

# THE LITTLE KNOWN SIDE OF FR. EDMUND WALSH

## HIS MISSION TO RUSSIA IN THE SERVICE OF THE HOLY SEE

MARISA PATULLI TRYTHALL

*Another and perhaps more important thing is that yesterday I have met here,  
in Washington, a really intelligent and influential colleague of mine (F. Walsh)...  
Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.<sup>1</sup>*

Fr. Edmund Aloysius Walsh, S.J., 1885-1956, was, first of all, an educator-priest who dedicated his life to Georgetown University<sup>2</sup> – the first Catholic University to have been established in the United States (1789). The home to this Jesuit University – the community of Georgetown which borders the Potomac River to the northwest of Washington, D.C. – became an integral part of the nation's Capitol in 1871 and this geographical unification, metaphorically at least, of Church and State, of sacred and civic duties, was to be

---

\* Abbreviations: Georgetown University Library, Special Collections Division, Washington, D.C. = GUSCD; Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu = ARSI; Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. = MDLoC; Louis J. GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., A Biography*, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1962 = GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*; Harold H. FISHER, *The Famine Relief in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration*, New York, Macmillan, 1927 = FISHER, *The Famine Relief*; Benjamin M. WEISSMAN, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1974 = WEISSMAN, *Hoover and Famine*.

<sup>1</sup> *Lucile Swan Papers*, «Letter from Teilhard de Chardin», GUSCD, Box 1, Folder 76.

<sup>2</sup> This article was drawn from a lecture given by the author at Georgetown University during her residency there as *Visiting Researcher*, 2008-2009.

essential to the life and work of Father Walsh – whose own multifaceted career was intimately connected with Georgetown University, with Washington D.C. and, internationally, with the United States' emergence on the world scene as a major power.

Father Walsh first went to Georgetown University to fulfill his Jesuit re-gency as a teacher in the High School Department from 1909 to 1912. Subsequently, in 1918 – following the completion of his theological studies and his ordination as a priest, he was appointed Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. His name would remain uninterruptedly in the University's annual catalogue as Professor, as Regent and as Vice President for the next 38 years – until his death in 1956. Although he traveled widely throughout his lifetime – often remaining abroad for extended periods of time, his ultimate destination was always his beloved Georgetown University where he professed his solemn vows<sup>3</sup> and where, in fact, he now rests in the small Jesuit cemetery to the right of the University's Harbin Hall.

Father Walsh remains particularly well remembered on the Georgetown campus due to the institution he founded in 1919 and which, since 1958, bears his name: the "Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service" – the very first American educational program dedicated to preparing students for international service in diplomacy and business. Regent of this institution from 1919 to 1921 and 1924 to 1952 (the interruption corresponds with the completion of his final year of Jesuit studies in Paray-le-Monial, France, and his Papal mission in Russia), the care that he showed in nurturing this School throughout his life at Georgetown and the significant results which this educational program has obtained would indeed provide reason enough to justify the esteem which is generally accorded Father Walsh. But, as befits the founder of such a prestigious institution, Edmund Walsh's personal services as an international diplomat (he represented at various times both the Holy See and the United States government) and his intensive activity as an author and lecturer in the advocacy of his geo-political views, were equally significant facets of his life and were, in fact, to reach far beyond the boundaries of his University to leave a lasting imprint upon the United States and upon international relations.

Pope Pius XI conferred several assignments on Father Walsh: three diplomatic missions - the direction of the Vatican's program for famine relief in Russia (Papal Relief Mission to Russia) in 1922-23, a mission to aid in the

---

<sup>3</sup> «... *Insuper, promitto specialem Obedientiam Summo Pontifici circa missiones prout in ejusdem Litteris Apostolicis et Constitutionibus continetur. ...*» Walsh professed his solemn vows, of obedience to the Pope, in Dahlgren Chapel, Georgetown University, on March 27, 1924, Fr. John B. Creeden, S.J., President of Georgetown University, officiating.

settlement of the church-state conflict between the Catholic Church and the Mexican revolutionary government in 1929, a mission to Iraq in 1931 which resulted in the establishment of a Jesuit led High School in Baghdad (Baghdad College) – and a Papal assignment to organize and direct “The Catholic Near East Welfare Association” (CNEWA - a large American fund raising association described by Walsh as “A Society in Aid of Catholic Interests in Russia and the Near East”) from 1926 through 1931. As diplomatic missions go, a more diverse array of challenging political and social conditions would be difficult to imagine – Bolshevist Russia caught in a merciless famine, Mexico during the “Cristero Rebellion” and Baghdad just at the moment of Iraq’s transition from British mandate to independent state. Each situation totally different, each situation fraught with tension and requiring a great deal of political acumen in order to achieve satisfactory results.

The American government also entrusted Father Walsh with a series of responsible positions. The first one, in fact, foreshadowed that which would become his lifelong involvement with U.S. government military matters. In 1918, shortly after his appointment in May as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Georgetown University, he was called to Boston by the United States War Department to become Assistant Educational Director for the New England States of the newly formed Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.).

He became, essentially, a personal liaison between the Army and the New England Colleges and Universities – many of which were converted into units of the S.A.T.C. – and dealt directly with issues involving student induction and the adjustment of college schedules to Army requirements (1918 to January 1919)<sup>4</sup>. In 1942, he was appointed Consultant and Lecturer by the Geopolitical Division of the War Department and carried out lectures and courses at major Army centers throughout the country. From 1945-46, he was consultant to the U.S. Chief of Counsel, Judge Robert H. Jackson, at the Nuremburg War Trials researching and giving advice on matters relating to Nazi religious persecution and the role of Karl Haushofer, the geopolitical theoretician whose ideas regarding “Lebensraum” were adopted by the Nazi regime. In 1946 he was selected by President Harry S. Truman as a member of a 9 person civilian commission, the “President’s Advisory Commission on Universal Military

---

<sup>4</sup> This field experience - the search for officers qualified for duty abroad - directly acquainted Walsh with a variety of New England colleges, their curriculums and the level of their students’ preparation. This sharpened his awareness of the inadequacies of the American curriculum in preparing students for service in international situations and, upon his return to his position as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Georgetown University, he founded the School of Foreign Service.

Training” and, from 1948 through 1951, he was a member of President Truman’s “Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces”<sup>5</sup>.

In Washington, he was a well known public figure – not only due to his association with Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service and the reputation it was rapidly acquiring, but also because of the public stances he took on a number of important issues having to do directly with the political life of the United States. He was, most certainly, not the type to hide his opinions, nor to ask others to express them for him. In fact, for 18 years beginning in 1924, immediately following his return from Russia, he delivered a public lecture series which was devoted to Russia and the dangers which international communist expansion posed to the free world<sup>6</sup>. This annual series of ten to fourteen lectures was widely attended by the Washington public and provided Father Walsh with an ample and on-going forum from which to voice his concerns.

