for the government-in-exile to reach an accommodation with the Soviets. "When a thing becomes unavoidable one should adapt oneself to it," FDR said, and asked Mikolajczyk if he agreed with that theory. When the Polish Premier replied that the Soviet demands were irreconcilable with the concept of Polish independence and sovereignty, FDR replied: "remember there are five times more Russians than Poles" and that Russia "could swallow up Poland if she could not reach an understanding on her terms."

Clearly, Roosevelt was trying to impress on the Polish Premier the seriousness of the situation facing the Poles. In his memo to the Vatican, Spellman recorded what FDR told him regarding the Soviet position on Poland and at one point remarked "Poland, if reestablished, would get Eastern Prussia." (emphasis added) FDR obviously feared for the very existence of Poland, and Soviet military might was
already dictating the realities of the situation on the ground in Poland. Just as the Soviets refused to acknowledge the Red Army was in Poland rather than Russia in January they could in fact, as FDR said, just "swallow up" all of Poland. For FDR the very existence of Poland was at stake, and if Poland ceased to exist what would be the reaction of American Poles and their fellow, anti-communist Catholics? To succeed in reestablishing the Polish state would be a major diplomatic achievement, even if some territorial concessions were needed to compensate for Soviet security fears. FDR was giving the Poles the same message in June that Churchill gave them in January.[22]

FDR then said he thought it would be constructive for Mikolajczyk to meet personally with Stalin. However, the Polish Premier replied that without the support of the President Stalin would insist on acceptance of his conditions prior to any meeting; he asked Roosevelt to tell Stalin he supported the government-in-exile's position. Roosevelt replied that as a politician himself, Mikolajczyk could understand that in his "political year" he could not intervene with Stalin on the Polish issue. Both men were obviously concerned with the impact of American public opinion. Mikolajczyk was hoping to force the President's hand into public support of the government-in-exile's
position on the frontier issue by playing to the large Polish electorate he knew FDR needed in November.

Roosevelt, having already agreed to much of Stalin's position on the frontier issue at Teheran, was trying to preserve some semblance of a Polish state, and reach a compromise acceptable to Poles in the United States as well as Poland. One way to do that would be to insure the reestablishment of the Polish state after the war, and to insure that Poles would be able to practice their Catholic religion.

Subsequent conversations between Roosevelt and Mikolajczyk revolved around the efforts of the Polish Home Army, and the need to supply them now that the Soviets were in Poland. The President agreed that the underground army was performing vital services to the Allies by disrupting German activities behind the front. FDR used this issue to stress again the need for Mikolajczyk to meet personally with Stalin and inform him of the strength and activities of the Home Army. He felt Stalin would be impressed and would agree to coordinate Red Army plans with the Poles in order to defeat the Germans.

The conversation then took an interesting turn. FDR brought up Father Orlemanski's visit to Moscow. He said he had been asked to meet with the priest but had not yet decided if he would. It is interesting to note FDR's comment
that he had not yet decided on meeting with Orlemanski. On
June 2 the President was sent a memo by Secretary Hull
advising against such a meeting. Hull disagreed with the
idea that the offer brought back from Stalin represented a
"real departure from the position of the Soviet government."
He referred to the "criticism from Polish-American and
Catholic circles." Hull believed all the information that
could be gathered on Orlemanski's visit with Stalin had been
obtained in the OSS interview conducted with him on his
return and that an "off the record" meeting could not be
kept secret and would generate more "unfortunate publicity."
Besides, Orlemanski had been summarily suspended from his
parish duties and ordered to the Passionist Monastery in
West Springfield by Bishop Thomas O'Leary of the Springfield
Diocese. Bishop O'Leary had been contacted by the Apostolic
Delegate Archbishop Ameleto Cicognani wanting to know "what
provision had been made for the parish of Father
Orlemanski." The reasons given for Orlemanski's suspension
were that he had left his parish without permission, and
that he had consorted with communists in violation of Pius
XI's 1937 encyclical. It was obvious the reaction of the
American Catholic Church was not what Orlemanski had
expected.[23]

In any case, FDR told Mikolajczyk he was interested in
the part of the priest's meeting with Stalin in which they
had discussed freedom of religion in Russia, particularly freedom for the Roman Catholic Church. Stalin was reported to have said he had no objection to freedom of religion, only to the fact that there were so many religions in the world. He added that to give religious freedom to one or two denominations would result in dozens more applying and felt, "it might be better to unify religions." According to Jan Ciechanowski the President felt this statement "might be an indication that Stalin would favor a union between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches," and he might even be willing "to admit the Pope's leadership and allow him to become head of the two united churches."

