# A History of the Persecutions

## The Catholic Church in Russia

The position of the Catholic Church in tsarist Russia was very complex, especially because it was the religion of vanquished peoples. Their liberation movements and rebellions affected the Church, which could not denounce her own children; and after the crushing defeat of these rebellions, persecutions would come down upon the Church as well. In addition, by virtue of the structure of the Catholic Church, which had its center outside the bounds of the Empire, Church life from Peter I (reigned 1682 to 1725) to Nicholas II (1894-1917) was characterized by an uninterrupted struggle for the preservation of its independence and its ability to maintain ties with the Vatican without hindrance.

Peter I subjugated the Orthodox Church to the State; later in the same century, Empress Catherine II (1762-1796) hoped to subjugate the Catholic Church, which was located on territories acquired as result of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Toward this end, immediately after the First Partition (1772) she created a new “Belorussian” diocese; she kept the Jesuit Order in the Russian Empire, even though it had been suppressed by the Papal See in 1773; and acting on her own, she changed the boundaries of previously existing dioceses.

Repressive decrees fell upon the Catholic Church in Russia as a result of the Polish Uprisings of 1830 and 1863. The Greek Catholic Church was completely liquidated; almost all religious orders were prohibited and their monastery property nationalized; serious roadblocks hampered the appointment of worthy bishops for vacant dioceses; and the government interfered in the management of church affairs and religious education. The “non-compliant” found themselves impoverished – they were internally exiled deep into Siberia for their participation in anti-government protests and their lands and property were transferred to others. But despite the fact that the Catholic Church existed under such constrained conditions, it nevertheless existed: diocesan offices and seminaries functioned, churches and chapels were built. By 1914, the territory of the Russian Empire (excluding the Kingdom of Poland) included 1,158 parishes, 1,491 churches, 1,358 chapels, 2,194 priests and five million faithful[[1]](#footnote-1)

The 1907 [1905?] decree of Nicholas II on religious toleration was the first legislation that somewhat improved the situation of Catholics in Russia; but even after the decree, the State still subjected Catholic priests to punishments, in particular, imprisonment in a monastery, as we learn from their biographies. All this must be taken into account if one is to correctly assess the position of the Catholic Church in the changed political situation of 1917.

The February 1917 Revolution eased the status of Catholics inasmuch as the Provisional Government gave full freedom to all religious confessions. The decree concerning the abolition of national and confessional restrictions, the liberation of Greek Catholic Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky,[[2]](#footnote-2) the legalization of the activity of the Russian [Eastern Rite] Catholic Church, the creation of a special commission within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the restoration of the position of Vilnius Bishop Edward Ropp, the dispatch of Ambassador A.I. Lysakovsky to the Vatican for the establishment of relations with the Vatican – these and other acts of the Provisional Government gave reason to suppose that the Catholic Church’s status as a “protected” church had come to an end and that the foundations had been laid for its full autonomy.[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Changes after the October Revolution

### Legislation

The favorable conditions created after the February Revolution inspired the hope that the Bolshevik regime, well-disposed toward working and oppressed peoples, would not oppress the previously persecuted Church. Such was the thinking that prevailed when Archbishop Edward von Ropp took the seat of the Mogiliev Archdiocese on December 2, 1917. This seat had been vacant since 1914 and the clergyman now appointed its leader had been an elected deputy at the First State Duma [1906] and in 1907 had been sent into internal exile for disagreement with the tsarist government on the question of its relationship toward Catholics.[[4]](#footnote-4) The archbishop was well-prepared to fulfill his new assignment. He came from a well-known family of the landed gentry, he had been educated abroad, and he had had episcopal experience in Saratov and Vilnius, where he had organized the Christian-Democratic Union that had elected him deputy to the Duma.

The Bolshevik regime, however, was anti-religious from the very first days of its existence. Proceeding from Marx’s claim that religion was nothing more than a structure built on a material base, Lenin asserted that one could put an end to the Church only by depriving it of its property.[[5]](#footnote-5) From its very first days the Soviet regime exhibited an amazing alacrity in realizing this thesis. The Decree on Land dated November 8, 1917, deprived the Church of the right to own land. A decree dated December 17 transferred all land holdings, including Church lands, to State ownership. By a decree dated December 24 all institutions of learning were placed under the jurisdiction of the People’s Commissariat for Education, and consequently the Church lost all its academies, seminaries and schools. As of December 31, 1917, Church marriages were no longer considered legal.

The beginning of 1918 saw a whole flurry of decrees and statutes aimed at suffocating the Church. On January 20, for example, the government issued a decree on the separation of the Church from the State, and schools from the Church; then on January 23 the People’s Commissariat of State Welfare [*prizrenie*] promulgated an order concerning the termination of stipends for the upkeep of churches and church workers.[[6]](#footnote-6) A decree dated February 2, 1918, deprived the Church of all property (and the right to acquire property) and terminated any State subsidies to religious organizations. From this point on, religious entities could rent rooms (churches) and objects needed for worship, but they would have the “free use” of these only upon receipt of permission from the authorities; moreover, any property given to religious entities was subject to tax. In fulfillment of this decree, hundreds of churches and monasteries were promptly taken from the Church as being particularly valuable historical or architectural monuments that were subject to coming under the “protection of the State.” All bank accounts of religious associations were also closed.[[7]](#footnote-7) The above-named decree also forbade the “teaching of religious doctrine in all State, public and private educational institutions.” From this time forward it was a crime to teach religion, even privately, to children and young people under the age of eighteen. Then on April 19, 1918, the government announced the creation of a Liquidation Commission within the People’s Commissariat of Justice for the purpose of enacting the Decree of January 20, 1918; this Commission then initiated new penal decrees.

Church workers became persons without civil rights and could not be a member of any supervisory body, even in religious societies. It was not just the priests who were deprived of voting rights, it was also their assistants – lectors and other church workers and their wives.[[8]](#footnote-8) Church organizations were deprived of the rights of a juridical person and placed on the same footing as private societies and associations. Thus, for all practical purposes, bishops and priests lost the possibility of guiding their congregations, which could lead to divisions and the Church’s complete submission to the State. These severe actions provoked a mass of protests on the part of all churches.

When the People’s Commissariat of Justice proposed to Archbishop Ropp on May 22, 1918, that he take part in meetings on the separation of the Church from the State, he advised the Commissariat that he was ready to come personally to Moscow, but the authorities expressed no desire to collaborate with Catholics in working out this question (Shkarovskii, p. 10). Instead, the authorities issued the Decree of August 20 (published August 30), “On the Procedure for Implementing the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State and of the School from the Church.” It deprived all churches of the rights of a juridical person and transferred their property to the “direct management of the local Councils of Workers and Peasants” (Shkarovskii, p. 11). This Instruction definitively deprived the clergy of all rights and declared the groups of twenty lay people [“*dvadtsatki*”] to be the only body having the right to rent church buildings and property from the State. The archbishop protested this Instruction on September 9, 1918, and Leonid Feodorov, Exarch of the Russian [Eastern Rite] Catholics, supported him. Nevertheless the seminary and theological academy in St. Petersburg were closed, as was the Saratov Seminary of Tiraspol Diocese, although the latter continued to function for a few more years in Odessa. All Catholic schools were also closed.

Forceful and “legal” methods of liquidating “religious prejudices” did not end here, however. Various decrees in 1919 and 1920 marked the beginning of an open war against the veneration of relics, which were broken open and forcibly gathered into State museums. The implementation of all these orders and decrees met with opposition from Church authorities and the faithful. The clergy’s speeches and protests led to their arrests; the people rose to the defense of their pastors, and then they were also subjected to repressions.

The Catholic Church tried to save its churches by referring to the impossibility of transferring them to secular authorities without the consent of the Papal See, but it did not take such a principled stand against the transfer to parish books (records) to the Registry Office (ZAGS), or the transfer of cemeteries and property to local Councils. In their efforts to save their churches, Catholics looked to foreign states for support, but given the Soviet government’s disregard for all rule of law, these efforts failed to bring any results.[[9]](#footnote-9)

After the publication of the Commissariat of Justice’s notorious Instruction of August 24, 1918, a struggle began surrounding “agreements” on the use of churches, a struggle that continued right up until the end of 1920. In the wave of political changes, lay Catholics formed committees for the defense of their churches and clergy in some parishes. In January 1919 representatives of the laity organized the Central Committee of Roman Catholic Communities of the Mogiliev [Arch]diocese. This body adopted a charter, certain articles of which disturbed the clergy. The problem of church councils was taken up at a conference of Petrograd clergy, with Archbishop Ropp participating. Recognizing the situation that had come about by that time, the archbishop obliged the pastors to select, at general meetings of the faithful, twenty to thirty authorized representatives from among the parishioners. The president of this council would become the head of the parish and would handle the church’s treasury. All negotiations of the laity with the authorities would have to meet with this person’s agreement. The goal of the laity’s Central Committee was the unification of parish councils and the organization of the defense of, and assistance to, diocesan government. It functioned over the course of approximately eighteen months and energetically protested the State’s anti-religious actions and defended the archbishop and priests.[[10]](#footnote-10)

One cannot compare the resoluteness of the urban laity’s dedication to the Church with the situation in the provinces, where there were few Catholics, priests were a long way from one another, and all were subjected to repressions by frequently changing authorities that applied their own procedures. This is easily seen in a “Telegram from the Department of the Directorate of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee to the Tomsk Revolutionary Committee,” dated April 7, 1920, requesting that it provide information about the number of churches in the city, the number of believers, and the possibility of using the churches for public needs. In the telegram one sees such concepts as the “utilization of churches for general needs.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Local Communists, who sometimes had Catholic roots, wishing to curry favor with the authorities, acted promptly and finished off the priests without waiting for approval from above.[[12]](#footnote-12)

### The Church and the New Political Circumstances

The Catholic Church in Soviet Russia was also affected by the broader political situation that obtained after the First World War when several newly independent states appeared on the map: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. Quite a few active parishioners abandoned Soviet Russia. Some Catholics returned to their historical homelands, others fled because of the famine. The Civil War worsened the situation even more, and Catholics became hostages of State interests. Archbishop Ropp was arrested in Petrograd April 29, 1919, and several priests were arrested the following day. A wave of arrests rolled through Belorussia as well. As later became clear, the hostages were taken in response to the fact that the Polish Army had occupied Vilnius and arrested Communists. Futile written and personal appeals by the Central Committee of Catholic Communities to the authorities requesting the release of the archbishop and priests were followed by a demonstration in Petersburg making the same demands. The government responded with new arrests of priests and laity. The archbishop was transferred to Moscow and after the Poles and Soviets had come to an agreement on the exchange of hostages, he was able to leave for Poland. Archbishop Jan Cieplak now became the head of the Mogiliev Archdiocese. Bishop Joseph Kessler, Diocese of Tiraspol, found himself in Bessarabia because of changes to international boundaries, and Soviet authorities would not allow him to return to his diocese.

Some suffragan dioceses of the Mogiliev Metropolitan Archdiocese found themselves partially or completely outside the boundaries of Soviet Russia, which led to administrative problems. Bishop Zygmunt Łoziński began anew by opening a seminary and setting up diocesan structures in Minsk. New bishops undertook similar tasks in Ukraine. But the Polish-Soviet War[[13]](#footnote-13) led to the partition of dioceses and new oppression of the Catholic Church. Bishops Zygmunt Łoziński, Ignacy Dub-Dubowski, and Piotr Mankowski departed for Poland, leaving their vicars general in charge in the east. Lands where Bolshevik power had not yet been established – Siberia, the Far East, the Caucasus, Crimea – received their own administrators, who, however, were not able to exercise their offices for long. The Diocese of Vladivostok, for example, was erected in 1923, but its bishop, Karol Śliwowski, was soon isolated, put under house arrest and was unable to govern his diocese.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Events in Petrograd provide a typical example of the struggle for the preservation of the Catholic Church’s freedom in Soviet Russia. On July 26, 1919, the Petrograd Soviet ordered that the offices of the Curia and Consistory be sealed and turned over to the district branch of the Registry Office along with the Consistory’s archives. Owing to Archbishop Cieplak’s shrill protest, the seals were removed after a few months, but the Consistory’s archives had been removed by the authorities. There was concurrently a struggle with the requirement to enter into agreements over the transfer of churches to the laity. The Catholic Church insisted that the churches were its property and could not belong to the Soviet State. Archbishop Cieplak’s protest of September 29, 1919, against the nationalization of the Church Endowment was also very important.[[15]](#footnote-15) Catholic clergy, supported by parish committees, not only refused to allow the signing of agreements regarding the use of churches, they also managed to gain the freedom to teach religion (Shkarovskii, p. 15). Amongst themselves, priests discussed the question of Communism as an anti-Christian doctrine and they tried to shield their parishioners from its influence (Shkarovskii, p. 16).

Archbishop Cieplak was arrested April 2, 1920. Church committees sent out telegrams to the highest echelons protesting his arrest; the authorities responded with the mass arrests of laity, many of whom were sent to the camps. To avoid further repressions among Catholics, Archbishop Cieplak wrote a statement April 15 undertaking to “promote the calming of minds” and after two days he was released, but he was put under surveillance.

