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Soviet Reaction to the Election of Pope John Paul II

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October 1993 marked the fifteenth anniversary of the election of the Archbishop of Kraków, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, as John Paul II. Now the Soviet archives have to some extent been opened it is possible to examine the attitude of Soviet agencies to his election, an event that caused deep concern in many quarters of Soviet officialdom and led to a renewed campaign to counter Vatican influence.

Almost uniquely for a religious group, the Catholic Church presented for the Soviet authorities a problem across a range of policy spheres: domestic, religious, ethnic, state security and foreign. Thus there was a need to counter what they viewed as a serious upsurge in Catholic activity connected with the renewed Vatican *Ostpolitik* associated with the new pope. The campaign against the Catholic Church following Wojtyła's election involved many bodies, including the Communist Party Central Committee, the KGB, the Council for Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, broadcasting and publishing outlets, the Institute of Scientific Atheism and the Institute for the Economy of the World Socialist System. A study of the reaction to the election thus provides a fascinating look at the way different Soviet institutions interacted and shows the range of resources available to Soviet leaders in pursuing a particular policy.

The Soviet Authorities and the Vatican

The Soviet state had always paid close attention to the Catholic Church, its activities, doctrines and influence. It had long been unhappy about its features – the powerful hierarchical system, international character and unyielding dogma – which left it beyond Soviet control. The institutional Catholic Church in the Soviet Union was crushed in the 1930s, but the problem arose again in the postwar era, when millions of Catholics became Soviet citizens as a result of the seizure of Eastern Poland and the Baltic States, and millions more came into the Soviet sphere of influence with the subordination of the countries of Eastern Europe. This required the articulation of concrete policies.

Until the arrival on the papal throne of Pope John XXIII in 1958, and especially the publication of his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in terris*, Soviet views of the church and the Vatican in particular had been largely hostile. The church was viewed as reactionary, antagonistic towards communism and an obstacle to the integration of the new territories. *Pacem in terris* marked a turning point, with favourable interpretations of it in the Soviet press. It is interesting that although the encyclical was not published in the Soviet Union, it was studied closely and widely referred to in sociological appraisals of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council (1962–5) also drew close study. The head of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults, which controlled all non-Orthodox religious groups, Aleksei Puzin, compiled several assess-

ments of the work of the Vatican Council. In January 1963 he produced a five-page summary of the first session,¹ which had taken place from 11 October to 8 December 1962. He viewed the debates as a conflict between the right-wing, traditionalist and anticommunist forces of the curia and the radical bishops demanding greater freedom, who were sympathetic to socialism. Most of this summary was later incorporated into Puzin's extensive speech *O politike papy Pavla VI (The Policy of Pope Paul VI)*,² given on 27 May 1964 to the Berlin meeting of religious affairs commissioners from socialist countries. Here too Puzin oscillated between condemnation of 'reactionary' circles and praise for 'progressive' elements in the church. He particularly called for measures to counter the influence of Lithuanian and Ukrainian émigrés 'slandering' the Soviet state. (Interestingly, Puzin noted that 'Slipyi often goes to our embassy in Italy and announces his desire to return to the USSR.')

Later in the 1960s concern grew among Soviet officialdom about the Vatican's alleged attempts to revive the church in the Soviet Union. Typical of this is a 1967 report by Vladimir Kuroyedov, chairman of the newly merged Council for Religious Affairs, *Spravka o pretenziyakh Vatikana po voprosam katolicheskoi tserkvi v SSSR (The Vatican's Claims on Matters to do with the Catholic Church in the USSR)*.³ Kuroyedov attacks the Vatican for all kinds of antisoviet activity, including support for Slipyi and the illegal Ukrainian Catholic Church, the naming of Bishop Ceslao Sipovich, an émigré in Rome, to head the Belorussian Catholics in exile and continuing 'hostile propaganda' in print and by radio. Kuroyedov is especially suspicious of the Vatican desire to name bishops for dioceses in the Soviet Union, an act for which 'the Soviet side sees no need at present'.

On 27 January 1972 the Lithuanian CRA commissioner Justas Rugienis sent Aleksei Barmenkov at the Moscow CRA a seven-page report on Vatican activity in Lithuania aimed at reactivating the church. The CRA plan for 1972 requires an examination of the Vatican's policies and plans 'to take part in the international meeting of leaders of state institutions for religious affairs of socialist countries planned for Sofia [in Bulgaria], for an exchange of opinions on questions of relations to the policy of the Vatican'.⁴ Kuroyedov's report to a CRA meeting in May 1973 complains that the Vatican 'tries to foment in [local Catholics] dissatisfaction with the policy of the party and the state with regard to religion and the church, and to create opposition to the Socialist system'.⁵ Kuroyedov is also suspicious of the Vatican's attempts at direct contact: 'In recent years the Vatican has sent many influential hierarchs to our country under various pretexts, sounding out the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the USSR necessary to it in order to activate the Catholic Church in our country which, allegedly, is in an unequal position compared to other churches.'

When speaking of 'influential hierarchs', Kuroyedov clearly has in mind his meeting in the CRA on 26 February 1971 with Archbishop Agostino Casaroli, who had come to Moscow to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. This was the first direct contact between a Vatican representative and the 'competent' Soviet authorities. The CRA's own record of the meeting, drawn up by Petr Makartsev, makes clear Kuroyedov's wariness in dealing with Casaroli, and his attempts to avoid awkward questions about the rights of Catholics within the Soviet Union with bland, non-committal replies.⁶

Pope Paul's declaration of May 1973 that 1975 would be a Holy Year aroused the CRA's concern. The department that followed Catholic affairs distributed a report on 22 May 1974 to local CRAs on the subject of Vatican attempts to activate the Catholic Church in connection with 'so called "holy places"' and measures to prevent these,

specifically as a response to the Pope's move. The 'special aim' of the year was the 'continuation of the struggle with communism under the slogan "reconciliation of the classes"'. Increased activity in Lithuania, Belorussia and elsewhere (especially pilgrimages) was directly linked to the announcement and, the CRA declared, this must lead to tighter control.⁷

As could be expected, the KGB took a tougher line on the church than other agencies. It was in the 1970s, as Oleg Gordievsky reports, that the KGB's First Chief Directorate started to take a serious interest in the Vatican. Until then the focus had been on Catholics within the Soviet Union, with provincial KGBs in Catholic areas – Lithuania, Ukraine and Belorussia – filing regular reports for the Fifth Chief Directorate, which Andropov had formed in 1968 to monitor dissent. In the 1970s the First Directorate asked KGB residencies in foreign countries on a number of occasions to supply intelligence on what the centre believed were the Vatican's increasingly subversive contacts with Soviet Catholics. Their reports were, according to Gordievsky, passed on to provincial KGBs.⁸

One of the fruits of this intelligence is a secret 1974 report to the Central Committee from the KGB, signed (though not necessarily written) by Yuri Andropov,⁹ which specifically expresses concern about alleged Vatican attempts to draw the Russian Orthodox Church into its 'ideological fight against the USSR'. 'Considering the anti-Rome atmosphere in the ROC which has taken shape over centuries, the Vatican is trying to convince its hierarchs about a "renewal" of its eastern policy.' Andropov quotes Pope Paul VI: 'the faith of the eastern churches is almost our faith'. By allowing a growing number of clergymen to study in its seminaries and colleges the Vatican aims to 'acquaint them with measures to counter atheism' so that they 'constantly absorb respect for Catholicism'. Evidence for this is the pro-Catholic position shown by such priests as Fr Aleksandr Men', who believes that 'only Catholicism can represent the ideal of church life'. Andropov is also concerned about the Vatican's attitude to the Uniate Church, suppressed in Western Ukraine in 1946 and Transcarpathia in 1949. 'The refusal of Paul VI to overseas hierarchs of the Uniate Church to found a so-called Ukrainian patriarchate is in fact motivated by the desire not to decentralise the Catholic Church, but promoted by the Vatican as testimony to the desire to improve relations with the ROC.' However, Andropov continues, 'At the same time, considering the Uniate Church as a force capable of achieving the catholicisation of the Ukrainians, the Vatican is illegally giving them moral and material support.' The Vatican is also supporting an autocephalous Orthodox Church in Ukraine which, Andropov believes, 'would make considerably easier the possibility of a revival of the Uniate Church'.

According to Andropov, the Vatican uses visiting tourists (for example, Louvain University professor Antoine Elens SJ and Offermans of the Gregorian University's centre for the study of Marxism) to look for potential supporters among priests opposing the Orthodox hierarchy. In 1972–3, reports Andropov, quoting 'incomplete data', 380 Catholic activists visited the country. Likewise Italian priest Fr Galasso, working among Italians building the Tol'yatti car plant, used his time to establish contacts with Orthodox clergy, while in Moscow, US embassy chaplain Richard was forging links with the Orthodox hierarchy.

The main aim of the Vatican, Andropov declares, is 'to support forces in [the Russian Orthodox Church] which, in its opinion, are capable of developing into an organised opposition to the state structure existing in our country and to oppose atheism'. However, in case his readers should become too alarmed, Andropov concludes with reassurance: 'The organs of state security keep Vatican contacts with the

Russian Orthodox Church under control and are taking measures to frustrate their ideas of using them in activity hostile to the USSR?

Andropov's analysis, concentrating on elements potentially affecting state security, shows a clear familiarity with Catholic activity, including tensions between Pope Paul and Cardinal Slipyi over the thorny question of a Ukrainian Catholic patriarchate, the frequency and details of individual trips by prominent western Catholics and tendencies within the Orthodox clergy. It also highlights the use made by the KGB and other state bodies of the Russian Orthodox Church to achieve their goals.

Towards the late 1970s, the Soviet state tended to concern itself more with other threats to the communist order, including the dissident movement inspired by the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, President Jimmy Carter's loudly proclaimed human rights policies and other problems. This did not prevent the CRA and other official bodies keeping a watching brief on the Vatican, however. The CRA plan for 1978, compiled in January of that year (when Pope Paul VI was still in office), required a report 'on several questions concerning mutual relations with the Vatican'. This was at the request of unspecified 'government organs'. The same month CRA official Petr Makartsev wrote to local CRA offices informing them of the October 1977 fifth assembly of the synod of bishops on evangelisation. 'As mentioned in trustworthy information received,' Makartsev wrote, 'special attention of the participants of the assembly was devoted to catechism of the population in socialist countries, above all in the USSR.'¹⁰ On 29 January 1976 the CRA had issued a decree on measures for increasing control over the activity of the Catholic Church in the Lithuanian SSR. There is no feeling of special alarm in these documents, however. Most of the attention is directed to the internal situation, which the authorities felt they had under control.

