

FRANCE AND THE VATICAN

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I do not know whether Monsignor Cerretti had read the recently published *Mémoires* of his illustrious predecessor, Cardinal Ferrata, before he left for Paris as the first Papal Nuncio to France, after the seventeen-years interruption of relations between the Holy See and the 'Eldest Daughter of the Church.' Those volumes are devoted largely to an account of the author's labors as Nuncio in Paris between 1891 and 1896. If his present successor did read them, it was doubtless with deep interest and no little reflection. In fact, a certain analogy exists between the mission confided to Cardinal Ferrata thirty years ago by Leo XIII, and the mission just confided by Benedict XV to Monsignor Cerretti. The latter is entrusted with the task of sealing and cementing the reconciliation between the Vatican and the French Republic. Ferrata was expected to accomplish an equally momentous task — to reconcile the Catholics of France with the Third Republic.

Monsignor Ferrata succeeded the Nuncio Rotelli after the famous toast at Algiers, on November 12, 1890, when Cardinal Lavigerie, in welcoming the French squadron, declared, to the accompaniment of the Marseillaise, his adhesion to the Republic. It was also immediately after the Bishop of Saint Fleur, the same month, confirmed with more discreet words the substance of that toast. Shortly after Ferrata assumed the duties of his post in Paris, Leo XIII published, on February 16, 1892, the encyclical *Au milieu des*

sollicitudes, addressed to the French bishops, in which he enjoined French Catholics to be loyal to the Republic. However, Ferrata's task was two-fold: to persuade the Catholics of France who were almost unanimously hostile to the Republic, to surrender their monarchical sympathies and dynastic attachments and reconcile themselves with the existing government, and, at the same time, to persuade the Republican authorities to cease regarding the Catholic Church, the French Catholics, and the Vatican, with a hostile and suspicious eye, and to call a halt, or, better still, to retrace their steps, in anti-Clerical legislation.

It would be hard to say which of these two tasks was the more difficult. Monsignor Ferrata does not tell us in his memoirs. But to judge from his narrative, the French Catholics gave him more trouble than did the government. The Nuncio certainly had many exacting and delicate situations to deal with in his relations with the French members of the Church. It seems certain that the Catholic militants in France, including some of the bishops, did their utmost to aggravate these difficulties, not so much on account of their religious zeal, — as Ferrata himself observes repeatedly, — as on account of their Royalist dislike for the Republic. The Cardinal quotes such expressions from their leaders as the following: 'It is wrong to be a Republican when Republicans are honorable, liberal, and good men. . . . The only flower that blossoms in that filthy bog

is the flower of rabblement and brutishness.' Ferrata condemns such Royalists, who strove 'to turn back the current of religious pacification which was so welcome to the government and to the country at large,' and relates an almost incredible incident, where a Catholic nobleman of Brittany, the Marquis de l'Angle-Beumanoir, tried to sow discord by complaining in the Senate because the catechism was being taught in certain government schools of Brittany, and demanded that this cease, in the interest of religious neutrality.

Catholics of this queer type did not hesitate to insult their own bishops when the latter seemed to them too tolerant of the existing government. They denounced them as 'accomplices in the persecution of the Church,' as 'incense-burners to the low-born, base Carnot'; as spies, cowards, and men who had sold themselves to the parties in power. One of their favorite manoeuvres was to oppose the Concordat, which enslaved the church and paralyzed its energy. This argument was used, not only by Catholic laymen, but also by priests and bishops. Ferrata cites an appeal to the French Catholics urging them to oppose the Concordat, from the pen of Turinaz, Bishop of Nancy, a gentleman who, unless we are mistaken, was later a ringleader of the irreconcilables during the Papacy of Pius X — who attacked the Paris government after it broke off relations with Rome, and was prominent in the fight against Modernism.

The chapter that throws most light upon the character of French clericalism is, perhaps, the one that describes the fight against imposing a succession tax upon the property of the religious orders. It seems clear from the Cardinal's account that the question was of little practical importance — a mere dispute over trifles. For instance, the total tax levied on one of the principal

orders, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, amounted to 25,000 or 30,000 francs a year. Distributed among the 1200 monasteries of this order, it amounted to about 25 francs for each one. Indeed, many of the orders — those which were registered as legal corporations — were in favor of complying at once with the law.

