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VATICAN DIPLOMACY AFTER THE  
CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS:  
NEW LIGHT ON THE RELEASE OF JOSYF SLIPYJ

BY

KARIM SCHELKENS\*

*The author, drawing on original documentation from several archives, examines the February 1963 release of Josyf Slipyj, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic archbishop, by the Soviet government. Slipyj's liberation is explored against the complex background of the Second Vatican Council and the emergence of Catholic ecumenism, as well as the diplomatic and political aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The significant roles of Pope John XXIII; Belgian friar Felix A. Morlion, O.P.; U.S. journalist Norman Cousins; and Dutch monsignor Johannes Willebrands—who all played a part in Slipyj's release—are described.*

**Keywords:** Cousins, Norman; Cuban Missile Crisis; Slipyj, Josyf, Cardinal; U.S.-Holy See relations; Willebrands, Johannes, Cardinal

For contemporary church historians the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in the mid-twentieth century is a particularly interesting, yet highly complex, subject of study. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) and the process of *aggiornamento* set major changes in motion for the Church.<sup>1</sup> A major concern was the rising

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<sup>1</sup>A full history of the most recent Council has been published in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, 5 vols. (New York, 1995–2006). The first and second volumes set the church historical background for this study. For a more general background to the issue of the Vatican Ostpolitik, see Philippe Chenaux, *L'église catholique et le communisme en Europe (1917–1989): De Lénine à Jean Paul II* (Paris, 2010). For the change in attitude from the pontificate of John XXIII onward and its heritage, see Agostino Casaroli's book *Il martirio della pazienza: La Santa Sede e I paesi comunisti 1963–1989* (Turin, 2000), esp. pp. 71–75.

tension between the two major political powers that emerged in the post-World War II world: the United States and the Soviet Union. Historians and political scientists alike have underscored the importance of Pope John XXIII in establishing a “détente” after the repeated condemnations of communism uttered by his predecessor, Pope Pius XII.<sup>2</sup> The extraordinary capacity of John XXIII’s humane and conciliatory attitude became most tangible in his remarkable encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*, of April 11, 1963. The encyclical was promulgated at a time when anticommunist sentiments were a strong presence within the gatherings of “his” ecumenical council; it is a document that can be seen as a worthy testament to the pope’s peacekeeping efforts.<sup>3</sup> This article will tend—once again—to confirm the pivotal role of John XXIII, but will by no means describe the full scope of his geopolitical impact. A detailed analysis of the way in which the Vatican repositioned itself within the overall context of the cold war also falls outside the scope of this article.<sup>4</sup>

Rather, based on original documentation from several archives, the focus will be on a significant event of the era: the release by the Soviet government of Josyf Slipyj, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic archbishop, in late January 1963 (see figure 1). Given that it took place not long after the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 22–29, 1962, when U.S.-Soviet tensions were still high, the archbishop’s release was momentous indeed.<sup>5</sup> In a bipolar world marked by the arms race and vivid

<sup>2</sup>For Pope Pius XII’s attitude toward communist regimes, see Philippe Chenaux, *Pie XII: Diplomate et Pasteur* (Paris, 2003).

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Vincenzo Carbone, “Schemi e discussioni sull’ateismo e sul marxismo nel Concilio Vaticano II: Documentazione,” *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 44 (1990), 10–68, here 11–12.

<sup>4</sup>The particular relationship between Rome and the communist world has been the subject of various excellent studies such as those by HansJakob Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie im Vatikan: Die Päpste und die Kommunisten* (Zurich, 1993), and Andrea Riccardi, *Il Vaticano e Mosca, 1940–1990* (Rome, 1992). On the Russian Orthodox Church under communist rule, see Dimitri Vladimirovich Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime 1917–1982*, 2 vols. (New York, 1984); Bohdan Rostyslav Bociurkiw, “The Formulation of Religious Policy in the Soviet Union,” in *Readings on Church and State*, ed. James E. Wood Jr. (Waco, TX, 1989), pp. 303–18; and John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

<sup>5</sup>See Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York, 1969). An interesting study of Europe’s political reactions to this crisis is found in *L’Europe et la crise de Cuba*, ed. Maurice Vaisse (Paris, 1993). Also see studies such as James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York, 1989); and *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White*



FIGURE 1. At left: Josyf Slipyj, Ukrainian Greek Catholic archbishop, later cardinal. Photo courtesy of Kirche in Not, Königstein, Germany. At right: Then-monsignor Johannes Willebrands, secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Photo courtesy of the Cardinal Willebrands Archives Foundation, Utrecht, the Netherlands.

memories of the casualties of World War II, political tensions reached a fearful climax in the Cuba crisis. In that context, the interaction of protagonists such as U.S. Catholic president John F. Kennedy,<sup>6</sup> Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, and Pope John XXIII, who all contributed to Slipyj's release from exile, should be acknowledged as a surprising act of confidence and goodwill from all sides.<sup>7</sup> The accounts of

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*House during the Cuban Missile Crisis* ed. Ernst R. May and Philip D. Zelikow (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

<sup>6</sup>Among the overabundance of literature on Kennedy, see, for example, Arthur Meier Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York, 1983).

<sup>7</sup>Events from an insider's point of view are described in the highly interesting and well-documented volume by Norman Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate: An Asterisk to the Hopeful Year 1962-1963* (New York, 1972), esp. pp. 20-22, 47-53, and 62-65. In the period discussed in this article Cousins met with Khrushchev, Kennedy, and John XXIII and maintained contacts among these leaders. Many other accounts appear to have been based largely upon Cousins's book. See, for example, on the so-called "Andover Talks," Roland Flamini, *Pope, Premier, President: The Cold War Summit That Never Was*, New York, 1980; Alberto Melloni, *L'Altra Roma: Politica e S. Sede durante il Concilio Vaticano II, 1959-1965* (Bologna, 2000); and Gerald P. Fogarty, "The Council Gets Underway," in Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, II:69-106,

Slipyj's release after almost eighteen years of Siberian exile have rarely referenced archival material. The intention here is not to offer a simple repetition or a synthetic overview of the existing literature; rather, a reassessment of this event will be presented from a church historiographer's perspective. In doing so, several lacunae will be filled in. In addition, the often underestimated, if not unknown, role played by individuals such as Félix A. Morlion, O.P., and Johannes Willebrands (then a monsignor, later cardinal; see figure 1) will be highlighted.<sup>8</sup> In this account, details of the contacts between Vatican officials and politicians on both sides of the ideological divide, as they took place in the days before and after Slipyj's release from Moscow, will be presented. On the basis of unpublished materials found in the Vatican Secret Archives, the personal files of Willebrands and Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens,<sup>9</sup> and the private diaries of Ukrainian bishops,

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particularly pp. 94–104. The same is to be said for several studies briefly discussing Slipyj's release in *Vatican II in Moscow, 1959–1965*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Leuven, 1997). Also see Ivan Choma, "Storia della liberazione del metropolita Josep Slipyi dalla prigionia sovietica," in *Intrepido Pastore* (Rome, 1984), pp. 323–47; Giancarlo Zizola, *L'Utopia di Papa Giovanni* (Assisi, 1973), pp. 205–06; Hansjakob Stehle, *Die Ostpolitik des Vatikans, 1917–1975* (Munich, 1975), pp. 342–48.

<sup>8</sup>The author thanks Maria ter Steeg of the Cardinal Willebrands Archive Foundation for granting access to Willebrands's private papers held at the Catholic Documentation Centre/Katholiek Documentatiecentrum (henceforth KDC) at Nijmegen, the Netherlands. On Willebrands's biography, see Karim Schelkens, *Johannes Gerardus Maria Willebrands*, in *Bio-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 31 (Nordhausen, forthcoming), highlighting the importance and characteristics of Willebrands's diplomatic skills amid tensions. Interestingly, Melloni's *L'Altra Roma* deals with Willebrands's involvement in only a few lines of text: "Fanfani, otto giorni dopo, viene a sapere dall'ambasciatore dell'URSS a Roma, Semeion Kozyrev, che Slipyj sarà liberato ed espulso; Willebrands riceve l'incarico di accogliere Slipyj a Mosca, di consegnargli il passaporto diplomatico dell'URSS che gli è stato preparato e di scortarlo a Roma" (p. 166).

<sup>9</sup>The author thanks Archivist Gerrit Van den Bosch for access to a collection of private memoranda and correspondence in the personal archives of Suenens, held at the archives of the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels. These items were delivered to Suenens through the mediation of Curtis Roosevelt (grandson of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt) and Morlion, with permission from Monsignor Igino Cardinale, chief of protocol at the Vatican Secretariat of State. Given the fact that Suenens was asked to present John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* at the UN headquarters in New York in May 1963, Roosevelt and Morlion intended that the Belgian cardinal would be well informed for the occasion. See Archives Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels (hereafter AAM), Personal Archives Suenens, Box 20, "Voyage États-Unis. Papiers Cousins-Morlion." For more information on Suenens's journey to New York, see Mathijs Lamberigts and Leo Declerck, "The Role of Cardinal L. J. Suenens at Vatican II," in *The Belgian Contribution to the Second Vatican Council*, ed. Doris Donnelly, Joseph Famerée, Mathijs Lamberigts, and Karim Schelkens (Leuven, 2008), pp. 61–217, here pp. 150–52.

new light can be shed on the relationships among the protagonists. Moreover, this study will benefit from recent publications that feature other relevant sources.

Given the distinctive nature of Slipyj's personal situation,<sup>10</sup> some background information is necessary about the position of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) in the post-World War II era, the rise of Roman Catholic ecumenism in the same period, and the clash between the Ukrainian diaspora hierarchy and the Russian observers during the first weeks of the Second Vatican Council. Within this complex setting, a detailed reconstruction of the timeline of Slipyj's release will be offered.

### **A Church in Exile: Ukrainian Greek Catholicism after World War II**

To understand the difficulties surrounding the release of Slipyj from Soviet incarceration, it is necessary to look at the origins of his exile. These are to be understood within the context of the bipolar political situation characterizing the post-World War II era. When Andrej Sheptytsky, the Lviv metropolitan for the UGCC, passed away in November 1944 his territory in Western Ukraine had already become part of the Soviet empire.<sup>11</sup> This situation had begun with the occupation and annexation of Galicia in September 1939, yet during the war the communist occupier's primary concerns had not been in the religious field, thereby providing a relative amount of freedom for the Ukrainian Greek Catholics who had been in communion with the Holy See since the Union of Brest in 1595–96.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the repu-

<sup>10</sup>For more detailed biographical information on Slipyj, see Ivan Choma, "La vita e le opere del card. Slipyj," *Euntes docete*, 2 (1985), 217–36; Franz Loidl, *Josyf Kardinal Slipyj und seine ukrainische Kirche* (Vienna, 1987); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Confessor between East and West: A Portrait of Ukrainian Cardinal Josyf Slipyj* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1990), pp. 146–231; and Ivan Choma, *Josyf Slipyj: Vincit Christum et defensor unitatis* (Rome, 1997).

