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Connecting Catholics in a Divided World: The Vatican and the Local Roman and Greek Catholic Church in Eastern Europe as an Intermediary in the Cold War

Konferenz

Collegium Carolinum Munich, 3rd and 4th May 2024

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World War II ended for Pope Pius XII with an ambivalent result: the Holy See was widely regarded as a reinvigorated institution of peaceful reconstruction, but the pontifex was confronted with the fact that communism, with its repressive church policy, had penetrated far into the Catholic heart of Europe. Former strongholds of the Catholic faith like Poland, Slovakia and Croatia were now governed by atheist ideologues who regarded the Catholic Church with suspicion or outright contempt. Nearly everywhere in East-Central and Southeastern Europe, the Church subsequently came under immense pressure and faced tough questions on how to deal with these new regimes.

With the opening of the archival records of the pontificate of Pius XII in 2020, a plethora of sources became available to researchers that offer insights into the ways the Vatican tried to navigate these new political realities. The Vatican, as the centre of Catholic life, was, however, defined by a distinctive tripartition: On the one hand, it stood as a significant state actor, wielding the unique status of the Holy See as a sovereign entity, while on the other hand, it operated as an influential non-governmental organization with a transnational network of a local clergy, religious orders, and welfare organizations that transcended political borders. Finally, the Catholic Church was not only a political actor that operated on different levels, but also a

spiritual one with goals and priorities that transcend a secular political understanding.

By embracing a multi-dimensional lens, this conference seeks to show the interactions and contributions of various stakeholders within the Church. We are therefore particularly interested in exploring the entanglements, cooperation, and conflicts among various Catholic entities transcending regions, borders, and levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. These interactions illustrate the interconnectedness of numerous Catholic representatives and organizations, extending even beyond the iron curtain. This inclusive perspective allows us to view the Church as a pluralist entity, responding to the challenges of the Cold War in East Central and South Eastern Europe through a wide array of initiatives, including social, political, and theological measures.

While our primary emphasis remains on the postwar era spanning from 1945 to 1958, leveraging the recently accessible documents within the Vatican Archives, the aforementioned transformations persevered beyond the passing of Pope Pius XII in 1958. Consequently, we are also looking for scholarly submissions that expand upon this viewpoint, looking at dynamics in the 1960s and 1970s.

PROGRAM

FRIDAY, 3RD MAY

Catholic Church in contact with non-Catholic Confessions

8:40-9:00 Natalia Shlikhta

t.b.a.

9:00-9:20 Anna Bisikalo

Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine and Poland between
1945 and 2000

9:20-9:40 Milosav Đoković

The Holy See and the Patriarchate of Constantinople after World
War II (1945-1958)

9:40-10:40 Discussion

10:40-11:10 *Coffee break*

Diaspora groups and their political activities

11:10-11:30 Katrin Boeckh

Catholics on the Move and in Deportation. Fragments of Papal Ostpolitik before the Cold War

11:30-11:50 Beáta Katrebová Blehová

The Slovak (Catholic) Diaspora and the Persecuted Catholic Church in Slovakia – The Strategies of Anti-Communism during the late Pontificate of Pius XII

11:50-12:20 Arūnas Streikus

The true voice of the Church of Silence? Lithuanian Exile Catholics as Intermediaries between the Vatican and the Catholic Church in Soviet Lithuania during the first Decades of the Cold War

12:20-13:20 Discussion

13:20-14:30 *Lunch*

Political efforts of the Roman Catholic Church from “above” and from “below”

14:30-14:50 Emilia Hrabovec

To Recommend Courage or Tolerate the Inevitable? The Holy See and the Catholics in Slovakia in the Face of the Communist Persecution and Seduction, 1948-1958

14:50-15:10 Przemysław Pazik

Squaring the Triangle. Loyalty to the Pope and National Ecclesiastical Policy of the Polish Church Leaders 1948-1956

15:10-15:30 Petar Dragišić

Yugoslavia and the Catholic Church 1945-1978: Between Conflict and Reconciliation

15:30-16:30 Discussion

16:30-17:00 *Coffee break*

17:00-18:30 Keynote

19:00 *Dinner*

SATURDAY, 4TH MAY

Anticommunist activities of Catholic Representatives

9:30-9:50 Marina Bantiou

The Reception of the Catholic Church's Decree Against Communism in 1949 in the European and US Press in the Early Cold War

9:50-10:10 Michaela Lenčářová

Ludák Diaspora in a Divided World (1945–1970)

10:10-11:00 Discussion

11:00-11:30 *Coffee break*

11:30-11:50 Helena Toth

“That you put off [...] the old man [...] and that you put on the new man”: The Struggle for Symbolic Resources in Post-war Hungary

11:50-12:10 Kristian Geßner

The Bacon Priest and the East. Werenfried van Straaten and his Aid Project for Eastern Europe

12:10-13:00 Discussion

Final Discussion

Lunch

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