The Election of Pope John Paul II

It is no exaggeration to say that the 16 October 1978 election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła caused not only surprise in the Kremlin, as it did in most of the world, but alarm verging on panic at the highest levels. (In Poland too the Politburo went into emergency session as soon as it learnt that Wojtyła was heading for election.) The first reaction was to call in the experts to learn more about the new pope and to try to establish the likely impact of the vote. Within a month the Institute for the Economy of the World Socialist System attached to the USSR Academy of Sciences had filed a report to the Central Committee on the possible political consequences of the election of the new pope, together with a brief biographical report.¹¹ The assessment, drawn up by the Institute's director, Professor Oleg Bogomolov, and dated 4 November 1978, described Wojtyła as a right-winger who as Archbishop of Kraków had antisocialist ideas. He did not make a frontal attack on communism, Bogomolov declared, but rather used the Vatican tactic of 'expansion by dialogue'. Bogomolov expressed concern that the election would result in greater criticism of the communist countries' human rights record. One way to prevent that, Bogomolov suggested, would be to 'warn' the Vatican that involvement in a 'hostile' human rights campaign would result in greater restrictions for the church in Eastern Europe. However, in an echo of future policy, Bogomolov put forward suggestions for some improvements. 'To forestall papal statements hostile to the USSR, it is worth studying the possibility of improving relations with the Catholic clergy in Lithuania, Ukraine and Belorussia. It is necessary to keep track of the tendencies in the Uniate Church, the recent ferment there, and block its adherence to the Catholic Church.' The same Institute also compiled a report for the Central Committee on possible changes in the internal political system in

Poland as a consequence of the election of the new pope.¹²

The KGB, and its chief Yuri Andropov, also took an intense interest in the new pope. Soon after the election, according to a KGB defector, Viktor Sheymov, Andropov cabled the KGB *rezident* in Warsaw, complaining: 'How could you possibly allow the election of a citizen of a socialist country as pope?' The *rezident* allegedly responded by advising Andropov to direct his enquiries instead to the KGB *rezident* in Rome.¹³ According to two émigré journalists, Vladimir Solovyov and Yelena Klepikova, Andropov immediately instructed Service 1 (Reports) of the First Chief Directorate¹⁴ to compile an analysis of how the new pope was elected. The report allegedly concluded that President Carter's security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski (who had met Cardinal Wyszyński on a visit to Poland with President Carter in December 1977) and American Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia (also of Polish extraction) pressured the remaining American cardinals at the consistory to insist on the election of Wojtyła. The authors of the KGB report allegedly saw Wojtyła's election as part of a Polish revolt against Moscow and an attempt to break free of Moscow's control.¹⁵ While the KGB archives remain closed and KGB submissions to the Central Committee are likewise still classified, the authenticity of these reports cannot be verified.

Gradually the different organs of the state swung into action. The various activities of the Catholic Church – both within the Soviet Union and abroad – began to be studied more attentively. Initial concern focused on the impact in Eastern Europe, where the Kremlin already felt its rule was challenged, most recently by Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and growing national and trade union unrest in Poland. When Pope John Paul announced his intention of revisiting his homeland as pontiff, the Kremlin was appalled that the Polish government should accede to the request, albeit with some hesitation. In February 1979 the Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs Vladimir Kuroyedov and the first deputy chairman Makhmud Rakhmankulov made an emergency visit to Warsaw to talk to Religious Affairs minister Kazimierz Kąkol, allegedly at the latter's request. 'The main theme of the meeting', Kuroyedov told the Central Committee in his report on the visit, 'was the change of leadership in the Vatican and its consequences.' The three-page report¹⁶ gives a detailed account of the Polish government's view of Wojtyła, reactions of the Polish side to Kuroyedov's representations about the forthcoming visit and an insight into Soviet concerns.

The Polish comrades characterise John Paul II as more reactionary and conservative in church affairs and more dangerous at the ideological level than his predecessors. While active in Poland he distinguished himself by his anticommunist views, was a champion of human rights in the spirit of the ideas of [President] Carter, and cooperated with church dissidents.

The Polish episcopate, said Minister Kąkol, hopes with the help of John Paul II to achieve the further activation of the church under the slogan: 'The Polish church must be worthy of the new Pope'. It is not by chance that the primate of Poland, cardinal Wyszyński, has recently been insisting strongly on the question of the widening of political freedom for the Catholic Church in the PPR.

Kuroyedov reports that the Polish leader, Edward Gierek, turned down Wyszyński's demands. Then he turns to the question of the papal visit 'with which our Polish friends are seriously occupied'.

Considering the negative results of this visit, the Polish side, Comrade Kąkol informed us, has taken measures with the aim of influencing the pope to

refuse to visit Poland at the time mentioned [the 900th anniversary of the death of St Stanisław in May 1979]. However, in the matter there has been a certain inconsistency, as witnessed by the interview with Kąkol published on 1 February by the Milan paper *Corriere della Sera* in which he says that 'there do not exist any obstacles of a political nature which could prevent the visit of the pope to Poland; he will be received with all honours and with all ceremony by both the people and the authorities.'¹⁷ In our view, the measures taken against the visit of the pope to Poland were insufficient and did not achieve their stated aims. As is clear from the latest reports, John Paul II has not given up his intention.

From here Kuroyedov recounts attempts to lean on the Polish side in order to persuade them to change their mind, in the process revealing how closely the Soviet authorities had monitored the new pope's activity, especially his first foreign visit to Mexico and the Caribbean in January–February 1979:

We told our Polish friends that, according to our information, the pope already has a worked-out strategic plan for the wide penetration of the Vatican in socialist countries. This can be proved, in particular, by the fact that during the visit of John Paul II to Mexico, he met representatives of the Polish emigration in that country several times and discussed with them questions of the strengthening of the struggle of Catholicism against 'communist regimes'. According to the plans of John Paul II the 'bridgehead' for the offensive of Catholicism must be such countries as Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In connection with this the pope announced that he lays great stress on his forthcoming visit to the PPR which, according to his calculations, must facilitate the 'lifting of the spirit of Catholicism' and the activation of the church in Poland and other socialist countries.

Kuroyedov reports in some distress on the Polish side's failure to mention the Mexico visit, given that 'this visit bore an antidemocratic, antisocialist character', with the pope condemning 'progressive' Catholics.

[We] tactfully tried to give our friends to understand that it is necessary to study more deeply the course of events in the world connected with the activity of the new pope, not to sit and wait for things to happen, but to take concrete, practical measures to neutralise attempts by the Vatican to influence the Catholic Church to antisocialist aims.

During the visit to Warsaw, Kuroyedov arranged a meeting of government religious affairs agencies of Eastern Europe, to take place in Poland in September 1979. The aim of the meeting – previously scheduled for June–July, according to the CRA's 1979 plan for foreign trips¹⁸ – was to devise strategies and tactics to counter Vatican activity. (At the request of 'governing organs', the CRA plan of work for 1979 – drawn up not long after John Paul was elected – had called for 'measures to neutralise Vatican attempts to use the Catholic Church of the USSR for antisocialist ends'.¹⁹)

The CRA in Moscow was already reviewing its own approach. At its meeting of 16 April it passed two measures: the first on the struggle with 'religious extremists', which specifically mentions cooperation among socialist countries to counter the Vatican's work; the second on promoting the observance of legislation on cults in relation to the Catholic Church. The latter involved a series of measures: a review of

work in Catholic areas of the USSR (Lithuania, Latvia, Belorussia and Ukraine), efforts to teach clergy about Soviet laws, an increase in 'patriotic' education in the seminaries and a new look at unregistered congregations. These measures were sent to local CRA offices on 5 June.²⁰

Pope John Paul's visit to Poland went ahead from 2 to 10 June 1979, and the enthusiasm of the Polish people caused the Kremlin – and especially the KGB – real concern. The top Soviet leadership, including General Secretary Brezhnev, are said to have received hourly reports of the pope's progress through his native country. The contrast between a popular Catholic Church and an unpopular communist government was all too clear. Foreign minister Andrei Gromyko was moved to stress that 'Poland was and remains an inalienable part of the socialist community'.²¹ But the combination of religious fervour and uncontrollable crowds on the streets of Poland had already caused unease, evoking the parallel between the pope and Ayatollah Khomeini, who had returned to Teheran in triumph almost exactly four months before. Gromyko was elsewhere quoted as fearing that the visit would have 'the same effect on the masses as Ayatollah Khomeini had in Iran'.²²

The Central Committee's concern about the Polish pilgrimage is shown by an 89-page file of reports from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Soviet Embassy in Poland and the Institute for the Economy of the World Socialist System,²³ detailing the pope's visit and measures taken by the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in connection with it. The Soviet authorities began to show a great deal more interest in the state of the Catholic Church in Poland, demanding ever greater detail on all aspects of its activity from various agencies. Other reports from the Warsaw embassy and consulates in Poland report on the strength of the church and the activity of the government-sponsored Pax association, while Gosteleradio reported on what Vatican Radio had been broadcasting to Poland.²⁴

The dilemma presented to the Soviet authorities by the Polish visit is clear from other sources. According to a 1979 plan of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Lithuanian party Central Committee, lecturers were to be thoroughly prepared to answer awkward questions inspired by the visit. Sample questions included: 'Why, given the reactionary character of Pope John Paul II, did the government of the People's Republic of Poland invite him to visit the country?' and 'What advantage did the government of the People's Republic of Poland gain from the visit of Pope John Paul II?' Further questions had been prompted by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's January 1979 visit to the Vatican: 'What questions were discussed during the meeting of USSR Foreign Minister Gromyko with Pope John Paul II?' and 'Will diplomatic relations between the USSR and the Vatican be established?' Even more dangerous – for the Soviet authorities – was the question: 'Is a future visit to the USSR by Pope John Paul II possible?'²⁵

A routine meeting of communist party ideological and international relations chiefs from all the socialist countries, which met in Berlin from 3 to 5 July 1979, just a month after the Polish visit, was almost taken over by the subject of how to respond to the new pope. 'As was noted at the meeting of secretaries of communist and workers' parties of socialist countries in Berlin in [July]²⁶ 1979,' Kuroyedov later reported,

a new phase has now begun in the policy of the Vatican in relation to the socialist countries, characterised by a sharp increase in the activity of the Catholic Church and attempts to change it into a political opposition in socialist countries. With this aim the Vatican has started to give active support to various sorts of nationalist forces, the bourgeois-clerical

emigration as well as dissidents from the socialist countries, and increasingly to try to influence young people and the intelligentsia.

The threats posed by Islamic forces were also discussed.

The agenda of this, the sixth such conference – attended from the Soviet Union by Boris Ponomarev and other Central Committee members – was not publicly revealed, and the first published report of the meeting in *Problemy mira i sotsializma*²⁷ speaks only generally of the topics discussed: ‘At the meeting there was a comprehensive exchange of information and opinions on current problems of mutual relations between fraternal parties in the spheres of international politics and ideology and on questions of agitation and propaganda.’ Kuroyedov’s account, several paragraphs in a wide-ranging speech to the meeting of CRA commissioners from all over the USSR in May 1980, was published in a booklet marked ‘secret’ and distributed to local CRA offices in numbered copies.²⁸ The fact that the Berlin agenda was dominated by the perceived upsurge in Catholic activity in Eastern Europe was not publicly revealed until late 1981 when a Ukrainian Central Committee worker Ivan Poluk reproduced Kuroyedov’s account – almost word for word – in an article in *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*.²⁹

The 1979 Anti-Catholic Decree

With information from all sources to hand, the Central Committee was now ready to lay down the policy response to Wojtyła’s election. A commission was set up to formulate a decree containing the Central Committee’s instructions. At the meeting of the secretariat on 23 October 1979 the subject under discussion was ‘measures to counter the policy of the Vatican in relation to the socialist countries’.³⁰ The minute of the meeting records the decision:

Instruct that commission to continue work on the draft of the decree on this question taking into account the exchange of opinions which took place at the meeting of the secretariat of the Central Committee. Add to the membership of the commission comrades V. M. Chebrikov, I. N. Zemskov and V. A. Kuroyedov.

Viktor Chebrikov was deputy chairman of the KGB, Igor’ Zemskov was a deputy foreign minister and Vladimir Kuroyedov was chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs. The decree was finally approved on 13 November 1979 and signed by, among others, Central Committee members Mikhail Suslov, Konstantin Chernenko and Mikhail Gorbachev.³¹ The decree ordered cooperation with communist parties in Western Europe and Latin America to counter the pope’s growing influence and discredit him. The KGB and Foreign Ministry were both given a role in reducing the pope’s influence. ‘Give the KGB the task of publishing abroad, through special channels, material pointing out the inadvisability for the Vatican of certain actions which could worsen relations with the socialist countries and hence worsen the Catholic Church’s situation.’ The articles published should denounce ‘dangerous tendencies’ in the pope’s behaviour.

