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# Jesuits as Peacemakers: Negotiating with Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great and Sitting Bull

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II. THE JESUITS AS PEACE MAKERS:  
NEGOTIATING WITH IVAN THE TERRIBLE,  
PETER THE GREAT AND SITTING BULLI

JOHN PATRICK DONNELLY, S.J.

Let us begin with two quotations. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" [Mt 5:9]. Less familiar is the statement of the Jesuit Constitutions that Jesuits are "to travel through the world and live in any part of it whatsoever where there is hope of greater service to God and of the help of souls."<sup>2</sup> The still earlier *Formula*, or first draft of the *Constitutions*, urged the Jesuits to be peacemakers and reconcilers for different factions within society.<sup>3</sup> This paper will look at three case studies of Jesuits as peacemakers. I confess that I have chosen these three cases because of their exotic locations and personalities no less than their importance.

ANTONIO POSSEVINO AND IVAN THE TERRIBLE<sup>4</sup>

Our first case study began on February 24, 1581, when a Russian envoy, Istoma Sevrigin, arrived unexpectedly at Rome. Papal-Russian contacts had been rare but not unprecedented. Ivan the Terrible sent Sevrigin because he was losing the Livonian War against Poland, which Ivan had started in 1563 by taking over much of Livonia—mostly today's Latvia and Estonia—from Poland. But then things

1 A longer version of this paper was presented at Fordham University, in March of 1995.

2 Jesuit *Constitutions*, #304.

3 *Formula*, #3.

4 The main sources for this part are Antonio Possevino, *The Moscovia*, translated and introduced by Hugh Graham (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Center for International Studies, 1977); A. M. Amann, editor, "Ioannis Pauli Campani S.I. relatio de itinere Moscovitica" *Antemurale* VI (1960-61), 1-85; Stanislas Polcin, *Une tentative d'Union au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: La mission religieuse du pere Antoine Possevin S.J. en Moscovie (1581-1582)* (Rome: Istituto orientale, 1957); Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

went sour. In 1571 the Crimean Tartars sacked Moscow. In 1578 the Swedes defeated Ivan's army. Still worse, in 1575 the Poles elected a new king, Stephan Bathory, a dedicated Catholic famous for skilled generalship. In his coronation oath Bathory promised to recover the lands that Ivan had invaded. He made good his promise. The war climaxed in 1581 when a Polish army of one hundred seventy thousand men besieged fifty-seven thousand Russians in Pskov, which lies some three hundred thirty miles south, southwest of modern St. Petersburg. The siege lasted six months until the Peace Treaty of Jam Zapolski was signed and the war ended, largely through the efforts of the Jesuit Antonio Possevino.<sup>5</sup>

In 1581, Ivan needed peace and tried to enlist Pope Gregory XIII's help by making vague promises to enter a Holy League against the Turks. Gregory had long dreamed of uniting Emperor Rudolf II, Venice, Bathory and Ivan against the still dangerous Ottomans. He also hoped that the Catholic faith might penetrate Ivan's Iron Curtain. It was a forlorn hope. As the Cardinal Secretary of State observed, Ivan's letter asking for papal intervention contained not a hint of religious concessions. Gregory chose as papal legate Antonio Possevino. He was to accompany Sevrigin back to Moscow and was charged with fostering religious reunion between Moscovia and Rome by mediating peace between Bathory and the Czar. He was also to seek the Czar's permission to build a few Catholic churches for the Catholic merchants trading in Moscovia.

