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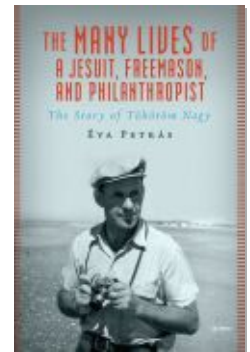
V. "The Third Rome"

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V.

“THE THIRD ROME”¹

“Well now...! [KALOT] had to be dissolved! [...] And in this immense struggle—no offense—the Primate himself was just a tool and an alibi, as was Töhötöm Nagy’s meddling.”²

1.

This time, on his way to Rome, Töhötöm Nagy was delayed for longer in Austria. Although he reached Vienna in one day, February 18, 1946, owing to the risk of being found out, he was supposed to continue his journey by plane only on March 1, but finally traveled as a car passenger: Capt. Rudolf von Ripper, a noted Salzburg artist before the war, and subsequently an OSS/SSU intelligence officer, helped Nagy reach Rome on March 3.³ This was to be Nagy’s longest period in Rome, with his goal being to “[n]egotiate with the Holy See the possibilities and broad strokes of a *modus vivendi* with the Russians. These negotiations stretched on due to the sensitive nature of the matter.”⁴ His long stay proved beneficial: when he departed for Hungary some two months later, on May 8, he carried an ID indicating that he was a representative of the Vatican Secretariat of State, and

1 Moscow is held, in certain imperial Russian doctrines, to have become the “third Rome” following the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. This pseudo-religious fanaticism was subsequently utilized by the Russian Orthodox Church and Tsars as a form of legitimation for their later geopolitically motivated campaigns against the Ottoman Empire and, has provided the basis for the neo-imperial concept of “Russian world” or ‘Russkiy mir’ as first espoused by Patriarch Kirill (Gundayev) in 2009.

2 Ugrin, *Emlékezésem*, 213.

3 Originally it was planned for him to travel by airplane with documents made out for an “Irving Smith,” but the Americans were unable to secure his journey. 1 March 1946; JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5’s [Streeter’s] Preliminary Report, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

4 *My journeys. Journey III*. OSZK Kt., f. 216/74.

was authorized by the Holy See to conduct negotiations on their behalf with his Soviet partners.⁵ Fr Leiber, the Pope's personal secretary, wrote in Nagy's letter of authorization of March 18: "Father Nagy is authorized to tell his principals that the Holy See is willing to communicate with the Moscow government, if it so wishes, as the Holy See was ready to do during wartime."⁶

Nagy later deemed his mission as being "of historical value," since, so far as he knew, "this was the first authorization in writing by the Vatican to negotiate with the Soviets in Moscow."⁷ This was true for Hungary, although Pius XII's cautiousness shines through in that not he, the head of the Church, had signed it, but his secretary.

The path to this potentially monumental event was arduous and the delay in Austria had foiled many of Nagy's plans. He wrote to a fellow Jesuit: "I have lost so much because of this delay, it defies estimation. [...] I could have prepared trips, I could have collected data, I could have talked to His Holiness beforehand... I won't even list all the lost opportunities. It has taken and still takes a huge mental effort to try and manage the disruption with a peaceful and happy soul."⁸

As a result and upon arriving in Rome, Nagy needed to hasten his efforts. While remarking to Kerkai after the fact about the situation on reaching Rome, he confirmed that their worst fears had been correct:

[T]he multitude of high-ranking church officials gathered in the Vatican this February complained [to Pius XII] so much and so bitterly about the Russians, and at the same time, the Moscow press attacked the Holy See so sharply, that His Holiness almost seemed to turn away from the tactic of *modus vivendi*.⁹ During those days, [...] Cardinal Mindszenty [...] told me what he had reported on the Russian situation in the Vatican,

5 Letter of authorization of the Holy See for Töhötöm Nagy. Vat[ikan] 18. März, 1946. abends 8 Uhr. Letter in German. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Letter 9. 2.

6 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 210–11.

7 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 210.

8 Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Zoltán Alszegehy. Rome, 8 March 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/189. Letter 1. 1. Zoltán Alszegehy SJ (1915–1991) was a theologian and professor of dogmatic history at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome in 1946. Bikfalvi, *Magyar jezsuiták*, 18.

9 About Pius XII's concordat diplomacy and *modus vivendi* efforts see: Chamedes, *A Twentieth Century Crusade*, 241–48.

and I saw how bleak his report was.”¹⁰ Continuing, he wrote that “I also found out that the Berlin Archbishop spoke in the same spirit. So much so that, according to Fr Leiber, the Holy Father wanted to commend Primate Mindszenty at a private audience for his policy of rigid opposition.”¹¹

To change the Pope’s mind, Nagy needed to act quickly and decisively. He delivered his report on Hungary to Fr Leiber the very evening he arrived (March 3), briefly summarizing its key points while emphasizing the necessity of negotiating with the Soviets.¹² It is apparent from his addendum, written two days later, that, when it came to maneuvering, he had no illusions about the Soviet’s objectives concerning Hungary. He interpreted communist policy vis-à-vis the Hungarian Catholic Church as a test of both Hungarian society and its institutions, “[t]he main goal is not only to completely discredit the Primate, incite hatred against the Church, and provoke the closing of Catholic schools, but also to gather intelligence. They want to know if the country is ready for an overt revolution.” KALOT policy and *modus vivendi* seemed reasonable alternatives, since they seemed capable of “reducing tension, and getting into contact with the Russians in order to delay the direct threat and win time to prepare against even stronger measures.” For this to succeed, “it would be desirable that His Eminence, Primate of Hungary, no longer provide reasons to attack his person, with emphasis on his stance concerning the monarchy issue. This way, the dialog with Stalin’s representatives would be possible.”¹³

Fr Leiber, in favor of both *modus vivendi* and a relationship with the Soviet Union, did not need convincing as to the appropriateness of such behavior, having talked with Nagy the previous fall about the Vatican’s stance on the USSR as being determined by more than just current political considerations. The fellow Jesuit made it clear to Nagy: “[t]he deci-

10 *Töhötöm Nagy’s letter to Jenő Kerkai*. Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 1.

11 Ibid.

12 *Supplément confidentiel à la relation du 16 février 1946 (exclusivement pour Sa Sainteté)*. [*Confidential supplement to the report of 16 February 1946 (exclusively for His Holiness)*]. [Rome] 6 mars 1946. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in French. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

13 Ibid. et passim

sive point in this entire issue is that the Holy See trusts, even takes for granted, and is preparing for the eventuality that in maybe 20–30 years, Russia will have become the largest and most blessed mission area of the Church. These are the considerations that determine the Holy See’s policy towards Russia, and it is best that the Hungarians know about this.”¹⁴

Outreach to the Orthodox Church(es) had traditionally been of great importance to the Vatican, and to the Society of Jesus in particular. However, recognition and appreciation of the specifics of Eastern Christianity independent of Rome gained new meaning with the papacy of Leo XIII (1878–1903). The Holy See revisited the topic of Russia’s re-evangelization during Pope Pius XI’s papacy (1922–1939) in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution (1917–1923) and the formation of the Soviet Union (1922). Thus, it is not surprising that the Jesuit-led Pontifical Oriental Institute was established in 1922, followed by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. To promote Catholic mission within the Soviet Union, the Collegium Russicum was established in 1928.

These efforts, experimental as they were, nonetheless ultimately had tragic consequences, fueling persecution of the Church by atheistic elements within the USSR while also dampening the Holy See’s expectations of what could be realistically achieved.¹⁵ Following several abortive attempts during the war, the faint hope of reaching a negotiated compromise with Moscow—as sketched for Leiber by Nagy—had again emerged in the immediate postwar period. Once again though, this shimmer of hope was jeopardized by Cardinal Mindszenty’s political statements. Thus, Nagy’s report, delivered on the evening of March 3, 1946, gained sudden significance, since Fr Leiber knew that Pius XII would receive Mindszenty for an audience at 11:30 the next morning—the Pope’s last chance to give the Cardinal in-person instructions before his return to Hungary.¹⁶

14 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 1 November 1945. OSZK Kt., f. 216/19. Nagy also reported Leiber’s views to the SSU. 1 March 1946; *Capt. F.W. Jones’s Report on Vatican Intelligence*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 40, WN 19891-19900. Fr Leiber remarked to Imre Mócsy in December 1945 that “The Church is waiting for the Russian initiative to begin diplomatic negotiations.” 30 January 1946; JZX-5924; AE5’s [Streeter’s] *Report about the first visit of Prince Primate in Rome*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 263.

15 On this and Romanian implications see Bánkuti, *A romániai jezsuiták*, 12–20.

16 16 March 1946; JZX-6646; *Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752’s [Töhötöm Nagy’s] negotiations in Rome*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268.

Up until this point, Mindszenty believed that his course of action enjoyed papal endorsement and had no reason to assume that this would change on the eve of his departure. The scene he depicts in his *Memoirs*, as Pius XII turned to him and uttered the following words during the open consistory ceremony of his elevation to cardinal on February 21, 1946, encapsulates his beliefs: “You will be the first of the 32¹⁷ who must take on martyrdom marked with crimson.”¹⁸

To Mindszenty, this affirmed his course and recognition of his role. However, a timely report on Hungary, strongly suggesting the possibility of negotiating with the Soviets—while maintaining all recognition and the message of the prophetic words—could immediately alter the Pope’s direct instructions, which, coming from above, would likely influence Mindszenty’s subsequent behavior.

