

SECRET MISSION: EDWARD J. FLYNN'S TRIP TO MOSCOW

THESIS

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by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Nadine and Steve.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Yalta Conference was held from February 4 to February 11, 1945. At this meeting, Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Josef Stalin discussed the terms of the end of World War II and the status of their respective countries' relations. With Roosevelt was Edward Joseph Flynn, Roosevelt's personal political advisor and close friend. Although he attended no formal meeting of the Big Three, he was with Roosevelt constantly at leisure and down times. When the Conference concluded, Flynn traveled to Moscow with American Ambassador to the Soviet Union. W. Averell Harriman, Harriman's daughter Kathleen, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr. and various staff members. At Roosevelt's request, Flynn agreed to travel in secret to Soviet Russia in order to assess the status of religious freedom in Russia. Roosevelt wanted to press for a "permanent peace" and believed that Catholics in Poland, Lithuania, and the Balkans had to be able to "practice their faith freely" in order to achieve true peace and harmony in Eastern Europe.¹

After reviewing State Department messages, memoirs, and other secondary sources, however, it became clear to this author that Flynn, as well as Roosevelt, was deeply concerned about the religious situation in the Soviet Union and its affects on

¹ Edward Flynn, *You're the Boss* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1947), 185.

American Catholic opinion. Flynn was not merely a cog in Roosevelt's policy to neutralize or change Catholic and Roosevelt's intentions were not just to press for religious freedom. The purpose of this paper is to show that although Roosevelt was the primary architect of American policy towards the Soviets and American Catholics, Flynn not only advised Roosevelt but helped shape that policy. Flynn's mission to Russia was part of his and Roosevelt's quest to justify their policy of supporting the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Flynn's conclusions from his trip were an amalgam Soviet propaganda and Flynn's previously formed views. His real purpose was to support Roosevelt's desire to continue an alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union in the post World War II environment.

This study is undertaken largely because there is no scholarly assessment of Flynn's mission to Moscow. Of course, there are numerous books on Roosevelt's foreign policy and on various American diplomatic representatives to the Soviet Union. Flynn's mission is often mentioned in passing in these tomes, but no one has yet examined it against the backdrop of American-Soviet relations during and after World War II. Examination of Flynn's trip is also important because Flynn was an advisor and close friend of Roosevelt's, and therefore, this study helps to understand Roosevelt's decisions.

To complete this study I relied upon unpublished papers in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York, the published documents of the United States government, particularly the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Flynn's own account of his life and mission and numerous secondary sources. I also used memoirs and autobiographies of important actors. Historiography related to Roosevelt's foreign policy in World War II runs the gamut from those who think he had to make concessions

to the Soviet Union in order to gain Soviet support in the war against the Axis Powers to those who think he went too far and conceded more than was necessarily prudent, particularly in terms of the imposition of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe. The Catholic Church was particularly upset with Roosevelt's concession to Stalin because large numbers of Catholics live in Eastern Europe, and they fell under Soviet control from 1945 to 1989.

The Catholic opposition was a force that Roosevelt had to deal with. He was determined to play out his hand regarding Stalin, making an effort to accommodate his security fears even at the expense of the political and religious freedom of the people of Eastern Europe. To balance or divide Catholic opposition, Roosevelt pursued a number of policies, including making statements about religious freedom, lobbying the Vatican through the offices of envoy Myron C. Taylor, and finally using Edward J. Flynn, a prominent Catholic politician, to convince Catholics in the United States and in Rome that Stalin was not as bad as he had been depicted.

CHAPTER II

EDWARD J. FLYNN: THE PERSON AND POLITICIAN

Edward Joseph Flynn was born on September 2, 1892, in Bronx, New York to parents Henry Timothy and Sarah Flynn, both Irish Catholic immigrants. Flynn's father graduated from Trinity College in Dublin and then became a “minor executive” at the New York Central Railroad.² However, he preferred to devote his time to tutoring his five children, of whom Edward Flynn was the youngest, in various subjects such as art and history. Flynn's mother in an effort to financially bolster the family made small investments in New York real estate that eventually boomed and left the family financially well off.³

Flynn remained in the New York City area, where he attended school, practiced law, and eventually got involved in politics. In 1912, when he was twenty years old, he graduated from Fordham Law School, a Jesuit college founded in 1841. After he graduated, he passed the bar exam and was admitted to the New York Bar in June 1913. Shortly thereafter, Flynn partnered with friend William McKeown, also a Fordham alumnus, and established a law firm. The law firm achieved early success, and in 1917 Flynn agreed to run for the first political office of Assemblyman of Bronx County.

² Jill Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of an American City* (Bronx, Ny.: Fordham University Press), 42.

³ Richard H. Rovere, “Nothing Much To It,” *The New Yorker*, 8 September 1945, 28.

Flynn won the election and was later re-elected for two additional terms. However, Flynn did not enjoy politics. The Assemblyman office required him to be in Albany two months out of the year, away from his law practice in New York City.⁴ He had also followed in his mother's footsteps by reaping financial rewards from investments in Bronx real estate. Because of his healthy financial condition and his desire to spend time at the practice of law, Flynn decided to quit politics in 1921.⁵ However, the following year, he gave in once more to pressure from other Bronx politicians and agreed to accept the nomination for sheriff of Bronx County. He subsequently won and became the "youngest sheriff in the United States."⁶ Flynn quit his practice with McKeown, and he held the office of sheriff from January 1922 to 1925.

Flynn's Mentor

1922 was an important year for Flynn because it was during this time that he met Charles F. Murphy, the Democratic party boss and Tammany Hall leader in New York City from 1902 until he died in 1924. Murphy was known for his silence and for giving Tammany Hall a more respected reputation after the widely known corruption that existed under Boss William M. Tweed's leadership. Unlike Boss Tweed, Murphy pursued a more "Progressive Era" approach that sought to help the underprivileged, keeping "his own machine honest and responsive to community needs."⁷ Flynn was

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Edward Flynn, 51.

⁶ Jonnes, 44.

⁷ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933, The Age of Roosevelt, Volume One* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 388.

greatly affected by the personality and approach of Murphy, who Flynn named as the "third important influence" in his life after his parents.⁸

Murphy, who "taught Flynn local politics," told him that it was easier to avoid mistakes and problems by avoiding publicity. In fact, Flynn, though talkative among friends, "rarely" spoke to newspapermen, which differed markedly from before when he had a more careless, "prankish attitude."⁹ Flynn's grandson Stephen J. DeCosse remarked that Flynn preferred "silence and anonymity in his public life."¹⁰ Murphy's influence extended beyond this trait and changed the way Flynn practiced politics. After Flynn was elected leader of the Bronx in 1922, he ran "his Bronx machine in a similarly aloof manner."¹¹ In the same year, he became the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Bronx County Democratic Committee.¹² Secrecy was a necessary characteristic for a political boss, according to Flynn. Many times, the party boss "cannot make up his mind as to what course to pursue-or, more often, because it is not propitious to announce his decision at the precise moment the newspapers clamor for it."¹³

Because of Murphy's influence, Flynn also became "more conscientious and circumspect," and people "saw a reflection of Murphy in almost everything Flynn [did], even in the way he [shook] hands."¹⁴ Flynn's aloofness remained intact when he made

⁸ Edward Flynn, 70.

⁹ Rovere, 28.

¹⁰ Stephen J. DeCosse, "Edward J. Flynn: The Political Boss and Social Reform" TMs, 1978, Edward J. Flynn Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park.

¹¹ Rovere, 28.

¹² "Edward J. Flynn Biography," (Hyde Park: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library).

¹³ Edward Flynn, 229.

¹⁴ Rovere, 28.

the trip to Yalta with Roosevelt and Moscow on his own. Richard H. Rovere for the *New Yorker* noted that the only comment he made to his friends about his visit to Moscow was that "Marshal Stalin reminded him of the late Charles F. Murphy."¹⁵

Rovere also noted that even though Flynn was introverted, he enjoyed intellectual inquiry and discussions. He liked reading, particularly the "novels of Arthur Koestler."¹⁶ Koestler was a Russian communist who eventually changed sides and actively supported anti-communism. His most famous publication was the 1940 novel *Darkness At Noon*, a fictional account of Stalin's purges and the general destruction that was rampant in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Flynn thought that Koestler provided more information and insight about Soviet Russia and Stalin than contemporary newspapers and periodicals. Flynn was a "student of history," and he enjoyed contemplation in a wide range of subjects.¹⁷

On December 9, 1941, Benn Hall of Benn Hall Associates sent Flynn a copy of a newly published book entitled *Shepherds in the Mist* by E. Boyd Barrett. The book chronicles Barrett's religious experiences. Barrett was "widely known for his bitter attacks on the Roman Catholic Church," and in the book, he "reveals the inner crises which caused him to both forsake the active priesthood and bitterly attack the Church." Hall thought that Flynn "would enjoy reading it, not so much because it was a polemic but because it revealed the anguish of a soul attempting to find its way in life. It was another example of a friend of Flynn's who thought that he was an intellectual and had an

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 294.

open mind."¹⁸

After Murphy died in 1924, Flynn continued to act as sheriff until the following year. He also forged a new law partnership with Monroe Goldwater that lasted until Flynn's death in 1953. Their practice became the "preeminent political law firm in New York City."¹⁹

Flynn's Relationship with Roosevelt

Flynn noted in his memoirs that it was in 1924 that he began to become "more intimately acquainted with Franklin D. Roosevelt."²⁰ The two originally met in 1918 while Roosevelt was the Assistant Secretary to the Navy. Roosevelt, however, temporarily left politics to recover from polio in Warm Springs, Georgia. Nonetheless, Flynn and Roosevelt became good friends in the early 1920s, and Flynn "was one of Roosevelt's most frequent companions..."²¹

Flynn was Roosevelt's "favorite" boss.²² He particularly liked that Flynn was candid and did not varnish the truth because of Roosevelt's vaulted status. According to Eleanor Roosevelt, Flynn told FDR the "truth as he saw it and argued fearlessly." Their friendship was so strong that Flynn once hung up on the president during a phone conversation. It did not affect their friendship because, as Flynn said, "as with sincere

¹⁸ Ben Hall to Edward J. Flynn, L, Edward J. Flynn Papers (Hyde Park: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, 9 December 1949).