On his way north, Possevino tried to enlist the support of Venice and of Emperor Rudolf in Prague. He then conferred several times with Bathory before heading toward Moscovia.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile Possevino was studying books on Moscovia and Russian Orthodoxy and searching the Greek Church Fathers for arguments to blunt Russian charges against Catholicism.<sup>7</sup> On the final leg of his trip to Moscovia, Possevino was accompanied by four other Jesuits. On August 20, Ivan greeted Possevino and his companions at Staritsa on the Volga with elaborate ceremonies, but he kept the Jesuits under virtual house arrest, treating them like spies.<sup>8</sup> Possevino tried to open the religious question with Ivan, but the Czar only made a vague promise to discuss this after

5 Davies, 426-31.

6 Polein. 4, 9.

7 Ibid. 5-7.

8 Ibid, 13-14.

peace with the Poles was concluded. Ivan did promise to allow Latin Masses for Catholic merchants in private homes, but no Muscovite could attend these services.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile the siege of Pskov continued; sickness and a spirited Russian defense were taking a toll on the huge Polish army. Ivan wrote Bathory a long letter dated June 29 which offered terms which he claimed were advantageous, but the letter called Bathory a liar, thirsty for Christian blood, and ended with an ultimatum: if Bathory did not accept his terms Ivan would drop all diplomatic relations between Poland and Muscovy. Bathory's answer, which reached Ivan on August 2 identified Ivan with Cain, Pharaoh, Nero, Herod and even Satan. Bathory proposed that the two monarchs fight a duel: that would decide their war and spare Christian blood. If Ivan refused to duel, he deserved to be called a woman and not a man.<sup>10</sup> In sixteenth century diplomacy, royal egos were often more important than political or economic considerations. Both Ivan and Bathory had giant egos. Possevino, the peacemaker, had his work cut out for him.

When Ivan and Possevino met again on September 12, the Czar officially charged him with negotiating a treaty with Bathory. The final treaty should include a ten-year armistice. Possevino was then to return to the Czar, who had kept two of his Jesuit companions as hostages. Possevino sent the third Jesuit to Rome with dispatches.<sup>11</sup>

After five meetings with Ivan at Staritsa,<sup>12</sup> Possevino returned to the Polish camp. There in October he discussed Ivan's proposals with Bathory and Jan Zamoiski, the Polish Grand Chancellor. The Polish leaders decided to continue the siege of Pskov to keep pressure on Ivan, but they agreed to negotiate. Possevino informed Ivan of this, and Ivan sent delegates to meet Polish representatives near Jam Zapolski, neutral territory close to Pskov. The deliberations lasted from December 13, 1581 to January 15, 1582. Both also used various ploys to strengthen their bargaining position. Both sides threatened to leave the conference. Another ploy was to introduce irrelevant issues, then try to trade them for points on the major issues.<sup>13</sup> Several

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9 Ibid, 16.

10 Ibid. 10-11, 16-17.

11 Ibid., 17-22.

12 Ibid, 14-17.

13 Possevino, xxiii-xxv—Graham's Introduction.

times Possevino adroitly intervened to prevent breakdowns. Even on the last day, negotiations were so fragile that the Poles threatened to walk out.<sup>14</sup> Possevino's book *Moscovia* gives a detailed account of the twenty-one sessions of negotiations.<sup>15</sup> News from the siege, now Russian successes, now Polish, affected the bargaining.

Was Possevino an honest broker, was he impartial? Yes and no. He despised Ivan as a cruel tyrant and admired Bathory.<sup>16</sup> Still, Possevino had strong reasons to help Ivan's representatives. They wanted peace because their country was prostrate; he wanted peace both on principle and because without a favorable peace, there was no hope of an anti-Turkish alliance, no hope of fostering religious union with the Russian church or even of establishing a tiny foothold for Catholic worship. At one point Possevino offered to forfeit his own life to Ivan rather than see the negotiations fail.<sup>17</sup> In the end, the Russians got the best of the bargaining. Soon after the Peace of Jam Zapolski was signed on January 15, 1582, the Poles lifted the siege of Pskov and retreated to the borders the treaty assigned them. Ivan gave up nothing that his armies had not already lost.<sup>18</sup>

