

**Abandoning the Crown:
U.S.-Vatican Relations During the Vietnam War, 1963-1968**

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Notes

All translations – from Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French – are translated by me unless otherwise stated. For ease of reading, I use “United States” and “America” interchangeably, instead using “Latin America” when referring to Central and South America – with apologies to people from both of those regions. In the same way, I also use “the Vatican” and “the Holy See” interchangeably. Although the Holy See is the diplomatic standard, ‘the Vatican’ is more easily recognizable, and, thus, preferable in certain cases. When the names of prominent Vietnamese individuals appear in the history, I have chosen to write them without diacritics. Due to Vietnamese naming conventions, surnames are placed at the beginning of the sequence of names, the middle name is second, and the given name comes last. For Vietnamese names, I use the Vietnamese convention of using given names in formal reference. Finally, there are many terms and allusions used throughout this thesis that may only be recognizable to those with some prior familiarity with Catholicism. To the best of my ability, I have sought to define uncommon and sometimes opaque terms (the Papal biographer Peter Hebblethwaite affectionately refers to them as ‘Vaticanese’) in the notes throughout.

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L'historien de l'Eglise... il aura été plus loyal à ne rien dissimuler des épreuves que les fautes de ses enfants, et parfois même de ses ministres, ont fait subir à cette Epouse du Christ dans le cours des siècles.

- Le Pape Léon XIII, "Depuis le jour", 1899

The historian of the Church... will have been more loyal to conceal nothing of the hardships which the faults of her children, and sometimes even of her ministers, have subjected this Bride of Christ to over the course of centuries.

- Pope Leo XIII, "Since the day", 1899

Introduction

On November 13th, 1964, moved by "discussions of world poverty" occurring in the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI decided to lay his papal tiara on the altar of St. Peter's Basilica.¹ Both as a gesture of the renunciation of temporal power and a sign of generosity to the world's poor, the solemn donation of the Pope's tiara was an answer to a question that had been looming since the fall of the Papal States in the 19th century: should the papacy have temporal power at all? The placement of the jewel-encrusted gold tiara on the altar was meant as a final and resounding 'no.'

This event, representative of the modernization efforts of the Catholic Church in the 1960s, was only one example of the great lengths the Pope went to in order to prove that he no longer wielded political power. This reconciliation to modernity was not only ceremonial, however. The Second Vatican Council would make concrete changes to the way Catholics practiced their faith, and to the Holy See's own foreign policy. Instead of being another European power, the Vatican sought to embrace its catholicity by giving more autonomy to priests and bishops, putting more trust in individual Catholic's consciences, and fostering diplomatic relations with as many nations as possible, especially in the decolonizing world. For

¹ "Pope Paul Donates His Jeweled Tiara To Poor of World." *New York Times*, November 14, 1964.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1964/11/14/archives/pope-paul-donates-his-jeweled-tiara-to-poor-of-world.html>

Pope Paul, the first and most daunting challenge to his new foreign policy would be the Vietnam War. However, the first implementation of this policy would also be its most catastrophic failure.

Since this thesis is tripartite, having as its subject the Vatican, the United States, and Vietnam, I must designate one of these actors as the focal point, and the Vatican makes the most sense. Because of this, events which might take up far more space if the topic of this thesis centered on Vietnam or the United States end up fading to the background in order to make the subject matter more manageable. For example, President Johnson's concern over the 1964 election receives only a paragraph of attention; the Tet Offensive, a major turning point in the Vietnam War, is only mentioned once in passing. However, this sacrifice is repaid with the ability to take Catholics as distinct and major subjects in both the United States and Vietnam, instead of only focusing on macro-level governmental interactions. Additionally, although the subject of this thesis is the Vatican, this is not a work of religious history. Doctrines and dogmas feature in the narrative only insofar as to explain praxis; the faith of national communities of Catholics is highlighted to show their effects on Vatican diplomacy.

In order to meet the challenges to world peace posed by the Vietnam War, Pope Paul wanted to create closer ties with the United States and use its global standing to further Vatican interests. Although at first dismissive, the United States would also find the Vatican useful in accomplishing some of its own policy goals, foreign and domestic. In this thesis I argue that this partnership, while at first promising mutual benefit, ultimately proved ineffectual, not due to the specifics of the Vietnam War itself, but due to certain interpretations of the Second Vatican Council, the Vatican's false self-conception, and Washington's exacerbation of lay Catholic dissidence. The Vatican's new pastoral focus contradicted its foreign policy, as its ability to maintain control over the vast network of clergy and laypeople in some sense depended on the

Pope's former temporal power. Additionally, the United States' own domestic policy goals would pit American Catholics against their own spiritual leader. On the United States' part, they could also not honestly negotiate for peace in Vietnam. The result of all these factors is a tragicomic series of events that would make the Vatican seem irrelevant in world politics until the papacy of John Paul II.

The existing historiography, sparse as it is, usually dismisses the U.S.-Vatican relationship during the pontificate of Paul VI as an uneventful midpoint between Pius XII during World War II and John Paul II in the latter stage of the Cold War. Even the most in-depth analyses scarcely broach the length of an average essay. However, access to new archival sources and synthesis of existing sources reveals that understanding the relationship between Paul VI and President Johnson is actually vital to understanding post-Vatican II American Catholicism, the foreign policy of Paul VI, and even some aspects of Catholics as a third force in South Vietnam. Far from being an irrelevant or uninteresting time period for the analysis of Vatican diplomacy, it is rich in humorous anecdotes, tragic misfortunes, and lessons that ultimately informed the later successes of John Paul II. I aim in this thesis to address the lacuna of this period of U.S.-Vatican relations, and to show that the relationship between President Johnson and Paul VI is one of the most important to understanding the Vatican diplomacy of the Cold War.

Chapter 1: The Triple Crown

In September of 1870, the soldiers of the Italian unification crossed into the lands of the Papal States with the aim of annexing the whole country. Over the course of only 10 days, these forces occupied all of Rome except for Vatican City. As Pope Pius IX watched with fear from within the City's walls, making provisional arrangements to escape to whichever nation would accept him, a kingdom over 1100 years old fell in less than two weeks. Although the unification army would not take the Vatican, the fall of the Papal States would, in turn, raise a question, both from the world and from the prelates of the Catholic Church itself: Should the Pope have temporal power at all? Since the year 756, the Pope had been not only the Vicar of Christ but also the king of a kingdom and the crowner of emperors. He even wore a crown – triple tiered, and said to symbolize his power as “father of... kings, ruler of the world, and Vicar of Christ on earth.”² Yet, restricted to 109 acres and unable to leave since he did not recognize the legitimacy of the Italian government, the Pope at this time seemed to be more of a prisoner than a king, much less ruler of the world. An apparent answer to this problem, which came to be known as the “Roman Question,” came in the form of the Lateran Treaty in 1929.³ It invalidated the Papacy's claims on any of the former lands of the Papal States, and, while it legally acknowledged the Pope as a king equal in honor to the Italian monarch, essentially reduced him to an ecclesiastical figurehead.⁴

² “Storia della Tiara” *Sala Stampa della Santa Sede*, 3 April 2001.

http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/documentazione/documents/sp_ss_scv/insigne/triregno_storia_it.html

³ It is called the Lateran Treaty in reference to the Lateran Palace, former Papal residence in the southeastern Rome and currently an extraterritorial property of the Holy See.

⁴ Treaty between the Holy See and Italy (Lateran Treaty), Vatican-Italy, February 11, 1929, Vatican State.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20171010175158/http://www.vaticanstate.va/content/dam/vaticanstate/documenti/leggi-e-decreti/Normative-Penali-e-Amministrative/LateranTreaty.pdf>

Although political reality had seen the Pope reduced to a nominal king, theology was still catching up to these developments. The arrival of unification troops had interrupted the First Vatican Council which had been taking place since December of 1869 and ultimately forced it to adjourn. This proved ironic, since the main concerns of the First Vatican Council included responding to liberalism and putting forth the doctrine of papal infallibility – in other words, shoring up papal power in an age of liberal republican fervor.⁵ In the Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus*, Pope Pius IX anathematized the belief that the Pope has “not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church, and this not only in matters of faith and morals, but also in those which concern the discipline and government of the church...”, rendering any Catholic who expressed such an opinion subject to denial of the Eucharist, shunning from churches, and eternal hellfire if they did not repent.⁶ Thus, to deny that the Pope was an absolute monarch, in both a religious and political sense, was a damnable offense. The five Popes from 1870 to 1929 were begrudgingly satisfied to be considered monarchs in exile, but the Lateran Treaty made such a belief impracticable. The Pope cannot exercise jurisdictional and governmental authority in a political sense when he has no subjects – so what of the papal monarchy?

This new Roman Question plagued the Church and would only begin to be answered when Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council on October 11th, 1962. It would be a Council that totally changed the orientation of the Church: rather than turned in upon itself,

⁵ Kirch, Joseph. "Vatican Council." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15303a.htm>

⁶ Council Fathers of the First Vatican Council. "Decrees of the First Vatican Council" *The Holy See*, 18 July, 1870, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum20.htm>. A dogmatic constitution is essentially the papal form of a royal decree, considered binding on all Catholics. The Eucharist is the primary Catholic sacrament, called the “source and summit of the Christian life” in the documents of Vatican II, where Catholics believe that bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ through consecration by a priest.

obstinately rejecting the events of the outside world and praying fervently for a return to pre-modern glory, Pope John proclaimed an *aggiornamento*: an updating, designed to “let in some fresh air” from the secular world.⁷ He planned to invite not only Catholic bishops and archbishops, but representatives from Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, and Protestant traditions to a Council meant to be catholic and ecumenical in the widest senses.⁸ A century before, the prelates of the Church would have hated such a reconciliation to modernity. But the Second Vatican Council soon became an equivocality – doctrinal conservatives believed that the ecumenical spirit of the Council would be used to smuggle in all sorts of anti-Catholic innovations and “false path[s],” while doctrinal progressives believed that the Council would give free rein to question long-held dogmas and practices.⁹

And then, suddenly, Pope John died. In any other pontificate, there would be a very real danger of an ecumenical council simply ending there, as every Pope needs to give their personal stamp of approval for a Council to continue. But the man elected to succeed him was no surprise – he was a close friend of John XXIII, and the Cardinal-Archbishop of Milan – Giovanni Battista Montini, who would become the sixth Pope to choose the regnal name Paul. Taking the name in honor of the apostle Paul, he intended to evangelize the world in the same radical way, setting his agenda for this through Vatican II. The new orientation of the Vatican changed not just interpretations of history or theology, but also of diplomacy. It treated the Pope not as the “father

⁷ Maureen Sullivan, *101 Questions and Answers on Vatican II*, New York: Paulist Press. 2002. p. 17

⁸ Small ‘c’ catholic is universal rather than having to do with the religion itself. Ecumenical refers to dialogue among and between different Christian churches.

⁹ For the quote on ‘false paths’, see Greenhouse, Steven. “Archbishop Lefebvre, 85, Dies; Traditionalist Defied the Vatican.” *New York Times*, March 26, 1991. <https://nyti.ms/29vSloG>. For concern about the revolutionary nature of Vatican II, see August 21, 1965 “The Pope is Clearly Worried” *America Magazine*, vol. 113, 1965 collection, Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO. I avoid using ‘liberals’ here because of the term’s inexact and highly political connotation. Progressive, with its associated meaning of development or becoming clearer through time while also subtly chastising the benighted past, would fit the general character of the innovators of the Second Vatican Council better.

of kings,” but as a courtier among royals. But this young conception of the Pope’s temporal authority would find an early challenger in the Vietnam War. Paul VI’s reaction to the war, as well as the international response to his initiatives, would set the tone for the efficacy of the Vatican’s foreign policy for the next two decades. However, in order to understand the involvement of the Vatican in the Vietnam War, we must first understand a few of the provinces in what can be called the longest lasting empire in history: Catholic Christendom.

Catholicism in the United States

One of these provinces was the young nation of the United States. New not only on the international stage but also in terms of its nascent Catholic community, the U.S. quickly shot up in importance in the eyes of the Holy See. Although its first diocese would only be established in 1789, a country founded on the very principles opposed at the First Vatican Council would soon become one of the most noteworthy influences on the Catholic world.¹⁰ Facilitated by the nation’s growing population as well as European immigration, self-identified Catholics increased from around 5% at the time of the fall of the Papal States to about 25% by the end of Vatican II.

¹¹ Although the Vatican generally viewed the American wing of the Church as “well-ordered” and “flourishing”, there were already conflicts between the two before the turn of the 20th century.¹² In 1899, Pope Leo XIII released the encyclical *Testem benevolentiae nostrae* regarding a new heresy called ‘Americanism’, wherein he simultaneously attacked two opinions

¹⁰ “Our History.” *Archdiocese of Baltimore*. Archdiocese of Baltimore. <https://www.archbalt.org/the-archdiocese/our-history/>

¹¹ For the figures on the Catholic population in the United States, see Byrne, Julie. “Roman Catholics and Immigration in Nineteenth-Century America.” *National Humanities Center*. TeacherServe 1 November, 2000. <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/nromcath.htm> and Stoddard, Ed. “FACTBOX: America’s Roman Catholic population.” *Reuters*, April 10, 2008. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-usa-catholics/factbox-americas-roman-catholic-population-idUSN0945928720080410>

¹² Leo XIII. “Longinqua.” *The Holy See*, 6 January, 1895, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_06011895_longinqua.html

associated with an American mindset: first, that the moral imperatives of the Church can become more lenient for the faithful depending on time and context, and second that the conception of church and state as “dissevered and divorced” was acceptable even in a pluralistic nation.¹³

Leading to an internal suppression of theological progressivism, *Testem* sought to create a creedal homogeneity among American Catholics that would inspire clerics and laymen to fight for the rights of the Catholic Church in the political sphere.