¹⁹ Jonnes, 59.

²⁰ Edward Flynn, 48.

²¹ Rovere, 28.

²² McCullough, 224.

friends, the quarrels never impaired our friendship.”²³ It did Roosevelt also valued Flynn’s personality and eclectic interests. According to Raymond Moley, a New Deal journalist and Roosevelt advisor, Roosevelt consulted with Flynn on matters other than politics because Flynn “who always seemed bored with politics, had read widely and could amuse Roosevelt with items far from statecraft.”²⁴

Alfred Smith, Governor of New York from 1923 to 1928, believed that Roosevelt should run for Governor in 1928, and because Flynn's relationship with Roosevelt was "very personal," Smith asked Flynn to convince Roosevelt to run. Flynn agreed and did just that. He then went even further. Flynn gathered financial backing for the campaign from John J. Raskob, “a wealthy industrialist and at that time chairman of the Democratic National Committee.”²⁵ Then he agreed to run the campaign. In the end, Flynn was "largely responsible for Roosevelt’s first election as Governor," according to author Rovere.²⁶ When Roosevelt assumed the governorship, he appointed Flynn Secretary of State for New York, though Flynn was reluctant to accept the offer. Flynn remained in this job until 1939.

While working with Roosevelt during his tenure as governor, Flynn's friendship with Roosevelt grew stronger. He became “a member of the charmed inner circle of personal friends” and was acquainted with Roosevelt's "methods of working and

²³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal: 1933-1935, The Age of Roosevelt, Volume II* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 579.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Jonnes, 62; Raskob funded the building of the Empire State Building. He later opposed Roosevelt’s New Deal program.

²⁶ Rovere, 28.

thinking."²⁷ Because Roosevelt felt that he could trust Flynn's judgment of people and political situations, he often called on Flynn for advice, especially when Roosevelt needed to choose a person for a particular political office. Even by 1932, Flynn was Roosevelt's "most trusted advisor among the professional politicians."²⁸

At one point in 1931 in the depth of the Great Depression, Roosevelt invited Flynn to stay at the gubernatorial mansion for a night, and he confided in him, "Eddie, I believe I can be nominated for the Presidency in 1932 on the Democratic ticket."²⁹ Roosevelt requested Flynn's help once again for securing the nomination. Flynn rejected Roosevelt's request to travel throughout the country to gather support from community and business leaders on the grounds that his introverted personality would make the job difficult. Instead, he readily agreed to assume a more behind the scenes role.

Up until Roosevelt secured the nomination in 1932, Flynn acted as a "mediator" between Alfred Smith, the other major potential Democratic candidate for president, and Roosevelt. He also acted as the primary communicator between Roosevelt and other political leaders working either for or against Roosevelt's campaign and prepared strategies.

During the actual campaign, Flynn worked behind the scenes, this time partnering with Louis McHenry Howe to plan Roosevelt's campaign tour. Flynn traveled with Roosevelt through California, which many considered to be a difficult state upon which

²⁷ Jonnes, 72; Edward Flynn, 77.

²⁸ Schlesinger, Jr., *The Crisis*, 278.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

to make an impression because it was poorly organized and too vast to cover quickly. Mistakes there could cost many votes, but Flynn made sure no mistakes were made.

After Roosevelt won the presidency, he immediately urged Flynn to accept an appointment in his new administration, and again, Flynn, who was consistently a "reluctant politician," declined. He did, however, help Roosevelt decide which supporters should be put into the newly available positions in the administration.³⁰

At the time of Roosevelt's election, Flynn's reputation as a powerful New York boss was solid. The number of registered Democrats in the Bronx county grew steadily under Flynn's leadership (325,269 out of 426,978 registered voters were Bronx Democrats), and those who worked with him respected Flynn greatly. According to one scholar, "anyone who failed to take Flynn's 'suggestions' seriously did so at his or her own political peril."³¹

Throughout Roosevelt's first term, he continued to rely on Flynn for advice. The following year, on September 21, 1933, Flynn had dinner at the White House, a frequent activity of Flynn's. Others present were James Farley, Vincent Dailey, Marguerite "Missy" Le Hand, Roosevelt's personal secretary, and of course Roosevelt. Farley reported that at this dinner Flynn and the others decided on that year's New York mayoral Democratic candidate.³²

Two terms later, in the summer of 1940, Flynn, in a conversation with James Farley, expressed his frustration with Roosevelt who had not yet revealed if he would be

³⁰ Edward Flynn, 123.

³¹ Jonnes, 71.

³² James A. Farley, *Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years* (Columbus: McGraw-Hill, 1948), 43.

running for president in 1940. Flynn told Farley that he was “going down to the White House and demand to know what Roosevelt [was] going to do.” He was not going to take orders from anyone. Farley reminded him that Roosevelt would maybe tell Flynn what he was going to do, but he would definitely not tell Farley.³³ Farley was not part of Roosevelt’s inner circle of friends.³⁴ Very few people were able to visit the White House on short notice. Flynn, who was a “devoted friend” of Roosevelt’s, also frequently spoke about politics and more mundane topics with the president at his Hyde Park home in New York.³⁵

Farley also recounted an event that took place in 1940 that showed the closeness of Flynn and Roosevelt. On August 1, a committee meeting was held to name the next Democratic National Committee chairman. Flynn was chosen, and Farley remarked, “I am certain the announcement was a surprise to everybody except Flynn. It was evident he and the President had decided before the meeting...”³⁶

Because Flynn “understood politics and the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church,” Roosevelt relied on Flynn’s advice regarding decision making, especially in the area of American Catholic policy. For the fourth term election, Flynn advised Roosevelt on possible choices for the vice presidential candidate. Flynn disapproved of John N. Garner, Roosevelt's choice, because Garner was from Texas, and Flynn believed that Catholics “would use this as an excuse for opposing the national ticket.” Flynn

³³ Farley, 238.

³⁴ Schlesinger, Jr., *Coming of the New Deal*, 579.

³⁵ McCullough, 294.

³⁶ Farley, 323.

emphasized the fact that the "feeling among Catholics was intense."³⁷ Ultimately, however, Roosevelt chose Garner because he "needed the Texas delegation."³⁸

Flynn had more impact in 1943 when Roosevelt needed to choose a new vice presidential running mate. Roosevelt favored James Byrnes, but Flynn worried that Byrnes would drive away Catholic voters because Byrnes had left the Catholic Church for the Episcopal Church for marital purposes. Flynn told Roosevelt that Catholics "wouldn't stand for it."³⁹ Because of Byrnes' departure from the Catholic Church and his racism, Flynn convinced Roosevelt to pick Harry Truman as the vice presidential candidate. David McCullough, author of *Truman*, noted that Flynn was responsible "more than anyone" for Truman's nomination.⁴⁰ He added that Flynn's "influence on Roosevelt on political matters exceeded that of anyone inside or out of the administration."⁴¹

Flynn was undoubtedly the most important Democratic leader in New York state, and any New Yorker's candidacy for national office needed Flynn's support. In fact, Flynn was "considered the most powerful boss in the country."⁴² He was "revered and feared" by Democrats. At a luncheon of the New York Democratic Party following Roosevelt's first presidential nomination, James Farley, chairman of the Democratic National Committee at the time, said, "I have met a lot of leaders in political life in my

³⁷ Edward Flynn, 105.

³⁸ George Q. Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency, 1932-1936* (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 10.

³⁹ McCullough, 297.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁴² *Ibid.*

time, but never have I met a man with keener political judgment and with finer and more perfect acumen on political affairs than your leader.”⁴³ Roosevelt and other Democratic leaders also lavished praise upon Flynn. However, the major hole in Flynn’s resume was his limited experience nationally and internationally. He was basically a shrewd and calculating politician at the local level, but since New York City, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, was his local level, he did have a certain self-confidence about managing people of all sorts and making decisions.

Flynn’s International Experience

Because of Flynn’s parochialism, it was somewhat surprising that Roosevelt nominated him to be the Ambassador to Australia in 1943. However, Roosevelt had extensive personal and professional experience with Flynn, so he knew that Flynn could handle the assignment. Many politicians, however, disagreed and objected to the nomination on the grounds that Flynn was a local New York party boss tied to the corrupt reputation of Tammany Hall and that because of his narrow geographic range, he would not be accepted or effective in international circles. Nonetheless, Flynn’s nomination went forward. He testified in Senate hearings, but in spite of Roosevelt’s support, the Senate surprisingly rejected the nomination. It was a rare loss for both Flynn and Roosevelt but possibly a harbinger of Roosevelt’s declining power.

Roosevelt, however, was not one to allow the Senate to stand in his way. As the war came to a close, he decided to tap Flynn for another critical international assignment – one that did not require Senate approval. Roosevelt brought Flynn with him to Yalta and then asked him to go to Moscow to investigate the status of the Catholic religion in

⁴³ Jonnes, 70.

the Soviet Union and negotiate between the Soviet government and the Vatican.