Priests were again arrested during the Polish-Soviet War. Article VII of the Riga Treaty of March 18, 1921, spelled out the right of the Catholic Church in Russia to exercise its activity independently, “within the bounds of internal legislation.” But it was precisely this legislation that was completely anti-Church and anti-religious, as already stated (Shkarovskii, p. 17), and thus this article did not relieve the situation for Catholics in Soviet Russia. But owing to the Riga Treaty, many Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians – including priests – were able to adopt citizenship of the new States without leaving Russia.

### Seizure of Church Valuables

The famine along the Volga and in south Russia was linked to a new tact in persecuting the Church. Both Pope Benedict XV (reigned September 1914 – January 1922) and Archbishop Ropp (now living in Poland) organized aid to the famine victims. Thanks to an agreement between the Vatican and Soviet Russia it was possible to open a Mission to Aid Famine Victims (“Papal Relief Mission”). The newly elected Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) himself made a contribution and he called upon the whole world to hasten to help. The Papal Relief Mission, headed by the American Jesuit Father Edmund Walsh, arrived in Russia August 25, 1922, and launched a large-scale effort. Despite this assistance, the Bolsheviks used the famine to begin the seizure of Church valuables. A Politburo resolution dated November 11, 1921 appointed Leon Trotsky responsible for this campaign. The authorities issued new decrees, above all a Decree of the All-Union Executive Committee dated February 23, “On the Procedure for Seizing Valuables Found in Use of Groups of Believers” (Shkarovskii, p. 19). Churches of various confessions were the victims of this decree.

The Pope declared his readiness to buy the Church valuables – including those belonging to the Orthodox Church – and even the faithful were ready to hand over money and their own personal valuables in order that the sacred vessels not be violated. For the authorities, however, what mattered was the seizure of precisely these Church valuables from Catholic and Orthodox churches. In many places the parishioners energetically protested and here and there they managed to hand over their own personal valuables in lieu of the sacred vessels. Opposition to the seizure of Church valuables and the stubborn refusal of parish communities to sign “agreements” led to a new wave of church closures (Shkarovskii, p. 21).

### Attempts to Break Up the Church

At the beginning of 1923, in response to Catholics’ protests, the authorities sealed all the Catholic churches. Priests then said Mass in apartments, and the faithful went around to various State offices with numerous petitions requesting that the churches be re-opened and appealed to international organizations including the Papal Relief Mission. But the regime once again reacted to these efforts in its own way: on March 2, 1923, Archbishop Cieplak and fourteen priests from Petrograd were hauled off to Moscow to appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The first Moscow trial showed the true intention of the new regime, which cared nothing about the actual guilt of those on trial. Having designated religion as an inimical phenomenon, the Soviet regime began its physical annihilation of these “enemies.”

The Soviet government found itself one more means of extracting financial gain from the Church: when demands for the release of a particular priest were very insistent, it would agree to exchange him for Communists arrested in Poland or the Baltic States. Thanks to such exchanges, Archbishop Cieplak and many other convicted priests survived.[[16]](#footnote-16) It sometimes happened that, with the beginning of World War II, a priest released under such an exchange would fall into the hands of Communists or Fascists, and this time death would catch up with him. In addition, for a large sum of money, the GPU often allowed the redemption of a convicted Catholic; Julia Danzas, for example, was redeemed from Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp by her brother.

Immediately upon their seizure of power, the Bolsheviks tried to instigate dissension in the Church from within. In the Orthodox Church, these efforts led to a real split; but in the Catholic Church no such split occurred, even though the authorities tried to bring one about by means of threats and promises to priests.

### Religious Education

Underground educational institutions were created in Leningrad, Kiev and some other cities to counteract the closure of seminaries, which was weakening the Church. The first effort was undertaken in 1921 when Catholics attempted to open a seminary in Petrograd. Father Antoni Malecki was its rector, and after his arrest in 1923, Michaƚ Rutkowski assumed this post; classes were held in his apartment. Only two candidates – Bolesƚaw Juriewicz and Julian Cimaszkiewicz – completed the curriculum and were ordained in 1925-1926 in Ukraine by the retired Bishop Anton Zerr.

A second attempt followed upon negotiations between Moscow and the Vatican; these negotiations led nowhere, and it was decided to begin a new enrollment of students in October 1926 (Antoni Malecki was at this time already a bishop). Eight men enrolled and classes were held in Father Antoni Wasilewski’s apartment. The candidates, who worked during the day at State enterprises, met for classes in the evening. But as early as January 14, 1927, the rector’s apartment was searched and he and other priests were arrested: the *starosta* of seminarians, Kazimierz Tysowski, was sentenced to five years in the camps. Father Pawel Chomicz, who had been drawn into the case, was sentenced to ten years in the camps; and twelve laymen involved in the case were sent into internal exile.

A new attempt by Bishop Malecki to organize a seminary led to his arrest and the arrest of the seminarians. Evening gatherings for young people, sermons, contacts with other priests, receipt of [liturgical] calendars or money from abroad – these were the evidence of the bishop’s “crimes” (Shkarovskii, pp. 181-187). Candidates for the priesthood for the Zhytomyr Diocese studied in Poland and then clandestinely crossed the border into the USSR. Another opportunity for a seminary education opened up later in Rome at the “Russicum” [Pontifical Russian College of Saint Therésè of the Child Jesus, founded by Pope Pius XI in 1929, organized under the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and run by the Society of Jesus].

Parallel to the preparation of new priests, an enormous importance was also given to the religious instruction of children. This was formally forbidden, but priests paid greater heed to the voice of God and the Church than to that of the regime. The faithful organized various educational and religious clubs – this was a customary Church activity, responding to the need of the people in the development of their spiritual life. But in the regime’s understanding, these clubs were anti-Soviet organizations, undermining the foundations of the State. Monasteries also functioned, although secretly. There were several religious communities in Leningrad, Moscow and Ukraine. They were all crushed by the Soviet regime and the members of the communities sentenced to long prison terms.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The “Committees of Twenty” were subjected to special pressure. On the one hand, they were the invention of the Soviet regime and therefore the clergy at first distrusted them. Their creation violated Canon Law and it was feared that the regime would use all means to subject these Committees to itself. On the whole, however, they came to the defense of the Church inasmuch as they bore responsibility for parish affairs and they gave the faithful the opportunity to help those in need, including “non-person” priests, especially those in prison and exile, many of whom survived thanks to the self-sacrificing aid of their parishioners. Members of these Committees were repeatedly arrested along with the priests and their personal assistants – organists, sacristans, housekeepers.

### Reorganization and Annihilation of Church Structures

Repressions and atheistic propaganda were taking their toll on the Church. Many priests were in prison, some had been deported abroad. Not a single Catholic bishop remained in the USSR, not counting the elderly Bishop Anton Zerr of Tiraspol, who had long ago retired from his duties and now resided in Ukraine, and Bishop Karol Śliwowski of Vladivostok, who was completely isolated from his diocese. Therefore Pope Pius XI established the *Pro Russia* Commission within the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, for coordinating aid to the Church in Russia. The Vatican attempted to communicate with the Soviet government through diplomatic channels in order to find a way out of this complicated situation. Official negotiations had no success, but a clandestine emissary of the Vatican, Bishop Michel D’Herbigny, went to Russia several times in 1926 and was able to re-establish the demolished hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, to appoint apostolic administrators and even to consecrate some of them as bishops.

The administration of the Catholic Church on Soviet territory at that time had the following structure:

1. Mogiliev Archdiocese, including the central and northern parts of European Russia and the northeast (Soviet) part of Belorussia
2. Minsk Diocese (its eastern part was in the USSR)
3. Zhytomyr Diocese, the greater part of which was in Soviet Ukraine (the northern and central part of Ukraine)
4. Kamenets-Podolsky Diocese, completely within the USSR (southern Ukraine)
5. Tiraspol Diocese, including the Volga [German] area and southern part of eastern Ukraine
6. Vladivostok Diocese, erected February 3, 1923 (Eastern Siberia and the Far East)
7. Apostolic Vicariate of Siberia (Western Siberia and Central Asia)
8. Apostolic Vicariate of Crimea and the Caucasus, erected most likely during the Civil War from the southern part of Tiraspol Diocese
9. Apostolic Administration for Armenian Rite Catholics
10. Exarchate of the Greek-Catholic Church in Russia[[18]](#footnote-18)

The clandestine reorganization that was carried out was intended to re-establish the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Russia. Removing the jurisdiction of those bishops living outside the boundaries of the USSR[[19]](#footnote-19) was an attempt to protect the Church against accusations of foreign interference.

The following administrations were created:

* Moscow – Bishop Pius Neveu
* Mogiliev and Minsk – Bishop Boleslavs Sloskans
* Leningrad – Bishop Antoni Malecki
* Kharkiv – Monsignor Wincenty Ilgin
* Kazan, Samara, Simbirsk – Monsignor Mieczysƚaw [Michael] Joudakas
* Odessa and Crimea – Bishop Alexander Frison
* Northern Caucasus – Monsignor Johannes Roth
* Volga ASSR – Monsignor Augustine Baumtrog
* Transcaucasia – Monsignor Stepan Demurov
* Zhytomyr Diocese – Monsignor Teofil Skalski
* Kamenets Diocese – Monsignor Jan Świderski

Bishop Pius Neveu, the Moscow administrator and a French citizen, had special powers.

The Chekists soon uncovered these secret appointments and the new administrators were subjected to various repressions. On July 9, 1926, Monsignor Teofil Skalski, the Zhytomyr administrator, was the first of them to be arrested. Bishop Sloskans, the Minsk-Mogiliev administrator, publicly announced his appointment as bishop during a liturgy in Vitebsk on November 14, 1926. The GPU thereupon placed him under constant surveillance and he was arrested within a few months. Monsignor Jan Świderski, administrator of the Kamenets Diocese, was arrested April 25, 1929. The fate of Bishop Antoni Malecki, the Leningrad administrator, was no less complicated. He was repeatedly arrested and in 1930 – at age sixty-nine – was exiled to Siberia. The administrator of Kazan, Samara and Simbirsk, Monsignor Mieczysƚaw Joudakas, was also arrested and exiled.

Even more tragic were the lives of the German administrators who later died a martyr’s death. Bishop Alexander Frison was not able to reside in Odessa. For all practical purposes he only served in Simferopol; he was subjected to frequent arrests and then finally shot. Monsignor Baumtrog, apostolic administrator for the Volga region, was arrested with a group of priests and laity and died in a camp. Monsignor Roth, administrator for the Northern Caucasus, was repeatedly arrested, exiled and later shot. The fates of the Transcaucasian administrators of the Armenian and Latin rites were no different. Leonid Feodorov, Exarch of the Greek-Catholic Church in Russia, also endured prisons, camps and exile, dying at his final place of exile.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The Catholic Church nevertheless continued to exist even under such conditions. Leningrad received two more bishops. The first was Teofil Matulianis, co-adjutor of Bishop Malecki. When he ended up in a camp and then later left for Lithuania as part of a prisoner exchange, Bishop Neveu secretly consecrated a French Dominican priest, Jean Amoudrou, to serve as bishop – but he was soon expelled from the USSR. Neveu himself, thanks to the protection of the French embassy, hung on in the USSR under very constrained conditions until 1936; but after he went to France for medical treatment he was not allowed back into Moscow (Shkarovskii, pp. 292-293).

Thus came to an end Pius XI’s attempt to re-establish the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the USSR, where by 1939 there remained not a single local Catholic priest still at liberty.

### The Prayer Crusade

People in many countries urged the Pope to publicly condemn the actions of Soviet authorities, but Pius XI feared that the situation of Catholics in the Soviet Union would only be worsened by his speaking out. Negotiations between Vatican representatives and the Soviet government yielded not even the slightest results – the arrests of priests, the closing of churches, the ideological and physical destruction of the Church continued. When it became clear that all legal and illegal attempts to preserve the Church had come to naught, Pope Pius XI, having very soberly assessed the situation, yielded to pressure from various quarters and broke his silence. The February 9, 1930, issue of the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, carried his letter dated February 2 to Cardinal Basilic Pompili, Vicar General of Rome, on “the need to grant sacred rights, cruelly violated on the territory of Russia.” The letter condemned the actions of Soviet authorities with respect to religion (Dzwonkowski, 1997, pp. 292-293). He recalled his efforts associated with the Genoa Conference in 1922 directed toward granting the Russian faithful guarantees of religious freedom. In addition Pius XI wrote about his speaking out in defense of Patriarch Tikhon, about the aid to famine victims in Russia that had been organized by the Papal Relief Mission and had saved 150,000 children from hunger and yet – despite the enormous need for the Mission – it had been forbidden by the authorities. He also mentioned the imprisoned bishops, Boleslavs Sloskans and Alexander Frison, as well as Leonid Feodorov, Exarch of Eastern Rite Catholics. The Pope likewise condemned the blasphemous anti-religious campaign that offended the faithful. He expressed his sympathy with their suffering and called for prayers of repentance (Dzwonkowski, 1997, p. 295).

