

ADAM DROZDEK

AVGUSTIN GOLITSYN ON CATHOLICIZATION OF RUSSIA

The prince Avgustin Petrovich Golitsyn from the distinguished nobleman family of Golitsyns is today a largely forgotten figure. Information about his life is very scanty¹.

Avgustin Golitsyn was born in 1823 in St. Petersburg of the family of prince Petr Alekseevich Golitsyn and the Polish-born Elżbieta Złotnicka. He was schooled at home; since his youth he lived in France where he married Louise de la Roche-Aymon in 1844. He died in Paris in 1875.

In his testament Golitsyn urged his children “to be faithful to the Catholic Church and to Russia.” This statement summarizes two focal points of his life. The first is his Catholic faith. He was most likely raised in the Catholic atmosphere since his father converted to Catholicism in 1820 and his mother, was very likely also a Catholic like most Poles. Moreover, the Golitsyn fa-

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¹ Marquis du Prat, *Ouvrages du prince Augustin Galitzin, Revue de l'Anjou et du Maine* 1 (1857), 257-260; a handful of letters written by Madame Swetchine to Golitsyn, in the third volume of her *Letteres*; P. Pierling, *Le prince Gagarine et ses amis: 1814-1882*, Paris 1996, ch. 12.

mily was very receptive to the Catholic faith². His grand-mother, Alexandra Petrovna Golitsyn, née Protasova, converted to Catholicism in 1806; her daughter, Elizaveta Alekseevna Golitsyn, became a nun and conducted missionary work among Indians in the Rocky Mountains³; his cousin, Dmitrii Dmitrevich Golitsyn, was a revered Catholic missionary in Pennsylvania⁴.

The second area of Golitsyn's interest was Russia. He was a historian and translator, and published numerous French translations of historical sources and literary works from several languages, but he focused on sources related to Russian history. Because of his marriage, he lived in the Chenonceaux palace that belonged to prince Villeneuve, father of marquis de la Roche-Aymon, his father in law. The palace occupies a distinguished position in French history and its archives were a source for the many documents that Golitsyn published.

His patriotism and faith were intricately connected. In Paris, Golitsyn frequently participated in the salon of Madame Swetchine, a Russian émigrée who converted to Catholicism. He befriended there a Russian Jesuit, Ivan Gagarin, who stirred an intense discussion among Russian intellectuals, both in Russia and abroad, with the publication of his book *Will Russia become Catholic?* (1856), in which he proposed that Russia should become a Catholic country to lift itself from its backwardness⁵. In this he continued the idea outlined by Petr Chaadaev in his first *Philosophical letter* (1836), for which he was officially declared insane. Golitsyn apparently knew Chaadaev personally, and he became a strong supporter of Chaadaev's and Gagarin's idea of Catholicization of Russia. He expressed his views own on religion in Russia in particular in his short books, *The Greek-Russian church* (1861), *Is the Russian church free?* (1861), and *The Holy See and Russia* (1864).

According to Golitsyn, three issues prevent the Russian church to enter the union with the Catholic church: the procession of the Holy Spirit; purga-

² A list of the Catholic members of the Golitsyn family can be found in [I.] Gagarin, *Conversion d'une dame russe à la foi catholique*, Paris: Douniol 1862, 183-186; E. Н. Цимбаева, *Русский католицизм. Идея всееропейского единства в России XIX века*, Москва 2008, pp. 186-187.

³ Golitsyn published a book based on her notes and letters, A. Galitzin, *Vie d'une religieuse du Sacré-Coeur 1795-1843*, Paris 1869.

⁴ Golitsyn translated his book from English, D. Galitzin, *Un missionnaire russe en Amérique: défense des principes catholiques adressée à un ministre protestant*, Paris 1856, and wrote an introductory note about Dmitrii's life.

⁵ J. Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle catholique?*, Paris 1856; A. Drozdek, *Gagarin and the Petrine primacy*, „Perspectiva” 8 (2009), no. 1, pp. 73-90.

tory; and the primacy of the pope (EGR 29)⁶. Golitsyn did not discuss other divisive points, such as the problem of celibacy; the use of unleavened bread for communion; or communion for all people in two forms.