<sup>11</sup>Stella Hryniuk, *To Pray Again as a Catholic. The Renewal of Catholicism in Western Ukraine* (Minneapolis: Center for Austrian Studies, University of Minnesota, 1995), pp. 2–4. Especially see the excellent study by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State, 1939–1950* (Toronto, 1996), pp. 80–83.

<sup>12</sup>Augustin Theiner, *Vetera monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1860–64), III:234–37. On this union, which produced long-term tensions between the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church that the Soviet treaty would only worsen, see also Bernard Dupuy, "L'union de Brest jugée avec le recul du temps," *Istina*, 35 (1990), 17–42; and *Four Hundred Years Union of Brest: A Critical*

tation of the widely known and respected Sheptytsky also had served as a restraint on communist authorities, thereby protecting the metropolitan from open attacks. Sheptytsky had established four Ukrainian exarchates in October 1939, and two months later he secretly ordained Slipyj—then the rector of the Greek Catholic Theological Academy in Lviv—as bishop. Thereupon, Slipyj was appointed coadjutor for the Archeparchy with right of succession, and on the death of Sheptytsky, Slipyj succeeded him. The end of the war and the death of Sheptytsky led to the subordination of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Communist Party, paving the way for a persecution of churches that were not incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church and thus subject to Moscow Patriarch Alexis.<sup>13</sup>

On April 11, 1945, the Ukrainian Catholic bishops, including Slipyj, were arrested. Most of them were accused of collaboration with Nazi rule and sentenced to forced labor and exile. These draconic measures prompted a strong reaction from Pius XII, expressed in his encyclical *Orientales Omnes* of December 23, 1945.<sup>14</sup> In it, the Vatican did not only condemn communism but also openly and specifically attacked Moscow Patriarch Alexis. The situation worsened when on March 8–10, 1946, some 200 Greek Catholic priests were forced to formally revoke their Union with Rome, declare the Brest Union annulled, and convert to Russian Orthodoxy in a *sobor* set up by the Kremlin<sup>15</sup>—all

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*Re-Evaluation*, ed. Bert Groen and Wil Peter Van den Berken (Leuven, 1998). The best historical study devoted to it thus far is that by Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform: The Kyivan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

<sup>13</sup>Ivan Bilas, "The Moscow Patriarchate, the Penal Organs of the USSR, and the Destruction of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church in the 1940's," *Logos*, 34 (1993), 532–76.

<sup>14</sup>In "Orientales Omnes," *AAS*, 38, no. 2 (1946), 33–63, Pius XII wrote: "Ita Rutheni ritus clerus, ut affertur, in litteris ad rei publicae moderatores datis, conquestus est quod sua Ecclesia in Ucraina occidentali, ut hodie vocatur, in difficillimis rerum conditionibus posita sit, propterea quod omnes Episcopi atque ex suis sacerdotibus multi comprehensi sint, unaque simul prohibitum sit ne quis eiusdem Ruthenae Ecclesiae regimen suscipiat." The pope stated later: "Sed res ipsae atque eventus facile declarant in suaque luce ponunt quanam fuerit ac sit harum saevitiarum causa. Quis enim ignorat Alexium Patriarcham, nuper a dissidentibus Russiarum Episcopis delectum, in litteris Ruthenae Ecclesiae datis—quae non parum ad eiusmodi insectationem ineundam contulere—defectionem ab Ecclesia catholica aperte efferre ac praedicare."

<sup>15</sup>On Khrushchev's involvement in the 1944–46 persecution of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, see William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York, 2003), p. 195. See Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church*, pp. 104–106. For a study of the Lviv *sobor*, see pp. 148–88.

without any say from the Ukrainian Catholic bishops.<sup>16</sup> These dramatic events set the tone for decades to come, and the UGCC would become a “Church of Silence.” Even when religious liberty was included in the USSR’s constitution, it was merely a formal liberty, for in reality, the Greek Catholic Church had no real right to existence. In reaction, the Vatican under Pius XII repeatedly rebuked communism<sup>17</sup> and sharply criticized the Russian Orthodox Church, which had become subject to state government.<sup>18</sup> Although the Kremlin had a somewhat less restrictive attitude—due to the de-Stalinization of the USSR to which Khrushchev’s February 25, 1956, “Secret Speech” contributed—the end of that decade was marked by new repressions of Ukrainian Catholics as well as other religious minorities.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Rise of Catholic Ecumenism: The Secretariat for Christian Unity**

Simultaneous with the Vatican’s presentation of itself as an anti-communist stronghold in the decades before the Second Vatican Council, the establishment of new ecumenical contacts on an international level facilitated attitudes quite different from the one found in the 1928 encyclical *Mortalium Animos*. Although ecumenical initiatives were not lacking before and during World War II,<sup>20</sup> it was mostly thereafter that a Roman Catholic awareness and engagement in the ecumenical movement was seen. One year after the establishment of the World Council for Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam in 1948—led by Dutchman Willem Adolf Visser ‘t Hooft—Pope Pius XII published an *Instructio de Motione Oecumenica* on December 20, 1949.<sup>21</sup> A year later Willebrands established the Catholic Conference

<sup>16</sup>The documents on this mock synod of 1946 were published by Patriarch Pimen, *Evovskij tserkovnyi sobor. Dokumenty i materialy 1946–1981*, Moscow, 1983. Also on this era, see the excellent study by Bernard Dupuy, “La dissolution de l’Église gréco-catholique en 1945 par le régime soviétique dans les territoires conquis,” *Istina*, 3–4 (1989), 290–305.

<sup>17</sup>Andrea Riccardi, “Antisovietismo e Ostpolitik della S. Sede,” in Melloni, *Vatican II in Moscow*, pp. 227–68.

<sup>18</sup>This attitude can be seen in a 1949 decree published by the Holy Office, declaring all sympathizers with communism to be excommunicated. See *AAS*, 41 (1949), 334. Further information can be found in Giuseppe Alberigo, “La condanna della collaborazione con i partiti comunisti, 1949,” *Concilium*, 11 (1975), 145–58.

<sup>19</sup>Repressions included the resentencings of Slipyj in 1953 and 1959.

<sup>20</sup>See Jörg Ernesti, *Ökumene im dritten Reich* (Paderborn, 2007).

<sup>21</sup>This instruction was an important step toward a somewhat less restrictive attitude and soon prompted the foundation of new ecumenical organs within the Roman Catholic Church such as the Foyer Unitas in 1950.



for Ecumenical Questions as a way to gather ecumenical expertise within Roman Catholicism from international sources, uniting members from institutes such as Istina, the Foyer Unitas, and the Johann-Adam-Möhlner Stiftung. The Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions was engaged not only with the WCC but also with individual members of other religions, including those behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>22</sup>

Most relevant in this context were the contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and other denominations. In 1948 the Moscow Patriarch Alexis had declined an invitation to join the WCC. As a result, and *a fortiori* after the second WCC assembly at Evanston in 1954, an ongoing process of correspondence was set up between Geneva and Moscow, resulting in a meeting on August 8–10, 1958, in Utrecht.<sup>23</sup> These initial contacts between Eastern and Western Church representatives proved to be crucial, even when no Roman Catholic participants were present and even when the Soviet regime controlled every move made by the Russian Orthodox Church on the international scene. The Utrecht talks revealed the internal complexity of the Russian Orthodox Church and its attitude to the West, as well as its willingness to engage in further communication. It also is striking that the Russian delegates at the Utrecht meeting inquired about the relationship between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, and that both the 1949 Instruction and the activities of the Catholic Conference and Istina were discussed.<sup>24</sup> Significantly, at the

<sup>22</sup>On the origins and importance of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions, see Mauro Velati's *Una difficile transizione: Il cattolicesimo tra unionismo ed ecumenismo* (Bologna, 1996).

<sup>23</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, 68, "Confidential Report of a Meeting between the Russian Orthodox Church and Delegates of the WCC at Utrecht," p. 9.

<sup>24</sup>See the correspondence on the Utrecht talks between Willebrands and Cardinal Bernard Jan Alfrink in Archives Willebrands, 223. The "Confidential Report" reads: "The delegates of the Church in Russia asked about the relationship of the WCC with the Catholic Church. Dr. Visser 't Hooft replied:

"(a) There is no official relationship.

"(b) There is a common prayer for the unity of the church as both keep the Unity Octave at the same time. The intentions are somewhat differently formulated by Fr. Watson, Père Couturier, and the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order, but the idea is the same.

"(c) There is a 'Catholic Conference on Ecumenical Questions.' This has studied several times—independently of the WCC—the themes which have been treated by the WCC.

"(d) Dr. Visser 't Hooft drew attention to the existence of the Instructio of the Holy Office: 'De Motione Ecumenica.'

WCC Central Committee meeting held in Rhodes in August 1959 the presence of two “catholic journalists” caused serious difficulties.<sup>25</sup> As a result of the Utrecht talks, the Russian Orthodox Church decided to join the WCC in April 1961,<sup>26</sup> and this would be confirmed and accepted during the WCC conference in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, matters had undergone a thorough transformation at the Vatican. On October 28, 1958, John XXIII was elected pope, and on January 25, 1959, he convoked an ecumenical council.<sup>27</sup> This decision would have far-reaching consequences for both the development of Catholic ecumenism and the relationship among the Vatican, the Kremlin, and the Moscow Patriarchate. The Rhodes incident had made it painfully clear that the Vatican urgently needed an “official address” for ecumenical affairs. Now, within the context of conciliar preparations, the June 5, 1960, *motu proprio Superno Dei Nutu* announced the establishment of ten preconcialar commissions and three secretariats that included a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) with Cardinal Augustin Bea<sup>28</sup> as its first president and Willebrands as secretary.<sup>29</sup> Given the SPCU’s mandate to invite

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“(e) There were some difficulties with the Roman Catholic Church concerning the persecution of Protestant minorities in Catholic countries.

“The delegates of the Russian Church have, at no time, said anything unfavourable or aggressive towards the Catholic Church during the course of this meeting.”

<sup>25</sup>See Karim Schelkens, “L’affaire de Rhodes au jour le jour. La correspondance inédite entre J.G.M. Willebrands et Ch.J. Dumont,” *Istina*, 54 (2009), 253–77.

<sup>26</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, 223, Letter from Visser ’t Hooft to Willebrands, April 25, 1961. In this letter, the WCC secretary general informed the SPCU of the upcoming press announcement regarding the membership of the Russian Orthodox Church; in this private letter he wrote: “Une des raisons principales pour laquelle nous avons adopté une attitude positive vis-à-vis de cette demande est d’ailleurs aussi que nous avons l’impression qu’en admettant l’église russe, nous pourrions du moins dans une certaine mesure aider au soutien de la cause du christianisme en Russie dans un temps où ceci est très nécessaire.” In the same archive folder, see Visser ’t Hooft’s note “Les faits qui ont marqué le rapprochement entre l’Église Orthodoxe de Russie et le Conseil Oecuménique des Églises.” This note mentions the fact that two delegates from the Moscow Patriarchate (Borovoj and Alexejev) had come to Geneva in June 1959 to study the WCC organization, as well as arrange a December visit by Visser ’t Hooft to Moscow.

