

Phony 'Scoops' Anent Holy See Condemned by Vatican Paper

By BURKE WALSH
(N.C.W.C. Staff Writer)

WASHINGTON—For upwards of three months immediately following the liberation of Rome last summer, I lived and worked in the Eternal City. While serving as correspondent of the N.C.W.C. News Service, I was privileged to act in a liaison capacity between the Vatican and the numerous Allied correspondents gathered in the Italian Capital. During this time, I saw manifestations of the situation against which Osservatore Romano has now seen fit to speak out in condemnation.

Self-Protection
Coverage of news in European capitals, I learned, has long involved the employment of "tipsters." These are persons who, rightly or wrongly, profess to have access to important sources of information, and offer to make them available to foreign correspondents for specified fees. Although some hold themselves out as offering "exclusive tips" to individual correspondents, very many operate on the "mass sales" plan. That is, they offer the same identical news to as many correspondents as will take it.

The leverage, in a case of this sort, is the correspondents' ever-present fear of being "scooped" by a competitor. If the correspondent of one agency, or one newspaper, takes a particular "tipster's" service, many of the others will have to fall quietly in line, for reasons, as they put it, of self-protection.

The "tipster" might actually turn up something big sometime, and if they are not in on his service, they will be "scooped."

In Rome, where you have both the Quirinal and the Vatican, there are a number of "tipsters" who offer to the correspondents services dealing exclusively with Vatican news. Some of these have been held out by their clients, in reproducing their "tips," as "authoritative Vatican sources." Some have even had official Vatican titles ascribed to them. As these cases have arisen, official Vatican sources have scolded the stories and have repudiated the authoritative positions attributed to the "tipsters."

On one occasion one of the most prominent correspondents in Rome came to me with information he thought ought to be relayed to proper Vatican authorities. It concerned a "tipster" I had not yet heard of, who professed to offer each correspondent an "exclusive" service. Subscription to the service cost a fixed amount, and this gave the foreign correspondent the privilege of reaching the material provided to him by the "tipster." If use was made of

VATICAN CITY — Alleged authoritative news "tips" from the Vatican which foreign correspondents in Rome buy and publish have been exposed as fraudulent by OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Vatican City newspaper.

OSSERVATORE'S comment, carried in a front-page box, is as follows:

"For some time past wide publicity has been given to certain anonymous and clandestine reports concerning the Holy See.

"These reports, which bear only a fee number, are edited with meticulous care, naming persons and titles and giving particular facts and bearing a Vatican protocol number, to create the impression of being of a direct, exact and semi-official character.

"Such reports—they are best identified by mentioning their contents—have spoken among other things of superior instructions to the Papal Nuncio to Argentina, of reports reaching the Holy See and controlled by it regarding the Spanish situation. Since these reports, as in the case of various others, have been accepted and diffused by news correspondents of foreign agencies, we believe it necessary to declare that they are pure inventions without any foundation whatsoever, a fact which should appear evident immediately from their carefully planned semblance of authenticity."

any of the material there was a further fixed charge.

Pretended Authenticity

What made this proposition so astonishing was that the "tipster" held himself out as having a connection with the Vatican Secretariat of State. His "stories" were very carefully written, with asterisks inserted here and there, referring to footnotes which claimed that this or that particular point came right out of the Vatican files.

To substantiate this impression, folio numbers and other file references were cited. This was about the time that spurious stories—including those about a rap-

proachment between the Holy See and Soviet Russia—were flying thick and fast.

It was easy to see how "tipsters" could seize upon such times to peddle their services among the correspondent, who were covering the Italian military campaign and Italian politics as well as Vatican news.

I asked the correspondent if he had used the story about which he told me. He said he had not, because he suspected it. I asked if the "tipster" had shown any credentials which might lend weight to his claim to have an official connection with the Vatican. He said he had not. Why, then, I asked, would correspondents be misled into accepting his claims and his product. He said because the material is so carefully prepared that it could easily have the aspect of authority to one without considerable experience in the coverage of the Vatican.

Inquiries of Vatican authorities brought the prompt response that the "tipster" was not then and had never been connected officially with the Vatican. Other inquiries developed that he wrote his dispatch at home, where, as one person put it, he employed a highly developed imagination to "dream them up." His main achievement seems to have been the ability to give his stories the appearance of official statements that would mislead all except the very wary. Some sources told me that this man's chief distinction in recent years has been as the author of photographic writings.

From the tenor of the Osservatore statement, it seems that this man may still be active in Rome, or that his questionable mantle has fallen on other energetic shoulders.

Church in Mexico Opens Peace Crusade

MEXICO CITY (RNS) — A Crusade for Peace and Victory has been inaugurated by the Catholic Church in Mexico in conjunction with the "Guadalupean Year" dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe, patron of Mexico. The Guadalupean Year ends October 12, 1945.

Dr. Luis Maria Martinez, Archbishop of Mexico, said priests throughout the country will conduct "ardent propaganda" for "a better world under the protection of Jesus Christ."

The archbishop has ordered that prayers at eucharistic congresses during the Guadalupean Year include petitions for constitutional recognition of the Church in Mexico. Forty congresses will be held in various centers, each lasting three days.

Postmaster Opens Mailing To Civilians in Italy

WASHINGTON (RNS) — Postmaster General Frank C. Walker reported Oct. 31 that in line with the President's program for restoring normal relations with Italy, parcels will be accepted henceforth for shipment to civilians in Rome, Naples, Palermo and Vatican City State.

However, Walker pointed out, the service is limited and the following rules must be observed:

The value of each package is limited to \$25.

Weight is limited to four pounds. Size is restricted to 24 inches length and girth combined.

No written or printed matter may be included in the packages.

For the present, only one package may be sent each month by the same sender to the addressee.

Perishable foods may not be mailed.

Suggested items for shipping are clothing and shoes, sewing kits, powdered or evaporated milk and soap.

OUT OF LINE

Officer: "This man is charged with taking bananas off a fruit stand."

Judge: "Ah, impersonating an officer. Two years."

Don't Ration It

PHILADELPHIA — Ration Wheelers, authority on salesmanship advise retail grocers: "Don't

ration contrary rationed and plentifulness. When a customer says he would like a pack of cigarettes don't say, 'no more!'"

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