The Pope’s message was well received throughout the world, and not only among Catholics. Thus began the famous Prayer Crusade in defense of the faithful in the USSR. Even though the whole world expressed its solidarity with the Pope and the faithful in Russia, in the USSR itself this call for prayer provoked an outburst of rage and accusations against Pius XI. The Communist press accused him of attempting to organize military aggression against the USSR. The fact that the Moscow Metropolitan Sergey Stargorodsky joined in the attacks on the Pope tells much about the state of the [Orthodox] Church in the USSR. The Metropolitan claimed that persecutions of the faithful were not related to their faith; rather, they were provoked by their anti-government and counter-revolutionary activity. This justification of the persecutions was well known and disseminated by all means of mass communication, so that there was no doubt as to who was its real author (Dzwonkowski, 1997, p. 297). [Translator’s Note: the same justification of the persecutions appeared in certain organs of the American press.]

Although attacks on the Pope continued to appear in the newspapers, his call for prayer had forced the highest authorities in the USSR to temporarily suspend and criticize in a restrained manner the excessively barbaric methods being used in the fight against religion. Nonetheless, priests being arrested even in the future would be accused of espionage on behalf of the Vatican, evidencing the danger that the tiny little Vatican posed for the enormous USSR.

## Methods of the Fight with the Church

We have already enumerated the methods used in the fight with religion that the Soviet regime applied immediately after the Revolution – decrees, the liquidation of Church property, deprivation of the Church’s rights, the destruction of the Church’s unity, the seizure of Church vessels, the removal of priests from influence on parish matters, the prohibition of religious education, and the destruction of the Church’s hierarchy. A Church without a head, with arms broken, was no longer a social force; it could no longer have a strong influence on the people. It became the refuge of the elderly and of the staunchest believers, who recognized the value of the faith and were ready to suffer for it, inasmuch as it was necessary to withstand not only physical violence but also the very aggressive onslaught of atheistic propaganda.

### Atheistic Propaganda

On February 7, 1925, Emelyan Yaroslavsky founded the League of Atheists to wage a more successful fight with religion. Its foundation, however, had been laid much earlier. On March 19, 1922, Lenin wrote to Molotov, “The more representatives of the reactionary bourgeoisie and reactionary clergy that we manage to shoot, the better. It is precisely now that we must teach these people in such a way that they won’t even dare think of protesting for decades.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

In their war against religion the Bolsheviks used their “secret order of the Knights of the Revolution” – the All-Union Extraordinary Commission [VChK, “Cheka” – later NKVD) and the secret Anti-Religion Commission of the Executive Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), where, under conditions of the very strictest secrecy, plans were developed for the total suppression of the churches. Yaroslavsky was chairman of the Commission and his deputy was E. Tuchkov, head of the Sixth Department of the Cheka.[[22]](#footnote-22) This Commission acquired the means of splitting the Churches and creating various “reform” groups, a method that was especially applied with respect to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The League of Atheists became more active in 1929, as was reflected in the change of its name to the League of Militant Atheists. This organization, typical for the Communist state, not only brought together volunteers or fanatics, it was also closely connected with all the structures of the regime and the GPU; it closely collaborated with the sector of general propaganda and Komsomol [Communist Youth League] and Pioneer organizations; and it supported relationships with the International and with Communist parties abroad. The League became a general organization for all professional and adult categories of the population. Atheism was propagated everywhere: in the factories, in the schools, on collective farms and even in prisons. As early as 1922 Yaroslavsky had founded “Atheist” publishing house, which flooded the country with magazines, brochures and placards mocking religion, the clergy and believers. Soon, on October 21, 1922, the magazine *Bezbozhnik* [The Godless] made its appearance in the various languages of the peoples of Soviet Russia, with special editions for workers, young people, collective farmers, etc. The press runs for the atheistic press at that time were 44 million copies. Anti-religious publishing houses had all material and technical means at their disposal (Dzwonkowski, 1997, p. 84).

The atheistic press had a widely developed network of correspondents and agents who kept an eye on religious life in the provinces. Persons mentioned in their articles were for all practical purposes doomed. A peculiar achievement of anti-religious propaganda was the creation of a new, anti-religious lexicon. “Religion” was replaced by “prejudices,” “religious fantasy,” or “religious ideology.” The concept of “faith” was replaced by words like “superstition,” “ignorance,” “backwardness,” or “reactionary thinking.”

In addition to their propaganda publications, branches of the League of Militant Ahteists also put on theatrical productions mocking religion; they held meetings where demands were made for the closing of churches and the espionage activity of the clergy came under discussion; they created museums of atheism; on the occasion of religious holy days they would hold atheistic demonstrations and speeches; and they organized courses on atheistic propaganda. League activists distributed anti-religious publications, and they kept track of people who had taken part in religious events and denounced them. The All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) affirmed the program of the League of Atheists in 1926 (Dzwonkowski, p. 85).

It is worth describing one of these demonstrations organized by the League of Militant Atheists – for example, the one in Minsk on January 18, 1930, with the participation of military, Komsomol, labor union, athletic and other organizations. After walking through the streets with their anti-religious banners, they held a meeting on Freedom Square, in front of the Catholic cathedral. During this event they burned many images of saints and adopted a resolution demanding that all churches in Minsk be closed and their bells removed within a month (Dzwonkowski, p. 86). Similar demonstrations were held in other cities. In Leningrad, for example, twenty blasphemous processions were arranged on Christmas 1924. The destruction of churches of various denominations and the destruction of a great number of priceless objects of religious art – icons, paintings, church vessels, ancient religious books – these were the “accomplishments” of the League of Militant Atheists (Dzwonkowski, 1997, p. 86).

The so-called “Polish experiment” was organized at the end of the 1920s for the intensification of the fight with tradition that was preserving religious beliefs. Autonomous districts were created in places where most of the population were Poles – Markhlevshchina outside Zhytomyr in Ukraine and Dzerzhinshchina in Belorussia – and the use of the Polish language was introduced throughout these districts. It was to be the main means of changing the traditionally religious, Catholic and patriotic consciousness of the Poles of the borderland districts to pro-Soviet and proletarian, international solidarity, in order to induct them into the Bolshevik revolution and then to carry the revolution onto the territory of Poland (Dzwonkowski, p. 89).

All the coordination of atheistic, including nationalistic, propaganda was in the hands of the Bolsheviks. A special emphasis was placed on the “atheization” of children and young people. This program was fully supported by the State, inasmuch as already in the Constitution of 1918 children and young people under the age of eighteen were prohibited from any participation in religious rituals. Teaching religion was prohibited, while at the same time the teaching of atheism was not only permitted but fostered in every way. In the autumn of 1928, the People’s Commissariat of Education issued a secret bulletin ordering all teachers to keep an eye on their pupils and their pupils’ families, to visit their homes and discern their attitude toward religion – and then in 1929 this State organ adopted a resolution concerning the mandatory creation of Militant Atheist clubs in all schools (Dzwonkowski, p. 91).

A special role was assigned to Pioneer and Komsomol organizations. Their members received, for all practical purposes, an anti-religious indoctrination. Children and teens were given awards for denouncing those who participated in religious rituals, including even their own parents. *The Godless* (1929, No. 2) recommended such methods, and at the same time called for dealing harshly with parents who punished their children for atheistic activity.

Anti-religious carnivals were organized during Church holy days and children were drawn into participating in them so that they would act against the Church, priests, and religion. There were contests for the most sarcastic insults of God, games to judge God, and sometimes during these anti-religious masquerades children had to spit on crosses and defile other religious symbols. Icons from private homes were publicly burned in bonfires with the participation of atheistic organizations, families and the Komsomol. The children also saw at these carnivals how elderly people would throw icons and crosses into the fire. This was all described in the newspaper *Vecherniaia Moskva* for December 27, 1929 (Dzwonkowski, p. 93). At popular festivals in Moscow participants dressed up as caricatures of Jesus Christ, Mary, and the saints.

The popularization of sexual freedom served the same goal – as well as all manner of degrading the family, which was called “the basic form of slavery.” The fight with the family became the most effective means of liberating young people from “religious prejudices.” The procedure for divorce was greatly simplified, and there were cries for “liberating women from the burden of family, motherhood, religion, and bourgeoisie morality.” Abortion was legalized in 1920.

“Atheization” was also conducted through film and radio. Performing artists were not allowed to sing in Church choirs. Books with a religious content were withdrawn from libraries and destroyed. Teaching of atheism was mandatory in universities, institutes, high schools and professional schools. In 1929 the All-Russian Central Executive Committee abolished the seven-day week and there would now be “days off” instead of “Sundays.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

A decree was issued in 1930 requiring everyone, without fail, to turn in to the local Council any Bible, religious literature or liturgical books – the explanation given by the authorities was that this was necessary because of a shortage of paper for printing newspapers. At the same time, it was inculcated into people’s consciousness that all family celebrations – weddings, funerals – were to have a secular character; it was forbidden to place crosses on graves. Activists of the League of Militant Atheists were especially violent in their efforts to “enlighten” the countryside. But their results were insufficient and therefore it was necessary to accuse those priests still at liberty of organizing resistance to the process of atheization.

We present here some of the slogans that appeared before Christmas, on December 14, 1929, in the Polish-language newspaper, *Orka*, published in Belorussia (Dzwonkowski, p. 96):

* Down with Christmas! Long live the uninterrupted work week!
* Instead of “Christmas,” let’s have a Day of Industrialization and Collectivization!
* Priests are faithful assistants to the Counter-Revolution!
* Churches and synagogues are breeding grounds of deceit and hypocrisy – let us turn them into breeding grounds of socialist culture!
* The most urgent task of Komsomol is to intensify its fight with religion!
* Socialist competition is a class weapon of the fight with religion!
* Fight any conciliatory attitude toward religion!
* Workers! Join the League of Militant Atheists!
* Priests are faithful servants of Polish Fascists, capitalists and land owners!
* Down with prayer books! Read Soviet books and Communist Polish books!
* Let’s turn every school into a bulwark in the fight for the anti-religious education of young people!

### Provocations

We have already mentioned the successful attempts to split the [Orthodox] Church from within by creating “progressive” Church circles. Informants wormed their way into Church communities. By intimidating people or by paying for their services, the security organs used parishioners and some priests and their assistants as their agents and thus broke the moral force of the Church itself, sowing distrust of priests. In addition to priests, the organs often arrested people whose only fault was their presence at liturgy or the performance of some work in the church (organists, choir members, cleaning ladies).

Attempts to destroy the Catholic Church in this way had no success. For example, the GPU knew about the Belorussian patriotism of Father Józef Bieƚohoƚowy of Minsk, and in the first half of the 1920s they suggested to him that he accept episcopal consecration from the Old Catholics in Germany, thereby creating a national Belorussian Church independent of Rome. Father Józef rejected the proposal and subsequently died in Lubyanka. Likewise unsuccessful was the pressure put on Bishop Antoni Malecki, Apostolic Administrator of Leningrad, to exceed his authority and convene a Synod of Apostolic Administrators of the USSR (Dzwonkowski, p. 81).

The security organs also tried to force some priests to promulgate statements that there was no persecution of the faith, that people had full freedom of conscience in the USSR, and that if priests were arrested it was only for State crimes: espionage, counter-revolutionary activity, and so forth. The GPU itself often fabricated these statements and then, using blackmail, forced priests to sign them. There were isolated instances where a priest, broken by the GPU, would publicly renounce his priesthood and abjure the faith, but the faithful perceived even these acts as the machinations of the GPU and did not condemn the priests.

Protests by the faithful grew weaker over time, but in many places the parishioners heroically defended their churches for years, arranging for liturgies and prayer services without priests, paying the ever-increasing taxes for the right to use the church; and they sent food and money to priests in camps and exile.

## The Group Trials

Efforts to split the Catholic Church in the USSR from within were not successful. Not even the most aggressive propaganda was able to bring about the necessary results. Therefore, the authorities began to employ the most reliable means for the intensification of their fight with “prejudices and darkness” – arrests, camps and internal exile of priests and laity. Group trials, a unique phenomenon of Soviet “jurisprudence,” became one of the most widely used methods for the physical destruction of the Church. Groups of priests and laity were arrested in various regions. While one or another trial was underway, the security organs tried to find people who were directly or indirectly associated with those who had been arrested, and from them they constructed an anti-Soviet espionage ring. The name of such an organization was often invented by the security organs – such as “the Polish Militant Organization” – and many priests and laity were arrested and sentenced to death for membership in this mythical organization.

Priests from Ukraine, Belorussia and even Siberia were most often charged with espionage on behalf of the bourgeois States: Poles, on behalf of Poland; Germans, on behalf of Germany; priests, on behalf of the Vatican. And here we must emphasize that events and facts no matter how far back in time could serve as the basis for these charges – for example, a priest at one time might have worked with the charitable mission to aid famine victims, or he might have had contacts with consulates and embassies. Receipt of financial assistance from abroad served as proof of espionage activity (the money would presumably have been the reward for information transmitted).