Roosevelt, of course, had a vast amount of talent at his disposal within the Department of State and elsewhere to accomplish these goals. But he wanted Flynn.

There are several likely reasons why Roosevelt chose Flynn as his envoy. First, Roosevelt deemed this particular mission extremely important and only a person with whom Roosevelt was intimately acquainted could be trusted to handle the task. Second, Roosevelt required secrecy, and Flynn without a doubt could be trusted to remain quiet. Third, Flynn possessed keen political insight and negotiating skills that he acquired while working on Roosevelt's governor and presidential campaigns. Fourth, Roosevelt wanted to reward Flynn and balance his embarrassing rejection by the Senate as Ambassador to Australia in 1943. Finally, Flynn was a Catholic, and therefore, American Catholics were more likely to respond positively to his assessment of the Soviet religious situation.

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN, SOVIET, AND CATHOLIC RELATIONS, 1930-1944

To appreciate the role that Flynn was to play in Roosevelt's foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, it is necessary first to describe the influence of the Catholic Church in the United States. The Catholic Church in the United States was a powerful institution and the country's largest single Christian denomination. During World War II, there were about 40 million Catholics in America. Groups that were mainly Catholic included "many German Americans and virtually all Polish, Irish, and Italian Americans."⁴⁴

Roosevelt sent Flynn to Russia to investigate the conditions in which Soviet Catholics lived. He was particularly concerned about religious freedom for Catholics because he understood that having the approval of powerful American Catholic leaders and the general Catholic population would allow him to make international policy decisions without fearing retribution. According to historian Peter C. Kent, "Roosevelt believed that he could avoid domestic difficulties with his Catholic supporters if he could lessen the tension between Moscow and Rome."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ralph B. Levering, *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance 1939-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 131.

⁴⁵ Peter C. Kent, "Toward the Reconstitution of Christian Europe: The War Aims of the Papacy, 1938-45," in *FDR, the Vatican, and the Roman Catholic Church in America, 1933-1945*, ed. David B. Woolner and Richard G. Kurial (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 169.

Catholic Opposition to the Soviet Union

Roosevelt was sensitive to Catholic opinions at the beginning of his presidency in 1933, especially because, in the opinion of Ralph B. Levering, author of *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance*, Catholic “hostility toward Russia had been unrelenting ever since the [Bolshevik] Revolution.”⁴⁶ It was important for Roosevelt to overcome or neutralize such Catholic opposition because he wanted a working relationship with the Soviet Union. Roosevelt was driven by the advance of Japan in Asia and the growing menace of a rearming Germany under a Nazi regime. From his perspective, it was critical to bring the Soviet Union out of its isolation, despite its ideologically driven policies, including its persecution of religion and the Catholic Church, in order to balance the growing threats in Asia and Europe.

The problem that Roosevelt faced in his diplomacy towards the Soviet Union was the prevalent anti-communism of Catholics. Catholics leaders and publications voiced their distrust and dislike of Soviet Russia as early as the Bolshevik Revolution, but particularly in the early 1930s when it became apparent that Roosevelt was on the verge of changing U. S. policy from one of non-recognition to recognition of the Soviet government. *Commonweal* and *America*, very influential Catholic journals, were decidedly anti-communist, and Catholics often cited them during this period.⁴⁷ Father Charles Coughlin of Detroit, a widely popular Catholic leader in the United States who addressed his followers through “weekly” radio broadcasts that reached approximately 30

⁴⁶ Levering, 36.

⁴⁷ Philip Chen, “Religious Liberty in U.S. Foreign Policy” in *FDR, the Vatican, and the Roman Catholic Church in America, 1933-1945*, ed. David B. Woolner and Richard G. Kurial (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 122.

million people, was also patently anti-communist and warned his audience about any rapprochement with the Soviet Union .⁴⁸

Catholics' main problem with the Soviet Union was its communist government. Communism was overtly anti-religious, and its followers called for the suppression and eventual elimination of religion. American Catholics consistently looked to the Vatican for religious and political guidance, and the Vatican remained stridently anti-communist prior to and throughout the entire war. The Vatican had condemned communism and the government of Soviet Russia on numerous occasions since 1917. Its position on the Soviet Union was well known and was more formally expressed in March 1939, when Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, which took brutal aim at the communist ideology. According to the pope, the most imminent danger the world faced was "bolshevistic and atheistic Communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization." He continued, "Communism, moreover, strips man of his liberty, robs human personality of all its dignity, and removes all the moral restraints that check the eruptions of blind impulse. There is no recognition of any right of the individual in his relations to the collectivity; no natural right is accorded to human personality, which is a mere cog-wheel in the Communist system."⁴⁹

When Pope Pius XII became the new leader after Pope Pius XI's death in February 1939, the Vatican continued its rigid stand against communism. The Catholic

⁴⁸ Charles R. Gallagher, "A Peculiar Brand of Patriotism: The Holy See, FDR, and the Case of Reverend Charles E. Coughlin" in *FDR, the Vatican, and the Roman Catholic Church in America, 1933-1945*, ed. David B. Woolner and Richard G. Kurial (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 269.

⁴⁹ Pope Pius XI, "Divini Redemptoris," (Vatican, 19 March 1937, accessed 30 October 2007); available from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19031937_divini-redemptoris_en.html; Internet.

Church was so anti-communist because it had been persecuted by the Soviet government since 1917, and with the events unfolding in the 1930s before World War II, it appeared as if communist influence and political control could spread into Eastern Europe where the Catholic Church had many believers.

Soviet Recognition

One of Roosevelt's first attempts to affect American Catholic opinion was during the Soviet recognition negotiations. In 1933, as mentioned, Roosevelt reversed America's previously held policy of non recognition of the Soviet Union. Roosevelt believed that an alliance with the Soviet Union would be economically beneficial to Americans who were "grappling with the effects of the Great Depression."⁵⁰ He also sought this new policy because the United States was the only remaining large country still refusing recognition, and the acquisition of an ally in Asia and the Pacific would help check the growing power of Japan and Germany.

In addition, Roosevelt just thought the American-Soviet relationship had to be normalized. In late 1933, Roosevelt reported to the press, "Since the beginning of my Administration I have contemplated the desirability of an effort to end the present abnormal relations between . . . the U. S. . . . and Russia. It is most regrettable that these great peoples . . . should now be without a practicable method of communicating directly with each other. The difficulties that have created this anomalous situation are serious but not, in my opinion, insoluble. . . ."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Department of State, "Recognition of the Soviet Union, 1933;" available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/id/86555.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 August 2007.

⁵¹ "Do It We Will," *Time*, 30 October 1933; available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,754005-1,00.html>; Internet.

One major problem with recognition of the USSR was Catholic Church opposition in America to such a policy initiative. Before beginning recognition negotiations with Maxim Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Roosevelt tried to ease American Catholic apprehension. The more prominent Catholic leaders and publications of the time expressed their dismay of establishing a partnership with a country that repressed freedom and religion, and they told various government bodies that to gain their approval, the Soviet Union must show some willingness to change its attitude and allow for the possibility of loosening religious restrictions both for Americans residing in the Soviet Union and Soviet citizens.

Catholics of all stripes protested to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the recognition of the USSR. One typical testimony came from representatives of the Holy Name Society of a parish in New York. It stated that the United States could not recognize the Soviet Union until the Soviets came to America "with clean hands."⁵²

Commonweal and *America* disapproved of Roosevelt's policy of recognition on the grounds that religious freedom in the Soviet Union was non-existent. *Commonweal* commented that recognition was an endorsement of "a social order guilty of [religious] persecution of the worse sense."⁵³ Roosevelt spoke of potentially large economic benefits from recognition, but both publications refuted this claim, citing the fact that the "USSR had no money or goods with which to trade." In May 1933, an article in *Commonweal* referred to the "inherent untrustworthiness and threat of the Soviets in that

⁵² Edward M. Bennett, *Recognition of Russia: An American Foreign Policy Dilemma*. Topics in United States Diplomatic History (Waltham, Ma.: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1970), 93.

⁵³ Chen, 122.

they supported local Communist parties in America in organizing to overthrow the U.S. government.”⁵⁴

In negotiations with Litvinov, Roosevelt expressed his concern about religious freedom for American citizens in the Soviet Union. In a letter to Litvinov, he stated, "I am deeply concerned that they should enjoy in all respects the same freedom of conscience and religious liberty which they enjoy at home."⁵⁵ He demanded assurance that American citizens could worship freely, congregate in churches, school their children individually or in groups, and receive instruction and services from religious leaders without interference from the Soviet government. He added that American religious leaders "will be protected from all disability or persecution and will not be denied entry into the territory of the Soviet Union because of their ecclesiastical status."⁵⁶

Eleanor Roosevelt noted in her memoirs *This I Remember* that her husband was “very proud” that he “insisted on inclusion” of religious freedom in the agreement.⁵⁷ However, no mention of religious intolerance of Soviet citizens was made in the agreement in part because intervention on behalf of Soviet citizens was seen by many policy makers as impossible, and it meddled in the internal affairs of another country, an action that the United States wanted to avoid. Secretary of State Joseph P. Cotton said,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 124.