His insistence throughout the years, in fact, was to make him a national symbol of anti-communism. Having had a close-up view of Soviet Russian communism and its anti-religious component, atheism, during his 21 month presence in Russia, Father Walsh – long before most Americans – had no illusions as to the serious threat which international communism posed both to his Country and to his Church.

Walsh’s vital public role within the Washington community was praised by another well known Washingtonian, Vannevar Bush, whose pioneering scientific vision forecast internet and who, in his role as Director of the U.S. government’s newly formed Office of Scientific Research and Development (1941-45), oversaw the development of the first atomic bomb. In his note of congratulations to Walsh on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Walsh’s entry into the Jesuits, Bush wrote:

*May I count myself as one of your friends and add my own congratulations on a long and distinguished career? It is a fine thing that you are here in Washington where your sage counsel often modified the course of events in a salutary manner, and we who have worked with you on occasion hope that this beneficent influence may long continue<sup>7</sup>.*

Similarly President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his letter of condolence to President Bunn of Georgetown University in 1956, summarized Walsh’s life-long contribution in the following words:

---

<sup>5</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Curriculum Vitae, GUSCD, Box 11, Folder 702.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>7</sup> *Vannevar Bush Papers*, General Correspondence, MDLoC, Box 116, Folder 2765.

*The death of Father Edmund A. Walsh is a grievous loss to the Society in which he served so many years, to the educational and religious life of the United States and to the free peoples of the Western World. For four decades, he was a vigorous and inspiring champion of freedom for mankind and independence for nations. His voice was influential throughout this country and in many lands overseas because he spoke with knowledge and conviction and a sympathetic concern for all peoples. And, at every call for duty, all his energy of leadership and wisdom of counsel were devoted to the service of the United States. His University and his Society - all who knew him well - mourn his death. But they can find in his memory the deathless inspiration of a life that was dedicated to the advancement of human rights and dignity and spiritual stature. Will you extend to the members of the University family and the Society of Jesus my personal sympathy in the death of Father Walsh?  
Sincerely, Dwight Eisenhower<sup>8</sup>.*

In a follow-up letter written a week later, President Eisenhower added this personal reminiscence:

*In the note I wrote you expressing my sympathy to you in the death of Father Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., I failed to say that in 1928 I had the rare privilege of listening to a magnificent lecture of his on the growing menace of communism. I think that I could recite some parts of it today.  
Sincerely, Dwight Eisenhower<sup>9</sup>.*

Delivered some 28 years after Walsh's lecture by the Five-star General who played such a strategic role in the defeat of Nazi Germany and who, as President of the United States, had directly faced Russia and the 'menace of communism', President Eisenhower's heart-felt tribute provides us with a clear idea of how memorable – and accurate – Walsh's geo-political vision was – and how clearly his well chosen words conveyed his convictions to his listeners.

It was, in fact, Father Walsh's gift with words – if I may interject a personal note – that was the first striking characteristic I noticed in his regard. As an Italian scholar working at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, my own acquaintance with Father Walsh initially came in a very different context: through my awareness of the roles he played in Papal missions connected with the Eastern churches. Thanks to subsequent research in the General Archives of the Society of Jesus located in Rome, I found his correspondence with the Vatican hierarchy in regard to the last of these missions - the conception and

---

<sup>8</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Correspondence re: Walsh, 1965-57, GUSCD, Box 2, Folder 114.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*

eventual establishment of Baghdad College<sup>10</sup>. This correspondence dealt with various aspects of organizing the mission and, with the exception of Father Walsh's letters, was uniformly dry and formal. On the other hand, Father Walsh's letters – written, according to the occasion, in English, French or Latin – transmitted a vision of what the proposed institution could be. They were informed by a lively, imaginative spirit and stood in marked contrast to the lackluster correspondence that surrounded them. This first contact with his literary spirit – elegant, clear, and dynamic – literally charmed me and provided my first inkling, I suppose, of Father Walsh's remarkable qualities as a writer, as a person and as a leader.

At the time, of course, such expressivity might not have been as well appreciated by his European counterparts. There was, in fact, a certain European prejudice – with an aristocratic edge – against the candid American spirit. The Father Provincial of the newly created New England Province outlined this well in this excerpt from his letter to the Jesuit Curia in 1927:

*We [the American Jesuits] have not the same exterior appearance of piety that I have noticed on the continent. Our men are liable to misinterpretation in Europe, because we instinctively hide what we hold precious. Conversely in the U.S., the exterior manifestation of being pious is apt to be taken for hypocrisy, universally by people at large, and to a certain extent by members of the Society. If Jesuits in the U.S. gave the impression of trying to look holy, we would have no influence whatever. Boys, people in general, would scorn us. I do not mean that we do not practice the rules of modesty. We do practice them as well as others. I speak this way, because as long as I have been a Jesuit, I have felt that the American Jesuits were not regarded as real Jesuits by the Jesuits in Europe, but as a sort of third order of Jesuits<sup>11</sup>.*

Conversely, Father Walsh, as a Jesuit in America, might well have encountered the reverse situation from his own countrymen – a lingering suspicion about the “European control” of the American Jesuit order and the feeling that other Catholic orders and institutions were more truly “American”, less tied to European ways, more authentic representatives of the American religious experience<sup>12</sup>.

In this complex context, then, Walsh's assignments – which brought him considerable attention and acclaim at home and abroad – also generated resentment within a few members of the Church hierarchy – a resentment which,

---

<sup>10</sup> *Missio Iraqensis*, ARSI, M. IRQ. – 1001 – I.

<sup>11</sup> *Informatio Procuratoris*, Fr. Fisher Report, 1927, ARSI, NEN – 1001 – I.

<sup>12</sup> RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, *The American Jesuits*, New York, New York University Press, 2007, 95.

in combination with other factors, would bring his years of Papal missions to a close. Nevertheless, all four assignments were extremely formative for Walsh.

For ten years they provided him with a world stage on which to demonstrate his considerable organizational and diplomatic capacities.

Following this brief introduction to Father Walsh, let us now turn our attention to what may be termed “the little known side of Edmund Walsh”: Father Walsh’s Papal missions from 1922 to 1931 and, in particular, to his first mission. As mentioned previously, Pope Pius XI assigned three diplomatic missions to Father Walsh: the Papal Relief Mission to Russia in 1922-23; the “secret” Papal mission to Mexico to participate in the settlement, “Arreglos”, between Church and State in 1929; and the Papal mission to Iraq, in 1931, which culminated in the establishment of Baghdad College.

These three missions had several factors in common:

1. The international situation that led the Vatican Curia to select Father Walsh
2. Pope Pius XI, who sanctioned these missions personally
3. The Church hierarchy.