### Religious Communities

Although official Church structures were paralyzed and would later be completely liquidated, they continued to exist “underground.” Religious communities, or communities similar to them (most often women’s communities), played an important role in the preservation of Church life. Some priests functioning in the USSR were representatives of religious orders: the Dominican Jean Amoudrou in Leningrad, the Assumptionist Pius Eugene Neveu in Moscow, and Jesuit priests secretly sent into Russia in 1939: Walter Ciszek and Victor Novikov. But for all practical purposes they had no way of creating communities of their orders. There were also, although underground, various women’s communities, including Third Order communities. The most well-known of these was the Abrikosova community in Moscow, which played a large role in Church life at that time. (Its history has been rather well researched and described in our time in the already-mentioned work by Irina Osipova.[[24]](#footnote-24))

The community of Dominican Sisters came into being prior to the Revolution, in the quarters of Vladimir and Anna Abrikosov, although both came from families that were rather indifferent to religion. “The husband and wife were ‘freethinkers’: True, they did not deny God, but neither did they believe in Him; they got along without Him […] they found themselves under the influence of Western Christian culture, which drew them to Catholicism. During travels through Europe, visiting museums and monasteries and contemplating monuments of a spiritual culture, they adopted a Western-Latin form of Christianity … Anna was the first of them to join the Catholic Church, in 1908 in Paris.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

The couple dedicated 1909 to the study of Catholic theology in Rome and Paris. Pope Pius X allowed them to practice the Latin rite temporarily, but they were to return to the Eastern rite at the earliest opportunity. In 1913, they were accepted into the novitiate of the Third Order of Saint Dominic in the Church of Saint Louis des Français in Moscow. They later made their Third Order vows in Rome. In Moscow they belonged at first to the Latin rite parish of Saints Peter and Paul. With time, their apartment became a meeting place for Russian Catholics – a place of philosophical, theological and historical debates. But the community had a Western, not Eastern, character. Later, after Vladimir’s ordination as an Eastern rite priest, this home became the center of the Russian Eastern mission and a place of meetings of Catholic and Orthodox clergy and the intelligentsia. At this time Anna headed in her own home a unique women’s community, relying on the Rule of Saint Dominic, in which some Sisters made all the religious vows while others were secular Third Order Sisters. Many of them had university degrees. The head of the convent began to be called Mother Catherine.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Difficult times soon came upon the community. Father Vladimir was arrested on August 17, 1922, and sentenced to death; the sentence was later commuted to permanent deportation from the country. On September 29 of that same year he left Moscow forever, and Father Nikolay Aleksandrov became pastor of the parish. In the autumn of 1923 the GPU organs conducted mass arrests among the Russian Catholics in Moscow and Petrograd. All the priests, Mother Catherine and the Dominican Sisters were arrested, along with laity who collaborated with them. A closed judicial trial was finished in May 1924 and those arrested were sentenced to three to ten years in solitary confinement, labor camps and exile. The remnant of the parish united around Father Sergey Soloviev, and even in these difficult times several people entered religious life. In February 1931 all members of the community remaining at liberty were arrested and convicted.

In the camps and in exile, wherever it was possible, representatives of the Abrikosova community continued their religious life. In the preservation of their fidelity to the Church, a supplemental vow was especially helpful – a vow to suffer for the conversion of Russia. Released from the camps, they tried in 1933 to renew their common life in Moscow, Kostroma, Krasnodar and Smolensk, but soon, headed by Mother Catherine, they were once again arrested and now received new terms. The charges were not distinguished by any originality: the creation of an anti-Soviet organization, anti-Soviet agitation, espionage, preparation of a terrorist act… In fact, their guilt lay only in the fact that they had tried to resurrect their communal life. In 1935 a group of Dominican Sisters was drawn into the investigation in a case against Catholic clergy in Tambov. Arrests of the surviving Sisters continued right up until 1949,[[27]](#footnote-27) but almost all the members of the community remained faithful to the Catholic Church – they were not broken by the prisons, camps, exile – even in these places they continued their apostolic activity.

Less known is the fate of other religious communities that existed during Soviet times in St. Petersburg, in Ukraine and in other places. For example, in Petrograd (Leningrad) there were the Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary, founded in 1857 by Saint Zygmunt Felinski, SFO.[[28]](#footnote-28) Deemed a “hostile element,” the Sisters were forced to leave Leningrad in 1930 by decree of the GPU. Thirteen of them settled in Kostroma, where six other Franciscans were already living; four settled in Yaroslavl. Only four elderly Sisters remained in Leningrad (Dzwonkowski, pp. 200-201).

### The Fate of Catholic Priests

Biographies of Catholic priests comprise a large part of our *Book of Remembrance*. The task of researching their lives is far from complete, and there is particularly little information about those who were subjected to repressions during the period when the Soviet regime was coming into power. Illustrative in this respect is the fate of Father Joseph Baumtrog, who was killed by the Bolsheviks in the Lower Volga region, just like many others in Ukraine and Belorussia who became victims during the Civil War. Polish priests, who had worked hard during the First World War to create educational and charitable organizations in the Russian Empire, now identified with newly independent Poland after 1918 and thereby became political hostages. For example, Metropolitan Archbishop Edward Ropp and several priests arrested in Petrograd in April and May 1919 as “Polish hostages” became a bargaining chip in a political game (Shkarovskii, pp. 139-141, 147). A delegation of Petrograd Catholics that met with Peter Krasikov on May 14 concerning the release of these hostages argued that the arrested priests were elderly – and for the most part were not even Poles by nationality (Shkarovskii, pp. 139-140).

The Bolshevik regime also tried to put priests into physical labor, which was a special form of discrimination against them as “parasites” and against religion, as something workers did not need. At the beginning of 1920 the authorities arrested Archbishop Jan Cieplak and then another 189 persons from among those who had protested against his arrest, many of whom received harsh sentences. In 1922, group trials of the clergy were held in Yaroslavl, Minsk, and Kamianets-Podilskyi. They were conducted by the so-called Revolutionary Tribunals, which frequently issued death sentences that were later commuted to prison sentences (Dzwonkowski, 1998, p. 77).

After Archbishop Ropp and the priests arrested with him were expelled from the country, the Cieplak-Budkiewicz trial was the next massive blow to fall upon the Catholic Church. Under Archbishop Cieplak’s leadership Catholics continued to persevere – they would not sign agreements regarding the use of Church buildings and they resisted the seizure of Church valuables. Although some parishes gave in, for the most part the Church stood firm. In response, the authorities began to seal the churches shut, resolving to show Catholics that come what may, the regime would not tolerate resistance. Numerous appeals from the faithful for the reopening of the churches were ignored, and instead the authorities inflicted a new, crippling blow. Archbishop Cieplak, fourteen priests and one layman were summoned to Moscow. The archbishop, foreseeing that he might not be returning, designated as his Vicar General Father Stanisƚaw Przerembel, the pastor of the parish in Detskoye Selo (formerly Tsarskoye Selo) outside Petrograd, and transferred the governance of the diocese to him. Once the Catholic clergy had arrived in Moscow, the authorities launched a propaganda campaign against them in the press (Dzwonkowski, 1998, p. 22) and soon the whole group was taken into custody. The trial began March 21 [during Holy Week] in the House of Unions (formerly the Dvoryanskoye Sobranie). The chairman of the tribunal, the apostate Orthodox priest Mikhail Galkin, and the State prosecutor, Nikolay Krylenko, were not jurists, but revolutionaries; the only professionals were the lawyers V. N. Bobrishchev-Pushkin and Nikolay Kommodov. Seated in the dock were Archbishop Jan Cieplak (age 66); Leonid Feodorov, exarch of Russian Catholics (age 43); monsignors Konstanty Budkiewicz (age 56) and Antoni Malecki (age 62); parish pastors Antoni Wasilewski (age 54), Teofil Matulianis (age 50); Franciszek Rutkowski (age 39); Lucjan Chwiećko (age 33); Piotr Janukowicz (age 59); vicar of the pro-cathedral, Augustine Proncketis (age 36); secretary of the curia, Jan Trojgo (age 42); D. Ivanov (age 39); and a 17-year-old parishioner, Jakob Sharnas. The charge was built on materials related to 1918-1919 that had been seized by the Chekists in 1920 and on the testimony of workers at the Petrograd church bureaus[[29]](#footnote-29) (Dzwonkowski, 1998, p. 77). Those on trial were accused of belonging to organizations that sought to inflict damage on the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working class and the proletarian revolution; resistance to the executive authority and provocation of resistance; and teaching the fundamentals of religion to under-age children. Archbishop Cieplak and the priests tried to prove that they were only maintaining their fidelity to Church precepts. The lawyers’ arguments were futile, since the authorities had already planned to carry out the death sentence on Catholic Easter. They sentenced Archbishop Cieplak and Monsignor Budkiewicz to death; four priests received ten-year prison sentences, and the rest, three-year prison sentences. The minor Sharnas got a six-month suspended sentence.

Hundreds of telegrams protesting the sentences came in from many countries and even the governments of European States came to the defense of the convicted. Thanks to this outcry the life of Archbishop was spared, his death sentence commuted to a ten-year prison term, but Monsignor Budkiewicz was nevertheless shot in Lubyanka Prison (or, according to some, in Sokolnicheskaya) on the night of March 31/April 1, 1923, Easter Sunday. This purely political show trial was meant to demonstrate the senselessness of any resistance to the Soviet regime. With time, as a result of prisoner exchanges, Archbishop Cieplak and some of the priests were able to leave for Poland; others, like Father Malecki, returned to their ministry after release from prison.

Using the same method with which it had broken the resistance of the Orthodox Church, the Soviet regime had now shown Catholics what awaited anyone who tried to protest. The authorities were also pursuing other goals: to undermine Christians’ faith, to compromise priests, and to instill fear. Nevertheless many of the parishioners, despite everything, rallied around their pastors and organized material aid for them. The St. Vincent de Paul Conference in Leningrad acted especially energetically, and after its leaders were arrested, parish committees began to render assistance.

Similar trials were associated with the creation of a seminary in Petrograd (Leningrad). Every attempt at the clandestine preparation of priests ended up with the arrest of the seminarians and those priests who had organized it. Going forward, almost all the group trials of Catholic clergy and laity would be conducted by the [extra-judicial] organs of the GPU/NKVD, with sentences handed down by the [Military] Collegium, and later by Troikas and Special Conferences of the Collegium.

Next came the aforementioned trial of Russian [Eastern Rite] Catholics from Moscow and Petrograd, arrested between November 1923 and March 1924 (*Abrikosova et al.*]. They were charged with having contact with the international bourgeoisie, “which, at the behest of the Vatican, was carrying out a campaign against the Soviet State and preparing for a military invasion of Soviet territory” (Dzwonkowski, 1998, p. 78). They all received sentences ranging from ten years in prison to three years in exile. After imprisonment in solitary confinement, some of them were later transported to Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp. Father Nikolay Aleksandrov of the Moscow parish of Russian Catholics was the first Catholic priest to end up there, along with the former seminarian Donat Nowicki who was subsequently clandestinely ordained an Eastern Rite priest at Solovetsky, thanks to the fact that Leonid Feodorov, exarch of Russian Catholics, was also imprisoned there, as was Bishop Boleslavs Sloskans.

The next wave of trials took place from 1926 to 1928. Those arrested faced the same standard charges: anti-Soviet agitation, counter-revolutionary activity, espionage… The trials from 1929 to 1931 were associated with the completion of collectivization. The populace of Catholic villages, particularly in Ukraine and along the Lower Volga, resisted collectivization and the Soviet regime saw the priests as instigators of this resistance. To this it was very easy to pile on “collaboration with foreign intelligence,” since priests in Ukraine were mostly Poles, while on the Lower Volga and Black Sea coast, they were Germans.

Thirty priests and several laity were tried at a closed proceeding in Kharkiv in 1930. This time the accused were supposedly “working” not for Germany, but for Poland, but the charges and sentences were similar – mostly ten-year prison terms, and although death sentences were also handed down, these would later be commuted to ten-year terms in the camps.

At that time, most Catholics, especially priests, were held at Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp (not just on the islands, but in the whole Solovetsky Camp system, which included the White Sea-Baltic Canal – Belbaltlag). Since Solovetsky was a corrective labor camp, intended to re-educate prisoners, various “pedagogical experiments” were carried out. It is enough to mention just one of them. In order to protect the other prisoners from the pernicious influence of religion, it was decided that the Catholic priests should be transferred to Anzer Island; this was proceeded by the December 5, 1928, closing of St. Herman Chapel where authorities had permitted the celebration of Mass on Sundays (but the priests secretly celebrated Mass at other times as well, especially at night). The priests’ quarters were searched January 19, 1929, and all liturgical books and Mass vessels were taken and the priests themselves were transferred to a penalty block. Despite this harassment, Masses continued – in the basements, workshops, cells… Then most of the priests, with Bishop Sloskans at their head, were transferred to Anzer Island.