The President was making quite a leap from the note concerning cooperation with Pius XII to allowing the Pope to head a united church in Russia. Perhaps the President had in mind Bohlen's memo outlining Stalin's postwar plan, and the possibility of working around that problem. The President then asked Mikolajczyk what he thought of Stalin's comments, and the Premier replied that Stalin could indicate his sincerity by releasing the Catholic priests imprisoned in the Soviet Union. The President then turned the conversation to other matters. FDR did not divulge to the Polish Premier that the American Embassy in Moscow believed Stalin's remarks were intended as a gesture "to remove a source of friction" in Soviet-Polish relations. Neither did he attempt
to ascertain the potential threat to Polish Catholicism of a revitalized Orthodox Church under Soviet domination, expressed in Bohlen's memo. [24]

On June 14 Mikolajczyk, having failed to extract a public commitment from FDR to support the government-in-exile's position on the frontier issue, returned to London. The following day Roosevelt lunched with Archbishop Spellman and made arrangements for the Catholic prelate to fly to Rome on an Air Force plane. The President quickly informed Stalin that the visit of Mikolajczyk to Washington would have no bearing on their Teheran agreements. FDR cabled the Soviet Premier on June 17, and in what may have been a reference to the upcoming U.S. elections stated "I deemed his visit at this time as desirable and necessary for reasons which Ambassador Harriman had already explained to you." The President expressed the opinion that Mikolajczyk was most concerned about the cooperation of the Red Army with the Polish Home Army and the need to coordinate their activities to defeat the Germans. He stated that Mikolajczyk would be willing to go to Moscow to discuss the problems between the Soviet Union and his government-in-exile, but took no position favoring the Polish viewpoint as requested by the Polish Premier. FDR concluded by saying, "You will understand, I know, that I am in no way trying to press my personal views upon you in a matter which is of special
concern to you and your country." The President was acknowledging the special significance attached to the Polish situation in terms of security to the Soviet Union expressed by Stalin.[25]

2) Ibid.


6) Ibid., p.269.


11) Ibid., p.1289.

12) *New York Times*, (February 17, 1944), 35.


15) Ibid., "p." 171.

16) Ibid., "p." 172.


19) *Ibid*.


22) Ciechanowski, *Defeat*, p.293-294


CHAPTER 9
CULTS AND VOTES

On July 1, 1944, Averell Harriman notified the State Department of an announcement in Moscow concerning the creation of a Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults under the Council of the Commissars of the USSR. The council was to provide liaison between the government and religious cults in the USSR, including the Catholic and the Greek Catholic churches. Bohlen was quick to recognize one possible implication of the new council. He viewed it as potentially a positive step giving a "greater degree of recognition than heretofore accorded" these religions and said the council should be viewed in connection with the "assurances given by Stalin to Father Orlemanski concerning the Catholic Church." He concluded that the council was "undoubtedly related with the Polish question and is probably designed to provide machinery to handle questions involving the Catholic population of eastern Poland which the Soviet government intends to incorporate in the Soviet Union." [1]

The Orlemanski mission was continuing to influence State Department thinking in spite of Hull's rejection of the letter from Stalin as offering nothing new to Soviet-Polish relations. Bohlen had not forgotten the
Pravdin conversation, however, and pointed out that "the Greek Orthodox faith ... has virtually been recognized as the State religion and unquestionably will be utilized in that guise as a political instrument of the Soviet State." No other religion was going to be allowed to "develop to a point where they might threaten the position of the official Orthodox church." [2]

On July 12 the Pope's most recent concerns over the Soviet Union were revealed to Myron Taylor in a lengthy audience. The Pope raised three issues with Taylor: the spread of communism in Europe and "its development in a strong way in Italy, the "Russian attitude toward Poland" and the "Russian attitude re: freedom of religion generally." Taylor had told Joseph Davies that he was disappointed the Vatican had not responded favorably to the Orlemanski mission. Now he presented to the Pope a draft of a statement which evolved following his discussions with Ambassador Maisky in London in 1942 dealing with the form of "assurance to be made by Marshal Stalin [that] would be acceptable." He also informed the Pope that he had "discussed the subject with the President of the United States, with Secretary Hull and others, including members of the Catholic hierarchy in America." [3]

The statement Taylor provided to the Pope contained two elements. The first called on the Soviets to publicly
proclaim "complete freedom of religious teaching and freedom of worship in all Soviet territory." This would be in accord with article 124 of the Soviet constitution and an acknowledgement of "the loyal participation in the defense of the Fatherland by all Russian people," assumably including Catholics. The second stipulated that "Any abuse of these privileges, whether to organize movements or incite the people to overthrow the Government, will be dealt with in each case according to law." Taylor said both Pius XII and his political advisor Monsignor Tardini accepted the first point but rejected the second. Following his audience with the Pope, Taylor met with Tardini who presented him with a lengthy memorandum outlining the Vatican's objections to Soviet behavior toward the Catholic Church in Russia, which Tardini said showed no significant improvement since the war began. The memorandum concluded "in view of what has been stated above and after the sad experience of the past, it is necessary to follow a policy of watchful expectation and reserve."[4]

The Vatican did not rule out the possibility of reaching an agreement with the Kremlin, but preferred to watch developments unfold. Taylor suggested to FDR raising the issue at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, which has just convened in Washington. FDR returned a message to Taylor telling him he had reached "the reluctant conclusion that at
this particular moment it would be unwise to raise the issue [religious freedom] openly." He said the Russians were "most sensitive" and might consider such a request an "affront" to the various statements they had already made concerning "freedom of worship in the Soviet Union." Instead, FDR wanted to pursue a policy of exerting U.S. "influence quietly and constantly" to obtain "practical tests of Soviet respect for that principle." This he believed was more in keeping with the Vatican's position that they were "wary of statements and intent upon concrete application."