Following the conclusion of World War I, the United States assumed its position as a world leader. While Europe had been devastated by the war and was struggling towards reconstruction, the United States had remained untouched and was enjoying a strong economy. Post-war American citizens contributed generously to alleviating the suffering in Europe (for many, it was perceived to be a filial duty) and still had money to contribute to the American church of their choice – which they did abundantly. These facts did not go unnoticed by the Vatican Curia which, of course, benefited indirectly and directly from the American affluence. They were also aware of the frequency with which the Church’s interests paralleled those of the newly arrived world power and the crucial importance of exploiting this connection. It was, therefore, natural that they looked to find an American Catholic who was equally at home with the workings of the United States government and with the workings of the Catholic hierarchy, had the confidence of both institutions and was capable of dealing with complex diplomatic situations. All of the preceding applied to Father Edmund A. Walsh.

Pope Pius XI, who conferred these missions on Father Walsh, had succeeded Pope Benedict XV on Feb. 6, 1922. Three weeks later, Walsh was on his way to Rome to discuss his appointment as Director General of the Papal Relief Mission to Russia operating under the auspices of the American Relief Administration (ARA). In reality, this relief mission was several months over-



due. Pope Benedict XV had been active on behalf of Russian famine relief since the summer of 1921 and had hoped the Papal Relief Mission – in collaboration with the ARA – would begin in October of 1921 (the month after the ARA had begun its work in Russia). According to Monsignor d’Herbigny, in fact, Pope Benedict XV continued to ask about this mission up until the day he died<sup>13</sup>. With the investiture of the new Pope, this hope became a reality. Certainly the new Pope had diplomatic experience which would prove useful to him in evaluating the Russian situation. As Cardinal Achille Ratti, he had been the Apostolic Visitor and, subsequently, Nuncio to Poland following World War I and he was undoubtedly aware of the delicacy of Poland’s newly achieved independence and of the complexity of the ethnic, political and religious relations throughout the entire area. He was, in fact, in Warsaw during the Polish-Soviet Russian war, February 1919-March 1921, and had first hand knowledge of the war and of the animosity which existed between Poland and Russia. Shortly after the war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Riga (March 18, 1921), Cardinal Ratti would return to Italy and the Soviets, due to drought conditions which caused wide spread crop failures, would be forced to appeal to the world for famine relief assistance<sup>14</sup>.

The Church hierarchy retained much of its 19<sup>th</sup> century character well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It gravitated around a closed circle of clerics – part either of the Vatican’s “clerical nobility” or of the European aristocracy – and it tended to be Eurocentric in outlook. In addition to the Pope, with whom he had a number of audiences while in Rome, Father Walsh was in close epistolary contact with two members of this hierarchy: the Superior General of the Jesuits, Count Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, S.J., and the Vatican’s Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri.

Count Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, S.J., who led the Jesuit order for 27 years (1915 to 1942), was born to a deeply religious Polish family. He had an uncle who was a Cardinal, and two sisters who achieved various levels of sainthood, as well as a brother who was a General in the Polish Army. Father Ledóchowski was a strongly committed adversary of communism and of Soviet Russia – a position which was certainly born from religious convictions, but that also corresponded exactly with the sentiments of the Polish nobility from which he was descended. As Walsh’s Superior General, he received copies of all of Walsh’s correspondence and was, of course, in direct contact with Walsh as

---

<sup>13</sup> MICHELE D’HERBIGNY, S.J., *L’aiuto pontificio ai bambini affamati della Russia*, in «Orientalia Christiana» 4,1 (1925), 25.

<sup>14</sup> The Riga Agreement between the Soviet government and the American Relief Administration was signed five months later, on August 20, 1921.



well. In the diary he kept during his Russian Mission, Walsh described his impression of Ledóchowski during their orientation conference in Rome on February 27, 1922: “Frail, delicate man, quick to see a situation or an argument, not too formal, ready to change a plan or opinion if good reason shown”<sup>15</sup>.

Father Walsh’s second important contact with the Vatican hierarchy was with Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, Secretary of State to His Holiness, 1914-1930.

As the Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri was in charge of the political and diplomatic activities of the Holy See. Walsh reported directly to him, sending weekly reports detailing the activities of the Mission, the contacts with the Soviets and the situation of the Church in Russia.

The American Church hierarchy was represented by Father John J. Burke, CSP, Paulist Father and *Catholic World* editor. Father Burke was the first General Secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Council – the American Bishop’s Council. This Council was organized by the Catholic Episcopate in 1919 with its headquarters located at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. – not far, in fact, from Georgetown University. It was an “agency of the Archbishops and Bishops of the United States to organize, unify and coordinate Catholic activities for the general welfare of the Church”<sup>16</sup>. It was Father Burke who, as General Secretary, was required to officially designate Walsh as the representative of the National Catholic Welfare Council to the American Relief Administration’s Russian Relief Program. He and Walsh remained in contact throughout the Papal Relief Mission.

With this in mind, let us look in greater depth at Father Walsh’s first mission: the Papal Relief Mission to Russia. This was Walsh’s longest and most formative Papal mission. The working relationships he developed here – and the trust his services earned him within the Vatican hierarchy – would serve him throughout his following missions. The direct experience and observations which he gathered in Russia would also determine much of his subsequent thought and work. In effect, the Russian mission would become a watershed event in his life. And it would use his organizational and diplomatic capacities to the fullest both as Director General for the Papal Relief Mission to Russia – charged with organizing the distribution of the food and medical supplies contributed by Catholic charities to the Russian population – and as acting Representative of the Holy See in Russia – designated to deal with the Soviet

---

<sup>15</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Diary: February 22, 1922 - February 6, 1924, Entry for Feb. 27, 1922, GUSCD, Box 2, Folder 125.

<sup>16</sup> PETER M. J. STRAVINSKAS, ed., *Our Sunday Visitor’s Catholic Encyclopedia*, Huntington, Indiana, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1998, 700.

Government regarding Roman Catholic interests in Russia. It was, essentially, two missions in one<sup>17</sup>.

Personally he, as all of the members of the relief agencies operating in Russia, would encounter the devastating human consequences of this tragic famine<sup>18</sup>. The heart rending photographs of this suffering which are preserved in his papers deposited in the Special Archives of Lauinger Library in Georgetown University remained a part of his personal library for the rest of his life. Most certainly they served as tragic reminders of this agonizing period<sup>19</sup>.

Walsh's initial encounter with the famine came while traveling through Russia laying the ground work for the Papal Relief Mission in April of 1922. He recorded it poignantly within his diary: "First real experience with famine-famished people climbing up on cars tapping at window all night with that piteous wail for food"<sup>20</sup>. His personal observations of the ghastly conditions which he encountered in Russia, and of the infinite gratitude of the people whose life had been saved by the Papal mission, are faithfully recorded in his diary. Walsh's work to alleviate that suffering and the considerable success his Mission had in doing so were, most certainly, of satisfaction to him. In his summary of the Mission which appeared in the ARA Bulletin, he wrote:

*... the Catholic Mission was able to carry out a mass feeding program which reached 157,507 persons in the districts of Crimea, Orenbourg, Moscow, Rostov/Don and Krasnodar. In addition to this feeding, which was conducted without distinction*

---

<sup>17</sup> GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Hoover summarized the situation in a letter of March 23, 1923 to C. V. Hibbard of the YMCA: "It is impossible to picture adequately the complete impoverishment of a great nation. The war, the revolution, the blockade, the great climatic famine of last year, the trial and failure of Communism – all have combined to project a misery and impoverishment the most awful of modern history". HAROLD H. FISHER, *The Famine Relief in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration*, New York, Macmillan, 1927, 540.