In the Third Council of Toledo in 589, the Nicene Creed was modified with the addition the *Filioque* phrase stating that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*. The Eastern church rejected the addition since it was not accepted by an ecumenical council and because it violated the elevated position of the Father.

Golitsyn argued that, in respect to the procession of the Holy Spirit, there is only a slight difference in wording between the churches (EGR 31). Christ said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (J. 15:26), but the Holy Spirit receives from Christ (J. 16:14) and is sent by Christ (J. 16:17), which makes it obvious that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The nature of this procession is “a mystery reserved for a blessed vision” (32). This truth is in the Gospels and even the Protestants, “these great demolishers of the Christian edifice,” never questioned it (33). The Holy Spirit was sent only after Jesus was glorified (J. 7:39), that is, “this could be done only through the union of the two persons of the holy Trinity from which [the Holy Spirit] proceeds.” The Father sends the Holy Spirit in Christ’s name (J. 16:26), that is, not only in His own, the Father’s, name, but also in His Son’s. When Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto His disciples (J. 20:22), He testified that the procession is from the Son (34). The fathers of the church – Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria – accepted this doctrine (LCP 784 note 2). Golitsyn also claimed that even the third and fourth ecumenical councils accepted it (EGR 35).

The church is the final authority on matters of faith, but the church “has also the right to teach, explain, and expose to all ages according to the necessity of time and place.” In the interest of this necessity, the Nicene Creed evolved. The first added council the word “consubstantial”; the council of Constantinople added a passage related to the divinity of Christ; in Chalcedon, consubstantiality of the Father and Son and the consubstantiality of Christ and man were added (EGR 39). Moreover, no authority can prohibit a believer to think about the procession of the Holy Spirit the way the Roman

⁶ References are made to the following works of Golitsyn:

EGR – *L’Église Gréco-russe*, Paris 1861.

ERL – *L’Église russe est-elle libre?*, Paris 1861.

LP – *De la liberté de la presse au point de vue religieux*, Paris 1860.

LCP – *Luther condamné par Photius*, “Le Correspondant” 36 (1855), pp. 769-785.

M – *Mélanges sur la Russie*, Paris 1863.

Church teaches. It is an opinion of the Eastern church, not a condemned doctrine. Only an ecumenical council can condemn it, and none of them did (37). Thus, Golitsyn basically agreed with Gagarin that the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit is an article of faith for a Catholic: it is not a dogma of the Orthodox church, but is an opinion and thus should not be condemned as heresy⁷.

The second issue Golitsyn addressed is the problem of purgatory, whose existence is denied by Orthodoxy. Metropolitan Platon defined purgatory as a modern fable (EGR 42). However, some Russian authors claimed that the soul makes a journey of 20 (some say 40) days through “imaginary spaces before it reaches the place of rest,” which can be interpreted as a passage through purgatory (44). We do not know for certain, Golitsyn said, where and how much souls suffer; we believe that God in His infinite mercy brings things back to order by the adequate punishment. Also, the Scriptures say that “an impious man, once dead, does not have any hope” (Prov. 11:7), which means that someone who did not make “a profession of impiety” and who also did not make “a profession of Christianity” can still have hope. Purgatory is effectively present in 2 Macc. 12 forcing the Protestants to reject the book (45). Christ spoke about a sin against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven either in this or the next world (Mt. 12:32), implying that some sins can be forgiven in the next world, which points to the existence of the purgatory (46). The fathers of the church recognized its existence (47), so did the Hebrew tradition, Plato in his *Gorgias* and *Phaedo* (48), and the Muslims by recognizing Araf as such a place (49). The Russians pray for the dead and they even have special memorial service for them, called *panikhida* (53). The rhetorical question remains, if prayers for the departed souls are to be effective, where are they now? If they are in heaven, then no prayers are needed. If they are in hell and if some souls can be yanked from hell through the mediation of prayer, then they are effectively in a purgatory that is part of hell. If Orthodox doctrine establishes the necessity of prayer for the dead, then it thereby confirms the Catholic doctrine of purgatory (LCP 771).

