

Paper proposal: Popes on the Rise! Mobilization, Media, and Political Power of the Modern Papacy, conference organized by the Center for Religion and Modernity, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität and Römisches Institut der Görres-Gesellschaft, Rome/Vatican, Campo Santo Teutonico, 22-26 March 2017

*Dr. Adrian Hänni*

**The Political Papacy in the Age of Transnational Mass Mobilization:  
The Case of the *Commission pour l’Eglise Persécutée***

**Abstract**

A crucial element of the political Papacy during modernity were the catholic groups often subsumed under the concept of “Catholic Action”. Pope Pius XI created a “central office” for Catholic Action in 1938 and after World War II, several dozen movements were organized under the umbrella of the Conférence des Organisations internationales catholiques (OIC). Within the OIC, a *Commission pour l’Eglise Persécutée* was established in the early 1950, composed of clerics and lay Catholics. This commission, whose activities were founded by the Catholic Church and Western intelligence agencies alike, provides for an illuminating case study of the political Papacy. While, on the one hand, it delivered traditional aid to the beleaguered church behind the Iron Curtain (cloths, Bibles etc.), it also disseminated propaganda for Western audiences (such as magazines or a “red book” supported by the Pope), organized initiatives at the United Nations, and produced radio broadcast through the Iron Curtain in collaboration with political émigré organizations. In doing so, the commission’s modus operandi perfectly matched the emerging transnational and global public spheres, as well as the transformation of mass mobilization and mass media. The proposed paper on the *Commission pour l’Eglise Persécutée* is based on the original documents of the commission, stored in the archive of the OIC, which, tellingly, have not been touched by researchers so far.