By June 1929 all the Catholic priests at Solovetsky had been transferred to Anzer Island,[[30]](#footnote-30) where they were assigned to hard labor: felling trees, dragging tree trunks, sawing logs. The heaviest work on this rocky island was digging dugouts for newly arrived prisoners. Twenty-three priests were isolated in the northern part of the island (Troitskaya Command Post). In 1932 there were thirty-two priests on Anzer Island. Their main problem was finding a place where they could say Mass and procuring hosts and wine, but they managed to deal with even these problems: they said Mass on a rock in the woods and later, in an attic of the barrack where they lived, on their knees because the ceiling was so low. The room that served as their quarters was three or four meters by two meters. All the priests had to squeeze into this space – and they would take turns saying Mass at night in the attic.[[31]](#footnote-31) A small amount of wine had been smuggled in with their parcels, and thus the priests decided that under these circumstances six to eight drops of wine would suffice for saying Mass. When that ran out, they tried to get raisins, from which they made their own wine.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Thus came about the “priests’ commune.” The priests decided to share all food equally, to fulfill the work norms for the sick, and not to work on Sundays (they would fulfill the Sunday work norm another time). An elected starosta headed the commune and another priest was put in charge of the household. They shared among themselves the parcels they received from the Polish Red Cross and the Political Red Cross. They resolved problems of their interrelations with camp authorities at a general meeting. The camp administration, however, had no liking for this “socialist” way of life. In July 1932 a routine seizure of Church objects was carried out and the priests themselves were arrested; most of them were then isolated from one another, eight of them were sent by convoy to Leningrad, two to solitary confinement in Yaroslavl Prison, and the rest scattered among various command posts. But in 1933 and 1934 they once again began to celebrate Mass secretly.

By 1937, despite the fact that many priests had already died or been released (some had left the country in prisoner exchanges), there were still approximately fifty Catholic priests at Solovetsky.[[33]](#footnote-33) Their contacts with Catholic lay prisoners had become more difficult, but they occasionally witnessed Catholic marriages (see, for example, the biography of Servant of God Camilla Kruczelnica).

Solovetsky was reorganized in 1937 and as a result many prisoners were transported to other places and shot. We know of the execution of twenty-six priests and two lay Catholics at the beginning of November 1937 in Sandormokh outside Medvezhegorsk in Karelia and ten priests in Leningrad Prison in December 1937.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Members of the Petrograd (Leningrad) and Moscow Russian [Eastern Rite] Catholic communities also went through the Solovetsky camps. Of the Roman Catholic clergy arrested in the Leningrad oblast, we would mention Father Stanisƚaw Przerembel, Bolesƚaw Juriewicz and Bishop Teofil Matulianis. Thirty-nine lay Catholic were also brought to trial with them, most of them members of the parish “Committees of Twenty.” The priests got ten-year terms and the laity, various prison terms.

An especially interesting example of the life of the Church during the persecutions is the story of a group of the faithful who congregated around the Orthodox Archbishop Nikolay [Bartholomew] Remov, who secretly became a Catholic under the influence of Bishop Neveu. A large group of religious and lay people were arrested with the archbishop in 1934-1935. He was shot and the rest got three- and five-year terms in the camps. During the same time (1934-1935), three priests and three Dominican Sisters from the Abrikosova community and a group of lay Catholics were on trial in Voronezh. The Sisters were acquitted at trial, but the priests got ten years in the camps.

Another large-scale case was that of Polish and Ukrainian clergy in Ukraine in 1935 and 1936 accused of belonging to a “fascist counter-revolutionary organization of Roman Catholic and Uniate clergy in Right-Bank Ukraine,” a case that caught up many lay Catholics as well. They were all sentenced to five to ten years in camps or exile.

The last group trials of Catholic priests and laity took place in 1937 and 1938. Most often the charge was belonging to the Polish Militant Organization and the arrests were associated with Yezhov’s Operational Order No. 00485 dated August 11, 1937, which enumerated all categories of Poles subject to arrest. Even faithful servants of the Revolution found themselves on the list: soldiers, Chekists, office and factory workers, collective farmers, Communists and those of no party affiliation.[[35]](#footnote-35) For example, we present the fate of Ya. Sendikovsky, an NKVD agent from Borovichi who had served on the Troika that judged Bishop Antoni Malecki and the “priests’ commune” on Anzer Island. In August 1937 he shared the lot of tens of thousands who were shot in Levashovo Field outside Leningrad.[[36]](#footnote-36)

As for mass arrests of Poles, it is well known that they occurred in practically all cities of the USSR, but the Poles in Moscow, Leningrad, Krasnodar, Rostov-on-Don, and Orel suffered especially – along with Poles in Belorussia and Ukraine. For evidence of these large-scale actions we have, for example, the memoirs of the residents of a small farm village outside Prokhladny in present-day Karbardino-Balkarya, where all the men of the village were arrested in 1937 and almost none of them ever returned home. Or in Siberian Belostok, according to Vasily Khanevich, a son of an “enemy of the people,” almost all the men from his village were arrested in 1937-1938 and soon shot – and only a few had the good fortune to “get off” with a ten-year camp sentence. They were all charged with belonging to the Polish Militant Organization, which they most likely had never even heard of.[[37]](#footnote-37) In fact this organization had been created by Józef Piƚsudski in 1914 and had been defunct since approximately 1920. Its presence in the USSR, even as late as 1937, was an invention of the GPU, necessary for justifying massive repressions of Poles in Belorussia, Ukraine and even Eastern Siberia.

Five of the last Catholic priests remaining at liberty in Belorussia – Konstantin Andrekus, Piotr Awgƚo, Jan Borowik, Peter Janukowicz and Stanisƚaw Rajko – were arrested on charges of leading PMO cells. They were all sentenced to death on August 25, 1937, and shot two days later in Minsk Prison. Priests, religious and laity went through prisons and exile repeatedly – they were arrested again and again…

The Kievan priest Father Bolesƚaw Blechman, freed from prison, settled in Vladikavkaz and after some time was re-arrested, along with the local priest, Father Antoni Czerwiński, Johannes Roth (Apostolic Administrator of the Northern Caucasus) and a group of lay Catholics. Czerwiński and Roth were shot in January 1938 and Blechman was sentenced to ten years in prison. The laity tried in this case got four- to ten-year terms in the camps. We should not forget that after serving their terms many had “minuses” on their internal passports,[[38]](#footnote-38) others were sent to “special settlements” or banished to remote regions of the country.

The authorities used a wide variety of means to deprive people of liberty. Often it was the ordinary city prison, such as Butyrka or Sokolniki in Moscow. The inner prison of the NKVD – at Lubyanka – had practically the worst reputation, with its especially harsh methods: prisoners were not allowed to lie down, there was a constant bright electric light in the cells, and the tact taken by interrogators would be alternated (one would cruelly beat the prisoner, then the next would be “kind”). There were also penalty solitary confinement cells and those most “popular” among the Catholics were the ones in Yaroslavl Prison, which was known for its severe regimen and the complete isolation of prisoners from one another. In 1930 there were thirty priests from Ukraine in Yaroslavl. German priests from the Lower Volga region were later also held there, although for many of them it was a transit prison before being sent to a prison camp.

In addition to camps and prisons, the penal system also included banishment and special settlements.[[39]](#footnote-39) These were usually located in very harsh climate zones – in Siberia, beyond the Arctic Circle and other regions, but basically in places that were very remote from large population centers. Priests, religious and lay Catholics tried to end up where there was still a functioning Catholic Church, but their participation in the life of the local parish unfortunately led to the arrest of the resident priest and all the active parishioners. Thus it happened in Orel, Nizhni Novgorod, Vladikavkaz and other cities.

We have alluded briefly to the genocide of Poles in the USSR, but the same kind of genocide was inflicted with respect to Soviet Germans and other nationalities. Yet even though among those who were arrested and shot there were many who were not believers, who were devoted with their whole souls to the Communist idea, one must not forget that the mass terror led for all practical purposes to the complete annihilation of previously existing parishes and communities. This is what we must keep in mind when we speak about today’s difficulties with respect to the renaissance of the Church.

### The Role of the Political Red Cross and Polish Red Cross

Catherine Peshkova, Maxim Gorky’s first wife, played a special role in this terrible time. She was the head of the Committee for Aid to Political Prisoners, which went by its former name, “Political Red Cross,” and simultaneously served as an agent of the Polish Red Cross, opened in December 1920 and closed by Yezhov in 1937. Many convicts appealed to the Political Red Cross, including Catholic priests, religious and laity; those who appealed to the Polish Red Cross were mostly Poles. Mrs. Peshkova herself was very conscientious in her work, personally visiting places of confinement and reviewing all appeals received. Many Catholic prisoners were her close acquaintances. She organized the sending of material assistance to the camps and places of exile and one can boldly assert that many Catholic priests from among those subsequently released and sent to Poland as part of a prisoner exchange survived thanks to her help. She also acted as an intermediary in the delivery of assistance received from abroad designated for specific persons. The Archive of the Polish Red Cross in Moscow has 5,639 personal files. Unfortunately this topic has not yet been brought to light in Russian-language publications.[[40]](#footnote-40)

The life of the Catholic Church had for all practical purposes come to an end in the USSR by 1939. French churches functioned in Moscow and Leningrad under very constrained circumstances. There were still several priests alive, mostly Germans who had gone through the camps and lived in exile in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, but in practice they were not able to carry out any pastoral ministry because there were as a rule no Catholics in these areas. This situation would change in 1937 when the authorities began to banish Poles from Ukraine to Kazakhstan and from Belorussia and Leningrad to Siberia.

## The Second World War

Changes continued in 1939 and 1940 as a result of the Soviet Union’s annexation of territories of western Ukraine, western Belorussia and the Baltic States, with their heavily Catholic populations. Under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939, Poland was to be split between Hitler’s Germany and the USSR and the Bug and Narev Rivers would become the border between them. The Polish government knew nothing of this pact, and thus when the Soviet Army came onto the territory of eastern Poland on September 17, 1939, the Polish command gave the order not to fight the Red Army. Polish Army units that had not been conquered or transferred from the west to the east were practically all arrested and sent to prison camps.[[41]](#footnote-41) In addition to the officers, militia, chaplains and soldiers, representatives of the intelligentsia, priests, teachers, and former military settlers also fell into captivity – they were all sent to prisons and camps. Some of them were killed immediately by the Red Army without trial or investigation, but the priests who ended up in the camps were most often not shot. Thus during negotiations between the Soviet government and the Polish government in Exile (in London) about the organization of a Polish Army in the USSR for combatting Hitler’s Germany, the question of the captive priests came up.

Practically no priests arrested in the USSR before the war were still alive when Hitler advanced onto Soviet territory in 1941 because in the autumn of 1939 even the military chaplains had been sent along with the Polish officers to camps in Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkov.[[42]](#footnote-42) There were thirty-eight clergy (including three Lutherans, two Orthodox and one rabbi). According to the testimony of prisoners who survived, many priests and officers led a truly holy life in the camps; they organized prayers, they preserved objects of ritual worship, they made icons. They were not real prisoners of war because they had not fought the Red Army – they had simply been interned. By Christmas 1939 the Soviets had taken the priests from the camps – mostly to the Moscow prisons. In April and May 1940, they were shot and their places of burial are only approximately known (only the body of Fr. Jan Leon Żólkowski was later found in Katyn). Only two survived: Stanisƚaw Kontek and Franciszek Tyczkowski.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Approximately twenty thousand Polish officers lie in rest in Katyn (outside Smolensk), Tver and Kharkiv – mostly reservists, and also many chaplains who had been called up for service in the army at the beginning of the war. But this is a small fraction of the Catholic clergy that was subjected to repressions – many more were killed in 1939 to 1941 right where they served – others were transported to Soviet camps in Kazakhstan, Siberia, Kolyma and the Komi ASSR. There were also priests who voluntarily went to places of exile with their banished parishioners, sometimes concealing their priesthood. With the advance of German troops onto Soviet territory in June 1941, many priests and their assistants were released from the prisons and camps.

No easier was the fate of those who found themselves on the territory around Vilnius, which was granted by the Soviets to Lithuania, but then later “peacefully annexed to the Country of Soviets” along with the other Baltic States. Mass arrests began then and there – in 1940 Lithuania had 1,487 diocesan and 152 religious order priests; 1,000 sisters; seventy-one Catholic schools; seven Catholic publishers and thirty-two journals. Upon annexation to the USSR, many aspects of Church activity were prohibited; the publishing houses and journals were closed down; crosses were removed from the schools; bells and various church furnishings were seized; and the Lithuanian anthem was prohibited and replaced with “The Internationale.” Yet even under these constrained conditions the Church did not cease to fulfill its mission.[[44]](#footnote-44)

In Latvia the Theology Department at the University of Riga was shut down and in the course of a year forty thousand people were deported and eleven priests were murdered.[[45]](#footnote-45) In Estonia Apostolic Administrator Archbishop Edward Profittlich, SJ, was arrested and convicted and subsequently died in Kirov Prison in 1941 [1942?.[[46]](#footnote-46)

After Germany’s attack on the USSR in 1941, the Soviet government began to look for allies in the West. In particular, negotiations were begun with the Polish Government in Exile, resulting in the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement,[[47]](#footnote-47) which included the formation of a Polish Army in the USSR under the command of General Wƚadysƚaw Anders; Polish government Delegations were established, and an “amnesty” was declared for a hundred thousand citizens who had been transported to Soviet camps. The Polish government awaited the release of the captured officers (who were no longer alive) and to the insistent demand from the Polish side, Stalin answered that “maybe they had taken off for Manchuria.”

Thanks to the “amnesty” and the activity of the Polish government Delegations, many young people made their way toward places in Central Asia where the Polish II Corps was forming. Priests and seminarians were also among those released from the camps and prisons who made their way to these points. Bishop Jósef Gawlina, bishop for the Polish Military, came to the USSR to organize the military ministry and he ordained some of the seminarians who had been released from the camps. Most of the priests fulfilled their pastoral ministry in places where the army was deployed, not only among the military but among the local populace as well.