Following the Central Committee decree, other relevant bodies leaped into action. On 26 December 1979 the All-Union CRA adopted a decree on measures to fulfil the Central Committee’s decree. On 2 January 1980 this was circulated to republican CRA commissioners, together with an eight-page attachment with the CRA’s detailed plans for fulfilling the decree.³² The measures were grouped in four main categories:

analysis, internal measures, external measures and propaganda. The first task was 'to assess material in hand on the activation of the Catholic Church in the USSR since the election of the new pope and work out measures to increase control over the activity of Catholic religious organisations.' When this was complete, a meeting of commissioners from the main republics with a Catholic population – Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine – was to be arranged in the first quarter of 1980. The All-Union CRA was also to work together with the Foreign Ministry to prepare an *oriyentirovka* (briefing paper) on the Vatican's current activity 'for use in internal and external political propaganda'.

Among the other wide-ranging measures proposed were greater coordination with religious affairs offices of other Eastern European countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia – and an attack on the Vatican on a theological level. Soviet churches were to be used in international bodies – among them the WCC, CPC, LWF, CEC, BWF and EBF – to emphasise their differences with the Catholic Church. The CRA was to 'recommend to the Moscow Patriarchate that it define more concretely the position of the ROC in relation to the contemporary policy of the Vatican'. The Orthodox Church was also to forge closer links with Western European Catholics 'critical of the policies of John Paul II'. Soviet ambassadors in Western Europe were to arrange invitations for Orthodox clerics in the run-up to the November 1980 Madrid human rights review conference. A delegation of left-wing Catholics from France was to be invited to visit the USSR in 1980, and a delegation of Orthodox were to visit Catholics in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1980 with the same purpose. The CRA – together with the Academy of Social Sciences (presumably the Academy's Institute of Scientific Atheism) and the Novosti press agency – were to prepare materials 'unmasking the reactionary content of the political and social conceptions of the Vatican, papal encyclicals and other programmatic Vatican documents with the subsequent aim of distributing these materials among Soviet and foreign mass media.' Articles were to be published in *Novoye vremya*, *Literaturnaya gazeta* and *Nauka i religiya* on changes to the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*.

There was also to be a specific attack on the Eastern-rite Catholic Church, banned in Ukraine by Stalin and forcibly merged with the Orthodox Church. The CRA was to 'organise appearances by a range of representatives of the Orthodox clergy unmasking the policy of the Vatican to the question of the Uniates, in the church and secular press, both in the USSR and abroad.' Materials 'characterising the true face of the Uniate Church' and 'compromising its activists, including Cardinal Slipyi' were to be prepared and distributed. (John Paul had met Slipyi on 20 November 1978, within weeks of becoming pope, and had written to him on 19 March 1979 reaffirming the right of the Ukrainian Catholic Church to exist.³³) Not all measures, however, were negative. Although the intention was to cut off Soviet Catholics from their fellow-believers abroad and not to help the church, the CRA ordered the establishment of a workshop in Lithuania to produce church artefacts 'in order to stop imports and speculation' and the publishing or import of Catholic literature in Lithuanian, Latvian/Latgallian, German, Polish and Hungarian.

With the CRA plans to fulfil the decree, Kuroyedov demanded that commissioners produce their own local plans, to be submitted to local authorities and the central CRA within one month. In Catholic Lithuania, for example, the commissioner Petras Anilionis compiled a seven-page plan which he sent to Moscow on 1 February 1980, only just in time for the one month deadline. In addition to fulfilling the plan he submitted, Anilionis was busy gathering other relevant material for Moscow. On 29 February he sent a report to Kuroyedov on the Vatican in socialist countries, and

extracts from Lithuanian broadcasts of Vatican Radio. He also copied the relevant entries of the Vatican yearbook, the *Annuario Pontificio*, to Kuroyedov.

The All-Union CRA plan for 1980, compiled in January of that year, contained several references to countering Vatican activity, by this time a ritual entry in the annual plan. 1980 also saw a significant change in the internal structure of the Moscow CRA, with the setting up of several new departments. Perhaps in response to the perceived Catholic 'threat' a separate Catholic department was added, together with another department handling relations with Muslim countries, perhaps in response to the negative image of the Soviet Union in the Islamic world in the wake of the December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. The Catholic department monitored the fulfilment of the anti-Catholic measures decreed by the CRA.

Local Information-Gathering

Local CRA offices were already playing their own part in assessing the new pope and passing on information they knew or thought might be useful to Moscow. On 11 January 1979, just three months after Wojtyła's election, Lithuanian commissioner Petras Anilionis sent Kuroyedov a six-page report on the situation of the Catholic Church in Lithuania since the election of the pope.³⁴ Anilionis reported a strong link between the election and a surge in unauthorised Catholic activity: 'With the election of Pope K. Wojtyła, extremist-minded priests of the Catholic Church in Lithuania began their activity. They very soon felt that on the papal throne there was "a distinguished fighter for human rights".' At the first meeting between the new pope and the Lithuanian bishops Liudas Povilonis and Romualdas Krikščiūnas, the pope is reported to have told them the church situation was as difficult in Lithuania as it was in Poland. Anilionis told Kuroyedov that the newly formed Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights was a direct response to the pope's inspiration. He listed their work since their formation, revealing that the first communication he had seen from the committee was a letter received on 30 November 1978.

The change in mood towards the end of 1979 had already led to greater efforts by local CRAs to provide Moscow with information they believed would be appreciated. One of the more useful conversations recorded by Lithuanian commissioner Anilionis was with Fr Pranas Račiūnas in November 1979. Račiūnas had just returned from an extended visit to relatives in Chicago and had visited the Vatican on his return journey. As usual when clerics returned from foreign travels, Račiūnas was summoned to the CRA offices in Vilnius to give an account of his journey. Unlike many such conversations, Anilionis considered the information he received to be so important that on 20 November 1979 he sent a four-page summary³⁵ to the Lithuanian party Central Committee, to Kuroyedov in Moscow and to the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

Račiūnas reported that 'literally all the Lithuanian emigres in the USA are convinced that the fifteenth cardinal, currently "*in pectore*", is bishop [Julijonis] Steponavičius, removed from the administration of his diocese, although none of them was able to produce any concrete proof.' John Paul had named one secret cardinal in June 1979 and the Soviet authorities had tried to establish the truth of such rumours. (Much later it transpired that the cardinal was in fact Bishop Gong Pin-mei of Shanghai, and not Steponavičius.)

Anilionis reports at length on Račiūnas' meeting with the pope which took place apparently at the instigation of fellow-Lithuanian Archbishop Audrys Bačkis, an émigré who worked in the Vatican's Council for the Public Affairs of the Church.

The conversation with the pope took place in the latter's private dining room, was conducted in Polish and lasted about 30 minutes. John Paul asked Račiūnas the following questions: How many clerics are studying in the Kaunas seminary and what is the situation there (meaning discipline, the programme of studies, the competence and conduct of the teachers)? What proportion of young people attend church, what is their religious activity like? How well organised are Catholic parishes and what are they like? In what form is 'pressure' on the church from the authorities, is such 'pressure' very centralised or is there a certain amount of independence for local organs of power?

Račiūnas, according to Anilionis, described the situation 'objectively'.

Anilionis gave prominence to Račiūnas' personal impressions as well:

Račiūnas got the impression that the pope follows the activity of the Catholic Church in Lithuania with great interest, although he did not venture his opinion on its situation. On the question of the Catholic Church in Belorussia, the pope stressed that 'the situation there is significantly more difficult than in Lithuania'. At the end of the conversation, John Paul II remarked that 'he prays for Lithuania every morning', and if the Soviet government allows it he would visit the USSR and, of course, Lithuania. The pope did not give concrete intentions on this subject.

In discussion with Mgr Ivan Dias of the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church, Račiūnas learnt that the Vatican considered the situation for the church in Lithuania to be worse than two or three years before. But Dias believed the situation would get better because of the 'general liberalisation' in the socialist countries and especially the example of China, where priests had been freed, churches had been opened, foreign Jesuits had been allowed in and 'successful soundings are being taken on the possibility of a papal visit to the PRC'. Such a visit to China, after the pope's visit to Poland, would have provoked alarm in the Kremlin.

Dias outlined to Račiūnas the Vatican's desire for all vacant dioceses to be filled with bishops supporting a 'central position', signalling to the Kremlin that it would no longer accept compromised candidates, but neither would it insist on known anticommunists.

Speaking of the so-called eastern policy of the Vatican, Dias remarked that this policy, formulated under Paul VI, remains in force, confirmation of this being the naming of its creator Monsignor Casaroli as the Vatican's secretary of state. But John Paul II intends to and will in future implement this policy more actively and if, in the development of relations with any socialist state, this policy does not bring tangible results, the present pope will without hesitation choose his own line.

Račiūnas also visited Cardinal Slipyi while in Rome – they were old friends from their labour camp days of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Račiūnas had been Slipyi's confessor for a while. Račiūnas informed Anilionis of the continuing conflict between Slipyi and the pope over the establishment of a Ukrainian Catholic Patriarchate, which the pope was refusing.

The importance Anilionis attributed to the information from Račiūnas is shown by his decision to send copies to such high bodies. Much of the information normally gleaned from clergymen returning from Rome was so trivial that it was of no interest further up.

The increased attention given to the Catholic Church was also leading to a desire to amass as much information as possible on all aspects of its activity. In 1980 the Lithuanian CRA asked Moscow to pass on their used copies of the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano*, a paper the Moscow CRA studied very carefully. Copies were henceforth sent on once they had been read in Moscow. The Lithuanian CRA passed on useful information gleaned from its pages to the Lithuanian Central Committee's department of propaganda and agitation. In accordance with the regulations for handling sensitive materials, the Lithuanian CRA kept copies in locked metal cabinets in a separate office, before they were destroyed.

Alarm in the Religious Policy Establishment

Following up on the decision to increase cooperation with other Eastern European countries, the CRA wrote on 12 February 1980 to the Central Committee with plans for foreign trips by both CRA officials and religious leaders.³⁶ The first item concerns three-day trips of two officials each to the GDR, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Cuba 'for discussion of joint measures to counter antisocialist activity of the Vatican and questions associated with the activation of the Catholic Church in the socialist countries aimed at strengthening its positions.' It is significant that both the GDR and Bulgaria were included, where the Catholic Church was hardly powerful. The absence of Yugoslavia and Romania was symptomatic of the only lukewarm relations between those states and the Soviet Union.

By the time of the All-Union gathering of CRA commissioners on 21–22 May 1980, there are indications of widespread alarm in the Soviet religious policy establishment – and not just about Catholic activity. The last gathering (they were held every few years) had taken place in 1977 and in his report then Kuroyedov had warned delegates not to be too complacent despite the success in antireligious work.³⁷ By contrast, the 1980 speech is characterised by a mood of near-panic, with an upsurge in unwelcome activity from almost all religious groups, including the Orthodox, Catholics, Muslims, unregistered Baptists and other 'sectarians'. It was at this meeting, as noted above, that Kuroyedov revealed the main topic of the 1979 Berlin ideology meeting. 'If among the Orthodox and Muslim clergy as a whole there is a loyal attitude to the Soviet state,' Kuroyedov told the commissioners,

among the Catholic clergy the growth of religious extremism is more and more noticeable, going as far as open statements against Soviet legislation on cults. This is in considerable measure connected with the arrival on the papal throne of the Polish archbishop Wojtyła, who by no means sympathises with the socialist system. At the start of his activity, Pope John Paul II himself received the dyed-in-the-wool Ukrainian nationalist [Valenty] Moroz and the antisoviet [Anatoli] Krasnov-Levitin, both expelled from the Soviet Union.