<sup>27</sup>Giuseppe Alberigo, “The Announcement of the Council. From the Security of the Fortress to the Lure of the Quest,” in Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, 2:1–54.

<sup>28</sup>Stjepan Schmidt, *Augustin Bea: Der Kardinal der Einbeit* (Graz, 1989).

<sup>29</sup>Mauro Velati, “La proposta ecumenica del segretariato per l’unità dei cristiani,” in *Verso il Concilio Vaticano: Passaggi e problemi della preparazione conciliare*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Alberto Melloni (Bologna, 1993), as well as Mauro Velati, *Una difficile transizione: Il cattolicesimo tra unionismo ed ecumenismo* (Bologna, 1996).

observers from other denominations to the upcoming Council, increasing contacts between Rome and the WCC,<sup>30</sup> as well as between Rome and Moscow, were seen. The latter arose from the SPCU's invitation to Moscow to send official observers to the Second Vatican Council, which Moscow had initially rejected.<sup>31</sup> Although at the WCC's 1962 Paris meeting Boris Nikodim, the metropolitan of Leningrad and Minsk, spoke in favor of sending WCC observers, the issue of Russian Orthodox observers at the Second Vatican Council turned out to be far more complex, because of the difficult bilateral relationships between various Orthodox Patriarchates.<sup>32</sup> On that occasion, on August 13, Willebrands, present in Paris, had private talks with Visser 't Hooft; Nikodim; and archpriest Vitali Borovoj, a professor at Leningrad Ecclesiastical Academy. During these conversations he learned that establishing further contacts was not impossible, but would require his presence in Moscow as a condition for obtaining cooperation from the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>33</sup> Willebrands discussed briefly the fate of the Catholic Church under Soviet rule with Nikodim,<sup>34</sup> then asked Bea for permission to undertake the journey.

<sup>30</sup>For example, Jérôme Hamer, O.P., attended the WCC Central Committee meeting in Paris on August 7–17, 1962; he was the first official Roman Catholic SPCU representative. In his report on the meeting he underlines the important role of Nikodim in obtaining a positive reaction to the SPCU's invitation for sending WCC observers to the Council. KDC, Archives Willebrands, 68: "Rapport du P. Hamer, Comité central du Conseil Oecuménique des Églises," Paris, August 24, 1962. Also see "Report by John B. Sheerin," September 10, 1962: "It was noteworthy that Archbishop Nikodim of the Russian Orthodox Church spoke in favor of the resolution and his support may have forestalled opposition from other quarters."

<sup>31</sup>During a conversation with Patriarch Alexis on June 15, 1960, Vladimir A. Kurojedov, the new president of the Soviet Government Council for Church Affairs, had taken a very negative stance toward John XXIII's initiative to convoke the Council. See Adriano Rocucci, "Russian Observers at Vatican II: The 'Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs' and the Moscow Patriarchate between Anti-Religious Policy and International Strategies," in Melloni, *Vatican II in Moscow*, pp. 45–69, esp. p. 55. This had resulted in the publication of the anonymous article *Non possumus* in the June 1960 issue of *Z'urnal Moskovskoj Patriarchii*—the periodical of the Moscow Patriarchate.

<sup>32</sup>For a more detailed study on these problems, see Rocucci, *Russian Observers*, pp. 45–69.

<sup>33</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, 68, Letter from Willebrands to Bea, August 12, 1962: "À la fin, Nicodème a précisé: Nous espérons beaucoup que vous puissiez venir à Moscou et encore une fois je vous assure que ce voyage ne sera pas infructueux."

<sup>34</sup>Nikodim's answer was the following: "Je suis incapable de vous donner des informations sur la situation des évêques catholiques en Union Soviétique ou leur possibilité de se rendre à Rome à l'occasion du Concile. Cela dépend du gouvernement russe. Or il y dans le gouvernement deux commissions pour les affaires religieuses: une pour l'église orthodoxe, une autre pour toutes les autres églises."

Well aware that the KGB was watching the Russian Orthodox Church, Bea responded positively, but stated some conditions: First, the Russian government had to grant permission to Catholic bishops in Russian territory to participate in the Council. Second, Willebrands was to be granted an official passport and visa for a visit to the Moscow Patriarch so as to avoid accusations that the Vatican has sent a “spy disguised as tourist.”<sup>35</sup> So, only days before the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council and only weeks before the Cuban Missile Crisis, Willebrands traveled to Moscow. He kept complete records of the conversations he held there from September 27 to October 2, 1962.<sup>36</sup> On this occasion, the main discussion topic was the practical organization of the Council, including the role of the observers. Also, the Russians pointed out that the Council should avoid an explicit connection of communist atheism with specific nations.<sup>37</sup> Yet, it is significant that Willebrands also cites Nikodim, who was the Moscow Patriarchate’s president of the Department for External Relations, raising the following issue:<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, 68, Letter from Bea to Willebrands, August 15, 1962: “Per l’accettazione nostra di Osservatori della Chiesa Russa la condizione ‘préalable’ è che il governo russo concede ai Vescovi che stanno nel territorio russo, di prendere parte al Concilio, e che non—nè materialmente nè moralmente—impedisca gli Stati con essa alleati o associati di fare lo stesso.” Bea proceeds: “Data questa assicurazione ufficiale e autorevole si può continuare di trattare la questione degli Osservatori. Non vi è alcuna obiezione di principio che V.S. Rev.ma vada per questo scopo anche a Mosca, come ha visitato altri Patriarcati. Ma vi è una condizione: che non vi vada come ‘turista.’”

<sup>36</sup>For an account of this journey, see Giovanni Turbanti, “Il problema del comunismo al Concilio,” in Melloni, *Vatican II in Moscow*, pp. 157–59. Also see Johannes Willebrands, “La rencontre entre Rome et Moscou. Souvenirs,” in Melloni, *Vatican II in Moscow*, pp. 331–38.

<sup>37</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, 68, “Visite de Mgr. Willebrands au Patriarcat de Moscou,” 13 pp., here pp. 2–3, on atheism: “Peut-on éviter d’en parler de telle façon qui permettrait une interprétation politique, dirigée contre certains nations? Ne pensez-pas que nous, comme évêques russes orthodoxes, défendons l’athéisme! Cela n’est pas vrai, mais nous demandons de comprendre notre situation. On peut parler de l’athéisme sans mentionner ou faire allusion à une nation déterminée, ce qui risquerait facilement de tourner un document religieux en un document politique.”

<sup>38</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, 68, “Visite de Mgr. Willebrands au Patriarcat de Moscou,” p. 4: Concernant la position des évêques catholiques en Russie, l’archevêque Nicodème a entendu des rumeurs que certains Vicaires apostoliques en Russie ont demandé un visa pour aller au Concile. Pourront-ils y aller? N’est-ce pas une situation délicate si l’Église Orthodoxe Russe sera représentée, même par ses observateurs, si les évêques ou leurs vicaires ne pourront pas être présent? Nous serons très contents de rencontrer éventuellement à Rome des compatriotes catholiques.

Concerning the situation of the Catholic bishops in Russia, Archbishop Nikodim heard rumors that some apostolic vicars in Russia applied for a visa to go to the Council. Will they go? Would it not be an awkward situation if the Russian Orthodox Church be represented, even by its own observers, without the presence of their bishops or vicars? We will be glad to finally meet our Catholic compatriots in Rome.

Nikodim articulated the central issue with powerful clarity. To understand the reaction of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic hierarchy to the SPCU's invitation to the Moscow Patriarchate, a look at the preparation in Rome for the Council is necessary.

### **The Hot Month of October 1962: Cold War in Rome**

In the Council's preparation phase, the bishops' *vota* were collected and organized into a manageable list of topics.<sup>39</sup> From summer 1960 onward the preconconciliar commissions were active in Rome, which included several UGCC representatives. Noteworthy is the conversation between Maxim Hermaniuk, C.Ss.R., the Ukrainian metropolitan of Winnipeg (see figure 2), and John XXIII at Castel Gandolfo on September 30, 1961. In his personal diary, Hermaniuk wrote:

Upon entering the Holy Father greeted me in Bulgarian—*kak su*—“how are you”, offering me the courtesy of using a Slavic language.

The discussion was very relaxed and cordial. The topics of the discussion were the following: 1. The invitation, in some form (to show a solidarity of faith in one God against atheistic communism), to the representatives of all who profess one God (Jews, Muslims) on the occasion of the Ecumenical Council.

2. The invitation, in some form, of Orthodox and Protestants to this Council.

3. The first provincial Synod of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg.

4. The persecution of the Church in Ukraine and the martyrdom of our nation, especially the great Metropolitan J. Slipyj.

The Holy Father confirmed, concerning the first two points, that this is very complex and is in the stage of study. He, with a sincere heart, con-

<sup>39</sup>Many bishops asked for clear condemnations of communism, which explains why the *Synthesis Finalis* of the Antepreparatory Commission of Vatican II places items such as *De communismo*, *De atheismo*, *De totalitarismo*, *De marxismo*, and *De socialismo* under the heading “Errors to Be Condemned.” See *Acta et Documenta* I.2.1:197-231.



FIGURE 2. At center: Maxim Hermaniuk, C.Ss.R., Ukrainian metropolitan of Winnipeg, at the Second Vatican Council. Photo courtesy of the Center for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, Catholic University of Leuven

veyed his apostolic blessings to our Synod and to the whole Ukrainian nation. The picture of Metropolitan Slipyj stands on his table.<sup>40</sup>

Members of the Ukrainian diaspora episcopate were hoping that the Council would address the suppression of the Greek Catholic churches in the Soviet Union. On the eve of the Council's solemn opening session, fifteen members of the Ukrainian diaspora hierarchy gathered in Rome to set a public agenda. Several steps were initiated at that meeting such as the preparation of a brochure and a letter to the Council Fathers informing them of the situation of Catholic martyrs of the UGCC and Slipyj; a plan to publish an article on the imprisonment of Slipyj; and an intention to ask Cardinal Gustavo Testa<sup>41</sup> to appoint a procurator for Slipyj.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Archives Metropolitan See Winnipeg, Canada (hereafter AMW), Council Diary Maxim Hermaniuk (hereafter Council Diary Hermaniuk), September 30, 1961. The diary will be published as *The Council Diaries of Maxim Hermaniuk, C.Ss.R., Metropolitan of Winnipeg, 1960-1965*, annot. Jaroslav Skira and Karim Schelkens, trans. Jaroslav Skira (Leuven, 2011).

<sup>41</sup>John XXIII, who was well acquainted with the Oriental Churches because of his experience as a nuncio in Bulgaria, had asked his friend, Testa, on July 31, 1962, to take up the post of prefect to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Testa agreed and was officially appointed on August 2, 1962.

<sup>42</sup>AMW, Council Diary Hermaniuk, October 10, 1962.