⁵⁵ Donald G. Bishop, *The Roosevelt-Litvinov Agreements: The American View* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965,) 47.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

“The religious situation in Russia sounds outrageous but it seems to me that this government as a government must keep its hands off.”⁵⁸

The Soviets agreed to the specific demand of Roosevelt for religious freedom for people in the USSR because they were eager for recognition from the United States. By this time, every other major power had already recognized them. However, the Soviets faced conflict from Japan after the Manchurian invasion in 1931. Also, they wanted to buy materials from United States, although trade between the two had not suffered during non recognition that lasted from 1917 to 1933. The Soviets also faced pressure from Germany. Hitler became the German leader in 1933, which made the Soviets uneasy, even though they had not yet recognized the full danger of Nazism.

In his response to Roosevelt’s demand for religious freedom, Litvinov assured the President that the Soviet government would uphold the rights of Americans to religious liberty. He referred to the following articles in the 1936 Soviet Constitution.

Figure 1. Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution

In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the state, and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of antireligious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.”⁵⁹

Figure 2. Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution

In conformity with the interests of the working people, and in order to strengthen the socialist system, the citizens of the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed by law:

- a. freedom of speech;
- b. freedom of the press;
- c. freedom of assembly, including the holding of mass meetings;

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Soviet and American leaders oftentimes referred to Article 124 in the Soviet Constitution to prove the existence of religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

d. freedom of street processions and demonstrations.

These civil rights are ensured by placing at the disposal of the working people and their organizations printing presses, stocks of paper, public buildings, the streets, communications facilities and other material requisites for the exercise of these rights.⁶⁰

Roosevelt proceeded with recognition. His effort to secure the religious freedom clause in the act of recognition, the so-called Roosevelt-Litvinov Agreement, persuaded many Catholics to favor recognition or, at least, to adjust to the reality of recognition and hope for the best. Many American leaders and the general American public were perennially hopeful that the Soviet government would, over time, improve its undemocratic record. After all, the Soviet Union was a fairly new country that had emerged from a revolution. It then endured extreme hardships in World War I and World War II. Many Catholic Americans reasoned that with recognition the Soviets would receive greater exposure to American ideals of freedom and democracy and that gradually the Soviets would recognize the benefits of these ideals and adopt them. *Commonweal* declared that “publicly to acknowledge a concession...to religion, would be a sign to the whole world that the defeat of the Russian [sic] atheistic war on religion has begun.”⁶¹ The change in opinion of recognition was abrupt, but many American Catholics began to differentiate between the communist ideology and the Russian people.

The American press was also optimistic. *Time* magazine published an upbeat interview and commentary of Mikhail Kalinin, the Soviet head of state, in December 1933. *Time* called Kalinin, a “genial grandpa” with a wife who resembled Mrs.

⁶⁰ “1936 Constitution of the USSR” (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University, 1996, accessed 20 September 2007); available from <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/36cons04.html>; Internet.

⁶¹ Chen, 125.

Roosevelt. However, when Kalinin met with American reporters and was asked if he believed that Roosevelt's demand for "religious rights of foreigners in the Soviet Union had paved the way for a rapprochement between Moscow and the Vatican," Kalinin responded enigmatically, "I do not want to make propaganda." However, reporters did not interpret this negatively.⁶²

Unlike American Catholics who adjusted to recognition, the Vatican condemned Soviet recognition, saying that Litvinov's reference to Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution and assurance that freedom of religion would be upheld in the Soviet Union was not a concession from the Soviets. It was propaganda meant to trick Americans into believing that the Kremlin had ideals in common with the West. In the words of the Vatican, it was "clearly meaningless."⁶³

Myron C. Taylor's Mission to the Vatican

After the completion of Soviet recognition talks in which Roosevelt was able to convincingly prove the diplomatic need to recognize the Soviet regime to American Catholics, Roosevelt again tried to influence Catholics with the appointment of Myron C. Taylor as his personal representative to the Vatican. With the outbreak of World War II and Roosevelt's desire to split the USSR from Germany after the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939, Roosevelt decided to seek some kind of relationship with the Vatican. This was critical because influencing the Soviet Union to break with Germany and then possibly join the Western states against Germany required support from the Catholic Church in the United States and from the Vatican in Europe. Of course

⁶² "Front Man's First," *Time*, 4 December 1933; available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,746416,00.html>; Internet.

⁶³ Ibid.

Roosevelt could have simply tried to entice the Soviet Union without Catholic support, but it would have been a policy fraught with danger. The Catholic Church influenced politicians in Congress and public opinion in the United States, and the Vatican, for its part, had great sway in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe.

The political power of these groups was strong. Catholics in America increasingly aligned with the Vatican in regards to policy decisions in World War II towards Germany and the Soviet Union. Roosevelt, therefore, had to build and maintain a close working relationship with the Vatican. He placed pressure on the pope at times to release statements showing the Vatican's approval of Roosevelt's policies and urging American Catholics to follow his lead.⁶⁴

Myron C. Taylor was appointed by Roosevelt in December 1939 (announced to the public December 23, 1939) to be an envoy to the Vatican. This was the first time that an American president appointed an ambassador to the Vatican, and Roosevelt's decision was faced with criticism from the public. To some critics, this act represented a violation of church and state. Roosevelt, however, believed that Taylor's presence in Rome would critically aid in the pursuit of peace at the outbreak of World War II.

The Vatican had special contact with crucial people in countries that could help in peace negotiations. Also, Taylor's appointment also helped to bridge the gap between the President's policies and American Catholic desires.⁶⁵ Pope Pius XII was equally as adamant about preventing total war in Europe, and he gladly partnered with Roosevelt

⁶⁴ Kent, 166.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

and Taylor. Taylor and Pope Pius XII had a cordial relationship. They met frequently, and Taylor had "daily access to the Pope day or night, whenever desired."⁶⁶

Throughout the duration of his post, Taylor, under the direction of Roosevelt and Flynn (by advising Roosevelt), made numerous attempts to persuade the Vatican to accept the Soviet Union or at least tone down their anti-Soviet language. Shortly after Roosevelt appointed Taylor to the Vatican post, Taylor made a direct and strong protest to Pope Pius XII to interfere and "censure" Coughlin's anti-Semitism. In 1940, Roosevelt gave a letter to Monsignor Joseph P. Hurley, Secretariat of State for the Vatican, "concerning an anti-Jewish movement in the towns of Brooklyn, Baltimore, and Detroit." Taylor stated that the "President was informed that the movement [was] supported by Catholics in those cities." Despite Roosevelt and Taylor's attempts to convince the Vatican to censure Coughlin, the Vatican did not respond.⁶⁷

Roosevelt and Taylor approached the pope again several years later to obtain expressed approval of the Soviet Lend-Lease initiative. In 1941, when Roosevelt sought to include the Soviet Union in the Lend-Lease program, anti-Soviet feeling among Catholics was still prevalent. In a speech given February 2, 1941 in New York City, the President of Fordham University declared, "Now that the policy seems to point to the appeasement of Russia, since trial balloons are already in the air, the time has come to insist that Russia is still our principal enemy."⁶⁸ He added, "Religious freedom in Russia,

⁶⁶ James S. Conway, "The Vatican and U.S. Wartime Diplomacy" in *FDR, the Vatican, and the Roman Catholic Church in America, 1933-1945*, ed. David B. Woolner and Richard G. Kurial (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 145.

⁶⁷ Gallagher, 272; Hurley was an anti-Semite, and he never brought the subject of Coughlin's extreme anti-Semitism to the Pope's attention.

⁶⁸ Levering, 36.

so long as the Communists continue to rule, is impossible.”⁶⁹ A Gallup poll taken in July 1941 showed that 6% of Catholics (as opposed to 3% of Protestants) supported Germany, and 66% of Catholics (75% of Protestants) supported a Soviet victory.⁷⁰

In September 1941, Roosevelt asked Taylor to obtain an agreement from the pope that would help ease the American Catholic public's strong anti-communist and anti-Soviet feelings. In a letter to the pope dated September 3, Roosevelt explained his position on religious freedom in the Soviet Union. Roosevelt said, “In so far as I am informed, churches in Russia are open. I believe there is a real possibility that Russia may as a result of the present conflict recognize freedom of religion in Russia, although, of course, without recognition of any official intervention on the part of any church in education or political matters within Russia.”⁷¹

Unlike the prospect for religious freedom in Germany, Roosevelt continued, “there is a real possibility that Russia may as a result of the present conflict recognize freedom of religion in Russia.” Though Russia was governed by a “dictatorship,” the form of government was not as harmful “to religion, to the church as such, and to humanity” as the German dictatorship.⁷² Roosevelt added, “I believe that the survival of Russia is less dangerous to religion, to the church as such, and to humanity in general than would be the survival of the German dictatorship. Furthermore, it is my belief that the leaders of all churches in the United States should recognize these facts clearly and

⁶⁹ Ibid, 132.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 44.

⁷¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945*, ed. Elliott Roosevelt (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), 1204.

⁷² Ibid., 1205.

should not close their eyes to these basic questions and by their present attitude on this question directly assist Germany in her present objectives.”⁷³

The Vatican most definitely disapproved of any kind of alliance with the Kremlin. The American policy was “dangerous and superficial,” according to Cardinal Domenico Tardini.⁷⁴ However, to appease Roosevelt, the Vatican issued a statement to call for a more “lenient interpretation” of the Vatican’s encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, which stated that it was immoral to aid any communist country.⁷⁵

American Catholic leaders mirrored the actions of the Vatican, though they supported the Lend-Lease bill even without the Vatican’s approval. American Catholic leaders supported lend lease to the Soviet Union because they felt that it was necessary to defeat the Axis powers. Before the Vatican’s call for a more loose interpretation of the *Divini Redemptoris*, American Catholic leaders had difficulty maneuvering around the “seemingly strict papal injunction” to support lend lease to the Soviets. To justify support, they published numerous articles in *Commonweal* and *America* that made the distinction between communism as an ideology and the people who happen to live in a communist country. They also sought to “clearly distinguish the Soviet regime from the Russian people, as well as the Russian nation from Communism.”⁷⁶

Despite success with American Catholics, Taylor was not optimistic about the state of religion in Soviet Russia. In a letter to the American government, Taylor noted

⁷³ Levering, 51.