Kuroyedov specified particular Soviet concerns:

Recently there have followed a range of hostile actions by the Vatican in relation to the USSR, increasing its attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of our country. The pope announced that the 'silent' Catholic Church oppressed in the USSR will now speak through his lips and that 'half his heart rests in Lithuania'. The Vatican openly expresses distrust of

diocesan leaders expressing loyal positions towards Soviet power. It devotes special attention to support of the reactionary part of the clergy.

Kuroyedov then went on to attack the Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in Lithuania, which, he said, had been founded 'by extremist priests not without the blessing of the Vatican'. The Committee, publicly announced on 22 November 1978, was seen by the Soviet authorities (on information from the Lithuanian CRA) as a direct result of the election of the pope just a few weeks before. The five priests had begun the Committee's work by addressing a letter to the new pope on 13 November, asking for his blessing.³⁸ Kuroyedov also expressed his fears of the revival of the Ukrainian Catholic Church:

The activity of the new pope brought in its wake the activation of the Uniates in the western regions of Ukraine, the submitting of requests for registration of the church of the so-called eastern rite, the organising of prayers in long-closed churches etc. A major contribution to this was the publication by the Vatican in June 1979 of the pope's letter to Cardinal Slipyi.

Kuroyedov noted the pope's recognition of Slipyi as Archbishop of L'vov, and his appointment of 'the rabid antisoviet' Lubachiv'sky (whom he called Yaroslav, instead of Myroslav) as Slipyi's assistant.

Kuroyedov concluded by admitting that problems did exist for the Catholics, such as the shortage of priests and literature (though he did not admit that these were a direct result of Soviet policy, if not its aim). He declared that these problems must be resolved.

Behind the scenes the Soviet authorities were at work on their most coordinated anti-Catholic measures for many years, but in their public statements they were careful to avoid the appearance of such a widespread plan. The *orientirovka* on the Vatican's current activity – to be produced jointly by the CRA and the Foreign Ministry and promised for many months – finally came up at the Central Committee meeting on 15 July 1980.³⁹ The document contains a balanced assessment of the church's strength and position, and reviews the Vatican's position as a state, mentioning that it has diplomatic relations with two communist states, Cuba (which were never broken off) and Yugoslavia (which were restored in 1970). It then goes on to try to draw divisions in the church between Catholics. Some clergy, even among the hierarchs, have criticised the extremes of capitalism and neocolonialism. Under their influence, the Vatican has sometimes supported Soviet peace initiatives.⁴⁰ However, after the election of John Paul,

there were manifold far-reaching changes in the Vatican. Choosing K. Wojtyła for the papal throne, reactionary circles in the church, as well as certain forces in the USA, tried to secure the strengthening of the influence of Catholicism on the state of affairs in the socialist countries. . . . Because of this, announcing the desire for an improvement in the climate of relations with the socialist countries and realising this with a range of such talks on the question, the Vatican is at present taking steps to activate Catholic circles in the countries of the socialist community. Special attention in this is devoted to Poland, to where, as is known, the visit of John Paul II took place in June 1979. Clerical circles are activating their search for means of influence on the politics and spiritual life of socialist countries is being activated, and their desire to create and control a wide network of Catholic social organisations

is becoming more noticeable, as is their desire to receive the possibility of using the mass media without control [by the Polish government]. There are also present attempts to strengthen influence on the working class and the intelligentsia. The Catholic Church has devoted special attention recently to young people. Right-wing forces in the Vatican have been making observable efforts to reinvigorate Catholicism in a series of districts in the Soviet Union, above all in Lithuania, Latvia, Western Ukraine and Belorussia. These forces inspire and support the activities of 'dissidents' and disloyal clergymen and try to revive Uniatism. Vatican propaganda spreads fabrications on so-called violations of religious freedom in the USSR, persecution of believers etc.

The document describes another Soviet fear, already expressed by Andropov in 1974: 'The Vatican is making increasing attempts to influence the representatives of other churches with the aim of activating their struggle for the strengthening of the position of religious forces in society.' Without directly attacking John Paul, the document notes: 'The course of Vatican reaction does not meet with opposition from the present pope – rather it finds echoes in a range of his public statements.' However, it goes on to describe some of his positive characteristics, from a Soviet point of view: 'the pope . . . has started more frequently to criticise the western way of life, its amorality and the decline of spiritual values under capitalism. These [parts] of his statements are being used in their work by communists in France, the FRG, the USA and other countries.' The document mentions John Paul's speech at the United Nations in October 1979, in which he criticised the arms race, and reports that he did not support the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics (called by western nations to protest about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan). The *oriyentirovka* calls on the Soviet side to support circles in the Vatican which favour détente and a sober, considered approach to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. There must be measures to counter reactionary Catholics who try to 'discredit Marxist-Leninist ideology and the reality of socialism'. And the document recommends: 'In foreign policy propaganda, make flexible use of differences in positions of Catholic circles, as well as the contradiction between the leadership of the Vatican and radically oriented clergy of developing countries, especially of Latin America.'

The Central Committee voted to distribute this five-page *oriyentirovka* widely to Soviet embassies and representatives in international bodies around the world via the Foreign Ministry. The document is notable for avoiding the harsh language used of the Catholic Church in private and for its attempt to differentiate between 'reactionary circles' in the Vatican and more progressive sections in the church. At the same time, the document is careful not to place Pope John Paul directly in the category of the reactionaries and takes great pains to remain neutral on him personally. The wide distribution of the document might account for the reticence in portraying John Paul too negatively.

On 30 July 1980 the Central Committee agreed to a suggestion from the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party to follow up on the recommendations of the July 1979 Berlin discussions of ideology chiefs. The Czechoslovak party proposed a meeting in November of the Central Committees' propaganda and mass media department chiefs to organise better propaganda to counter the activity of Catholic and Islamic bodies.

Following this initial burst of anti-Catholic measures, coinciding with Yuri Andropov's increasing control over Soviet internal policy, there was a thorough

crackdown on religious troublemakers. Catholic priests and lay activists in Lithuania, Ukraine and elsewhere were arrested. Meanwhile, the work of monitoring and assessing the church's activity continued. On 12 July 1982, for instance, Anilionis compiled a report on the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*, which he sent to V. S. Volodin, head of the international affairs department of the CRA in Moscow.⁴¹

It is during this period that the Soviet authorities finally tackled the unacknowledged Catholic presence in Belorussia. Since the eastern part of Poland had been incorporated into the Soviet Union during the war, a large number of Catholics had been brought into the Belorussian SSR which, in the Stalinist era, was a model atheist republic with hardly any churches at all. These Catholics were without a hierarchy and with a declining number of ageing priests, a problem Casaroli had unsuccessfully raised with Kuroyedov in 1971. By the late 1970s the CRA was beginning to face the question, gradually bringing more of these communities into registration and allowing some candidates to study for the priesthood in the seminaries in Kaunas and Riga. However, this method followed the usual two-edged pattern: some concessions but tighter overall control. On 10 November 1982 the Moscow CRA issued a decree on controlling Catholic activity in the Belorussian SSR, a decree that was renewed in 1985.

Poland Again

The Central Committee had continued to receive detailed reports on the church in Poland since the 1979 visit. The Warsaw embassy regularly filed reports – in 1980 a total of 111 pages⁴² – but in 1981 came a new feature: Soviet consulates in Gdańsk, Kraków and Szczecin began filing reports on the strength of the church in their areas. Themes of interest were the 'normalisation' of church–state relations, the 'penetration' of the church into the working class, relations between Solidarity leaders and the bishops and the activity of Catholic organisations.⁴³ The following year the Warsaw embassy was submitting lengthy reports on 'several new elements in relations between the state and the church in Poland in the conditions of martial law in the country [declared on 13 December 1981] and on the activity of the "PAX" organisation of lay Catholics'.⁴⁴

Events in Poland, even after martial law had banned Solidarity and outlawed political unrest, continued to cause concern in the KGB. According to Oleg Gordievsky, the KGB's Polish experts retrospectively dated the origins of the Polish crisis to the election of Pope John Paul.⁴⁵ The Kremlin was watching closely the growing ties between the Reagan administration in Washington and the Vatican, whose objectives coincided neatly in Poland. Reagan met the pope for the first time on 7 June 1982 in the Vatican, and the most important item on the agenda was support for the outlawed Solidarity union. There was extensive secret cooperation between the two sides in backing Solidarity, as revealed by Carl Bernstein.⁴⁶ But the Kremlin too was aware of this dangerous alliance. Two weeks after the meeting, Tass ran a story, dated Paris, giving 'certain details of the recent meeting'.⁴⁷

The president in particular urged the head of the Catholic Church to take a tougher stand in relation to Poland, to intensify pressure on the leadership of the country using the clergy and their contacts with various anti-government groups. R. Reagan recommended to the pope that he visit the PPR in August 1982 under the pretext of attending religious events and officially raising the question with the Polish authorities, despite the obvious difficulties of realising the plans of the visit in the near future.

... According to the same trusted sources, R. Reagan expressed readiness to step up financial support to opposition circles in Poland, in particular through church channels. The US president also asked John Paul II to exert a moderating influence on Catholic priests taking part in antiwar movements in the West.

This story reflects the Kremlin's view that the pope had come under the influence of the United States' president. This view was perhaps erroneous: the evidence equally clearly points to John Paul's lead in handling the Polish crisis or, at least, an equal partnership between the president and the pope. However, the Soviet press failed to link Reagan's ambassador at large, Vernon Walters, to covert work in Poland. Describing one of perhaps a dozen secret trips to the Vatican, Tass described it as an attempt to enlist the pope's support in halting antiwar sentiment among American Catholic priests, basing its assessment on a *New York Times* story.⁴⁸

The growing concern that the church was at the heart of the threat to communist rule not just in Poland is shown by further reports to the Central Committee. Whereas in the late 1970s the Central Committee had been receiving reports from the Soviet embassy in Prague on 'Chartists' (members of Charter 77) and other dissidents, by the 1980s much of the focus had switched to the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. In 1981 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a report on talks between the Czechoslovak government and the Vatican,⁴⁹ talks which ultimately proved inconclusive on resolving the question of the vacant Catholic dioceses. Later the Prague embassy and the consulates in Brno and Bratislava were required to submit more detailed reports on relations between the state and the Catholic Church, Czechoslovak-Vatican negotiations and the state of the Catholic Church in Brno and Slovakia.⁵⁰ As the Soviet leadership began to recognise the threat to its rule in Eastern Europe from the Catholic Church, it began to look also at other churches. In 1982 the Soviet embassy in East Berlin filed a report on church-state relations in mainly Protestant East Germany.⁵¹

Pope John Paul had been hoping to return to Poland in August 1982 to attend the 600th anniversary of the Jasna Góra monastery at Czestochowa, but the visit never took place. His more restrained 1983 visit to his homeland – from 16 to 23 June, just a month before Jaruzelski lifted martial law – hardly allayed Soviet fears. As in 1979 the Central Committee received full reports on the visit and its aftermath. There is a 101-page file containing

information from the embassy of the USSR in the Polish People's Republic on organisational-political measures of the CC of the PUWP [Polish United Workers' Party] in connection with the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland in 1983, and the results of the visit, on the new 'Eastern policy' of the Vatican and on certain antistate manifestations by the Polish catholic clergy; informational note from *Glavinturist* on statements made by foreign tourists in connection with the visit of Pope John Paul II to the PPR.⁵²

Filed separately, there is also a report from the Soviet embassy in Warsaw on state-church relations in the aftermath of the visit.⁵³

