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From *Ostpolitik* to *Europapolitik*

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Anyone wishing to know what the Pope thinks on international questions should read his annual address to the diplomats accredited to the Holy See. On January 12, 1990, Pope John Paul II provided the customary *tour d'horizon* of international problems. Though greatly preoccupied with famine in Africa and the imminent war in the Gulf, there was nevertheless an important section on events in Central and Eastern Europe. This, it was reasonable, would provide the most up-to-date insight into how the *Ostpolitik* turned into the *Europapolitik*.¹

The Pope did not disappoint. He warned about a new division in Europe—not this time an ideological iron curtain, but a split “that would oppose the Europe of the rich to the Europe of the poor, modern regions to backward regions”. If 1990 had been the year of liberty, he remarked 1991 should be the year of solidarity. The long winter was over. The Cold War is at an end.

But then during the night that followed this speech, thirteen Lithuanians were killed and over 130 injured when paratroopers stormed the television station in Vilnius. This raised many questions: Was the Cold War over after all? Were we really through the winter? One remembered Sir Walter Raleigh in his *History of the World*: “He who follows contemporary history too close along the heels, may haply get kicked in the teeth.”

The *Ostpolitik*—of the Vatican or anyone else—is a topic that simply will not stay still. One can be put out of date in a fortnight. No one sighs for the time when everything was frozen into immobility. Though there were crucial differences of style between the *Ostpolitik* of Paul VI (1963-78) and John Paul II (1978-)—it could not be otherwise with a Slav Pope²—at least the topic stayed manageably and recognisably the same. The question was how did the Vatican—the Holy See strictly speaking—deal with Communist regimes, especially in those countries of Eastern Europe where so many Catholics lived in enforced co-existence with Communists?

That has now become a largely historical question for most countries. Already the books dealing with it³ seem musty and unreliable even as history. Why? Because their authors assumed that the Cold War would go on for ever in precisely the same form, and that Rome and Moscow, with their universalist aspirations and international organisation were sworn enemies who would fight each other to the death. That is not happening. What we now have is different contestants engaged in a different battle.

To each, his own

Others found their predications falsified and their noses put out of joint because they never anticipated the "Sinatra doctrine." The idea that a still Communist Soviet Union would let the countries of Eastern Europe go their own way seemed preposterous until it happened. Though the expression the "acceleration of history" is slightly bogus, it is at least more persuasive than talk about the end of history. Things do seem to have speeded up in the 1989-91 period.

One might ask why the Vatican needed an *Ostpolitik* at all. After all, no one has ever talked about the Vatican's *Westpolitik*. The short answer is that while Western Europe was held to be in a normal situation from the point of view of the pastoral work of the church, Yalta and the post-war settlement created an anomaly in Central and Eastern Europe which needed special treatment.

The Vatican was one of the victims of the Cold War. Its diplomats were thrown out, one by one. That was a minor inconvenience compared with what was happening on the ground. In the Ukraine and Romania, the Uniate Churches were simply abolished, their clergy killed, imprisoned or forcibly converted to Orthodoxy. In Hungary and Yugoslavia there were show trials of church leaders, Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty and Alojzje Stepinac. Religious life—monks and nuns—was suppressed, most savagely in Czechoslovakia. In Catholic Poland it was war unto death until 1956.⁴

How did Pope Pius XII, elected in March 1939, respond to these events? He had a visceral hatred of Communism. The Communist press recognised this dubbing him "the Pope of the Atlantic Alliance." Pius counter-attacked with the only weapons at his disposal: moral condemnation. On July 14, 1949, the Holy Office condemned all forms of collaboration or co-operation with Communists.

It was sometimes asked whether Pius was more concerned with Italy than Eastern Europe. It was an unanswerable question. Pius was obsessed with Italy's eight million Communist voters and had nightmares about Cossacks watering their horses in the fountains of Saint Peter's Square. He wanted to stop that from happening. In Eastern Europe he was worried by the tentative hints of accommodation that he detected in Wyszynski's attitude in Poland.

The notion of Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski as a compromiser with Communists seems utterly



The Pope under siege

fanciful to anyone who has read his diaries.⁵ But Wyszynski realised something Pius did not: the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, though ultimately doomed, were solidly established, not about to go away in the short term nor to be overthrown with Western help. That was the meaning of Hungary 1956, when Pius railed impotently against Western inactivity and supineness.

