

The Catholic Record.

"Christianus mihi nomen est Catholicus vero Cognomen."—(Christian is my Name, but Catholic my Surname) St. Pacien, 4th Century

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SOVIET TRIAL OF THE RUSSIAN PRIESTS

SUMMARY OF THE TESTIMONY ILLUMINATES CONDITIONS

FIRST DAY

Witness Kolesnikoff reported the incidents which occurred during the removal of articles of value from the Church of St. Catherine, on the Nevsky Prospect. He stated that the priest Chodniewicz refused to permit the inspection of the chalice, and declared that to do so he would have to pass over his dead body.

Chodniewicz explained to the judges what the little cupboards in Latin "tabernaculum," in which the Holy Eucharist is kept, means to the faithful, and that no one but the priest can touch it. The chief judge, with astonishment, asked:

"But this is distributed, and you give it to the faithful?"

Chodniewicz—"Yes, distributed, but I give it myself and only to those who accept it."

Judge—"Why did you prevent the police from looking at the Host?"

Chodniewicz—"It was a ciborium with consecrated hosts."

Judge—"But it was in the lists of articles to be taken."

Chodniewicz—"I would not permit profanation." Judge did not seem to understand what was meant.

Judge—"Are you sure there was nothing else hidden in the vessel?"

Chodniewicz—"Nothing. I was willing to show it after Communion."

Judge—"What do you mean by that?"

Chodniewicz—"After the distribution of the consecrated hosts to the people."

Judge (with knowing look at audience)—"Oh, after the distribution, eh?" (This brought a laugh from the Jews and Communists—the insinuation being that the priest might have hidden jewelry or other precious objects in the ciborium and given them secretly to some of the communicants.)

Chodniewicz explained the obligation on Catholic priests to prevent profanation of the Host, and what a horrible thing it would be to permit such profanation.

Chief Judge Galkin—"We do not care how you sin against religion—we only care whether you offend the law of the Soviet."

When it was brought out that even after the closing of the Churches the accused celebrated Mass at home and in private apartments, the judges at some length questioned the accused as to where the articles used for divine service came from since all the objects in the church had been listed in the inventory. The accused explained that almost every priest received as a present from his parishioners vessels and vestments which he uses in the Mass. These are property of the priest.

AN ALLEGED INSULT

Witness Guedix testified that the priest Eismont had insulted him because of his conduct and that he obstinately refused to call a meeting of the parishioners to sign the release or contract. Eismont explained that he did not want to speak to the witness because he wished to do business with the higher representatives of the Government and not with the said witness who had so far forgotten himself as to call him, Eismont, "a bad subject," before the Commissariat. In reply to the question of the procurator as to why Eismont persisted in not signing the release or contract, Eismont explained that he had never been able to place them to show him the release or get them in his hands. They had merely read it to him twice from a distance without showing it to him; he could not sign it since he did not know exactly what he was supposed to sign.

Questioning Guedix, the procurator, Krilenko, pointed out and emphasized the fact that Guedix wanted several times to organize a meeting of the parishioners, but that he could not succeed; but that one Sunday Eismont assembled the parishioners and declared to them that it was not permitted to sign the contract. Krilenko laid special stress on the fact that the parishioners could be assembled to proclaim a refusal to sign the contract, but that when it was a question of assembling them to sign the contract and obey the law, Eismont said that he had nothing to do with it.

The interrogation proved that practically all of the accused had received a higher education and studied theology in the Ecclesiastical Academy. In reply to the question of the procurator, practically all answered that they refused to sign the contract on the order of the Pope and of the Archbishop.

The priest Janushkowiez studied in the seminary but did not complete the course in the Academy. He replied to the questions of the procurator on the subject of the testimony of the witness Davidenko. When it was brought out that Janushkowiez had signed the contract, procurator Krilenko re-

marked with satisfaction: "Yes, you did not study in this 'higher school'."

Krilenko—"And you taught children?"

Janushkowiez—"I have prepared children for confession."

Krilenko—"It was your right."

A witness from the Vassiliostrov district of Petrograd (a woman) testified that she had been unable to close the church because of the great excitement of the Catholic parishioners who cried: "We shall not sign the contract because the Pope of Rome has not permitted and will not permit it." The said witness was led away to cries of "Freedom of conscience! The Communist!"