But there were others that would not listen to this — particularly members of the unregistered orders, who were theoretically subject to a higher tax, but in practice could easily evade paying any tax whatever. These ecclesiastics fairly overwhelmed with pious insults and religious anathemas anyone, whether layman or cleric, who did not agree with them. 'They assumed that they possessed a monopoly of all the zeal and heroism expended in defending the rights of the church. . . . Whoever adopted their views was a brave and courageous man, a true champion of the good cause. Whoever was inclined to a different opinion was a villain, a poltroon, not to say a traitor.' According to Ferrata, these clerical irreconcilables eventually fancied that they alone spoke in the name of the Deity, proclaiming that, if a miracle was necessary, they would demand one. They ended by emulating Langenieux, Cardinal of Reims, who cited as a precedent for refusing to pay taxes the resistance of the early church to the Pagan Emperors and the example of the Christian martyrs.

Naturally, these irreconcilable monks and priests were backed up by those French Catholics who were opposed to any form of reconciliation with the government, who were Royalists equally hostile to the Republic and to the policy of the Holy See.

Cardinal Richard told me confidentially one day, that this noisy protest against the taxes was, indeed, caused partly by the revolt of sincere Christians against a measure

hostile to the Church; but that there was also a good deal of simulated religious interest and political intrigue behind it. . . . Eugenio Veuillot told me late in August, 1895, that a certain militant clique, which was doing all in its power to foment resistance to the law, was headed by Monarchists who were trying to defeat the policy of the Holy See.

Ferrata's *Mémoires* help us to explain the failure of Pope Leo's policy of reconciling French Catholics with their government. Naturally, the Nuncio does not admit this failure, which, in fact, did not become evident until later, during and after the Dreyfus affair, when the policy of Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes clashed with the policy of Pius X. But we can discover from what he tells us the conditions that made failure inevitable. They were substantially these: the obstinate anti-Republicanism of French Catholics and the obstinate anti-Clericalism of French Republicans.

What motives impelled Leo XIII to undertake this policy and to persist in it, notwithstanding its unpromising prospect? Ferrata explains this by quoting papal documents and by his own observations. The purpose was to rescue religion in France from the vicissitudes of party strife by accepting the political institutions which the country had adopted, and then to rally all the conservative elements of the nation to the defense of religion. To put the motive in more concrete, political terms, those which Ferrata himself uses to interpret the Pope's desires: the Holy See sought to end the identification of Catholicism with Royalist opposition to the Republic, and thus to deprive the Republic of its strongest arguments for opposing the Church; to force a wedge between the Moderate Republicans and the Radical Republicans, who had hitherto been united against the Catholics because the latter were Royalists, and

thus to form a Conservative-Republican *bloc* friendly to the Church.

It was an excellent plan, but it required the Catholic Royalists to sacrifice their political convictions, or — what was the same in practice — to cease trying to put them into effect. However, it was not easy for the Pope to compel obedience in the home of the Gallican movement. The Holy Father demanded more than he had power to enforce. French Catholics would not consent 'to deliver the key to their political conscience to an Italian,' to quote one of their own writers. The Pope rejoined that all he asked was that the faithful in France should subordinate their political convictions to their religious convictions. But the latter would hear nothing of that. As Bismarck said to Monsignor Galimberti, in justification of the alliance between Austria and Italy: self-preservation comes first, Catholicism comes second. French Catholics said — or if they did not say so, they thought it — we are first of all Frenchmen (that is, French Royalists), and then we are Catholics.

Possibly Leo XIII would have succeeded better in persuading French Catholics to follow his course, if he had adopted a different method: if, instead of emphasizing mainly the benefit to the Church of his policy of supporting the Republic, he had emphasized its advantage to France, and thus allied it with a cause peculiarly sacred to all Frenchmen — *la revanche*. He might have addressed to the Catholic clergy, and their flocks as well, the remark which Monsignor Ferrata once addressed to Minister Spuller: 'The Holy See, by bestowing upon the Republican régime a sort of moral consecration, might help it to win the confidence and friendship of a Great Power.'