<sup>19</sup> In his book recounting the experiences of American field workers during the Russian relief program, Bertrand Patenaude notes the term "famine shock" (derived from "shell shock" – a battle-ground term developed in World War I). "Famine shock" was in common use by ARA workers, many of whom were veterans of World War I and recognized the similarity of the symptoms, to describe the psychological trauma caused by daily confrontation with unimaginable scenes of starvation and death. He cites the words of a young Harvard educated field worker: "I often think of how people in New York told me how they envied me the opportunity of seeing so many interesting things. Yes, interesting, that's the word. Yes, it's very interesting to move among people who a glance tells you would be better off dead than alive", BERTRAND M. PATENAUDE, *The big show in Bololand: The American relief expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, 227.

<sup>20</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Diary: February 22, 1922 - February 6, 1924, Entry for April 5, 1922, GUSCD, Box 2, Folder 125.

*as to race, religion or politics, the Mission imported and distributed \$250,000 worth of textiles and medicines*<sup>21</sup>.

Notwithstanding this success, Walsh was often embittered by the Soviet government authorities who so often, in complete disregard of the wishes of the local populace, rather than supporting the charitable intentions of this mission, created obstacles to them and, thereby, impeded help being extended to their own starving countrymen. He also came to suspect that the famine (estimated to have killed over five million people by the end of 1922) might well have been caused as much by the Soviet government's incompetence as by drought and to believe, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Russia, in the midst of the famine, was covertly exporting its own grain resources from its southern ports while receiving "similar supplies from charitable sources" in its northern ports<sup>22</sup>.

Nor was his diplomatic role as Representative of the Holy See to Bolshevik Russia to offer much satisfaction. It did offer him the day-to-day opportunity to observe and interact directly with the innermost workings of the Soviet government – most particularly with regard to their acts of religious persecution – and he did attempt – utilizing that small portion of authority which the Roman Catholic Church might constitute for the Bolsheviks, that small amount of gratitude the Bolsheviks might feel for the substantial aid that Russia was receiving from the Vatican and his own conviction of purpose, strength of will and unwavering commitment – to do everything within his possibilities to defend the interests of the Church, both Catholic and Orthodox, within the communist state-. His correspondence with the Soviet government bears ample witness to this. His diplomatically phrased letters display a laudable patience and self-restraint, yet they stand their ground. They are correct in tone, proper in form yet painstakingly precise in rebutting the frequent patent absurdity of the government's position to which they replied<sup>23</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> FISHER, *The Famine Relief*, 463.

<sup>22</sup> EDMUND A. WALSH, *The Catholic Church in Present-day Russia*, in «The Catholic Historical Review» 18, 2 (1932), 183.

<sup>23</sup> An example, among many, can be found in Walsh's letter of response, written November 12, 1923 (after the Relief Mission's agreement with the Soviets had been terminated by the Soviets and after several months of futile negotiations regarding the wording of a new agreement) and addressed to Madame O. D. Kamenev, President, Commission for Foreign Relief, Kremlin, Moscow:

*I note your statement that many people are inquiring why the Vatican Mission is not doing the work which it came to do. May I rely on your Commission to assure them of the following facts:*

*1. The Vatican Mission is working as usual in Crimea feeding at present approximately*

In summary, then, these two official duties, as Director General of the Papal Relief Mission and as Papal Representative – so different in function and aim, offered him the exceptional opportunity to observe the workings of Bolshevik Russia at both the grassroots level (through his tours and contact with relief posts throughout the country) and at the governmental level (through his contact with the Bolshevik bureaucracy in Moscow). He experienced Bolshevik Russia fully and at first hand – not as tourist or bystander, but as engaged participant – and his judgments were made accordingly.

Initially Father Walsh was involved in this mission at the request of Colonel William N. Haskell, the Director for the American Relief Administration's Russian Program. The American Relief Administration (ARA), a private relief organization headed by Herbert Hoover – then U.S. Secretary of Commerce under President Harding, had been charged with feeding Europeans in the wake of World War I destruction. In 1921, this charge had been extended to include Russia in response to the request which the Russian writer, Maxim Gorky, had made to Herbert Hoover in July of 1921 on behalf of the starving Russian people. The ARA's purpose as an organization was succinctly outlined in the 1921-22 edition of the *Year Book of the Churches*: "Purpose: receives and distributes relief for children of Austria, Poland and Russia. Conducting medical and general relief in Russia on behalf of cooperating organizations"<sup>24</sup>. In fact, for the Russian Relief Program, the ARA administered the funds appropriated by the Congress of the United States (approximately 40 per cent of the Total Resources) as well as the funds supplied by the "European Relief Council" which, in addition to the ARA, included 8 affiliated American charities of which the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) would ulti-

---

*6000 children, as the Crimean Government has signed a separate contract, willingly providing the few written guarantees required by the Vatican.*

2. *There is no question of the Vatican Mission "beginning" [emphasis in original] the work it came to Russia to do. That work was begun over a year ago and was suspended only because the Soviet Government on June 19, 1923, cancelled the previous Vatican Agreement signed by a representative of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Government and the Papal Secretary of State on March 12, 1922. At the moment of this cancellation, the Vatican was feeding 160,000 people daily, had just finished a distribution of clothes to 100,000 people and had imported \$50,000 worth of medicines for free distribution by the Vatican Relief Mission. I feel confident that your Commission will be glad to convey this official information to all inquirers. Very truly yours, Edmund A. Walsh, Director General, Vatican Relief Mission. (Edmund A. Walsh Papers, Letter to Madame O. D. Kamenev, Commission for Foreign Relief, Nov. 12, 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 387).*

<sup>24</sup> E. O. WILSON, ed., *Year Book of the Churches 1921-22*, Washington D.C., Hayworth Publishing House, 1922, 307.

mately represent all the Catholic contributions<sup>25</sup>. This concentration of funds (approximately 70 million dollars in the first year)<sup>26</sup> under the sole administration of the ARA was arranged “with a view to assuring the efficient handling and distribution of the supplies under American direction inside Russia”<sup>27</sup>. Essentially, the ARA served as an umbrella organization for its affiliates. “During the period of affiliation, the administrative machinery of the ARA, centering in New York, London, and Moscow, was utilized for the purchase, insurance and transport (sea and land) of supplies, and for the conduct of negotiations with various governments regarding relief matters”<sup>28</sup>. Although there were a number of other international groups which responded to Gorky’s request and carried out relief missions independently within Russia, the “ARA furnished over 90 per cent of all relief going into Russia”<sup>29</sup>. The success of this program – and the efficiency with which it was run – can readily be measured by the *New York Times* article triumphantly announcing Colonel Haskell’s visit to the United States after the first year’s activity. Captioned “9,000,000 Are Fed in Russian Relief”, the article begins with the statement: “Colonel William N. Haskell leaves Russia today after successfully putting through the greatest relief program in history”<sup>30</sup>.