KRILENKO CROSS-EXAMINES ACCUSED

To all the accused Procurator Krilenko put the same question: "Have you read the decree on the Separation of Church and State?"

Some answered that they had read it and knew it—others that they were not interested in it as it was the affair of the Dean. By questioning, the procurator then brought out the fact that instruction had been given at home to two, three and as many as fifteen children, a fact which they did not dissimulate, affirming that they found it legal and compulsory for them, as priests, to do this. The procurator read the declaration and the release of Shvetsko, attached to the records of the trial, in which it is stated that according to his duty as a priest he would continue to teach religion to children in the future.

Procurator—"You know that the decree forbids you to teach children?"

Shvetsko—"Yes, in school."

Procurator—"And how many children have you taught at home?"

Shvetsko—"One, two, sometimes more."

Procurator—"And the maximum?"

Shvetsko—"The number has been as high as ten."

Procurator—"And it wasn't a school?"

Shvetsko—"No."

Procurator—"Then what is it?"

Shvetsko—"As a priest, it is my duty to teach children, for instance, at the request of the parents; I have no right not to teach."

Procurator—"I place the question directly in such teaching of a group of children a school, or not?"

Shvetsko—"No, it is not a school in the sense of the decree."

Procurator—"Shrugging his shoulders and with a gesture of the hands: 'You persist in your point of view which is directly opposed to the law?'"

Shvetsko—"As a Catholic priest, when I teach religion to children I am directly fulfilling my duty."

Procurator—"And you declare that you will do it in the future?"

Shvetsko—"Yes, I shall do so."

FATHER FEDOROFF EXPLAINS ATTITUDE

Procurator—(Fingering his papers)—"Let us go on further. Now the churches of the Petrograd district. Accused Fedoroff, you refused to sign the contract."

Fedoroff—"Yes."

Procurator—"Your Church is that of St. Boniface?"

Fedoroff—"No—that of the Pentecost."

Procurator—"You confirm the protocol of the statements?"

Fedoroff—"As far as I am concerned I affirm it."

Procurator—"You refused to attend because your ecclesiastical authority does not admit the civil law on the subject of church property?"

Fedoroff—"Yes, for that very reason."

Procurator—"You refused to attend the meeting, is that true?"

Fedoroff—"Yes it is true."

President—"Priest Budkiewicz, what can you say on the subject of the accusation?"

Budkiewicz—"I have done everything possible to help the Government in the capacity of mediator."

Procurator—"Showing his documents." "We shall see later how you have helped." (He read aloud fragments of the minutes of the meetings of the Petrograd clergy on the subject of the decree of Separation of Church and State.) "These resolutions were adopted in the meetings of all the clergy attending these meetings?"

Budkiewicz—"Almost all those who are here present." (Indicating the bench of the accused.)

The procurator questioned them separately and found that the meetings had been held in the residence of Archbishop Cepliak. Some had not attended, others had attended several times.

Fedoroff—"I attended only the three meetings in 1919."

Procurator—"What was done at the meetings?"

Fedoroff—"At one of the code of Pius X. was analyzed; at the two others there was drawn up a form of contract acceptable to us after negotiations of the Soviet Power with the Holy See."

Procurator—"And so you find that the laws of Soviet Russia are not acceptable to you?"

Fedoroff—"Only those laws on church property which cannot be disposed of by us without the

authorization of our ecclesiastical authority."

Procurator—"You still maintain this opinion?"

Fedoroff—"I affirm it now until an understanding by both parties."

Procurator—"You consider us as one party?"

Fedoroff—"Yes, as a party."

Procurator—"You consider the Soviet Government only as a party?"

Fedoroff—"When it proclaims laws affecting church property, then it is a party. According to my convictions."

President—"That does not interest us."

Procurator—"Then you act in thorough accord with your chief, the accused Cepliak?"

Fedoroff—"I am not subordinate to Archbishop Cepliak."

Procurator—"To whom are you subordinate, then?"

Fedoroff—"I am subordinate to the Archbishop of Galicia, Andrew Sheplitsky."

Procurator—"Where is he?"

Fedoroff—"At Lvoff."

Procurator—"Astonished." "What variety is this again? Explain it to us."