The influence that Leo's policy of cultivating the Republic had upon the

conclusion of the alliance between France and Russia is alluded to several times in these *Mémoires*. Ferrata does not speak of this merely on his own authority, or on the authority of Pius, who was won over to his policy. He ascribes the same opinion to the French Ambassador at the Holy See and to the Russian Ambassador at Paris at the time the alliance was made. When we consider the immense importance that this idea of balancing the Dual Alliance against the Triple Alliance had for Leo XIII and his Secretary of State, Rampolla, because of its possible effect on the question of the Papacy's temporal power, we cannot escape the conclusion that the Pope was impelled, by political as well as religious motives, to seek a reconciliation between the Catholics of France and their government, although for obvious reasons he could not emphasize these temporal objects.

Cardinal Cerretti will not be ignorant of this precedent. It may help him materially in dealing with the government of the Republic and with French Catholics. The latter will certainly be more favorable to such a programme than they were in the days of his predecessor.

In fact, the basis of the reconciliation between France and the Vatican is now frankly acknowledged.

There are Catholics, and even members of the clergy, who are free to confess that the present arrangement redounds more to the advantage of the French government than to the advantage of the Holy See.

President Millerand was equally explicit in his official address of welcome to the new nuncio. He found himself obliged to make an apology for the Act of Separation, enforced by the Republic alone at the cost of a violent rupture with Rome. What would the spirit of Pius X have said, had it been privileged to make a few remarks on this occasion? Millerand emphasized community of interest between France and the Church as the substantial reason for their restored relations.

To-day French Catholics can endorse and support this reconciliation between the Holy See and their government, without subordinating politics to religion as Leo XIII urged. In fact, patriotism now bids them reverse their former attitude. For this reason we may expect them on this occasion to be more obedient and tractable.

RUSSIAN FAMINES: A COMPARISON

[We print below a graphic picture by Tolstoy of the initial stages of the great Russian famine in 1891, and immediately thereafter recent accounts from the Moscow Pravda and Isvestiya of the present famine in the same region.]

IN 1891

I HAVE just visited four counties affected by crop failure. The first was Krapivensky County, the most fertile portions of which were hit the hardest.

The first indication of scarcity is the fact that practically the whole population is using bread made of flour mixed with *lebeda* — a weed-grass, sometimes used as food when people are starving. The proportion of the two ingredients runs from one-third of *lebeda* to half again as much. The bread made out of the mixture is black as ink, heavy, and bitter. This bread is eaten by all, even by those who are ill; by children, by pregnant women.

There is also a shortage of fuel. As early as September the peasants hereabouts had nothing to burn. They go long distances for wood, seven and even nineteen versts.

It is evident that conditions are very bad; and yet, when you look at the people, you wonder at their apparent health. They are all at work. Land-owners told me they could not get enough help. I visited a village in this country where they were digging potatoes and threshing oats. I also noticed that the use of *lebeda* bread was not altogether due to starvation.

At the first home where I was shown *lebeda* bread, I saw a thresher at work on oats, of which that family had about sixty stacks, each worth about three hundred rubles. They were short of rye, but they had a good crop of potatoes. The reason why they were eating *lebeda* bread was because the head of the family, a thrifty old peasant,

thought it wise economy. 'Others are eating *lebeda* bread,' he said to me; 'why should n't my people eat it, too?'

As I continued my journey into Bogoroditsky County, conditions became worse. I found less and less food and more of the desperately situated peasant households. On the very boundary of Efremovsky County, even the potato crop has failed. The best land has returned scarcely more than just the seed. The bread almost everywhere is mixed with *lebeda*. And it is even poorer than in the previous county; it nauseates you if you try to eat it without anything else.

But even these villages are not the worst. Still more desperate is the situation in Efremovsky and Epifansky counties. I have visited a large village in Efremovsky County. Of its seventy households, only ten are still living on their own supplies. Half of the other houses are empty: their former occupants are out begging. Those who have remained eat *lebeda* bread, or else bread mixed with bran. A woman told me how her little girl became sick after she ate *lebeda* bread; but there was no other to give her.

We stopped at the last house in the village, and a ragged, emaciated woman came out of the door and told us of her situation. Of her five children, the oldest is ten. Two of her children are sick, with the influenza, most probably. A three-year child is also ill; she had brought him out and laid him on the bare ground, with just some rags thrown over him. The child is uncomfortable and the ground he lies on is damp, but still it is better than to leave