The third issue is the problem of apostolic succession. Golitsyn stated that the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit was only a pretext for the schism between the Eastern and Western churches. The real reason was the papacy (EGR 59). The primacy of the pope was recognized by early church fathers and by the first seven councils (63). On 16 January, the day of Peter (64), believers say a prayer that states that he is “the foundation of the Church,

⁷ Gagarin, *La Russie...*, p. 51.

the king of faith, bearer of the key to the kingdom of heaven, the owner of the *first* apostolic throne” (65). If Jesus wanted a visible head of the church, then a succession of heads was necessary. Many Orthodox texts confirm this succession (66). Great merit of Gagarin lies in extracting Catholic truths from liturgical books of the Russian church (68). Following the example of de Maistre and others, Gagarin used Orthodox liturgical texts to show in respect to the Catholic doctrine of the divine origin of papacy that “there is clearly a contradiction between these texts and practice of the Russian church”⁸. Therefore, Golitsyn’s prayer was that, through the grace of God, Orthodox believers would “recognize the truth about which they loudly sing every day” (LCP 772), because the undercurrent of the Russian church is really of the Catholic origin and the Catholic spirit is in the Russian church “through all that is miraculously preserved in its doctrines and liturgy”⁹. The exposition of the doctrine changed all this, or, as Golitsyn phrased it, “the scientific exposition of the dogma was corrupted, but the popular hymns which are left intact proclaim it” (LCP 771), i.e., they proclaim, among others, the papal primacy.

A major problem with the Russian church was its dependence on the state. Since 1821, after publication of the *Spiritual regulation*, the office of the patriarch was abolished and replaced with the Synod which effectively became a department of the state; that is, the tsar became the real head of the church. Peter I had a hand in writing this document, but the principal author was Prokopovich, “an apostate monk, unfaithful even to heterodoxy, [man] of exquisite falsehood, an accomplish coward”¹⁰. Archpriest Iosif Vasil’ev, a chaplain of the Russian embassy in Paris, claimed that Peter I did not want to enslave the church (ERL 16), but sought to guarantee its independence. However, after the tenth patriarch, Adrian, died in 1700, Peter I waited until 1720 to call a council where he presided and, in the following year, he established by an ukase a Synod of 4 archbishops, 7 archimandrites, and 10 archpriest (17), reduced to 3 archbishops, 20 archimandrites and 1 archpriest in 1763 by Catherine II (18). Members of the Synod made an oath to the tsar (19). Vasil’ev stated that this oath was only a sign of respect for the sovereign, not the subjugation to him. Probably, sarcastically remarked Golitsyn, the princes who paid tribute on their knees to the Tatar khan consoled themselves that they only gave a sign of respect to him. Moreover, Vasil’ev claimed that in France,

⁸ [J.] Gagarin, *Réponse d’un Russe à un Russe*, Paris 1860, p. 37.

⁹ A. Galitzin, Préface, in: *Sermon inédit de Jean Gerson sur le retour des Grecs à l’unité*, Paris 1859, p. 11.

¹⁰ A. Galitzin, *Le Saint-Siège et la Russie*, Paris 1864, pp. 37-38.

a bull from Rome has to be approved by the council of the state (20). Also, bishops are judged by the state in cases of abuse of their ecclesiastical duties. Golitsyn stated that there were French laws opposed to religious liberty, but the French clergy always opposed them, whereas the Russian clergy, “degenerate children of Chrysostom,” not only never protested against such laws, but even glorified them (21) and found “repose in the corrupting peace of absolutism proving right this sad maxim that servitude demeans humans until they start to love it!” The procurer in the Synod is not a benefactor or servant of the Synod, as Vasil’ev claimed, but its guardian and a director: the Synod can only discuss matters submitted by the procurer, and the deliberations are valid only when signed by the emperor. An instruction of the Synod from 17 May 1722 even required the clergy to reveal secrets of confession (22) if they related to the security of the government. However, this was a slippery slope since very soon many offences heard in confession that had nothing to do with the imperial dynasty were revealed to the police (23).

The dependence of the Russian church on civic authorities acquired caricatural dimensions in an event described by Golitsyn.

In 1857, peasants of Dziernowicz petitioned Alexander II for permission to openly exercise their Catholic religion (ERL 3). Peasants were brutally interrogated by the police; four people were imprisoned and sentenced to hard labor. The rest was threatened with exile to Siberia (4). They said they were forced to enter the Orthodox church and to take communion. The next year, governor Shcherbinin came to the village. Asserting that the tsar is on earth what God is in heaven (5) and that the governor represents the tsar, peasants were forced to kiss the governor’s hand on their knees and were blessed by him, whereby they were pronounced members of the Orthodox church (6).