This is precisely what occurred: Leiber spoke to the Pope on the morning of March 4, and, following the audience with Mindszenty and Pius, informed Nagy that the Pope had urged the Prince Primate to be more prudent in his statements. As such, Nagy could express his relief to Kerkai, even though “[t]he Vatican’s behavior towards the Russians has [...] an undercurrent of understandable fear, perhaps loathing, and hatred of bolshevism. The visceral emotions and judgment of His Holiness on the Russians are characterized by more of the same, but his great sense of responsibility overcomes these understandable primary internal views, and in his external statements he deems the search for a *modus vivendi* necessary.”¹⁹

He then summarized the results of the action he and Leiber had executed: “[t]he next day the Primate told me somewhat bitterly, that His Holiness had asked him to refrain from any more statements, if possible, as they might worsen the situation. And the Cardinal’s secretary [András Zakar – É.P.] described the facts to me this way: “The Pope silenced the Cardinal.”²⁰

Still, Mindszenty, who was unaware of the Jesuit back-channeling that had fueled the Pope’s departing remarks, did not perceive his journey to Rome with dissatisfaction. Upon his return to Hungary, he stated that he

17 Sc. During this consistory, 32 new Cardinals were appointed.

18 Mindszenty, *Emlékirataim*, 123.

19 Töhötöm Nagy’s letter to Jenő Kerkai. Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 1–2.

20 Ibid. 2. and 16 March 1946; JZX-6646; Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752’s [Töhötöm Nagy’s] negotiations in Rome, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268.

continued to enjoy the Pope's full support, which both his proponents and detractors considered as true. He had met and spoken with the Pope multiple times, secured financial aid for a number of projects and purposes, and markedly influenced Pius XII's opinion on reestablishing relations between Hungary and the Holy See.²¹

In reality, however, the Vatican never possessed a consistent view as to Mindszenty. Support for him was far from unanimous, and opinions were not wholly positive among the Pope and his advisers.²² Pius XII, not without reason, lashed out at Nagy during a private audience, citing the letter he had earlier written regarding the Cardinal: "You recommended him!"²³ Further, he characterized Mindszenty as "troppo imprudente," too imprudent.²⁴

Although the Holy Father had urged Mindszenty to be more cautious in his public statements, he did accept his opinion concerning the nunciature.²⁵ While Mindszenty had mediated between the Hungarian government and the Vatican in the fall of 1945 supporting the re-opening, in the spring of 1946, he cautioned Pius XII against prematurely agreeing to a move that would give the country's political left an easy victory.²⁶ Fr Jánosi, on behalf of Zoltán Tildy, had tried to achieve a breakthrough during negotiations with the Vatican in December 1945.²⁷ The nunciature's reopening would have fit well with the idea of a *modus vivendi*. However, even though Jánosi reprised his role as the representative of then Presi-

21 Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 519.

22 Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 241.

23 *Töhötöm Nagy's letter to Jenő Kerkai*. Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 2.

24 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadjóművesek*, 259. He also reported about this to SSU: 1 March 1946; JZX-6411; Professor Plan, AE5's [Streeter's] *Preliminary Report*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

25 The Holy See's decision was probably influenced by a similar experience in Poland. Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 235-40.

26 Balogh, *Mindszenty József*, 519, and Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 243.

27 According to AE754 (Imre Mócsy), Jánosi arrived in Rome on December 21st 1945, and was Zoltán Tildy's personal representative. Arrival of Jánosi in Rome; Hungarian Proposals to the Vatican. Rome, 27 December 1945 and 18 January 1946, Jánosi's Negotiations in Rome; Rotta to Return as Papal Nuncio to Hungary; Jánosi's conference with Tardini re appointment of Nuncio to Hungary. 27 December 1945; JZX-5619; AE5's [Streeter's] *Report on the arrival of Jánosi, a.k.a. Janicsek in Rome*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 261. and 18 January 1946; JZX-5690; AE5's [Streeter's] *Report on Jánosi's negotiations in Rome*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 262.

dent Tildy and Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy in 1946,²⁸ the Pope, in light of Mindszenty’s reservations, neither allowed Angelo Rotta to resume his position as nuncio, nor did the Pontiff fill the post with anyone else.²⁹ By that time, views on the nuncio’s possible return had already shifted in Budapest. Rotta’s former secretary, Gennaro Verolino³⁰ later recalled: “The communist Hungarian government had the idea that there had to be a nuncio in Budapest. A Hungarian cleric spoke about this, who traveled clandestinely and very adventurously between Rome and Budapest [...] The ones who truly opposed the return of the nuncio to Budapest were the Russians, who—as the cleric mentioned earlier having heard the proposal, said: “Then we’ll have two Mindszentys instead of one!”³¹

The “cleric mentioned earlier” is easy to identify: Nagy. According to contemporary sources, he linked the *bon mot* not to the Soviets, but to Rákosi, with its proponents including Smallholders within the coalition government and advocates of *modus vivendi*.³² Whoever fueled Mindszenty’s views about the possible return of the nuncio to Budapest, and through him, to the Vatican, the end result saw the likelihood that Nagy’s diplomatic mission to the Soviets might succeed as minimal. The consolidation of relations between the USSR and the Vatican “became increasingly difficult by attributing the behavior of His Eminence the Cardinal almost entirely to His Holiness’s personal instructions to the point that they’re

28 Jánosi, József SJ. *Memorandum*. Part III. *Vertrouwelijke verklaringen van Presid. der Republ. TILDY en van Ministerpres. NAGY, door P.J. over te brengen aan de H. Stoel*. [Confidential statements from President Tildy and Prime Minister Nagy to the Holy See]. [1946] Copies of material from the order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Dutch. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum*, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 8–10.

29 Stehle, *Geheimdiplomatie*, 243. After this, the settlement of relations between Hungary and the Holy See did not reappear on the agenda for a long time. In 1964, the issue was revisited with the conclusion of a partial agreement, however, a full settlement was not reached until after the fall of communism.

30 Gennaro Verolino (1906–2005) was a Vatican diplomat, and nuncio Angelo Rotta’s secretary in Budapest between 1942 and April 1945.

31 Verolino made this point in a letter in 1997, in which he described the Budapest nunciature’s efforts to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. *Gennaro Verolino’s letter to John F. Morley*. In Napolitano, *Budapest igazai*, 160.

32 *Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946)*. Rome, November 12, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50. 2. fol. 8. and *Rapporto sulla situazione del Cattolicesimo ungherese (sino al 5. XI. 1946 incluso)*. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum*, 1946–1950, 9.

no longer angry at the Cardinal personally, as they consider him a faithful tool in the hands of Rome.”³³

According to the Jesuits’ interpretation, despite all these pitfalls, it was not unfathomable for progress to be made regarding the Soviet Union’s policy vis-a-vis the Catholic Church and the Vatican. According to Fr János’s assessment:

By all indications, conditions are met. First, it seems the Russians, at least for the time being, want to avoid an open *Kulturkampf* [culture war] against the Church. There are 40 million Catholics living at this time in the territories they have practically occupied. And they have realized that the Catholic Church was different from the Russian Church both in terms of organization and resistance potential. The major Catholic parties of Western Europe are also important factors. The Russians have discovered that Christianity is not only a religion, much less just piety, it’s a way of life. It is possible that in their fanaticism they think they will be able to eventually change this way of life, but they don’t think the time is right just yet; they are going to need great terror for this, which they don’t consider appropriate at the moment, because it would increase resistance to the extreme. If they don’t yet see they are going to need ideological compromises in many respects, they have recognized their only option is slower penetration.³⁴

Stalin’s church policy, which was a component of the popular front strategy introduced at the end of the world war, forecast a slow transition to socialism in Hungary on tactical grounds. According to Stalin’s initial estimates, this would require some 10-15 years.³⁵ During World War II, pragma-

33 *Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946)*. Rome, 12 November 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50. 2. fol. 7-8. és *Rapporto sulla situazione del Cattolicesimo ungherese (sino al 5. XI. 1946 incluso)*. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946-1950, 8-9.

34 János, József SJ. *Modus vivendi*. P. József János’s Reports, Part V. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946-1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 11-16.

35 Mevius, *Agents of Moscow*, 47-49. “On the principle of same formation = greater security, [the Soviet Union] began to carry out the permanent revolution, i.e., the gradual construction of the Soviet system.” However, Sovietization did not equate to immediate Sovieti-

tism in the Soviet Union and Soviet-occupied regions took the deep societal roots of the churches into account, successfully instrumentalized national sentiments, and turned a blind eye to how churches operated to achieve Soviet strategic and foreign policy goals. Accordingly, 1945–1946 marked only the beginning of the Soviet Union’s implementation of its ecclesiastical policy. Portents of a showdown with the Church, if any, were faint in Hungary, and did not constitute an existential threat.³⁶ Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the 1945 election, which the Hungarian communists saw as a failure, the country’s domestic environment began to alter. This saw the political and public campaign of the Left Bloc unleashed. Through the employment of ‘salami tactics,’ Moscow-trained Hungarian communists became more brazen, reflecting a change in the Kremlin’s position.³⁷

As Nagy wrote in a letter presumably addressed to Vicar General Fr Boynes, even without knowledge of the latest Hungarian political developments he did not view Soviet ecclesiastical policy as entirely positive. Instead, he identified two competing trends: The “Stalinist,” which he saw as relatively complacent, and the “Molotovian,” a militantly atheistic line, with considerable experience in liquidating churches.³⁸ He framed the goals of mission as exemplary of this dichotomy: “It appears to me that the Molotovian clique [...] is well established and has a powerful organizational framework, built on the experience of the past 25 years. I may be able to convince the Stalinist group that it is important, with regards to both their own interest and their foreign reputation, as well as overall domestic tranquility, to reach a compromise with the Church, which will yield positive benefits.”³⁹

fiction, but rather, adapting the countries in the region to the Soviet system on a flexible basis. Kalmár, *Történelmi galaxisok*, 42. See L. Balogh, “Törvényes” megszállás, 13–58, for a summary of the Sovietization of Hungary and the region.

36 Bánkuti, “Frontátvonulás,” 411–24. This statement does not seek to overlook the atrocities and damage done to churches, but rather, that the situation prevailing after 1948 cannot be extended back to 1945–1946, as it frequently is.

37 Baráth, *A Kreml árnyékában*, 77–101. The Left Bloc was created on March 5, 1946.

38 V. M. Molotov (1890–1986) was a hardline Soviet politician, supporter of Stalin, and key figure in Soviet power structures starting from the 1920s. He served as People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs from 1939, and Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union from March 15, 1946.