If Wyszynski was right, some theory of co-existence was needed. Pius could not provide it and John XXIII, who became Pope on Pius' death in 1958, could. In his 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, which has justly been considered his last will and testament, he made two liberating distinctions. First, a distinction must be made between the error and the person who errs. While the error must always be rejected, the person who errs must always be respected, or even embraced. Nikita Krushchev sent greetings for Pope John's eightieth birthday and gratefully accepted his mediation in the Cuban Missile Crisis.⁶ So this Communist was not the devil complete with horns and a tail. One could talk to the beastly fellow.

But the second distinction of *Pacem in Terris* was even more important. It saw communism as a philosophical system which, though basically wrong, could nevertheless express genuine aspirations towards justice and fraternity that the church would wish to endorse.

Pope John's successor, Paul VI, elected in June 1963, agreed and embraced the idea of Marxism as a "Christian idea gone mad." That meant Marxists could in principle be recuperated. Throughout the long papacy of Paul VI, the chief agent of the Vatican's *Ostpolitik* was Agostino Casaroli, eventually Cardinal Secretary of State, who was known as "the Henry Kissinger of the Vatican" because of his readiness to engage in shuttle diplomacy.⁷

What was Casaroli trying to achieve? He represented a spiritual power, even a moral force, that was not backed up by military might or economic power. It might seem a nonsensical idea in the tough, real world. But the Pope has two advantages that someone like the Dalai Lama does not have. He can speak in the name of the world's 800 million Catholics (whether they are listening to him or not), and through his diplomatic service he is inserted into the wider political scene. The Holy See has observer status at the UN and UNESCO and other international bodies. Thus the Pope becomes a "transnational actor."⁸

But, more prosaically, what was Casaroli doing in his diplomatic dealings with Eastern Europe? He had the following theory. He distinguished between three stages in the life of the church in Communist countries: the *esse*, the *bene esse*, and the *plene esse*. First of all, the *esse* was the mere existence of the church: its survival – however obstructed – underground if need be, but still there, still in business, administering the sacraments. Once survival was assured, the battle moved on to the right to appoint bishops freely, to organise seminaries for priestly training, to hold catechism classes. Secure legally entrenched rights on such questions and the *bene esse* of the church would be established. This is what Casaroli pressed for at the CSCE conference at Helsinki in 1975 where the Vatican was represented at an international meeting

for the first time since the Congress of Vienna. He presented religious freedom as an aspect of general human rights.

But the presupposition of all this was that the *plene esse*, the fulness of the rights of the church, lay far ahead beyond some distant, shimmering horizon: for seen from 1975, the regimes of "real socialism" had not conceded much and still had a very permanent feel. They were kept in place by geopolitics more than by consent. A Sakharov theory of convergence was sometimes used. These regimes would be modified from within: "We are all growing together: our bourgeois aspirations would eventually coincide".

Europa agenda

In 1978, there came the surprise of a Polish Pope. Many observers said a Polish Pope was impossible. In Warsaw the Polish Minister of Cults, Kamierz Kakol, promised on election day that if a Polish Pope were elected, he would treat everyone to champagne. The news came later that evening. He loyally opened the champagne. The impossible had happened.

The election of a Polish Pope made an immediate and dramatic difference to the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*. John Paul II soon made it clear that he saw his pontificate as correcting an historic imbalance that was also an historic injustice: the disparity between Eastern and Western Europe in the life of the church. There were practical ways of dealing with this problem. Vatican Radio stepped up its broadcasts in Polish, *L'Osservatore Romano* came out with a Polish-language edition for the first time, and a Polish desk was opened in the Secretariat of State.

Then there was the first visit to Poland in June 1979. It illustrated the difference between spiritual power and physical power. The Polish government certainly had the physical means to keep the Pope out: but in practice it could not stop him from going home, much less censor him once he was there. Quite a bit has been made of the way this first visit gave Poles the self-confidence which led to the formation of Solidarity the following year. The visit was a kind of informal plebiscite which revealed the gulf between *le pays légal* and *le pays réel*.

John Paul acted as tribune of the people. He articulated their aspirations. Reviving the theme of the millenium celebrations of 1966, he claimed that the church embodied the soul and the culture of the Polish nation in a way the party could never aspire to. Quoting the Jesuit poet of the Renaissance, Piotr Skarga, he compared the faith of Poland to an oak tree with deep roots that could be shaken but never overthrown.