The CRA also watched the pilgrimage closely. In Catholic Lithuania (where Polish radio and TV were accessible), Anilionis sent a report to the central CRA on 30 June on the results of the pope's visit. The central CRA ordered action to 'resist attempts by the Vatican to activate the Catholic Church in the USSR' and to 'study the mood and reaction of the Catholic clergy and believers to the visit of John Paul II to the Polish People's Republic and take appropriate measures to neutralise the negative

influence of this visit on Catholics in the USSR'. These measures were billed as responses to the June 1983 Plenum of the Central Committee (which was devoted to the topic of increasing ideological educational work among the masses) and speeches by the General Secretary Yuri Andropov.⁵⁴

The KGB First Chief Directorate's plan of work for 1984, drawn up by FCD chief Vladimir Kryuchkov in late 1983, named the Vatican as one of the targets requiring regular political intelligence, along with the 'Islamic factor'.⁵⁵ Destabilisation in Poland was seen as the work not of the Vatican, but rather of the 'main adversary', the United States. KGB agents were enjoined to exert influence 'in our favour' on 'clerical organisations on the questions of war and peace', although the Vatican was not specifically mentioned. Likewise, Kryuchkov did not mention the Vatican in his review of the KGB's work in 1982–3, although he did complain of increased 'subversive activity' by émigré, nationalist and Zionist organisations abroad and 'antisoviet pronouncements from reactionary Muslim organisations'.⁵⁶

On 19 December 1984 the KGB sent out a directive⁵⁷ to *rezidenty* in foreign capitals calling for more active work 'to deal with the tasks set by the heads of our Department [the FCD] and Service [the KGB as a whole] for working against the Vatican'. 'In recent years', the circular began, 'the head of the Catholic Church and right-wing circles in the Vatican have been stepping up subversive activity against the socialist countries and the national liberation and antiwar movements.' The Vatican has put forward the idea 'of creating, under the banner of a so-called "religious international", an international alliance to combat communist ideology'. The directive – sent by the head of the FCD's Third Section (the UK, Scandinavia, Australasia, Ireland, Malta), Nikolai Gribin, and presumably other sections – instructed *rezidenty* to engage in

more active efforts . . . to penetrate, using agents or other operational means, into the leading Catholic centres of the West in order to obtain intelligence about hostile operations in preparation by the Vatican, and also to carry out large-scale active measures directed towards inciting prominent figures in the Catholic Church to protest in defence of peace and limitation of the arms race.

There followed a five-page, top secret attachment on measures to counter the 'subversive activity of the Vatican', providing a fuller account of all the KGB's phobias about the church. The Vatican 'has pursued a policy of more energetic subversive action . . . in socialist countries, converting a religious movement into a political opposition force.' The KGB specifically attributed this 'marked' antisocialist bias to the arrival on the papal throne of John Paul,

whose hostility towards the countries of the socialist community is conditioned both by his personal anticommunist and antisoviet convictions and by the influence exerted on him by the most conservative representatives of the Catholic clergy and reactionary political figures of the West, especially those of the USA.

In the light of the 'Polish experience', as the assessment described it, the church was trying to obtain 'actual complete independence' from the state and intensify 'antisocialist feeling among the Catholic clergy and faithful'. The 'main emphasis in its so-called "Eastern policy"' was on reviving Catholic and Uniate parishes, supporting 'the most reactionary priesthood' and setting up a 'religious opposition' to influence the political process. The experience of Poland is inspiring the Vatican to

extend its activity to other socialist countries. They ‘calculate that the tactics they have recently adopted may lead to destabilisation of the political situation in certain states of the socialist community, or in some parts of the Soviet Union.’ The Vatican’s ‘principal interest is concentrated on the most “promising” countries of Eastern Europe, from its point of view: Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia’. This is why the Vatican is trying to establish diplomatic relations with and papal trips to socialist countries. The Vatican is also trying to unite other churches – especially the Russian Orthodox Church – in an antisoviet campaign, to undermine the antiwar movement ‘in cooperation with the leaders of the chief NATO countries’.

To counter this, Moscow directed, the KGB must gather information on the Vatican’s plans to increase its influence in Eastern Europe, on its links with capitalist states and China, and on ‘coordination of policy and cooperation, especially with the United States and other NATO countries, in undermining the position of socialism and the national liberation and antiwar movements, including also cooperation with their special [intelligence] services’. Also of concern was the ‘disposition of forces’ within the Roman curia. Specific ‘active measures’ ordered included: warning John Paul that any ‘hostile activity’ by the Vatican in the socialist countries would be construed as ‘interference in their internal affairs’ which would risk a deterioration of relations; exploiting ‘in the interests of the socialist countries’ any internal dissension in the Vatican, especially on the part of ‘influential cardinals’ opposed to the pope’s ‘excessive enthusiasm’ for his eastern policy; encouraging antiwar clerics; countering growing links between the Vatican and the Russian, Georgian and Armenian churches; and exposing links between the Vatican and the CIA and other intelligence services. ‘In order to deal with these tasks,’ the document concluded, ‘steps must be taken to make more systematic use of existing agent resources and to create new ones in Catholic centres and organisations and, above all, in the Vatican.’

The extent of KGB spying in the Vatican at that time is not yet known. The KGB *rezident* in Rome from 1976 to 1982, Boris Solomatin, later claimed that the KGB ran a spy in the Vatican ‘capable of reaching the highest echelons of the church’ – one of four top agents in Italy. ‘We could not have managed without this. It was not easy to attract him, as religious people have a completely particular way of thinking,’ Solomatin recalled, ‘but we were successful. The Vatican is a real superpower, one to keep an eye on.’⁵⁸

The despatch of such vitriolic documents, ten months after Andropov’s death, shows just how much the KGB retained Andropov’s morbid suspicions of the Catholic Church, as evidenced by his 1974 report to the Central Committee. The tenor of the writing and the specific claims of Vatican conspiracies were a continuation of the same theme, especially the view that the Vatican’s links with the Russian Orthodox Church, which the Kremlin kept under close control, might subvert that church’s loyalty to the Soviet state. The threat to the Kremlin’s hegemony in Eastern Europe was highlighted, as well as the perhaps more alarming threat of ‘destabilisation’ in some parts of the Soviet Union.

The CRA’s Theological Study

Surprising as it may seem, the KGB, the CRA and the various institutes were close readers of papal encyclicals, especially those of Pope John Paul II. One of the most carefully scrutinised documents was the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation* of 6 August 1984. Although not written by the pope, it was seen as the fruit of his thought. It was

criticised in a number of newspaper articles. Aleksandr Bovin described the document as an American–Vatican coproduction.⁵⁹ According to the KGB's assessment, it 'contains some sharp pronouncements about the socialist countries. Marxist doctrine is declared to be incompatible with the Christian faith, and the struggle of those nations fighting for their political, social and spiritual liberation is regarded as inadmissible.'⁶⁰ The *Instruction* was also cited to Lithuanian Catholic leaders in December 1985 as evidence of the Vatican's 'aggressive policy towards the socialist countries' that made a papal visit to Lithuania impossible.⁶¹

Russian translations of papal encyclicals were apparently prepared quite quickly, and local CRA offices would often receive a summary of the CRA's response to them. For example, a typewritten Russian translation of John Paul's *Slavorum apostoli*, which highlights Europe's common Christian roots and which was issued by the Vatican in July 1985, was completed by 3 August for limited internal distribution. On 30 August the new chairman of the CRA, Konstantin Kharchev, sent copies to local CRA offices, together with his comments. He disliked John Paul's idea of a 'united Europe' founded on the basis of 'the Christian roots of its peoples'. Kharchev instructed local CRAs to take measures to counter the activation of the church and its missionary work, and stressed the importance of teaching clergy 'a negative attitude to antisocialist acts of right-wing circles in the Vatican'.⁶²

Pope John Paul in the Soviet Press

The subject of how the pope was treated in the Soviet media – at that time faithful mouthpieces for official views – has been dealt with reliably elsewhere.⁶³ It is clear from new evidence, though, how this coverage fits in with changing official perceptions of the new pope. According to the plans put forward to counter the Vatican's perceived extra activity, the CRA and others worked closely with the press. According to Oxana Antic, the tone of local press articles was far less measured in its criticism of the pope than that of the central press – which, incidentally, could be read abroad.

In 1982 attacks on the pope increased, with several articles criticising the pope's support for the Solidarity trade union, by that time outlawed under martial law. He was accused of 'anticommunist propaganda on a vast scale and of actively helping Solidarity.' In December 1982 the journal *Politicheskoye samoobrazovaniye* attacked the pope for meddling in the internal affairs of Eastern Europe. He was described as 'the inspirer of antisocialist activities of the reactionary clergy in Poland' and a supporter of 'subversive activities' by innumerable agents, including propaganda specialists.⁶⁴ The Vatican was even moved to respond to these criticisms.

On the whole, as Antic remarked in 1981, three years after Pope John Paul had come to office, the Soviet press had not yet worked out a consistent line on him.

Soviet–Vatican Diplomacy

Despite the fact that the Soviet Union did not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See, contacts at a fairly senior level had been growing since Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's first visit to the Vatican in 1963 to meet Pope John XXIII. Although in his memoirs⁶⁵ Gromyko claims that this and subsequent meetings were all at the Vatican's request, it is clear that both sides welcomed the chance to meet. The 1963 meeting came in the wake of Pope John's *Pacem in terris* encyclical, which had found favour in the communist world. Pope Paul VI's five meetings with Gromyko developed

these contacts. According to Gromyko, most of the discussion focused on peace and disarmament – topics where Soviet and Vatican views coincided, at least superficially. Although Pope Paul raised the question of restrictions on believers, Gromyko avoided giving answers by claiming he was ‘not competent’ in that area. Despite the lack of official contacts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow kept a close watch on Vatican affairs, which were handled, along with those of 12 other countries, by the Ministry’s First European Department. The Rome embassy also had a Vatican ‘expert’ on the staff. In the 1980s he was Yuri Bogomasov. (The Rome embassy’s KGB *rezident* also had the job of keeping an eye on the Vatican.)

With the 1978 election of John Paul, Gromyko appears to have adopted a cautious approach. Ever the diplomat, he soon arranged a meeting in the Vatican with the new pontiff, which took place on 24 January 1979 and lasted two hours. (For the first time a Soviet foreign minister was able to converse with a pope in Russian.) Gromyko was accompanied by the ambassador to Italy, Nikita Ryzhov, while the Vatican secretary of state, Agostino Casaroli, was with the pope. According to Gromyko, much of the discussion centred on peace and disarmament, until the pope raised the question of religious freedom. ‘It is possible’, Gromyko quotes the pope as saying, ‘that not everywhere have obstacles limiting the freedom of religious belief been removed. According to some sources, something of the sort may be happening in the USSR.’ Gromyko gave a bland answer: ‘Sometimes in the West various cock-and-bull stories are circulated about the state of religion in the Soviet Union, and attempts are even made to portray lawbreaking criminals as great martyrs. In all this, it seems, there is not a grain of truth.’ And he repeated bland assertions on freedom of religion in the USSR, to which the pope allegedly replied: ‘In general that is how we understand this question.’ Apparently neither side returned to the matter. According to Casaroli, Gromyko reacted bluntly to what he saw as the pope’s over-modest assessment of the Vatican’s influence. ‘Perhaps the Holy See itself does not fully realise just what strength it possesses,’ Gromyko is reported to have said.⁶⁶ Gromyko’s first visit took place while the Soviet state was still evaluating the new pope. Although Gromyko was clearly trying to stick to a foreign policy agenda, it is notable that Pope John Paul was just as keen to discuss the situation of Catholics in the Soviet Union. Gromyko found it harder to dodge such questions than he had in discussion with previous popes.