Meanwhile, Patriarch Alexis and the Russian Orthodox Synod had gathered at Zagorsk on October 8, 1962, and agreed to send two observers to the Council: Borovoj, who had attended the Utrecht and Paris meetings and also frequently visited the WCC headquarters at Geneva as a delegate for his church; and Vladimir Kotliarov, vice-superior of the Russian Religious Mission at Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> They arrived in Rome on October 12 (see figure 3), and action was swiftly taken by the Ukrainian diaspora bishops. Hermaniuk's diary entry of October 17, 1962, notes:

Meeting at the College of St. Josafat with Most Rev. Ivan Bučko, Most Rev. A. Sapeljak and Most Rev. A. Hornjak on the issue of the ratification of the text of a common letter of our Ukrainian Bishops to all the Fathers of the Council regarding "the observers" of the Russian Orthodox Church at the Council. The discussion was very interesting and beneficial. I was entrusted with preparing an outline of our lines of thought, and Most Rev. Bučko is to prepare the full text in Italian. Afterwards we will determine when that letter is to be given to the Fathers of the Council.<sup>44</sup>

As Nikodim had predicted, the Ukrainian diaspora bishops were deeply shocked by the presence of Russian Orthodox observers, given that many of their own bishops were still in exile or imprisoned.<sup>45</sup> During these days just before the Cuban Missile Crisis, the conflict between the Russian Orthodox Church and the heavily persecuted Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was about to come to a head. Over the next days, Hermaniuk drafted a public repudiation of the Russian Orthodox observers invited by the SPCU, in which the

<sup>43</sup>See the leaflet distributed by the SPCU, *Observateurs délégués et hôtes du Secrétariat pour l'Unité des chrétiens au deuxième concile oecuménique du Vatican* (Rome, 1965), p. 11.

<sup>44</sup>AMW, Council Diary Hermaniuk, October 17, 1962.

<sup>45</sup>On October 21, one day before Kennedy presented the public with photographs of Soviet missiles in Cuba, Hermaniuk noted: "in the afternoon a reception hosted by His Eminence Cardinal Agagianian in honour of the Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Archbishops and Bishops of all the Eastern rites participating in the Council. At the reception also were Cardinals Feltin, Tisserant, Amleto Cicognani, and . . . V. Valeri. Apart from the cardinals there were also patriarchs: Maximos IV from Antioch, the Patriarch of Armenia and the Maronite Patriarch. Among those present there were also—one knows not why and what for—the 'observers' of the Russian Orthodox Church—Vitali Borovoj and Vladimir Kotliarov. This is a real misfortune for the Council and for all its manifestations. It is painful, especially for us Ukrainians, who have suffered so much and our brothers who still continue to suffer under Moscow and its Orthodox Church—especially our Confessor Josyf Slipyj—for fidelity to Christ and the Church." See AMW, Council Diary Hermaniuk, October 21, 1962. Also see Melloni, *L'Altra Roma*, p. 132.



FIGURE 3. Russian observers at the Second Vatican Council. Photo courtesy of the Center for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, Catholic University of Leuven.

Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet government were presented as a single entity, making clear that the Council should denounce both rather than invite “communist representatives” to Rome. At this point, the Ukrainian hierarchy felt deserted by the Vatican administration, and the Ukrainian hierarchs felt that they needed to respond to the patronizing attitude of Vatican diplomats, who considered the UGCC only as a small Eastern entity. Their initiative was hardly welcomed by the SPCU.<sup>46</sup> On October 25, Willebrands and Bea were aware of the intention of the Ukrainian bishops to publicly protest the presence of the Russian observers at the Second Vatican Council, and both informed Monsignor Igino Cardinale, chief of protocol at the Secretariat of State of the Holy See. Cardinale, in turn, made a note on the matter for Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, secretary of state for the Holy See.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup>For an insider’s perspective, see Emanuel Lanne, “La perception en Occident de la participation du Patriarcat de Moscou à Vatican II,” in Melloni, *Vatican II in Moscow*, pp. 120–21.

<sup>47</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Report on the Events of October 23–27,” p. 2. Also see Archives Willebrands, 324, “Diary Notes on the First Weeks of the Council,” for October 25, p. 3: “The Russian observers ask about the presence of catholic bishops from Soviet territory. According to the information of Msgr. Lupi, none of them are present at the



On that same evening, Bea had a private audience with John XXIII,<sup>48</sup> in which he informed the pope that, at earlier meetings, Ivan Bučko had favored inviting representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, but had now changed his mind under pressure from the Ukrainian diaspora episcopate. He, too, felt the risk that the Vatican diplomats would opt for a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union, rather than for a clear support of the Ukrainian martyrs. John XXIII personally asked Bea to prevent such an action by the Ukrainian bishops, and on October 27 Bea met with Ukrainian Metropolitan Ambrosij Senysyn—responsible for the U.S. Ukrainian diaspora—to inform him that the pope wished the Ukrainian bishops to refrain from action against the Russian observers. Also, Bea explained that the SPCU had invited the Russian delegates on its own initiative and not by order of the Holy See. These factors contribute to the extremely complex background against which the negotiations leading to Slipyj's release must be understood.

### From Andover to Rome

When it came to the Vatican's attitude toward communism John XXIII showed an astoundingly open and humanist attitude from the earliest period of his pontificate. This is illustrated by a remarkable peacekeeping initiative from the pope's side. In August 1959 John XXIII had private conversations with Belgian Dominican friar Félix A. Morlion, who had previously been actively involved in actions against nazism and Stalinism (see figure 4). Morlion, now a director of the New York-based American Council for the International Promotion of Democracy under God (CIP), discussed two issues with John XXIII. First was the possibility of establishing an "international university"

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Council. Both of the Russian observers cannot understand this and deplore the fact that, while they themselves are present, no catholic representatives from the Soviet Union are here. . . . Cardinal Bea informs me that he has learned from a reliable source, that the Ukrainian bishops are planning to make public objections against the presence of Russian observers, with Msgr. Bučko as spokesman. It is needed to prevent such action from happening and the cardinal orders me to contact Msgr. Cardinale. Upon returning at the office I did so, and Cardinale's spontaneous reaction was: 'is he crazy', he would immediately prepare a note for Cardinal Cicognani."

<sup>48</sup>The audience was not noted in the pope's diary (Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, *Pater Amabilis. Agende del papa, 1958-1963*, ed. Mauro Velati [Bologna, 2007]), but Bea reported it to Willebrands. See the diary note in Archives Willebrands, 324, p. 1: "Cardinal Bea has had an audience with the Holy Father, who appeared to be fully aware of the Ukrainian initiative. The pope told the cardinal that he did not wish to see such actions, and has ordered Cardinal Bea to inform the Ukrainian episcopate of this."



FIGURE 4. At left: Félix A. Morlion, O.P. Photo courtesy of KADOC, the Documentation and Research Center for Religion, Culture, and Society of the Catholic University of Leuven. At right: Norman Cousins, January 1943. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, reproduction no. LC-USE6-D-006885.

under CIP auspices, which ultimately was formed in November 1961 as the International Pro Deo University with Morlion as its first president. Second, Morlion and John XXIII talked about the need for a series of books to explain to nonbelievers, including those under communist rule, the new and more pastoral approach of the Catholic Church.<sup>49</sup> The pope intended that these six books would be issued after events at the Vatican. With John XXIII's approval Morlion contacted Harper and Brothers in search of a writer who could advise him on his project. In early 1960 the publishing house referred Morlion to U.S. journalist Norman Cousins, editor-in-chief of the *Saturday Review* and a founding member of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE; see figure 4). Cousins and Morlion quickly became friends, and this friendship would have significant ecclesiastical and political implications. Cousins, who had had private contacts with Khrushchev in Moscow and New York, was already acquainted with some of Khrushchev's close friends through semi-official US-USSR meetings held at Dartmouth. Another such meeting would be held in October 1962 at Phillips Exeter Academy in Andover,

<sup>49</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Félix A. Morlion, "Memorandum for John XXIII and John F. Kennedy," November 1962, p. 1.

Massachusetts. This time, through the mediation of Cousins, Morlion observed talks that took place on the eve of American congressional elections amid the mounting tensions of the Cuba crisis.

On October 24, at the height of the crisis, Cousins, well informed by his Washington connections, told Morlion of the political risks at hand and asked him “if Pope John could make a very special appeal for restraint on all sides.” Morlion then telephoned Cardinale, who stated that such a plan was underway and that Kennedy would be kept informed.<sup>50</sup> On that day Morlion twice telephoned the Vatican, making the case for Cousins as a possible link between the Vatican and the Kremlin.<sup>51</sup> The result of these communications is indicated by Cardinale, who made clear that the pope was interested in receiving Cousins. Then, on October 25, 1962, John XXIII delivered a speech on the radio that asked all parties to avoid nuclear warfare and casualties. His appeal was published in the *New York Times*<sup>52</sup> as well as in Moscow’s *Pravda*.<sup>53</sup> In the course of the next days both Khrushchev and Kennedy gave proof of restraint.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, at Andover on October 25, Morlion met privately—without Cousins and without the pope’s knowledge—with Evgueni Fedorov, chair of

<sup>50</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Morlion, “Memorandum for John XXIII and John F. Kennedy,” November 1962, pp. 3, 3a.

<sup>51</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Morlion, “Memorandum for John XXIII and John F. Kennedy,” November 1962, pp. 2–3. Regarding Cousins, Morlion wrote:

1. He is a rather unique case in having obtained special personal confidence of Nikita Khrushchev as proved by certain questions asked him which cannot be explained as ordinary moves of dissimulation. This has been favored by his books and actions for peace which have been linked by Khrushchev and his friends, to organizations as SANE which are not under his control.
2. He is widely known as a humanist who is not identified with any particular creed and owes no allegiance to any church. My experience with him demonstrates that he is a deeply spiritual man of sacrifice and prayer worthy of special confidence of our headquarter [Vatican].
3. He is seen by Nikita Khrushchev and his friends as a typical leader of a new peace loving generation, which in a certain sense can be expected to owe primary allegiance to the human family and the cause of peace.

At the time the United States did not have a formal diplomatic relationship with the Holy See. For details on the U.S. relationship with the Holy See from the eighteenth century onward, see Andrew M. Essig and Jennifer L. Moore, “U.S.-Holy See Diplomacy: The Establishment of Formal Relations, 1984,” *The Catholic Historical Review*, 95 (2009), 741–64.

<sup>52</sup>“Text of Pope’s Appeal,” *New York Times*, October 26, 1962, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup>*Pravda*, October 26, 1962, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup>See Fogarty, *The Council Gets Underway*, pp. 100–01.

the Russian delegation, and Russian journalist Grigory Shumeiko. Morlion's three-hour talk with these men would prove quite important, as he solicited and obtained permission for Cousins to travel to Moscow and meet with Khrushchev<sup>55</sup> after a visit to the Vatican. In other words, Morlion had managed to send Cousins to Moscow with a specifically religious agenda. On October 29 Morlion had another transatlantic phone conversation with Cardinale regarding the possibility of a visit by Cousins to the Vatican, which was planned sometime between December 8 and 13.<sup>56</sup> In the days thereafter, Washington was informed of this private initiative,<sup>57</sup> and in late November Cousins received a phone call from Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the United States, who indicated that Cousins could meet with Khrushchev on December 14. As a result, a broader triangular structure of private contacts was established among Washington, Rome, and Moscow based on the personal contacts established by Cousins and Morlion.