Colonel William N. Haskell, a West Point graduate and career soldier, had previously been selected by Herbert Hoover to administer the American relief operations in Romania (for the U.S. Food Administration in 1919) and to be Director General of all European and American relief agencies (including the ARA) operating in Transcaucasia (1919-1920)<sup>31</sup>. In addition to his practical experience in relief organization and his familiarity with Eastern Europe, he had a distinguished record of military service and a knack for “getting things done” – all of which well qualified him for directing the Russian

---

<sup>25</sup> The European Relief Council Agreement was signed in Washington on August 24, 1921. Participants included The American Relief Administration, American Friends Service Committee, American Red Cross, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Knights of Columbus, Young Men’s Christian Association, Young Women’s Christian Association, The National Catholic Welfare Council. Additional charities joined soon thereafter. FISHER, *The Famine Relief*, 511.

<sup>26</sup> *Ib.*, 542.

<sup>27</sup> FISHER, *The Famine Relief*, 546.

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.*, 457.

<sup>29</sup> FREDERICK LEWIS SCHUMAN, *American Policy Toward Russia since 1917: A Study of Diplomatic History, International Law and Public Opinion*, London, Martin Lawrence, 1928, 206.

<sup>30</sup> *9,000,000 Are Fed in Russian in Relief*, *New York Times*, 12 July 1922, 10.

<sup>31</sup> BERTRAND M. PATENAUDE, *The big show in Bololand: The American relief expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, 60.

Relief Program. Personally he was a devout Catholic with close family ties to the Georgetown Jesuit community thanks to the fact that he was married to Winifred Farrell, the sister of Joseph A. Farrell, S.J. Father Farrell, like Edmund Walsh, had entered the Maryland-New York Province of the Company of Jesus in 1902. His subsequent studies soon brought him into contact with both Walsh, with whom he shared a common Irish-American heritage and a love of rhetoric, and Georgetown University, with which he was associated for much of his life.<sup>32</sup> Father Gallagher, in recalling the Jesuit community dinner held in Georgetown to honor Farrell and Walsh's 50th anniversary in the Society, describes Farrell as Walsh's "intimate friend and companion since they entered the Society of Jesus fifty years before"<sup>33</sup>. Walsh's close friendship with Joseph Farrell also extended to Farrell's sister and brother-in-law, Winifred and Colonel William Haskell<sup>34</sup>, and it would seem that this sustained friendship had allowed Colonel Haskell the opportunity to take Walsh's measure – perhaps through Walsh's involvement with the Army's S.A.T.C. program or through his considerable activities in founding, organizing and promoting Georgetown's School of Foreign Affairs. In early June of 1922, following Colonel Haskell's suggestion, Walsh and Farrell were designated as the official representatives of the National Catholic Welfare Council to the ARA's Russian Relief Program.<sup>35</sup> Subsequently all three of these Georgetown Jesuits, Edmund Walsh, Joseph Farrell and Louis Gallagher, were designated to serve in the Papal Relief Mission to Russia (announced by Pius XI in an apostolic letter of July 10, 1922)<sup>36</sup> with Father Walsh – again following Colonel Haskell's suggestion – serving as Director General of the mission.

---

<sup>32</sup> His most sustained contact with the University lasted from 1927 to 1955 during which he served as treasurer and then as spiritual director. Rev. J. A. Farrell of Jesuits Dead, *New York Times*, 3 October 1957, 29.

<sup>33</sup> GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*, 237.

<sup>34</sup> In Walsh's diary account of his first train trip from Rome to Moscow in preparation for the Papal Relief Mission to Russia, he mentions stopping in Coblenz [Koblenz] (which served as a staging area for ARA operations) where he had dinner with the Haskell children. From there he telegraphed ahead to Winifred Haskell who was visiting her husband in Moscow, to ask her to remain until he arrived. When he arrived in Moscow, he was immediately taken to the Haskell's home where he had dinner with both Colonel and Mrs. Haskell. Later in the week as he was getting settled, he notes that he was "taken out by Winifred H". *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Diary: February 22, 1922 - February 6, 1924, Entries from March 10-27, 1922, GUSCD, Box 2, Folder 125.

<sup>35</sup> FISHER, *The Famine Relief*, 561 – Roster: American Relief Administration Personnel.

<sup>36</sup> JAMES J. ZATKO, *The Vatican and Famine Relief in Russia*, in «The Slavonic and East European Review» 42, 98 (1963), 61.



Walsh's role as Director General of the Papal Relief Mission – much of whose economic resources, of course, were drawn directly from the American funds gathered by the National Catholic Welfare Council – was crucial. By definition this role required an American administrator<sup>37</sup> and, most certainly, it required someone in whom Colonel Haskell, as Director General of the ARA's Russian Relief program, had complete trust – not only because of the organizational challenge presented by administering a large relief program in Russia, but also because of the responsibility it entailed of administering American funds in complete accord with the directives of the ARA while carrying out the directives of the Vatican. Though the aims of the ARA and of the Vatican missions coincided on many issues, they were, of course, not synonymous and avoiding misunderstandings required someone who was sensitive to the priorities and concerns of both entities. In fact, the position demanded an executive who could bring objectivity, tact, and balanced judgment to every level of interaction of the Papal Mission in Russia: with the ARA, the Vatican, the Soviet government, the Russian Roman Catholic and Orthodox communities, the Relief Mission personnel (both those sent by the Vatican and the local Russian employees), and with the Russian people themselves.

Following his summons to Rome in February, 1922<sup>38</sup>, and his first trip to Russia (March-April, 1922) during which he familiarized himself with the ARA's method of operation in Moscow, the port city of Petrograd [Saint Petersburg] (which was also the structural center of the Soviet Catholic Church)<sup>39</sup> and the District of Samara relief site, Walsh returned to Rome on May 2 for further talks with Ledóchowski, Gasparri, Pizzardo (the acting Secretary of the

---

<sup>37</sup> According to the terms of the European Relief Council Agreement, all American charitable funds to be used for the Russian Relief Program were to pass through the American Relief Administration. President Harding further strengthened the ARA's role by stipulating, at the behest of Herbert Hoover, that the State Department would issue passports for relief work in Russia only to persons officially in the service of the ARA. Hence, the ARA had the final say as to who went to Russia and how the American funds were used and, therefore, the funds gathered from American Catholic sources could only be administered by an American who was an official member of the ARA's Russian Relief Program. BENJAMIN M. WEISSMAN, *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921-1923*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1974, 55. [The Papal Relief Mission to Russia could have operated independently in Russia (in fact, it had already attempted to do so), but would not have had access to either the American funds gathered by the NCWC or to the food sources and distribution facilities offered by the ARA].