After the treaty, Possevino went to Moscow to discuss religious issues with Ivan. Now that he had peace, Ivan was willing to yield nothing—indeed he became so angry while debating theology with Possevino that he raised his iron-tipped staff to bash in the Jesuit's brains.<sup>19</sup>

#### THE TREATY OF NERCHINSK, 1689

The month of August 1689 was a landmark in Russian history for two reasons. In Moscow Peter the Great's supporters overthrew the Regent Sophia and made young Peter the Great effective ruler. On August 27 [old style] thousands of miles to the east at Nerchinsk, Russian and Chinese diplomats concluded a treaty which determined a border between Russia and China which, with minor adjustments, lasted for nearly one hundred seventy years. By the Treaty of Nerchinsk the

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14 Ibid, 139.

15 Ibid, 106-39.

16 Ibid, xiv, xix, xxiv—Graham's Introduction.

17 Ibid, 123, 125.

18 Ibid, xxv.

19 Ibid, 72.



Russians ceded to the Chinese land almost equivalent to Germany and France combined.

Nerchinsk was the first treaty made by China with a European power and the first to be worked out according to European patterns of diplomacy. Earlier the Chinese had viewed foreign countries, whether Asian or European, not as sovereign equals but as mere tributaries.

Ivan the Terrible had encouraged Russian expansion eastward, and Cossack pioneers had begun to explore and conquer the vast reaches of Siberia. This brought the Russians up against lands that the Chinese had long regarded as their own. Although local peoples had accepted a vague Chinese suzerainty as far back as the fifteenth century, the Chinese had never effectively ruled the region. Gradually Russian traders moved south to the Amur River, the Russian-Chinese border today. Russian soldiers built forts, notably at Albazin.

In 1680, the great Chinese Emperor Kang Xi was determined to stop these encroachments and sent troops to build forts in the disputed territory. He consolidated the new Manchu dynasty which ruled China until the early twentieth century. In 1685 he sent a large Chinese army to assault Albazin, the most forward Russian outpost. The Russians surrendered and retreated north to Nerchinsk. The Chinese army destroyed the fort and returned home. The next year the Russians returned and rebuilt their fort at Albazin. Kang Xi ordered his army to retake it. The second siege lasted thirteen months. The Russians started with eight hundred twenty-six men; less than seventy were still alive when the Chinese lifted the siege after Peter decided to negotiate the border between the world's two largest countries.<sup>20</sup>

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20 The most important source for this section on the treaty of Nerchinsk is Joseph Sebes, *The Jesuits and the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk* (1689) (Rome: IHSI, 1961), 67-70. I have also used John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1994), 26-49, 278; Yuri Semyonov, *Siberia: Its Conquest and Development* (Montreal: International Publishers, 1963), translated by J.R. Foster, 113-23, 274-75; George V. Lantzeff and Richard A. Pierce, *Eastward to Empire: Exploration and Conquest on the Russian Open Frontier to 1750* (Montreal McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 178-82, and Benson Bobrick, *East of the Sun: The Epic Conquest and Tragic History of Siberia* (NY: Poseidon Press, 1992), 88-90. The text of the treaty is printed in *Russia's Conquest of Siberia: 1558-1700* (N.P.: Western Imprints, Oregon Historical Society, 1985) edited by Basil Dmytryshyn et al., Vol. I, #133. On Chinese attitudes in dealing with foreigners, see Sebes, 114. Also useful are Carl Bickford

The Chinese would be negotiating from strength, but they wanted a settlement badly so they deal could with Mongol tribes. The Russians too needed peace in Siberia since they had to face the Ottomans, the Poles and the Swedes in the West, and their treasury was depleted. Both China and Russia hoped that peace would foster trade between Russian and China. Both were at the limits of their reach along the Amur River. These economic, geographic and strategic factors were more important than the Jesuit contribution to the final peace.