It is significant that later in 1979 diplomatic contacts of an indirect nature also began to dry up as Soviet hostility to the new pontiff increased. Gromyko was in New York in the autumn of 1979, but left shortly before the pope’s visit to the United Nations General Assembly on 3 October. For the first time in many years, no Vatican representatives were invited to the traditional reception at the Soviet embassy in Rome on 7 November to mark the revolution anniversary. And, according to the Rome journalist Hansjakob Stehle, Soviet diplomats were heard to complain of John Paul’s repeated comments on human rights.⁶⁷

While Gromyko had five meetings with Pope Paul VI over 10 years, there was a long gap after the first meeting with Pope John Paul, perhaps prompted by the growing hostility to the pope from mid-1979, especially in the wake of the visit to Poland. Gromyko himself notes the difficulties the Soviet side had with the pope over what he calls ‘the well-known events in Poland’: the Solidarity unrest. ‘In relation to them,’ he wrote later, ‘the Vatican took up a position which, of course, crossed over the border separating politics from the problems of people’s worldview, and used its weight in a manner which was not in support of a socialist Poland.’

Contacts between the Kremlin and the Vatican were confined to a lower level as tensions increased in Poland. In December 1980 Central Committee member Vadim

Zagladin had a meeting with the pope in the Vatican. However, the content of their talks remains a mystery. Some sources allege that the pope warned Zagladin that he would return to Poland to be with his people if there was a Soviet invasion.⁶⁸ The audience John Paul gave to Lech Wałęsa in January 1981 and the Christmas letter of 18 December of the same year – just days after the imposition of martial law – annoyed the Soviet authorities. By sending Wałęsa (as well as Archbishops Glemp and Macharski) a copy of his letter to Jaruzelski, the pope was tacitly acknowledging Wałęsa as being at least on a par with the communist leader.⁶⁹

It is perhaps of significance that Gromyko had no meetings with the pope during the leadership of that great foe of Pope John Paul, Yuri Andropov, or during the brief rule of his successor Konstantin Chernenko. Dialogue resumed within weeks of Mikhail Gorbachev's election as general secretary of the Communist Party: Gromyko's second meeting with Pope John Paul took place in the Vatican on 27 March 1985. Gromyko was accompanied again by Ryzhov (by then a deputy foreign minister) and the ambassador to Italy, Nikolai Lun'kov. The pope was joined by Cardinal Casaroli and Archbishop Achille Silvestrini. Gromyko began by raising the question of war and disarmament, and indirectly attacked the Vatican for not doing enough to encourage peace. While praising the Vatican's stand against nuclear weapons, Gromyko was pressing for the peaceful coexistence of the communist and capitalist worlds without mutual hostility or interference. 'The principle of peaceful coexistence of states, independent of their social system, generally finds sympathy from the Catholic Church and the Vatican. But from this there have so far been no firm results.' Gromyko went on to issue a warning: 'The practical activity of the Vatican is a little diverted to the side of cultivating suspicion towards the socialist states.' Gromyko told the pope he believed there was a contradiction between support for the struggle for peace and 'interference in well-known ways in the internal affairs of states'.

It was again the pope who raised the question of the rights of believers in the Soviet Union, 'tactfully' as Gromyko declared. 'Do not Catholics in the USSR suffer some limitations to their civil rights, isn't that so?' the pope is quoted as asking. Gromyko restated his view that believers had full freedom, but added a coded warning. 'Religious figures, whatever their faith,' he replied, 'must not misuse their position and get involved in activities which are not their affair – in other words they should not interfere in affairs of state. This is how we understand the activity of those clergy, of whom there are not too many in the Soviet Union, who represent the Catholic faith.' The pope allegedly listened quietly to this explanation and did not raise the subject again.

Gromyko, and the Soviet Foreign Ministry, retained a wide range of semi-formal links with the Vatican, but remained suspicious of the Vatican's intentions. 'The Vatican orientates its pastoral work through a range of channels and modes of influence in support in everyday life of everything that favours the class of the well-off.' Gromyko's wooden phrases mask the Soviet authorities' deep frustration at their failure to make headway against aspects of the Vatican's work which they disliked, while mistrusting those parts that seemed to be in their favour. Perhaps symptomatically, Gromyko described the Vatican as the 'chief headquarters' (*glavny shtab*) of the Catholic Church, viewing it almost in military terms.

Despite trying to confine his conversations to international themes, and gaining Vatican support for Soviet foreign policy objectives, Gromyko was unable to avoid the question of the rights of Catholics in the Soviet Union. It is noticeable that he felt less happy discussing these with Pope John Paul than with earlier popes.

The 1981 Assassination Attempt

Yuri Andropov was, it seems, one of the more vocal critics of John Paul in the Soviet establishment. According to the defector Viktor Sheymov, a KGB major and communications intelligence expert in the Eighth Chief Directorate, Andropov certainly entertained the idea of killing the pope. Sheymov claims to have been on a work trip to the general who officially headed the KGB's Warsaw office in 1979, when the undercover station chief Colonel Solov'yev arrived with an urgent cable signed by the KGB chief: 'Obtain all possible information on how to get physically close to the pope.' According to Sheymov, this was a KGB euphemism for assassination. The general reportedly complained that 'If we do that we'll have to kill them all [the Poles] or get out of here.' Sheymov believed that the attempted assassination of the pope – which took place after he defected to the United States – was organised by the KGB. Sheymov's testimony – given at a Washington press conference in 1990⁷⁰ – has not been confirmed by other sources, but it is possible Andropov was seeking information on the feasibility of an assassination, whether or not he had decided to carry one out.

Much still remains unclear about the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square on 13 May 1981. Soon after the arrest of the Turk Mehmet Ali Agca, rumours of a Bulgarian connection and a possible link to the KGB emerged. Agca had been in close contact with officials of the Bulgarian airline and others. While the involvement of the KGB – or the CIA – has long been discussed,⁷¹ the archives remain closed on this point and it is as yet impossible to clarify whether any of the three countries mentioned were involved.

Oleg Gordievsky – then working at the KGB's First Chief Directorate in Moscow – recalls that opinion in the KGB was evenly divided between those who were convinced their service was involved and those who were convinced it was not.⁷² Vadim Bakatin, named by Mikhail Gorbachev to head the KGB on 23 August 1991 in the wake of the failed coup, was ordered to search the archives to discover if the KGB had been involved. 'Materials of the operational subdivisions and the archives of the KGB were examined,' Bakatin reports.

We were able to find something. But this 'something' could hardly be considered to be of material significance. Basically it consisted of notes from the [KGB] leadership which presented a political evaluation of the events connected with the attempt and the resulting judicial investigations, and suggested propaganda measures to counter 'the sensation stirred up in the West' about the 'Bulgarian connection'. No materials of any sort witnessing directly or indirectly to the involvement of the KGB in the attempt were uncovered. There were no sensations. I believe this accords with the truth.⁷³

In a March 1992 interview the former KGB *rezident* in Rome, Boris Solomatn, denied that searches in the KGB archives had turned up any suspicion of involvement.⁷⁴

In late 1992 the former head of the KGB First Chief Directorate, Leonid Shebarshin, also spoke on the subject. When he was appointed in February 1989, Gorbachev and the then KGB chief Kryuchkov had instructed him to initiate an enquiry into whether the KGB had been involved. Shebarshin declared that they found not the slightest evidence of KGB involvement. Shebarshin also denied any Bulgarian connection. In August 1985, he said, Kryuchkov and he had travelled to Sofia to meet their counterparts in the Bulgarian *Durzhavna Sigurnost*. At 'relaxed' meetings, the two had asked the DS chief, Vassili Kotsev, if the Bulgarians had been involved. Kotsev denied it emphatically. Shebarshin maintains, and believes the view was shared by the

KGB, that the assassination attempt was a joint action of the CIA and allied secret services.⁷⁵

While the full archives remain closed the mystery will remain unsolved. However, it is clear that whether the KGB was involved or not there were fears that worldwide public opinion would immediately conclude that it had been. Both openly and behind the scenes the Soviet state devoted great resources to denying claims of involvement in what they called the 'Antonov case' (named after Sergei Antonov, an official of the Bulgarian airline alleged to have been an accomplice of Agca who was arrested in Rome on 25 November 1982). Press articles and pamphlets were written or translated from Bulgarian for publication in the Soviet Union and abroad. In 1984–5 continuing concern at the highest level is shown by reports to the Central Committee based on internal information and information from the Soviet Embassy in Sofia and the Institute for State and Law of the Academy of Sciences on prospects for possible developments in the 'Antonov case'.⁷⁶

Changing Attitudes

It is as yet too early to assess the changing attitudes to John Paul II as the Soviet era drew to a close. The election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the CPSU in 1985 did not immediately change the state's wariness of the Catholic Church. Valeri Alekseyev, a former worker in the Komsomol headquarters, reports that antireligious moves continued throughout the Gorbachev era. Gorbachev and Ligachev sanctioned

the drawing up and adoption of a whole range of secret decrees of the CC of the CPSU between 1985 and 1990 on strengthening the struggle against 'the activation of religious sectarianism', and 'the reactionary influence of the Muslim clergy', and on limiting the influence of Catholicism on the population, on measures to counter Orthodox influence etc.⁷⁷

In public, however, the Soviet leadership began to warm to Pope John Paul. The culmination of this rapprochement was the historic visit by Mikhail Gorbachev, by then Soviet president, to the Vatican on 1 December 1989. Diplomatic relations were promised and Gorbachev invited the pope to visit the Soviet Union. The almost simultaneous lifting of the ban on the Ukrainian Catholic Church removed one Vatican reservation about the Soviet system. Gorbachev could also safely ignore representations against the Soviet state's alleged new closeness to the Vatican. At the Central Committee plenum in December 1989, just days after he had met John Paul II, Gorbachev was attacked by hardliner Aleksandr Mel'nikov for foisting policies on the country that the 'bourgeois world', 'our former and current enemies' and even the pope would bless.⁷⁸ Following the relegalisation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, leading Russian Orthodox hierarchs – traditionally very faithful to Soviet policy – complained to Gorbachev and to the deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Anatoli Luk'yanov, about what they saw as the state's betrayal of their interests to the Catholic Church in Western Ukraine. Luk'yanov gave them a sympathetic hearing but Gorbachev did not.⁷⁹ Gorbachev had a second Vatican meeting with the pope in November 1990, although with less dramatic results.

Gorbachev's subsequent assessment of his relations with the pope were almost embarrassingly effusive: speaking of the 'deep feeling of sympathy and understanding between us', he declared that the revolutions that shook Eastern Europe in 1989 'would not have been possible without the presence of the pope, without the political role he was able to play on the world stage'. Gorbachev, writing in 1992, revealed that since the

1989 meeting, the two had had 'an intense exchange of letters'.

It is not easy to describe the understanding that exists between me and the pope because in a relationship of this kind, enormous importance must be given to an instructive, perhaps intuitive, and certainly personal element. I don't have the slightest difficulty in admitting that I was in accord with many ideas in his discourses.⁸⁰

Within ten years the Kremlin view of John Paul had changed dramatically.

Conclusions

It is clear that the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 was a major surprise for the Soviet state. At first it did not know how to react, reserving its judgment while it formulated its response. Traditional suspicion of the Vatican, especially on the part of the KGB and the ideological establishment, was soon seen to be vindicated as John Paul's 1979 visit to Poland revealed the depth of the challenge he posed to Soviet-backed communist rule in Eastern Europe. Outright opposition crystallised in summer 1979 during and immediately after the visit. Moves to counter the Vatican's perceived increased activity were worked out in the summer and autumn of 1979, culminating in the Central Committee decree of November 1979. All institutions of the Soviet state then moved into action to fulfil their role in the plan. The range of institutions involved in countering the Vatican shows the vast and diverse resources available to the Soviet leadership for mobilisation in pursuit of an objective, as well as the connections and interrelations between them all. Although different institutions adopted different nuances and approaches, all shared the same, centrally directed policy goal.