39 *Töhötöm Nagy’s letter to “Mon Révérend Père”* [likely Norbert de Boynes SJ]. [Rome] 25 avril 1946. Copies from the material of the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in French. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

This mission received not only serious attention from the Jesuits, but also the SSU, to whom Nagy had disclosed the results of his negotiations and newer objectives. One day after he arrived in Rome, on March 4, he held a meeting with “Signor Stephano” which had been arranged by Fr Mócsy, at which Streeter thoroughly debriefed Nagy on his most recent trips to Hungary and Romania.⁴⁰ Thanks to Aradi’s report that had arrived in February, SSU was already aware of Nagy’s negotiations with the Soviets and Béla Illés. Aradi reported that Nagy had been asked to mediate between the Vatican and the Soviet Union, and it was apparent that Illés had promised Nagy that he would inform the Soviet ambassador G. M. Pushkin,⁴¹ who would also negotiate with Nagy.⁴² In addition to this information, Nagy also told Streeter about recent developments: He had carried Mindszenty’s appointment letter from the Vatican, he recounted the meeting between Pope Pius XII and Cardinal Mindszenty, and detailed the former’s instructions to Mindszenty to maintain a low profile.⁴³

Two months later, however, SSU X-2 in Washington voiced their concern about Nagy, noting that through him, the Vatican might be able to penetrate the young intelligence organization: “It is our belief that his [Aradi’s] position in DD-land [Germany], together with his contact with AE752 [Nagy], offers the Vatican a very real opening for penetration of our organization.”⁴⁴ The same report continues, noting that through Nagy “Vatican officials, including Fathers Brust and Leiber undoubtedly are aware of the use of AE752 [Nagy] by our Branch and by SI [secret intelligence, the branch of OSS and SSU to which Aradi belonged], (c) Vatican intelligence coming to us from AE752 [Nagy] must be judged accordingly.” Ulti-

40 7 March 1946; JZX-6412; *The Professor Plan: AE752’s [Töhötöm Nagy’s] Itinerary and Contacts*. NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

41 Georgy Maksimovich Pushkin (1909–1963) was a Soviet diplomat, and the Soviet Union’s Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Hungary between November 1945 and 1949.

42 19 February 1946; LA-339; *Kilkenny’s [Zsolt Aradi’s] report on negotiations for Vatican/USSR concordat*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108, B 26. Nagy never actually met Pushkin. *Diary excerpt [Budapest]* 24 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

43 16 March 1946; JZX-6646; *Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752’s [Töhötöm Nagy’s] negotiations in Rome*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268.

44 “Saint” to “BB8” [James Angleton Jr.]. 22 May 1946. NARA II, RG 226, E 214, B 2, WN 21090-21105.

mately, SSU evaluated Nagy’s reports and information as (indirect) messages from the Vatican.⁴⁵

The actual intent of Vatican diplomatic overtures to the US, if such a thing existed, cannot be reconstructed from the currently extant sources: It is indeed possible that Vatican officials suspected Nagy’s contacts (particularly Streeter and Aradi) of having ties to US intelligence, and further, that they readily acknowledged these when sharing information with him, knowing that it would likely find its way to Washington. At the same time, it is also not unreasonable to assume that they entirely trusted Nagy as their inside man, viewing conversations with him as confidential, privileged, and not the stuff of casual gossip.

The information that Nagy provided was not just newsworthy, but also was more and more tied to his personal fate: The events he was experiencing signaled the state of Vatican diplomacy and the Holy See’s policy towards the east. The fact that Nagy’s mission was fraught with mortal danger was as readily known and accepted in the halls of the Vatican as it was in and around Washington D.C. Nagy recognized the danger he was in, but likely viewed his struggles as on behalf of the Church and part of his Jesuit vocation, and, thus, an acceptable sacrifice.

Both the Pope and Fr Leiber warned him, in paternal fashion, about his plans. When he spoke to Pius XII about his escapades, the Holy Father asked him whether he was ever afraid on his missions, to which he answered:

I know my efforts will end in me getting caught, tortured, and executed. It comes easy with Russians. He told me smiling that I look like I could escape every time, and he didn’t believe this would be the end of me. When I answered positively that I hoped for this, because I wanted to give my life to God’s cause, he told me with kind reproach that this might suit me as an individual, but the interests of the Church require that I live and work, as opposed to dying.⁴⁶

45 The same is concluded by another summary report collecting manifold information not on Nagy’s activities, but those of Leiber, as presented by Nagy: 1 March 1946; *Capt. F.W. Jones’s Report on Vatican Intelligence*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 40, WN 19891-19900.

46 He also writes about Fr Leiber’s warnings: “Even Leiber, the most fervent advocate of *modus vivendi* with the Russians, warned me to take every Russian promise with the utmost doubt.” *Töhötöm Nagy’s letter to Jenő Kerkai*. Rome, 3 May 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/236. Letter 2. 3.

Nagy's value to SSU increased even further when he shared his long-term plan with "Signor Stephano": On behalf of the Vatican's diplomatic service, he was aiming, not only to return to Hungary, but also to travel to Moscow, "the third Rome."⁴⁷

2.

Nagy's newest plans, however, nearly ended in disaster before they had a chance to begin. His journey, which, like his previous ones was organized by the OSS or SSU, was delayed owing to issues within the SSU.⁴⁸ Originally, one of SSU's other agents, "Dubois,"⁴⁹ was supposed to help Nagy; however, "Dubois" was stopped at Enns, along the interzonal border between the Soviet and American occupation zones in Austria, as a result of his false papers. Due to the "Enns incident," as it became known, Nagy and another Jesuit ("Jones") refused to meet with "Dubois," who subsequently "escaped" from the Soviet border guards and arrived in Rome. "Signor Stephano" respected Nagy's decision and had also been warned by Washington to delay Nagy's departure because of security considerations.⁵⁰ As a result, Nagy's return journey needed to be replanned.

Following this incident, Streeter wanted to cut the Austrian branch of SSU (specifically, Aradi) out of his agent's handling. Although he needed their facilities and assistance to physically transport Nagy to Hungary from Italy, he did not want a man he saw as his valuable agent to be questioned each time he transited Austria, given new or additional assignments, or placed in jeopardy owing to security mistakes or lapses. Thus, a seri-

47 March 16, 1946; JZX-6646; Report of AE5 [Streeter] about AE752's [Töhötöm Nagy's] negotiations in Rome, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 108A, B 268. The term used in Streeter's report is "JE-land capital," with JE-land indicating the Soviet Union. Nagy was not the only Jesuit to tend towards the Soviet Union. His Croatian colleague, Stjepan Tomislav Poglajen (1906–?) embarked upon a similar mission, reaching Moscow. He shared his experience with Greta Palmer under a pseudonym. Cf. Palmer, *Élő hit*, and his letter to Pius XII. Under the pseudonym "Kolakovic." On 29 October 1945. Archivio Storico della Pontificia Università Gregoriana (henceforth APUG), Fondo Robert Leiber, Fondo 6. Kolakovic

48 Streeter appears to have run a travel agency in the US in the 1960s. His name and address can be found in Nagy's 1963 calendar: "Mr. Stephen Streeter. President of American Tourist Association. 1180 18th Street. N.W. Washington 6." This suggests that the two remained in contact and on good terms for some time. *Pocket calendars*. OSZK Kt., f. 216/11.

49 "Dubois" = Géza Izay SJ (1916–2008)

50 30 April 1946; AE5's [Streeter's] report on his consultation with AE752 [Töhötöm Nagy], in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 483, WN 13714-13725.

ous conflict that had been brewing between Aradi and Streeter for nearly a year (if not longer) reached a boiling point.⁵¹ A meeting was arranged in Rome at the beginning of May 1946, attended by Aradi and SSU Austria’s Executive Officer, Robert Cunningham, on the one hand, and Streeter and James Angleton Jr. of SSU Italy on the other. Cunningham made sure that Angleton Jr. understood that SSU Austria had no plans for gathering intelligence in Italy, while Angleton Jr. expressed much the same sentiment regarding Austria. However, despite identifying the problem posed by joint control of Nagy (in Austria, he was treated as a positive intelligence agent, while in Italy, he was considered part of counterintelligence), no definitive solution was reached apart from respecting each office’s territorial jurisdiction.⁵² The talks, however, failed to ease Nagy’s return to Hungary through Austria.⁵³ Eventually, on May 8, 1946, Nagy departed Rome on a flight to Vienna that Streeter had arranged, with SSU Austria organizing a ride for him from there to the Hungarian frontier. On this occasion, he was driven by a certain Otto Ploss, who actually brought him to Sopron.⁵⁴ Aradi was not in Vienna at the time, having in all likelihood remained in Rome to further sort out familial matters.

This journey created several unfortunate circumstances: First, according to Nagy’s diary, since crossing into Hungary without an entry permit was a great risk, they had, on a whim, picked up a hitch-hiking Russian

51 The issues between Aradi and Streeter can be traced back to the security concerns voiced by the latter’s branch, X-2, when Aradi was first brought on to work with OSS in June of 1944. While outside the scope of this work, they can be summarized as relating to the presence of non-Americans within OSS and SSU as employees. None of Aradi’s immediate supervisors, themselves US citizens, ever voiced anything but admiration for him and his work ethic, and even Angleton Jr. vouched for him in 1945. There is likely some degree of anti-Semitism (owing to Aradi’s ethnic background) evident in their considerations.

52 Greater intelligence collaboration and sharing was also agreed upon, particularly regarding Vatican and Church activities. SSU Austria, through Aradi, had developed quite a sophisticated and long-range program utilizing various Catholic Church officials in Eastern and Central Europe. For a summary of the meeting, see 10 May 1946: LS-024-510, SSU-4125; Robert J. Cunningham (XO, SI) to Chief of Mission, SSU, WD Mission to Austria: Conference held in Rome on 2 May 1946, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 215, B 6, WN 26180-26199.

53 Neither Angleton nor Alfred C. Ulmer Jr. (Chief of SSU Austria) approved of Nagy’s double control. At least in Italy, Angleton Jr. asserted that only Streeter contact and debrief him. March 7, 1946; JZX-6412; *The Professor Plan: AE752’s [Töhötöm Nagy’s] Itinerary and Contacts*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 505, WN 18470-18481.