It is fair to say that the Pope treated Edward Gierek, then first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, with courtesy tinged with contempt. Meeting the Pope at Belvedere Palace, Gierek recalled that the Poles were celebrating thirty-five years of socialism. John Paul pointedly ignored this theme, and congratulated Gierek on rebuilding the royal palace in Warsaw "as a symbol of Polish sovereignty." Thirty-five years of a socialism that had failed to

deliver was not much to put in the balance against more than a thousand years of Christianity. It was the virtual end of Gierak, his delegitimation.

This 1979 visit was important not just for Poland but for the whole of Europe. At Gniezno Pope John Paul II proclaimed the "spiritual unity" of Europe. Since then, there have been no less than 55 papal Euro-speeches with variations on the same theme, all from highly symbolic places like Compostella, Trier, Vienna and Velherad. Why Gniezno? It was there that the first Polish King, Miesko, was baptized in 966: so the baptism of the king and the birth of the nation coincided. At Gniezno in June 1979, he proclaimed the spiritual unity of Europe, and said that it was to proclaim this unity that Providence had chosen a Slav Pope. It is difficult for mere politicians to argue with divine Providence.

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Yet whatever else could be said about Europe in June 1979, it was still materially divided by the iron curtain, by military alliances and by ideology. So what did it mean to talk about spiritual unity? Did it belong to a fantasy cloud-cuckoo land?

In fact it was a claim, a very steely claim, that the divisions of Europe were man-made, artificial, anomalous, and to be brought down as soon as possible.⁹ Was it also a prediction? Was John Paul saying not only that the iron curtain *should* be brought down but also that it *would*? One can argue about that, but what is undeniable is that this statement about the profound spiritual unity of Europe was political through and through. Poland in the first place, and then the other countries of what we choose to call Eastern Europe, were to rejoin the Europe from which they had been so cruelly and artificially excluded.

That is the first meaning of the title of this article. In one sense John Paul II did not have an *Ostpolitik* at all; or, if you prefer it, his aim was to make the *Ostpolitik* redundant by inserting it within his *Europapolitik*. The goal was to break down the barriers and make Europe whole again. Moreover, the Eastern Europe envisaged by Pope John Paul II was not an inferior partner nor a suppliant begging for some crumbs from the success story of the European Community. It had its own specific contribution to make. Poor in material terms, it was spiritually rich and had something essential to give.

This was signalled in the customary, symbolic language of the Vatican. On December 31, 1980, in his apostolic letter *Egregiae Virtutis*, John Paul II proclaimed Saints Cyril and Methodius co-equal patrons of Europe. Europe already had a patron, Saint Benedict, given the post by Paul VI in 1964. Did the new appointment mean that Benedict had failed or proved an incompetent patron?

No, but the trouble with Benedict and his monks was that he was too closely and too exclusively associated with the evangelisation of Western Europe. Cyril and Methodius, two ninth century Greek monks from Salonika, represented "the wider Europe" before the divisions of East and West had set in. John Paul later wrote an encyclical, *Slavorum Apostoli*, the first to be devoted to Europe. Cyril and Methodius were models of ecumenism and models of evangelisation today because they translated the Gospel into the language and hearts and customs of the Slav peoples. Moreover, John Paul insisted that the church needs both traditions just as the body needs two lungs to breathe—the "Latin" tradition which is rational, juridical and practical needs filling out by the "Eastern" tradition which is more mystical, intuitive and Spirit-led.

What was Moscow making of the Slav Pope with such wholly unexpected initiatives? It was still the period of stagnation. The success of *Solidarnosc* in Poland meant that the Pope was clearly seen as a formidable foe. One cannot prove that the Bulgarian secret service, and therefore Yuri Andropov, was behind the assassination attempt on the Pope on May 13, 1981.¹⁰ But it would have certainly suited the purposes of Soviet foreign policy to have this tribune of Polish nationalism and defender of Solidarity out of the way.

No sooner had John Paul convalesced than he counter-attacked. He believed that he had survived the assassination attempt "providentially", that is for some purpose, and he attributed his survival to Our Lady of Fatima, where in 1917, the Virgin Mary was believed to have appeared to a group of peasant children.