Although it is impossible to determine whether the 1899 encyclical was a direct cause, the Catholic population of the United States in the early 20th century was, at least in religious practice, rather orthodox by Vatican standards and distinctive among the American population. Catholicism was perceived as the religion of the poor or working-class urban immigrant – although, as a group, Catholics were advancing up the socio-economic ladder – and recognizable through their parochial education system, the practice of abstaining from meat on Fridays, of wearing crucifixes, praying with rosaries, and, often, their Irish or Italian surnames.¹⁴ This creedal homogeneity was also reinforced by anti-Catholicism, usually from Protestant denominations, which in turn led to the creation of “a vast network of institutions of every type and variety” for the American Catholic.¹⁵ Despite this opportunity for insularity, Catholics did not turn away from both social and political activism: both religious and laypeople participated in the running of orphanages, charities, and hospitals. Individuals like Dorothy Day of the Catholic Workers’ Movement were integral in starting unions and fighting for workers’ rights.

¹³ An encyclical is a letter from the Pope that is spread around – “cycled” – to churches throughout the Catholic Church. On *Testem*, cf. Leo XIII, “*Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*.” *The Holy See*, 22 January, 1899, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13teste.htm>

¹⁴ Regarding social status of Catholics in mid-20th century America, see Herberg, Will. *Protestant – Catholic – Jew: An Essay in American Sociology*. Doubleday & Company, Inc.: New York. 1956, 150.; a rosary is a stringed bead necklace of 59 beads ending in a pendant crucifix, used for counting prayers.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168

Even priests carved a path to political power: for example, Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, became a member of the National Science Board and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission under the Eisenhower administration.¹⁶

Yet cracks appeared beneath the surface of the seemingly cohesive and impenetrable Catholic public face. The Protestant religious historian F.E. Mayer called the Catholic Church in America “the most dogmatic and at the same time the least doctrinal church,” referring to the diversity of social and political beliefs among Catholics at the time.¹⁷ Although American laypeople could toe the party line on fundamental theology, their opinions on social welfare, labor, and political hierarchy could diverge significantly. Additionally, as Catholics began to become more educated and more influential, the first error corrected by Pope Leo XIII in *Testem* resurged in popularity – freedom of conscience allowed some to shirk obedience in the name of private judgment.¹⁸ Yet, when compared with European nations, Americans seemed to be caring less about the Roman Question – the election of the first Catholic American president in 1961 seemed to signal that the fear of the Pope controlling the democratic republic through a Catholic head-of-state was dying. With the opening of Vatican II, however, the American Church was about to get an answer to a question it had just resolved for itself.

Political Catholicism in Vietnam

The Roman Question was not only a concern for America, but also for Vietnam. With the ascension of a Catholic to the presidency in South Vietnam, a reckoning with the past influence of Catholicism over the country was bound to happen. Although the history of the Catholic

¹⁶ Timothy Walch. *Catholicism in America: A Social History*. Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company: Malabar, Florida. 1989. p. 98

¹⁷ F.E. Mayer *The Religious Bodies of America*. Concordia: St. Louis. 1954. p. 107

¹⁸ Walch. *Catholicism in America*. p. 89

hierarchy in Vietnam was longer than in America, with the first missionary bishop arriving in 1658, it was far more contentious.¹⁹ A flurry of French missionary activity in the 18th century eventually led to violent crackdowns, resulting in the execution of Portuguese and Spanish missionaries. Seeing a lucrative economic in the religious persecution, the French monarchy would soon come to subjugate a large portion of Southeast Asia. The colony of French Indochina, made up of the modern states of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam would come to an end in 1954 after the First Indochina War, when the French were once and for all kicked out of Cochinchina. Divided at the 17th parallel between the forces of the Viet Minh in the North and the figurehead Emperor Bao Dai in the South by the Geneva Conference, Vietnam was slated to be reunited by popular referendum in 1956. However, this was an unacceptable option for both the South Vietnamese and for the United States, which had begun to see Vietnam as an area of strategic importance in Southeast Asia. The emergence of Ngo Dinh Diem, a devout Catholic from a wealthy Saigon family, also learned in traditional mandarin studies, as Prime Minister of Vietnam began a partnership between Washington and Saigon that would embroil both in a disastrous war.

Diem, a darling of the CIA and considered the Vietnamese Syngman Rhee, was to somehow stop the inevitability of a Communist government having rule over all of Vietnam and bring his half of Vietnam into the 20th century. It was a daunting task: Ho Chi Minh was wildly popular and sure to win in a nationwide referendum, and minority groups throughout the Mekong Delta were opposed to Diem. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of Northern Vietnamese – mostly Catholic, and many fearing reprisals for service or cooperation with the

¹⁹ Tran, Anh. 'The Historiography of the Jesuits in Vietnam: 1615–1773 and 1957–2007'. *Jesuit Historiography Online*. Brill Reference Online. October 2018. https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/jesuit-historiography-online/the-historiography-of-the-jesuits-in-vietnam-16151773-and-19572007-COM_210470#d625071e493

former French colonizers – were fleeing South, in part because of CIA propaganda.²⁰ Yet Diem would create a miracle with the help of the United States – he avoided the nationwide referendum by rejecting the Geneva Accords and rigging an election to displace Bao Dai; he waged war on local religious minorities and the organized crime syndicate Binh Xuyen; and he successfully resettled many North Vietnamese Catholics in fertile but underdeveloped lands in the western Mekong Delta. For a flicker of a moment, Diem looked like he might be able to stave off the Northern Communist threat.

Although the United States and Diem had many common drives, including anticommunism and the desire to modernize Vietnam, each had different views of how that nation-building should take place in the South.²¹ Although Diem benefited from a relationship with Washington, he was not created by Washington, which caused friction as the U.S. presence in Vietnam increased. Plagued by a “colonial mentality,” Diem lamented as his own officials would sooner obey the commands of American advisors than his own authority.²² In order to win back some of his own sovereignty and guide the nation through his own vision of modernization for Vietnam, Diem and his brother Nhu (the unofficial commander of the ARVN Special Forces) even posed the possibility of reducing American aid to South Vietnam both monetarily and in terms of boots on the ground.²³

Formerly the bright hope of the U.S. government, Diem’s shining promise died with the Buddhist Crisis in 1963. After refusing to raise a Buddhist flag on the capital in honor of the

²⁰ Jessica Elkind, “The Virgin Mary is Going South”: Refugee Resettlement in South Vietnam, 1954–1956, *Diplomatic History*, Volume 38, Issue 5, November 2014, pp. 987–1016

²¹ Edward Miller. *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA. 2013. p. 12

²² *Ibid.*, p. 253

²³ *Ibid.*, 254-255

holiday of Vesak, Buddhists – the majority religion in Vietnam – protested this and other repressive religious laws under the Diem regime, leading to a chemical attack on the demonstrators by police.²⁴ This was simply another travesty to add to Diem’s rule for many South Vietnamese: under Diem, "divorce was made almost impossible and adultery a crime. Abortion was banned, as were prostitution, blue movies, horse racing, beauty contests, boxing matches, sentimental songs, and even dancing".²⁵ But the violence used against Buddhists, his obvious favoring of Catholics in the military and government, and his readiness to dispense with U.S. intervention made Washington nervous. They were not alone, as some of Diem’s own generals were also suspicious of Diem’s capability to rule.

Overly enamored with their own initiatives for South Vietnam, the Ngo brothers wanted to stay the course which had made them so hated among both civilians and military personnel. One of their programs, the Strategic Hamlet Plan, which was originally designed to develop and secure villages in rural South Vietnam, ended up losing the South Vietnamese government money through corruption and even unintentionally handing weapons to the Viet Cong. These fatal errors caused a plot for a coup to rise among the military elite, which the United States subtly goaded on. Although unexpected, the coup ended with the assassination of the head-of-state and his brother on November 2nd, 1963.²⁶ In response Roger Hilsman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, would say “revolutions are rough. People get hurt.”²⁷

²⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume III, January-August 1963, eds. Edward C. Keefer and Louis J. Smith (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1991), Document 144

²⁵ Seth Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950-1963*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers: Lanham. 2006. p. 90

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 311-312, 324

²⁷ George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* McGraw-Hill Education: Boston. 2014, p. 106

Thus, Vietnam had provided an alternative answer to the Roman Question: no Catholic should be granted autocratic power. It was a chilling warning to Washington not to oversimplify either the revolutionary politics or the religious landscape of South Vietnam. But it also provided a wake-up call to the Vatican, reminding it that it could not escape from its past simply through rebranding itself. For many nations of the global south, Catholicism was the religion of the colonizer, the autocrat, and the traitor. For the Vatican, this would create a major diplomatic problem: who could it realistically ally itself with? In terms of public relations, the Vatican would choose the nonaligned world; in terms of détente, the Vatican would choose the Communist world; and in terms of theology, it would choose the American sphere of influence. But all these postures would be knocked off balance by the Vietnam War.

Chapter 2: New Wine, Old Wineskins

When Pope Paul was elected by the College of Cardinals on the 21st of June, 1963, he wasted no time in continuing the work of his predecessor. The day after his election he announced his intention to resume Vatican II, in addition to other aims for his pontificate, namely “reviewing of the Code of Canon Law... [and] that peace among peoples, the most excellent of all good things, may be imposed.” He also hinted at his desire to fight for the rights of disenfranchised peoples, but left ambiguous whether this primarily meant those in Communist spheres of influence or in the decolonizing global south.²⁸ Either way, the Second Vatican Council was about to change the global Catholic Church, for better and for worse. And, on its face, the most ostensible change would be a shift in both focus and sympathy toward the global south, at least for its public relations.

Vatican II as Anti-Imperialist

The history of the Holy See and its posture towards the global south is one of both complicity and advocacy. First becoming involved due to the colonial conflict between Portugal and Spain in the 16th century, Pope Nicholas V permitted the Portuguese to “invade, conquer, pillage, and subjugate” the peoples and possessions of the new world and Africa, beginning centuries of religiously-justified colonization around the world.²⁹ But the two World Wars had

²⁸ Paul VI, “Qui Fausto Die”, 22 June 1963, Vatican City. https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/es/speeches/1963/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19630622_first-message.html. All foreign language documents are translated by me unless otherwise noted. For the unclear implications of Paul’s speech, see: Praesertim Venerabilibus Fratribus dilectisque filiis illarum regionum animo praesentes adsumus, ubi Sancta Ecclesia, quominus legitimis suis utatur iuribus, prohibetur. Trans: We keep in mind especially the venerable brothers and beloved children in those regions where the Holy Church is prohibited, that she might not use her legitimate rights.

²⁹ Nicholas V & Levy Maria Jordão (comp.) *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum*. Typographia Nationalis: Lisbon. 1867, p. 22. The original Latin, here re-ordered for ease of translation, is: “[plenam et liberam auctoritate Apostolica tenore praesentium concedimus facultatem]... tibi Saracenos et Paganos aliosque infideles et Christi inimicos quoscunque et ubicunque constitutos regna, ducatus... invadendi, conquerendi, expugnandi, et subjugandi...”

turned public opinion against the formal European style of empire, and the era of decolonization had plunged the Holy See into an unfamiliar, globalized world. No longer able to only focus on the squabbles of European powers, Paul VI decided to emphasize the universality of the Catholic faith by integrating the nascent states of the global south into the new diplomatic system the Pope was setting up.

The focus on the nonaligned world and, more generally, the global south, was incontrovertible. 29.9% of the circa-2600 prelates attending were born outside of Europe and North America, while 54.5% served dioceses outside of Europe and North America.³⁰ These included clergy from the Eastern Rite Catholic churches, lesser-known churches which are in communion with the Pope. The Eastern Rite Churches would be encouraged to have more autonomy by retracing their respective heritages as outlined in the conciliar document *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, which included acknowledgement of the pastoral and liturgical authority of patriarchs in their own territory or rite, more relaxed standards for conversion of Eastern Christians, and more control over missionary activity even when the Catholic missionaries in their dioceses were of the Latin Rite.³¹

The entire hierarchical structure of Roman Catholic missions was deracinated and then replanted. In 1911 there were about 13,000 missionaries serving around 30 million Catholics in East Asia, Oceania, Africa, and Latin America; of those missionaries, 60% were foreign to the territory, with the vast majority of them coming from Europe.³² In addition, although they were

³⁰ Wilde, M.J. "Second Vatican Council Votes." *Association of Religion Data Archives*, Association of Religion Data Archives, 19 November 2019. http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/VATICAN_CB.asp

³¹ Second Vatican Council and Walter M. Abbott (ed.) *The Documents of Vatican II in a New and Definitive Translation with Commentaries and Notes By Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Authorities*. Herder and Herder: New York. 1966, pp. 372-386

³² Kirch, Joseph. "Catholic Missions." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10375a.htm>

organized by the centralized Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, actual missions were conducted by diverse religious orders receiving most of their capital through direct contributions by the faithful to the mission – one 1903 study estimated that up to 4/5 of all revenue of missionary societies came from voluntary donations.³³

By 1965, however, this would change. Although missionaries would still come from Europe when necessary, the Council Fathers proposed a model of indigenization of missions, where “from the very start,” new Catholic communities in mission territories “...should be so formed that [they] can provide for [their] own necessities insofar as this is possible.”³⁴ Additionally, the conciliar document on missions, *Ad gentes*, adopted language and tactics one could likely find in the statement of purpose of any humanitarian aid organization. Although the theological underpinnings of mission more or less stayed the same, the actual action of missionary work shifted from, to borrow language from Catholic teaching, *spiritual* works of mercy to *corporal* works of mercy.³⁵ In other words, it was a shift from missions centered on conversion to missions centered on material aid.