54 NARA II, RG 226, E 211, B 38, WN 20228.

major, so that their trip would appear as though they were simply bringing him back, rather than actually crossing into Hungary. Ploss, who did not have a Hungarian visa, remained on the Austrian side of the border, while Nagy went to the Hungarian side to search for a driver who could bring the car back to Ploss from Sopron. The bluff succeeded, as a border guard drove the car, taking the Russian major (and Nagy) to Sopron, with no one asking to see Nagy's papers.⁵⁵ Despite averting one danger, another, longer term problem that neither Nagy nor the SSU was aware of at the time arose: Ploss was apparently in the employ of the Military Political Department of the Hungarian State Police, the Katpol, and operating against SSU in Vienna.⁵⁶ He provided all of the information he had on Nagy to the Katpol: how he had brought him to the border, and that, as far as he knew, the Jesuit who frequently travelled to Rome was a "Vatican spy"⁵⁷ who was suspiciously aided by US authorities.⁵⁸ Based on the data Ploss gave, it was easy to identify the individual as Nagy, causing the noose, unnoticeably at first, to begin to tighten around him in Hungary.⁵⁹

Nagy arrived in Budapest on May 16, 1946, equipped with his Vatican passport and Papal letter. He was ready for action and suspected nothing of the danger growing around him. For the short term, after re-adjusting to life along the Danube, he would contact the Soviets, while, in the long term, he would proceed to the Soviet Union, using his KALOT affiliation as cover.⁶⁰

KALOT began the year of 1946 facing contradictory circumstances. Its organizational funds had largely been replenished, and work had resumed.

55 *Diary excerpt* [Sopron] May 15, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

56 By the time a summons to KATPOL's offices arrived, Nagy was already in South America. *Summons*. Budapest, March 10, 1947. OSZK Kt., f. 216/2.

57 SSU Washington shared this sentiment, believing him to be a member of the "Vatican Intelligence Service." 22 May 1946; "Saint" to "Saint" and "BB8," report. "Saint" to "BB8" [James Angleton Jr], in: NARA II, RG 226, E 214, B 2, WN 21090-21105.

58 Bare, "The curious case," 120.

59 At present, little is known about this early phase of KATPOL, but in addition to intelligence, offensive counterintelligence with a special focus on operating against western secret services, appears to have played a key role in the organization's early activities. Okváth, "Kémek," 67-92.

60 "My aim is to link a confidential Vatican assignment with the official Hungarian mission to Moscow, so there is no danger of me not returning. I will ask for approval of this journey to Moscow from the Holy See itself, which gives me cover in the eyes of the overzealous Hungarian public, while at the same time, being of great service to the Vatican." *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 27, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

However, its efforts were being seriously challenged from two directions: first, in the field of youth organizing, they were unable to reach an agreement with the Hungarian Democratic Youth Association (MADISZ). Created in February 1945, this was the Hungarian Communist Party’s youth apparatus, and served as an umbrella organization for coordinating youth outreach (allegedly) irrespective of ideological or party affiliation.

Second, the issue of *modus vivendi* raised more and more questions about KALOT’s role in the Catholic Church, forcing the former’s leadership to explain and account for its actions with growing frequency.⁶¹ KALOT resented the fact that it had been prohibited from participating in the inaugural conference of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) in London, in late fall of 1945,⁶² with MADISZ members instead representing Hungarian youth organizations.⁶³ This prevented KALOT from developing international ties, which instead became their priority for 1946.⁶⁴ The Soviet Union was included among these, and relations between the Soviets and KALOT were good, as can be seen in the negotiations between Lt. Kvin of the propaganda department of the Red Army and Kerkai in early January 1946.⁶⁵ Kerkai’s team agreed to continue discussions with MADISZ in order to create a consolidated youth organization. Maintaining ties to the Soviets seemed important in any event, as it offered KALOT the opportunity to prove its “democratic commitment” and that it was “not an enemy of the Russian people.”⁶⁶ Eventually, as a result of multilateral negotiations, the National Council of Hungarian Youth (MIOT) was created, with KALOT among its members, but not its leaders.

Nevertheless, KALOT saw their participation as important, with Sándor Meggyesi noting on behalf of the organization’s leadership that “[t]he

61 To the Actio Catholica for example. *Confidential memorandum. On the conflict between the Youth Secretariat of the A.C. and the KALOT movement concerning the discussion around MIOT.* Budapest, 18 March 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 10.

62 The inaugural conference of the WFDY was held between 19 November and 10 December 1945.

63 *Methods to approach the Russians, certain steps of ours, results so far, future unfolding.* Budapest, 5 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 7.

64 *Work program of KALOT’s international department for the year 1946.* [Budapest] 14 January 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 4.

65 Kerkai mentioned this to “Márton,” a prison informant during his arrest. *Report.* Budapest, 27 May 1952. ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-109168. 12-15. and Balogh M., *A KALOT*, 179-183.

66 *Methods to approach the Russians, certain steps of ours, results so far, future unfolding.* Budapest, 5 February 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 7.

tension of the current transitional situation in world politics and Hungarian domestic politics will not be resolved within a matter of weeks, in fact it may last very long indeed. And since we will continue to live in the immediate vicinity of Russia, it would be suicidal to assume constant opposition instead of being amicable neighbors on issues where it's possible to move forward together."⁶⁷

Owing to KALOT's membership in MIOT, *modus vivendi* had been achieved on a domestic and organizational level. Upon learning of these developments, Cardinal Mindszenty saw KALOT's participation in MIOT as a manifestation of the irreconcilable differences between *modus vivendi* and his own views. His immediate reaction was to demand that Kerkai justify his actions.⁶⁸ Kerkai detailed his reasons in a letter sent in late March. In concluding the message to his former teacher, he shared his conviction that "uniformity isn't the only way to serve Catholic unity, different tactical forms set to a common goal can prove much more effective."⁶⁹ Despite his friendly tone and efforts, Mindszenty did not demonstrate any sympathy for, or understanding of, Kerkai's position. Accordingly, when Nagy arrived, Kerkai found himself embattled.⁷⁰

This problem was exacerbated by the fact that Jesuit activities had made Provincial István Borbély's position vis-à-vis the Cardinal untenable. Arriving in Budapest from Szeged on May 21, Fr Borbély had requested a detailed report from Nagy concerning his journey to Rome, in order to learn about developments in the Vatican. Nagy remarked in his diary:

I was very surprised by the explosively tense tempers. He was so much on the Primate's side, and interrogated me with such impatience that I couldn't finish a single sentence, since he interrupted each of them. I told him that the Holy Father had told me that the Primate is too imprudent. [...] At the end of our conversation, he strictly forbade me from

67 *Confidential memorandum. On the conflict between the Youth Secretariat of the A.C. and the KALOT movement concerning the discussion around MIOT.* Budapest, March 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 10. 3.

68 *József Mindszenty's letter to Jenő Kerkai.* Esztergom, March 26, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 14. and PL, 1709/1946.

69 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Cardinal József Mindszenty.* Budapest, 31 March 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 15. 3. and PL, 1709/1946.

70 *Diary excerpt [Budapest] May 16, 1946.* OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

relaying any unfavorable opinion to him from Rome. I am under the impression that Fr Provincial is entirely on the Primate’s side emotionally. He is disposed that way intellectually as well, but since he doesn’t see clearly, in fact he knows that Rome is backing us, being a true leader gets the better of him, and he leaves us to act with complete freedom.⁷¹

Nagy could not have known that, shortly before his arrival, Fr Borbély had been summoned by the Primate to account for Jánosi’s political activities, with the Primate apparently being better informed concerning them than was his own superior.⁷² This was also the exact moment that tensions had erupted between Kerkai and Mindszenty over MIOT. Even though Borbély had not been directly involved in the latter, the debate must have been uncomfortable for him, owing to the long-standing personal relationship between Kerkai and Mindszenty. Against this backdrop, Nagy arrived from Rome with unsettling news about Mindszenty. Confronted by these remarks, Fr Borbély saw his task as Provincial as to snuff out the growing conflict between members of his order and the Primate. For that reason, he carefully prepared Nagy for his upcoming audience with Mindszenty, which was to come just a few days later.

Nagy acted as the Provincial had instructed him: he handed over the letters to Mindszenty that he had brought from Rome, made remarks about several current affairs, and remained silent about topics that were not to be discussed. However, despite his best efforts, he could not dodge the Primate’s question, carefully crafted owing to Mindszenty’s disposition to conspiracy:

In the end the Primate asked about how he was seen by the Vatican. “Did the Holy Father say anything specific?” I said to myself, this was the moment to tell the truth, but remembering the Fr Provincial I just said: “His Holiness expressed his hopes to me, that Your Eminence will steer the ship of the Hungarian Church wisely under the difficult conditions of the times.” Not exactly “troppo imprudente!” Still, he per-

71 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] May 21, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

72 *Primate József Mindszenty’s letter to Provincial István Borbély SJ*. Esztergom, April 11, 1946 and *István Borbély’s answer to Primate József Mindszenty*. Budapest, May 1, 1946. PL, 1932/1946.

sisted: “Was the Pope instructing me, or did he just say it to you?” When I answered that it had not been the former, he emphatically replied: “Then I shall disregard it.” I have the impression that he [Mindszenty] is an extremely arrogant person.⁷³

The above reveals that the tone had shifted dramatically from that which had prevailed just a few months earlier, during the fall of 1945, when Nagy had voiced his belief that he could influence the new Primate. For the moment, Mindszenty’s rage was directed against Jánosi and Kerkai, both of whom had earned his wrath by acting publicly against his interests and wishes. Although Mindszenty still saw Nagy as a delivery boy to Rome, he would later begin to suspect what the courier had actually been up to, and the information he had received from Rome concerning himself and Hungary. Since his secret diplomatic mission remained unknown to the Primate, who was too distracted by Kerkai’s actions, Nagy could pursue it, if only for the time being.

Nagy was informed by someone within the Smallholders’ Party⁷⁴ that he should meet Boris Pavlovich Osokin if he wanted to negotiate with an influential Soviet functionary. As he learned, Osokin was the head of the Central European branch of the NKVD.⁷⁵ Officially, Osokin served as a political adviser to the Allied Control Commission, appointed by Major General Ivan Ivanovich Levushkin in February 1945, to observe the activities of Hungarian political parties and monitor the mood and political orientation of the youth and peasantry.⁷⁶ It is likely that he was already

73 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] May 24, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

74 In his diary, he claims to have received Osokin’s details from Béla Varga. According to the report he filed later in Rome, it was Ferenc Nagy. *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] May 25, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. and *Relazione dell’abboccamento col signor OSTJUKIN, capo-sezione del “NKVK” [sic] in Europa Centrale (Budapest, il 25 maggio 1946) [Report of the meeting with Mr. OSTJUKIN, section chief of the “NKVK” [sic] in Central Europe. Budapest, 25 May 1946]*. Roma, il 2 agosto 1946. Copies from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and Rome, 2 August 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/76. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Scatola Bianca, Pio XII. N. 1.