By late July, events were coming together on all fronts. FDR was overwhelmingly renominated by the Democratic Convention to seek a fourth term; Archbishop Spellman was in Rome where the American press was speculating on his "real mission" as he had been granted several private audiences with the Pope, and Polish Premier Mikolajczyk flew to Moscow to talk personally with Stalin. On the same day the Pope gave a speech encouraging Poles to work with the advancing Soviet armies. In an address to 500 Polish soldiers, the Pope "asked that Poles not seek vengeance against the Germans or Russians that overran Poland in 1939, but in fact should collaborate with the Russians." Pius said he was still seeking an independent Poland. Members of the diplomatic corps, commenting on the speech, said they
believed it was extremely cautious. This speech takes on new meaning when seen in the context of the conversations held on July 12 with Myron Taylor. Pius was publicly acknowledging Catholics ability to cooperate with the Soviet Union within days of being told the President of the United States was still working to produce a satisfactory agreement which would guarantee the church freedom of movement in eastern Europe, even if under Soviet control.[6]

On August 1, with encouragement from radio broadcasts from Moscow, the Polish underground in Warsaw began open resistance to the Germans occupying the city. The Red Army was only 10 miles from Warsaw and the Poles expected a quick Soviet advance to liberate the city. By early September, however, it was clear that the Red Army was not going to assist the uprising. It remained exactly where it was when the uprising began. Pleas for assistance from Stalin met with excuses that military necessity prevented resupplying the underground or advancing on Moscow. He also refused permission for U.S. planes to land at Soviet bases if they attempted to drop supplies. Churchill was furious and tried to get FDR to agree to send American planes to drop supplies to the Poles, and land at Russian bases without permission. While the President complained to Stalin along with Churchill about the lack of help to the embattled Poles, he was not willing to follow the Prime Minister's latest plan.
To do so would have destroyed the basis of trust which FDR was trying to establish with Stalin. FDR finally notified Churchill that he was informed the underground Poles had left Warsaw and "There now appears to be nothing we can do to assist them." The fighting continued, however, for another month. Finally, in what Robert Dallek has termed "an apparently cynical effort to refute accusations that they wished to see Poland's non-communist underground destroyed," and after yet another British appeal, the Red Army resumed its advance on Warsaw, dropped supplies to the Poles and agreed to let American planes land at Soviet bases after dropping supplies. It was too late, however, and the rebellion was crushed with some 250,000 Polish casualties. [7]

In the meantime, the President was involved in a bitter reelection campaign. Polls conducted in August and early September showed Republican candidate Thomas E. Dewey holding a narrow lead over FDR overall, but in key electoral vote states Dewey was ahead by large margins: Illinois, 54 to 46 percent; Ohio, 54 to 46 percent; Michigan, 57 to 43 percent; Wisconsin, 56 to 44 percent. These were the same states cited by Ciechanowski where the Polish vote could make the difference. By early October FDR was clinging to a narrow 51 to 49 percent lead nationally.[8]
It was beginning to appear that the President's fear, expressed to Stalin at Teheran, was becoming a reality. Events in Poland were driving Poles to seek answers from the President. Just what was his position on Poland? Jan Ciechanowski claims he was repeatedly being asked by various Roosevelt campaign operatives his opinion on what would be the most effective way to ensure the "Polish vote." And it cannot be forgotten, as Secretary Hull pointed out during the Orlemanski affair, "Catholic circles" were also showing a great interest in Poland.

On August 15, Secretary Hull forwarded to FDR a memorandum from Taylor dealing with the source of the information which had led to the Pope's belief that American Catholics supported a negotiated settlement to the war. Taylor had heard from the British Minister to the Holy See, Sir D'Arcy Osborne, that Archbishop Spellman had made the same comment to him. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, currently in Rome, indicated that Spellman told him the same thing prior to leaving for Rome. Taylor felt these disclosures "may indicate a movement to bring about a negotiated peace, along lines undisclosed to us directly."

It seems entirely possible that Spellman was advocating to the Pope a policy that would bring an end to the war before Russian armies could occupy the areas of Eastern Europe that FDR had told him a year earlier would certainly remain under
Soviet domination. He may also have been attempting to raise the prospect of a potential revolt of 30,000,000 Catholics against FDR's foreign policy in the midst of a heated campaign, not just the possible loss of six or seven million Polish voters. Whatever his motives, Taylor was spending much of his time trying to convince the Pope that "there is no possibility of a negotiated peace and that the only terms that will be offered to the German Army are unconditional surrender." [9]