Disagreements soon arose between the Polish government and the Soviet authorities, as a result of which General Anders decided to lead his army out of the USSR. Among his soldiers were seminarians who were later sent to a seminary in Bierut, established especially for them, where priests who came out of the USSR with the army served as instructors. In the same way, hospitals, families of the military and orphans were saved from the USSR – and later turned up in refugee camps in India, the Near East and Africa. Priests went with them as chaplains. Chaplains for the military units went the whole route with the army, through the Near East, Africa, Italy. Only an insignificant number of Polish Army soldiers and officers returned to Poland after the war. Many of them came from the eastern territories of Poland that became part of the Soviet regime after World War II and thus they chose emigration, mostly to England but also to France, the United States and other counties. New parishes – Polish, Belorussian and Ukrainian – thus arose in these countries.

Only three chaplains remained in the USSR: Ryszard Grabski, in the Polish mission in Kotlas; Franciszek Albin Janocha, OFM, who had secretly remained behind; and Tadeusz Fedorowicz, who had fallen ill during the army’s march out of the USSR and remained now in Kazakhstan.

When the Italian and Romanian armies occupied southern Ukraine along with the Germans, they began to open the long-closed and partially demolished churches. The military chaplains – and in some cases, graduates of the Russicum – celebrated Mass. Fathers Pietro Leoni, SJ, and Jean Nicolas, AA, from Odessa were arrested soon after the end of the war and ended up in Soviet camps.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Despite some easing of religious life during the German occupation of western Ukraine and Belorussia, certain priests who ministered there at that time earned the crown of holiness, martyred at the hands of the Fascists. Here we would note in particular the new martyrs who belonged to the Congregation of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception – Blessed Jerzy [George] Kaszira, MIC, and Blessed Antoni Leszczewicz, MIC – who died in Rosica [Belarus] during a Nazi punitive operation (“pacification action”) in February 1943. These priests were offered a chance to evade punishment, but they preferred to die in the flames of a burning building together with their parishioners.[[49]](#footnote-49) Such was also the fate of eleven Sisters of the Congregation of the Holy Family of Nazareth of Navahrudak [Belarus], who were shot by the Gestapo August 1, 1943, without investigation or trial [Blessed Sister Maria Stella and Her Ten Companions].[[50]](#footnote-50)

The situation of the faithful on these territories was exacerbated by the fact that the NKVD, and then the Gestapo, exploited national conflicts among the peoples who lived in the former regions of Poland, and thus members of Polish underground organizations were often handed over to the authorities by Ukrainians, Belorussians and Lithuanians during the Soviet and then during the subsequent German occupation. This enmity, especially in Ukraine, often developed into massacres organized by Ukrainian nationalists in Polish villages, just as Polish partisans demolished the combatants of national movements. This tragedy warrants thorough study – we mention it only so that the sufferings of the Church’s children in war-time conditions not be forgotten.

In 1941 all Germans from the Crimea, Ukraine and the Lower Volga were deported to Kazakhstan and Siberia. Finding themselves in exile and camps, religious and lay Catholics not only preserved their faith, they frequently brought other prisoners like themselves to the faith. The few priests still alive now had the opportunity to render spiritual assistance to their co-religionists.

No easier were the fates of the Jesuits Walter Ciszek and Victor Novikov who had been prepared at the Russicum, had studied the Eastern Rite and had bi-ritual faculties. Since 1938 they had been living in Albertyn, outside Slonim, awaiting assignment for a mission in the East. In March 1940, they traveled to Lviv where they received the blessing of Andrey Sheptytsky, Metropolitan Archbishop of Greek Catholics, on their plan to enlist with the Soviets as workers for the Urals. They were soon under surveillance and arrested within a year; they spent many years in prisons, camps and exile.

We must say a few words also about the role of priests during the formation of the People’s Polish Army in the USSR in 1943. Polish Communists who collaborated with Stalin participated in its organization and it was for all practical purposes a copy of the Red Army, but even so it could not get by without Catholic chaplains. Their fates are astonishing. The chaplain in the First Army was the oblate priest Father V. Kubsh who was captured by the Germans in 1942 and who, thanks to the help of an Austrian guard, fled and joined a brigade of Soviet partisans where he served as a dentist. They hunted him down, brought him to Moscow and then to a camp of the First People’s Division. Even more amazing is the story of Father Tadeusz Fedorowicz who had voluntarily gone from Lviv to Kazakhstan with his deported parishioners in 1939. He was arrested in Kazakhstan but under the “amnesty” he was released and then served at the Polish high school that was established there. When the formation of the Second Polish Division of the People’s Army got underway, they hunted down Father Fedorowicz in Kazakhstan and he, having become the chaplain of this military subdivision, went with them to Poland.

## The Catholic Church in the USSR after the Second World War

Mass arrests of officers, soldiers and chaplains of the Home Army got underway as soon as the Soviet Army entered Poland in 1944.[[51]](#footnote-51) Arrested priests – Wƚadysƚaw Bukowiński, Bronisƚaw Drzepecki, Bolesƚaw Remigius Kranc, OFM, Jósef Kuczyński – spent long years in Soviet camps. Once released, Fathers Drzepecki and Kuczyński ministered in Ukraine and Father Bukowiński, in Karaganda. The German priests who survived ministered in the towns of Central Asia, secretly at first but later officially. Father Michael Köhler, the last priest of Tiraspol Diocese, served there for many years.

New repressions began in Latvia in 1944, after the return of the Red Army – ten priests were tormented and died and another forty were exiled. All the bishops except Metropolitan Archbishop Antonijs Springovichs were exiled. In 1947 he consecrated two vicar bishops. One of them – Kazimirs Dulbinskis – spent many years in the camps and exile and was not able to return to Latvia until 1964 – and he was not able to exercise his ministry until after 1989. The number of students in the seminary was limited to fifteen, which was then reduced to five in 1965. The number of living priests was quickly diminishing.

The Catholic Church in Lithuania was much stronger, even though it too had been subjected to violent repressions. The territory of Vilnius Diocese now lay within the boundaries of Lithuania, Belorussia and Poland. Many of the faithful from the area of Vilnius left for Poland and more than a hundred priests, having escaped arrest, went with them. Archbishop Romuald Jaƚbrzykowski was expelled from the USSR and later worked on organizing diocesan entities in Biaƚystok, in the Polish part of his diocese. In 1946 and 1947, 330 priests were hauled off from Lithuania to Siberia, including Bishop Pranas Ramanauskas and Bishop Teofil Matulianis, who had already served time in Solovetsky. In 1956 only 120 priests returned to their homeland – the rest finished out their days in their places of exile.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Foreign missionaries who had completed their prison terms – Fathers Pietro Leoni, SJ, Jean Nicolas, AA, Paul Chaleil, and Wendelin Jaworka [former rector of the Russicum] – were deported from the country after Stalin’s death,[[53]](#footnote-53) while others continued to serve out their terms in prisons and camps. Father Jósef Kuczyński, who spent seventeen years in prison, recalled, “I was always convinced that God had allowed the brutal maliciousness of this regime in order to provide religious help to the most exhausted people…. The most zealous pastors could never, on their own, have gotten where the regime sent them. There, in that frozen hell, real priests experienced the improbable joy of bringing comfort to tormented people.”[[54]](#footnote-54)

### The Manchurian Mission

We must devote a special page in the Martyrology of the Catholic Church of the former Soviet Union to the Manchurian mission.[[55]](#footnote-55) At the beginning of the 1900s, an apostolic prefecture had been formed, headed by priests from the Assumptionist order.[[56]](#footnote-56) War and revolution at the beginning of the century changed the situation, and some Catholics left Manchuria. In 1923, Father Karol Śliwowski was promoted to the rank of bishop and named the head of the newly erected Diocese of Vladivostok. At about the same, a community of Eastern Rite Catholics was growing in Harbin. From 1928, under a directive of the Holy See, it was headed by a priest of the Congregation of Marians, Servant of God Archimandrite Fabian Abrantowicz, MIC. Boarding schools, with many orphans among their pupils, were among the responsibilities of this developing mission. Harbin had several Catholic churches at that time. St. Stanislaus, the first of them, had been built by the Poles and was home to various Polish organizations (the missionaries were mostly Poles; the Eastern Catholics were mostly Belorussians); St. Josephat Church was built by [Blessed] Antoni Leszczewicz, a diocesan priest who served in Harbin from 1920 until 1937 when he returned to the West and entered the Congregation of the Marians. Father Abrantowicz played a special role in the Manchurian mission; he founded St. Nicholas Lyceum for boys and he looked after the boarding schools run by the Ursuline and Franciscan Sisters. The mission’s activity did not cease even during the Japanese occupation – the Marian priests from western Belorussia and the Sisters, although working under very constrained circumstances, nevertheless continued their educational activity.

The Latin Rite was also represented in Harbin. It was headed by Father Leon Piotrowski, OFM, who was to have become the Apostolic Administrator of Siberia, but he was never able to fulfill his duties on Soviet soil.

Repressions began in 1947 when the Communists came to power in China and culminated in 1948 with the arrest of all the priests and lay people who worked with them; they were all handed over to the Soviet authorities. Many met their death in the USSR: Father Abrantowicz; the Servant of God, Archimandrite Father Andrzej Cikoto, MIC, who had replaced Father Abrantowicz as administrator; and many lay Catholics who had helped them. The Sisters were expelled from the country. By 1949 most Europeans had left Manchuria; Russians were not able to leave for the USSR until 1954, and then only for settlement on virgin lands.[[57]](#footnote-57)

### The Liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church

The history of the liquidation of Uniatism in western Ukraine is still insufficiently researched.[[58]](#footnote-58) After occupying Lviv in September 1939, the Soviet regime did not particularly persecute the Greek Catholic Church. But Polish-Ukrainian antagonism, intensely inflamed during the war years, had taken more than one life, including clergy. This forced many Poles, after new borders were drawn in 1944-1945, to abandon their place of birth and head for Poland. But after the final establishment of the Soviet regime in western Ukraine, there came a time for persecution of the Greek Catholic Church.

Metropolitan Josef Slipyi, who had replaced the deceased Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, was arrested along with other Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops and numerous priests. On March 8-10, 1946, a group of priests headed by Father Havryil Kostelnyk, having agreed to join the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, convened the “Lviv Council,” sanctioned by Stalin, at which the 1596 Union of Brest was condemned and a resolution was adopted abolishing it and uniting Greek Catholics to the Russian Orthodox Church.[[59]](#footnote-59) In fact, the “Council” was not canonical and it was not supported by a single one of the arrested priests. According to memoirs of people who knew him, Father Kostelnyk convened the Lviv Council in order to save the Greek Catholic Church and its priests, because he was counting on the onset of a new war that would change the existing state of affairs.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The populace reacted to all this in various ways: some hid underground priests who were faithful to the Union; others attended the few Roman Catholic churches; but most continued to go to the same churches as they had before. The return of the churches after the recognition of the Greek Catholic Church during perestroika testifies to the fact that the people had continued to adhere to the Union.

Greek Catholic priests who had not submitted to the resolutions of the Council went underground and continued their ministry. When arrested, they were charged with supporting the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, just as the Roman Catholic priests were charged with supporting the Home Army. The investigatory organs had no interest in the truth of these charges – they simply wanted to crush the Church.

Greek Catholic priests in exile ministered to Roman Catholics as well as those of their own rite. It sometimes happened that Latin Rite priests, clandestinely prepared for the priesthood in Russia, would be ordained by underground Ukrainian bishops. The metropolitan of Lviv, Josef Slipyi, after many years in prison camps and exile, thanks to the personal intervention of Pope John XXIII, was released and allowed to go to Rome, where he later died.

## The Survival of the Church under New Conditions

As a result of border changes after the Second World War, the USSR now included within its boundaries:

* In Lithuania, several dioceses
* In Latvia, two dioceses
* In Estonia, a large community
* In Belorussia, the dioceses of Minsk-Mogiliev and Pinsk and part of the diocese of Vilnius
* In Ukraine, the dioceses of Lutsk, Lviv, Kamianets, and Zhytomyr and part of the diocese of Przemyśl
* In Ukraine, several Greek Catholic dioceses

Many Lithuanian bishops were arrested, including Bishop Teofil Matulianis who had “tasted” Soviet prison camps even before the war. Romuald Jaƚbrzykowski, archbishop of Vilnius, was expelled to Poland. The same fate befell Belorussian and Ukrainian bishops who had spent time in the prisons and camps and then later ended up in Poland. Living in Poland, they were formally ordinaries of their dioceses in the USSR; sometimes they were appointed administrators for other dioceses. In the post-war years, during the time of “repatriation,” most Poles left their place of birth and moved west to the new Polish lands that had been taken from Germany. The priests often went with their parishioners, who sometimes relocated en masse, as whole villages. There is no doubt that the reason more Poles left Ukraine than Belorussia and Lithuania was the massacre of Poles by Ukrainians that had been provoked by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army during the German occupation. In Lviv itself, as in other large cities of Ukraine, especially to the east of the pre-war Polish-Soviet border, there were more than a few remaining Roman Catholics, but there were few priests among them. In Belorussia and the area around Vilnius most Catholics remained where they had lived before, but many priests were arrested and most churches were closed. The people’s resistance, however, was so strong that Church life was preserved.