Another event that Golitsyn considered as an example of an unjustified usurpation of ecclesiastical authority by the state was the canonization of Tikhon Zadonskii.

It was decided in Russia, said Golitsyn, that each reign should have a saint; for the current reign it is St. Tikhon (M 53). In 1846, his body was found preserved in his sarcophagus (54). In 1861, the Synod sent a request to the tsar for him to proclaim Tikhon a saint; to recognize his relics as sacred; to establish 13 August as his holiday; and to permit the Synod to announce these decisions to the nation. Tsar Alexander II consented (55). One Russian (Golitsyn probably obliquely meant himself) said that (57) Tikhon’s life was barely investigated; that the healing upon an invocation of his name was not necessarily a miracle (58); besides, no investigation was conducted in respect

to these miracles, only a reliance on hearsay; that the preservation of Tikhon's body was just desiccation, a natural phenomenon in the North; in the Protestant church of St. Thomas, there is a well preserved body of the duke of Nassau (59); that the report of the Synod is valid only when approved by the tsar (60); that it would be profoundly amazing if Catholics asked the French king to declare someone a saint; that tsar Alexander acted as head of the Church (61); finally, that the life of Tikhon was little-known; it would be better to pronounce Nikon or Theophilact Lopatinskii as saints; Nikon, because he fought with the tsar for independence of the church (62); Lopatinskii, because he was "one of the wisest Russian prelates of the last century" who tried to remove Protestant influences (63).

At one point, Golitsyn stated that before Peter I, the clergy served as a counterbalance to imperial despotism¹¹; on the other hand, he also said that in 1721, the church "was suffocated in his [Peter I's] arms and plunged into the darkness"¹². However, the process was apparently gradual. The ground for acceptance of the 1721 enactment was prepared long before the eighteenth century; that is, the subjugation of the Russian church to the will of the emperor was nothing new. To show it, Golitsyn presented as an example the establishment of the patriarchate in Moscow in 1589.

In 1588, Jeremias, the patriarch of Constantinople, came to Moscow¹³. Boris Godunov spoke with him and suggested establishing a patriarchate in Moscow (ERL 11). Jeremias said that he would confirm whomever tsar Fedor chose. Three candidates were proposed pro forma to the tsar, and he chose metropolitan Job. While the new patriarch celebrated a church service, a dignitary approached him and said, "the Orthodox tsar, the ecumenical patriarch and the sacred council elevate you to the patriarchal throne of Vladimir, Moscow, and the whole of Russia." The tsar was mentioned first. On 26 January, there was a solemn consecration. Job received some church insignia from the tsar (12) to become the patriarch by the grace and will of the tsar. An act was issued which stated that the first Rome fell because of Apollinaris' heresy (the heresy was condemned by pope Damasus in 377); that the new Rome, Constantinople, was under Saracens, and thus Moscow was the third Rome

¹¹ A. Galitzin, Introduction, in: *La Russie au XVIII siècle. Mémoires inédits sur les règnes de Pierre le Grand, Catherine I^{re} et Pierre II*, Paris 1863, p. X.

¹² Galitzin, Introduction, p. XI.

¹³ He was accompanied by Arsenius, the archbishop of Ellasson who wrote an account of this journey. A translation from Greek of this account was published by Golitsyn in *Document relatif au patriarcat moscovite 1589*, Paris 1857. Cf. his introduction, p. 9.

(13). Golitsyn based his report about the establishment of the patriarchate in Moscow on the *History of the Russian empire* by Karamzin who commented that its establishment was only the change of the title and that the church remained in absolute dependence on the state. Soloviev confirmed that the patriarchate was a result of secret talks between Godunov and Jeremias (14) and the result of the will of the tsar. Expectedly, metropolitan Platon in his *Short history of the Russian church* castigated “our most recent Historians” for such an assessment and stated that the establishment of the patriarchate was due solely to Jeremias’ desire to satisfy the tsar who was very religious and simply “wanted thereby to present the church in greater splendor”¹⁴.