On October 11, the White House issued a press release, accompanied by photos, of a meeting between FDR and members of the Polish American Congress, the same group that had led the attack against Orlemanski's visit. The Poles were at the White House to get the President's views on the continued application of the principles of the Atlantic Charter, and specifically how those principles applied to Poland. According to Ciechanowski, the Polish language press in the United States was not satisfied with the President's answers. Roosevelt knew of the continued dissatisfaction, and arranged another meeting with Charles Rozmarek of the PAC aboard his campaign train in Chicago on October 28, seven days before the election. Ciechanowski says the President promised Rozmarek that he would "take active steps to insure the independence of Poland." The next day Rozmarek endorsed the Democratic ticket. The President was being
disingenuous with Rozmarek. He was indeed pursuing a policy for an independent Poland, it was just not the same Poland the Poles were talking about. But, as the President had told Premier Mikolajczyk, "When a thing becomes unavoidable one should adapt oneself to it." [10]

Meanwhile, Republican candidate Dewey was doing his best to revive with voters the anti-communist theme of Father Coughlin. In a speech at Boston, Dewey told his audience that FDR had put his party on the auction block, and the highest bidder was the Communist Party. "Now the Communists are seizing control of the New Deal," Dewey said, "through which they aim to control the Government of the United States." He suggested that FDR pardoned Earl Browder in time to help organize for the fourth term bid. Roosevelt was furious, but his advisors were telling him he had to answer the charges because "the voters were more afraid of communism than fascism." [11]

The Polish vote held, however, and the President won reelection on November 4, but although the electoral vote count was overwhelmingly in Roosevelt's favor, the margin of victory in the nine key states identified earlier as having strong Polish or Catholic votes, was narrow indeed. In most cases FDR won these states by the narrowest of any of his previous elections, and his ability to hold the Catholic vote could indeed be pointed to as the margin of victory.
The President won Pennsylvania with 51 percent of the vote, and his plurality of 105,000 was over 500,000 less than his 1936 victory. Illinois was virtually the same, 51.5 percent, New York 52.3 percent, Michigan 50.2 percent. In California the President won with 56 percent of the vote, down from 67 percent in 1936. Ohio and Wisconsin went Republican for the first time since 1928. James MacGregor Burns pointed out that it was "remarkable that a forty-two-year-old governor with experience in neither war nor diplomacy could come so close to toppling a world leader at the height of a global war." Soon after the election the Catholic hierarchy served notice that it might not be so easy to maintain the Catholic vote in the future. [12]

On November 13, a week after the election, the American Catholic Bishops released a resolution on eastern Europe passed by the administrative board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The resolution noted the "sufferings, misery and fears" of their fellow bishops, clergy and religious throughout all of Europe and "The circumstances of the moment excite in them a particular anxiety for the fate of religion among their fellow Christians in Poland, the Baltic States, and neighboring Catholic lands." The resolution concluded, "American Catholics would ever resent their country's being made a
party to the de-Christianization of historic Catholic peoples." [13]

Three days later, On November 16, the bishops released a second, more lengthy statement on "International Order." With victory in the war seeming more certain each day the statement opened "We have met the Challenge of War. Shall we meet the challenge of Peace?" The bishops' statement was in response to the recently concluded Dumbarton Oaks Conference. The State Department had asked for comments from the public on the establishment of an international organization aimed at securing future peace. The New York Times carried a page one story on the bishop's statement and reprinted the entire text on an inner page. The Times concluded the bishops were not opposed to the creation of such an organization, but were putting forward moral principles on which it should be guided. The statement said "We have no confidence in a peace which does not carry into effect, without reservations or equivocations the principles of the Atlantic Charter." This seems a direct reference to the previous statement on conditions in eastern Europe. [14]

Proper organization of the international community was essential to establishing a just peace, according to the bishops, and "To do this we must repudiate absolutely the tragic fallacies of 'power politics' with its balance of power, spheres of influence in a system of puppet
governments, and the resort to war as a means of settling international difficulties." Without specifically mentioning the Soviet Union the bishops said "The ideology of a nation in its internal life is a concern of the international community" and stipulated that as a condition of membership "every nation guarantee in law and respect in fact the innate rights of men, families and minority groups in their civil and religious life." In essence the bishops were continuing to call for a statement guaranteeing religious freedom in the Soviet Union and the countries of eastern Europe. [15]

The bishops had just raised the stakes. Poland was no longer an isolated ethnic political issue, if it ever had been. It was now a Catholic issue, as was the fate of all eastern Europe. FDR could not have been mistaken about what the bishops were saying. The statement was signed by Edward Mooney, Archbishop of Detroit; Samuel Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago; Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York; John McNicholas, Archbishop of Cincinnati and John Noll, Bishop of Fort Wayne. These were all the President's old friends, the men who defended him in his battle over Mexico, against the charges leveled by Father Coughlin; the men whose position on Spain had influenced his policy.