75 The NKVD was the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union which operated from 1934 and 1946, performing a variety of state security and intelligence tasks. Its modern successor is the Russian FSB.

76 Baráth, *A szovjet tényező*, 86. Little is known at present about Osokin. He attended military academy, was suddenly recalled from service in Hungary, and fell victim to one of Beria’s purges. Zamercev, *Cserež godi*.

familiar with Nagy through both his declared administrative and undeclared security work and Nagy’s role as the deputy national head of KALOT. Ultimately, the two met on May 25, 1946.⁷⁷ After reviewing Nagy’s mandate from the Vatican, their conversation revolved mostly around Cardinal Mindszenty, who, for Osokin, was the Hungarian embodiment of Vatican policy. The fact that Mindszenty continued to express a common line with the Pope supported the widespread Soviet belief in ecclesiastical hierarchy, which postulated that no space existed within the system for conflicting ideas or the formation of independent opinions.

Nagy encountered some difficulty in convincing his counterpart that this idea was not accurate, since he also referenced Pius XII while communicating the Vatican’s intention to negotiate with the Soviets. However, referring to the situation’s ambivalent nature offered Osokin a chance to express both his doubts about the Vatican’s sincerity in entering negotiations and the intolerability of a person like Mindszenty to the Soviets. He posed the rhetorical question to Nagy: “What does the Vatican want after all, and who represents the Pope’s intentions: him, or the Cardinal?”

Nagy, however, parried, maintaining that the Pope did not, and could not, determine the political orientation of the high clergy. Thus, despite their seemingly close ties, the Vatican and Mindszenty were actually two different political actors. Nagy illustrated this with historical examples. Having listened intently, Osokin laughed and called him a “cunning Jesuit.”⁷⁸

But Osokin had received Nagy’s message: The Vatican’s aim was to approach the Soviet Union through Nagy. Adopting a more diplomatic tone, he continued their dialogue by praising the Jesuits: “He said it was always the Jesuits who adapted first to the changing times, which is why they don’t think it’s an accident that again it’s a Jesuit traveling back and forth between Rome and Budapest.”⁷⁹

77 See *Relazione dell’abboccamento col signor OSTJUKIN, capo-sezione del “NKVK” [sic!] in Europa Centrale (Budapest, il 25 maggio 1946)* [Report of the meeting with Mr. OSTJUKIN, section chief of the “NKVK” [sic!] in Central Europe (Budapest, 25 May 1946)]. Roma, il 2 agosto 1946. Copies from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950*. and Rome, 2 August 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/76. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS Scatola Bianca, Pio XII. N. 1.

78 Ibid. 3.

79 Ibid. 4.

At the end of their conversation, he promised to bring the case to Moscow and to inform him of any reaction. However, that was far from all: On the very next day, Nagy received a message from Osokin asking him not to play any public role in the near future, nor to give any speeches, but to “sit tight.” In Nagy’s interpretation, surely “the Russians are happy to have someone mediate between them and the Holy See, and they try to keep that person above reproach in order to make use of him when it’s time.”⁸⁰

To put it in perspective, he wrote: “the Soviets truly want relationships with the Holy See because of certain favorable appearances, and they don’t want to start persecuting religion just yet. True, their final goals are unfavorable towards the Church, but the inner evolution of the Soviet will be complete by then, aiming to consolidate power based on Pan-Slavism as opposed to Bolshevism. This latter case would signal a positive turn for the Church.”⁸¹

It can be inferred from knowledge of what transpired over the ensuing days that Osokin did not pursue a return to the Pan-Slavism of the Russian Empire, but rather a much more pressing matter, since he thought it best for Nagy to step out of the spotlight and remain a potential mediator between the USSR and the Vatican. Although Nagy could not fathom the exact reason, he nonetheless complied with the request and maintained a low public profile over the following weeks.

This was all the more difficult for him, as KALOT’s anniversary celebrations were held on June 10 in Budapest and he would have enjoyed the opportunity to express his dedication to KALOT’s members in a speech.⁸² The relationship between KALOT and Mindszenty had soured owing to the MIOT affair, and a speech from Nagy might have bridged the divide. In a letter dated June 8, 1946 to the Faculty of Catholic Bishops, the Primate formally withdrew his support from KALOT, also demanding a further report explaining KALOT’s activities.⁸³ As a result, KALOT’s leadership needed to exercise caution and ensure that their public remarks

80 Ibid. 5.

81 Ibid.

82 “I didn’t even make a speech at the grand assembly of KALOT on 10 June, though it would have been a very good idea.” – he wrote in his report. Ibid.

83 *Primate József Mindszenty’s letter to Jenő Kerkai*. Esztergom, 8 June 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 19. and PL, 2991/1946.

saved face with the Primate, all the while appealing to public sentiment and guests expecting a declaration of “democratic commitment.” It became apparent, however, that the gulf between these two expectations was too great, and that, despite the experiences of the “border-crossing” Jesuit, they would be impossible to bridge.⁸⁴

Those attending the celebration two days later could report to the Cardinal that the speeches and toasts were fine from a Catholic point of view, and that Kerkai had done a particularly great job. As Fr Borbély later reported to the Jesuit Generelate in Rome: “those who participated in the celebration found nothing unusual about this and viewed Fr Kerkai’s speech as manly and clear. It was a brave, Catholic speech, fit for today’s times—this was the general consensus.”⁸⁵

Despite the positive performance, the Primate did not forget the MIOT affair, and became further enraged when he learned that a Soviet youth delegation of seven people had been present at the celebration along with MADISZ members.⁸⁶ Borbély remarked: “When the Cardinal found out about this, he was of the opinion that this was a sign of formal cooperation with the communists and the Russians, and it was all made to look as if the whole game were the intent of the Holy Father.”⁸⁷ At the very least, “democratic commitment” had been proven, and the Komsomol delegation invited KALOT’s representatives, including Nagy, to Moscow.⁸⁸ It thus seemed that Nagy had achieved his goals and would be able to travel

84 Kerkai wrote to Zsigmond Mihalovics, A.C.’s national head: “If the impossible situation of getting stuck in the crossfire hadn’t arisen, we could have held the front for at least another six months.” Budapest, July 18, 1946. Quoted by: Balogh, *A KALOT*, 201.

85 [Fr István Borbély István SJ]: *Kard. Mindszenty en de KALOT. (Cardinal Mindszenty and the KALOT)* [Róma] December 2, 1946. Copies from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Dutch. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950*. The Dutch summary with the exact date was written on the basis of an undated, longer report from Borbély: [Fr István Borbély István SJ]: *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT*. Copies from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950*. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. *Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127*.

86 József Ugrin assessed the Komsomol delegation as being about 40 strong. In Ugrin, *Emlékezéseim*, 209.

87 *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT*. Copies from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950*. 10. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. *Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127*. 118.

88 A few days after the grand assembly, KALOT’s leadership visited the Komsomol delegation, during which they extended the invitation to Moscow. Meggyesi, “Az út vége.”

to Moscow on legitimate grounds, without raising the Cardinal's suspicions. However, KALOT's Catholic legitimacy, and, by extension, its existence, was hanging by a thread: Mindszenty demanded a new report about the organization's activities.

Kerkai told the Primate about KALOT's position in the MIOT-affair,⁸⁹ with Nagy drafting the report detailing the background for the decisions which had been made. He wrote, since according to Osokin's request, he was not to give public addresses. In fact, he took so much time and care in writing his seventeen-page report, that he personally had to ask Mindszenty for an extension of his deadline.⁹⁰ Nagy finally submitted his report on June 24, timed so that Fr Borbély was absent and ignorant of the fact.⁹¹

The report was a reasoned argument for *modus vivendi*, but its author made several remarks in the foreword that likely incited Mindszenty's rage: It justified KALOT's activities by noting the support that they enjoyed from Rome. Nagy confidently wrote:

We still can't believe that His Eminence the Cardinal Primate would doubt the Jesuits' faith in the Church, a faith evidenced by special merit for the 400 years of the Order. It would cause great confusion if the appearance arose that Your Eminence doesn't trust the faith of Jesuits in the Church and in principle, since more and more people know that the same fathers enjoy the special trust of His Holiness Pope Pius XII.⁹²

The memorandum then repeated arguments in favor of *modus vivendi*, deeming rigid opposition to it irresponsible and impulsive, in contrast with Nagy's own views. Nagy summarized his experiences in Rome as well, writing about the shift in world politics, the Vatican's and Americans' views, and the unlikelihood of an anticommunist third world war. The last of these, which Mindszenty was eagerly anticipating, would usher in a rapid change in the world's geopolitical constellation.

89 *Jenő Kerkai's letter to Primate József Mindszenty*. Budapest, June 22, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 23.

90 *KALOT National President [Jenő Kerkai's letter to Primate József Mindszenty]* Budapest, June 13, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 20. and *Primate József Mindszenty's letter to Jenő Kerkai*. Esztergom, June 20, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 20.

91 *Justification report*. Budapest, June 24, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/49.

92 *Ibid.* 2. et passim

As noted previously, Mindszenty based his view on Hungary’s place in the world on this outcome, a path which Nagy incorrectly labelled *expressis verbis*:

First of all we must pin down the constant and only great aim, the one to consider exclusively, which is saving and serving the values of Christianity and Hungary. [...] Everything can be risked but the nation itself. And we cannot recognize a single appropriate tool. [...] A possible tactic of our times, which Hungarian Catholicism may follow, is the way of rigid opposition, total distrust, and constant secrecy. We can call this, in the noble sense of the word, the way of impulses, as it isn’t based on a cold consideration of sometimes tragic, real internal and external facts, but stems from an instinctive aversion of deeply wounded souls, from the sea of bitterness of a thoroughly destroyed and humiliated country [...] One of the main characteristics of this behavior is heroic spirit and deathly resolve. [...] [I]t is reckless to follow impulses without a solid basis, and since the life of the nation is on the line, a great responsibility. I do not know who would shoulder the responsibility of pursuing a policy of rigid opposition if not in the safe knowledge that help is on its way. Without this, it is just provoking more oppression, persecution and destruction. In fact, it is the martyrial mindset of people like this that shows that even death isn’t unpalatable to this method; and even if an individual has a right to seek death with a martyrial mindset, he or she has no right to lead an entire nation on this path.