The situation somewhat improved in the beginning of the 1980s. The seminary in Riga, although under great restrictions, began to accept candidates for the priesthood from all over the USSR; but seminary life was monitored by the authorities who did not allow the enrollment of candidates with firm religious convictions. Women’s religious communities that had been preserved underground now carried out missionary activity not only in Latvia but in Kazakhstan and the Caucasus. Exiled priests also found the opportunity to minister to exiled Catholics. Aglona, a place of pilgrimage to the wonder-working icon of the Mother of God, played a special role in the preservation of the life of the Catholic Church not only in Latvia but in the entire USSR.

Of the several seminaries that existed in earlier times in Lithuania, only one now remained – in Kaunas – but even it, like the seminary in Riga, was not completely free. Candidates from other Soviet republics were almost never admitted because there was a need to educate priests for the many Lithuanian dioceses, but there were exceptions. Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusziewicz and Bishop Joseph Werth, for example, both graduated from this seminary. Priests were under constant surveillance, their contacts were monitored, and the KGB used methods that it had refined back before the war. Teaching children the catechism was forbidden, teachers who believed in God were dismissed from their jobs, and there was no Catholic press whatsoever. Bishop Vincentas Sladkevicius was arrested in 1959, and Bishop Julijonas Steponavicius, in 1960. Many churches were closed: some became galleries, such as the Vilnius cathedral; others became museums of atheism. In addition to priests, many representatives of a clandestine opposition to the regime were also arrested. A special role was played at this time by *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, illegally published beginning in 1972. This typewritten, illegally distributed journal became a chronicle of the repressions of the faith and the faithful. Human rights organizations were also cropping up in Lithuania and priests cooperated with these organizations, which were energetically persecuted by the KGB

When Nikita Khrushchev came to power, it seemed that the situation of Catholics in the USSR improved for a time. Many priests and lay Catholics who had been sentenced for their faith were now set free, although almost all of them were prohibited from returning to the western regions of the Soviet Union, and they remained living mostly in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.[[61]](#footnote-61) Some priests in those out of the way places managed to attain the legalization of their ministry, which of course did not give them complete freedom, since everything connected with religious activity came under the management of the Council on Religious Affairs [Sovet po delam religii]. Priests were under constant observation by the KGB and their parishes were infiltrated with informers.

Soon new arrests and the widespread closing of churches were once again underway. In Ukraine and Belorussia, this period saw the obliteration of many Catholic church buildings and ancient monasteries that were architectural gems. In the Baltic republics, the destruction of churches met with such strong opposition that the authorities limited themselves to the arrest of bishops, priests and the most active of the laity –the buildings themselves for the most part were spared.

After the Moscow Patriarchate’s observers returned from [an early session of] the Second Vatican Council, the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Josef Slypi, who had spent eighteen years in prison, was released.[[62]](#footnote-62) The Metropolitan received an invitation to participate in the work of the Council; at the border his Soviet passport was taken from him and thus it became impossible for him to return to the USSR.[[63]](#footnote-63)

In the 1960s, missionary activity took on a new life, with “wandering” priests now travelling all over the huge expanses of Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Caucasus and other places seeking out Catholics. The Capuchin Fathers Serafim Kashuba and Alexander Ben and the Ukrainian diocesan priest Father Josyf Svidnitskyi were among such priests. Thanks to them Catholics in the most remote places were able to receive the sacraments even though they did not have a church or parish.

We should also mention the illegal preparation of candidates for the priesthood. Official seminaries were under constant pressure from the KGB and candidates who were not approved by the authorities could not be accepted into the seminary or, if they were, they would be expelled. Some priests at that time organized the clandestine preparation of young men who, working in government establishments, in their free time studied theology and other subjects, taking their exams as extern students. This method of study could be found in Lithuania, Latvia, Belorussia, Ukraine and the Caucasus. Although they had gaps in their education, the priests who finished these clandestine seminaries turned out to be fine missionaries. Among those who thus completed their priestly preparation are the present-day bishop of Karaganda, John Paul Lenga; Father Antony Ghey, the rector of St. Petersburg Seminary; and Father Evgeny Geinrikhs, dean of the Northwest Region. Ordinations were performed secretly in Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania.

### The Role of Religious Communities

With time the Abrikosova community broke up and gradually ceased to exist. But in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Lithuania, the seeds sown by the sufferings and prayers of the Dominican Sisters continue even today to bear fruit. Many active members of the laity and several priests who came from the milieu associated with the Sisters of the Abrikosova community continue to serve the resurrected Catholic Church in Russia. The Zhytomyr community of Handmaids of Jesus, which had been in existence from long ago, also survived the war.

The preservation of religious life in the USSR became possible mainly owing to the annexation of lands where religious life was well developed: in western Ukraine, western Belorussia, Lithuania and Latvia. Although many Sisters left for Poland, community life was nevertheless preserved, especially in new congregations because these did not adopt a religious habit. Communities like the Eucharistic Sisters from Lithuania and Belorussia or the Sisters of the Congregation of the Poor Child Jesus from Latvia not only preserved their structures, they opened new convents in Kazakhstan and in the Caucasus. Under conditions where it was necessary to conceal one’s membership in a religious community, it was not easy to attract new vocations, all the more so given that Soviet education had made the concept of a religious vocation incomprehensible to young people. In order to open a new community anywhere the Sisters would have to obtain a residency permit, which was very difficult, and for this purpose they would take on jobs in those places that no one else wanted to do. Later they would try to transfer to another job where it would be possible to engage in clandestine apostolic activity.[[64]](#footnote-64)

The Sisters would gather the people for prayer, often in a cemetery or in some private home, and thus the community would be strengthened and eventually a priest would be able to visit it. A fine example of their accomplishments is given by the Latvian Sisters from the Congregation of the Poor Child Jesus who, having been in Kazakhstan and Georgia, finally settled in the city of Prokhladny in the very center of the Northern Caucasus. In the 1970s they gathered Catholics, mostly Germans, and thus sprang up the third Catholic parish in Russia (after Moscow and Leningrad).

It should be noted that there were also men’s orders in the USSR: Franciscans, Jesuits, Marians, Salesians and Dominicans. Men concealed their membership in these orders and served as ordinary priests. Even the head of a seminary seldom knew that a seminarian belonged to an order. Those not in seminaries prepared for the priesthood secretly, being ordained sometimes abroad (most often in Poland), and as priests for many years celebrated only underground liturgies. Thus they avoided the regimen of harsh restrictions imposed on priests who had been granted government registration.

### Priests without Documents

The registration of parish groups of the faithful was an especially important matter. Formally it was possible – but in practice it caused major complications. First a “Committee of Twenty” had to be set up, and it then became the core of the community and represented it vis-à-vis the authorities. Given that all aspects of religious life were subject to repressions, this was not a simple matter. Even if such a group could be assembled, many years of aggravation lay ahead. Things were simpler in places where Catholics made up the majority of the population, but even in such places churches were closed, especially after the arrest of the priests and the most active parishioners.[[65]](#footnote-65)

The fate of any priest was completely in the hands of the so-called “authorized representatives” of the Committee on Matters of Religion under the Executive Committee [of the Communist Party], which were in fact a weapon of the repressive apparatus of the authorities and exerted constant pressure. If a priest worked too diligently – teaching the young, celebrating Mass illegally, travelling about without permission from parish to parish – he could end up in a camp, but most often, especially from the 1960s onward, he would be deprived of his “certificate” – meaning the right to minister legally. If this priest tried to obtain the right to minister somewhere else, an inquiry would be made at his prior place of residence in order to get complete information as to his “political reliability.” Thus the life of a pastor passed in constant fear and humiliation and not everyone could endure it. Furthermore, any help given to priests, especially priests serving in the underground, subjected the faithful to danger – and thus those lay Catholics who did help their priests were real heroes.

Aside from the western regions of the USSR, the most favorable situation for Church life was in Kazakhstan. Many Catholics, especially Germans and Poles, had been deported there and they remembered traditional Church life. They often lived in the same place and were thus able to organize themselves into communities, sometimes even managing to open prayer houses and obtain government registration of a priest.

### The Role of Religious Education in the Home

The prohibition against teaching religion to children and young people under the age of eighteen existed practically until the time of perestroika. There were periods when, in certain regions of the USSR, this proscription was less rigorously enforced, but always and everywhere there were “volunteers” ready to denounce their neighbors, acquaintances, relatives. Teachers were supposed to keep track of whether their pupils went to church. Children, caught in such “crimes,” were excluded from the Pioneers, Komsomol and sometimes even from school. Therefore instruction in the home played the main role in imparting religious feelings to children and teaching them their prayers – and most often it was the grandmothers who were engaged in this, as they remembered the normal religious life in homes and parishes. The strength of the faith of the elderly is evidenced by what they kept: the prayerbooks, crosses, icons, Bibles, and rosaries that accompanied the faithful in exile, in the labor camps, and so forth. Crucifixes and icons hung in dugouts or in communal apartments and the image of praying grandmothers – all these became the primary catechism for many children and even though in school and at Pioneer and Komsomol meetings they were subjected to atheistic indoctrination, in their hearts were preserved the religious feeling or words of a prayer taught them at one time by their grandmother.

Parents, who no longer remembered parish life, did not have such firm faith and thus were seldom capable of handing it on to their children. A fear that was common for many at that time played no small role – namely, the fear that their children would be subjected to discrimination in school, that they would not be able to quietly finish their high school education and enroll in post-secondary institutions.[[66]](#footnote-66) In addition, remembering the humiliation of their parents, young parents tried to protect their children from these troubles. These fears even caused many not to teach their children their native language – this especially affected German children, who were hated by their peers even without this handicap. Many Poles and Germans even tried to hide their national heritage and became “russified,” thereby losing even their Catholics roots. The cause of all this was the bad attitude toward them that was unofficially propagandized.

Often parents, themselves brought up with atheistic propaganda, were no longer in a position to transmit the faith to their children. But despite this, some religious customs were at least partially preserved in families – the blessing of children, celebration of Christmas and Easter, rituals associated with funerals, wearing a little cross or medal, usually hidden. This allowed children and young people to carry the faith through their school years and also through military service, where a special emphasis was placed on atheistic indoctrination.

Although repressions gradually began to weaken, atheistic propaganda, persecutions of the faithful and arrests continued right up to the time of perestroika.

### Liturgies without Priests

In the absence of priests and given the great dispersion of Catholics, especially among the Germans, it was always one of the elderly who led the newly appearing prayer groups. Members of the group prayed and sang old religious songs, often corresponding to the liturgical season. These meetings were attended mostly by elderly people, who still preserved a need for liturgical prayer. The younger generation almost never attended these gatherings – they did not understand the very language of the prayers nor their meanings.

Natural leaders arose in these groups, people who not only led common prayer but also baptized children, organized Christian burials and taught parents how to perform the marriage blessing over their children. Grandmothers diluted water that had at one time been blessed in order to have some on hand for blessing a grave or Easter food.

In places where the faithful defended the church from being closed, but where there was no longer a priest, the parishioners themselves said Mass. There are written descriptions of such liturgies: the faithful placed a sacred host upon the altar, sang hymns and prayed the text of the Holy Mass from their prayerbooks. At the moment of the Transubstantiation of the Blessed Sacrament utter silence reigned in the church, sometimes broken by weeping. There were instances where the most faithful parishioners received from priests the right to distribute Communion, but the faithful were afraid of receiving Communion without going to confession.[[67]](#footnote-67) The staunchest Catholics would use any opportunity – a business trip, a vacation – to get to a functioning church where they could go to confession and receive Holy Communion.

“Wandering” priests gathered the faithful in homes, and during the night heard confessions, taught and baptized children, performed marriages and said Holy Mass – and left at dawn. We must note the heroism of those who secretly took in these priests – most often they were the same grandmothers who had led the prayers in the absence of a priest.

### The Role of the “Resettlement of Peoples” in the Preservation of the Church

Stalin’s “resettlement of peoples” led Catholics ending up in places that were completely new for them. Thus Poles from Ukraine and Belorussia were resettled in Kazakhstan and Siberia in 1937. The next deportations took place in 1939, as already described. In 1941 all the Germans from the European part of Russia were resettled in Kazakhstan, the Central Asian republics and Siberia. Massive deportations from the Baltic States and western Ukraine began after the Second World War. All these measures unexpectedly resulted in a positive side effect: the appearance of new, rather large Catholic settlements in places of exile. Many former prisoners remained in these regions as permanent residents.

At the end of the 1960s, when it became possible to relocate to more favorable places, Catholics would try to live not far from one another so that they could set up prayer groups that would eventually be visited by a missionary priest.