Fedoroff—"We are Catholics also, but of another rite, it is the variety of rite."

Procurator—"There is no other difference?"

Fedoroff—"No."

Procurator—"Reading the Memorandum of Fedoroff." "It was you who composed this?"

Fedoroff—"Yes, it was I. For five years I strove to make the Government understand our point of view, but I received no answer."

Procurator—"That is right." (A pause.) "Did you refuse to sign the contract?"

Fedoroff—"Yes."

Procurator—"Therefore, you find that you are not obliged to obey the law?"

Fedoroff—"I obey every Soviet law insofar as it is not against my religious conscience."

Procurator—"Let your religious conscience be. I ask concretely, without motives, do you obey the Soviet power or not?"

Fedoroff—"If the Soviet power forces me to act against my conscience I do not obey it."

Procurator—"Ah."

TEACHING IN HOMES

Next the priest Matulianis was questioned. It was brought out that there had been no incidents in connection with the removal. There had been teaching at home. The utensils for service were the property of the priest.

The priest Maletzky declared the same thing except for the teaching of children. Procurator Krilenko returned to Fedoroff.

Procurator—"You officiated after the closing of the churches?"

Fedoroff—"Yes."

Procurator—"Where?"

Fedoroff—"In a lodging in the house where I live."

Procurator—"How many persons attended?"

Fedoroff—"About twenty."

President—"The Tribunal—'Where did you study?'"

Fedoroff—"Abroad. I spent five years in the Papal College, in Rome, the sixth year at R. . . ; the seventh at Fribourg, in Switzerland."

President—"When did you become a priest?"

Fedoroff—"I have been a priest since the year 1911."

President—"You are Orthodox?"

Fedoroff—"I am Catholic, not Orthodox."

President—"And what does 'Greek Catholic' signify?"

Fedoroff—"Explains the origin of the oriental rite in the Catholic Church as coming from the Greek Orient."

Procurator—"Your social status?"

Fedoroff—"I am the son of an artisan."

Krilenko—"What resources did you have to study abroad?"

Fedoroff—"Partly my own; later I obtained a subsidy from the Metropolitan Andrew Sheplitsky."

The telegram which Archbishop Cepliak sent to Jaroslav, "Illegal demand, do not present an inventory of the Church goods" was adduced as a Counter Revolutionary act. But the Bishop defended his act by pointing out that his only competence was in the domain of Ecclesiastical jurisdiction and according to the Canon Law the demand was illegal and the cure was not bound to present an inventory. The circular letter which he sent to his diocese and which was cited as political propaganda, contained nothing but the soundest Catholic doctrine on the need of religious teaching of the young people in these times when the chaos following the great War had almost destroyed the moral sense of so many.

SECOND DAY

The second day session of the court was opened by Krilenko reading the circular of Archbishop Cepliak on the subject of the removal of valuables. The Prosecutor observed, from the affirmation of the accused, that according to the canons of the Church, "he who

shall have taken or given away Church property (except for restitution or indemnity for what has been taken or given without the permission of the Church) is excommunicated, even without trial."

Krilenko—"Then you affirm that in the sense of the document you could not order not to offer the valuables for the starving?"

Cepliak—"Yes, and I beg you to take into consideration that likewise I could not order them to be given."

Krilenko—"I note that, but we shall see (fingering his papers). Was this decision spread by you?"

Cepliak—"No, it was not, but the faithful knew all the circumstances quite well."

Krilenko—"Reading the instructions of Cepliak concerning the perpetual teaching of religion to children." "Was this document distributed?"

Cepliak—"No, it was merely communicated to the administrative section, I always held to the canonical point of view and this document explains that view."

Krilenko—"Reads the paper with the instructions to priests to read it in the churches. He shows the document to the accused." "This is yours?"

Cepliak—"Yes, mine. I am not only the administrator of my diocese, but the preceptor also, my duty."

Krilenko—"That is all right. I understand your intimate motives, but another thing interests me just now. The law decrees that the school is separate from the Church, consequently . . ."

Cepliak—"But the church is not only the building, the house of prayer, but also the house of study, of religious study."

Krilenko—"It is the fight against the exigency of the law. The fight to evade such and such a law is a political act."