The presence of Russian Orthodox observers at the Second Vatican Council stirred controversy, but could have been expected, given John XXIII's overall approach to outreach. Without the knowledge of members of the Ukrainian episcopate, contacts had been evolving between the Vatican and the Kremlin since 1961. Such contacts were largely separate from the SPCU's ecumenical endeavors, but were equally important. It was highly symbolic that in late November 1961, John XXIII addressed a personal letter to Khrushchev,<sup>58</sup> who in March 1958 had become premier of the Soviet Union. Such private letters

<sup>55</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Morlion, "Memorandum for John XXIII and John F. Kennedy," November 1960, p. 5: "When asked [by the Russians] if I could give them this information in writing [on the Second Vatican Council and on the new policies developed by the Vatican] I answered yes on the condition that NC [Cousins] will be accepted by them to visit NK [Khrushchev] and inform him further on what he would learn through private contacts with PJ [John XXIII]." On October 29, Morlion had a second conversation with the Russian delegates and handed them a note he had prepared for Khrushchev that described the intentions of John XXIII and the upcoming book project on the new Vatican policies.

<sup>56</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Morlion, "Memorandum for John XXIII and John F. Kennedy," November 1960, pp. 10-11.

<sup>57</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Letter from Ralph A. Dungan (special assistant to Kennedy) to Cousins, December 6, 1962: "The President, knowing of your impending visit to Rome, has asked that you convey to the Holy Father the President's great relief at the Holy Father's recovery and asks that you extend his best wishes for the Holy Father's continued good health."

<sup>58</sup>Giorgio La Pira, *Lettere a Giovanni XXIII: Il sogno di un tempo nuovo*, ed. Andrea Riccardi and Augusto D'Angelo (Milan, 2009), p. 393.

between the pope<sup>59</sup> and the premier, however negligible in terms of content, point to the growth of a mutual trust and openness. This would become tangible in a much debated press statement offered by Cardinale on November 9, 1962, in which the Vatican stated that it was “ready to engage in relations with any state, but they have to be founded on the reliable guarantee of the other party to assure freedom for the church and the sanctity of the moral and spiritual interests of its citizens.”<sup>60</sup> Significantly, this statement went further than John XXIII’s October 25 appeal: “I always speak well of all those statesmen here and there, in this or that land . . . who promote, favor and accept negotiations, at all levels and at all times.”<sup>61</sup> Even before Cousins and Morlion’s arrival in Rome in early December 1962, Roman events in the public sphere, as well as behind closed doors, in November would prove to be quite eventful. For a start, the Ukrainian bishops at the Council, who noted the turn taken in Cardinale’s press conference, decided to continue their course of action. On November 22, 1962, a statement was published in the Italian press, representing a “Solemn and Dramatic Declaration on the Silent Church.”<sup>62</sup> In agreement with the Vatican Secretariat of State and in close contact with Borovoj, the SPCU reacted the next day, issuing another press statement that distanced itself from the Ukrainian initiative.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Moreover, the pope was constantly informed of the ongoing contacts between members of the Italian government and the Kremlin in the same era such as Fanfani and Giorgio La Pira, the mayor of Florence, as is evident in from their recently edited correspondence. See La Pira, *Lettere*, esp. letters 63, 79, 107, 108, 113, and 115.

<sup>60</sup>Krassikov, “The Second Vatican Council in the Context of Relations between the USSR and the Holy See,” in Melloni, *Vatican II in Moscow*, pp. 313–30, esp. p. 325.

<sup>61</sup>Quoted in Zizola, *L’Utopia*, p. 7. See AAM, Archives Suenens, which contain a “Very Restricted Memorandum” by Morlion titled “A Principle of Holy See Policies Applicable in Relations with the East.” In it, the Vatican press conference is explained as follows: “The occasion for the press conference was the necessity of counteracting pressures of all kinds by less diplomatically subtle people in favor of the Holy See breaking diplomatic relations with Cuba.”

<sup>62</sup>See F. Pucci, *Una solenne e drammatica dichiarazione sulla “Chiesa del silenzio”*: *Invocata da 15 Vescovi ucraini al Concilio sulla libertà per i sacerdoti detenuti oltrecortina*, in *Il Giornale d’Italia*, November 21–22, 1962. Later, Hermaniuk would comment on this in an interview with the *Ukrainian Weekly*, July 26, 1987, p. 4, stating that “[a]s chairman of the Ukrainian Catholic delegation I and the other 14 signed a joint letter calling for goodwill in releasing Slipyj. Up until that point, the issue was too sensitive for any of the bishops to want to handle. So we printed in the daily newspaper, *Il Giornale d’Italia*[,] on November 22, 1962. That day all of the bishops attending Vatican II learned first-hand that we had no official voice. It was a day that the whole Church listened to our voice.”

<sup>63</sup>Vatican City, Vatican Secret Archives, Conc. Vat. II, Papers SPCU 1463, “Report of the SPCU-Meeting of November 23, 1962,” which contains the following passage: “Mgr le

Moreover, Willebrands met with the Ukrainian bishop conference on November 24, explaining to the bishops the precise reasons and circumstances behind the invitation extended to the Russian Orthodox observers.<sup>64</sup> The Ukrainians had clearly not realized that their action was hardly appreciated by the pope, given John XXIII's efforts in diplomacy geared toward obtaining Slipyj's release. For a start, on the day that the Ukrainian press statement appeared in *Il Giornale d'Italia*, private conversations took place between Semeion P. Kozyrev, the USSR ambassador to Italy, and Amintore Fanfani, the Roman Catholic prime minister of Italy.<sup>65</sup> After these conversations, Kozyrev believed an improved Holy See-Soviet Union relationship was on the horizon,<sup>66</sup> although this would later prove to be a somewhat premature expectation.

### From Rome to Moscow

On December 12, after Morlion and Cousins had cleared their trip to Rome with Washington, they traveled to Rome and held conversations with Cardinals Cicognani and Bea, Monsignor Angelo Dell'Acqua, and Cardinale. The non-Catholic Cousins—who did not meet with John XXIII due to the pope's illness—was now acting as an unofficial intermediary for the pope on this trip to the Kremlin and was preparing for his talk with Khrushchev. He studied the first chap-

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secrétaire Willebrands met au courant l'assemblée au sujet du communiqué paru dans la presse et attribué à l'Épiscopat Ukrainien en exil. Certains évêques ukrainiens se sont désolidarisés de cette déclaration. Mais le Secrétariat a jugé bon, d'accord avec la Secrétairerie d'État, de faire un communiqué de presse. Ce communiqué, conçu en termes assez larges, peut aussi se référer à des allusions faites dans la presse allemande et aussi aux États-Unis sur la question des observateurs. Il a semblé utile de faire ce communiqué. Mgr Willebrands en a parlé avec l'archiprêtre Borovoj. On espère que la déclaration des évêques ukrainiens n'aura pas de conséquences."

<sup>64</sup>AMW, Council Diary Hermaniuk, November 23–24: "Msgr. Willebrands spoke to our bishops at the College of St. Josafat: 1. He spoke at length about the work of the Secretariat in general; 2. He went to Moscow on behalf of the Secretariat; 3. In Moscow, he wanted to raise the topic of Metropolitan J. Slipyj, but His Eminence Card. Cicognani (Secretary of State) said to him that this is not his business and that he should not pursue it."

<sup>65</sup>It should be noted that during this period, Fanfani led a coalition of Christian Democrats and Italian socialists, rendering Italian politics open to left-wing political ideas and softening its attitude toward the Kremlin. On Fanfani's role and contacts with the Vatican and Moscow, see Pietro Neglie, *La stagione del disgelo: Il Vaticano, l'Unione Sovietica e la politica di centrosinistra in Italia, 1958–1963* (Siena, 2010).

<sup>66</sup>Krassikov, *The USSR and the Holy See*, pp. 325–26.

ter of the first volume in Morlion's book series; talked to his Russian friends Fedorov, Shumeiko, and others; and consulted with Vatican officials. During his talk with Bea—who had been fully informed about the state of church affairs in Moscow by Willebrands only three weeks before<sup>67</sup> and about the attitude of the Ukrainian hierarchy only a week before—the topic of Catholic suppression under Soviet rule was broached. Cousins stated:

For many years he [Bea] said, members of the religious community had been imprisoned inside the Soviet Union. It would be a most favorable augury if at least one of them could be released. Would there be any particular person he had in mind, I asked. "Yes", he said, Archbishop Josyf Slipyj of Ukraine, who has been imprisoned for eighteen years. He is a very fine man. The Holy Father is concerned about him. The Holy Father would like the Archbishop to live out those few years [left] in peace at some seminary, where he would be among his own. There is no intention to exploit the Archbishop's release for propaganda purposes.<sup>68</sup>

On December 14, Cousins flew from Rome to Moscow for a long conversation with Khrushchev.<sup>69</sup> Many issues were discussed during this meeting, including the Cuba crisis and Khrushchev's Soviet Communist Party reform. Cousins explained to Khrushchev the importance of Morlion's book project as well as the major role of the pope during the Cuba crisis and the pope's opinion that "the Church should go deep into the spiritual problems of peace. A nuclear war is not only a war against man, but a war against the Creator and his plans for humanity's future."<sup>70</sup> Cousins underscored the need "to avoid that the pope's mediation, his wish to serve the cause of peace, should promote crisis."<sup>71</sup> The subject of religious freedom then was

<sup>67</sup>See AAM, Archives Suenens, Cousins, "Report of the Meeting between Mr. Nikita Khrushchev and Mr. N.," December 14, 1962. This sixteen-page report by Cousins offers a full report of the dialogue. An English version was sent to Kennedy, and an Italian version was sent to John XXIII, Cardinale, Dell'Acqua, Tisserant, and Bea. Cousins's report mentions that Khrushchev was well aware of Willebrands's first Moscow visit just before the Cuba crisis.

<sup>68</sup>Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate*, p. 30.

<sup>69</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Cousins, "Report of the Meeting between Mr. Nikita Khrushchev and Mr. N.," December 14, 1962, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Cousins, "Report of the Meeting between Mr. Nikita Khrushchev and Mr. N.," December 14, 1962, pp. 5–6.