Finally, Nagy detailed the key aspects of *modus vivendi* in short sentences, not unlike a creed: “In addition to rigid opposition, according to our humble view, Hungarian Catholicism is in need of *modus vivendi*. [...] These days, as the old proverb says: it is easy to be a hero, but hard to be wise. We should seek to become wise, as the Gospel speaks in the parable of the king, who, seeing he cannot counter twenty thousand with ten thousand, asks for peace. This is *modus vivendi*. A request for peace. Not making friends, not giving up principles, not submitting, but also not poking the beast with which we are locked in the same cage.”⁹³

93 Ibid.

Nagy's great intellectual attempt, however, failed to achieve its goal: Mindszenty broke with KALOT and Nagy. Nagy later learned from Fr Borbély that his text has been referred to as "an abomination."⁹⁴ From that time on, not only was Nagy unable to wash off the stain of being a Rusophile, but also that of an upstart, as he believed himself to be the conveyor of authentic Papal intent, as opposed to the Primate.⁹⁵

Mindszenty's rebuke was not the only reason for KALOT's demise. Its founders were aware that "no one could have earnestly believed that in majority agrarian Hungary a party aiming for total control would ignore the ideological education of agrarian youth."⁹⁶ Nonetheless, what happened was unexpected.

On June 17, 1946 on Teréz boulevard, near the Oktogon, a Soviet soldier and an officer were shot and killed. It was claimed that a KALOT membership card was found beside the body of the alleged perpetrator. The ensuing public witch hunt achieved its goal of wiping out denominational organizations.⁹⁷ Nothing about the attack has been clarified, with the perpetrator's true motivation still unknown. Even the events surrounding KALOT's exact dissolution cannot be accurately reconstructed. The consensus among Nagy's circles was that it had been a false-flag operation executed by the Hungarian communists. They contended that dissolving KALOT would not have been in the interest of the Soviets at that moment, since negotiations were ongoing and both sides were generally on good terms.⁹⁸ Nagy recorded the events similarly in his diary:

94 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 30, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. He took the Primate's words so close to heart, that he repeated them decades later: *Data on Mindszenty's political role*. [Budapest] [around June 1971] ÁBTL 3.2.3. Mt-975/2. 129.

95 This arose from the fact that Nagy, and not Mindszenty had been entrusted with negotiating on the topic of *modus vivendi*, of which the Primate was neither informed nor a party. In this way, the Primate believed that Nagy was attempting to undermine his authority and relationship with the Pope.

96 József Ugrin, *Reply... op. cit.* In *Bequest of Ugrin*, 24.

97 The Interior Minister, László Rajk, dissolved Catholic organizations on 22 June 1946. *Magyar Közlöny* [Hungarian gazette], June 22, 1946. no. 139 7150/1946 M. E., 7200/1946 M. E. and 7330/1946 M. E. and on the right of supervision: *Magyar Közlöny*, June 28, 1946. no. 144.

98 This view is shared by Kenez, "The Hungarian Communist Party," 881, and Balogh, *A KALOT*, 200, among others.

Béla Varga⁹⁹ nervously told me that the government received a transcript from Sviridov, the military commander¹⁰⁰, calling on the government to hasten the liquidation of reactionaries, especially when the Church was involved. He lists several Catholic organizations, among them, first of all KALOT, asking for their dissolution. The phrasing of the accusations against KALOT make it clear that the whole operation originated with the Hungarian communists. We soon checked, and according to our information, we're up against another trick from the Hungarian communists: they tricked the military commander into writing the transcript. István Barankovics went straight to our Russian friends, to Captain Ráth in the immediate vicinity of Ostyukin,¹⁰¹ who, outraged, called the entire operation a rash act by stupid soldiers. He thinks a military commander has no right to interfere with affairs like this.¹⁰²

Later, Fr Borbély reported along similar lines to the Curia in Rome:

The Hungarian government, at the insistence of the top Russian commander in Budapest (General Sviridov), dissolved KALOT and other Catholic organizations, because [they claimed that] they represent a grave danger to the safety of the Russian army. A few politicians in the Smallholders' Party tried to prevent the dissolution, but they failed. It happened. Immediately afterwards I was told that the Russian general decided on this under pressure from the Hungarian communists, since the communists consider KALOT to be their most dangerous enemy. I was also told that the general's zeal was rebuked by the Russian diplomatic mission to Budapest and the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. All of this is likely true.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Béla Varga was President of the National Assembly at that time.

¹⁰⁰ Lieutenant General Vladimir Petrovich Sviridov (1897–1963), was deputy chairman of the Allied Control Commission.

¹⁰¹ = Osokin

¹⁰² *Diary excerpt* Budapest, July 3, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

¹⁰³ [Fr István Borbély SJ]: *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT* [*Cardinal Mindszenty and the KALOT*]. Copies of material from the Order's archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 16. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127. 124.

KALOT's dissolution was irreversible and absolute, but only resulted in the creation of an ephemeral successor organization. Possessing a markedly different leadership, the Catholic Agrarian Youth Association (KAPSZ) arose in its place in August 1946.¹⁰⁴ The outlawing of KALOT was certainly part of the political offensive launched by the Hungarian Communist Party. It also demonstrates the change in the internal balance of power within the Kremlin. The various cliques jockeying for supremacy in Moscow can be readily identified in how the event unfolded.

On one side, Nagy negotiated with those members of the Soviet side who were more disposed to dialogue. He had been insulated from the events of June 17, possibly because his interlocutors within the Soviet occupation administration saw him as useful for future negotiations. Thanks to this intervention, Nagy, the Vatican diplomat, could remain a viable negotiating partner irrespective of what happened to KALOT. This interpretation of the multifaceted Soviet diplomatic strategy assumes good faith on their part, which requires us to accept that the responsibility for dissolving the KALOT rested squarely with Hungarian communist politicians.

KALOT's disbanding along with that of other denominational organizations suggests that the time for consensus-based diplomacy was nearing its end. Regardless of how *modus vivendi* was perceived within the Church, Nagy's chances for success could be said to be slim. Undaunted, he prepared for his next journey to Rome carrying a message from the Soviets that he felt expressed their sincere desire to negotiate further. Neither Kerkai nor Nagy could perform any function within the Society of Jesus for the time being owing to Mindszenty's intervention: The Primate explicitly commanded Fr Borbély to exact personal consequences. He wrote:

I have repeatedly stated verbally, now I emphatically wish to tell you in writing, that you compel to obedience and force into retirement regarding the public and the press, those members of the Order, who, to the shock of many and the confusion of a wide group of Catholics, follow a hostile course, departing from and countering the official Catholic direction, shattering much-needed Catholic unity. In Debrecen, Fr Kerkai stated in front of a large crowd that [KALOT

104 Balogh *A KALOT*, 201–205.

and the Democratic People’s Party] had taken a friendly course with the invaders ‘even if the Primate doesn’t like this’. I have learned from other sources that—their own words—only obey the authority of the official Church in matters of faith and morality. This is an impossible thing for a Jesuit to say.¹⁰⁵

This represents the definitive answer Nagy and Kerkai received to their report. Both events forced the two Jesuits to resort to stronger measures: KALOT’s dissolution by decree on the pretext of the Teréz boulevard attack, and Mindszenty’s withdrawal of Church support and the prohibition of further personal involvement. As such, Nagy’s response, written later, becomes more understandable: “in executing [KALOT], the Cardinal worked in complete harmony with the communist party.”¹⁰⁶ In July 1946, the emerging situation seemed far from black and white: the movement was full of vigor, its reorganization had begun, the first step toward negotiations with the Soviets had been successful, and, according to him, further progress was possible if Mindszenty could restrain his political machinations and the Pope lend more open support to *modus vivendi*. Rome must be informed of what had transpired, and Nagy wished to do this before anyone else. As he wrote in his diary: “I’ll run down quickly to Rome and file a report so that his letter [sc. Mindszenty’s] only arrives after mine.”¹⁰⁷

3.

This time it was prudent for Nagy not to travel alone. He set off with Zoltán Nyisztor, with whom he had a long-standing friendship through *Magyar*

105 József Mindszenty’s rescript on Jesuits to the Superior. Esztergom, July 23, 1946. PL, 3108/1946.

106 [Fr István Borbély István SJ]: *Kardinal Mindszenty und der KALOT* [*Cardinal Mindszenty and the KALOT*]. Copies from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in German. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 16. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 109–127.

107 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 30, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24. He did not need to fear that Mindszenty’s letter would arrive before he did, or that the Holy See would take steps before he gave his own report. As András Zakar noted when discussing the events of summer 1946 in his testimony during the Mindszenty trial: “The Primate wrote a report to Rome asking for the Holy See’s decision. The written answer arrived ca. two years later...” ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-700/2. 309.

Kultúra. Nyisztor accompanied him for a very specific reason, namely, to escape from Hungary with Nagy's help. Although organizing and departing on a journey with Nyisztor, who was already evading arrest, made leaving the country undoubtedly more complicated, Nyisztor's support left a significant impression with the Holy See in evaluating the Jesuit's conflict with the Primate: "[I]'m taking Z. along, who is greatly respected in Rome, who entirely condemns the Primate for his reckless policy. I couldn't have hoped for a more valuable witness."¹⁰⁸

Nyisztor's situation had indeed become untenable in Hungary.