This is not to say that missions before 1965 did not have a humanitarian element to them, nor that missions after that year did not pay any attention to spiritual matters. Rather, shifts in vocabulary and organization paved the way for a new style of evangelization, one which was at least as concerned with “waging war on famine, ignorance, and disease” and in “offer[ing its] prudent aid to projects sponsored by public and private organizations, by governments, by

³³Baumgarten, “Die kathol. Kirche u. ihre Diener in Wort u. Bild”, III, [Munich](#), 1903, p. 399

³⁴ *Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 584-630; 602

³⁵ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, spiritual works of mercy are: instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, forgiving, and bearing wrongs patiently, while corporal works of mercy are: feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. CCC2447

international agencies... and even by non-Christian religions” as in conversions.³⁶ Suddenly, three quarters of the world morphed from the territory of missions to heathens, to sovereign lands where missions went to serve the people, regardless of circumstance. In fact, even the body in charge of mission territories would be renamed to reflect this – in 1967 Pope Paul rechristened the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples.³⁷

In one sense, Vatican II could be defined as, at its core, an anti-imperial council. It adopted the language of anti-imperialism, sought to increase representation and amplify the voices of minorities within the Church, and tried to avoid any semblance of European colonialism in its administration of the global network of churches in communion with the Pope. But this could only be an act of self-deception from the start. The immense number of Catholics worldwide was a sometimes purposeful, sometimes happenstance result of a complicated history of colonialism, mission activity, and, ultimately, empire. 1100 years of an imperial papacy could not be forgotten in a day, even if the Pope proclaimed that “the Church in no way desires to inject herself into the government of the earthly city.”³⁸ On the contrary, of the 43 nations with which the Vatican established diplomatic relations during the pontificate of Paul VI, 34 (~80%) were part of the Non-aligned world.³⁹ If anything, the Vatican was setting itself up to be the mediator to the non-aligned world, not an apolitical entity only serving people in a humanitarian

³⁶ *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 599

³⁷ Paul VI, “Regimini Ecclesiae Universae.” *The Holy See*, 15 August 1967. http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vi_apc_19670815_regimini-ecclesiae-universae.html

³⁸ *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 599

³⁹ “Bilateral Relations of the Holy See.” *Vatican.va*, the Holy See, 9 July 2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20140709142833/http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/documents/rc_seg-st_20010123_holy-see-relations_en.html

capacity. To try and push this identity of being apolitical, however, Pope Paul even gave up the triple-tiered crown that he had been coronated with, to shouts of “Long live the poor Pope!”⁴⁰

Vatican II as *Detente*

As much as Pope Paul wanted the Vatican to appear apolitical, it needed to maintain plausible diplomatic neutrality and preserve his state’s position as mediator. To this end, the Holy See sought to cultivate a cordial relationship with the communist world, especially with the USSR and its Eastern European satellite states. Many commentators would note the importance of Pope Paul’s policy of *Ostpolitik* in this period, architected by Monsignor Agostino Casaroli, future Vatican Secretary of State under Pope John Paul II. But Casaroli’s *Ostpolitik* was not based on any affinity for communism.⁴¹ Rather, it was a means to protect the delicate tripartite balance between the natural sympathy to the American sphere of influence, the openness of the Communist Bloc to dialogue, and the growing importance of the Non-aligned world. The relationship between the Vatican’s *Ostpolitik* and what can be called its *Südpolitik* is something of an ouroboros: courting the communist world lent some credibility to the idea of the Holy See supporting neither the communist system nor the liberal democratic system whole-heartedly, while claiming to have the best interests of the Non-aligned world at heart made the Vatican a more attractive option for mediation to both the First World and the Communist world. In theory, Vatican II-inspired *Ostpolitik* strengthened the Holy See’s diplomatic position by the very fact of proclaiming itself apolitical. But, as theory transitioned to practice, an incredulous USSR, a

⁴⁰ Doty, Robert C. “Pope Paul Donates His Jeweled Tiara to Poor of World.” *New York Times*, 14 November 1964. <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/11/14/archives/pope-paul-donates-his-jeweled-tiara-to-poor-of-world.html>

⁴¹ Cf. August Franzen, *A History of the Church*. Herder and Herder. New York: 1969, 427 and Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope*. Paulist Press: Mahwah, NJ. 1993, pp. 500, 589.

suspicious United States, and, most importantly, faithful living behind the iron curtain, would call Vatican neutrality into question.

That the Council Fathers of Vatican II intended to open a dialogue with the Soviets and states within their sphere of influence was evident even from Paul VI's inaugural speech. His predecessors had, in no uncertain terms, condemned both communism and socialism and encouraged faithful living in nations under communism to resist.⁴² Comparatively, although Paul would hint at the obvious issues the Holy See would have with atheistic communism, the new Pope was downright friendly with the Eastern Bloc. In the name of the new ecumenical spirit, Paul VI even invited representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, including Archpriest Vitali Borovoi, noted as a KGB agent by the MI6, for a personal chat. In addition, one of the invitees, Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad, was long rumored to be a Soviet plant due to his young age and his collaboration with the government of the USSR.⁴³ His visit was granted on the basis that he was "writing a study about the pontificate of John XXIII", and the Pope received him warmly.

Less warmly received were the Catholic Church's own prelates from Eastern Europe. About 6% of the prelates attending Vatican II lived under a communist regime, the majority of them from Soviet sphere of influence, and many of whom sought a reiterated condemnation of

⁴² Regarding condemnation of communism, cf. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis. Vatican City: 1949. pp. 334-335, wherein anyone following that "materialistic and anti-Christian" doctrine is called an "apostate to the Catholic faith". For condemnation of socialism, cf. Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," *The Holy See*, 15 May 1891. http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html, especially ¶4, 5, 14, 15, and 17. However, it should be noted that laissez-faire capitalism has also been strongly criticized by the Holy See, cf. Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno," *The Holy See*, 15 May 1931, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html, especially ¶101 & 103.

⁴³ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 275. The reason for his youth being a matter of suspicion was that, usually, Metropolitans would be older (on average in their 60s) while Nikodim was in his mid-30s.

communism at the Council.⁴⁴ At the beginning of the Fourth Session of Vatican II, a group of conservative Council Fathers known as the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* passed around a petition for a new condemnation of communist doctrine.⁴⁵ Only 434, or around 15%, of attendees became signatories on the petition, which included the majority of prelates living under communist regimes. The proposal was ultimately rejected. Bishops living under communist regimes who were particularly vocal were rushed out of the public eye. For example, Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church Josyf Slipyj, who had been arrested by the Soviet collaborationist government in Ukraine and urged to convert to Eastern Orthodoxy as part of the liquidation of the Ukrainian churches in communion with Rome, denounced Pope Paul as “clasping the bloodstained hands of the murderers of the Greek Catholic Church.”⁴⁶ In return, Pope Paul refused to declare him Patriarch of his own Rite, but did raise him to the cardinalate two years later. In another case, the Prince-Primate and Archbishop of Esztergom Jozsef Mindszenty, who had been trapped in the American embassy in Budapest since 1956, was approached by a papal legate inviting him to participate in Vatican II in 1963.⁴⁷ Instead of being an honor, the invitation essentially came with a lose-lose situation attached: he was to either accept a lateral promotion and abdicate his position in the Hungarian Church to placate the communist government, or stew in the American embassy with no diplomatic support from the Holy See. Rather than compromising his position, Mindszenty rejected the invitation to attend Vatican II, and remained in Budapest until 1971.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Wilde, M.J. “Second Vatican Council Votes.” *Association of Religion Data Archives*, Association of Religion Data Archives, 19 November 2019. http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/VATICAN_CB.asp

⁴⁵ The 4th Session of Vatican II opened in 1965. *Coetus Internationalis Patrum* is Latin for “International Group of Fathers.”

⁴⁶ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 275

⁴⁷ Prince-Primate is essentially the highest-ranking Catholic prelate in Hungary.

⁴⁸ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 356

Pope Paul's simultaneous courting of the USSR and sacrifice of the more visible anti-communist prelates of Eastern Europe provides a first example of how political issues would overshadow pastoral and hierarchical issues. Putting up an apolitical front while actually prioritizing diplomacy would lead many priests and bishops to simply retreat into the newfound autonomy that the Second Vatican Council had ushered in. But Vatican II was not only concerned with courting the Eastern Bloc and the global south; it elevated American prelates, through their involvement in the drafting of documents, to unprecedented levels of influence.

American Influence at Vatican II

Although Americans constituted only about 8% of prelates at Vatican II, their effect was massively disproportionate. This can mostly be attributed to the influence of two prelates: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, and Egidio Vagnozzi, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States. Considered arch-conservatives and accused of packing the American episcopacy with their own personal choices for office, they were more known for the wealth of their dioceses than their personal holiness.⁴⁹ The conservatism of doctrinal traditionalists at Vatican II, however, was of a different species than American conservatism. In fact, many of the causes supported by American prelates – most notably the declarations on religious freedom and ecumenism – were considered rather progressive.

The commission on religious freedom was headed by two Americans – Fr. John Courtney Murray and Fr. Thomas Stransky. While Stransky was a young staff member at the Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and uncontroversial, Murray had been previously censured for his opinions on religious liberty and barred from teaching at the Catholic University

⁴⁹ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 346 and Callahan, Daniel. "America's Catholic Bishops." *The Atlantic*, April 1967. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1967/04/america-s-catholic-bishops/308898/>

of America. Yet, when it came time to decide on the *periti* for the document on religious freedom, Cardinal Spellman used his influence to get the rebuked priest on to the committee for drafting the conciliar document.⁵⁰ Although Murray had been censured for a too-liberal view on religious freedom, he did not argue for religious freedom on the ground of freedom of conscience - Murray called such a thing "dangerous" in a letter to the pope in 1965 - but rather based on the dignity of the person. He was careful to promote his conception of religious freedom as duty, not as a justification for indifferentism.⁵¹

The result was an uproariously popular document among the American contingent - 200 American bishops fought tooth and nail for the document to be passed, most notably the Archbishops of Boston and Chicago who put "enormous pressure" on Paul VI to pass it.⁵² The result, called *Dignitatis Humanae*, was controversial. Doctrinal conservatives accused the document of blessing the very indifferentism that John Courtney Murray claimed to avoid, while some doctrinal progressives accused the Pope of "papal absolutism" for delaying the vote on the document for edits to be made.⁵³ If freedom was "the cardinal social virtue", as Murray had asserted, what became of the pastoral authority of the Church?

Dignitatis Humanae was not the only document that was affected by the influence of American prelates. *Nostra Aetate*, the document on relations between Catholicism and non-Christian religions, had much input from numerous American clergymen. While the document

⁵⁰ *Periti*, sing. *Peritus*, Latin for "skilled" – essentially, a title for a "category expert" who helps to draft conciliar documents.

⁵¹ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 348-350. Indifferentism is the belief that all religions are equally true and that no particular religion is better or more salvific than any other. This belief was decried in the papal encyclical *Mirari Vos*, written by Pope Gregory XVI in 1832.

⁵² Ian Linden, *Global Catholicism: Diversity and Change since Vatican II*. Columbia University Press: New York. 2009, pp. 80-81

⁵³ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 347

was originally focused on relations with Jews, specifically condemning beliefs in hard supersessionism and Jews-as-deicides, the final document promoted dialogue with Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, while leaving room for whatever religions were not mentioned by name.⁵⁴ Some prelates, decried *Nostra Aetate* as discouraging the missionary and evangelical spirit due to the document's recognition of elements of truth in all religions.⁵⁵

The document on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, was similarly daring. Dr. Oscar Cullman, a Protestant observer invited to the Council, called it “more than the opening of a door; new ground ha[d] been broken. No Catholic document ha[d] ever spoken of non-Catholic Christians in this way.”⁵⁶ In fact, some even claimed that the presence of Protestant and Eastern Orthodox observers unfairly pressured the Council Fathers to be more accepting of non-Catholic Christianity; others claimed that the documents were too informed by the UN Declaration of Human Rights.⁵⁷ Abandoning the language of “return” or “integration”, the document promoted “restoration” of the Body of Christ, implying a mutually-compromising union of the disparate denominations of Christianity, to the chagrin of conservative prelates.⁵⁸

Considering the American influence on three of the most important documents of Vatican II, it would be fair to say that, doctrinally, the Council supported the American sphere of influence. However, unlike the posture taken towards the Eastern Catholic Churches, where a return to tradition was promoted, the Latin Rite Catholic Church wanted to close the book on its

⁵⁴ Supersessionism is the belief that the covenant established by Jesus Christ both replaces and abrogates the covenant that God had established with the people of Israel. Deicide, or God-killing, is a grave sin that had been attributed to the Jewish people to justify persecution against them.

⁵⁵ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 344

⁵⁶ *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 338

⁵⁷ Linden, *Global Catholicism*, p. 80

⁵⁸ Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. “Unitatis Redintegratio.” *The Holy See*, 21 November 1964, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html

unsavory past. Between changing the language and form of the Mass, promoting religious freedom and the primacy of conscience, and changing its posture on non-Catholic religions, Vatican II ushered in changes that seemed to spend all that power that was shored up at Vatican I. Rather than building up papal power, more autonomy was granted to the individual dioceses; rather than condemning the ideas of liberalism, liberal ideas regarding religion were enshrined. But too many sweeping changes too quickly, especially in an institution so dependent on tradition, upsets the delicate equilibrium and begs the question: if the Catholic Church *can* change, what *can't* it change?

Americans, emboldened by these developments, were about to show what could be changed in praxis. In 1963, at the opening of Vatican II, 70% of Catholics attended Mass at least once every week, 38% went to confession every month, 13% received Communion every week, 72% prayed privately every day, 34% made a mission within the past year, and 24% had a substantive conversation (i.e. not just small talk) with their priest in the past year. By a decade later, Mass attendance had declined to 50%, monthly confession declined to 17%, daily prayer declined to 60%, mission work declined to a meager 6%, and those having a substantive conversation with a priest declined to 20%. In fact, the only number to increase was the number of people who received communion weekly, doubling to 26%.⁵⁹ The inverse relationship between reception of communion and going to confession is indicative that American Catholics were considering fewer and fewer of their actions to be sinful, or perhaps simply no longer caring if they were. The heresy of 'Americanism' which Pope Leo XIII had written of had triumphed.

⁵⁹ Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council*. University of California Press: Los Angeles. 2004, p. 35 For a clearer presentation of this data, see Appendix A.