<sup>38</sup> Father Walsh was on leave from Georgetown University while completing his Tertianship at the Jesuit community in Paray-le-Monial, France, when he was asked by his Superior General, Father Ledóchowski, to come to Rome for meetings.

<sup>39</sup> CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE ZUGGER, *The Forgotten: Catholics of the Soviet empire from Lenin through Stalin*, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press 2001, 174.



*Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs*) and Pope Pius XI. His diary observations show that he was now well aware of the actual situation in Soviet Russia, particularly of the problems regarding the Soviet government. During his conference with Cardinal Gasparri, he was pleased to see that the material which he had brought to Rome from Archbishop Jan Cieplak, Archbishop of Mogilev (whom he had met in Petrograd) had been used as the basis for a Papal protest which detailed a list of religious persecutions “unknown in history of civilized nations”. At the conclusion of this meeting, it was decided that Walsh should proceed to the United States carrying letters from Pope Pius XI to President Harding and to Herbert Hoover of the ARA<sup>40</sup>.

Walsh left Rome on May 15 and arrived in New York on May 27. He was met at the boat by his friends, Father Joseph Farrell and Father Louis Gallagher, both of whom readily accepted his invitation to join in the forthcoming Papal Relief Mission. Over the next three weeks, Walsh had meetings with a number of American Churchmen, Father John Burke of the NCWC, Cardinal O’Connell, Archbishop Hayes and Archbishop Curley<sup>41</sup>, a meeting with President Warren Harding (to whom he delivered a letter from the Pope) and two meetings with Herbert Hoover (to whom he also delivered a letter from the Pope). During the last of these meetings, on June 1, Walsh gave Hoover a second letter from the Vatican and the affiliation of the Papal Relief Mission with the ARA was officially confirmed<sup>42</sup>. On June 17, Walsh left the United States, accompanied by Father Gallagher,<sup>43</sup> and arrived in Rome on June 26,

---

<sup>40</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Diary: February 22, 1922 - February 6, 1924, Entry for May 5, 1922, GUSCD, Box 2, Folder 125.

<sup>41</sup> Several of these expressed embarrassment concerning the crisis within the NCWC which had delayed Walsh’s appointment as the NCWC’s representative to the ARA and, in fact, had delayed the beginning of the Papal Relief Mission to Russia by several months. Speaking with Hoover, Walsh explained that “at last they [the NCWC] were convinced that funds would be properly administered”. *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Diary: February 22, 1922 - February 6, 1924, Entries from May 27 - June 17, 1922, GUSCD, Box 2, Folder 125. In reality, however, the NCWC had been paralyzed for several months due to internal dissension. This impasse was ended on February 25, 1922 (i.e. in the same week Walsh was summoned to Rome), when Pope Pius XI ordered the complete suppression of the NCWC. The NCWC defended itself in its petition to the Pope on April 25, 1922, and the Sacred Consistorial Congregation plenary session of June 22, 1922, ultimately determined that the NCWC could, by observing certain, very specific conditions, remain in existence. ELIZABETH MCKOEWEN, *Apologia for an American Catholicism: The Petition and Report of the National Catholic Welfare Council to Pope Pius XI, April 25, 1922*, in «Church History» 43, 4 (1974), 514-528.

<sup>42</sup> GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*, 18.

<sup>43</sup> Father Gallagher served as Walsh’s personal assistant through most of the Russian mission. His account of this period is, therefore, an eye-witness account which clearly explains the conditions and challenges which such an operation – in such primitive conditions – entailed.

1922. Here he had further discussions, oversaw preparations for the Mission and had two further audiences with Pope Pius XI.

On July 5, 1922, Walsh left for Moscow to take up his place as Director General of the Papal Relief Mission to Russia<sup>44</sup>. The supporting 11 member Vatican delegation left Rome in late July<sup>45</sup>. The Mission's work began in the districts of Eupatoria and Djankoy (Crimea) and, as Father Gallagher describes,

*the first feeding kitchen was opened on the twenty-ninth of September and it took care of a thousand children a day...Within a month the whole district of Eupatoria was taken over from the American Relief Administration, and the Papal Relief was feeding twenty thousand children a day. By the end of October, the Djankoy sectors in north Crimea had been annexed and the numbers increased to almost fifty thousand*<sup>46</sup>.

At its height, the Papal relief effort had 701 feeding points (public kitchens, orphanages, hospitals, refugee camps) with the capacity to feed from 125,000 to 158,000 people daily – the great majority of whom were children – in five geographical areas: Crimea (Eupatoria and Djankoy), Moscow, Krasnodar, Rostov and Orenbourg<sup>47</sup>.

Handling the very real consequences of the famine was, however, only one of Walsh's concerns. Once the Mission was functioning, he had to turn his attention, in his role as Papal Representative, to the increasing religious persecution carried out by the Soviet government<sup>48</sup>. Essentially, the regime had decided to eliminate the Orthodox Church and the famine provided an excellent cover for their aims. On February 26, 1922, Lenin, in refusing an offer by the Russian Patriarch Tikhon to donate the Church's non-consecrated vessels for famine relief, had ordered that the churches be entirely stripped of their sacred vessels – be they consecrated or non-consecrated – in order that these might be used to raise money for famine relief<sup>49</sup>. Such a complete desecration of the church, of course, was not acceptable and while Tikhon, who refused, was placed under house arrest, many other churchmen, in attempting to prevent

---

<sup>44</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Diary: February 22, 1922 - February 6, 1924, Entry for July 5, 1922, GUSCD, Box 2, Folder 125.

<sup>45</sup> *Papal Aid for Russia*, – in *New York Times*, 26 July 1922, 9.

<sup>46</sup> GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*, 21.

<sup>47</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Statistical Report on State of the Papal Relief Mission on April 15, 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 384.

<sup>48</sup> This was facilitated by the arrival of Father Joseph A. Farrell in December of 1922. Farrell took over the day-to-day administrative work of the Mission.

<sup>49</sup> RICHARD GRIBBLE, *Roman Catholicism and U.S. Foreign Policy – 1919-1935: A Clash of Policies*, in «*Journal of Church and State*» 50, 1 (2008), 76.

this desecration, were arrested, tried and executed for counter-revolutionary activities. This confiscation policy was applied equally to both the Orthodox and the Catholic churches in Russia. Later in the year, the Soviet government demanded that all Church properties be turned over to committees of laymen (parishioners), under State control and subsequently, on December 5, 1922, they shut down the Catholic churches in Petrograd pending the response of the Vatican regarding this issue<sup>50</sup>. This Church-State conflict in Petrograd was further complicated by the fact that many of the Catholic clergymen were of Polish descent and the Russians were still smarting from the defeat they had received in the Polish-Soviet Russian war<sup>51</sup>.