In the encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (3 September, 1981) John Paul "stole the Marxist clothes" in asserting the priority of "labour" over "capital" in the name of Christian humanism. He was interested in worker-participation in factories.¹¹ He advised *Solidarnosc* that trades unions should have a social function, and should not have links with political parties. That became an academic point from December 13, 1981, when martial law was imposed and *Solidarnosc* outlawed.

Work of the devil

The death of Leonid Brezhnev on November 10, 1982 made little difference to the Vatican's *Ostpolitik*. The Soviet leadership seemed to be floundering. Neither the sixteen months of Yuri Andropov nor the thirteen of Konstantin Chernenko suggested any consistent new strategy. In this period the Pope was even more aggressive towards communism. There was no question of dialogue, detente or even peaceful co-existence. A battle was raging for the future of the world.

It stretched from Poland to China and to Latin America. From now on there would be ruthless confrontation and competition.

The visit to Nicaragua in March, 1983, was another episode in the anti-Communist campaign. In effect Pope John Paul excommunicated the "popular church" in Nicaragua. In so doing he destabilised the country from within and lent legitimacy to the US support for the contras. He made Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo a cardinal to lend him prestige and strengthen his arm.

This was all on the assumption that the Sandinistas were thorough-going and irrecoverable Marxists. It was an ideological option very close to that of President Ronald Reagan's "evil empire" speech.

The Vatican equivalent duly came in the Instruction "On Certain Aspects of Liberation Theology" (September 3, 1984). It said: "A key fact of our time ought to evoke the reflection of all those who would sincerely work for the true liberation of their brothers: millions of our own contemporaries legitimately yearn to recover those basic freedoms of which they were deprived by totalitarian and atheistic regimes...". So this theme went right to the top of the papal agenda. It is a key fact of our time; not something to think about from time to time.

The 1984 text goes on even more fiercely: "This shame of our time cannot be ignored: while claiming to bring them freedom, these regimes keep whole nations in conditions of servitude which are unworthy of mankind". Those suspected of supporting Marxists, such as liberation theologians, are deluded like Lenin's "useful idiots".

A Vatican diplomat remarked: "Even if all this were true, we are not used to such brutal and offensive language." One has to keep open the dialogue with people of which one thinks badly. Casaroli reportedly threatened resignation.

This instruction of 1984 could be blamed on Bavarian Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the head since 1981, of the Holy Office (rebaptized as the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith). But the 1986 encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Dominum et Vivificatem*, could not be so relativised.

Here John Paul denounced Marxism by name as "essentially and systematically atheist" (56). With this denial of God "we find ourselves", he says, "at the very centre of what could be called the 'anti-Word', that is to say the 'anti-truth'" (37). In effect, this was to say Marxism was the "work of the devil".

The encyclical was dated May 18, 1986. It showed no awareness that a new first secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, was in place in the Soviet Union and seemed to be talking a new language. Most Poles were deeply sceptical. As Halina Bortnowska, a Crakow theologian and friend of the Pope, said at the time: "The cat may smile at the mouse, but it's still a cat, and we're still

the mouse." Was Gorbachev really going to allow history to be rewritten and rehabilitate the victims of Stalinism? Would he confess the truth about Katyn? If such revisionism were serious, then there would be drastic consequences for the Vatican's *Ostpolitik* and any number of words would have to be eaten.

It took a long time for the Vatican to respond positively to Gorbachev's initiatives. The papal visit to Poland in June 1987, conceded nothing at all. There were crypto-Solidarity rallies in Gdansk. The Pope did not play the game. A frustrated President Wojciech Jaruzelski said to John Paul at the airport as he left: "Living in Rome you have an idealist view of Poland; it is much more difficult if you have to try to govern it." Jaruzelski knows his Poles.

But after this final delegitimisation of the Polish Communists and perhaps sensing victory in the air, the tone of Vatican diplomacy began to change. Casaroli, if not the Pope, came to believe in Gorbachev's sincerity. By now Gorbachev had visited every significant European capital except Rome; he could hardly go to Rome without seeking an audience with the Pope; and he could not see the Pope unless he had something to offer; and what that really meant was religious liberty and legalisation for the Ukrainian Catholic Church as well as freedom for the Catholics of Lithuania, Latvia and Bielorussia.

But the diplomatic coup of a Gorbachev visit, this historic first, had to be worked for on the Vatican side and earned by Gorbachev. Public abuse of Marxists dropped out of Vatican documents from 1987 onwards. The encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* even-handedly condemns both imperialisms, the one dominated by profit and the other by power. US conservative Catholics were shocked and tried unsuccessfully to explain this away.