Of course, not all changes in praxis can be attributed to the Council itself. The decentralization and collegiality of Vatican II allowed for the creation of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and United States Catholic Conference, two groups founded for American prelates to set some of the liturgical and practical standards for the dioceses of the United States. These two groups loosened the requirements for fasting during Lent, and promoted the renovations of churches that often resulted in the destruction of Catholic statues and art. Essentially, the NCCB was cracking down on some of the more visible aspects of Catholicism in America at the same time the Second Vatican Council had made sweeping aesthetic and liturgical changes. Couple this with the newfound educational and financial prosperity of Catholics in America, and it created the perfect environment for lay Catholics to begin a mass dissent from the authority of the Pope. And it was in this situation that Pope Paul began to reveal his new diplomatic framework towards the American sphere of influence.

Chapter 3: Parallel Empires

Luckily for Pope Paul, American sympathy was generally with Catholics. After the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the desire to stick with the late President's social and legislative vision garnered support for Lyndon Johnson, the man who would take up Kennedy's mantle. Sworn in on Air Force One only two hours after the assassination, the new president, an intimidating and aggressive coalition-builder in the Senate, set out to continue fabricating consensus as he had done when Majority Whip. Through retaining most of Kennedy's senior appointments and pushing forward legislation in the name of honoring his predecessor's memory, Johnson established his presidency as one meant to repair the fractured American nation – a focus on domestic issues which would demonstrate his progressive politics and deference to the Kennedy legacy, but would leave him unprepared for the quagmire in Vietnam. In order to reach the desired popular consensus and to realize his dream of a 'Great Society', Johnson soon discovered that the Catholic Church, with its wide-reaching diplomatic, medical, educational, and press capabilities could be instrumentalized. However, Washington would only begin to take full advantage with Pope Paul's visit to the United Nations in 1965.

The initial interactions between Pope and president indicate a relationship built more around the preservation of tradition rather than mutual respect. Johnson and his staff seemed to be aware of the popularity of Paul's own predecessor, Pope John XXIII, especially through his papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.⁶⁰ Reading groups focused on the encyclical, which centered on the cultivation of peace and disarmament throughout the world, popped up throughout the United States, both religious and secular in background. 'Good Pope John', as he was known, had captured the attention of American policy analysts through this document. Johnson responded by

⁶⁰ Latin: Peace on Earth

posthumously awarding him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian honor, as the first Pope and the first Catholic priest to receive it.⁶¹ For Pope Paul, this was a recognition that both leaders stood in the long shadows of beloved predecessors, and further correspondences between Pope Paul and Johnson would make them realize the commonality of their foreign policy goals.

In December of 1963, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and Johnson's de facto Chief of Staff Walter Jenkins started to plan a meeting between Pope Paul and Johnson, a ceremonial step for presidents at this point, doing as Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy had done before.⁶² They planned to send an emissary to see the Pope as he went on a whirlwind tour of the Holy Land, to cross paths with him in Jerusalem in order to propose a meeting between the two heads of state. This trip, undertaken by the Director of the Peace Corps, R. Sargent Shriver, would accentuate a primary issue in U.S.-Vatican relations at the time: formalization of diplomatic ties between the two countries. America and the Vatican had, at one point, formal relations, but, in 1867, Congress cut off all funding to diplomatic missions from the Holy See. From then on, all diplomacy was conducted through ad hoc personal envoys. Because of this irregular relationship, Pope Paul, through an emissary, told Shriver that a personal meeting on American soil would be "impossible".⁶³ For the Pope and the president to meet, they could converge on a place of the Johnson administration's choosing in any other locale. Yet, in the

⁶¹ Airgram, Pope Paul VI to Lyndon B. Johnson, 12/8/63, #310 "Vatican City", Country File, NSF, Box 78, LBJ Library.

⁶² Johnson had no Chief of Staff in an official capacity; Jenkins, a White House aide, managed the daily meetings and projects on the President's behalf. Memo, McGeorge Bundy to Walter Jenkins, 12/19/63, #310 "Vatican City", Country File, NSF, Box 78, LBJ Library.

⁶³ Cable, Dean Rusk to G. Frederick Reinhardt, 1/8/64, "Vatican Cables Vol.1 10/64-12/67", USSR & Vatican, Country File, NSF, Box 231, LBJ Library.

process of orchestrating a formality, the overlapping interests of the Vatican and the United States became clear.

In terms of foreign relations, the Vatican presented itself as a capable intelligence organization in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Vietnam. Given the United States' vested interest economically and ideologically in Latin America, and hoping to avoid another Castro (or even Arbenz), the cultural and political clout of Catholicism seemed a perfect tool for quelling socialist or communist tendencies in the region. Ideally for America, priests could promote cooperation among their flock with pro-American regimes in their respective countries.⁶⁴ However, the very ideas the United States hoped that Catholic priests in Latin America could stamp out were influencing those selfsame priests.

The Vatican as a Global Intelligence Organization

Regarding Eastern Europe, there were non-negligible populations of Catholics living behind the Iron Curtain, especially in countries like Hungary, Ukraine, and the Baltic states. As with Cardinal Mindszenty and Major Archbishop Slipyj, communist governments in the region usually tried to either liquidate entire churches and their leaders or guarantee the appointments of pro-government clerics to the episcopate. This drove many churches underground, leading Catholic priests to having passion for and ties with illegal anticommunist movements – contacts integral for the rollback of communism. Again, Washington viewed the Catholic Church almost as a spy agency, with its agents in every corner of the world. In addition, the Holy See's lack of

⁶⁴ For example, it was a requirement for any Latin American priest who wanted to move up in the hierarchy to attend the International University for Social Studies Pro Deo in Rome – where the instructors would “indoctrinate [Latin American priests] in the concepts of the free enterprise system.” Cf. Cable, T. Graydon Upton to Walt Rostow, 4/11/66, “RM 3-1 11/23/63-4/11/66”, EX RM3, WHCF, Box 6, LBJ Library.

formal relations with the USSR provided a window of opportunity to the United States to take advantage of favorable global opinion towards the Catholic Church. Announcing an official U.S.-Vatican diplomatic relationship was a possible boon to convincing nations nonaligned in the Cold War to enter the American sphere of influence, while also giving the U.S. a perceived moral high ground.

In Vietnam, however, the influence of Catholics on national politics came with more caveats. On one hand, the existence of Vietnamese Catholics gave sympathetic and powerful reasoning for American intervention: failure to prevent the Vietnamese domino from falling to communism threatened not only the global balance of power between communism and liberal democracy, but also the ability to believe in and practice one's faith. Vietnamese Catholics were also more than a token religious minority: they were generally educated, influential in their local communities, and anticommunist. For American interests, a Catholic Vietnam, if possible, would be a stable Vietnam. But these exact characteristics that made Catholics preferable to work with also caused internal friction. Under the Diem regime, Catholics received extreme preferential treatment: Catholics were preferred for promotions in the South Vietnamese army, majority-Catholic villages received more martial aid to fight the Viet Cong, and the Catholic Church, which was the largest property owner in South Vietnam, was exempt from land reform measures, while Buddhists had no protections.⁶⁵ This antagonism stoked conflict between Catholics and Buddhists, leading to violence and retaliation on the part of both groups. With the assassination of Diem only a month before President Kennedy's, South Vietnam became an even more confusing jumble of religious sects and political factions – promoting a national Catholic identity

⁶⁵ Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*. pp. 90-91

would be a comfortable solution for the United States, but it would neither be the most effectual nor the most stable.

The Vatican and the “Great Society”

Although the Johnson administration was considering these disparate foreign policy goals, the President himself was more concerned with domestic issues and the formation of a “Great Society”. In this field, too, the Catholic Church, with its wide-reaching social programs, could be utilized in the consensus-building Johnson so craved. In terms of integration, the easing of racial and religious tensions, welfare, and education, the American Catholic hierarchy could be counted on as an ally to further the administration’s aims. As an early example, the administration considered sending an emissary to the Second Vatican Council in 1964 to influence the outcome of the conciliar document *Nostra Aetate*, specifically to reject the idea that Jews, as a people, are in any way personally or collectively responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. A letter from an anonymous Jewish staff member shows the seriousness of the proposal, wherein a concerned official argued against following through with such a plan because of the optics of the state interfering with Church matters, and because the hierarchy already seemed sympathetic to the idea.⁶⁶ Thus, the Johnson administration was not only concerned with Catholic practice, but also with doctrine – a point which would lead to a divergence between Pope and president years later, especially concerning contraception and abortion.

Yet there were domestic concerns with a perceived closeness to the Pope and to the Catholic Church as well. Although Johnson’s predecessor was a Catholic, Kennedy made a very public affair of convincing the mostly Protestant nation that his faith would in no way impair or

⁶⁶ Memo, Anonymous to Lyndon B. Johnson, 7/1/64, , #310 “Vatican City”, Country File, NSF, Box 78, LBJ Library.

bias his presidency.⁶⁷ Perhaps his readiness to publicly repudiate sectarian affiliation gave Kennedy credibility – a credibility that Johnson, whisked into the Oval Office by unfortunate happenstance, was unable to cultivate. Not that Johnson was a religious bigot; he saw himself as a masterful ecumenist, able to bridge those gaps rather than create them.⁶⁸ But the very fact of his ecumenism and acceptance of people of all religious traditions opened the door to speculation by the public. His close friendships with Archbishop Lucey of San Antonio, the Catholic priest Wunibald Schneider, his relationship with the Pope, and the conversion of his own daughter to Catholicism in 1965 welcomed rumors of a hidden pro-Catholic bias on Johnson’s part. Upon the invitation of the Pope to the 1964 New York World’s Fair, where a Vatican pavilion had been opened, Johnson’s Chief of Protocol noted that any proposal of a possible meeting should have “no official reaction until after [the] elections”, hoping to stem any hit to the President’s poll numbers that might have been weathered as a result.⁶⁹

Even taking public reaction into account, the Johnson administration recognized the importance of good relations with the Vatican, and the benefit that would come with formalized relations. However, it would not be until 1965 that the U.S.-Vatican diplomatic relationship became active. One of Johnson’s aides, a Catholic named Jack Valenti, met with the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Egidio Vagnozzi, to discuss the opinions of the American Catholic hierarchy on administration policy. Vagnozzi, a doctrinal conservative and hawk, surprised

⁶⁷ John F. Kennedy. “Transcript: JFK’s Speech on His Religion.” *NPR*, National Public Radio, 5 December 2007. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16920600>

⁶⁸ Billington, Monroe. “Lyndon B. Johnson: The Religion of a Politician.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1987, pp. 519–530. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27550443.

⁶⁹ Memo, Angier Biddle Duke to McGeorge Bundy, 10/27/64, , #310 “Vatican City”, Country File, NSF, Box 78, LBJ Library.

Valenti by describing Johnson's election as "providential".⁷⁰ He readily offered information about the Catholic Church in Vietnam, and his suspicions about the Buddhist movement. Most importantly, however, was the Apostolic Delegate's proposal to change the architecture of the diplomatic avenues between the Holy See and the United States. Because of the lack of formal relations, as had been revealed during the Shriver mission, diplomatic discussions usually occurred on a person-to-person basis, with ad hoc communications opened as necessary.

Although U.S.-Vatican relations would not be formalized until the Reagan administration, Vagnozzi's request did bring to light who the point-people were. During the pontificate of Pius XII, Francis Cardinal Spellman was the main contact between the Vatican and the U.S. government. But since Pius' death in 1958, the papal-presidential relationship had reached a lull. The short reign of John XXIII and the subsequent assassination of Kennedy had caused communications to fall to the wayside. If the Pope and president were to become close again, Vagnozzi requested a dependable contact in the White House for continuous communication. Valenti and Vagnozzi would comprise the initial duo, but the pool of contacts would inevitably expand. The use of these personal envoys would be a reliable indicator for the rest of the Johnson administration for how important the Vatican's advice and knowledge were at any particular time.

With a communications network established, Paul and Johnson were now free to correspond with one another on diplomatic issues. However, with the overlap of interests discovered as a result of the Shriver Mission, the Pope's negative answer to a meeting on

⁷⁰ For public opinion about Vagnozzi, cf. Peter Kent and John Pollard eds. *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age*. Praeger: Westport. 1994. p.210. For the memo on the Valenti/Vagnozzi meeting, cf. Memo, Jack Valenti to Lyndon B. Johnson, 2/26/65, , #310 "Vatican City", Country File, NSF, Box 78, LBJ Library.

American soil became more and more disagreeable with the passing months. The relationship with Pope Paul was as much about optics, domestic and international, as it was about concrete policy issues, which made a papal-presidential meeting a necessity. To not meet with the Pope would not only be a break from now-established tradition, but would also alienate Catholic voters and legislators – many of whom publicly clamored for the formalization of relations with the Holy See.⁷¹ This pressure was not simply external to the White House; internally, there was a general consensus among Johnson's aides, Catholic and non-Catholic, that a meeting must happen. After all, one aide noted, one did not need to be Catholic to be “impressed by their numbers,” and the results the sympathy of the Catholic population would have on legislation.⁷²

But, Washington also needed to consider the effects on public opinion that such a meeting would have. If Johnson had taken the second-hand word of the Pope as truth, that a meeting on American soil would be impossible, then it was implied that Johnson needed to come to the Pope. A man too afraid of issuing a public reaction to an invitation to meet certainly would not have boarded a plane to go half-way around the world and see a religious figure on a whim. Instead, the Holy See needed to go about making the impossible possible. And, in October of 1965, the Pope managed just that.