Just what effect was all this having on American public opinion? A poll conducted that same November revealed
that a majority of the American people still believed Russia could be trusted to cooperate with the Allies after the war by a margin of 47 to 35 percent, while 18 percent did not know. The poll was further broken down by income groups and religious affiliation. Trust in continued Russian cooperation was highest in the upper-income group with 56 percent overall believing in continued cooperation. However, there was a 14 percent difference within this group between Catholics and Protestants; 44 percent of Catholics believing Russia could not be trusted compared to only 30 percent of Protestants. The margin of distrust narrowed in the middle-income group where 34 percent of Catholics distrusted the Russians and 31 percent of Protestants. Among lower-income groups 48 percent of Catholics distrusted Russia compared to 34 percent of Protestants. Clearly, although still not a majority, distrust of Russia's postwar cooperation was running high as the war drew to a close, and American Catholics were far more likely to distrust Russian intentions than their fellow Americans. [16]
NOTES
CHAPTER 9


2) Ibid.

3) Memo, Taylor to FDR, July 17, 1944, PSF Diplomatic, Vatican, Taylor Myron C., 1944, FDR Library.

4) Ibid.: Enclosure "C"


9) Memo, Gray to Tully, August 15, 1944, PSF Diplomatic, Vatican, Taylor Myron C., 1944 FDR Library.; Memo, Taylor to Hull, August 9, 1944, PSF Diplomatic, Vatican, Taylor Myron C., 1944 FDR Library.


15) Ibid. p.60.
CHAPTER 10
"SAUL ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS"

As 1945 opened it was becoming increasingly clear that Stalin intended to have his way on the Polish question. On January 3 he formally recognized the Polish Committee of National Liberation, known as the Lublin Committee, as the provisional government of Poland. This was a move that both FDR and Churchill had been attempting to forestall until the Big Three met at Yalta. Anglo-American forces in the west were just beginning to regain the offensive following the breach of their lines in the Battle of the Bulge. And the public was beginning to have serious doubts regarding the conduct of the President's foreign policy. Pollster Hadley Cantril reported to the President in early January that his polls showed "a significant decline since the previous June in public confidence that the President and other officials were successfully handling the nation's interests abroad."

[1]

The President knew he was faced with a potentially disastrous domestic political situation as he prepared to leave for Yalta. The polls showed Catholic opinion in the country at much higher levels of distrust in continued postwar cooperation with Russia, and overall opinion on the President's policies was now down as well. The Catholic
hierarchy had called into question the cornerstone of the President's peace plan, and challenged him to live up to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. According to Edward J. Flynn the situation of Catholics in eastern Europe was on FDR's mind as he prepared to leave for Yalta. Flynn, a Tammany associate of Al Smith and political boss of the Bronx, tied his political future to FDR following the disastrous 1928 election. Smith never forgave him, and when FDR wanted New York Governor Herbert Lehman to appoint Flynn to the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Roosevelt's nomination of Senator Royal Copeland as Ambassador to Germany Smith effectively blocked the nomination. Lehman would not make the nomination without Smith's approval as he felt he owed his election as Governor to Smith's backing, and Smith would not give his approval. [2]

In the long term, however, the backing of a powerful, popular President proved more beneficial to Flynn than the lack of approval from the ex-governor and defeated Presidential candidate. Flynn was named Democratic National Chairman by FDR in 1940, and now, in 1945, would be thrust into the international limelight by FDR. According to Flynn, FDR raised the issue of the "position of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia and the Balkans after the war," during a conversation in the White House. Flynn said FDR told him "there could never be a permanent peace unless the large
Catholic populations in Poland, Lithuania and the Balkans were permitted to practice their faith freely." He then asked Flynn to accompany him on the trip to Yalta and take up the problem with Stalin and Molotov. The thrust of the conversation described by Flynn seems to indicate that FDR had not changed his position on Russian domination of eastern Europe that he outlined to Spellman in September of 1943, but was continuing to try to find a means of making it "less harsh." [3]

On January 22, as the President and his party were boarding for the journey to Yalta, a single page document was prepared in the White House for the President's signature. It was addressed "To all diplomatic, consular, army and navy officers of the United States Government." The document said the bearer, "the Honorable Edward J. Flynn," was "engaged in a mission for me which involves a visit to Moscow, with the approval of Marshal Stalin, and also a visit to Italy before returning to the United States." It then instructed all personnel coming in contact with Flynn to "permit him to pass, without let or molestation," and to extend to him all courtesies normally associated with diplomatic personnel. The President, apparently with the approval of Stalin, was in effect granting Flynn a personal passport allowing him to travel anywhere in Europe under U.S. military control. [4]
While FDR seems to have been embarking on yet another attempt to resolve the divisions between the Vatican and the Kremlin, Stalin was apparently embarking on his own plan. While the Big Three were negotiating at Yalta George Kennan, now back in the Moscow Embassy as Charge, was sending a flurry of cables to the State Department dealing with some rather remarkable events taking place in Moscow surrounding the Russian Orthodox Church. A Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Eastern Church had been convened for purposes of electing a new Patriarch of Moscow. Invitations had been extended "through official Soviet diplomatic channels" to the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. The Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria accepted personally and the others sent "rather imposing delegations of Metropolitans, Archbishops and Bishops." The visitors were treated as official dignitaries, and shown great hospitality by the Soviet government, (including a performance of the Moscow Ballet). [5]