The Chinese delegation arrived first on July 20 at Nerchinsk and included some fifteen thousand men, mainly troops. The Russian garrison at Nerchinsk numbered a mere five hundred men. On August 9, the Russian chief negotiator, Fyodor Golovin, arrived with fifteen hundred troops and the Polish translator Andrei Belbetskii, who was as fluent in Latin. The final treaty was concluded August 27, 1685.

The lead Chinese negotiator was Prince Songgotu, commander of the Emperor's bodyguard and an old friend of the Beijing Jesuits. He was helped by Sabsu, the governor of northern Manchuria, who had commanded the Chinese army during both attacks on Albazin.<sup>21</sup> The negotiations were to be conducted in Latin; the official text of the treaty was in Latin, with a Chinese translation for the Chinese and a Russian translation for the Russians. The text was the work of two Beijing Jesuits, but they were far more than mere translators. They informed the Chinese delegation about the outside world and about European negotiating procedures. The two Jesuits were the Frenchman François Gerbillon and the Portuguese Thomas Pereira. Pereira had long been the Emperor's personal music teacher; Gerbillon later became his official geographer. As Pereira was departing, Kang Xi gave him his own gown and told Songgotu to treat the two Jesuits as the Emperor himself—no doubt a bit of hyperbole, but significant. He told the Jesuits, "I am treating you with the honor and distinction that I accord to my grantees, whom you shall accompany...." The Jesuits

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O'Brien, *Russia under Two Tsars, 1682-1689: The Regency of Sophia Alekseeva* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 105 ff. and Fred W. Bergholz, *The Partition of the Steppes: the Struggle of the Russians, Manchus and the Zunghar Mongols for Empire in Central Asia, 1619-1758: A Study in Power Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

21 Semyonov, 115-16.

did not fit into any regular Chinese category of officials, but influence often escapes fixed categories.<sup>22</sup>

Jesuit influence in Beijing had grown since Matteo Ricci arrived there in 1601. The Jesuits quickly established themselves as the emperors' main geographers and calendar makers. They served as the key conduit for western science, mathematics, geography, philosophy, art and religion to the Chinese, and of Chinese culture to the West. The Jesuit hope of finding a Chinese Constantine failed. Still, the favor the Jesuits enjoyed at court secured a measure of toleration for Christian missionary work anywhere in China.

There are three main accounts of the Nerchinsk negotiations. Both Jesuits wrote diaries of them. There is also Golovin's official report to Peter the Great. Because Emperor Kang Xi did not want his negotiating with Western barbarians as equals to set a precedent, it seems there were no comparable Chinese accounts.

The Jesuits' motives for participating in the negotiations were mixed. Ending the Russian-Chinese hostilities was important, but Nerchinsk also offered an opportunity to earn the Emperor's favor. This the Jesuits achieved. Three years later, Kang Xi issued a decree which permitted any Chinese to become Christian.<sup>23</sup>

The Jesuits also tried to win the favor of the Russians. The Jesuits needed a new route to China through Russia and Siberia. Since Matteo Ricci's days, the Jesuits had come east under the patronage of the Portuguese crown, but the Portuguese empire in the Orient was crumbling under Dutch assaults. Increasingly the Italian, Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits in China were being replaced by French Jesuits. Louis XIV did not want Frenchmen to be subject to the Portuguese patronage and urged finding a new route.<sup>24</sup> French-Portuguese rivalry among the Jesuits in China, represented at Nerchinsk by Gerbillon and Pereira, does not seem to have hurt their work.

The Portuguese route was long, dangerous and unhealthy. Of the six hundred Jesuits sent to China before the Treaty of Nerchinsk, only one hundred arrived. "All the rest," we are told, "had been destroyed by shipwreck, illness, murder, or capture by pirates or other robbers."<sup>25</sup>

22 Sebes, 110, 119.

23 Semyonov, 122; Sebes, 78, 109. In 1717 Kang Xi cancelled the decree in the aftermath of the Chinese Rites controversy.