The First Papal Visit to the United States, 1965

The miracle Paul had orchestrated was a visit to the United Nations headquarters in New York City. Although the Pope had said a visit to America could not happen, he considered himself to be visiting an international body that happened to be on a particular country's soil,

⁷¹ August 21, 1965 "Pope and President at the UN?" America Magazine, vol. 113, 1965 collection, Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO

⁷² Memo, Angier Biddle Duke to McGeorge Bundy, 10/27/64, , #310 "Vatican City", Country File, NSF, Box 78, LBJ Library.

feigning internal consistency. As paper-thin as that explanation was, it did give the Pope and the president occasion to meet in person for the first time on October 4th. On a 14-hour long whirlwind trip through New York, Paul endeavored to further the model of world peace that had been put forth in John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* by appealing to the general body of the U.N.⁷³ He arrived early in the morning, first heading to St. Patrick's Cathedral, where he met with Archbishop Spellman. Addressing Spellman but facing the crowd of faithful and curious amassed, the Pope proclaimed to more than 1 million people – with another 10 million watching intently at home – that “we are all citizens of Rome.”⁷⁴

For Paul, being a citizen of Rome meant being an emissary of peace and concord throughout the world. At this point in time, the greatest threat to world peace was the conflict between the Communist world and the American sphere of influence, so the logical next step for the pontiff was to meet with Johnson and preach peace. And so, the two met at the Waldorf Astoria hotel just before 1:00p.m. to discuss politics. Pleasantries led into facile discussions of worldwide initiatives for health and education, and then into race relations. However, despite the Pope's declaration of an evangelical *romanitas* only hours before, he did not say much of anything on Vietnam or the conflict with the USSR and China; rather, social justice in Latin America loomed heavily on their minds. It seems the Pope had come to speak of peace to everyone except the President himself.⁷⁵ Pope Paul was not alone in this avoidance of deep

⁷³ For a map of the Pope's 1965 trip, see Appendix B.

⁷⁴ For citation of Pope's speech, see: Paul VI. “Address of the Holy Father Paul VI.” Saint Patrick Cathedral, New York. 4 October 1965. http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_st-patrick-new-york.html. For estimations of the crowd and viewing public, see: Glass, Andrew. “Pope Paul VI visits the U.S., Oct. 4, 1965.” *Politico*, 4 October 2012. <https://www.politico.com/story/2012/10/this-day-in-politics-081968>, and Bill Adler. *Pope Paul in the United States*. Hawthorn Books: New York. 1965, p. 18.

⁷⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XII, Western Europe*, eds. David S. Patterson and James E. Miller (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2001), Document 303. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d303>

conversation though. In setting the talking points for the meeting, McGeorge Bundy advised that relevant topics to discuss be limited to the UN's effectiveness in calling for disarmament, the social justice efforts in Latin America, and the importance of "informal personal contact". With emphasis Bundy closed, "[the President] and the Pope are not discussing diplomatic relations or population control."⁷⁶ Vietnam was a subject for another day, apparently.

There was ample time, however, for photo opportunities and a gift exchange. The Pope had arrived with a large painting of Christ's resurrection painted by a contemporary Italian cubist. More simply but certainly not humbly, Johnson gifted the Pope with a small golden globe and an autographed photo of the President himself in a sterling silver frame.⁷⁷ There was a certain symbolic irony to Johnson's gift of the globe to Pope Paul; one could say that the world was not Johnson's gift to give, nor Paul's to receive. The vision of a world under the guiding force of the President's progressive policies and the Pope's peaceful faith would not come to be, despite their best efforts. At the time, though, Paul was about to present this vision to the delegations of 116 countries at the UN.⁷⁸

There, the Pope did give his speech begging peace. His first rhetorical move was to declare himself outside of the sphere of earthly "competition" between states. Reducing himself to "a man like yourselves", he forwent using the royal 'we' which the incumbent on the chair of Peter had used for centuries, adding that his was a "spiritual mission" rather than temporal. Paul

⁷⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XII, Western Europe*, eds. David S. Patterson and James E. Miller (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2001), Document 302.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d302>

⁷⁷ Memo, News Conference with Bill Moyers, 11/4/65, Vatican Memos Vol. 1 10/64-12/67 "USSR & Vatican", Country File, NSF, Box 231, LBJ Library. For an image of their meeting, see Appendix C.

⁷⁸ Albania was the only nation to excuse itself, cf. America editors, "Pope Paul at the United Nations: A Historic Day." *America Magazine*, 16 October 1965. <http://papalvisit.americamedia.org/1965/10/16/pope-paul-at-the-united-nations-a-historic-day/>

had not come to lecture the world, but to ask for their ears, he asserted. In the spirit of Vatican II, which the Pope had invoked in the beginning of his speech, he wanted to listen to the world, and let in some of its wisdom. But, outside of the spiritual realm, what authority could the Pope cite to his audience?

Referring to the Catholic Church's long history, he called it an "expert on humanity". Claiming that the Church could speak "for the dead as well as the living," the Pope painted the social arm of the Church in terms that would be familiar today – not as a spiritual body, but as a humanitarian one. As mentioned above, Pope Paul had confirmed that the Church's role in the world had transitioned from spiritual works of mercy to corporal, that the Church's primary purpose was no longer conversion, but social justice. The idea of the Church as useful due to its expertise drew on another important point in the foreign policy of the Holy See: Paul had essentially admitted that the Church was abdicating its own vision and becoming an advisor to a different supranational body. The Catholic hierarchy was after all convinced "that this Organization represents the obligatory path of modern civilization and world peace." Only a few paragraphs later, he would quote President Kennedy on peace: "Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind." But was ideological war a licit means to achieve that end?⁷⁹

The Holy See's answer seemed to be in support of America and its sphere of influence. Another outcome of Vatican II had permeated its foreign policy: a capitulation to American interests. Of course, this posture benefited the Vatican while the U.S. remained one of the poles in the bipolar conflict between Communism and liberal democracy. However, this underlying foreign policy principle engendered a certain self-conception that would ultimately deceive both

⁷⁹ For the speech referenced *passim*, cf. Paul VI. "Address of the Holy Father Paul VI to the United Nations Organization." New York, U.S.A, 4 October 1965. http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations.html

the Pope and the President: for the Catholic Church to truly be an expert in humanity, it needed to have the ability to both reach and influence Catholics on the ground. Many of their social justice initiatives, and many of the reasons that Washington found the Vatican useful in foreign policy, depended on an orthodox clergy and a docile laity. Without these two undergirding factors, the global power of the Holy See would be greatly diminished. But, if the Church truly did have this expertise regarding human nature and need, then a loss of either factor could not happen under the Pope's watchful eye – or so the Holy See and Washington believed.

As he closed his speech, the entire assembly broke into a standing ovation. It seemed that the world, too, agreed with the Pope's exhortation of "*Jamais plus la guerre*," 'never again war.' But the Johnson administration had other ideas – the Vatican had already found ways to make the impossible possible for the U.S. government, and that is a lesson difficult to unlearn. Of course, it benefited the Holy See as well, with the most economical use of time. While Pope Paul's total trip to New York lasted 14 hours, only around 2 of those hours were spent in a political capacity. The rest of his time not spent in transit had him filling his role as the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church – engaging in interfaith dialogues, saying Mass, and addressing the faithful. Despite the political nature of his visit, the Pope still was able to maintain a pastoral, apolitical cover, and thereby become a global spokesman for peace.

Chapter 4: The Leader of World Peace

The aftermath of the Pope's visit to the U.N. was immediate. With the Vatican established as a diplomatic player on the world stage, Washington's focus on the Vatican increased. Johnson and his staff concluded that getting on the good side of the Pope, and using the reach of the Catholic Church, would be a powerful tool in executing their administrative goals domestically and internationally. This desire to instrumentalize the Pope would lead to a bipolar relationship with him; on the one hand, Johnson would paint himself as a devotee with great respect for the "moral suggestion of the leader of world peace".⁸⁰ On the other hand, he would undermine some of the Pope's own sources of authority to further certain policy initiatives. The result is a kind of comedy-of-errors, with essential misunderstandings ultimately leading to a series of failed diplomatic missions on the international stage, while also cracking the previously united American Catholic face.

Three specific situations dominated the U.S.-Vatican relationship at the dawn of 1966: the problems of family planning, Mindszenty in Hungary, and, of course, Vietnam. Together, this triplet covers the spectrum of Washington's reaction to the Vatican. In family planning, Washington was subversive towards the Vatican, using dissident American priests to promote the use of contraception and abortion amongst Catholics. Regarding Mindszenty, the U.S. and the Vatican would engage in a form of the volunteer's dilemma where each party wanted a common good, but no individual would act in light of the sacrifice that would need to be made.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XII, Western Europe, eds. David S. Patterson and James E. Miller (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2001), Document 307.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v12/d307>

⁸¹ The prisoner's dilemma is a type of model in game theory where one individual can make a sacrifice to help the collective, but not volunteering while someone else does nets one no sacrifice but all the benefits. All players lose when none volunteer. For an example of the volunteer's dilemma, cf. Manning, R.; Levine, M; Collins, A. (September 2007). "The Kitty Genovese murder and the social psychology of helping: The parable of the 38 witnesses". *American Psychologist*. **62** (6): pp. 555–562.

Finally, Washington would fully support the Vatican's peace efforts in Vietnam, but the weakened moral position of Catholicism and the Pope would enervate the missions for peace.

Family Planning

Even before the Pope's visit, Washington had viewed the Catholic Church's position on contraception and abortion as inimical to economic development. Considering the economic model of growth proposed by Johnson's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Walt Rostow, declining birth rates were a precondition for industrialization and development of countries. Promoting the conscious limitation of the amount of children in a family was a "form of welfare choice" that allowed for higher incomes, better education, and, in Cold War terms, an argument for non-planned economies.⁸² In Rostow's five-stage system, no planned economy had reached the highest level of development, that of "high mass consumption." Thus, contraception and abortion in undeveloped nations became a main concern of the Johnson administration as a Cold War weapon. And Catholic nations, especially in Latin America, were thought to be in most desperate need. However, not wanting to attract international attention or condemnation from the Pope, Johnson's aides advised "informal and little publicized efforts" to further this goal.⁸³

Yet, two of these efforts did enter an official realm. One was the use of the National Catholic Welfare Conference to further dissidence on the contraceptive ban among Catholic laity through giving the impression that the clergy supported them.⁸⁴ On some level, though, that

⁸² Rostow, W. W. "The Five Stages of Growth-A Summary". *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1960. pp. 4-16

<https://web.archive.org/web/20130223023302/http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ipe/rostow.htm>

⁸³ Memo, Harry McPherson to Jack Valenti, 4/21/65, "RM3-1 Catholic 11/23/63 - 11/3/66", EX RM3, WHCF, Box 6, LBJ Library.

⁸⁴ From here on, I will refer to the National Catholic Welfare Conference as the NCWC.

impression was correct. Rumors were circulating that a change in doctrine was on the horizon, spurred on by the “effervescent” spirit of Vatican II.⁸⁵ Later on, priests in the United States and around the world would protest over the Pope’s upholding of doctrine, some even leaving the priesthood over it.⁸⁶ But, with nothing settled and public perception on the line, the Johnson administration tried to use its ties within the NCWC to spur on lay dissent.

As early as 1964, the Johnson administration had sought contacts within the NCWC due to its large media arm, which had the capability of reaching every Catholic in the U.S. They found a powerful figure in the unofficial head of NCWC’s communications division, Monsignor Frank Hurley, a California native known for his talkative and congenial personality. The “key fellow in terms of this little bureaucracy [i.e., the NCWC]”, Hurley’s word could simultaneously and directly influence both clergy and laity.⁸⁷ Tapping him to become a mediator on the issue of population control, Johnson’s aides used Hurley as a kind of tuning fork: they pointed him in the direction of some bishop, or priest, or prominent Catholic, and learned whether there was a consonance of opinions. This skill would become even more useful when the philanthropist John D. Rockefeller III proposed a commission on population to Johnson. Seeing the opportunity such a commission presented as a “consensus making instrument,” a Johnson aide asked Hurley to find a prominent Catholic clergyman to volunteer for a spot on it. Although the bishops would be “forced” to contradict any of the commission’s findings, Johnson’s aide believed that “we can

⁸⁵ Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council*. University of California Press: Los Angeles. 2004, p. 8

⁸⁶ Kitchener, Caroline. “When Catholic Priests Dissented.” *The Atlantic*, 30 July 2018.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/membership/archive/2018/07/when-catholic-priests-dissented/566375/>

⁸⁷ Memo, Ralph Dungan to Bill Moyers, 10/29/64, “RM3-1 Catholic 11/23/63 – 11/3/66”, EX RM3, WHCF, Box 6, LBJ Library.

probably get [the NCWC] to put some Bishop on any Commission on Population that [the President] set[s] up.”⁸⁸

Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty

The Johnson administration at this point had a reasonable hope of domestic consensus building between American clergy and its policy goals regarding population control. However, consensus would not define every aspect of the relationship between Washington and Catholics, especially when dealing with Catholics abroad. The conflict that most embodies the disagreement between the Vatican and Washington is the self-imposed exile of Cardinal-Archbishop Mindszenty in the American embassy of Budapest. As mentioned above, the Hungarian Catholic Church was a target for liquidation by the Communist government. Mindszenty, as a vocal advocate for the independence of his national church, became a roadblock to better relations with Hungary, and, in turn, the USSR, for both the Vatican and the United States. The Vatican wanted Mindszenty out of the American Embassy in order to force his abdication, which would have improved relations with the Hungarian government, presumably also ameliorating the oppression of Catholics in the country. The United States wanted Mindszenty out of the embassy because his presence ultimately threatened the positive trend of the U.S.-Soviet relationship. And, ultimately, Mindszenty wanted to leave the embassy – either to become a martyr in a Hungarian prison, or to return to his place of honor as the head of the Hungarian Church.

Although it seemed all parties would benefit from Mindszenty’s removal, any one party acting first would necessitate a sacrifice on their part. If the Vatican acted first in removing

⁸⁸ Memo, Joseph Califano to Lyndon Johnson, 7/12/67, “WE 2/16/67-8/9/67”, EX WE 2/16/67, Box 2, LBJ Library.

Mindszenty, or stripped him of his title while he was still in the embassy, they risked alienating the faithful within Hungary and making the Cardinal all the more vocal about the injustice. If the United States acted first, it risked an international incident that would weaken not only its own moral standing but also negatively affect relations with the Vatican. If Mindszenty himself acted first, he was in danger of not getting the martyrdom he wanted and instead being forced to languish under house arrest in silence. Without a catalyst to set things in motion, the Hungarian Cardinal continued to wait in the embassy, with secret police watching outside at all times. But, just on the eve of 1966, a catalyst that promised to solve the dilemma appeared.