<sup>71</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Cousins, "Report of the Meeting between Mr. Nikita Khrushchev and Mr. N.," December 14, 1962, p. 6, adding that "one could think that it would be an expedient to have crisis, knowing that it would be possible to have recourse of the Holy See to overcome them."

addressed as well as the UGCC's situation, with Cousins asking for a sign of good intentions toward the Catholic Church by allowing it to disseminate its holy literature and, to show that religious freedom was taken seriously, liberating Slipyj. The latter request triggered some reactions. Cousins's private report of the meeting states:

Here Khrushchev used about fifteen minutes to explain thoroughly the case of Bishop Slipyj, whom he had known; he had followed this case personally, from 1940, when he was President of the Cabinet of Ukraine. He gave a detailed history of the religious events in Ukraine, expounding thoroughly the political questions around the figure of Slipyj's predecessor, His Excellency Bishop Prince Sheptytsky.<sup>72</sup>

Later, Khrushchev says that "I do not know where bishop Slipyj is now, nor whether he is alive or not; but I shall deal with the matter and have his case examined," which seems to recognize the potential for enormous scandal should Slipyj be released. But Cousins pressed further, stating that the Vatican would promise that it would not exploit any publicity, whereupon Khrushchev stated that "I will have the case examined, and I do not exclude a release, provided there are guarantees that nobody will make a political case out of it. I had other enemies, too, and one more in freedom wouldn't make me afraid."<sup>73</sup> At the end of his report, Cousins made clear that the conversation had surpassed his expectations, as all of the points he had prepared had been received positively. Some signals can testify to the mutual sense of a positive atmosphere of the talk such as the fact that Shumeiko

<sup>72</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Cousins, "Report of the Meeting between Mr. Nikita Khrushchev and Mr. N.," December 14, 1962, pp. 11-12. Regarding Sheptytsky, Khrushchev indicated that "it was not possible to go back to the situation that had existed under the Czar, when the priests were his gendarmes. His Excellency Sheptytsky made a declaration in this sense. Then he was immediately struck by an illness, and died under rather mysterious circumstances. There are reasons for suspecting that his death had been accelerated."

<sup>73</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Cousins, "Report of the Meeting between Mr. Nikita Khrushchev and Mr. N.," December 14, 1962, pp. 11-12A. The elaborate account given in Cousins's private report differs from the story published in *The Improbable Triumvirate*, pp. 48-49: "I [Cousins] said that over the years, many attempts had been made to obtain the release from prison of Archbishop Slipyj of the Ukraine. Pope John was hopeful that something could now be done. He was not addressing himself to the reasons for the internment; these reasons went back many years and there was no point in rearguing the case." Khrushchev then says: "It is not a good idea. I would like to have improved relationships with the Vatican but this is not the way to do it. In fact, it could be the worse thing we could do. The Chairman said if the Archbishop became free there would be large headlines proclaiming, 'Bishop Reveals Red Torture.'"



and Fedorov insisted on sending an “open” (not codified, as was customary) telegram to Morlion, or the fact that Khrushchev sent along a handwritten Christmas card for John XXIII.

### **Back to the Vatican**

A few days later, Cousins headed back to Rome. There, the tumultuous first period of the Second Vatican Council had come to a close, and an overall new direction shaping Roman Catholicism was gradually evolving. In Rome Cousins met with Morlion, Dell’Acqua, Cardinale, and Bea, plus the dean of cardinals, Eugène Tisserant. To these men he reported on his conversation at the Kremlin and again noted Bea’s vivid interest in the possibility of religious amelioration and the request for the release of Slipyj.<sup>74</sup> He also had a private audience with the pope on December 19, 1962. On the basis of his own report he had a lengthy conversation with John XXIII in which both the pope’s diplomatic sensitivity and personal desire for world peace on a humanitarian basis were clear. In a report on this conversation written for Kennedy on January 17, 1963, Cousins recalls:

Pope John has profound convictions about the issue of war and peace in our time. War can no longer be considered a purely political question. The effects of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons on man, on the human germplasm, on the natural environment, on hundreds of millions of people outside the nuclear nations, and on generations to come—these effects clearly make the issue of war and peace a profound spiritual one. Every resource must be tapped in behalf of the human situation. But the Holy Father has no desire to create any embarrassment for the President or to undertake any initiatives that are unacceptable to the President or to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup>Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate*, p. 58.

<sup>75</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Cousins, “Report for President John F. Kennedy,” January 17, 1963, p. 1. In the same report to Kennedy, Cousins also articulates four aspects to explore during the Moscow portion of his trip:

1. What are the prospects for enlarged religious freedom inside the Soviet Union? Would it be possible to obtain the release of bishop Slipyj? What about publication and distribution of holy literature?
2. How much could be ascertained about the nature and strength of the opposition to N. K.’s no-war policy inside the Communist world in general and inside the Soviet Union in particular?
3. What are the alternatives to the present Soviet leadership?
4. What are the prospects for opening up a responsible line of communications between Rome and Moscow?

Also, it is evident that Cousins and John XXIII addressed topics beyond the geopolitical implications of atomic warfare, including the situation of religions under Soviet rule as well as the possibility of securing the release of Slipyj.<sup>76</sup> In his letter to the pope a few days later Cousins would return to these topics:

I was grateful for the opportunity to report to you personally concerning my visit with Mr. Khrushchev, from whom I sought assurances of enlarged religious freedom inside the Soviet Union. He recognizes your desire to do everything possible to keep the differences now separating the nations from becoming the combustible material of a nuclear war. He welcomes the establishment of unofficial and confidential contacts or communications. He will give consideration to your request that Holy Literature be made increasingly available, with respect to both publication and distribution. He will look into the case of Bishop Slipyj.<sup>77</sup>

Cousins concluded that, like Vatican policy, Soviet policy at the summit was in transition, with Khrushchev searching for a workable relation to the West. Thus, a basic agreement among the three parties was moving toward fruition. In examining this process, several conclusions can be drawn:

- (a) First, the pope allowed for the offices of the Vatican to be made available for the purpose of averting or abating geopolitical crisis. Seemingly, the Vatican was even willing to engage in actual mediation between political powers. Thus, the Vatican was emerging as a fully accredited subject in international politics, maintaining its “third way” between Washington and Moscow.
- (b) Second, the absence of nuclear conflict, described in terms of peaceful coexistence or competitive coexistence, was to be maintained through mutual respect for the conditions that make this possible.
- (c) Third, beyond the negative condition of absence of nuclear conflict, the possibility emerged for positive action. Such positive action was to be rooted in a broad “humanistic consensus” designed to foster the full development of human resources and capacities on the planet. This perspective could be shared by all parties involved.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup>Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate*, p. 64, reports that John XXIII said the following: “I have prayed for many years for the release of Archbishop Slipyj. Can you imagine what it must be like to be cut off for so many years from the kind of service you have prepared yourself to live, and from life itself? What is your impression? Do you think the Archbishop will be released?”

<sup>77</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Letter from Cousins to John XXIII, December 21, 1962. Cf. La Pira, *Lettere*, p. 393.

<sup>78</sup>The U.S. position is clear in AAM, Archives Suenens, Letter from Kennedy to Cousins, January 31, 1963: “I want to thank you for keeping me informed so fully about

Against this background of growing consensus, the release of Slipyj, as a result of the changing relationships between the political forces and the Holy See, can be regarded as an important token of mutual confidence and goodwill from the Kremlin and as a personal gesture from Khrushchev to the pope. However, reducing the fate of Slipyj to a simple result of grand diplomacy among major political players does not reflect the full picture.

### **Moscow Revisited: February 2–4, 1963**

Although there is no proof that Willebrands and Cousins met in the last months of 1962, both had been key players behind the scenes in Slipyj's release. Both had interacted with major figures behind the Iron Curtain and were therefore well aware that any type of accusation of political bias against the Vatican or the Council must be avoided. Moreover, both were skilled in diplomatic encounters within their domain—Cousins in cultural and political milieux, Willebrands in ecumenical venues. In addition, both knew of the pope's personal longing<sup>79</sup> for the liberation of Slipyj; in Willebrands's case, it had become clear that John XXIII had asked his old friend Testa to contact the Russian observers at the Council in view of a possible release.<sup>80</sup> Now, after Cousins's return to the United States, a period of calm set in. In early January 1963 Soviet government officials discussed a report by Borovoj on the Second Vatican Council and invited him to elaborate on it. Borovoj's presentation addressed two main points: the conversation with Testa regarding the release of Slipyj; and his intention to offer a full report on the Council to the Patriarch of Constantinople, as no official representatives from the Ecumenical

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your trip to Rome and Moscow. It has been a most interesting and fruitful journey. Certainly the results so far have been promising. As you know, any betterment of the human situation in this world—whatever the country involved—is of importance to the United States. The national interest and the human interest come together in our fundamental objectives as a nation. I am certain that you have reflected this approach in this important undertaking."

<sup>79</sup>It is noteworthy in this context that, via Don Giuseppe De Luca, John XXIII also had approached Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the Italian Communist Party, regarding religious liberty in the USSR and the situation of Slipyj. See Riccardi, *Il Vaticano e Mosca*, pp. 240–41.

<sup>80</sup>See *La politica del dialogo. Le carte Casaroli sull'Ostpolitik Vaticana*, ed. Giovanni Barberini (Bologna, 2008), pp. 798–801. Such contacts had indeed taken place in November 1962. See the confidential note in KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Contacts avec les autorités du Patriarcat de Moscou," in which a conversation is mentioned in view of Slipyj's liberation among Testa, Bea, Willebrands, Borovoj, and Kotliarov.

Patriarchate had been present in Rome. Afterward, Borovoj stated the reactions of these government members: "The first reaction to both points was rather negative, and concerning the release of Metropolitan Slipyj, they objected that the Vatican could exploit this against the Soviet Union by means of hostile publicity."<sup>81</sup> Borovoj insisted that Testa's request came directly from the pope, and Borovoj himself was personally guaranteeing that the Vatican would not abuse such a gesture from the Kremlin.<sup>82</sup> Borovoj's statement had several implications. It was clear that the pope was highly respected inside the Kremlin, as had become evident during the December 14 Cousins-Khrushchev talk. Also, it indicated a kind of benevolence toward the West and a more open stance toward ecumenical engagement, given the personal risk that Borovoj was taking to obtain the release of the Ukrainian archbishop.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, in Vatican circles, Monsignor Pietro Pavan was preparing an encyclical letter, which would be promulgated on April 11 under the title of *Pacem in Terris*.<sup>84</sup> This encyclical, to be presented by Suenens at the headquarters of the United Nations in May 1963, would prove to be a worthy and lasting testimony of John XXIII's endeavors to safeguard world peace and for Vatican diplomats meant the official opening up of a "third way" between Washington and Moscow. In that regard the encyclical remains a milestone that inaugurated a long process of the Catholic Church's dealings with the communist world.

### "Slipyj Is a Free Citizen"

On January 18, Cousins received a phone call from Dobrynin, inviting him for a private lunch. At the lunch Cousins and Morlion were informed of Khrushchev's decision to release Slipyj from his Siberian exile without further conditions and without a new trial.<sup>85</sup> Morlion

<sup>81</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Contacts avec les autorités du Patriarcat de Moscou," p. 1: "La première réaction à tous les deux points a été plutôt négative, et au sujet de la libération du métropolitain Slipyj ils ont objecté que le Vatican pourrait exploiter ce fait contre l'Union Soviétique, par moyen d'une publicité hostile."