The measures taken against the Catholic Church – both internally and internationally – tended to be based on earlier models: public attacks on the Vatican, smear campaigns, the use of the Orthodox Church as a proxy, internal repression. The revival of interest in the Vatican also led to a voracious campaign to collect as much information as possible about all aspects of the Catholic Church in an endeavour not to miss the slightest nuances of Vatican planning. It is significant that the Vatican's every move was interpreted as part of an antisoviet plot coordinated with every conceivable enemy: Zbigniew Brzezinski's visceral antisovietism, Ronald Reagan's Evil Empire plans, the 'Islamic factor'. The Catholic Church, the Vatican and Pope John Paul personally required a more subtle approach in the late 1970s and 1980s than was possible in earlier decades, with the Soviet authorities trying to present an agreeable face in public and reserving their hostility for activity behind the scenes.

It is too early to say how far the KGB desired, planned or was involved in the attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul in 1981. Perhaps the full truth will never emerge. Nevertheless the growing influence at the top of KGB chief Yuri Andropov, perhaps the leading force in the Soviet Union even before he became General Secretary of the CPSU in November 1982, is clear in a more ideological approach to the Vatican than was shown under Brezhnev. It was only after Andropov's death that paranoia about the West, including the Vatican, began to ease.

The Soviet state was one of the first to realise the profound and far-reaching implications of the papal election and the role of the Catholic Church in the undermining of communist rule in Eastern Europe. Traditional paranoia about organisations outside its control led the Soviet state to exaggerate the degree of organisation behind Catholic undermining of communism. But in the end the Soviet state was powerless to resist the gradual crumbling of its authority in which Pope John Paul played a significant (but by no means unique) role.

Notes and References

- ¹ *Pervaya sessiya Vtorogo Vatikanskogo Sobora (informatsiya)*, Lithuanian State Archive (LSA), Vilnius, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.64, pp. 163–7.
- ² *O politike papy Pavla VI*, LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.68, pp. 1–22.
- ³ *Spravka o pretenziyakh Vatikana po voprosam katolicheskoi tserkvi v SSSR*, LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.75.
- ⁴ Both are in LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.86.
- ⁵ *O nekotorykh voprosakh sovershenstvovaniya kontrolya za soblyudeniyu zakonodatel'stva o religioznykh kul'takh*, 17 May 1973, pp. 14–15, LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.89.
- ⁶ *Spravka o besede predsedatelya Soveta po delam religii pri Sovete Ministrov tov. Kuroyedova V. A. s sekretarem Soveta po gosudarstvennym delam Vatikana arkhiepiskopom Karfagenskim Agostino Casaroli*, LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.84. (English translation in *Inside the Vatican* (Rome), January 1994.) For an account based on Casaroli's view of the meeting see Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican 1917–1979* (Ohio University Press, Athens OH, 1981), pp. 365–6.
- ⁷ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.91. The CRA had long been running a campaign against pilgrimages to 'so-called holy places', beginning with a Central Committee decree of 28 November 1958, and a CRA decree of 17 October 1972.
- ⁸ Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *More 'Instructions from the Centre': Top Secret Files on KGB Global Operations* (Frank Cass, London, 1992), p. 46.
- ⁹ Central Committee Archive (CCA) in the Centre for the Preservation of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD), Moscow, F.5, Op.67, D.963. According to Valeri Alekseyev, who worked in the propaganda and agitation department of the Komsomol central committee ('*Shturm nebes' otmenyayetsya?* (Rossiya Molodaya, Moscow, 1992), pp. 262 and 265), Andropov – unlike Brezhnev (and his faithful follower Chernenko) – took a personal interest in the 'religious question'. Brezhnev's indifference to religious questions is recalled by Kuroyedov in an interview in *Lyudina i svit* (Kiev), no. 1, 1992.
- ¹⁰ Letter of 23 January 1978, LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.101. The 1978 CRA plan is in the same file.
- ¹¹ CCA, F.5, Op.75, D.83. Although this is still a closed file, the text was leaked to *Rodina* (Moscow). A partial Italian translation appeared in *La Stampa* (Turin), 23 April 1993.
- ¹² *Vozmozhnyye izmeneniya vo vnutropoliticheskoi situatsii Pol'shi v svyazi s izbraniyem K. Voityly papoi*, CCA, F.5, Op.75, D.1072 (closed file).
- ¹³ Interview with David Ignatius, *Washington Post*, 2 March 1990. The same day Sheymov repeated his claims at press conferences in Washington, reported in the American and British media the following day. Sheymov worked in the cypher department of the Eighth Chief Directorate. He amplified these reminiscences in his rather fictionalised memoirs *Tower of Secrets* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 1993), p. 98.
- ¹⁴ According to Stanislav Levchenko, who defected from the KGB in 1979, this service made a conscientious effort to provide accurate and scholarly reports for the Politburo and other clients. John Barron, *KGB Today: the Hidden Hand* (Reader's Digest, New York, 1983), p. 448.
- ¹⁵ Vladimir Solovyov and Yelena Klepikova, *Yuri Andropov: a Secret Passage into the Kremlin* (Robert Hale, London, 1984), p. 199, and *Inside the Kremlin* (W. H. Allen, London, 1987), pp. 105–6. They claim the KGB analysis was 'pilfered by a foreign intelligence agency', but give no further source. As corroboratory evidence they cite a *Życie Warszawy* article from 13 March 1983, reprinting an article in the Madrid weekly *El Tiempo*, which quoted an apparently forged memorandum from Brzezinski to President Carter outlining his plans to get Wojtyła elected. It is possible the planted memorandum was part of Operation Sirena 2, begun in September 1982 by the FCD's Service A: Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *Instructions from the Centre: Top Secret Files on KGB Foreign Operations 1975–1985* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1991), p. 100.
- ¹⁶ *Ob itogakh poyezdki delegatsii Soveta po delam religii pri Sovete Ministrov v Pol'skuyu Narodnuyu Respubliku*, CCA, F.5, Op.76, D.186, document 1.

- ¹⁷ This is a free quotation from an article that in fact appeared in the *Corriere* on 5 February. Kuroyedov, as will be seen again below, did not pay much attention to detail.
- ¹⁸ The plan was compiled for the 16 January Central Committee secretariat meeting, CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.800. The CRA may not have known then that the pope's visit to Poland would go ahead in June.
- ¹⁹ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.103.
- ²⁰ The Lithuanian CRA copy is in LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.103.
- ²¹ *Pravda*, 17 June 1983.
- ²² *Soviet Analyst*, 28 June 1979, p. 7, quoting the Italian press.
- ²³ January–October 1979, CCA, F.5, Op.76, D.931 (closed file).
- ²⁴ March 1978 to March 1979, CCA, F.5, Op.75, D.1072 (closed file).
- ²⁵ Lithuanian Party Archive, Vilnius, F.1771, Ap.256, B.228. Not all the questions were so worrying. 'Why are the same films always repeated on TV?' was one, as was 'Why are women no longer sent into space?'
- ²⁶ Kuroyedov erroneously gives the date as June. It is not clear whether he attended the Berlin meeting.
- ²⁷ *Problemy mira i sotsializma*, no. 9, 1979, pp. 54–5. It was also briefly mentioned by the GDR party daily *Neues Deutschland*, 6 July 1979. Countries represented at the meeting were Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary, Laos, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Vietnam.
- ²⁸ Kuroyedov's speech, *Ob osobennostyakh sovremennoi religioznoi obstanovki i zadachakh po povysheniyu effektivnosti kontrolya za soblyudeniym zakonodatel'stva o religioznykh kul'takh*, 21–2 May 1980, is in LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.106. The above quotes are found on pp. 12–13.
- ²⁹ 'O praktike raboty po protivodeistviyu katolicheskoi i uniatskoi propagande', *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, no. 28, 1981, pp. 202–3.
- ³⁰ CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.1060 (closed file).
- ³¹ The decree is mentioned in Protocol No. 184 of the 13 November 1979 secretariat meeting where it was passed. The text is still in a closed file in the Central Committee archives, but was leaked to *Rodina*. A partial Italian translation appeared in *La Stampa*, 23 April 1993.
- ³² LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.105 contains the copy sent to the Lithuanian commissioner Petras Anilionis.
- ³³ The text was not published until 17 June 1979 (conveniently, after the pope's visit to Poland) in *Osservatore Romano*, a paper that was read attentively in the CRA. The pope's letter to Slipyi kept reappearing in the anti-Vatican studies. See Anatoli Belov, *Kritichesky analiz ideologii i politiki sovremennogo klerikal'nogo antikommunizma* (Moscow, 1982); Miloslav Matouška, *Kritika klerikal'nogo antikommunizma i problemy ego preodeleniya (na materialy ChSSR)*, dissertation of the Institute of Scientific Atheism, 1982, p. 107 (Pope John Paul, Matouška maintains, offers the Ukrainian Catholic Church certain support 'contrary to the reserved position of his predecessors Paul VI and John XXIII').
- ³⁴ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.103.
- ³⁵ *Spravka o besede s ksenzom Rachiunasom*, LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.103, pp. 248–51.
- ³⁶ CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.1176.
- ³⁷ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.98.
- ³⁸ The text of this letter and other Committee documents are translated in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer 1979), pp. 88–9.
- ³⁹ CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.1326.
- ⁴⁰ This part of the *oriyentirovka* appears to derive from standard published assessments, such as the entry on the Vatican in the *Diplomaticheskyy slovar'*, which was edited in the Foreign Ministry.
- ⁴¹ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.110.
- ⁴² January 1980 to January 1981, CCA, F.5, Op.77, D.695 (closed file). Includes report from Soviet embassy in Warsaw, *O nekotorykh osobennostyakh otnoshenii mezhdu gosudarstvom i kostelem na sovremennom etape*.