⁷⁴ Dennis Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin: America’s Ambassadors to Moscow* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 93.

⁷⁵ Conway, 146.

⁷⁶ Chen, 134.

that the United Nations reported that the number of Catholic churches in Russia (1,800) as reported by *Colliers* magazine was “completely false.”⁷⁷ The Soviet propaganda falsely “proclaims even a tolerance and an understanding for the Catholic Religion, respect for the Faith and religious practice and offers collaboration.” Taylor recognized the optimism reflected by leaders and members of the press but reminded Roosevelt that religion in Russia was not likely to be experiencing a revival and added that “it [was] necessary to follow a policy of watchful expectation and reserve.”

After the Vatican extended relations with Japan in January 1942, the relationship between the Vatican and the West deteriorated drastically. The United States, Great Britain, and even the Soviet Union lost respect for the Vatican after the recognition, and the Western powers no longer tried to persuade the Pope of his misaligned thinking. Similarly, the Soviet Union stopped trying to court the Vatican as strongly as before.

However, Roosevelt’s administration continued the struggle to improve American Catholic views of the Soviet Union into 1942, and he still used Taylor to affect papal opinion. In November 1942, Taylor constructed a statement that he felt the Soviet government should publicly announce and adhere to. Taylor stated that the “following might meet the face-saving requirements of the situation and constitute a declaration which, if sincerely made, would be meaningful.”⁷⁸ The Soviets should “publicly proclaim complete religious freedom, including freedom of worship and freedom of religious teaching, in all the territories of the Soviet Union.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States. *Diplomatic Papers 1944* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1964), 1220.

⁷⁸ Kent, 169.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

He added that if the Soviets agreed to this statement, “then it [would] have contributed immensely to present morale and future harmony among the United Nations. If it will not, then it is evidently better not to make, even by implication, a commitment on the acceptability of an ambiguous statement which would only aggravate the difficulty of post-war discussions by having another untrustworthy declaration on the record.”⁸⁰

Taylor’s assistance to Roosevelt continued throughout the war. On July 17, 1944, Taylor sent a letter to Roosevelt regarding the Soviet attitude towards Catholics in Poland. He said that the Vatican wanted to ensure that Catholic believers in Poland were free to worship, and it wanted the Russian government to give its word that this would occur. Taylor suggested that Stalin agree to a statement that said that Catholics must have “complete freedom of religious teaching and freedom of worship in all Soviet territory.”⁸¹ The pope and Domenico Tardini, Papal Under Secretary of State, agreed with this statement.

Taylor then told Roosevelt that there was not any “substantial improvement” in religious treatment in the Soviet Union since before the war. He added that “the anti-religious Soviet legislation always remains in vigor.”⁸² He cited the continued anti-religious propaganda and the many Catholic priests in Poland who were arrested and deported.

USSR’s Religious Policy and American Representatives

⁸⁰ Myron C. Taylor, FDR to Myron C. Taylor (Hyde Park: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, 3 January 1943).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Department of State, *Diplomatic Papers 1944*, 1219.

Various American politicians who favored assisting the Soviet Union also sought to affect American Catholic opinions. John W. McCormack, House Majority Leader, told Assistant Secretary of State Berle that he wanted to “liberate 135 Roman Catholic priests...” for a psychological angle in the United States.⁸³ The fact that an article entitled “Churchmen Back Country’s War” appeared in a Moscow News Bulletin, was related to the Secretary of State. The chargé in the Soviet Union added that this was “lip service to religious freedom,” “designed in particular for American readers.”⁸⁴

Two months later, Laurence A. Steinhardt, American ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1941, told Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who had days before told Steinhardt to acquire a helpful press statement, “I leave with the impression that the Soviet government will give lip service and make a few gestures to meet the President’s wishes but is not yet prepared to give freedom of religion in the sense that we understand it.”⁸⁵ Several days after this correspondence, he wrote to Hull again, writing that “freedom of worship exists in the USSR.” The “Soviet state does not meddle and does not consider such meddling necessary.”⁸⁶ He used Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution to prove his statements. It is unlikely that within the course of a few days, Steinhardt changed his mind and really believed that religious freedom existed. It is much more plausible that he wrote the explanation to give the American government ways in which to justify their statements that there was no religious persecution in Soviet Russia.

⁸³ Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States. *Diplomatic Papers 1941* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1004.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1005.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1002.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1003.

On September 11, just one week after reporting to the pope that churches were open in Soviet Russia, Roosevelt wrote to Konstantin Alexandrovich Umansky, the Soviet ambassador to America, saying that “some publicity regarding the freedom of religion in the Soviet Union might have a very fine educational effect before the next lend lease bill comes up in Congress.”⁸⁷

The Soviets were not at all sure what Roosevelt wanted, but eventually the message got through. On October 4, 1941, Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Soloman A. Lozovsky, read a prepared statement in Moscow. He said that all religions, namely Catholicism, were free in the USSR. Less than one year later, the Soviet government arranged to have a small book called *The Truth About Religion in Russia* published and sent abroad, particularly to the United States and England. It was a compendium of propaganda and falsehoods that masked the reality of religious persecution in the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, it was some evidence that the American government could point to in support of its argument that religious conditions had improved in Soviet Russia.

Joseph Davies

In April 1943, Roosevelt sent Joseph Davies, American ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1936 to 1938, to speak with Stalin. Davies was a well known sympathizer of the Soviet system, and he made large contributions to the positive assessment of the Soviets in the United States. For example, his 1941 book *Mission to Moscow* “had

⁸⁷ Department of State, *Diplomatic Papers 1944*, 999.

exercised considerable influence on American opinion” and was “well regarded by the Russians.”⁸⁸

While in Moscow, Davies advised Stalin to ease restrictions on religion in a way that would be visible to American citizens. Davies stated that “the Soviet image in the West would be greatly improved if they disbanded the Comintern and provided some evidence of religious freedom.”⁸⁹ The new policies, though they would not actually “ease” religious restrictions, would most importantly appear to Americans as an expansion of religious freedom. They would then be more likely to harbor positive feelings about the Soviets, and Roosevelt would more easily be able to create an alliance with the Soviets. Davies added that this was “not simply done, but if allowed to take place at the propitious moment, it would have great impact.”⁹⁰

In May 1943, “before Davies left Moscow,” the Soviet government allowed the election of a patriarch to head the Russian Orthodox Church.⁹¹ This was the first time since 1917 that the Soviet government allowed the election of a patriarch. Peter the Great “abolished” the office of the patriarch in 1721, but the Church elected a new patriarch, Tikhon, in 1917 before the Communist government took power. He was held under house arrest until he died in 1925 and no new patriarch was named.⁹² On September 12, 1943, Metropolitan Sergei became the new Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. In

⁸⁸ Roosevelt, 1273.

⁸⁹ Dunn, 186.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States. *Diplomatic Papers 1943* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), 855.

a *Moscow News* article that was forwarded from Soviet Union Ambassador Standley to the Secretary of State, Metropolitan Alexei stated that the Holy Synod is under the authority of the patriarch, and it is a “purely ecclesiastical body.”⁹³

The report also said that “whereas in Tsarist Russia the Synod included a representative of the State and the State actually directed the activities of the Church, the Church has now been completely separated from the State...”⁹⁴ Furthermore, Alexei stated that relations between the Church and the State were to be governed as Stalin and the Constitution prescribed.

According to the 1936 Constitution, there was separation of church and state in Russia. At the time of the revival of the Patriarch, Stalin dissolved the Comintern, which also helped to allay Westerners’ fears that Stalin was using the Comintern’s anti-religious programs to rid the entire Soviet Union of religion.

Averell Harriman

In October 1943, American ambassador Averell Harriman in the Soviet Union sent a telegram to Secretary of State Stettinius noting additional steps Stalin had taken to create the appearance of religious freedom. He stated that the Soviets renamed the Anti-Religious Museum, the Museum of the History of Religion. The director of the museum reported that antireligious membership levels and the number of active programs had drastically reduced during World War II.

The director spoke of other ways in which the anti-religious movement had slowed. For example, he replied that “there was no special anti-religious program in the

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 857.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

schools.”⁹⁵ After the war, he added that it was possible that the Soviet government would recommence anti-religious programs, but this would be done “by means of lectures in clubs, by reading programs in libraries, etc.”⁹⁶

Harriman noted that the Embassy also questioned “an experienced American observer in Moscow.”⁹⁷ This person visited the Office of the Atheists League and reported that the employees said that they were not participating in any current anti-religious programs but that anti-religious publications were available for purchase in some Moscow bookstores. Harriman noted, “it appears from the foregoing that anti-religious propaganda has virtually ceased in the Soviet Union during the present war...” and concluded that the Soviet position on religion was uncertain. He continued by adding that if and when the Soviets revived anti-religious policy after the war, it was probable that “the anti religious organizations ...[would] not be allowed to take such an openly hostile attitude toward the Church and religion as they did in the period before the present war.”⁹⁸

He also mentioned the fact that the government had an “unprecedentedly favorable attitude...towards the Church,” citing government supply of candles, plans for church restorations, the reprinting of Church writings, and the new election of the Patriarch and the Holy Synod.⁹⁹ Whether these were true or not, American Catholics were overwhelmingly doubtful. Roosevelt’s “effort to heal the breach between Russia’s

⁹⁵ Ibid., 863.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Observer’s name was not mentioned.