24 Sebes, 87, 88.

25 Sebes, 96. Semyonov, 114.



Both sides at Nerchinsk wanted peace, but a final agreement did not come easily. Hard bargaining was required to make them accept compromises. Here the Jesuits were the necessary catalyst. At the first session the Chinese demanded that the Russians surrender all the land between Lake Baikal and the Pacific—an area equivalent to the land from Boston to Denver. The Russians refused, and the Chinese dropped that opening ploy the next day. Pereira worked hard to get the Chinese to accept the Russians as equals, not barbarians.<sup>26</sup> As the negotiations continued, the Chinese turned more to the Jesuits for advice, rather to the annoyance of the Russians, who felt that they might otherwise have gained an advantage. It is impossible to trace all the rough spots in the negotiations. Some items from the section headings in Pereira's diary include:

- Second meeting ends in an impasse.
- Chinese distrust so great that war is imminent.
- Russians refuse Chinese demand that Albazin be the border.
- Russian intransigence, Chinese counter measures.
- Most of Chinese give up hope.
- Russians ask for new meeting but delay making proposals.
- Russians ask for Jesuits to go to their camp—Chinese allow only Gerbillon to go.
- Belbetskii brings new proposals for protocols in future negotiations.
- Difficulties over having the Noz mountain as a border.
- Russians send protest letter to Chinese.
- Jesuits visit Russian camp to urge concessions.
- New Russian proposals, Chinese counter proposals.
- Jesuits urge Russians to come to a decision; urge Chinese to be patient.
- Celebration following the signing of the treaty.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, without the Jesuit brokers, the Nerchinsk negotiations would probably have been aborted. Two recent scholars have said that the treaty "may be considered one of the most successful ever made, in-

26 Sebes, 108.

27 Sebes, 172-73. I have rephrased, shortened and dropped many of these entries for the sake of brevity.

augurating a period of peace which lasted for one hundred seventy years."<sup>28</sup>

SITTING BULL AND FATHER PIERRE-JEAN DE <sup>29</sup>

For our last Jesuit peacemaker, we must leap almost two hundred years forward and across the Pacific to the mid-western United States. By 1867, the Civil War was over. But what of the Indians? In 1867 Congress set up a Peace Commission, which has been termed "a reasonable mixture of military firmness and humanitarian leniency."<sup>30</sup> The Commission, admitting that past wars were mainly due to the white man, said, "But it is said our wars with them have been nearly constant. Have we been uniformly unjust? We answer unhesitatingly, yes."<sup>31</sup> The Commission had a new "hitherto untried policy... to conquer by kindness"<sup>32</sup>—to settle the Indians on reservations which would be off-limits to all white men except Indian agents and missionaries, give them personal possession of plots, if they wanted them, up to three hundred twenty acres for a family, farming implements, seed, and training for the men in how to farm, for the women in how to make clothes. The army pulled back and burned its forts. Both humanitarians and the military were convinced that the treaties were the Indians' last chance to survive.<sup>33</sup>

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28 Lantzeff, 181.

29 For this part of the paper I have used the following sources: Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993); Stanley Vestal, *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux, A Biography* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1932/ reprint 1956); H.M. Chittenden and A. T. Richardson, *The Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, 1801-1878* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905) Vol. III; John J. Killoren, "Come Blackrobe" (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); John Upton Terrell, *Black Robe: The Life of Pierre-Jean De Smet, Missionary, Explorer & Pioneer* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964); Gilbert J. Garraghan, *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (New York: America Press, 1938) Vol. III; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 2 vols.