By late December of 1965, Mindszenty was already an old man at 74 years old. Thus, it came as no surprise when the Cardinal was diagnosed with tuberculosis just a few weeks before Christmas.⁸⁹ Without either proper staff or medical equipment, the entire legation was at risk of catching the disease and the Cardinal himself was at risk of death. Morbid as it was, it provided an effective excuse to get Mindszenty out of the embassy. Advising him to leave Hungary and go west for treatment, the American embassy staff appeared to be on the brink of ending an exile that had begun nine years prior.

Fate would not have it, though. Mindszenty vehemently refused to leave, even for medical treatment. Over the course of a few months his condition continued to worsen – even to the point where extracting him from the country became an impossibility. And then, suddenly, in an event the Cardinal himself would attribute to divine intervention, he became well with barely any increase in medical attention. After his full recovery, Mindszenty sent a letter to the President thanking him for his continued support and for the medical treatment, offering his

⁸⁹ Letter, Elim O'Shaughnessy to Jozsef Mindszenty, 12/14/65, "Hungary", Europe and USSR: Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Country File, NSF, Box 195, LBJ Library.

blessings. He received no letter in return; rather, it had been “general established policy to avoid involving the President personally in substantive correspondence with the Cardinal.”⁹⁰ Live or die, Mindszenty was still nothing more than a diplomatic roadblock. However, it would still have been better for the U.S. government for the Vatican to move first in removing the Cardinal. Especially since, after his brush with death, Mindszenty was genuinely considering removing himself from the embassy before either could act. Washington had even sent 6 pages worth of guidelines and contingencies to the American embassy in case Mindszenty attempted to leave.⁹¹

Because of Mindszenty’s threatened departure from the embassy, and the increasingly loud demands of the Hungarian government to remove him as the Prince Primate of the Catholic Church in Hungary, the volunteer’s dilemma had morphed into a game of chicken, with both the Vatican and Washington trying to get the other to act first.⁹² By 1967, Washington had implied to the Vatican that, if action were not taken, it would negotiate with the Hungarian government to hand over the Cardinal. In late September, Secretary of State Dean Rusk issued an ultimatum: if the Vatican did not remove Mindszenty by October 3rd, the American embassy was authorized to give him up to the government.⁹³ The Vatican, far from moved and acting with a characteristic insouciance, continued to ignore the Mindszenty issue. The Apostolic Delegate to the United States believed it would be better for Washington to “do the negotiating for the Cardinal’s safe-

⁹⁰ Memo, Benjamin Read to Walt Rostow, 9/30/66, “Hungary”, Europe and USSR: Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Country File, NSF, Box 195, LBJ Library.

⁹¹ Telegram, Telecommunications Operations Division to American Embassy Budapest, 9/26/67, “Hungary”, Budapest 409, Europe and USSR: Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Country File, NSF, Box 195, LBJ Library.

⁹² For the increasing demands for the removal of Mindszenty, whom the Hungarian government called “an embarrassment to both Hungary and the United States”, Cf. Memo, Visit of Hungarian Charge D’Affairs, 2/8/65, MINDR, WHCF Name File, LBJ Library; Memo, Nathaniel Davis to Walt Rostow, 10/4/67, “Hungary”, Europe and USSR: Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Country File, NSF, Box 195, LBJ Library.

⁹³ Telegram, Dean Rusk to American Embassy Budapest, 9/30/67, “Hungary”, Europe and USSR: Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Country File, NSF, Box 195, LBJ Library.

conduct.”⁹⁴ Having called Washington’s bluff, the Vatican succeeded in getting the topic of the Hungarian Cardinal off the table for a time. October 3rd came and went with Mindszenty still staying in the embassy, and he remained there well into the Nixon administration.

Although Washington and the Vatican may have considered Mindszenty to be a threat to détente in Europe, but the greatest threat in the balance of power between the liberal-democratic and communist worlds was Vietnam. In the same way, the Vatican may have been hesitant to protect one man in Hungary, but it was more than willing to pool all their resources to help Catholics in Vietnam, and to work towards an end to the war. Yet again, this demonstrated the Vatican’s all-too-eager mentality to spurn its clergy, which would later affect the Pope’s missions to Vietnam.

Papal Intervention in Vietnam

Although the Vatican supported the cause of South Vietnamese Catholics, it also believed that the best way to protect Catholics in both North and South Vietnam would be to support the American war effort and prevent reunification of the two countries. To this end, the Vatican developed a three-pronged approach: First, the Pope would use his heightened moral position in world politics to influence national leaders in the conflict. Second, the Pope would use the riches of the American Catholic Church to bolster aid to South Vietnam. Finally, the Vatican would use its newly gained political clout to send missions to Vietnam to further the peace effort. In alignment with the Mindszenty affair, most of these initiatives would meet failure.

⁹⁴ An Apostolic Delegate is essentially the Holy See’s equivalent to a personal envoy; for the reference to Apostolic Delegate Luigi Raimondi’s statement on Mindszenty, see Memo, Nathaniel Davis to Walt Rostow, 10/3/67, “Hungary”, Europe and USSR: Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Country File, NSF, Box 195, LBJ Library.

The first major initiative the Pope would undertake to leverage his moral position in the Vietnam War was to praise the decision of the belligerents to go through with a ceasefire for Christmas of 1965. Using this opportunity to try to push peace talks, the Pope sent letters to the heads-of-state of all major relevant nations, including the People's Republic of China and the USSR. However, there is a real question of whether the letters were sent more for posterity rather than substance. Each letter was only a paragraph, but their respective tones betrayed the incontrovertible fact that, despite the efforts of the Vatican *Ostpolitik*, it was America that was the Holy See's greatest ally.

By far the friendliest in this letter, Pope Paul opens his letter to President Johnson first thanking him for a letter sent by the American Ambassador to the United Nations, whom he had met in an audience not long before. He recognizes that the President's initiatives "will result in a permanent peace for that war-torn area," and that Johnson's push for a Christmas truce was a "noble response" to the Pope's own urging. But the Pope would not afford this gratitude to the other recipients. Even Nguyen Van Thieu, at that point the leader of the military junta that would become the second Vietnamese Republic, received a letter that was cold and formal. The only solace Nguyen might have taken in the letter was the Pope's commitment to "safeguarding the country's independence", a desire that would put him at odds with the leaders of the Communist countries involved in the conflict.

In his letters to Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, and the President of the USSR Nikolai Podgorny, the cordiality remained but was accompanied by an almost threatening undertone. To Mao, the Pope began his letter by "dar[ing] to address a respectful and urgent call... to concern yourself with bringing about a just solution that safeguards the independence of the country." The implication was clear: the previous intervention of China had been unjust, and only support

for a Korea-esque tense division of North and South could lead to an acceptable solution. The same language, not outwardly accusing but implicitly damning, was used in the letter to Ho Chi Minh. “Our [the Pope’s] prayer is rising to God... that nothing is neglected to achieve a peace so keenly desired, which will free humanity from a terrible threat.” The terrible threat, that is, of the Vietnam War possibly escalating beyond a proxy war. The Pope even called out the official stance of North Vietnam that the Viet Cong was an independent freedom fighting party – “we call on all those responsible to not commit acts which could lead to the resumption of violent combat and bombings.” The Pope was telling Ho to keep his soldiers in line. While there was no threat to back it up, perhaps the Pope wanted Ho to infer one.

The strangest letter, however, was the one which the Pope sent to Podgorny. The first question is why the Pope designated Podgorny as the recipient at all. If the Pope were to stick to diplomatic tradition, he would have addressed the letter to Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as the successor to Nikita Khrushchev. After Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964, power was divided into a triumvirate of so-called revisionists: Brezhnev, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers Alexei Kosygin, and finally Podgorny.⁹⁵ Thus, the decision to address Podgorny must have been a deliberate one. The answer to why Podgorny was addressed specifically also ties in to whether these papal letters were more for public relations, or an actual effort for peace.

To understand why Podgorny was addressed, it is first necessary to understand his reputation. Firstly, the *troika*’s diplomatic style was personal and intimate, with frequent visits to foreign heads-of-state within and outside the Soviet Bloc. Secondly, Khrushchev had set up a

⁹⁵ Ilya Zemtsov. *Chernenko: The Last Bolshevik: The Soviet Union on the Eve of Perestroika*. Transaction Publishers; Piscataway, New Jersey. 1989. p. 87.

rivalry between Podgorny and Brezhnev to determine who would succeed him as party secretary. While Brezhnev did end up winning this squabble, there were rumors that Podgorny had been the favorite, and Brezhnev's usurpation of the secretariat had strained their relationship further.⁹⁶ Thus, addressing Podgorny may have been, in the Pope's eyes, an appeal to a figure he saw as diplomatically keen, in competition with Soviet orthodoxy, and yet, still powerful within the party leadership of the USSR. But, if the Pope had put this much thought into the addressee, this necessarily leads to the question of whether he believed that the letters might actually bring about peace.⁹⁷

It is difficult to call the letters substantive when they contain so little substance – each letter is at most a few paragraphs and consists of little besides an appeal for a “just solution”. Although the Pope did not use many stock phrases in the writing of the letters, the structure and style of argument were generally the same, mostly referencing prior national hardship and pleading that the states not inflict such tragedy on another state. Regardless of whether the Pope believed the letters would somehow bring the two Vietnams to the negotiating table, it did accomplish one thing: pushing the Holy See closer to the United States. It became clear from the responses – or lack thereof – coming out of the Communist world that any just solution must include reunification. Both Podgorny and Ho sent rescripts to Pope Paul saying as much. “A just solution in Vietnam,” Podgorny remarked, “can be reached on the basis of the known proposals of the democratic government of the Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of

⁹⁶ United States Central Intelligence Administration. “The Brezhnev-Podgorny Relationship in the Soviet Leadership.” 7 August 1964 <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79-00927A004500110002-1.pdf>

⁹⁷ Throughout this section I have been referencing the letters included here: Paul VI. “Appels Historiques pour la Paix au Vietnam.” *The Holy See*, 31 December 1965. http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/fr/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651231_appelli-storici.html.

South Vietnam."⁹⁸ Ho Chi Minh did not even dignify the Pope's letter with a response; however, to a 1967 letter asking for truce, Ho basically concurred with Podgorny's message. The only just solution would be to recognize the NLF as the rightful government of South Vietnam.⁹⁹

With the confirmation that a solution could not be reached simply through pleading, Pope Paul turned to the rich American church for help. In 1966, on the anniversary of his trip to the United States, he released an encyclical entitled *Christi Matri*, which implored Catholics around the world to pray to the Virgin Mary for peace in ongoing world conflicts.¹⁰⁰ Although the encyclical itself did not explicitly mention charitable giving as a way to work towards peace, focusing instead on the efficacy of prayer in the rosary, Church practice afterwards clearly reflected the connection between generosity and peace efforts. Calling on Mary as the "Queen of Peace," who "pours forth abundant gifts of her maternal goodness in midst of so many great trials and hardships," Pope Paul wanted Catholics – especially American Catholics – to compare themselves to her in their treatment of those downtrodden by war. Through charitable giving, Catholics were exhorted to become parental figures to the Vietnamese. Quoting St. Anselm, the Pope asked, "What could ever be deemed more suitable than for you to be the mother of those whose father and brother Christ deigned to become?"¹⁰¹

This call for Catholics in the U.S. to support the South Vietnamese was familiar to religious Americans by 1966. In fact, this mode of thinking of Vietnam as a country that could be saved with "Christian compassion" had been presented to the American public with much

⁹⁸ Telegram, G. Frederick Reinhardt to McGeorge Bundy, 1/12/66, "Vatican Cables Vol. 1 10/64-12/67", USSR & Vatican, Country File, NSF, Box 231, LBJ Library.

⁹⁹ Memo, Ho Chi Minh to Pope Paul VI, 2/14/67, "Vatican Memos Vol. 1 10/64-12/67", USSR & Vatican, Country File, NSF, Box 231, LBJ Library

¹⁰⁰ Latin for "to the Mother of Christ"

¹⁰¹ Paul VI. "Christi Matri." *The Holy See*, 15 September 1966. http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_15091966_christi-matri.html

applause over a decade before.¹⁰² Thomas Dooley, a Catholic Marine from St. Louis, introduced Vietnam to America in 1956 with his best-selling book *Deliver Us From Evil*. Drawing from his time in Vietnam as a doctor helping refugees cross from Communist North to liberal South, Dooley's book described a Vietnam that was filled with good, suffering people who wanted to be free from the ravages of Communism. The reading public loved it, with the book selling over 1 million copies over multiple printings, becoming "one of the most widely read books about Vietnam ever written."¹⁰³

Dooley's book essentially solidified the narrative for the Vietnam War before a single American combatant set foot in the country. Since there were so many Catholics threatened by the Communist regime in the North, so it was claimed, support for South Vietnam was support for the Church abroad and for Christian freedom. As one conservative Catholic priest put in his weekly column, the Vietnam War was a "holy war... not because it [wa]s being fought for the Holy Land... but because it [wa]s a war for men's lives and men's freedom."¹⁰⁴ And, as a holy war, Catholics took pride in supporting their 'Christian soldiers'. America magazine, the publication of the Society of Jesus and, at the time, a politically moderate source, bragged that Catholic Relief Services was the "largest voluntary agency at work in S[outh] V[ietnam].," having donated "40 tons of medicines... 200 tons of salt and 2400 cases of condensed milk" throughout 1965.¹⁰⁵ They even predicted CRS would "quadruple" its giving, and expand

¹⁰² Christian Appy. *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity*. Penguin Books: New York. 2015. p. 3

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 8

¹⁰⁴ Box 2, "Column in *Our Sunday Visitor*", Lyons, Daniel 1949-1971. Oregon Province Archives of the Society of Jesus. "Right or Wrong: Christian charity in Vietnam". July 11, 1965. Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁰⁵ America Magazine, vol. 113, 1965 collection, November 6, 1965 "And the Remainder Thus...". Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO. Additionally, I will refer to Catholic Relief Services as CRS hereafter.

recipients of its aid with government approval. The efforts of CRS would garner international approval, even from an Italian Communist periodical.¹⁰⁶ It seemed that American Catholics were eager and willing to play-act as Mary with the Vietnamese people as the Christ-child.