⁹⁸ Department of State, *Diplomatic Papers 1943*, 863.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Government and the Catholic Church appears not to be succeeding,” declared the *United States News* magazine in July 1943. “There had been hope, but this was something even America’s most persuasive politician was unable to bring off.”¹⁰⁰

In another message to the Secretary of State, Harriman remarked on the Russian Orthodox Church ceremony held January 7, 1944. During the ceremony, special attention was given to Americans, and the “desire to impress and flatter was obvious.”¹⁰¹ He also noticed NKVD officers in attendance.

Harriman’s letters to the Secretary of State show that the American government was suspicious of Soviet religious policy. The Americans knew of Soviet Russia’s history of religious oppression and knew that some oppression had taken place during World War II. With developments such as the revival of the Patriarch in 1943, however, Americans were more optimistic. Harriman admitted that the positive changes in policy were made because of the “stress of the war,” but he did note, with reserve, that once anti-religious policy was revived after the war, it may be less hostile.

Before World War II, Harriman reported that it was known that the Soviet government openly repressed religion by arresting and killing church leaders, destroying churches, and distributing widespread anti-religious propaganda. However, the words used by the Museum of the History of Religion director to describe possible future plans for anti-religious policies, such as “lectures in clubs” and “reading programs in the library,” had a democratic tone that hinted at toleration and freedom.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Levering, 133.

¹⁰¹ Department of State, *Diplomatic Papers 1943*, 865.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Though many believed Roosevelt's sincerity and even applauded his pro religious liberty stance, there was fear among Catholics that Roosevelt would be "misled into assuming that the freedom which [was] guaranteed under the Russian Constitution [had] any real resemblance to the religious freedom that we have known in America."¹⁰³ Since Roosevelt's primary concern at this point was defeating the Nazis, it was likely that he put aside his personal belief that all people should be guaranteed religious freedom for the purpose of gaining American support for a Soviet-American partnership.

¹⁰³ Levering, 52.

CHAPTER IV

FLYNN AT YALTA

The final effort of Roosevelt and Flynn to influence Catholic opinion came in Flynn's mission to Moscow. The Yalta Conference began on February 4, 1945, and while Flynn noted that he was not involved in any discussions or agreements, he did hear from other American officials present and the president what took place. He also dined with Roosevelt aboard the ship to Yalta on several occasions, and advised him on political matters dealing with Yalta.¹⁰³ At one point during the conference, Roosevelt "informed Marshal Stalin of his desire that [Flynn] visit Russia and discuss the entire relationship of the Catholic Church with Russia."¹⁰⁴

His mission to Moscow, however, had taken greater importance than simply an attempt to counter anticommunism among Catholics. Now Roosevelt was concerned about the postwar world, the prevention of future wars, and the preservation of some kind of modus vivendi with Stalin's Russia. To appreciate the added importance of the Flynn mission, it is necessary to describe briefly Roosevelt and Flynn's evolving strategy during and before the end of the war to maintain Soviet cooperation.

¹⁰³ Jim Bishop, *FDR's Last Year, April 1944-April 1945* (New York: W. Morrow, 1974), 272.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Flynn, 88.

United Nations Negotiations

The United Nations loomed large in Roosevelt's mind. To create a United Nations that would survive and be effective, meaning to prevent future conflict, Roosevelt first had to convince Stalin to participate. In 1942, the year that the United Nations first came to life, Roosevelt knew that he could not alienate Stalin for fear that Stalin would withdraw from the alliance and risk "an end to Russian military cooperation and perhaps an attempt by Moscow to conclude a separate peace with Nazi Germany."¹⁰⁵ Roosevelt continued his policy of cooperation with Stalin and the Soviets throughout the war so that after the war ended, the Soviets would desire to cooperate in the United Nations. Roosevelt's desire for Soviet involvement in the post war organization was the "theme of all his subsequent political, strategic, tactical, and public acts before he died."¹⁰⁶

The Conference

At the Yalta Conference, the Three Powers came to agreements about "liberated" Europe. They stipulated that "by this declaration we reaffirm our faith in the principles of the Atlantic Charter, our pledge in the Declaration by the United Nations and our determination to build in cooperation with other peace-loving nations world order, under law, dedicated to peace, security, freedom and general well-being of all mankind."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 48.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations, A Story of Superpowers, Secret Agents, Wartime Allies and Enemies, and Their Quest for a Peaceful World* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004), 58.

¹⁰⁷ Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Atlantic Charter*, The Avalon Project (New Haven: Yale Law School, 14 August 1941).

Roosevelt's most pressing concern was "Stalin's cooperation on the U.N."¹⁰⁸ Stalin finally agreed to the proposed voting system as long as the Soviet Union had three seats in the General Assembly. Because Roosevelt wanted to "guarantee Stalin's participation in the U.N.," he agreed.¹⁰⁹ Churchill, who had secured six seats for Britain, also accepted. However, Flynn disagreed with this arrangement. Flynn, along with James Byrnes, "warned Roosevelt that the isolationists in Congress would have a field day..."¹¹⁰ Roosevelt heeded Flynn's warning, and on the day before the conclusion of the Yalta Conference, he secured two additional seats in the General Assembly for the US.

After difficult negotiations, Stalin also "reluctantly" agreed to allow for a new government in Poland. The new government was to be "reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad and allow "the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot."¹¹¹ It was decided that the border would "follow the Curzon Line with digressions from it in some regions of five to eight kilometers in favor of Poland," and eventually Poland "must receive substantial accessions in territory in the north and west."¹¹² It was also agreed to create a

¹⁰⁸ Schlesinger, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II*, (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 266.

¹¹¹ Churchill and Roosevelt.

¹¹² Ibid.

commission with “Foreign Minister Molotov; the U.S. envoy, Averell Harriman; and the British ambassador to Moscow, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, to negotiate the details.”¹¹³

In November 1944, American bishops met to discuss the possibility of the proposed United Nations organization. They did not agree with Roosevelt’s Great Powers plan in which only the most powerful countries would have voting power. This was unchristian. In a letter to Roosevelt, they emphasized their support for his peace efforts but “warned” that for a lasting peace, the United States needed to take a “strong stand for justice” with the Soviet Union; they needed to “force” the Soviet Union to require religious freedom.¹¹⁴ Catholic leaders were especially upset about the Polish agreement, arguing that the United States was not abiding by the Atlantic Charter. They felt vindicated somewhat when Stalin violated some of the terms made at the Yalta Conference. Stalin did not heed to agreements about prisoner of war exchanges and Poland.

Catholic opinion in the fall of 1944, leading up to Flynn’s visit, did not significantly change. *Catholic World* published an article in October saying, “The greatest potential menace to permanent peace is Soviet Russia.” “Fascism is not and never was as dangerous as Communism.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Schlesinger, 60.

¹¹⁴ Kent, 171.

¹¹⁵ Levering, 172.

CHAPTER V

FLYNN'S MISSION TO MOSCOW

In a *New York Times* article published on February 14, 1945, Flynn declared that his trip to the Soviet Union had “no significance.” He went “simply as an old friend and associate of the President” and because “he had always wanted to visit Russia.”¹¹⁶ Though it is true that Flynn was an “old friend and associate of the President,” Flynn’s statement that his trip had “no significance” is an almost comically gigantic misrepresentation. His trip, or rather his mission, was highly significant. In a telegram to the British Foreign Office on March 14, 1945, the British government asserted that Flynn’s mission had a very specific purpose. He went to Moscow “with a view to reassuring American Catholics on this point [religious freedom] on his return.”¹¹⁷ Though very few knew it at the time, Flynn also sought a rapprochement between the Vatican and the Soviet government, which also had the ultimate aim of reassuring American Catholics, especially after the upsetting Yalta Conference agreements.

Flynn devoted a chapter in his book *You're the Boss* to his trip. He began by explaining that “sometime early in 1945, during a general conversation at the White House, the subject came up about the position of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia

¹¹⁶ Edward Flynn, 184.

¹¹⁷ Kent, 172.

and the Balkans after the war.” The “President felt there could never be a permanent peace unless the large Catholic populations in Poland, Lithuania, and the Balkans were permitted to practice their faith freely.”¹¹⁸ They agreed that Flynn would travel with Roosevelt to the Yalta Conference and then travel to Soviet Russia after Yalta.

It is interesting to note that in his autobiography, Flynn says that he is investigating the Catholic religion in “the Balkans.” This implied that the Soviet government exercised control over the Balkan regions in early 1945.

Roosevelt asked Flynn to interview Soviet officials, including Joseph Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, and religious figures and observe Soviet life. Flynn felt “very strongly” about this mission.¹¹⁹ Roosevelt also asked that Flynn travel in secret; Flynn visited Russia as an “unofficial guest,” and he had no visa or passport. To travel, Roosevelt signed a uniquely drafted letter that allowed Flynn to travel through Russia without trouble. Despite his desire for secrecy, Roosevelt did inform Pope Pius XII of Flynn’s impending visit.