<sup>82</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Contacts avec les autorités du Patriarcat de Moscou," pp. 1-2: "À la demande des autorités soviétiques, 'quelle garantie avons-nous que le Cardinal Testa tiendrait la parole?', l'archiprêtre Borovoj s'est fait garant personnellement."

<sup>83</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Contacts avec les autorités du Patriarcat de Moscou," p. 6, refers to the following conversation as recorded by Willebrands: "Je lui ai demandé: Pourquoi êtes-vous intervenu d'une manière si efficace, mais qui n'a pas été sans risques, dans la question de la libération du métropolitain Slipyj? Borovoj m'a répondu: je

and Cousins used a public telephone to inform Cardinale of the news; Cardinale then informed the pope.<sup>86</sup> From that moment on the news spread quickly, and by January 25 Kozyrev had informed Fanfani of Slipyj's release.<sup>87</sup> On that same day, Cardinale and Dell'Acqua met with Willebrands<sup>88</sup> from the SPCU—in the absence of Bea, who was in Copenhagen—and commissioned Willebrands to meet with Kozyrev that evening to have the news officially confirmed.<sup>89</sup> Their conversation dealt mainly with practical issues regarding Slipyj's release and his journey from Moscow to Rome. Questions arose as to whether Willebrands—who was charged with accompanying the

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suis convaincu qu'en agissant ainsi j'ai servi l'Église, non seulement votre église, mais l'église du Seigneur." Borovoj goes on: "La libération du Métropolitain Slipyj peut devenir le signe d'un développement nouveau qui aura une importance très grande pour la situation de votre église dans notre pays et d'une manière indirecte aussi pour l'église orthodoxe. Deux problèmes se présentent encore, un grand et un petit. Le grand problème, c'est le développement de votre église en Russie. Le petit problème, c'est ma part et mon risque personnel."

<sup>84</sup>On January 7, 1963, John XXIII wrote in his diary: "Ho poi consacrato tutto il Vespero, circa tre ore, nella lettura dell'enciclica di Pasqua in preparazione, fattami da mgr. Pavan: *La pace fra gli uomini nell'ordine stabilito da Dio e cioè*." See Roncalli, *Agende*, p. 482. On the preparation of this encyclical, see also Turbanti, *Un concilio per il mondo moderno*, p. 227.

<sup>85</sup>Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate*, pp. 68–70; Melloni, *L'Altra Roma*, p. 166.

<sup>86</sup>On January 28, 1963, during a reception for the cardinals and bishops of the conciliar Coordination Commission in Rome, the pope had confidentially expressed his personal joy regarding the news of the release.

<sup>87</sup>Barberini, *La politica del dialogo*, p. 800, writes: "In Italia, l'On. Fanfani consegnava alla Segreteria di Stato, su richiesta Sovietica, un appunto (25 gennaio 1963) nel quale, fra l'altro, si ribadiva che il governo russo aveva ritenuto possibile soddisfare la domanda in considerazione dell'interesse del Vaticano e particolarmente di Papa Giovanni XXIII, come esclusivo atto di buona volontà." Also see KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Conversation avec S. Exc. Mons. Kozyrev," January 25, 1963, p. 1: "Pour ce cas, tu devrais prendre contact avec le citoyen italien, avec lequel j'ai parlé de cette affaire. L'ambassadeur pensait à Fanfani."

<sup>88</sup>Former SPCU member Thomas Stransky mentioned that Bea and Willebrands had been informed on January 24—probably by the Vatican Secretariat of State—of Slipyj's release. See Thomas Stransky, "Memories of Johannes Willebrands at Vatican II: An Insider's Story," in *Les agendas conciliaires de Mgr. J. Willebrands. Secrétaire du secrétariat pour l'Unité des chrétiens*, ed. Leo Declerck (Leuven, 2009), pp. vii–xviii, here p. xiv.

<sup>89</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Conversation avec S. Exc. Mons. Kozyrev," January 25, 1963, p. 1: "Je lui ai dit que le Saint Siège avait reçu des nouvelles que l'archevêque Josyf Slipyj serait mis en liberté sans conditions. L'Ambassadeur a répondu: Je peux vous confirmer cette nouvelle, Slipyj est citoyen libre." Willebrands proceeds, stating that: "Nous voudrions le voir à Rome, prenant garde autant que possible qu'une publicité inopportune soit évitée. On m'a désigné pour aller à sa rencontre."

archbishop from Moscow—and Slipyj should return via Vienna or not and whether the two men would return by airplane or train. In these matters the central issue was the avoidance of press sensationalism, as the actions of the Ukrainian episcopate were still fresh in memory. The same sense of diplomacy surfaced when Willebrands expressed a need to visit the Moscow Patriarchate during his trip to ensure that inadvertent offense was not given.<sup>90</sup> Kozyrev's wish to improve the relationship between the Holy See and the Soviet Union also was evident. Given the positive sign offered from the Kremlin side, the expectation clearly was that the Vatican would now take the next step, as is seen by the insistent questions in that direction. Willebrands wrote:

Then the Ambassador said: "Isn't there something else that you should speak to me about?" When I said "No", he was a little disappointed and said: "I thought there was something else you needed to tell me again. Are you not aware that there have been contacts concerning the possibility of relations with the Holy See?" I said, "I know there were contacts about such a possibility in theory, but I do not know the details." The Ambassador responded: "In my opinion, the time has come to discuss the details."<sup>91</sup>

In the subsequent days Willebrands would prepare for his second journey to Moscow, with departure scheduled for February 1, 1963. Two days before, John XXIII had a personal message delivered to him, as well as the gift of a rosary for Slipyj.<sup>92</sup> As for Slipyj's release, it appeared that the Soviets thought it crucial that it was not to be considered a rehabilitation. It was emphasized that, even though a new trial would not be held and conditions were not attached to the

<sup>90</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Conversation avec S. Exc. Mons. Kozyrev," January 25, 1963, p. 2: "Dans l'éventualité d'un voyage à Moscou de ma part, je voudrais bien faire une visite aux autorités du Patriarcat, étant donné que j'ai fait autrefois une visite au Patriarcat. Si je ne ferais pas une visite au Patriarcat, cela créerait une mauvaise impression."

<sup>91</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Conversation avec S. Exc. Mons. Kozyrev," January 25, 1963, p. 3: "Ensuite l'Ambassadeur a dit: Vous n'êtes pas chargé de me parler d'une autre chose? Quand j'ai dit: "Non", il était un peu déçu et disait: J'avais pensé que vous devriez me parler d'une autre chose encore. Ne savez-vous pas qu'il y a eu des contacts au sujet de la possibilité de rapports avec le Saint Siège? J'ai dit: Je sais qu'il y a eu des contacts au sujet d'une telle possibilité en principe, mais je ne connais pas les détails. L'Ambassadeur a répondu: À mon avis, le temps est venu pour entrer dans les détails."

<sup>92</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, Letter from John XXIII to Willebrands, January 30, 1963: "Santo Padre augura particolarmente a Mr. Willebrands il buon viaggio, e lo assicura della Sua preghiera. Voglia Monsignore gradire medaglia d'oro. Il rosario benedetto dal Papa per l'ecc.mo. Mr. Slipyj. Si possono dare a Mr. Willebrands almeno una ventina di medaglie d'argento del Concilio. Possono servire."

release, the release was to be regarded as an amnesty and that Slipyj was still considered an enemy of the Soviet government. This specification posed potential difficulties in Slipyj reassuming his position as archbishop of Lviv. This account shows Borovoj questioning whether Slipyj, in the event that a “new leader” is sought for the UGCC, would be the most suitable candidate.<sup>93</sup>

On Friday, February 1, 1963, Willebrands arrived in Moscow and was met by Borovoj, who escorted him to the Hotel Metropol. The next morning, he met with Vladimir A. Kurojedov—the president of the Soviet Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs who in 1960 had been vehemently against Russian participation in the Second Vatican Council—as well as with Peter Makkarsev from the Soviet Council for External Affairs.<sup>94</sup> After mutual congratulations, Willebrands explained that, once they reached Rome, Slipyj would spend some time at the Greek Catholic Abbey of Grottaferrata; during this period the Vatican would distribute a brief and sober press statement.<sup>95</sup> The possibility of establishing an official diplomatic relationship with the Vatican was broached, which Willebrands again avoided discussing, explaining instead the nature and role of the SPCU. Willebrands made clear that the SPCU’s intentions lay primarily in the field of reuniting Christianity as well as developing improved relationships with other religions<sup>96</sup> and secular entities and organizations. Finally, another con-

<sup>93</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Contacts avec les autorités du Patriarcat de Moscou,” p. 2: “La libération a été un acte de faveur du gouvernement soviétique, et surtout du premier ministre Khruscev, pour répondre à une demande de Sa Sainteté le Pape. Un retour éventuel du métropolitain à Lemberg doit être traité avec beaucoup de prudence. Il s’agit ici d’une question de première importance, notamment la position de votre église dans l’Union soviétique. À mon avis, il y a la possibilité d’un nouveau développement, mais vous comprendrez aisément que cette question est extrêmement délicate et compliquée. Si votre église à Lemberg devrait avoir un nouveau chef pour l’avenir, est-ce que le métropolitain Slipyj serait la personne la plus indiquée, dans les circonstances actuelles, ou une autre?”

<sup>94</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Contacts avec les autorités civiles,” p. 1.

<sup>95</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Contacts avec les autorités civiles,” p. 2: “J’ai demandé Mr. Kurojev et Mr. Makkarsev de ne pas être exigeant au sujet de ce communiqué. Il sera impossible, et d’ailleurs il n’y a pas de raisons, de tenir secrète la libération du métropolitain, mais nous lui demanderons de ne pas donner d’interviews ou de ne pas faire des déclarations, etc.”

<sup>96</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Contacts avec les autorités civiles,” pp. 2–3, has Willebrands referring to a recent initiative involving Morlion: “Récemment, l’université catholique ‘Pro Deo’ à Rome avait organisé un ‘agape’, à laquelle ont été invités des représentants non seulement de l’église catholique et d’autres communautés chrétiennes, mais aussi d’autres religions, par ex. les Juifs, les Musulmans, etc.”

cern expressed during this conversation was the unpredictable reaction of the diaspora Ukrainians to the news of the release.<sup>97</sup>

In the afternoon of that day Willebrands paid his visit to the Moscow Patriarchate's Office for External Relationships, where he had a short conversation with the Estonian bishop Alexis of Tallin, and the day after he visited the monastery at Zagorsk for a meeting with Archimandrite Pimen and the rector of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy.<sup>98</sup> Of greater interest is the fact that on the early morning of that day Willebrands met with Slipyj at the Hotel Moskva. After presenting the pope's rosary to the archbishop, Willebrands explained the conditions of his release and the need to avoid publicity. Then, once again, travel practicalities came to the fore, as well as Slipyj's personal wishes:

The Metropolitan desired to visit Lviv before leaving Russia. Due to the great distance, a visit to Lviv would have taken four days. I told him that I understood deeply his desire to see his church and his family again, but I could not determine the possibility of such a journey.<sup>99</sup>

In a second meeting that evening the same wish was expressed again, with Slipyj making clear that this was a question of conscience, and the issue recurred until Willebrands, on the morning of February 4, presented Slipyj with a schedule for the journey outlined by Testa and Dell'Acqua, making clear that Slipyj was expected to come to Rome. By that time, Slipyj had decided to ship his luggage to Lviv and stay with Willebrands, but he also was considering how he should respond to the Russian accusation that he had simply acted to save his own life and liberty.<sup>100</sup> Finally, Slipyj sets aside all doubt, telling Willebrands the following story:

<sup>97</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Contacts avec les autorités civiles," p. 4: "Une autre préoccupation est l'attitude de certains cercles d'émigrés; quelquefois ils semblent ne pas comprendre le développement des choses."