Regardless of how American Catholics perceived the situation, Vietnamese certainly did not welcome the condescension of American and European organizations, even when providing aid. Even the oft-romanticized Catholic population of South Vietnam, portrayed as longsuffering under an oppressive Buddhist majority who dearly missed the days of the Diem regime, did not hold the same attitudes or goals as their foreign benefactors. Although there was a period of violent reprisal against Catholics following the Diem assassination, by 1965 there was a more concerted effort to unite rather than divide the South Vietnamese, despite religious differences. Where American spectators saw Buddhists as secret Viet Cong infiltrators, Catholic Vietnamese saw them as neighbors.¹⁰⁷ In fact, inspired by the ecumenical and humanitarian shifts occurring within the Vatican, Catholics were more prone to grand acts of community service in support of Buddhists. One group of men educated in French-run Catholic schools “organized an ambitious development project in District 8 of Saigon, a poor neighborhood full of refugees from the First Indochina War that was beginning to see a new wave.”¹⁰⁸ Additionally, instead of holding on to the memory of President Diem with a vicegrip, Catholic intellectuals were trying to transition the focus away from the religious overtones of the Catholic-Buddhist conflict. The head of the

¹⁰⁶ Maria Antonietta Macciocchi. “La lettera del Papa per i soccorsi al Vietnam.” *L’Unità*, 27 November 1965; “Quattro appelli di Paolo VI sul Vietnam.” *L’Unità*, 2 January 1966; Marangoni, Spartaco. “Unità socialista e dialogo con i cattolici.” *Rinascita* 28, 1 January 1966. pp. 7–8.

¹⁰⁷ On the American government’s judgment of the Buddhist movement as infiltrated by the Viet Cong, see: Memo, Jack Valenti to Lyndon B. Johnson, 2/26/65, #310 “Vatican City”, Country File, NSF, Box 78, LBJ Library. On Catholic opinion of Buddhists as anti-Catholic and Communist: Lyons, Daniel. “Accepting Defeat in Vietnam: Ideological Surrender: No Victory Without Convictions”, February 1965, “The Future of Vietnam”, Box 2, Articles, Lyons, Daniel 1949-1971. Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁰⁸ Quinn-Judge, Sophie. *The Third Force in the Vietnam War: The Elusive Search for Peace 1954-75*. I.B. Tauris & Co.: New York. 2017. pp. 93-94

University of Saigon's humanities department, Nguyen Van Trung, a Catholic, popularized the idea of Diem's government as one for the rich. Changing the issue to one of class rather than creed, Nguyen set the agenda for Catholic-Buddhist relations to one of cooperation in fighting the dual problems of rural and urban poverty.¹⁰⁹ While some certainly mourned over and pined for a return to the Diem regime, the survival of South Vietnam was predicated on the South Vietnamese's ability to create a government representative of the needs of all its people.

Taking notice of the detrimental effects of the Catholic-Buddhist conflict and set on his own vision of reconciliation, Pope Paul sent diplomatic missions to North and South Vietnam both to promote cooperation between Buddhists and Catholics and to help bring North Vietnam to the negotiating table. The first of these missions would involve the mayor of Florence, Giorgio La Pira. A lifelong bachelor and practicing Catholic, La Pira had the ear of the papacy. A friend of Pope Paul since the 30s, he had often found himself representing the Vatican to different groups – either in ecumenism with the Eastern Orthodox Church, or in talks with the World Zionist Organization, La Pira may have been an Italian layman, but the Pope considered him a papal diplomat. Depending on who you asked, La Pira was alternately known as *il santo*, “the saint”, or *la pirata*, “the pirate”, in a pun on his surname.¹¹⁰ This two-facedness would follow him into his meeting with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong in late 1965.

Although La Pira claimed his actions “always had the Pope's seal,” he came to Hanoi ostensibly as a representative of Italy.¹¹¹ While in their hour-and-a-half meeting Pham and Ho mostly restated what they had previously sent to the Pope – that no two state solution would be

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 91

¹¹⁰ Pirro, Deirdre. “Giorgio La Pira: The monk-like mayor.” *The Florentine*, 8 April 2010. <https://www.theflorentine.net/2010/04/08/giorgio-la-pira/>

¹¹¹ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 386

acceptable, and that American imperialists were slaughtering Vietnamese – La Pira decided to bring some creative reinterpretation when he relayed the content of the meeting to friends. In a phone call to a lawyer tangentially related to the Johnson administration, La Pira gushed that "you have to tell [the president] that he must negotiate because the other side is prepared to negotiate. This killing can't go on."¹¹² A few days later the American press reported not that La Pira was sent to Hanoi to talk of peace, but that Hanoi had sent La Pira to start negotiations.

Because of the Florentine mayor's gusto, three nations were forced to do damage control. Hanoi made an international statement refuting the purported 'peace feeler', calling it "sheer groundless fabrication."¹¹³ Media in the United States lambasted La Pira, presenting him as a "Don Camillo character", who spoke first and thought later when it came to international politics.¹¹⁴ Worst off was the mayor's personal friend, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amintore Fanfani. Also a papal contact, Fanfani was almost singlehandedly blamed for La Pira's gaffe. The Foreign Minister suffered all the more when, at the behest of his own wife, La Pira was invited to give an interview to a right-wing newspaper. During the interview, La Pira mocked the then-current Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro as "soft and sad"; said of Dean Rusk that he "knows nothing and understands little"; and even claimed that Fanfani himself was the most important Italian politician. Only ten days later Fanfani would tender his resignation to the

¹¹² Lawyer Recounts His Visit to Italy, 19 December 1965, Folder 16, Box 03, Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 04 - Political Settlement. The Vietnam Center Archive, Texas Tech University.

https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/129415

¹¹³ Commentaries Rap US Peace-Negotiation Hoax, 20 December 1965, Folder 15, Box 03, Douglas Pike Collection: Unit 04 - Political Settlement. The Vietnam Center Archive, Texas Tech University.

https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/129214

¹¹⁴ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, pp. 386-387

soft and sad man himself.¹¹⁵ The only entity that did not suffer from this venture, at least publicly, was the Holy See.

Not deterred by La Pira's failure, yet still aware of its repercussions, Pope Paul decided on trying a different route in his next mission. Instead of focusing so ostensibly on politics, the Holy See would try to influence politics through the tried-and-true method of faith. To this end, the Pope sent the Apostolic Delegate to Canada, Archbishop Sergio Pignedoli, to Vietnam. Officially, his role was to implement "the message of Vatican II", which included "substantial" financial aid.¹¹⁶ However, his real goal was twofold: first, to organize the Northern and Southern Vietnamese bishops, and secondly to get the bishops to dissuade the Catholic population from protests or political extremism.¹¹⁷ It was a mission doomed to failure, even in the eyes of the Holy See, but necessary at least to try.¹¹⁸

The desire to organize the Northern and Southern episcopacies did not imply disorganization among the Vietnamese clergy – on the contrary they, partially by virtue of being indigenous Vietnamese, had the trust of and influence over the laity in both North and South. By American estimates, North Vietnam, despite impressions to the contrary, had a better-equipped Catholic hierarchy than the South. The problem, then, was the bishops' desire for autonomy from the West. Either deliberately or through neglect, communications between Vietnamese bishops

¹¹⁵ Robert C. Doty. Special to The New York Times. "Fanfani Quits Over Peace Intermediary's Views: Foreign Minister Condemns Friend's Attack on Rusk Embarrassed also by Wife's Arranging of 'Interview' FANFANI RESIGNS AS FOREIGN CHIEF." *New York Times (1923-Current file)*, Dec 29, 1965, p. 1. *ProQuest*, <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/116736403?accountid=10226>.

¹¹⁶ Telegram, G. Frederick Reinhardt to Dean Rusk, 7/29/66, "Vatican Cables Vol. 1 10/64-12/67", USSR & Vatican, Country File, NSF, Box 231, LBJ Library

¹¹⁷ Telegram, Amembassy Saigon to Dean Rusk, 2/23/67, "[Buddhists and Catholics]", Komer-Leonhart File, NSF, Box 1, LBJ Library

¹¹⁸ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 386

and the Vatican's archbishop over the former colonies of French Indochina had broken down. Those who did remain in contact "regarded Pignedoli as a meddler in their affairs," and thought of his efforts as a show of mistrust on the part of the Vatican.¹¹⁹ For, what was the point of the indigenization of missions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries if indigenous bishops could not be trusted to know what was best for their flock?

Although Pignedoli traveled throughout Vietnam for over a month, he accomplished little to nothing. When he tried to convince bishops to tell their congregations to promote cooperation with Buddhists, the bishops rejected him because they believed reconciliation was already underway. When Pignedoli expressed concern over Catholics in South Vietnam engaging in a coup if a disagreeable party came into office in the upcoming 1967 elections, they were insulted at the accusation against their people. Upon suggesting concessions to Communists in either the war or the elections, the bishops were infuriated. Although they shared many of the same goals, Pignedoli could not level with the bishops because his very presence implied that, even if they all wanted the same ends, the means were inadequate because they were not the means dictated from Rome. Returning from his trip in October of 1966, Pignedoli "was forever reluctant to discuss [the mission] at all."¹²⁰ Hanoi had deemed the mission "pathetic," and the Vietnamese bishops, who believed themselves to be in line with ecumenical spirit of Vatican II, were frustrated with foreign political interference.¹²¹ Again, a papal mission had ended in failure.

Yet, despite the continuous gaffes and faux pas of the Holy See, Johnson continued to hope beyond hope that "the Holy Father... [could] nudge the Vietnamese to the negotiating

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Telegram, Amembassy Saigon to Dean Rusk (2), 2/23/67, "[Buddhists and Catholics]", Komer-Leonhart File, NSF, Box 1, LBJ Library

table.”¹²² At least, this was the impression President Johnson had given – in reality, he had no intention of going to the negotiation table until the Viet Cong and North Vietnam were completely at their mercy. Just as North Vietnam had declared that no two-state solution would be acceptable, Washington would not sue for peace until the independence of South Vietnam could be guaranteed. In a private meeting in 1965, Johnson announced as much about the peace effort: “The negotiations, the [bombing] pause, all the other approaches - have all been explored. It makes us look weak - with cup in hand. We have tried.”¹²³ Yet President Johnson knew that being the figure that looks most prepared to negotiate made the war look more just – and his relationship with the Pope gave him exactly the moral leverage he needed. The Pope was not totally unaware of this, as Dean Rusk had expressed that calls for peace must be “evenly balanced”, since Pope Paul’s public decrying of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam jeopardized public perception of the war.¹²⁴ So President Johnson arranged a surprise visit to the Pope, two days before Christmas 1967, to show the world his desire for peace and goodwill.

A Christmas Reunion, 1967

On December 23rd, after a trip to Australia and Vietnam, President Johnson redirected his return flight to Rome. It was so speedily coordinated that “many of Johnson's own advisors, including Johnson's chief logistical aid, were not informed until they were in the air.”¹²⁵ He landed in Rome unannounced, and requested an audience with the Pope at once. Pope Paul had just begun his recovery from a prostate operation when he heard that Johnson had landed on the

¹²² Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 387

¹²³ Mark Atwood Lawrence. *The Vietnam War: An International History in Documents*. Oxford University Press: New York. 2014. p. 91

¹²⁴ Memo, Walt Rostow to Lyndon B. Johnson, 11/11/1966, “Vagnozzi, Egidio, Apostolic Delegate”, Files of Walt Rostow, NSF, Box 5, LBJ Library

¹²⁵ Francis Rooney. *The Global Vatican: An Inside Look at the Catholic Church, World Politics, and the Extraordinary Relationship between the United States and the Holy See*. Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham. 2013. p. 128

grounds of Vatican City in a helicopter. “Angered” that Johnson was coming at one of the busiest times of the year liturgically, yet begrudgingly accepting of the situation, Pope Paul received the President in his private library.¹²⁶ The meeting was an hour of tense posturing. One Johnson aide present described the meeting as an exchange between a “considerate but pushy” President and a “sympathetic but firm” Pope.¹²⁷ President Johnson expressed two specific requests – First, that the Vatican send a representative to North Vietnam to obtain “more humane treatment for American POWs.” The other was to act as a neutral third party in getting North Vietnam and the Viet Cong to sit for informal peace talks. After chastising Johnson for his continuation of the bombings, he offered to be an intermediary personally.¹²⁸

Having forced a meeting on the Pope which would bolster his own public perception while also enlisting Pope Paul in a peace effort, Johnson acknowledged the fact that Christmas was only two days away by exchanging gifts. In a parallel to their previous gift-giving exercise, Pope Paul gave President Johnson a painting of the nativity. Johnson, however, presented the Pope with a box he proceeded to open himself using a pocketknife he had brought. Once opened, Johnson revealed a bronze-and-plaster bust of himself to the Pope.¹²⁹ He had had them mass produced and given them to dozens of dignitaries before. Although the Pope smiled in response and thanked him graciously, photos of the event show the awkward and pained reaction to this present.¹³⁰ It was the perfect conclusion to a diplomatic comedy of errors that would lead into the

¹²⁶ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI*, p. 427

¹²⁷ Rooney, *The Global Vatican*, p. 128

¹²⁸ Aide Memo, Jack Valenti, 12/23/1967, “Vatican President’s Meeting with the Pope, Jack Valenti’s Notes and Aide Memoire”, International Meetings and Travel File, NSF, Box 21, LBJ Library

¹²⁹ For an image of the Pope bemusedly handling Johnson’s gift, see Appendix D.

¹³⁰ McAuley, Joseph. “Pope and President, Paul VI and Lyndon B. Johnson: Christmas on the Tiber, Texas Style.” *America Magazine*, 25 September 2015. <https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/pope-and-president-paul-vi-and-lyndon-b-johnson>

year of revolutions: a farcical meeting between two global influencers – the leader of the free world and the leader of world peace - right before both of their public images would collapse.