Cepliak—"No, religious in this case. We are fighting for our religious right: We see what is now becoming of our children. We are asking to be allowed to influence children legally."

Krilenko—"We shall not enter into discussion. . . And so you look upon churches as a place monopolized for the teaching of the Catholic Church. Therefore, if I go to the church on Sunday and start to answer the preacher, it would, according to you, be a sacrilegious interference?"

Cepliak—"Yes, yes."

The question of the editing of the "Chronicle of the Mohileff Diocese," litograph, by the priest Tebeavsky is next discussed. An article from this paper is read.

Krilenko—"I observe a contradiction between the circulars of April 2 and January 12."

KRILENKO PROVOKES LAUGH

Krilenko then reads aloud the letter of the Metropolitan Ropp to Budkiewicz on the subject of a loan from the Polish Government, with the remark that the latter's supposition concerning the short duration of the Soviet Government had not been realized (Laughter.)

Next are read: the letter concerning John Vassilevsky: ("there is an opportunity for Moscow,") the letter of Budkiewicz concerning a report on the trunks and effects found in the attic of the house in which Budkiewicz lived.

The latter explains that some of his parishioners had begged him to keep their trunks in his attic when they left Petrograd, and that he had allowed them to do so.

In connection with the testimony of the accused, the painful situation of the Catholic Church in Russia under the monarchy was brought up. Krilenko was interested in knowing who appointed and confirmed the Catholic and Orthodox bishops. Cepliak gave the information for the Catholic Church. As regards the Orthodox, Krilenko questioned Fedoroff: "Perhaps citizen Fedoroff will tell us who appointed the Orthodox bishops, for the Synod, for instance?"

Fedoroff—"The Procurator General appointed whoever he liked and the superior authorities confirmed the choice."

Krilenko—"Accused Cepliak, what is your opinion concerning the October revolution and the Soviet Government?"

Cepliak—"We were glad of the revolution—it liberated us; under the old regime we were confined and limited in our ecclesiastical rights."

Krilenko—"And in other countries, how does the government treat you?"

Cepliak—"The treatment of the government in all free countries (for instance in America), is benevolent."

Krilenko—"What is it that affirms the ideological influence of the Catholic clergy on the conscience of the faithful? Is it not the school which is your principal instrument?"

Cepliak—"No, not only the school, but above all our teaching of the truth, the ethics of Christ, the influence, of faith and of grace."

Krilenko—"Let us speak of things which are intelligible to

every one. We see clearly that by your teaching on the torments of the other life you terrify and mystify the ignorant and children. The terrorization of the ignorant is a political fight."

Cepliak—"We terrorize no one, our concern is the concern of faith and free will, and if anyone heitates in his faith, I must strengthen him. It is not a political struggle but a religious one. Even if a part of the White Guard were against the faith I should excommunicate them also."

Krilenko—"How do you treat a power that forbids you to teach children?"

Cepliak—"If this right is taken from us by force, we submit only to iron necessity."

Krilenko—"This is your personal opinion?"

Cepliak—"I speak in the name of all of us, Catholic believers."

Krilenko—"But the faithful are the people, therefore why fight when ecclesiastical property was declared the property of the people?"

Cepliak—"The 'twenty' were not selected among the faithful only, and ecclesiastical property, according to the canons of the Church, can be placed at the disposal of the Dean only."

Krilenko—"What real obstacle was there in this 'twenty'?"

Cepliak—"The 'twenty' violated the rights of the Catholic faithful and the dean of the parish by preventing them from being the religious executors of the canons of their church."

Krilenko—"In a word, the 'twenties' shook the unity of the organization of the church?"

Cepliak—"Yes, and in the Orthodox Church unity has been broken, as we now see."

Krilenko—"Then these 'twenties' destroy the absolute power of the churches over the faithful which has existed until now?"

Cepliak—"No, not absolute."

Krilenko—"Thanks to this position occupied by the Church a hostile state of mind was maintained among the faithful against the government orders."

Cepliak—"No, not hostile, rather saddened."

Krilenko—"Hm . . . saddened. . . this saddened opinion is a political fact or not?"

Cepliak—"No, not political."

Krilenko—"In the letter from your chief Ropp there is a question of the early fall of the Soviet Power. What is your position, whether it lasts a long time or not?"