30 Prucha, I, 490.

31 Ibid I, 491.

32 Ibid.

33 Killoren, 315

But how to convince the tribes to sign the treaties? Secretary of the Interior, H. O. Browning, appointed as "envoy extraordinary" the famous Belgian Jesuit, Pierre-Jean De Smet to this task. The native Americans esteemed De Smet the Black Robe more than any other white man. General William Harney, a member of the Peace Commission, claimed that De Smet "has almost unbounded influence over the Indians."<sup>34</sup> Starting in 1844, De Smet had made five major journeys among the tribes securing peace. Late in 1867, he traveled from St. Louis to Fort Buford near the borders of North Dakota, Montana, and Canada. He sat in council with tribe after tribe, an estimated fifteen thousand Indians, and urged them to accept the treaties. Later that year, the land being offered the Indians was reduced to less than half his own recommendations.<sup>35</sup> He returned to St. Louis to prepare for a second trip but his health collapsed—he was 68.

By April 1868 his health had been sufficiently restored for him to join five generals, including William T. Sherman and Phil Sheridan, in a special train across Nebraska. Enroute they held a successful meeting with leaders of the Brûlés tribe.<sup>36</sup> Sherman promised adequate hunting grounds and protection from white intruders and distributed presents to the Indians.

But what of the hostile Hunkpapa Sioux who were hiding somewhere in the upper reaches of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers? Sherman proposed that De Smet go and find them. De Smet's boat trip up the Missouri took thirty-three days and included many stops to discuss the treaty with tribes along the way. Many chiefs warned him against going to the Sioux, saying that it would cost him his scalp. But when he insisted on going forward, eighty Indians from seven tribes accompanied De Smet, his old friend and interpreter, C.E. Galpin, and Galpin's famous Sioux wife, Eagle Woman. De Smet had warned Galpin, "I know the danger of such a trip. I have no other motives than the welfare of the Indians and will trust to the kind providence of God."<sup>37</sup>

The expedition set out on June 3, 1868. Thirteen days later their scouts made contact with eighteen Hunkpapa Sioux. The next day as the Sioux and De Smet advanced down the Powder River valley, sud-

34 Terrell, 348; Utey, 77; for Harney's quote: Killoren, 310.

35 Terrell, 349-56; Killoren, 309.

36 Killoren, 313-16.

37 Chittenden, 896.

denly five hundred warriors came racing toward them. De Smet unfurled a banner of the Blessed Virgin he had carried for the occasion. The Sioux were intrigued by the strange flag and came up to shake De Smet's hand and led him into Sitting Bull's vast camp of some five thousand warriors.<sup>38</sup>

De Smet exhausted, asked for food, then fell asleep. When he awoke he was face to face with Sitting Bull and three other chiefs. Just days earlier, Sitting Bull had led raids near Forts Buford and Stevenson which killed two white men and captured two mail riders of mixed blood. Sitting Bull stripped the riders and sent them back to the army with the message that he and his chiefs would not meet with the Peace Commissioners and would go on killing white men till they all cleared out of Indian country.<sup>39</sup> Sitting Bull now addressed De Smet: "Blackrobe, I hardly sustain myself beneath the weight of white man's blood that I have shed. The whites provoked the war" with a massacre of some seven hundred "women, children and old men.... I rose, tomahawk in hand, and I have done all the hurt to the whites that I could. Today thou art amongst us and ... I will listen to thy good words, and bad as I have been to the whites, just so good am I ready to become toward them."<sup>40</sup> Sitting Bull promised to convene a Great Council.

The Great Council met on June 21, 1868 and drew some five thousand Indians. After passing the peace pipe with leading chiefs, De Smet spoke and urged the Indians to renounce war and embrace the Great Father's offer of land, farming implements, domestic animals and training. Otherwise the sheer power of the white man and his armies and the dying off of the buffalo and other game meant inevitable death. The four chiefs spoke and agreed. De Smet wrote a summary of Black Moon's speech, who concluded, "We have been forced to hate the whites; let them treat us like brothers and the war will cease. Let them stay home; we will never go to trouble them.... Let us throw a veil over the past, and let it be forgotten."<sup>41</sup>