Just like Gagarin, Golitsyn saw the liberation of the Russian church as being possible only through its union with the church of Rome. When a church separates itself from the universal church, it becomes a national church and a subject to the sovereign (ERL 56). The Russian church must be reformed and the basis for it should be the reestablishment of the hierarchy, so that the church can become stable and independent. It should “sign peace, without making any sacrifices, with the Church of which it once incontestably was an integral part; reenter the union with the universal Church while retaining its venerable rites, its national liturgy and its own character.” One church hymn says, “We pray, Lord, with one mouth and one heart for the peace of the universe, well-being and *the reunion of all the Churches*” (24). The Orthodox church should make reality what they proclaim in their hymns.

By joining the Catholic church, the Russian church would be released from the heavy hand of secular authorities; the church it would be free and true to the Christian spirit. It is in freedom that the church can properly function; therefore, promoting freedom in the political system is a sacred duty of the church: “liberty, mother of civilization, is, first of all, a daughter of the Church” (M 57) and “the Church challenges only one liberty of her children, the [liberty] which prevents them from being truly free” (M xvi). For this reason, the best political system for the church should have freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of election, and freedom of publication, in a word, political freedom (LP 5). The Church, thus, can not only go hand-in-hand with humanity, as Golitsyn phrased it, but it can progress only by the light of the torch of which God made it the guardian (6). For this reason, Golitsyn strenuously opposed the Russian institution of serfdom since “Man should not be a property of another man. By its essence, possession should

¹⁴ Митрополит Платон (Левшин), *Краткая Церковная российская история*, Москва 1805, vol. 2, p. 99.

refer only to things.” Part of the reason of this lamentable situation was the fact that “the Russian church never had the courage to raise its voice in favor of her children”¹⁵.

Another important issue in respect to liberty was freedom of the press, the freedom which scared many Catholics (LP 7). However, this freedom was “most essential of all, since to be imperishable, the truth, first of all, must be proclaimed”¹⁶. Following Pierre Louis Parisis, Golitsyn said that freedom of the Catholic press remained the only obstacle to the state to make the church its servant. Discussions in the tribune, protests by bishops, and even the pope could not accomplish what the free press did (8). This meant freedom of all press, even those periodicals that uncovered scandals in the church. Being free, the church could triumph over the monstrous scandals of ancient paganism. Scandals were the necessity of its position on earth (Mt. 18:7) (9). The only thing that the government wanted to protect was the adoration of its power and the maintenance of people’s material tranquility. Politicians wanted to pursue power; they were much less interested in the purity of Christian faith (12). And thus, there was no incompatibility between old Catholic doctrines and liberty. The most important thing for a believer was the freedom of the heart, and freedom in the civic domain is one of elements that guarantees such freedom. The history of the church is a long battle for freedom (M viii, x). The Russian church, Golitsyn believed, would do best by uniting with the Catholic church to ensure the victorious outcome of this freedom.

AUGUSTYN GOLICYN I KATOLICYZACJA ROSJI

Streszczenie

Książę Augustyn Golicyn spędził większość swego życia we Francji, gdzie zajmował się intensywnie publikacją źródeł historycznych dotyczących głównie historii Rosji. Publikował również prace na temat katolicyzmu i jego roli w historii Rosji oraz możliwości, jakie katolicyzm otwierał dla jej przyszłości – czym kontynuował dyskusję otwartą przez Iwana Gagarina. W tej dyskusji Golicyn skoncentrował się na trzech problemach dzielących katoli-

¹⁵ A. Galitzin, *L’émancipation des serfs en Russie*, “Le Correspondant” 52 (1861), p. 490, 493.

¹⁶ A. Galitzin, Préface, In: *La chemise sanglante de Henry le Grand*, Paris 1860, p. 2.

cyzm i prawosławie, a mianowicie: pochodzeniu Ducha Świętego, istnieniu czyśćca oraz prymatu papieskiego. Golicyń podkreślał, że wolność Kościoła w Rosji, będącego wówczas w pełni zależnym od władzy cesarskiej, możliwa jest jedynie po połączeniu się z Kościołem katolickim.

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Słowa kluczowe: prawosławie, katolicyzm