Dialogue, once prescribed, was now presented as the only way forwards. Casaroli enjoyed a late summer, a *Nachsommer*, while Ratzinger fell silent on political matters and devoted himself to castigating the German Greens as pagans.

The millenium celebration of Christianity in the land of Rus in 1988, provided a convenient and non-committal way through to Gorbachev. No attempt was made to put the Soviets in the wrong; on the contrary, everything was made to make it easy for them to accept the idea of a powerful Vatican delegation. In the end no less than ten cardinals went to Moscow to celebrate one thousand years of Christianity in "Russia." Their presence was a reminder of history: when Prince Vladimir was baptized in 988, the schism between East and West, Constantinople and Rome, still lay ahead in the future, being conventionally dated 1054.

But a formidable obstacle lay in the way: the Ukrainian Catholic Church would object fiercely to any kind of accommodation with the Communists and the Russian Orthodox Church which had rejoiced in its annihilation in 1946.

The way this obstacle was stealthily removed illustrates the advantages of having a Polish

Pope. Journalists who gathered in Rome for the Synod on the laity in October 1987, missed the most important event: the formal reconciliation between the Polish Bishops and the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops.

The two groups of bishops met privately in Rome, in the presence of the Pope's secretary, Stanislaw Dziwisz, and solemnly forgave each other for all the wrongs and injuries they had inflicted throughout the centuries. Cardinal Joseph Glemp, Primate of Poland, said: "We are, as it were, weighed down by the burden of complaints and prejudices and the memory of tears and blood." Glemp also advised: "We should not compete to see which of us has suffered the more... Religious people, above all, should know that one does not scratch at a healing wound."¹² That is, as it were, the sub-plot, dealing with the problems of inter-war Poland when Latin and Ukrainian Catholics did not always get on well.

Thus ten cardinals went to Moscow in 1988. What was achieved? Nothing much except the prospect, at last, of a Gorbachev visit to the Pope. Casaroli had a personal meeting with Gorbachev, handed him a letter from the Pope, and concluded that "his position is solid." "I believe Mr. Gorbachev can do much," he opined, and expressed the view that religious freedom in the USSR would come in the context of "an overall progress in freedom."¹³ Asked by a Soviet journalist what he thought about the "new climate" created by the 19th Party Congress, the Pope replied: "It is too soon for me to give an evaluation, but certainly we follow the climate of *perestroika* with great interest. This democratisation, this greater participation of the citizens in social and political life, fulfils the expectations not only of the Eastern countries but also corresponds to the social teaching of the church".¹⁴

Guarded though it was, it was a long way from "the shame of our time". So Gorbachev and Raisa were finally able to visit the Pope on December 1, 1989, shortly before going off to meet President George Bush on storm-tossed Malta. It was agreed that the Ukrainian Catholic Church should be legalised, and that there should be an exchange of diplomatic representatives. Archbishop Francesco Colasuonno took up his post in Moscow in March 1990, the first Vatican diplomat in Russia since the time of Catherine the Great. Gorbachev's second visit to the Pope, on November 18, 1990, also preceded a meeting with Bush not to mention the other signatories of the CSCE agreement in Paris.

Dissolving *Ostpolitik*

It all sounds like a happy ending. All the objectives of the Vatican's *Ostpolitik* have been achieved, and it can now be dissolved into its *Europapolitik*. The time of anomaly is no more. Religious freedom is now the norm, with little local difficulties in the Ukraine and Romania where the Orthodox Church is reluctant to hand back the properties seized in 1946 and 1948 respectively. But elsewhere, even in Albania, there has been great progress where Mother Teresa has been welcomed back as the world's most famous Albanian. Not only the *bene esse* but the *plene esse* may be said to exist throughout most of the continent.



Invasion and sack of Rome

The institutional celebration of this new state of affairs will be a synod of European bishops due to meet in Rome probably next October. For the first time ever bishops from the Atlantic to the Urals will discuss the future of their common European home. It is hard to think of any other forum in which this debate could take place. It may be thought pretentious and possibly absurd for Catholic bishops to be pronouncing on such questions; and a few Protestant and Anglican observers will not change that—it is doubtful that a few Orthodox Christians will get there.