Trip Events

While in Moscow, Flynn visited with Soviet officials but stayed in the American Embassy. When he arrived there, Flynn wrote that he “went for a walk to gather what impressions [he] could of the people.”¹²⁰ He observed that the Russian people had a limited sense of style, but he did concede that the children appeared to be happy and healthy. His first visit was to a Moscow orphanage. The orphanage food was adequate,

¹¹⁸ Edward Flynn, 185.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 189.

the children were happy, and “all placed a high emphasis on the military aspects, and the Soviet state and glorified the Red Army exploits.”¹²¹

He was then “taken” to a boys’ elementary school where he witnessed obvious malnutrition. There was, however, exquisite artwork on the walls. The school representative bragged that the artwork was created by the advanced students at the school, but Flynn believed the works to be too professional. He noted that this was “obviously a model school” and a “splendid example” of the high achieving schools that the Soviets were trying establish.¹²²

Flynn then met and talked with Georgi G. Karpov, Chairman of the Council of the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church. According to Karpov, his job was to ensure that freedom of religion was upheld. He addressed grievances made by the Church and worked with the government to address the problems so that the Church “could minister to the spiritual needs of its communicants.”¹²³

Flynn noted that Karpov described his role in religion as limited. Karpov continued to imply that freedom of religion in the Soviet Union was allowed by saying that although there were not any church schools, priests could preach in their private homes. Young people who were members of the Young Communist League were indeed allowed to join the Orthodox Church, and Karpov added that “some of them even wore crosses.” Flynn later confirmed the fact that some students wore crosses with the secretary of the Moscow Oblast Young Communist League, who said that through lectures they discourage religion among young people.

¹²¹ Ibid., 190.

¹²² Ibid., 191.

¹²³ Ibid., 192.

Karpov also said that the number of churches was growing and that since the Revolution, none of the 16,000 churches that was open before World War II was ever closed. The Russian Orthodox Church was under the jurisdiction of Karpov's organization, but he claimed to have no knowledge about how churches under other religious groups such as Catholicism were managed.

Flynn noted that Karpov's office was located in the same building on the floor above the office of I. Polyansky, who was Chairman of the State Commission for the Affairs of Religious Cults. This particular organization supervised religions other than the Russian Orthodox Church including Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Protestant denominations. Flynn met with Polyansky and found his interview to be disappointing. Polyansky seemed nervous, and when asked why he knew so little about the work of the organization, he referred to the fact that the organization had only commenced the previous July and "a census of faith was still being taken."¹²⁴ In other words, Polyansky said that his organization had not taken any actions because they did not yet have enough information about the beliefs of the Soviet people.

Flynn met with other religious and government leaders, including Molotov. Flynn explained in his memoirs that he could not divulge most of what was said with Molotov because of the delicacy of the situation. He noted, however, that when asked about religion, Molotov said that he was not religious but that it might be good to adopt religion in his old age. Flynn was amused with this comment because he knew that Molotov was a communist and thoroughly against religion. Flynn also met with Patriarch Alexei in a meeting arranged by Karpov. The Patriarch repeated many of the facts made

¹²⁴ Ibid., 194.

by Karpov including that statement that churches numbered about 16,000 and priests were allowed to instruct in private homes.

Father Leopold Braun

Flynn met with many official Soviet religious leaders, but he also met with Father Leopold Braun, who was chaplain of the US Embassy in Moscow and a pastor at the St. Louis des Français Church in Moscow, which was located across the street from a political prison. Braun arrived in Russia in 1934 to serve as a priest in the American embassy and while there, he struggled to carry out his religious duties in the face of Soviet interference.

In late 1941, after the Americans asked the Soviets to make a gesture that would please American Catholics, restrictions against Braun were greatly reduced. By 1945, he was in poor physical and mental condition, however. Several American statesman tried to send another American priest to assist Braun, but Stalin would not approve a visa. He would only allow a replacement.¹²⁵

Braun experienced hardships brought about by Soviet oppression first hand, and after witnessing changes in Soviet policies, he concluded that the Soviet's new religious policy was not a relaxing of church freedoms. The "relaxation" "was sustained by the government not out of conviction but out of expediency," and therefore, no one could trust the Soviet government.¹²⁶ Braun exclaimed, "the Soviets were *not* our Allies." Braun related these accounts and conclusions to Flynn and told of the diminishing presence of Catholicism. According to Braun, his assessment was "the absolute contrary

¹²⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States. *Diplomatic Papers 1945*, 1111.

¹²⁶ Leopold Braun, *In Lubyanka's Shadow: An Assumptionist Priest In Stalin's Moscow, 1934-1945*, ed. G.M. Hamburg (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2006).

to what the visitor had been hearing from the mouths of suddenly freed and highly influenced spokesman of all faiths.” Braun felt that Flynn “did not want to hear the truth” and that Flynn “was quite unhappy at seeing [him] destroy the wonderful impression he had acquired and was prepared to take home.”¹²⁷

Flynn did not understand Braun’s grievances because, after all, the St. Louis des Français Church, the church where Braun presided, was in operation. Braun conceded that his church was allowed to remain open. However, “the St. Louis church of Moscow was the one and only remnant of 1500 other Catholic churches of the Latin rite alone, left open in the entire country...” Braun added, “On his return he could report that Catholicism in the Soviet Union was operating.”¹²⁸ Flynn’s reaction was not unusual. Braun explained that many Westerners branded Braun as anti-Soviet and anti-Russian. In February 1945, while still visiting the Soviet Union, Flynn wrote that he agreed with other Western dignitaries; Braun had to move back to the United States and be replaced with another priest.

Flynn’s Conclusions

At the end of his stay in Moscow in late February 1945, Flynn admitted that the Soviet system was complex and confusing. With only a short amount of time spent in Russia, he found it difficult to come to any definite conclusion. Even people who had resided in Russia for a longer period of time would have difficulty making a fair judgment because they had probably “seen no more” than he did.¹²⁹ Though he felt he

¹²⁷ Braun.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Edward Flynn, 202.

did not have enough information to make any decisive conclusions, while also admitting that he found the Soviets to be less than frank, Flynn's concluding analysis seemed to be a defense of the Soviet system.

First, in his defense of the Soviets, he said that the Soviet system was too new. It had existed for only 27 years by 1945, and this was not enough time to develop a fully functional and efficient society. Flynn compared the system to early America; when the United States was 27 years old, it was no more advanced than Russia in 1945.

Second, Flynn pointed out that the Soviets were "in an all-out war effort."¹³⁰ They expectedly produced only military goods and no consumer goods. Thus, Soviet citizens experienced hardships, but this, too, could improve once the war ended.

Third, Soviet people were not of European descent; "their minds are mostly Asiatic and their thinking follows an Asiatic trend." In a letter to his wife, he stated that "the situation here is so complex and so contradictory that it is difficult to form any definite opinions." When he spoke of the Asian character of the Soviets, he noted that "they try to be cooperative and pleasant by sometimes one has a feeling that they to say the least are not entirely frank."¹³¹

Fourth, though the Soviets used "high-handed methods" in the areas outside Russia including Poland and the Balkans, this desire to protect borders was not unusual. Again, he alluded to American relations. "Our [American] Army and Navy today are insisting that we should have control of various islands in the Pacific in order to protect our Pacific shoreline. We are, however, making no mystery of this occupation. If Russia

¹³⁰ Ibid., 203.

¹³¹ Edward J. Flynn to his wife, Edward J. Flynn Papers (Hyde Park: Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, February 1945).

followed the same procedure in the Balkans and in Poland, surely the rest of the world would not disagree with her.”¹³² With this statement, Flynn seemed to be defending Soviet domination of Poland and the Balkans.

Fifth, he asked, how can Americans expect the Soviets to share information when other countries also do not this? He added, “If there were a free and uncensored exchange of news-Russia would no doubt be better understood by the entire world.”¹³³

¹³² Edward Flynn, 203.

¹³³ Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

POST YALTA AND THE FLYNN MISSION

Roosevelt predicted Catholics' negative response to Yalta, and to assuage Catholics, part of Flynn's mission was to try to improve relations between the Vatican and the Kremlin.¹³⁴ Flynn went further, however, after Stalin violated some of the Yalta agreements.

Flynn's Advice to the British

After Flynn left Moscow, he spoke with Harold Macmillan, head of the British Foreign Office, on March 21 about the situation in Soviet Russia. Macmillan found that Flynn's approach to Russia was "political" rather than "diplomatic," and he spoke about the Soviet Union from a party boss's perspective, as if the government of the Soviet Union was a political machine headed by a boss with a spoils system and patrons who benefited or did not benefit from the machine. In a telegram to the British Foreign Office, Macmillan stated that Flynn thought "the Russian set up was the best-knit political machine that he knew of." In Flynn's words, "That bunch was tough."

¹³⁴ George Flynn, 172.

Flynn believed that the British had “made a mistake emphasising the pre-eminence of Stalin. He was Boss but he had only such ... [power?] as the machine gave him.” He also told Macmillan that Stalin “had gone rather further at Yalta than the ‘Boys’ cared for and that Russian policy since Yalta was due to the ‘Boys’ making themselves felt.”¹³⁵

The wording of Flynn’s assessment without a doubt resembles that of a political party boss rather than a diplomat. Formally, most of Roosevelt’s envoys to the Soviet Union were trained diplomats, and so Flynn’s perspective was unusual and because of that, helpful. His reference to Stalin as the “boss” shows that in his eyes, the Soviet Union was a political machine, similar to the New York political machine. The British wrongfully believed that Stalin was all powerful, that he did not answer to anyone else in the Soviet government. However, Flynn believed that the Soviet government was a political machine. Therefore, it was impossible for Stalin to maintain power unless he gave some concessions to other members, the “Boys,” of the government. These people helped put Stalin in power, and they could remove him if he acted out of place.