He recently got out of jail where he was treated cruelly. He slept on the stone floor of the unheated bathroom, and there was a time when he thought his life would end, as he felt he was slowly freezing to death. This good man prayed throughout his long, eight-month sentence, and came back to us like a saint. It felt good to talk to him. He spoke of his tormentors in genuine Christian spirit, with forgiveness. But he wanted to flee [...] That's why he came to me. I promised him everything and talked it over with Aradi that he was to come to Vienna, and the Americans would help him to get to Rome.¹⁰⁹

Reaching Vienna, however, was difficult, particularly since their smuggler was leading them on. After waiting for several days, they eventually reached Ágfalva, where they were delayed at the parish priest's owing to document controls, with a different driver. "Nyisztor was depressed, he saw the situation as being hopeless and desperate. But I was overcome by a perfect calm and a sense of security as usual in danger, and said we would reach the other side the same night."¹¹⁰

Nyisztor paid homage to Nagy in his memoirs for helping him through so many adversities, though he failed to mention the latter's calm. Instead, he remarked that Nagy would console him when problems arose by saying that emerging complications always account for the most successful operations. After the identity checks, they met some unreliable "help-

108 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] June 30, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

109 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] July 4, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

110 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] July 4, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

ers.” According to Nyisztor, Nagy “started cursing like a sailor. He had a strong, folkloric lexicon that he probably picked up from fugitives and smugglers during his illegal border-crossings of the past.”¹¹¹ Eventually, with the help of a man from Fertőrákos, they managed to cross to Mörbisch am See on the night of July 5, 1946.¹¹²

Nagy detailed the events: “[W]e reached a forest, through which the border ran. We proceeded carefully. Nyisztor kissed the last tree with tears in his eyes. He was bidding farewell to his homeland. Perhaps forever.”¹¹³ Both men would later recall this experience as a poignant moment that they had lived through together.¹¹⁴

Nagy stayed with Aradi in Vienna until mid-July and Nyisztor received papers that allowed him to continue on.¹¹⁵ The two eventually both reached Rome safely: Nyisztor went “on foot,”¹¹⁶ while Nagy took a considerable detour, but made better time. He boarded an American military plane that flew from Vienna to Munich, Dijon, Lyon, Marseille, Corsica before finishing its odyssey at Naples. Nagy enthusiastically recorded the fabulous views of the Alps as well as the Mediterranean. The picturesque scenes helped him, if only briefly, to forget about the issues he was facing. And there was a lot to forget, since the trip nearly began with him falling out of the plane. “During take-off, an emergency exit door fell off: I had been leaning against it a minute earlier, maybe that’s why it fell off, but luckily I sat on the other side. We landed, picked up the door, and then left again.”¹¹⁷

From Naples, Nagy flew to Rome, where he informed his acquaintances over the following days that he had arrived: Vicar General Fr Boynes, Assis-

111 Nyisztor, *Vallomás*, 275. It seems that an old wish of his mentioned in his diary had come true: to “pick up dialectal terms.”

112 Mörbisch am See (Ger) = Fertőmeggyes (Hun)

113 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] July 4, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

114 *Töhötöm Nagy’s letters to Zoltán Nyisztor*. Buenos Aires, July 7, 1948, and Buenos Aires, April 24, 1949. OSZK Kt., f. 216/256. Letters 4. and 5.

115 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] July 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

116 Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadkőművesek*, 232. Probably referring to the fact that Nyisztor had to cross the border between Austria and Italy on foot through the Alps. Adriányi and Csíky, *Nyisztor Zoltán*, 219–20.

117 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] July 18–20, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/24.

tant General Fr Brust, Fr Leiber,¹¹⁸ and “Signor Stephano.”¹¹⁹ His report for Pius XII was ready by July 30.¹²⁰

This report was primarily based on the statements he had included in the document prepared for Mindszenty,¹²¹ but accompanied by an evaluation of the conflict between the Primate and KALOT. Naturally, his account favored KALOT’s side of the story, however, he was objective and even-handed in stating that “His Eminence personally behaves like a true hero, and has become the hope of the nation in such tumultuous times.”¹²² Given the prevailing circumstances though, he relativized this as being an improper and reckless approach to political issues: “Even if he was to achieve good results, it seems that it wouldn’t satisfy him. Conversely, he aims to incite scandals with the goal of presenting Hungarian Catholicism to the world as a hero opposing an oppressive power. [...] The sheer presence of the Cardinal is an incitement to political demonstration, drawing Protestants as well as non-believers [...], i.e., the dissatisfied from all walks of life wanting to protest the current system.”¹²³

And since KALOT “rejected the political principle of intransigence,” the Primate “seeks to destroy” it as though it were an enemy; hence the conflict between them.¹²⁴ However, KALOT saw in the policy seeking compromise a sort of opportunity to survive—he continued—which is why they entered into dialog with the Soviets. This alone did not indicate any straying from the path of Catholicism, however. To prove this,

118 *Diary excerpts*. [Rome] July 20–29, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

119 July 16, 1946; *JRX 4227*; *Professor Plan, AE5’s [Streeter’s] report on AE752’s [Töhötöm Nagy’s] itinerary*, in: NARA II, RG 226, E 210, B 503, WN 18388. The date of Nagy’s arrival in Rome on the report does not match the date in the diary. The difference between the two sources amounts to a few days.

120 *Rapporto sulle lotte interne de Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso)* [*Report on the internal struggles of Hungarian Catholicism (up to and including 10 July 1946)*]. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum*, 1946–1950. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124., ff. 25–45.

121 *Justification report*. Budapest, June 24, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/49.

122 *Rapporto sulle lotte interne de Cattolicismo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso)* [*Report on the internal struggles of Hungarian Catholicism (up to and including 10 July 1946)*]. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum*, 1946–1950. 1. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124., ff. 25.

123 *Ibid.*, 3–4.

124 *Ibid.*, 6.

he reported on KALOT’s anniversary grand assembly and its annual activities. In expressing his opinion of Mindszenty’s policy vis-à-vis that of *modus vivendi*, he remarked that “even a life sentence is preferable to a death sentence.”¹²⁵ Concluding, he sought to give meaning to taking on a “life sentence” within the context of church history, assigning it to the eastern mission. This saw the Hungarian Catholic Church as an outpost of the Vatican wedged in the Slavic and Orthodox world—a bridgehead which might play a crucial future role in re-evangelizing Russia. He argued as follows:

[F]inally the leadership of KALOT was also prompted to search for a *modus vivendi* by the fact that they glimpsed a great opportunity for the church in opening a promising new missionary area in Eastern Europe, and it seems to them that during possibly the second greatest mission of the history of the Church,¹²⁶ the small but deeply religious Hungarian people might play an important role as a vanguard in the sea of Orthodoxy. There are signs of this great work of global historical importance, there are preparatory, strategic steps to be taken, and KALOT has a definite mission in this, which is preparing the way.¹²⁷

To prove this, on August 2 he provided a summary of his negotiations with Osokin.¹²⁸ He thought not only about whether his reports would convince Pius XII to continue the experiment, but also what sort of sign he might take back to Hungary to signal the validity of his mission. He suggested to Fr Leiber that, in light of KALOT’s difficult situation, a papal brief would ensure that Catholic policy was truly unified and in search of consensus. Nagy even supplied a draft for such a proclamation.¹²⁹ How-

125 Ibid., 14.

126 The Jesuit mission to China in the 16th-17th centuries was likely the “first” one.

127 *Rapporto sulle lotte interne de Cattolicesimo ungherese (sino al 10 luglio 1946 incluso)* [Report on the internal struggles of Hungarian Catholicism (up to and including 10 July 1946)]. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. 18. and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 124., ff. 42.

128 OSTJUKIN, *capo-sezione del “NKVK” in Europa Centrale. (Budapest, il 25 maggio 1946)*. Roma, il 2 agosto 1946. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.

129 The text of this is only partially available in Hungarian in Nagy’s book Nagy, *Jezsuiták és szabadságharcosok*, 235–136. The full text of the draft is available in French: *A l’occasion du*

ever, Leiber could not push this request through in such short time: “He [Leiber] told me that although His Holiness was convinced by my letter, and he condemns the rigid contrarianism of the Primate, he shied away from vindicating this in writing, i.e. condemning the Primate. He asked me how long I could wait for that letter. I said 2-3 days. He laughed. It was more like two or three months. Can we hold out for that long? I expressed my doubts.”¹³⁰

We cannot be certain whether time was the only factor that conspired against Nagy’s request. In the interim, Mindszenty’s letter had arrived, among others, and Nagy had to return to Hungary without a written show of support. As usual, he was assisted by the SSU, reaching Vienna on August 7th 1946 by plane. From there, his path to the Jesuit center in Budapest via Mörbisch am See and Ágfalva.¹³¹

Upon his return, two topics piqued his interlocutors’ curiosity more than any other. The first pertained to theories about the June 17th murders and KALOT’s dissolution, while the second related to how Jesuit representatives—Fr Borbély, Fr László Varga, and Fr Elemér Csávossy—could get to Rome as electors for the XXIX. *Congregatio generalis* convened by the Jesuit Superior General.¹³²

Nagy had negotiated with Aradi and his superiors about how to transit the group into and out of the country, to ask for American documents, and to provide support on their journey, by speaking with parish priests at Ágfalva and Mörbisch am See. He was surprised that Fr Borbély did not await his response, instead hurrying on his own to Kőszeg. Nagy believed that he was avoiding him on purpose: Borbély had just transferred Kerkai to Veszprém, in compliance with the Primate’s wishes, and was about to transfer Nagy as well. This made it inconvenient and awkward to meet Nagy in person. Undaunted, Nagy followed Borbély to Kőszeg with Varga and Csávossy. There they would need to meet, since Nagy had to hand over the fake American travel documents. After their conversation, he thought that to the Provincial Superior “not even help and support for

dixième anniversaire... [On the occasion of the 10th anniversary...]. Rome, le 5 août, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 24.

¹³⁰ *Diary excerpt* [Rome] August 1, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

¹³¹ *Diary excerpts*. [no place] August 7-10, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

¹³² On details see Bánkuti, *Jezsuiták a diktatúrában*, 71.

modus vivendi people was an attractive thing,” and prepared himself for whatever adverse reports Borbély might give about him in Rome.¹³³

Still, whether he liked it or not, at that moment, Borbély depended on Nagy’s knowledge of the area and his connections. Eventually, on August 17, he brought Borbély, Varga, and Csávossy into Austria, and Vienna where he left them in Aradi’s care.¹³⁴ He returned to Budapest to ask for an explanation from Osokin regarding the status of KALOT.

Nagy needed to pull on the Soviet thread because, according to his assessment, if he achieved any result in Budapest, it would have such importance in Rome that next time he would be sure to get the papal brief in support of their activities. However, if he failed to show actual progress in his negotiations, “[i]t’s possible that Rome considers my role, built on the tactic of being equals with the Russians, a *fata morgana*.”¹³⁵

After discussing the matter with Kerkai, he felt that he would be able to present progress to Rome with regard to two issues relating to negotiations with the Soviets: Furthering the cause of the nunciature, and his long-desired journey to Moscow.¹³⁶ He met Osokin and his fellow officers three times during the fall, either late in the evening or at night.