The Pope's dream, of course, is of a revival of Christendom in which the church once more plays a leading role in unifying the continent, whose Christian roots he constantly stresses. Whereas most historians emphasise the role of the crusades in forging European consciousness, Pope John Paul underplays this theme, for obvious reasons, and says pilgrimages aroused European awareness. Yet modern Europe, East and West, is secular and does not go on pilgrimages. But the reality-defying dream remains. Perhaps this is very Polish.

Anyway, the dream is what lies behind the decade of evangelisation the Pope has called for in the lead up to the year 2000. But of course the Pope could have proclaimed that theme—and did—even before the events of 1989.

Between the first visit of Gorbachev to the Pope on December 1, 1989, and the second on November 18, 1990, there were further changes and the first signs of Vatican disarray. Obviously the crumbling of barriers and the collapse of communism were welcome to the Vatican as a vindication of what it had been saying all along: Communism was an unnatural, anti-human creed that could not endure forever. But what should come next? On this there was no clarity. The Pope fumbled uncharacteristically.

The reason for this is plain. Vatican rhetoric was perfectly attuned to a situation in which Christians were persecuted or oppressed or excluded from civic life. When its function was to be critical of the state and to demand religious liberty, it knew perfectly well what to do. Now nothing is so simple, and the Vatican is hesitant.

The papal visit to Czechoslovakia in April 1990 made the point. This was not Poland, the contribution of the church to the "velvet revolution" had been real but modest, and the Pope treated Vaclav Havel not as a fellow Catholic, which would have been pushing his luck, but as a fellow Central European intellectual of a younger generation. The Pope congratulated the Czechs and Slovaks on overthrowing the "devastating ideology of hatred," but grim warnings modified the euphoria.

They must avoid being infected by the "virus" coming from the West, bringing secularism, indifference, materialism and hedonism. This almost seemed to suggest that under democracy they were going to be worse off spiritually than under communism. It was a disconcerting message for people who had just regained their freedom.

A second cluster of doubts gathered round Gorbachev himself. Throughout 1990 the Vatican continued to support Gorbachev as the man who had brought religious liberty and restored diplomatic relations. But what would happen if he moved to the right? It was another version of the problem that everyone in the West faced.

For the Vatican this reliance on Gorbachev proved very inhibiting. Having newly established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union prevented it from doing what comes naturally, that is giving unequivocal and outright support to the Catholics involved in the national movements in Lithuania, Bielorrussia and the Ukraine. To support such movements is now regarded as subversive.

In the Ukraine there is the added difficulty that the Russian Orthodox Church is completely unyielding in its attitude towards the Ukrainian Catholic Church. It is significant that the new Patriarch Alexi, clearly a party man, in December 13, 1990, signed the letter of the fifty-three establishment figures demanding more draconian central government. But would anyone who might replace Gorbachev be worse from the Vatican's point of view? Is Gorbachev simply the devil they know? Probably the answer is yes.

There is another version of the same dilemma in Yugoslavia where the Vatican would be spontaneously inclined to support Slovenia and Croatia's bid for independence, but can hardly do so without reviving memories of Ustaci atrocities.

Fighting the Western virus

Does Poland offer any more hope? John Paul trod sure-footedly so long as the church and Solidarity were in opposition and could act as an alternative counter-culture, both political and artistic. Since the elections of June 4, 1989, he has been unusually reticent.

Two events have profoundly modified the way Poland is seen by the Vatican. First, it becomes difficult to maintain the myth of Catholic Unity when Solidarity is so evidently and irrevocably split. At first the split was tolerated. In the run-up to the presidential elections Pope John Paul and the Polish Bishops remained reasonably impartial so long as they believed the contest lay between Lech Walesa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

It was as though these two individuals symbolised tendencies which the Pope united in his own person: the populism of Walesa, and the more intellectual approach of Mazowiecki. The Pope urged them to come together and sink their differences. But it was now too late to put the Humpty-Dumpty of Solidarity together again. They were already evolving into political parties standing for roughly a right and left on the spectrum: a Walesa party that would be nationalist, Catholic, anti-Semitic by instinct if not overtly, and anxious above all to purge swiftly the remaining traces of communism from the bureaucracy; and a Mazowiecki party, pro-European, social democratic, Catholic indeed but also pluralist, recognising that the country had changed.