The Synod elected Alexei, Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, as Patriarch on February 2, and an elaborate coronation ceremony was planned for February 4, which Kennan described as "in effect the ceremonial climax to the reestablishment of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union." Kennan followed his first cable with a second interpreting the events and placing them in their political context. The
revival of the Moscow Patriarch had nothing to do with "any spontaneous movement on the part of the church but [of] a deliberate policy on the part of the Soviet Regime." The move was seen as an attempt to promote an "all-Slav" policy based on the religious sentiments of the Slav populations in areas coming under Soviet control. Also, the revival would provide the Soviets a channel of communication "to all believers of the Eastern Church....An iron in the fire of Near Eastern politics through Russian Church property...[and]a means of disarming criticism...in western religious circles."[6]

On February 8, Kennan sent another cable on the implications of the recent religious activity in Moscow dealing with the Soviet attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church. He thought the fact the Soviet government was sponsoring the reemergence of the Russian church might be the result of "the unfruitful outcome of Father Orlemanski's mission." Kennan felt the failure of Moscow and Rome to reach an agreement following Stalin's statement to Orlemanski resulted in the ability of the Russian Church to emerge from "its former obscurity". He added that "Today, all things indicate that the Kremlin is prepared to do open battle against the influence of the Vatican." The Soviet press was currently attacking the Vatican openly, but "How this anti-Catholic tendency will affect Soviet policy in
Poland, Hungary and Croatia is however still not apparent." He felt the Soviets policy toward Catholics in Central Europe would present a "highly delicate problem for Russian Church diplomacy." [7]

When William Bullitt wrote to FDR in early 1943 he warned the President against the widespread assumptions taking hold that Stalin had "changed his political philosophy," that he "has abandoned all idea of world communism" and wanted to "have the Soviet Union evolve in the direction of liberty and democracy, freedom of speech and freedom of religion." To accept such a view he said "implies a conversion of Stalin as striking as the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus." As Ed Flynn flew to Moscow with Averell Harriman following the Yalta Conference he was embarking on a mission that was directly contrary to the most recent evidence of Soviet intentions expressed by Kennan. A policy that had been revealed to the State Department eight months earlier. [8]

On February 14, The New York Times reported that Flynn flew to Moscow with Ambassador Harriman. The story said Flynn had taken no part in the Crimea Conference but had simply accompanied the President "as an old friend and associate." In conclusion, the story said "It was emphasized that there was no significance in Mr. Flynn's mission to the Soviet Union." The following day, The Times reported on
Flynn's activity in Moscow saying he sat next to Soviet Foreign Commissar Molotov at a performance of the Bolshoi Ballet. The story said "While Mr. Flynn said he had no official mission here he was much interested in Poland." Only after several weeks did The Times begin to suspect that Flynn was up to more in Moscow than a simple vacation.

In a story datelined Rome on March 6, The Times confirmed that Flynn would visit the Pope after leaving Moscow. According to the report, "Despite President Roosevelt's bypassing of a press conference question concerning Mr. Flynn's mission to Moscow, the impression prevails that Mr. Flynn has been selected to provide the preliminary liaison between Moscow and the Vatican and that he may become the key figure in an eventual rapprochement."

The story concluded by saying Archbishop Spellman of New York was expected in Rome at the same time as Flynn.

By the time Flynn reached Rome his mission was front page news. On March 23, as the war in Europe was raging toward its conclusion, The Times reported Flynn had been granted an audience with Pius XII which lasted "far longer than the usual personal pilgrimage." It also reported that Flynn met with bishops Montini and Tardini of the Vatican Secretariat of State. According to The Times, "Mr. Flynn smiled and said 'no comment' at a press conference when asked if he had discussed with Premier Stalin efforts toward
a rapprochement between Moscow and the Holy See. 'I don't think I ought to discuss it until I get home and discuss it with him [Roosevelt],' but admitted reports 'were quite fair speculation'.' [10]

By this time FDR had received a preliminary report from Harriman indicating there still might be a possibility of success. On March 14 Harriman sent a top-secret dispatch to the President telling him that Flynn had concluded the Moscow portion of his mission and had left for Rome, by way of Teheran. Harriman said Flynn met twice with Molotov, and "Although he declined to give Ed a message to the Vatican, Molotov showed undisguised interest in the subject." He said Molotov was pessimistic about the possibility of success but "he indicated without saying so directly that he was open to suggestions." He believed, however, that the while the door was still open the ending of hostility would have to begin with Rome. [11]

While in Moscow, John Melby, a Foreign Service officer assigned to the U.S. Embassy, was given the task of accompanying Flynn on his travels in the Soviet Union. According to Melby, Flynn told him in the course of their weeks together that FDR "hoped to get some kind of Kremlin-Vatican concordat, to end the feud between those two great power bases." Melby confirmed that Molotov felt the Vatican would be more troublesome on the issue, but told Flynn "...
go ahead and talk with the Pope and see how he feels about it." He said he believed Flynn already knew the Pope would "if not enthusiastically, still go along with the idea."