<sup>98</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Contacts avec les autorités du Patriarcat de Moscou," pp. 4-5: "Le recteur de l'Académie a exprimé sa joie de me recevoir ensemble avec l'archiprêtre Borovoj et a dit: "Vous êtes les deux anneaux d'une chaîne, et je me réjouis que la chaîne ne soit pas rompue. Vous êtes les deux hirondelles qui annoncent un nouveau printemps. Comme théologien je me demande quelquefois: 'pourquoi ne sommes-nous pas unis?'"

<sup>99</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Conversations avec Son Exc. le Métropolite Joseph Slipyj," p. 1: "Le métropolite aurait bien voulu faire une visite à Lwow, avant de quitter la Russie. À cause de la grande distance, une visite à Lwow demanderait quatre jours. Je lui ai répondu que je comprenais très bien son désir de revoir son église et sa famille, mais que je ne pouvais pas encore juger de la possibilité d'un tel voyage."

<sup>100</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, "Conversations avec Son Exc. le Métropolite Joseph Slipyj," p. 2: "J'ai montré au Métropolite le schéma du voyage fait par son Éminence le



Before leaving the camp where he was interned, the commander asked him if he was prepared to go to Rome in case the pope had expressed his desire to go. And to this question he replied that, in this case, he would not hesitate to go to Rome.<sup>101</sup>

In the afternoon, Slipyj clandestinely ordained Basil Velychskovsky as bishop,<sup>102</sup> thereby strengthening the underground episcopate in Ukraine under Soviet rule. That evening, Slipyj and Willebrands took the train to Vienna, where Papal Nuncio Opilio Rossi received them on February 6, 1963.<sup>103</sup> From Austria they traveled to Rome. On February 10 Slipyj arrived at Grottaferrata, where “for the first time in seventeen years he fully celebrated the high Slavic rite. Willebrands, [Monsignor Jean-François] Arrighi and Stransky witnessed the tears.”<sup>104</sup>

### The Long Road toward Diplomatic Relations

At the moment of Slipyj’s arrival in Rome, most Council Fathers were absent from the city, and so most diaspora Ukrainians received the news quickly. For example, Hermaniuk heard the news on a Canadian radio broadcast on February 10<sup>105</sup> and met Slipyj in Rome

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Cardinal Testa et d'accord avec Son Exc. Mgr. Dell'Acqua. Je lui ai dit que j'avais une grande liberté. Le schéma est plutôt une indication qu'un ordre, mais la pensée des autorités à Rome est claire: il nous attendent à Rome. Le Métropolitte a répondu qu'il avait beaucoup réfléchi pendant la nuit et que sa décision était prise: a) il ne veut pas me quitter un instant avant l'arrivée à Rome; b) il expédiera ses bagages à Lwow.”

<sup>101</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Conversations avec Son Exc. le Métropolitte Joseph Slipyj,” p. 3.

<sup>102</sup>The Willebrands report only states: “Dans l'après-midi du 4 février, une personne de Lwow est venue faire une visite au Métropolitte à Moscou. Cette personne avait reçu la lettre que le Métropolitte lui avait envoyée, en lui communiquant sa libération et son adresse à Moscou. Cette visite a donné au métropolitte la possibilité d'expliquer tout et a enlever sa dernière hésitation.” Also see Choma, *La vita e le opere del card. Slipyj*, pp. 217–36; and Ulisse Alessio Floridi, *Moscow and the Vatican* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1986), pp. 172–80.

<sup>103</sup>KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Conversations avec Son Exc. le Métropolitte Joseph Slipyj,” p. 4: “Avant de quitter le camp où il était interné, le commandant lui avait posé la question s'il était prêt de se rendre à Rome, au cas où le Pape aurait exprimé ce désir. Et à cette question il a répondu que, dans ce cas, il n'hésiterait pas de se rendre à Rome.

<sup>104</sup>Stransky, “Memories,” p. xv. Also see Roncalli, *Agende*, p. 489.

<sup>105</sup>AMW, Council Diary Hermaniuk, February 10: “Today in the morning the Canadian Radio conveyed the extraordinary joyful news from the Vatican, namely, that our heroic Confessor of the faith Met. Josyf Slipyj, released from Bolshevik captivity, arrived last night in Rome and has already been received by the Holy Father John XXIII. The Vicar

on March 2, 1963. But this event had a larger effect. On the same day in February Morlion wrote a letter to Khrushchev at the request of Bea, stating that “your personal gesture in liberating Bishop Slipyj and the manifestation of good will avoiding political exploitation from our part are proof that the revolution of esteem and mutual understanding has started a new kind of peaceful relations.”<sup>106</sup> Yet the letter’s main concern was the Kremlin’s hope that official bilateral diplomatic relations could be established, with Morlion acting on behalf of Bea.<sup>107</sup> Along with his letter to Khrushchev Morlion sent a detailed report of a February 6, 1963, meeting between Bea and Kozyrev,<sup>108</sup> mentioning four fields of human life and liberty summed up by Cousins on which agreement needed to be reached:

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of Christ welcomed him with tears in his eyes.” Two days later his diary recorded the following: “Today I received a very nice letter from the Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa, His Eminence Sebastiano Baggio, on the occasion of the liberation of our dear Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj. That was an extraordinarily nice gesture from the side of a personal representative of the Vicar of Christ. A representative of the *Winnipeg Free Press* appealed to me for information and stated that he will correct that unfortunate mistake in the communiqué about the release of Metropolitan Slipyj, where the Metropolitan is called: ‘Polish Bishop.’ In fact, the evening edition of the *Free Press* delivered today contained that correction.”

<sup>106</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Letter from Morlion to Khrushchev, February 12, 1963.

<sup>107</sup>The letter states: “Acceptance by the Holy See of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union implies that not only Catholics but also many other people would be guided to change their image of the Soviet Union which has grown to be rather dark during the Stalinist era.” Next, Morlion states that “before creating the sensational news that Soviet Russia has asked and obtained diplomatic relations the Holy See must be able to prove that it has guarantees that stalinist terror and totalitarianism are irreversibly suppressed. This is why His Eminence has insisted in further discussions first through private contacts and then through mutual accreditation of a person or organization empowered to discuss these questions on a semi-official level.”

<sup>108</sup>AAM, Archives Suenens, Morlion, “Report of a Conversation between Bea and Kozyrev,” February 6, 1963. In this report constant tension is evident between Bea, who insists on preparatory unofficial contacts, and Kozyrev, who hopes for the immediate establishment of official diplomatic relations. In the end, both conclude to the following, with Cousins in mind. See p. 5: “It seems that we must try what Khrushchev proposed: indicate an intermediary person that can inform the soviet Government of the ideas of the Holy See and vice versa can inform the Holy See of the ideas of the Government of Moscow.” A week later, on February 15, Willebrands met with Kozyrev to inform him of the events during his Moscow trip. See KDC, Archives Willebrands, “Visite de Mgr Willebrands à l’Ambassadeur russe auprès du Quirinal,” February 15, 1963. During that meeting Kozyrev made it quite clear that “si le Vatican désire des relations avec l’Union soviétique—et je crois bien que cela serait utile—on ne peut pas poser des conditions. Il s’agit de sauver la paix. Les autres choses, qui intéressent l’église catholique, viennent après.”

- (1) Freedom of worship with guarantees that church communities, seminaries, etc. can appeal to higher authorities if local organs hinder development, or refuse building permits or materials, when the legally required number of signatures has been obtained.
- (2) Freedom outside the school, of family meetings in which children are given supplementary spiritual instruction in the tradition of their great nation and full loyalty to the rightful authorities.
- (3) Freedom of expression for organs (similar to the one permitted for the Russian Orthodox Church) on which different religious and spiritual tendencies can develop, holy literature can be disseminated and commented.
- (4) Freedom of charitable action, particularly in the use of savings and individuals and of enterprises for the help to the underprivileged in undeveloped nations.

It was clear that the road toward official relations between Rome and Moscow would not be an easy one. Yet it was significant that John XXIII granted an audience on March 7 to Alexei Adjubei, son-in-law of Khrushchev,<sup>109</sup> who was attending the presentation of the International Balzan Peace Prize to the pope on March 10. Nevertheless, the events preparing, surrounding, and following the liberation of Slipyj did constitute a unique testimony to the importance of personal human encounter and to the courage required to maintain confidence in the other individual. As *Pacem in Terris* stated:

We are hopeful that, by establishing contact with one another and by a policy of negotiation, nations will come to a better recognition of the natural ties that bind them together as men. We are hopeful, too, that they will come to a fairer realization of one of the cardinal duties deriving from our common nature: namely, that love, not fear, must dominate the relationships between individuals and between nations.

<sup>109</sup>In this context note that on that day, John XXIII jotted down the name “Josyf Slipyj.” See Roncalli, *Agende*, p. 507. John’s decision to receive Adhzubei and to accept the prize was highly controversial in Italian right-wing circles and received much negative press attention. As a result, for a planned meeting between Bea and Adhzubei, Bea did not attend, but sent Willebrands in his stead. See KDC, Archive Willebrands, “Rencontre de Mgr Willebrands et Mr. Adjubei,” March 13, 1963, p. 1: “Le Saint Siège avait désigné, pour le rencontrer, Son Éminence le Cardinal Bea. Après la publicité provoquée par l’audience chez le Pape, on voulait éviter une nouvelle agitation, et pour cette raison, le Cardinal m’avait demandé d’aller le voir à sa place.” At this meeting, Willebrands clearly and openly addressed the problematic issue of the UGCC under suppression. See on p. 2: “Nous ne savons pas exactement quelle est la situation de notre église en Russie. En Lithuanie, il y a un seul évêque en fonction, Mgr. Meselis, mais il n’est pas normal de n’avoir qu’un seul évêque dans ce pays catholique. En Ukraine notre église, qui autrefois comptait cinq millions de membres, officiellement n’existe plus. Comment voulez-vous traiter avec quelqu’un qui officiellement n’existe pas!”