- ⁴³ February 1981 to March 1982, CCA, F.5, Op.84, D.609 (closed file). Includes report from the Institute of Scientific Atheism, *Katolicheskaya tserkov' i sobytiya v Pol'she*.
- ⁴⁴ January 1982 to January 1983, CCA, F.5, Op.88, D.733 (closed file).
- ⁴⁵ Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: the Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990), p. 537.
- ⁴⁶ 'The Holy Alliance', *Time*, 24 February 1992.
- ⁴⁷ *Pravda*, 19 June 1982.
- ⁴⁸ Tass in English, 10 November 1982.
- ⁴⁹ Report in CCA, F.5, Op.84, D.483 (closed file).
- ⁵⁰ CCA, F.5, Op.88, D.606 and Op.90, D.582 (closed files).
- ⁵¹ CCA, F.5, Op.88, D.635 (closed file).
- ⁵² February 1983 to February 1984, CCA, F.5, Op.89, D.545 (closed file).
- ⁵³ *Ob osobennostyakh otnoshenii gosudarstva s kostelem posle vtorogo (iyun' 1983g.) vizita papy v Pol'shu*, CCA, F.5, Op.90, D.722 (closed file).
- ⁵⁴ See *V pomoshch' upolnomochennomu*, information materials, issue 5 (Moscow CRA, 1983), pp. 33–5, in LSA, F. R181, Ap.3, B.112. For the attacks on religious extremism at the Moscow plenum see *Materialy plenuma TsK KPSS, 14–15 iyunya 1983 goda* (Politizdat, Moscow, 1983), p. 60.
- ⁵⁵ Andrew and Gordievsky, *Instructions*. . . , pp. 16–22.
- ⁵⁶ Chief conclusions and views adopted at the meeting of heads of service, 1 February 1984, translated in Andrew and Gordievsky, *Instructions*. . . , pp. 4–14.
- ⁵⁷ *Work on the Vatican*, Directive No. 2182/PR and attachment, translated in Andrew and Gordievsky, *More Instructions*. . . , pp. 47–52.
- ⁵⁸ Interview in *Panorama* (Milan), 22 March 1992.
- ⁵⁹ *Izvestiya*, 7 October 1984.
- ⁶⁰ *Measures to Counter the Subversive Activity of the Vatican*, 19 December 1984, sent by Nikolai Gribin of the FCD to *rezidenty*, translated in Andrew and Gordievsky, *More Instructions*. . . , p. 48.
- ⁶¹ LSA, F. R181, Ap.3, B.117.
- ⁶² LSA, F. R181, Ap.3, B.117.
- ⁶³ The best surveys are by Radio Liberty's research department: Elizabeth Scheetz, 'Official Soviet reaction to new Pope', 13 November 1978 (*RL* 251/78); 'How the Pope is faring in the Soviet media', 19 October 1981 (*RL* 414/81). See also Alex Alexiev, *The Kremlin and the Pope*, Rand Corporation report P-6855, April 1983.
- ⁶⁴ As quoted by Tass, December 1982.
- ⁶⁵ Andrei Gromyko, *Pamyatnoye* (Politizdat, Moscow, 1988). The account of his meetings in the Vatican is in vol. 2, pp. 39–46. The English version, *Memories* (Hutchinson, London, 1989), has the same material on pp. 211–14, but the version is abridged and tidied up, and a few significant remarks are removed.
- ⁶⁶ Quoted in David Willey, *God's Politician: John Paul at the Vatican* (Faber and Faber, London, 1992), p. 14.
- ⁶⁷ The facts in this paragraph come from Stehle, *op. cit.*, p. 387.
- ⁶⁸ Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August* (London, 1982), p. 223. See also Claire Sterling, *The Time of the Assassins* (Angus and Robertson, London, 1984), pp. 122–3.
- ⁶⁹ The pope's letters to Jaruzelski and Wałęsa are reproduced in Lech Walesa, *A Path of Hope* (Collins Harvill, London, 1987), pp. 223–5.
- ⁷⁰ Press conference, 2 March 1990. See also Sheymov, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–7.
- ⁷¹ Two of the more accusatory authors are Claire Sterling, *op. cit.*, and Paul Henze, *The Plot to Kill the Pope* (Croom Helm, London, 1984). Both use circumstantial evidence – including Soviet hostility to Pope John Paul – to try to prove a KGB plot. Other writers taking a similar line include W. R. Corson and R. T. Crowley, *The New KGB: Engine of Soviet Power* (William Morrow, New York, 1985), p. 380.
- ⁷² Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*. . . , p. 537.
- ⁷³ Vadim Bakatin, *Izpravleniye ot KGB* (Novosti, Moscow, 1992), p. 171.

- ¹⁷ This is a free quotation from an article that in fact appeared in the *Corriere* on 5 February. Kuroyedov, as will be seen again below, did not pay much attention to detail.
- ¹⁸ The plan was compiled for the 16 January Central Committee secretariat meeting, CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.800. The CRA may not have known then that the pope's visit to Poland would go ahead in June.
- ¹⁹ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.103.
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- ²⁶ Kuroyedov erroneously gives the date as June. It is not clear whether he attended the Berlin meeting.
- ²⁷ *Problemy mira i sotsializma*, no. 9, 1979, pp. 54–5. It was also briefly mentioned by the GDR party daily *Neues Deutschland*, 6 July 1979. Countries represented at the meeting were Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary, Laos, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, the USSR and Vietnam.
- ²⁸ Kuroyedov's speech, *Ob osobennostyakh sovremennoi religioznoi obstanovki i zadachakh po povysheniyu effektivnosti kontrolya za soblyudeniym zakonodatel'stva o religioznykh kul'takh*, 21–2 May 1980, is in LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.106. The above quotes are found on pp. 12–13.
- ²⁹ 'O praktike raboty po protivodeistviyu katolicheskoi i uniatskoi propagande', *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, no. 28, 1981, pp. 202–3.
- ³⁰ CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.1060 (closed file).
- ³¹ The decree is mentioned in Protocol No. 184 of the 13 November 1979 secretariat meeting where it was passed. The text is still in a closed file in the Central Committee archives, but was leaked to *Rodina*. A partial Italian translation appeared in *La Stampa*, 23 April 1993.
- ³² LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.105 contains the copy sent to the Lithuanian commissioner Petras Anilionis.
- ³³ The text was not published until 17 June 1979 (conveniently, after the pope's visit to Poland) in *Osservatore Romano*, a paper that was read attentively in the CRA. The pope's letter to Sliipy kept reappearing in the anti-Vatican studies. See Anatoli Belov, *Kritichesky analiz ideologii i politiki sovremennoogo klerikal'nogo antikommunizma* (Moscow, 1982); Miloslav Matouška, *Kritika klerikal'nogo antikommunizma i problemy ego preodeleniya (na materialy ChSSR)*, dissertation of the Institute of Scientific Atheism, 1982, p. 107 (Pope John Paul, Matouška maintains, offers the Ukrainian Catholic Church certain support 'contrary to the reserved position of his predecessors Paul VI and John XXIII').
- ³⁴ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.103.
- ³⁵ *Spravka o besede s ksendzom Rachiunasom*, LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.103, pp. 248–51.
- ³⁶ CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.1176.
- ³⁷ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.98.
- ³⁸ The text of this letter and other Committee documents are translated in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer 1979), pp. 88–9.
- ³⁹ CCA, F.4, Op.24, D.1326.
- ⁴⁰ This part of the *oriyentirovka* appears to derive from standard published assessments, such as the entry on the Vatican in the *Diplomaticheskyy slovar'*, which was edited in the Foreign Ministry.
- ⁴¹ LSA, F. R181, Ap. 3, B.110.
- ⁴² January 1980 to January 1981, CCA, F.5, Op.77, D.695 (closed file). Includes report from Soviet embassy in Warsaw, *O nekotorykh osobennostyakh otnoshenii mezhdru gosudarstvom i kostelem na sovremennom etape*.

- ⁴³ February 1981 to March 1982, CCA, F.5, Op.84, D.609 (closed file). Includes report from the Institute of Scientific Atheism, *Katolicheskaya tserkov' i sobytiya v Pol'she*.
- ⁴⁴ January 1982 to January 1983, CCA, F.5, Op.88, D.733 (closed file).
- ⁴⁵ Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: the Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990), p. 537.
- ⁴⁶ 'The Holy Alliance', *Time*, 24 February 1992.
- ⁴⁷ *Pravda*, 19 June 1982.
- ⁴⁸ Tass in English, 10 November 1982.
- ⁴⁹ Report in CCA, F.5, Op.84, D.483 (closed file).
- ⁵⁰ CCA, F.5, Op.88, D.606 and Op.90, D.582 (closed files).
- ⁵¹ CCA, F.5, Op.88, D.635 (closed file).
- ⁵² February 1983 to February 1984, CCA, F.5, Op.89, D.545 (closed file).
- ⁵³ *Ob osobennostyakh otnoshenii gosudarstva s kostelem posle vtorogo (iyun' 1983g.) vizita papy v Pol'shu*, CCA, F.5, Op.90, D.722 (closed file).
- ⁵⁴ See *V pomoshch' upolnomochennomu*, information materials, issue 5 (Moscow CRA, 1983), pp. 33–5, in LSA, F. R181, Ap.3, B.112. For the attacks on religious extremism at the Moscow plenum see *Materialy plenuma TsK KPSS, 14–15 iyunya 1983 goda* (Politizdat, Moscow, 1983), p. 60.
- ⁵⁵ Andrew and Gordievsky, *Instructions*. . . , pp. 16–22.
- ⁵⁶ Chief conclusions and views adopted at the meeting of heads of service, 1 February 1984, translated in Andrew and Gordievsky, *Instructions*. . . , pp. 4–14.
- ⁵⁷ *Work on the Vatican*, Directive No. 2182/PR and attachment, translated in Andrew and Gordievsky, *More Instructions*. . . , pp. 47–52.
- ⁵⁸ Interview in *Panorama* (Milan), 22 March 1992.
- ⁵⁹ *Izvestiya*, 7 October 1984.
- ⁶⁰ *Measures to Counter the Subversive Activity of the Vatican*, 19 December 1984, sent by Nikolai Gribin of the FCD to *rezidenty*, translated in Andrew and Gordievsky, *More Instructions*. . . , p. 48.
- ⁶¹ LSA, F. R181, Ap.3, B.117.
- ⁶² LSA, F. R181, Ap.3, B.117.
- ⁶³ The best surveys are by Radio Liberty's research department: Elizabeth Scheetz, 'Official Soviet reaction to new Pope', 13 November 1978 (*RL* 251/78); 'How the Pope is faring in the Soviet media', 19 October 1981 (*RL* 414/81). See also Alex Alexiev, *The Kremlin and the Pope*, Rand Corporation report P-6855, April 1983.
- ⁶⁴ As quoted by Tass, December 1982.
- ⁶⁵ Andrei Gromyko, *Pamyatnoye* (Politizdat, Moscow, 1988). The account of his meetings in the Vatican is in vol. 2, pp. 39–46. The English version, *Memories* (Hutchinson, London, 1989), has the same material on pp. 211–14, but the version is abridged and tidied up, and a few significant remarks are removed.
- ⁶⁶ Quoted in David Willey, *God's Politician: John Paul at the Vatican* (Faber and Faber, London, 1992), p. 14.
- ⁶⁷ The facts in this paragraph come from Stehle, *op. cit.*, p. 387.
- ⁶⁸ Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August* (London, 1982), p. 223. See also Claire Sterling, *The Time of the Assassins* (Angus and Robertson, London, 1984), pp. 122–3.
- ⁶⁹ The pope's letters to Jaruzelski and Wałęsa are reproduced in Lech Walesa, *A Path of Hope* (Collins Harvill, London, 1987), pp. 223–5.
- ⁷⁰ Press conference, 2 March 1990. See also Sheymov, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–7.
- ⁷¹ Two of the more accusatory authors are Claire Sterling, *op. cit.*, and Paul Henze, *The Plot to Kill the Pope* (Croom Helm, London, 1984). Both use circumstantial evidence – including Soviet hostility to Pope John Paul – to try to prove a KGB plot. Other writers taking a similar line include W. R. Corson and R. T. Crowley, *The New KGB: Engine of Soviet Power* (William Morrow, New York, 1985), p. 380.
- ⁷² Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*. . . , p. 537.
- ⁷³ Vadim Bakatin, *Izjavleniye ot KGB* (Novosti, Moscow, 1992), p. 171.

⁷⁴ *Panorama*, 22 March 1992.

⁷⁵ *Corriere della Sera*, reported in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 December 1992. The same article reports similar views from former Bulgarian foreign minister Petar Mladenov that the attempt was the work of the CIA, which was aiming to destroy growing dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Soviet state under Andropov, allegedly a supporter of better ties with the Catholic Church.

⁷⁶ *O perspektivakh vozmozhnogo razvitiya sobytii vokrug 'dela Antonova'*, August 1984 to July 1985, CCA, F.5, Op.90, D.571 (closed file).

⁷⁷ Alekseyev, '*Shturm nebes' otmenyayetsya?*', p. 266. Alekseyev's writing should be treated with some caution. He attributes the Soviet leader's rapprochement with John Paul to Gorbachev's need 'to join the mondialist-Masonic worldwide elite' (p. 273).

⁷⁸ Transcript in *Izvestiya TsK KPSS*, no. 4, 1990.

⁷⁹ CCA, F.89, Op.8, D.41.

⁸⁰ 'Humanity and John Paul', *Guardian*, 14 March 1992, translated from *La Stampa*, 3 March 1992.