In March of 1923, the Petrograd Catholics, headed by Archbishop Cieplak, again refused (or were no longer permitted) to sign the Soviet government's church property agreement. In retaliation, the government had them arrested and brought to Moscow to stand trial. This group, "a cross section of contemporary Soviet Catholicism", was composed of the Archbishop Jan Cieplak, his Vicar General, Monsignor Constantine Budkiewicz (both of Polish descent), fourteen of his clergy and was augmented by the addition of the Russian Catholic Exarch, Leonide Feodorov<sup>52</sup>. All were accused, tried and convicted of anti-Soviet political activities<sup>53</sup>. At the conclusion of the trial, Archbishop Cieplak and Monsignor Budkiewicz were sentenced to death while the remaining priests were given prison terms of varying lengths. Walsh, who had remained in close contact with Archbishop Cieplak throughout his sojourn in Russia, was permitted to attend the trial as the Vatican representative and, thanks to his precipitous action in informing the Vatican and the consequent worldwide publication of the death sentences, was able to bring pressure upon the Soviet authorities to spare the life of the Archbishop. Cieplak's sentence was commuted to 10 years in prison and, after a year's imprisonment, he was released and banished from Russia. His Vicar

---

<sup>50</sup> GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*, 33.

<sup>51</sup> Harry Lane Hill pointed out the anti-Catholic consequences of the Soviet's "humiliating defeat in the Russo-Polish war" and the Soviet's subsequent equation of "Catholic" and "Polish" in his review of DAVID E. POWELL's book on the *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, in «Russian Review» 38, (1979), 493. Father Walsh, himself, had to assure his Russian hosts that Roman Catholics were not all Polish, nor were they always Polish sympathizers.

<sup>52</sup> EDMUND A. WALSH, *The Catholic Church in Present-day Russia*, in «The Catholic Historical Review» 18, 2 (1932), 185.

<sup>53</sup> During this trial, the Russian prosecutor, after receiving a negative reply to his request that the priests desist from teaching the Christian religion, proclaimed: "Your religion, I spit on it, as on all, on Catholics, Orthodox, Jewish, Mohammedan and the rest". *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Trial of Archbishop Cieplak and Petrograd Clergy, 7 April 1923, p. 14, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 384.

General, Monsignor Constantine Budkiewicz, however, was summarily shot inside the prison shortly after the trial ended<sup>54</sup>.

During the time of the trial, March 21–25, 1923, as “a strategy to distract my attention from the important matter at issue – the trial of the Archbishop”, Chicherin, Russia’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, informed Walsh that the Russians had decided to return the relics of Saint Andrew Bobola, stolen from Poland by the Russian Army during the recent Polish-Soviet Russian War, to the Vatican<sup>55</sup>. These relics of the Polish Jesuit missionary and martyr who is a patron Saint of Poland had, indeed, been requested by the Vatican and Father Walsh had relayed the request to the Soviet authorities in December of 1922. As Walsh noted, the relics were evidently intended as a gesture of good will – perhaps as something to offset the bitter pill of the trial, but, of course, the circumstances blunted the effect. Nevertheless, the restitution of the relics of Saint Andrew Bobola remains one of the few tangible signs of appreciation which the Soviets showed the Vatican for its help to the starving people of Russia. The arrangements for the transfer of the relics were completed by late September of 1923 and, on October 5, Father Gallagher left Moscow to personally escort the relics to Rome<sup>56</sup>. Once the relics were consigned in Rome, he did not return to Russia.

During this period, in his role as Papal Representative, Walsh was also very much in touch with the daily problems of Christian worship in Russia. He supplied funds to needy Catholic churches for building repairs and tax payments, aided clergymen “reduced to absolute misery”, looked into the growing problem of police harassment of nuns, priests and parishioners, and fulfilled numerous private requests submitted to him by the Holy See – forwarding food and/or money to persons in distant places, arranging for repatriations, attempting to secure releases from prison, etc.<sup>57</sup>. He was, of course, extremely concerned with the closing of churches throughout Russia and, in his August 10, 1923, letter to Cardinal Gasparri, Walsh recommended the creation of “a definite fund which shall be devoted to saving churches from confiscation by paying both the exorbitant taxes and the other charges which the Government is imposing on them as one way of gradually driving them out of existence”. He went on to propose an alternative solution as well: “the adoption of Russian Catholic churches by

---

<sup>54</sup> HENRY LANE HULL, *Catholic Relief Mission to Russia*, in «The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History», Joseph L. WIECZYNSKI, ed., 6, Gulf Breeze, FL, Academic International Press, 1976, 140.

<sup>55</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 12 March 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 384.

<sup>56</sup> *Ib.*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 28 September 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 386.

<sup>57</sup> *Ib.*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 10 August 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 386.

dioceses in America” – an innovative plan which was apparently approved by Pope Pius XI during one of Walsh’s visits to Rome, but which would never be proposed to the Soviets due to the deteriorating situation which would conclude with Walsh’s departure from Russia in late 1923 and the subsequent closure of the Papal Relief Mission<sup>58</sup>. Walsh’s resiliency and will to resist were strong, but occasionally the constant strain due to the exceptional circumstances shows. He concludes his next letter to Cardinal Gasparri with the following words of resignation with regard to filling all the requests the “various Cardinals” have made of him: “We shall do all in our power to find and aid the persons in question, but conditions in Russia are so different from conditions of life in Italy and Europe in general that much allowance must be made”<sup>59</sup>.

By late July, 1923, in fact, things had taken a turn for the worse. Colonel Haskell’s American Relief Administration had ceased operation and left Russia.

The end to this mission was in response to the preceding months of harassment by the Soviet government which, in turn, seems to have been motivated by two Soviet perceptions: first, that the worst of the famine was over – thanks in great part to the successful and well-coordinated efforts of the ARA – and second, by the realization that this very success was a double edged sword, that the gratitude of the Russian people might be exploited as a propaganda victory for the bourgeoisie Americans<sup>60</sup>.

The *New York Times* had spoken to this in their article of October 6, 1921, written just a month after the ARA mission had begun functioning in Russia, by quoting the words of Mikhail Kalinin, President of the Central Executive Committee who, after voicing his admiration of American know-how said: “During the last three years the rest of the world has tried to conquer us in vain. Perhaps it will be you Americans who come here on an errand of mercy who will really win that victory”<sup>61</sup>. By the Fall of 1922 this latter vision, at least in the opinion of some of the more intransigent Bolsheviks, was becoming a distinct possibility and, from that moment on, the Soviet government adopted measures – by introducing, among others, restrictive regulations and economic barriers – to force closure of the relief missions operating in Russia. Meantime, the Soviet authorities also took pains to publish newspaper articles which cast suspicion on the motives behind the American charity efforts and discredited the people who were involved in them.