De Smet left the Indian camp and traveled three hundred fifty miles to Fort Rice, where, together with three generals and the representatives of some fifty thousand Indians, he signed the peace treaty on July 2. Eight speakers from among the twenty tribes represented paid

38 Terrell, 369-70; Chittenden, 909-11; Killoren, 319.

39 Utley, 78; Chittenden, 912.

40 Chittenden, 912; Terrell, 371.

41 Chittenden 916-17; Killoren 320-21; Terrell 372-74.

special tribute to De Smet and his work. The next day the generals wrote De Smet: "You will find your true reward for your labors and for the dangers and privations you have encountered in the consciousness that you have done much to promote peace on earth and good will to men."<sup>42</sup> On July 4, the army distributed presents and De Smet left for St. Louis University. When he got home, he was so sick that the doctors despaired of his life. Again he recovered and lived until 1873.<sup>43</sup> The peace did not last so long.

The sequel to this story is well known. In August 1868, roving bands of Indians raided and killed in Kansas and Colorado. On November 27, Lieutenant Colonel George Custer's men raided a sleeping village of Cheyennes and killed more than one hundred Indians. Eight years later, Sitting Bull avenged that at the Little Big Horn. In 1871, Congress gave up making treaties with native American groups as if they were foreign nations.<sup>44</sup> De Smet was therefore the least successful of our Jesuit peacemakers, but through no fault of his own.

#### CONCLUSIONS: JESUITS AS PEACEMAKERS

Let us try to draw some tentative generalizations from these three test cases of Jesuits as peacemakers. In no case did they cause the peace; rather the warring nations saw peace as more desirable than war for military, economic, and political reasons. But this realization is often not enough to secure peace. In earlier times, the ego of monarchs and, in modern times the rage of nationalism have kept nations fighting to the point of either total defeat or total victory. Would not all the nations of Europe have profited if they had embraced Benedict XV's peace proposals in 1917? Yet, the slaughter continued until empires crumbled.

In all three of our cases, the Jesuits acted as catalysts. They were able to play this role because they enjoyed a degree of trust from both sides. Why trust? Ironically, because they were outsiders, persons who had little to gain from victory and much to gain from peace. Possevino was an Italian mediating between Poles and Russians. Gerbillon and Pereira were western Europeans in a dispute between Chinese and Russians. De Smet was a Belgian—Sitting Bull and the Sioux may

42 Chittenden, 922.

43 Chittenden, 919-21; Terrell, 375; Killoren, 322-27.

44 Prucha, II 495-96; Killoren, 297-329.



not have known this, but he did not fit their usual categories for white men. He was a Black Robe, a special category, certainly neither army nor government agent nor settler, rather a man who had long enjoyed charismatic relations with Indians. Peace is built on trust, and the Indians trusted De Smet when he told them that their only alternative to the hated reservation was extermination, for they knew he had their interests at heart.

At Jam Zapolski, the Russians knew that Possevino preferred the Poles, yet they could trust his basic neutrality because he in principle wanted peace and because his other goals—the alliance against the Turks, opening Russia to Catholicism and eventual church reunion—could not grow out of a treaty which hurt Moscovia. Likewise at Nerchinsk, the Jesuits were in the employ of the Chinese emperor, but the Russians knew that the Jesuits wanted that alternative route to China across Siberia, and for that they needed peace and Russian benevolence.

What did the Jesuits as such gain from their peace making? Possevino's work gained nothing from Ivan but it did increase Bathory's favor toward the Jesuits. Nerchinsk was followed by a short-lived edict of toleration in China. De Smet's work was undone within months. These three Jesuit peace efforts have generally been praised by historians—for all that's worth—but not always: several nineteenth century Russian historians blamed the Jesuits for the loss of the Amur River Valley and, ironically, a Soviet historian praised them.<sup>45</sup> What did the Jesuits really gain? Christ's commendation: "Blessed are the peacemakers."

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45 Stephan, 32, Sebes, 77; Semyonov, 118, 122.