## Changes After Perestroika

Repressions became weaker with time. Political processes in the world, particularly in Eastern Europe from 1970 to 1980, played a considerable role in this regard. The Helsinki Accords on security and cooperation in Europe (1975), which devoted serious attention to human rights, instilled in many citizens of the USSR and the concentration camps a hope for the betterment of their life, including their religious life. The election of Pope John Paul II (1978) strengthened the spirit not only of Catholics, but also of many other believers who came to realize that people remembered them, that they were not alone.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Although in some places bureaucrats continued for a long time to create various obstacles, believers gradually rid themselves of fear and demanded the return of their churches. The wave of protests was especially strong in those territories where many Catholics lived, but in Russia itself, the matter was much more complicated…

Catholic parishes already existed in the capital cities – Leningrad and Moscow – and in Prokhladny, in the Caucasus, but the Prokhladny parish did not have its own priest and there was no way a priest from Moscow or Leningrad could go there. The opening of new parishes did not come about until perestroika, when new parishes were founded in Siberia, not far from Kazakhstan, which was more organized in this respect.[[69]](#footnote-69)

The Iron Curtain was lifted spontaneously: events in Poland gave meaning again to the word “solidarity,” then the Berlin Wall collapsed and the people began to return to their traditional values. Perestroika in the USSR led to the destruction of the foundations upon which Soviet society had been built. However, the seed of freedom, broadcast on unprepared soil, sprouted as ruin, arbitrariness, egoism, nationalism and irresponsibility. Religious hunger, presented with complete freedom of religious denominations, led not only to people’s return to the Church, but also to the appearance of various pseudo-religious groups.

An unstable society often looks for an enemy who is “interfering” with its normal development.[[70]](#footnote-70) People accustomed to taking as solid truth everything said in the newspapers or on the radio or television were not able to deal with the flood of information, and they often fell into apathy. One must take into account the fact that most Russians live on the edge of poverty – only a few have become wealthy – and even those associated with the Church are not always an example of Christian life. In such conditions, many do not believe in anyone or anything.

The enthusiasms of the first years of perestroika, when interest in religion sharply increased, have gradually given way to religious indifference. Faith communities grow slowly, sometimes only officially. Superficial religiosity has easily been replaced by magical and pagan phenomena, in which people do not turn to God nor do they harmonize their lives with Christian teaching.[[71]](#footnote-71)

It is under these circumstances that it falls upon us to re-establish the Catholic Church in Russia. In tsarist times it was considered a foreign religious faith, even though in terms of numbers of adherents it was second only to the Russian Orthodox Church. In Soviet times, the whole propagandist arsenal of historical phobias was deployed to justify the intentional destruction of the Catholic Church.[[72]](#footnote-72) In order that Catholics might occupy their proper place in contemporary Russian society, it is necessary to recover historical truth. It is with this goal that we publish our *Book of Remembrance*, which tells the story of how Catholics sowed the seed of their faith in this land and have now the right to be reborn from this seed – for the good of Russia and of the whole world.

Father Bronisƚaw Czaplicki

1. B. Kumor, “Kościoƚ i katolicy w cesarstwie rosyjskim,” in: *Odrodzenie Kościoƚa Katolickiego w ZSRR* (Lublin, 1993); B. Kumor, “Konkordat rosyjski z 3.08.1847 i utworzenie diecezji tyraspolskiej,” Manuscript (Lublin, 1998). (Paper prepared for a symposium dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the Tiraspol Diocese.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Archbishop Andrey Sheptytsky, Metropolitan of Lviv. He protected the birth and development of a movement of Catholics of the Eastern Rite in the Russian Empire. During the First World War, after the Russian Army captured Lviv, he was arrested and interned in Suzdal Monastery for “disobedient priests.” After the February Revolution in 1917, he was liberated and went to Petrograd where he presided over the First Council of the Russian [Eastern Rite] Catholic Church and, using the authority granted to him by the Holy See, he established an exarchy in Russia. Father Leonid Feodorov was promoted to the post of Exarch. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Shkarovskii, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Shkarovskii, p. 10. In other words, it was hoped that his apparently liberal tendencies would make him more acceptable to the Bolsheviks. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. D.V. Pospelovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ v XX veke* [The Russian Orthodox Church in the Twentieth Century] (Moscow, 1995), p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. V.I. Markov (Ed.), *Iz istorii Zemli Tomskoi 1917-1921: Narod i vlast’* [From the History of the Tomsk Lands, 1917-1921: The People and the Regime] (Tomsk, 1997), p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Pospelovskii, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Markov, pp. 292-294. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Shkarovskii, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Shkarovskii, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Markov, p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid., p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Polish-Soviet War, 1919-1920. Jósef Piƚsudski, then head of Poland, wanted Poland’s newly reborn state to lie within the boundaries of the former Polish Republic as a federated state. The Bolsheviks wanted to create a Soviet republic in Poland as a kind of bridge for spreading the revolution into Germany. Under these conditions, Polish Self-Defense Units were organized in Lithuania and Belorussia in 1918. The situation in Ukraine, where power was constantly changing hands, was considerably more complex. In the conflict of such differing political interests, against the background of Civil War in Russia, the outbreak of a new war was inevitable. Military action developed very quickly: at first, Minsk and Kiev were occupied by the Poles, but soon Bolshevik forces were threatening Warsaw. The outcome of this war depended on the Battle of Warsaw, August 13-25, 1920, when the armies stopped, having divided in half the territories of Ukraine and Belorussia. The Treaty of Riga, March 18, 1921, concluded the war, and the boundaries that it established remained in effect right up until September 17, 1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. M. Efimova, “Sud’ba episkopa” [The Fate of the Bishop], *Svet Evangeliia* (1998), No. 11, p. 4. See also biography of Bishop Karol Śliwowski. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Church property confiscated by the tsarist government in the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth became the Church Endowment. Although it was at the disposal of the Theology Collegium, which was connected with the State, nevertheless, along with contributions of the faithful, it comprised the economic foundation of the Catholic Church in Russia and could not be considered the property of the Soviet State (Shkarovskii, pp. 152-154). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. A separate chapter is devoted to these priests in *Kniga pamiati*. Translator’s Note: The online posting of biographies simply follows alphabetical order. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Irina Osipova, *Vozliubiv Boga i sleduia za Nim* [Having Fallen in Love with God and Now Following Him] (Moscow, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Dzwonkowski (1997), pp. 45-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Zygmunt Łoziński of Minsk; Edward Ropp of Mogiliev; Adolf Szelążek of Zhytomyr; and Joseph Kessler of Tiraspol. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Vasilii von Burman, OSB, *Leonid Feodorov: Zhizn’ i deiatel’nost’* [Leonid Feodorov: Life and Work], Rome (1966). Not translated, but see Paul Mailleux, *Exarch Leonid Feodorov: Bridgebuilder Between Rome and Moscow* (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1964). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. G. Shtrikker (ed.), Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ v sovetskoe vremia (1917-1991): Materialy i dokumenty po istorii otnoshenii mezhdu gosudarstvom i Tserkov’iu, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1995), pp. 39, 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid., pp. 39, 216-219, 222-223. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Translator’s Note: The word “Sunday” *voskresenie* presented special problems for atheists, inasmuch as it was derived from the word “resurrection” *voskresen’e*. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Irina Osipova (1999). In contrast to this publication, this same community is presented in a harshly critical light in the already-cited book by Deacon Basil von Burman, OSB, *Leonid Feodorov*. We will not challenge that opinion here inasmuch as this has already been done in Osipova’s book in an appendix titled “Protest” by Sofia Eismont, OP, one of the Sisters of the community, who analyzes Deacon Basil’s critical views. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Von Burman, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid., pp. 171-173. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Osipova, pp. 14-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Saint Zygmunt Felinski, SFO (1822-1895) was appointed Archbishop of Warsaw; he spent twenty years in exile in Yaroslavl following his protest of the Russian response to the 1863 Uprising. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. “Church bureaus” were created in association with local soviets and were in charge of church affairs. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Reznikova, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Von Burman, pp. 670-671. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid., pp 671-672. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Reznikova, pp. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid., pp. 26-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Iz istorii Zemli Tomskoi, pp. 137-140. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Księga Pamięci Polaków – ofiar komunizmu – pochowanych na Lewaszowskim Pustkowin pod Sankt-Petersburgiem, V. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1995), p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Iz istorii Zemli Tomskoi, pp. 25, 140-149. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “Minus” a number of major cities where they would not be allowed to reside. Translator’s Note: This could be three, six, nine – and by the 1940s there were 135. Rossi, *The Gulag Handbook*, p. 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Translator’s Note: For a full description of these special settlements, see Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin’s Special Settlements* (Oxford, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. I. Zaikina, “Usƚyszeliśmy ich glosy,” p. 169. Translator’s Note: A major work on this topic has now been published in Russian: Irina Osipova and Liia Dolzhanskaia, eds., *“Dorogaia Ekaterina Pavlovna…”: Pis’ma zhenshchin i detei, pis’ma v ikh zashchitu, 1920-1936* [“Dear Ekaterina Pavlovna…”: Letters of Women and Children, Letters in Their Defense, 1920-1936] (St. Petersburg, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Here one must take into account the fact that a large part of the Polish populace came under Soviet occupation, having taken refuge in eastern Poland from the Germans. After the annexation of eastern Polish lands to the USSR in 1939 there was a new wave of repressions. In 1940 and 1941 more than a million Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians and Jews were deported from the lands of western Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltic States. See Cz. Bloch, “Deportacje ludnosci polskiej,” in: *Odrodzenie Kościoƚa Katolickiego w byƚym ZSRR* (Lublin, 1993),pp. 162-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Z.S. Siemaszko, “Życie obywateli polskich,” in: *Polacy w Ko*ś*ciele Katolickim w ZSSR* (Lublin, 1991), pp. 154-156. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Siemaszko, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. K. Lorenz (ed.), Die römisch-katholische Kirche in der Sowjetunion (Eichstätt, 1990), p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid., p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid., p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The agreement dated July 30, 1941, between the Polish Government in Exile, headed by General Wƚadysƚaw Sikorski, and the Soviet government, set forth the terms for the organization of a Polish Army in the USSR. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Osipova (1996), pp. 103-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939-1945*, pp. 355-366. Translator’s Note: See [www.padrimariani.org](http://www.padrimariani.org) and Jan Bukowicz, *The Marian Martyrs of Rosica* posted on that website. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. M.T. Gorska, CSFN, “Męczennice z Nowogrodka,” *L’osservatore Romano* (Polish Ed., 2000), No. 2, pp. 55-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Home Army – Partisan formations organized on the territory of Poland; they led an energetic fight with the enemy during the period of German occupation. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Die römisch-katholische Kirche, pp. 38-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. S. Golovanov, *Katolichestvo i Rossiia* (St. Petersburg, 1998), p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. R. Dzwonkowski and J. Paƚyga, *Za wschodnią granicą 1917-1993*, p. 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. The beginnings of Christianity in China go back to the first centuries of the Christian era when Nestorian missionaries successfully labored there. But the evangelization of China by Catholics began during the general missionary surge in the sixteenth century and has not ceased since that time, although various political and intra-church difficulties have hampered it. Missionaries extended their activity even into Manchuria, which had come under the influence of the Russian Empire by the end of the nineteenth century. Many immigrants from Russia had settled in this region, including quite a few Poles. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. L. Peshkova, “Kharbin – Russkii i katolicheskii,” *Svet Evangeliia* (Jan. 17, 1999), pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid., pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. In order to understand the events that took place, one must know the whole history of Galicia. This land had been separated from the rest of the Russian world at a very early date. In the fourteenth century it was a part of Hungary – and subsequently it became part of the Polish state, at a time when other western Russian lands, including Kiev, became part of the Lithuanian Kingdom; they were unified in the Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1569. Various ecclesial and political processes led to the Union of Brest in 1596, which the Galician dioceses at that time did not accept. The growth of Uniatism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was connected with resistance to Protestantism, the rise of national consciousness (especially in Ukraine), the gradual strengthening of Muscovite Rus after its “Time of Troubles” (1605-1613), and the rapid decline of the power of the Polish-Lithuanian state. This process led both to the Galician Orthodox dioceses joining Uniatism and the strengthening of Orthodoxy in Belorussian and Ukrainian lands. The fate of Uniates on these territories depended on the stability of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the end of the eighteenth century a headlong liquidation of Uniatism was initiated by Russian authorities. This was carried out by various and often violent methods, all so that by 1839, with the unstinted aid of Nicholas I, Uniatism should cease to exist in Russia. It was still preserved for some time in the so-called Kingdom of Poland and it survived only in the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Galicia, where the Greek Catholic Church had a metropolitanate in Lviv and several other dioceses. It was the same in the period of the annexation of these lands to Poland after World War I. True, during the war, when the Russian Army occupied western Ukraine, which had become part of Austria-Hungary, among those arrested was the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, who then spent several years imprisoned in Suzdal Monastery. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Shtrikker, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’*, vol. 1, pp. 366-367. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Za wschodnią granicą, p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Golovanov, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid., p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Za wschodniąa granicą, pp. 327-336. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid., pp. 279-290. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., pp. 191-197 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ibid., p. 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid., p. 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid., p. 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. This hypothetical enemy can be whomever you choose: Zionists, the Vatican, America, NATO, and so forth. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. We have seen that one’s faith can be used to justify calls for violence or lies in the name of defending one’s political, economic and other very selfish positions. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Now in the present time [2000], the Church often suffers attacks, with the same methods that were used in the past. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)