Melby said Flynn was so confident an agreement would be reached that Flynn asked him if he would be interested in being his assistant in Rome when Roosevelt appointed him to serve as liaison between the Vatican and the Kremlin. At the same time Flynn told Melby not to discuss what he had told him with anyone from the State Department "because neither Stettinius nor anybody else in the State Department knows anything about it." According to Melby, Flynn said "This is a straight White House operation." The only one who would have any information was Harriman. [12]

In the meantime, the State Department was attempting to get some idea of what Flynn's mission was about. On March 8 Grace Tully, the President's secretary, placed a memo on the President's desk informing him that Mr. Bohlen of the State Department telephoned with a message from Harriman that Flynn was about to leave Moscow, and was seeking authorization to make travel arrangements and to pay for them. She said Bohlen told her "the State Department says they do not know the nature of his work but if he is on an official mission all they ask is that you send a chit over authorizing them to pay for his expenses." Bohlen may have been seeking to get some hint from FDR on the nature of what
Flynn was up to in Moscow but FDR was not about to divulge any information before he was ready. On March 10 he sent a simple memo to Secretary Stettinius stating: "I hereby authorize the State Department to take care of all expenses in connection with Honorable Edward J. Flynn's confidential mission abroad." [13]

On the same day the press was reporting on Flynn's audience with the Pope, Flynn prepared a lengthy memorandum for FDR that was sent to Washington with Taylor's diplomatic correspondence. He outlined for the President his conversations with Molotov which centered, as FDR's conversation with Stalin at Teheran, on the domestic political reaction of American Catholics to Soviet activities. Flynn told Molotov "there are many millions of Roman Catholics in the United States" and that "the President was extremely anxious to create as good feelings as possible between the people of the United States and the Soviet Union." He pointed out "That a rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the Vatican would do much to improve the relations between the two countries." Molotov repeatedly stressed the Soviet position that the Vatican was openly hostile to the Soviet Union, and at one point commented that the "Vatican had often made favorable steps towards Germany, even Hitlerite Germany; but that it rarely had a good thing to say about the Soviet Union." Harriman raised the issue of
the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and the Soviet's intentions there. Molotov replied that "the Red Army had liberated Poland and that he had never heard that its presence there had any effect on the religious feeling of the Polish people." [14]

Molotov claimed that the Soviet Union respected all religions as long as they did not "interweave their policies with policies hostile to the Soviet Union." He was dealing with politics and not religious dogma and "the attitude of the Vatican is not only not friendly towards the Soviet Union, but unneutral." Flynn said Molotov thanked him for the frank exchange of views and promised to give the matter further consideration. He then said he would inform his colleagues of their conversations. This left Flynn and Harriman to believe "the door was deliberately left open for further conversations or for further action." He concluded it was his personal opinion "that some sort of rapprochement might be worked out." [15]

The Flynn mission had attracted the attention of more than just the western press. Writing in his diary on March 23, Joseph Goebbels also commented on the Flynn mission to the Pope noting "Clearly Roosevelt wants to win the Catholic Church over to his side." Goebbels claimed the Pope had been displeased with the results of the Yalta Conference but that other considerations were at work as
"The Americans are working actively in the background to cheat not only the Soviets but also the British out of the international game." Goebbels at this point was grasping at any straw which might indicate a breakdown in relations between the Allies. He still held out, even at this late date, for a miracle which would allow the Reich to conclude a separate peace, and his main hope still rested with the Soviets. [16]

On March 23 Taylor wired Secretary Stettinius that he presented Flynn that morning to Pius XII "following which there ensued for forty-five minutes a full review of Mr. Flynn's recent visit to Russia, the details of which are pledged to be strictly secret and as there is no apparent urgency in the situation I am convinced that it would be more appropriate for Mr. Flynn to report to you in person than through me by message." In spite of the widespread speculation in the press concerning the state of the President's health there was "no apparent urgency" in sending a diplomatic wire on the results of Flynn's talk with the Pope. This view was reinforced on March 29 when Flynn cabled Harriman that nothing had happened requiring immediate attention but that if something did Taylor would contact him. Flynn concluded by saying "Will write after talk with President." [17]
Flynn arrived in London on April 3, for discussions with Churchill and other British leaders. While in London he learned of the President's sudden death on April 12. He left immediately for Washington, faced with the task of informing a new President of "a straight White House operation" of which the new occupant knew nothing. In his memoirs, Truman says he met with Flynn almost immediately upon his return to Washington, but that Flynn brought up domestic politics which he felt inappropriate to discuss under the circumstances. He told Flynn they would get together at a later date. For Flynn to have brought up domestic politics is entirely consistent with the nature of his mission. FDR had framed his discussions with Stalin on Poland at Teheran in terms of domestic political considerations. Flynn's discussions with Molotov revolved around FDR's concern about acceptance of Soviet policy in terms of American public opinion, particularly Catholic opinion. The entire mission revolved around domestic politics. Truman, however, had no idea what FDR was thinking when he sent Flynn to Moscow, and neither did anyone in the State Department. [18]

Melby said Flynn sent word to him that he felt "pretty sure that Mr. Truman, once he got used to the idea of being President and got caught up on his homework, was going to tell him to go ahead and do it, carry through with it."