The first meeting was on September 6. Nagy told Osokin of his journey to Rome, the papal brief he had nearly acquired, and also discussed KALOT’s dissolution, which he broached by beginning: “[e]ven the French translation of the brief was finished¹³⁷ when news of KALOT’s dissolution broke, and there I stood completely humiliated, because the Russians themselves disavowed me. Beyond theoretical considerations, for the possibility of *modus vivendi* the existence of KALOT was a real argument. It was with KALOT that I had proved to the Vatican that it was possible to collaborate with the Russians, and they believed me because of KALOT’s results.”¹³⁸ He then went on to say that he considered KALOT’s disbandment a failure of

133 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] August 11–12, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

134 Elemér Csávossy gave his testimony relating details of the escape during a hearing at his trial in 1951. *Report*. Budapest, November 8, 1951. ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-81347. 152–153.

135 *fata morgana* = an optical illusion, similar to a mirage. *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] August 31, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

136 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 1, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

137 *A l’occasion du dixième anniversaire...* Rome, le 5 août, 1946. [*On the occasion of the 10th anniversary...*] OSZK Kt., f. 216/65. Document 24.

138 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 6, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. et passim

Soviet diplomacy, which forfeited any chance of negotiating with the Vatican that his mediation might have realized. To restore trust, the Soviets would need to make concessions. Nagy also disapproved of the fact that the Sviridov-note “shot” Fr Kerkai from his place, allowing the Primate to see his policy as vindicated and his followers to increase in number.

For his part, Osokin did not offer any sort of compromise, instead reiterating the official Soviet position: A KALOT member had murdered Soviet soldiers; therefore, the organization had to be dissolved. It was a “fascist” organization anyway, since it had collaborated with the Levente movement “before liberation.”¹³⁹ The Soviets had ostensibly given KALOT a chance to carve out a place for itself in the new democracy, however, it evidently still had too many “reactionary elements” among its ranks.

Nagy rejected Osokin’s arguments, attempted to relativize KALOT’s relationship with the Levente movement, and criticized how they had not been given an opportunity to defend themselves in regard to the Teréz boulevard attack, or to examine any of the prosecution’s ‘evidence’. Furthermore, Nagy argued against any insinuation that he or the organization were reactionary, highlighting their social work, as well as KALOT’s aims and results. He went on to say that there would be no need to dissolve KALOT, should any of its members have been, in Osokin’s words “hateful enemies of Hungarian democracy and the Russian army.” Viewing the Soviet actions as an over-reaction, he brazenly continued: “The entire movement and its central leadership cannot be held to account for this, as no sane person could take you, Russian officers, to account for the many abominations committed against the Hungarian populace by individual soldiers of the Russian army.”¹⁴⁰

Ultimately, Nagy’s own tongue did not punish him: Osokin advised him to move on, and consider that KALOT needed restructuring. What more could Nagy want? How could the Soviets better demonstrate their goodwill? Upon hearing that, Nagy pounced, offering his proposal: He asked for the nunciature to be allowed to return, to be led by G. Verolino, and to be permitted to travel to Moscow as a delegate of the Holy See. Osokin expressed no hope that the nuncio could return before peace negotia-

139 On this, see Balogh, *A KALOT*, 114–21. and the chapter “*Töhötöm Nagy and KALOT*” in this book.

140 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] September 6, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. et passim

tions were concluded, however, he noted Verolino’s name.¹⁴¹ In addition, Osokin promised to facilitate Nagy’s journey to Moscow.

Nagy and Osokin’s next meeting came on October 10. By then, however, Nagy was already planning his next jaunt to Rome. He and Osokin agreed that Nagy should no longer sneak across borders. Since “his safety” was of the utmost importance, Nagy would be issued a border crossing permit from the Soviets.¹⁴² Apparently, they also took his mission seriously. At their next and final meeting, on October 18, the Soviets asked for Nagy’s Vatican passport, and stamped it, confirming Nagy’s belief that he “was again getting closer to the goal.”¹⁴³

While his paperwork was being finalized, Nagy could again converse with Osokin, an opportunity which he used to discuss the theoretical possibility of Soviet-Vatican rapprochement in detail. Eventually, his passport was returned, and both agreed to continue mediating between the two parties. Nagy wrote: “I was under the impression that this negotiation brought the two world views closer, since he was going to report to Moscow on the matters discussed, as was I to His Holiness.”¹⁴⁴

With his Soviet passport stamps, as strange as they were to him, Nagy departed legally for Rome for the first time. “The journey itself went smoothly. It was the first time I didn’t have to sneak across,” he wrote in his diary.¹⁴⁵ As he boarded the train to Győr on October 24 and exchanged pleasantries with some old ladies in his cabin, he could not fathom that he would again see Budapest only after two decades, and no longer as a man of the cloth, but as Mr. Töhötöm Nagy. For the time being, Father Nagy was going to report to the Pope, meet his American friends and interlocutors in Rome, and eagerly await the results of the Superior General elec-

141 The issue was examined further by Fr Jánosi, who negotiated in Rome from late September 1946 on behalf of Ferenc Nagy and Zoltán Tildy. József Jánosi SJ: *Memorandum*. Part III. *Vertrouwelijke verklaringen van Presid. der Republ. TILDY en van Ministerpres. NAGY, door P. J. over te brengen aan de H. Stoel. [Confidential statements from President TILDY and Prime Minister NAGY to the Holy See].* [1946] Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Dutch. JTMRL II. 1. *Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950.* and and ASRS, AA.EE.SS. *Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo V, Pio XII, Parte I, Ungheria, Pos. 129. ff. 8–10.*

142 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] October 11, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. et passim

143 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] October 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

144 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] October 18, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

145 *Diary excerpt* [Budapest] 25 October 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

tion. He hoped to return to Budapest with an apostolic brief from the Pope supporting KAPSZ, the new KALOT, before continuing to Moscow. There, on an initiative of the Pope's order, he would further his Church's cause in a distant world, hostile to his faith and culture. He considered these realistic expectations, so he traveled not only in physical comfort, but also peace of mind. Nagy enjoyed Aradi's hospitality in Vienna for several days, leaving on November 4 via his usual route: American way-bill, by plane, and with the cry "Greetings, Rome, my one earthly love!" he arrived in the Eternal City on November 5.¹⁴⁶

4.

Nothing would transpire as Nagy had planned. He found almost all his fellow Jesuits together: Jánosi, Mócsy, Varga and Borbély were all in Rome, while Csávossy had already left for home. They let him know that Jean-Baptiste Janssens had been elected Superior General.¹⁴⁷ He would usher in a new era in the history of the Society of Jesus. The influence of Fr Boynes, Brust, and Leiber waned, with the new Superior General seeking direct collaboration with the Pope. The state of emergency accompanying the war was followed by a restoration of the peacetime order.

Jánosi and Mócsy told Nagy that Jánosi had been severely rebuked for his involvement in politics and from then on was only to mediate with the approval of Mindszenty and Janssens. To them, this meant that Jánosi would never again be involved, and Nagy saw his situation as a similar one. Borbély remarked to the others that his reports were "just naïve observations of a naïve man" and "surely they won't believe that Töhi?"¹⁴⁸ These omens did not bode well for him. However, he did not need to wait long for firsthand confirmation of this: He met Fr Borbély on November 6, 1946, and quickly cut to the chase.

The Primate denounced me to the Pope. He charged me with stating in a letter that His Holiness wasn't backing the Primate, but approved of the tactic of *modus vivendi*, and this statement was spreading in

146 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 5 November 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

147 Jean-Baptiste Janssens (1889–1964) was a Belgian-born Jesuit, civil and ecclesiastical lawyer, Provincial of the Belgian Jesuit Province, and Superior General from 1946.

148 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] 5 November 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

Hungary through me. I was banned from operating at home, because the Society could not be in conflict with the Primate. Fr Provincial had already talked it over with Fr General, and he was only delivering the final and highest decision to me: I cannot return to my work, I could choose between Nagykapornak and Argentina. My first question was whether this was the decision of Fr General or Fr Borbély, because I would accept the General’s decision, but nobody else’s. I refused to be sentenced by Fr Borbély in Rome, firstly because I consider him biased, and second, because the supreme superior is here. He answered that this was Fr General’s decision and that it wasn’t necessary for me to talk these issues over with him, just as he had decided in Jánosi’s case that he was to leave Rome in 48 hours. When I heard this, I immediately saw that there was no room for appeal, no excuses: I had failed.¹⁴⁹

They aimed to clarify the situation, and it was learned that Janssens, in fact, had not even heard about Nagy’s case; the decision, however, could not be modified: Nagy was assigned to Uruguay.¹⁵⁰ He presented his final report on the situation in Hungary on November 12, 1946, which in essence consisted of a few polite comments, followed by a 14-page critique of Mindszenty’s attitude as Hungary’s top cleric, and political and church actor.¹⁵¹

This would be Nagy’s last word on *modus vivendi*, on Hungarian Jesuits, and in the Vatican’s diplomatic service. He never again contemplated the issue of Soviet-Vatican rapprochement, likely owing to the upsetting and dramatic meetings and conversations. He would wonder how his Russian friends were going to see his disappearance, but he had to banish any former ideas from his mind as “futures past.” It seemed that “the third Rome” had dissolved before his eyes like a *fata morgana*.¹⁵²

149 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] November 5, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

150 *Diary excerpts*. [Rome] November 5–12, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20.

151 *Rapporto sulla situazione del Cattolicesimo ungherese (sino al 5. XI. 1946 incluso)* [Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946)]. Copies of material from the Order’s archive in Rome. Typewritten document in Italian. JTMRL II. 1. Epistolae Variorum, 1946–1950. and *Jelentés a magyar katolicizmus helyzetéről (1946. november 5-ig bezárólag)* [Report on the State of Hungarian Catholicism (until 5 November 1946)]. OSZK Kt., f. 216/50.

152 *Diary excerpt* [Rome] November 6, 1946. OSZK Kt., f. 216/20. And about Jánosi’s retreat see his report to Robert Leiber on January 8, 1947. Situation in Ungarn. APUG, Fondo Robert Leiber SJ, Fondo 12. Diversi Memoranda sulla situazione politica dopo la II. guerra mondiale