While Flynn was the Bronx boss, he stipulated, “in order to remain in that position I must always have the Committee votes to support me. My control is entirely dependent on this support. If a majority of the Committee decided they no longer wanted me, they could call a meeting tomorrow and supplant me.”¹³⁶ A boss will be able to keep his position, however, as long as “the key party members have some sort of exempt positions,” or political offices.¹³⁷ In other words, the major players in the machine, as

¹³⁵ Foreign Office, “Views of Mr. E. Flynn on Policy of Soviet Union, 21 March 1945,” Russian Correspondence, 1945, text-fiche.

¹³⁶ Edward Flynn, 224.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

well as their children and spouses, were “taken care of.”¹³⁸ The “business of patronage” determined the success “of a party and a leader.”¹³⁹ He added that he was never in real danger of losing his position as boss because he also maintained control over choosing “who should be appointed to positions that control exempt jobs.”¹⁴⁰ His “long association with the party” and his “absolute control of exempt positions” was a “powerful influence in my control.”¹⁴¹ Additionally, a party boss must be a good guesser. He must know which person to choose and back for an election.

In response to Stalin’s violation of the Yalta agreements, Flynn told Macmillan that “Harriman and Sir A. Clark-Kerr should present a joint note asking for certain definite assurances on two or three main points regarding Poland.”¹⁴² He continued, “If they did not obtain a clear and satisfactory reply they should politely close the negotiation with a carefully worded reply. We should refuse to be drawn into prolonged and useless talks. The Russians should be faced with our refusal to be associated with anything except strict adherence to the agreement. No desire to settle Polish ...[issues?]. . . San Francisco Conferences should allow us to ...[weaken?]. . . or to be embroiled in a net of talk.”¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 225.

¹⁴² Foreign Office.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Flynn also warned Macmillan that the “Yalta honeymoon was over and the Senate would cut up rough when the reality of an unhappy ‘mariage de convenance’ was apparent.”¹⁴⁴

Flynn and the Vatican

Time reported on April 2, 1945, that Flynn and Taylor traveled to the Vatican to meet Pope Pius XII.¹⁴⁵ Flynn, “fresh from Cairo, Moscow, and Yalta,” met immediately with the pope, who rescheduled an audience with Pietro Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, the Prefect of Propaganda Fide. According to the article, Flynn met with the pope for 56 minutes and then met with Monsignor Domenico Tardini, the “Vatican's Secretary for Extraordinary Affairs and president of the special Vatican Committee for Russia.”

When asked by reporters why Flynn was at the Vatican, Flynn stuck to his original story. He “was making the personal pilgrimage of any good Catholic.” Flynn gave away very little to reporters, adding that he had discussed with the pope Vatican-Soviet relations “just casually, very casually.” He added, “I’ve come here on a mission from the President and whatever is to be said about it must be said by the President, if he wants to say anything after I get home and report to him.”

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ “Visit to the Vatican,” *Time*, 2 April 1945; available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,775464,00.html>; Internet.

CHAPTER VII

REALITY OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE SOVIET UNION

There were some doubters within the American government and the academic world who believed that the Soviets were merely offering the Americans lip service and that because the Soviet Union was a communist dictatorship, it would never adopt American ideals. People who held these views oftentimes lived in the Soviet Union and had experienced the frustrations and restrictions of Soviet life.

In reality, life in the Soviet Union differed greatly from how it appeared on paper in the Soviet Constitution or in Soviet laws and decrees. Soviet life was harsh and religious freedom was virtually non-existent. Various US State Department ambassadors (Bullitt, Davies, Harriman, Kennan) to the Soviet Union made note of religious restrictions on many occasions. These memoranda were read by Roosevelt, and Roosevelt regularly met with ambassadors and State Department Soviet experts. However, Roosevelt did not rely solely on the State Department for information about the Soviet Union. He also asked some press corps members to inform and advise him.

The purpose of Flynn's trip was to negotiate between the Vatican and the Soviet Union and return to the United States with a positive assessment of the religious situation in the Soviet Union. Flynn accomplished the latter. While the relationship between the Vatican and the Soviets did not improve, he did come to the conclusion that life in the

Soviet Union was indeed harsh and difficult but that over time it would improve and religious freedom would likely exist. Whether or not Flynn actually believed this is questionable. His autobiography *You're the Boss* was written in 1947, only two years after his Soviet mission. Therefore, it is very likely that in 1947 he was still reluctant to speak openly about what occurred. He omitted a great deal of his actions in the Soviet Union and the Vatican from his book. It is also true, however, that many statesmen at the time agreed with Flynn's assessment that conditions in the Soviet Union would probably improve over time. This view was widely held, and so, it is also very likely that Flynn really did believe this as well. The fact remains, though, that life in the Soviet Union was considerably harsher than Flynn depicted it in his autobiography.

In Roosevelt's 1940 speech to the American Youth Congress Councils, he stated that he "heartily deprecated the banishment of religion" in the Soviet Union. He added that he had expected that Russia would "eventually become a peace-loving, popular government with free ballot, a government that would not interfere with the integrity of its neighbors."¹⁴⁶

From these memoranda and reports, it is clear that Roosevelt remained fully aware of the true status of religion throughout his entire presidency. He knew that the Soviet government was a communist dictatorship that suppressed religious freedom and harassed religious followers, both Soviet and American citizens, including American religious leaders such as Father Leopold Braun. In 1940, Roosevelt acknowledged that the Soviet Union was a dictatorship.

¹⁴⁶ Benson S. Grayson, ed., *The American Image of Russia, 1917-1977* (New York: Ungar, 1978), 151.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the Soviet government feared the possibility that the Soviet people would not fight. Soviet loyalty was at a low point because many resented Stalin's brutal regime. In 1939, Stalin took the Western borderlands to bolster Soviet strength and provide a barrier for foreign invaders. However, Stalin used very harsh tactics when obtaining the land, such as burning peasants' fields. He also cared nothing for Soviet prisoners of war, suspecting them of disloyalty for not dying on the battlefield. His attempt backfired, and many Soviets despised their government after this event. Steven Merritt Miner, author of *Stalin's Holy War*, argued that Stalin was trapped by a crude class analysis based on Marxism. His pursuit of policies that attempted to completely eliminate the bourgeoisie in the borderland also diminished domestic support for the Soviet Union.

Despite the government's fears, many fought, though these were mostly ethnic Russians who fought to defend Russia, not the Soviet Union. Russians also fought because they witnessed Nazi atrocities first hand. While Hitler could have gained the loyalty of the Russian people and drawn open support from the Vatican, Hitler's profound racism caused him to lose these opportunities. He instead plowed through parts of the Soviet Union, simultaneously eliminating the Soviet people in his path and fueling Russian nationalism and a willingness to fight among the Soviet Union's inhabitants.

Resentment of Stalin was especially strong in the churches, which were often hotbeds of Soviet dissent. Stalin reorganized this and altered Soviet policies to quiet dissent in churches. Stalin also used churches, particularly the Roman Orthodox Church because he could control its actions, to reinforce Soviet power.

After Germany invaded, Stalin let up on religious persecution in order to prevent Soviets from joining the German side. First, Stalin allowed Sergei of Moscow, a Russian Orthodox leader, to raise funds for the Red Army. This formerly illegal activity helped promote Soviet loyalty among the religious. Sergei also issued a statement requesting Orthodox followers to extend loyalty to the country. He spoke of the struggle against the Nazis as a “Holy War” and accused Nazis of atheism while referring to the Soviet Union as the “defender of Christ.” Sergei peppered his pro Christian, anti-German speech with hate.¹⁴⁷

Politically, Stalin and his government benefited from the change in religious policy. They were able to draw the people into the fight against the Germans, and most significantly, they used the Russian Orthodox Church to recruit and control dissidents. The change in policy, however, was only cosmetic; no real changes towards religion occurred. From 1941 to 1944, the Soviet government continued to follow its policy of suffocating religion while making visible policy changes that appeared in the eyes of Westerners to be the beginning of freedom for Soviets.

¹⁴⁷ Steven Merritt Miner, *Stalin's Holy War Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 77.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The long, 3,000 mile trip to Yalta was difficult, and Roosevelt was physically weak. Roosevelt's weakened condition is a testament to the importance that he placed on the Yalta Conference.

The primary purpose and main factor determining American foreign policy during World War II was to end the war and create a situation in Europe that would prevent another war. To ensure peace, Roosevelt supported the creation of the United Nations and the involvement of the Soviet Union in the United Nations. Soviet involvement made American Catholics uneasy, and their hesitancy threatened to prevent the organization's establishment.

Flynn, a Catholic and powerful politician, advised Roosevelt on many political issues, and he was a pivotal member of Roosevelt's inner circle who helped to shape American policy. Flynn's influence extended into the international arena. While on the Yalta trip, Flynn and Roosevelt worked together to create a strategy that would, first of all, include the Soviets in the post world war organization and second, gain the acceptance of the American public, especially Catholics, and American politicians. On April 12, 1945, Flynn learned that Roosevelt had died. Upon Roosevelt's death, Flynn's mission ended, and he returned to the United States to attend the funeral.

Although Flynn did not have the opportunity to meet with Roosevelt face to face at the conclusion of his trip, he did keep Roosevelt updated throughout his mission in Moscow and the Vatican, and he did achieve at least some of his objectives. Although the Vatican never warmed towards the Soviets, American Catholic distrust of the Soviets did not stand in the way of the international peace organization. The United Nations was established shortly after Flynn's mission, and therefore, both Roosevelt and his devoted friend and primary advisor realized their goals.

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