Flynn was right. Truman's appointment calendar for July 3,
as he was preparing for the upcoming Potsdam Conference, lists an appointment with Flynn arranged by Democratic National Committee Chairman Robert Hannegan. Hannegan apparently "thought [it was] important for the President to talk with Hon. Edward J. Flynn before going to Big Three meeting." By this time Melby was back in the United States, having returned to attend the San Francisco conference opening the United Nations. He met Flynn in New York who told him "he was still very confident that the thing [Kremlin-Vatican concordat] was going on." Melby also confirmed that in Flynn's meetings with Pius the Pope, while not enthusiastic had expressed interest and told him, "Go ahead and see what you can do. See what we can work out."

The available evidence suggests then that Flynn had commitments from both Molotov and Pius XII to continue to seek a resolution. [19]

The Potsdam Conference marked the beginning of a new era in the nature of U.S. - Soviet relations. Harriman had been urging FDR to take a harder line with the Soviets since the previous September. Relations had steadily worsened over the Polish issue and the question of the makeup of the Polish government since the end of the Yalta Conference. Harriman reported that Stalin seemed genuinely shaken by Roosevelt's death, but said he assumed there would be no changes in policy. He agreed to Harriman's suggestion that
Molotov attend the opening ceremonies of the United Nations in San Francisco as a gesture of respect for the dead President. In mid-April Truman gathered his foreign policy advisors to assess the situation regarding U.S.-Soviet relations. [20]

The record of this meeting reveals there indeed would be a change in policy. Harriman restated his concern, expressed in a personal memo to Harry Hopkins the previous September, that the Soviets viewed the American attitude of "generosity and cooperation" as a sign of weakness and approval of their policies. Terming the current Soviet activity a "barbarian invasion of Europe" Harriman said Soviet control of a country meant the extension of the Soviet system complete with secret police, extinction of freedom of speech and other freedoms. Truman repeatedly expressed his intent to be "firm" with the Russians. The new President said the Russians needed us more than we needed them and that while he did not "expect to get 100 percent of what we wanted...on important matters he felt that we should be able to get 85 percent." [21]

President Truman did not share FDR's belief that giving the Soviets their way in eastern Europe was a method for establishing an atmosphere of trust. More importantly, he did not share FDR's belief, as expressed to Spellman in September of 1943, that the United States would not play an
important role in Europe after the war. Truman, and the new circle of advisors he was gathering around him, were believers in the concept of the "American Century" proclaimed by Henry Luce in 1941. Truman brought a more nationalist viewpoint to the Presidency in contrast to FDR's internationalist viewpoint.

Nonetheless, in September, with the war in the Pacific over, and relations with the Soviets becoming increasingly acrimonious, Truman approved a resumption of the Flynn mission. The New York Times reported on September 12 that Flynn, after meeting with Truman at the White House, "would return to Rome and Moscow to complete a special diplomatic mission he undertook for President Roosevelt." However, Flynn suffered a heart attack in early November, and was never able to reopen the discussions.[22]

Roosevelt's death probably ended what little chance of success that existed for achieving a rapprochement between the Vatican and the Kremlin, although Truman did approve a resumption of Flynn's mission. Stalin had already set in motion his plan to make the Russian Orthodox Church an instrument of Soviet policy, and without the influence of FDR to attempt a compromise in the Soviet attitude "to do open battle against the influence of the Vatican," the result could only be a hardening of American Catholic anti-Communist opinion. Each new episode of Soviet
anti-Catholic activity in Eastern Europe brought forth a new wave of publicity, and statements from high ranking members of the Catholic hierarchy and Catholic politicians. Catholics were not the only Americans with an aversion to Communism. However, their growing political strength combined with the official anti-Communist position of the church led to the series of policy conflicts outlined here. In turn FDR's postwar planning took into account early in the war Catholic attitudes and the prospect, which he tried to head off, of renewed charges of Roosevelt sympathy for Communism. When Joseph McCarthy stood before the Republican convention in 1952 and charged the Democrats with twenty years of treason, millions of Catholics and millions of other Americans were willing to believe him.
NOTES
CHAPTER 10


4) Memo, FDR to All Diplomatic, Consular, Army and Navy Officers of the United States Government, January 22, 1945, PSF Edward J. Flynn Folder, FDR Library.


6) Ibid., pp.1114-1115.

7) Ibid., pp.1119-1121.


11) Dispatch, Harriman to FDR, March 14, 1945, PSF Edward J. Flynn Folder, FDR Library.


13) Memo, Tully to FDR, March 8, 1945, PSF Flynn Folder, FDR Library., and Memo, FDR to Secretary of State, March 10, 1945, PSF Flynn Folder, FDR Library.

14) Memorandum of Mr. Flynn, March 23, 1945, PSF Flynn Folder, FDR Library

15) Ibid.

17) Memo, Taylor to Secretary of State, March 23, 1945, PSF Flynn Folder, FDR Library.; and Memo, Taylor to Secretary of State, March 31, 1945, PSF Flynn Folder, FDR Library.


19) Melby Interview, pp.91-92.; and President's Appointment Calendar, PSF July 3, 1945, HST Library.


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