Essentially the Bolsheviks’ fears with regard to the possible subversive ends of relief activities in Russia had already been well expressed during the discussions be-

---

<sup>58</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ib.*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 17 August 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 386.

<sup>60</sup> WEISSMAN, *Hoover and Famine Relief*, 164-165.

<sup>61</sup> *Russia Opened Up By Famine Crisis*, in *New York Times*, 6 October 1921, 15.

tween and Soviet government and the ARA held in Riga prior to the Riga Agreement. Now that the crisis had passed, those fears took center stage once more<sup>62</sup>.

This deteriorating political situation had, in fact, already begun during the first year of the Papal Relief Mission (i.e. during the second and final year of the ARA's mission to Russia). By the summer of 1923 – with the ARA's withdrawal from Russia completed, this situation had become far more oppressive. In his August 17, 1923, letter to Cardinal Gasparri, Walsh indicated that the Papal relief work in Russia had been almost completely suspended due to the lack of a suitable agreement with Soviet officials. In fact, on June 19 of that year, the Soviet government had cancelled its agreement with the Vatican (stipulated in Rome on March 22, 1922)<sup>63</sup>.

In consequence of this and, most likely, also in consequence of the departure of the ARA which, as the largest relief organization operating within Russia, had certainly shielded the smaller organizations from many difficulties, Walsh had attempted to reorganize the mission's relations with the Soviet government in order to have suitable guarantees and a clear definition of the program's legal basis in Russia. This attempt at concluding a new legal agreement, something which Walsh insisted upon given his previous experience with the Soviet government, was to be thwarted, as Walsh recounts: "by interminable delays and procrastination"<sup>64</sup>.

Over the next months, the government's tactics of bureaucratic delays and unkept promises<sup>65</sup> would also prevent the Papal Relief Mission's planned distribution of medical supplies. Walsh's reaction to such tactics is expressed in several letters to

Cardinal Gasparri. After detailing a long sequence of frustrating exchanges between his office and a governmental agency which refused to honor the financial contract it had signed previously, his letter of August 24, 1923, concludes:

*In all these matters I beg to warn Your Eminence that the duplicity of these people is unbelievable if not actually experienced here on the spot. Lying is the ordinary refuge*

---

<sup>62</sup> BENJAMIN M. WEISSMAN, *Herbert Hoover's 'Treaty' with Soviet Russia: August 20, 1921*, in «Slavic Review» 28, 2 (1969), 285.

<sup>63</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 12 November 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 386.

<sup>64</sup> During this period, the Soviet Government made a concerted effort to have Walsh removed from his position as Vatican representative. The authorities complained to the Vatican that he was "somewhat rude and did not have sufficient consideration for the mentality of the new Russian regime", GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*, 64.

<sup>65</sup> Much of this obstructionism was applied by the Soviet government in the hopes of forcing diplomatic recognition by the Vatican – an important objective in the Soviet's desire to be "legitimized" internationally.



*and it simply renders normal intercourse, whether diplomatic or commercial, almost impossible*<sup>66</sup>.

Walsh touched on this fundamental problem once more in his letter of September 21, 1923:

*So it goes from day to day, a continual battle to preserve that element which is the basis of all human intercourse: mutual faith and reliability*<sup>67</sup>.

His darkening view, the result of the visceral impact that his Russian experience had on him, is stated even more clearly in his October 12 letter to the Cardinal:

*The past year has been a succession of protests made in the name of common humanity – for the slaughtered Budkiewicz, for the imprisoned Archbishop, for the 22 priests and for the others suffering persecution under the anti-Christian policy of the Soviets*<sup>68</sup>.

As if that weren't enough, similar tactics were applied to Walsh's attempt to secure a suitable house in Moscow for what he hoped would be the permanent residence of a representative of the Holy See to Russia<sup>69</sup>. This search lasted for several months and proved to be an endless maze of Soviet subterfuge, a surreal sequence of events which was worthy of a Kafka novel. Houses were selected, repaired, then given to others only to have another house suggested, etc. Finally, when the Vatican delegation was to take possession of "their" house, Walsh found that it was already occupied by 11 tenants<sup>70</sup>! Upon protest to the Soviet authorities, the 11 were reduced to 1 man who was, in Walsh's opinion (and that of several members of the Moscow Diplomatic Corps), most likely a Soviet government spy. When Walsh refused this situation, the government issued an ultimatum demanding that he accept the house under those conditions. Father Walsh recounts

---

<sup>66</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 24 August 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 386. Very likely Walsh's analysis of the Soviet's duplicity was also intended as a warning to the Vatican which, throughout this period, continued to conduct direct diplomatic negotiations with Russia in Rome.

<sup>67</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 21 September 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 386.

<sup>68</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 12 October 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 387.

<sup>69</sup> Walsh, however, did not recommend the diplomatic recognition of Soviet Russia by the Vatican.

<sup>70</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Letter to Mr. H., 1 August 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 386.



these events in detail in his final letter from Moscow to Cardinal Gasparri<sup>71</sup>. He then summarizes the deep frustrations of the past 6 months and analyzes the situation in the following elegant, even poetic diplomatic language:

*So the whole summer has passed and winter is here. Our time, energy, patience, good will has been used up in endless, petty controversies regarding such matters, in which the Bolsheviks seek to impose their tyranny on Relief organizations in order to control them to the good of Communism.*

He closes the letter with a request for instructions from Cardinal Gasparri. The instructions arrived and Father Walsh left Russia shortly thereafter. The Papal Relief Mission to Russia was drawing to a close<sup>72</sup> and Edmund A. Walsh's lifelong mission as a passionate eye-witness to the inhumanity of Soviet Russian communism had just begun<sup>73</sup>.

---

<sup>71</sup> *Edmund A. Walsh Papers*, Letter to Cardinal Gasparri, 16 November 1923, GUSCD, Box 6, Folder 387.

<sup>72</sup> All Mission workers returned to their native countries except for two German Fathers who took over the supervision of the central office until the Moscow warehouse was emptied of supplies. GALLAGHER, S.J., *Edmund A. Walsh, S.J.*, 75. This office finally closed on September 18, 1924. CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE ZUGGER, *The Forgotten: Catholics of the Soviet empire from Lenin through Stalin*, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press 2001, 153.

<sup>73</sup> In addition to over 1,500 public lectures on Soviet Russia given throughout the United States, Edmund Walsh wrote several books on the same subject: *The Fall of the Russian Empire: The Story of the Last of the Romanovs and the Coming of the Bolshevik* (1928), *The Last Stand – An Interpretation of the Soviet Five Year Plan* (1931), *Total Empire: A Footnote to History* (1951), and articles: “Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy Does Not Justify U. S. Recognition Yet” (1926), “Some Observations of the Soviet Problem” (1927), “The Catholic Church in Present-Day Russia” (1932).