But with Mazowiecki brutally removed in the first round of the presidential election, while John Paul remained silent the Polish bishops abandoned any claim to even-handedness in Poland and supported Walesa. Yet the second round of the election exploded the myth that Poland was a Catholic country. Only 38.5 per cent of those eligible to vote chose Walesa; 3.5 millions voters plumped for Stanislaw Tyminski, a result Cardinal Jozef Glemp called a "joke played by history." But if episcopal advice can be spurned to this extent, then history's joke was on the church.

It was serious, because Pope John Paul had always hoped Poland would prove exemplary for the rest of Europe and that its church-state relations would blaze a trail for the future. In particular, legislation should reflect Catholic social teaching on contraception and abortion. British philosopher J.O. Urmson's remark that "large-scale models for thinking about the world are invariably based on small-scale models" was tested experimentally as it were. If Poland cannot provide a model of Christendom, then how can Europe as a whole be suspected to follow that pattern?

In the speech to diplomats on January 12, 1991, the Pope hailed the return to normality: he was able to greet for the first time the ambassadors of Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak federative republic (*sic*) and looked forward to welcoming those of Rumania and Bulgaria. On this level, the *Ostpolitik* is already the *Europapolitik*.

And although he also was able to greet - for the first time - the Soviet Union's diplomatic representative, the unstated truth is that this crumbling empire will remain outside the "common European home" so long as European values and standards of human rights do not apply.

In the last article ¹⁵ he wrote before becoming Pope, John Paul asked where the easternmost frontier of Europe was. It was not on any map, he said, but could be found where the Christian values of the dignity of the human person met the domain of autocracy, barbarism and tyranny. As long as that frontier exists, the Vatican will still need an *Ostpolitik* as a way of coping with an anomalous situation. But just as urgent is a *Westpolitik* that can deal with the problems of democracy and pluralism.

References

¹ - This article is based on a paper given at the Russian and East European Centre Seminar at St. Antony's College, Oxford, on January 28, 1991.

² - Although Pope John Paul is profoundly Polish, he prefers to call himself a "Slav Pope". That is how he introduced himself to Mikhail Gorbachev at their historic first meeting on December 1, 1989.

³ - The best is Pedro Lamet's massive *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies*, Duke University Press, 1990.

⁴ - The story is told in Hansjacob Stehle, *Die Ostpolitik des Vatikans*, R. Riper, Munich, 1975. On Stepinac see Stella Alexander, *The Triple Myth, A Life of Alojzije Stepinac*, Boulder, London, 1985.

- 5 - *A Freedom Within, The Prison Notes of Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski*, Foreword by Malcolm Muggeridge, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1985.
- 6 - See P. Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII, Pope of the Council*, G. Chapman, London, 1984. Dutch, German, French and Italian translations exist.
- 7 - The best account is by Achille Silvestrini, "L'Ostpolitik de Paul VI", in *Notiziario*, N.20, Istituto Paolo VI, Brescia, 1990, pp. 70-83.
- 8 - See I. Vallier, "The Roman Catholic Church: a Transnational Actor", in R.O. Kehone and J. Nye eds, *Transnational Relations in World Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 129-52.
- 9 - Mikhail Gorbachev made a very similar claim in 1987: "Pondering on the common roots of such a multi-form but essentially common European civilisation, I felt with growing acuteness the artificiality and temporariness of the bloc-to-bloc confrontation and the archaic nature of the 'iron curtain'." *Perestroika*, Fontana, Collins, London, 1987, p. 194.
- 10 - Many books were written to prove this thesis. The least fictional are Claire Sterling, *The Time of the Assassins*, Angus and Robertson, London, 1983; Paul Henze, *The Plot to Kill the Pope*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1984.
- 11 - In his book on the encyclical, *The Priority of Labour*, Paulist Press, New York, 1982, Gregory Baum claims that John Paul here "has lifted Catholic social teaching to a new height, ... and produced a social philosophy that transcends Marxism from within". That judgement betrays a strong element of wishful thinking.
- 12 - *The Tablet*, November 7, 1987, p.1218. *The Tablet* has been a well-informed Catholic weekly under lay editorship since its foundation in 1840.
- 13 - *The Tablet*, August 27, 1988, p. 994, quoting an interview in *Il Messaggero*.
- 14 - Viktor Novikov quoted in *La Repubblica*, July 1, 1988.
- 15 - Karol Wojtyla, "The Frontiers of Europe", in *The Tablet*, June 9, 1979. It first appeared in *Vita e Pensiero*, 1978.