Cepliak—"I was always of the opinion that it would last a long time. It is my constant personal opinion."

Krilenko then quotes the minutes of the parochial meetings and the lists of members present. Addressing himself to Budkiewicz: "You do not deny that these persons attended the meetings?"

Budkiewicz—"If it is written I do not deny it."

Krilenko then accuses the priest Eismont for his words and his intention of delivering to the Government only a copy of the parochial registers.

Krilenko—"You confirm these words?"

Eismont—"Yes, I confirm them."

Krilenko—"Then you consider as non-compulsory the formal demand of the law with regard to the baptismal registers?"

Eismont—"I believed it necessary to protest against the complete removal of the registers."

As regards the priest Shvedko, Krilenko is of the opinion that his parochial committee is an illegal organization. When Shvedko, surprised by the documents attached to the acts of the trial proved that the parochial committee was in conformity with the law in every respect, Krilenko remarked: "because the parochial committee was registered, it does not follow that it was legal." Budkiewicz is accused for the words found in the documents of Krilenko on the subject of the fight with the "bolshévist pest" and the necessity of teaching children and parishioners from the pulpit.

RIGHT TO INTERRUPT PRIEST

Krilenko—"And this fight from the pulpit—do you consider it a political fight?"

Budkiewicz—"No, I do not find it that, it is a matter of religion."

President—"Can the faithful answer the priest in the church?"

Cepliak—"No, we do not conduct polemics."

Krilenko then speaks of inciting hatred against the Soviet power.

Cepliak—"Our religion forbids us to hate; we should like to draw the whole world to us."

The accused distinguish between the question of fighting atheism and the question of a political struggle against the Soviet Power which is held against them as a crime: it is their duty to fight atheism but they have no right to conduct a political struggle.

The priest Shodniewicz, in reply to the question of the president, gave some explanations of the decision to exclude communists from the members of the Church.

Krilenko—"Can your sermon in the church be criticized?"

Shodniewicz—"The sermon admits of no discussion. After the sermon, whoever wants to can come to me, question me and criticize me as much as he likes."

Krilenko—"That is of no importance to us, what happens in your house. You find that a monopolized propaganda can be organized in the pulpit, an ideological struggle, by acting on an ignorant and irresponsible crowd, this is what is of importance to us."

Krilenko continues to read the papers found in the house of Budkiewicz and letters addressed to him by the Metropolitan Ropp, for instance on the subject of "passage from the defensive to the offensive."

"The existence of Bolshevism is dragging, and no one knows when it will end." (Movement and laughter in the room.)

Budkiewicz—"I did not find that all the opinions of the Metropolitan Ropp were strictly canonical, precisely his opinion on the conclusion of the contract before receiving the permission of the Pope. I called this step fictitious because an unauthorized signature, in my opinion, was fictitious."

Krilenko—"What did your words 'defence by resistance rather than by obedience mean?'"

Budkiewicz—"I had the contract in view."

Archbishop Cepliak answered the question about the procession. The procession was held because of the arrest of the Metropolitan Ropp, went as far as No. 5 Gorochoff Street and dispersed.

Krilenko reads extracts from the "Chronicle from Mohileff" concerning the procession.

Krilenko—"Accused Cepliak, did you take part in the procession?"

Cepliak—"No, I only celebrated the divine service."

Krilenko—"Did any of the priests take part in the procession?"

Cepliak—"No."

Krilenko—"And who carried the cross?"

Cepliak—"They carried it themselves."

Krilenko then reads a document entitled: "Memorandum on the Separation of the Church and State in Bolshevist Russia." And then the protest against the instruction which appeared after the decree on the separation of the Church and State. Having read the names of Kounzetzoff and Fedoroff, Krilenko asks: "Citizen Fedoroff, is this the same Kounzetzoff who was a judge and who was condemned to be shot for organizing resistance to the Soviet power?"

Fedoroff—"Yes, it is the same Kounzetzoff."

Krilenko—"He was condemned for appeal to devastations?"

Fedoroff—"I do not know why he was condemned. I was merely invited with him to draw up a protest against the instruction on the decree of separation of Church and State."

Krilenko—"This Kounzetzoff was condemned later?"

Fedoroff—"What happened later does not concern me; I became acquainted with him in