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SECURITY INFORMATION

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Chief, Operations Division, ORC
Attn:
FROM : Chief, Contact Division, CU
SUBJECT: Mikola AMBRAMCHIK

DATE: 30 October 1951

1. This office has contacted Mikola AMBRAMCHIK, who has just returned to the US for a brief visit after a year's stay in Europe. He lived mainly in Paris, but also made extensive trips to England, Belgium and Italy.

2. This Spring, he went to Vatican City for consultations with high Church dignitaries. Previously, he had talked to Cardinal Tisserand, Church expert on Eastern European affairs, who encouraged him to go to the Vatican. He was accompanied to Rome by Father Robert van Covelaert, son of the old Belgian parliamentarian, who is secretary of the Belgian-Belorussian Association.

3. The issue at stake was the appointment of a bishop and Apostolic Visitor to the Belorussians in exile. Subject points out that there were at one time six Belorussian bishoprics, in Smolensk, Minsk, Polotsk, Pinsk, Vilno (Wilna, Vilnyus), and Suprasl (near Bialystock). At present, there are no Belorussian bishops at all.

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4. In discussions at the Vatican, which included a private audience by the Pope (whom subject described as extremely well informed or at least well briefed on Eastern European affairs), the Vatican took the attitude that a number of bishoprics would be restored to Belorussia after a liberation of the area. Meanwhile, the Vatican considered the status of Roman Catholics among minority nationalities in the USSR a very delicate matter and tried to avoid any action which might stir up new waves of persecution.

5. Subject pointed out that the independence of Belorussian church groups in exile from the Poles was a matter which could hardly lead to retaliation. His view prevailed, and the Pope promised to appoint Father Boleslav Sloskans bishop and Apostolic Visitor. Father Sloskans has been rector of a small seminary at Louvain. The practical result of this development is that henceforth Belorussian Church groups will have a direct channel to the Vatican and therefore, will enjoy a higher prestige than heretofore. In a larger sense, this step signifies a recognition on the part of the Vatican of the aspirations to freedom and independence of the National minorities of Eastern Europe. (This tendency was independently reported by an American priest of Irish descent who recently returned from Rome.)

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6. Subject told us that he held conversations with [] Alexander Kerenski, and other individuals about the possible participation of Belorussian groups in the new anti-Communist front recently established in Europe (SONR). He stated that he had known [] for many years and found him quite understanding. His meeting with Kerenski was prompted by []

7. Subject found Kerenski fairly moderate and eager for cooperation. Kerenski proposed that a plebiscite be held in Belorussia after the liberation of the USSR to determine whether the people of Belorussia want (a) an independent status for their country, (b) a federation with Russia and perhaps other areas currently in the USSR, or (c) union with Russia. Subject argued that Belorussia had obtained sovereignty with the fall of the Czar and should be treated as a sovereign state, in which case chances of peaceful cooperation with neighboring countries would be greatly improved. Kerenski, according to subject, did not vigorously oppose nor wholly accept this view.

8. As things stand at present, the Belorussians are not quite so vehement in their opposition to SONR as the Ukrainians who, according to subject, have heaped abuse not only on the Russians for being imperialistic but also upon the Americans for allegedly helping the Russians in this respect (through the sponsorship of SONR and some groups represented in it). Subject will hold conversations on this subject during his current US visit with interested individuals and organizations, including the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, Inc.

9. A copy of this memorandum is being forwarded to OSO.

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