Chapter 5: Efforts of No Consequence

As Christmas 1967 gave way to 1968, the once-promising avenues towards peace in Vietnam that the Vatican was pursuing began to crumble quickly. Just as the Vatican had reconciled itself to one revolution through the Second Vatican Council, another revolution was being born which challenged the Pope's moral authority, pitched clergy against laity, and chipped away at the relationship between parish priests and the hierarchy. Doctrine and dogma were not the only things at stake, though: all the diplomatic reorienting that Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul had worked toward was set to be undermined in a dramatic fashion. First, American Catholics would be split on contraception and the handling on the Vietnam War, scarring the heretofore impenetrable Catholic face, not just among the laity, but within the clergy as well. Second, diplomacy with the two Vietnams would break down speedily, minimizing Vatican influence. Finally, with the Tet Offensive seemingly proving the war to be unwinnable, President Johnson would abandon the Vatican as a possible mediator and announce he would not seek re-election, freezing the U.S.-Vatican relationship for the remainder of his presidency.

Clergy and Laity Dissent on Contraception

As mentioned above, one of the great dangers in the American Catholic Church, from the standpoint of Rome, was its assimilation to Protestantism. As Catholics moved up the socioeconomic ladder, they had less need for the social, educational, and welfare infrastructure that the Church had built up. As Catholics started to branch out from insular communities of other Catholics, the ability of the clergy to influence the laity dropped – especially in sexual matters. Vatican II, which seemed to open the door to all sorts of liberal reforms, eventually led to a commission on contraception. Theological progressives believed that, with the advent of a contraceptive pill, that contraceptives would no longer be categorically sinful. The Church had

justified its ban on contraceptives through the killing of Onan in the Bible for committing coitus interruptus.¹³¹ A contraceptive pill would not fall into the sin of Onanism, progressives argued, since there was no physical barrier between man and woman – no seed was spilled, to use the Biblical language. To lay Catholics, this argument was convincing – how could intimacy between husband and wife be wrong, especially if they were taking precautions to not bring a child into a world in danger of overpopulation? It was also not lost on laypeople that clergy took a vow of celibacy, and thus presumably had never dealt with a pregnancy scare or the hardship of raising many children. The general feeling of the contraceptive ban was, as the politician Earl Butz would put it in a mocking Italian accent, “you no play-a da game, you no make-a da rules.”¹³²

And it seemed, for a moment, that the Vatican would listen to the laity on this matter. The majority opinion of the Pope’s commission on contraception was that some form of hormonal contraceptive should be considered licit within sacramental marriage.¹³³ Catholic and secular media, having heard the majority report, plastered on headlines that Catholic teaching was about to change. This created a burgeoning expectation within Catholic communities that the teaching on contraceptives would be moot – leading to a moral crisis within the clergy. If someone had come to Confession and confessed using contraceptives as a sin, then would that mean the emotional difficulty of admitting that was for nothing? If a couple believed, in good faith, that

¹³¹ Cf. Genesis 38:4-10 on Onan and Onanism. Additionally, for an explanation on how this plays out in Catholic moral theology, cf. Pius XI. “Casti Connubii.” *The Holy See*, 31 December 1930, ¶53-56.

¹³² Carlson, Michael. “Earl Butz: US Politician brought down by racist remark.” *The Guardian*, 4 February 2008. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/04/usa.obituaries>

¹³³ Memo, Douglass Cater to Lyndon B. Johnson, 11/29/1966, “RM 3-1 11/44/66 –“ EX RM3, WHCF, Box 6, LBJ Library. See also Norris, Charles W. “The Papal Commission on Birth Control-revisited.” *The Linacre quarterly* vol. 80,1 (2013), pp. 8-16.

the use of contraception was not sinful, should they be admitted to Communion? Worse yet, if Catholic moral theology had been wrong about contraception, what else could it be wrong about?

Seeing the disorder from the commission's findings, Pope Paul asked the faithful to "abide by the traditional teaching while he studied the commission's findings."¹³⁴ But it was too late. Priests could not easily shame laypeople for use of contraception, and there were no outward signs that could differentiate between couples using and abstaining from contraception. Even priests disagreed amongst themselves. Priests revolted against the teaching on contraception, refusing to absolve penitents if they confessed to using contraception as a sin. Some left the priesthood altogether to get married. It was no coincidence that 10% of America's clergy walked away from their vows between 1966 and 1971. The historian Leslie Woodcock Tentler also proposed that a decrease in the importance of the priestly role had an effect on the mass exodus from the priesthood:

"It did not escape the notice of an increasingly alienated clergy that the Second Vatican Council, for all its revolutionary effects, had had little to say about the priesthood. The Council Fathers had acknowledged that an increasingly educated laity had of necessity to play a more prominent role in the Church and indeed an evangelizing role in the world... but no fresh rationales for being a priest or religious emerged."¹³⁵

Neither were there any 'fresh rationales' for the sinfulness of contraception. But, in July of 1968, Pope Paul broke his silence on contraception and released the most famous, and controversial, encyclical of his entire papacy: *Humanae Vitae*.¹³⁶ In it he defended the traditional sexual morality of the Church, right at the time when most of the faithful believed it was

¹³⁴ Tentler, Leslie Woodcock. *Catholics and Contraception: An American History*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY. 2004. p. 228

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 235

¹³⁶ Latin: On Human Life

changing. Although most American bishops agreed, or at least did not openly disagree, with the Pope, many parish priests ignored the encyclical. Riots broke out in Washington, D.C. at the Catholic University of America and elsewhere in protest of the teaching.¹³⁷ President Johnson's search for a Catholic priest to be on Rockefeller's commission on population ended when Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, agreed to act as a liaison to the Pope on issues of population.¹³⁸ With these acts of dissidence the first death knell of the American Catholic subculture, as it had existed, rang.

The Vietnam War Divides Catholics

Another issue began to divide American Catholicism: the Vietnam War. As the Tet Offensive and atrocities like the My Lai massacre unfolded in the media, the protest movement against the war started to pick up steam. Gallup estimates from 1968 put opposition to the Vietnam War as rising from ~40% to 50% over the course of the year, and Catholics were certainly among them.¹³⁹ Even seminarians were asking their superiors for permission to go out and protest.¹⁴⁰ At Woodstock College Jesuit Seminary, one seminarian, when told that he should obey his superiors if they were to tell him to stop protesting, pointedly responded, "'Did we enter the Society to obey? Our duty is to serve, our loyalty is to Jesus Christ and His service is not defined by obedience. Our loyalty can go beyond obedience.'"¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Tentler, *Catholics and Contraception*, p. 271

¹³⁸ Memo, John Rockefeller to Lyndon B. Johnson, 6/2/67, "WE 2/16/67-8/9/67", EX WE 2/16/67, Box 2, LBJ Library. See also Donald T. Critchlow, *Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion, and the Federal Government in Modern America*. Oxford University Press: New York. 1999. pp. 63-65

¹³⁹ Newport, Frank and Carroll, Joseph. "Iraq versus Vietnam: A Comparison of Public Opinion." *Gallup News*, 24 August 2005. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/18097/iraq-versus-vietnam-comparison-public-opinion.aspx>

¹⁴⁰ Letter of Edward Sponga, S.J., Fr. Provincial of New England Province to Robert Trabold, S.J., February 17, 1968 Box 6, Folder 3. New England Province of the Society of Jesus Records of the Provincial John V. O'Connor, S.J., 1962-1968, Record Group 1.7. Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁴¹ Open meeting: Protest and Community, Box 6, Folder 3. New England Province of the Society of Jesus Records of the Provincial John V. O'Connor, S.J., 1962-1968, Record Group 1.7. Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO.

Many priests' and seminarians' loyalty manifested itself in ways more extreme than protest. Some engaged in draft card burnings; others, like the so-called Catonsville Nine, raided Selective Service System offices to burn draft records. For this crime, the group, which included three Catholic priests and a monk, were each sentenced to between two and three-and-a-half years in a very public trial.¹⁴² A former seminarian named Roger LaPorte set himself on fire in front of the United Nations in protest of the war, even taking on the position of a Buddhist monk in emulation of the famous self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc.¹⁴³ Thus, as the horrors of war were televised to Americans, the reactions to them became more intense.

However, as heart-wrenching and impactful as the stories of protest are, they were not characteristic of most Americans, nor Catholics. More generally, the question dogging moderates was the timescale of the victory. This conflict was personified in the disagreements between the Archbishop of San Antonio, Robert Lucey, and the Bishop of Rochester, Fulton J. Sheen, on the war. Lucey, known for his social justice work especially in Hispanic and Latino communities in Texas, was also a hawk. In a meeting with Johnson and observers of the 1967 South Vietnam elections, he attacked the media for calling the war a "stalemate," and emphasized that Vietnamese priests and Catholic Relief Services workers were educating the South Vietnamese poor on democracy. But his most pointed criticism came for those in the Catholic hierarchy who were not supportive of the troops, decrying "prominent citizens talking through their hats or birettas."¹⁴⁴ This was a thinly veiled reference to Fulton Sheen, who hosted a popular eponymous

¹⁴²Gannon, Thomas M. October 26, 1968 "Trial of the Catonsville Nine." *America Magazine*, vol. 119, 1968 collection, Jesuit Archives, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁴³ Van Allen, Rodger. "More Information on Roger LaPorte: Postscript to an Article." *American Catholic Studies*, vol. 117, no. 4, 2006, pp. 70–72. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44195013. Accessed 6 Apr. 2020.

¹⁴⁴ Pool Report of the Vietnam Election Observers Reporting to the President by Chuck Bailey and Phil Potter, 9/6/67, The President's Appointment File [Daily Diary Backup] 8/29/67 - 9/12/67, Box 75, LBJ Library. A biretta is a type of square cap worn by Catholic clergy.

television show viewed by “10 to 30 million viewers each week”, and became openly critical of the war during his last years on air.¹⁴⁵ In one sermon reported on in Catholic periodicals, Sheen called for all troops to be removed from Vietnam, claiming that the war diverted resources away from racial reconciliation and civil rights in America.¹⁴⁶ In one broadcast in 1968, he explained his belief that the Vietnam War permitted too many evils – the association of religion solely with political doctrines, exacerbating internal conflict among Americans, and not to mention the violence done to actual Vietnamese.¹⁴⁷ Thus, Catholics could read about their own bishop blessing the troops and encouraging monetary support of the war, while hearing another bishop decrying the war on television, and then see their parish priest engaging in protests. Without a concerted answer from the hierarchy on moral questions, each Catholic was more bound to follow his or her own conscience, draining the clergy of most of their influence.

Vietnamese Catholics Reject Vatican Meddling

Just as politics was eclipsing the influence of religion on a national level in America, so too were political concerns outweighing Vatican influence internationally. Thus, when President Johnson had asked the Pope to negotiate for better treatment of POWs in Vietnam, the Pope acted with vigor while the received response was enervating. In mid-January, hoping that a tit-for-tat agreement would more effectively bring the North to the table, the Pope went to President Thieu of South Vietnam asking if he could visit POWs in South Vietnam as well. Thieu agreed conditionally on North Vietnam’s acceptance of the same proposal. When Pope Paul brought this

¹⁴⁵ “Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.” *The Sheen Center for Thought & Culture*. <https://www.sheencenter.org/about-archbishop-fulton-j-sheen/>

¹⁴⁶ “Sheen links racial peace with call to end Viet War.” *National Catholic Reporter*, Volume 3, Number 40, 9 August 1967, p. 2

¹⁴⁷ Sheen, Fulton. “We Are in Two Wars.” *YouTube*, uploaded by The Catholic World, 23 June 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxNC2eWg7hg>

proposal to Hanoi, he was ignored for over seven months. Expectedly, Hanoi rejected the visit, which thus caused the visit to South Vietnam to also be cancelled. Despite a favorable analysis of outcomes from the White House and a clear plan of how he wanted to nudge Hanoi to the negotiating table, another one of Pope Paul's diplomatic missions had failed before it had even begun.¹⁴⁸

But Paul's mission to Hanoi was not the only one which failed. As an extension of the unhelpful Pignedoli mission, the Holy See had little control over the bishops in Vietnam, and with the suggestion of a bombing cessation came fears of a retaliation from Catholic hardliners in the South against the Thieu-Ky government. Thus, although the White House believed that a papal visit would have been favorable in convincing most Catholics against any sort of protesting, their exploratory analysis also revealed rifts in the lay Catholic community. There were three distinct groups: "moderates responsive to Archbishop Binh [of Saigon]", leftists, and "radically national northern Catholics."¹⁴⁹ Although the first and last were thought to be more amicable if the Pope were to visit, Catholic leftists would still be out of his reach. Additionally, the home-grown desire for Catholic-Buddhist reconciliation was only becoming stronger. In one striking example, a Buddhist nun, Nhat Chi Mai, immolated herself in front of statues of the Virgin Mary and Quan Am (a bodhisattva associated with compassion and mercy), to urge cooperation between Buddhist and Catholic peace activists against the war.¹⁵⁰ South Vietnamese Catholics, seeing that a compromise or coalition government would be necessary to protect

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Letter, Paul Marcinkus to Lyndon B. Johnson, 8/5/68, "Appointment File [Diary Backup] August 5, 1968", The President's Appointment File [Daily Diary Backup] 8/1/68 - 8/123/68, Box 108, LBJ Library. See also Memo, Lyndon B. Johnson to Walt Rostow, 8/31/68, "Pope Paul VI [2 of 2]", Head of State Correspondence File, NSF, Box 11, LBJ Library

¹⁴⁹ Memo, Ellsworth Bunker to Walt Rostow, 11/27/68, "Pope Paul VI [2 of 2]", Head of State Correspondence File, NSF, Box 11, LBJ Library

¹⁵⁰ Quinn-Judge, *The Third Force*, p. 106

themselves after the end of the war, flirted with reconciliation with the Communists as well. After all, Pope Paul was “encouraging reconciliation and dialogue with Marxist governments and parties in Europe, so such discussions in South Vietnam existed in harmony with trends in the worldwide Church.”¹⁵¹

Even if dialogue with Marxists was a trend in the global Church, avenues for dialogue between the Vatican and Hanoi were rapidly being closed off. In order to insinuate himself into negotiations more directly and hopefully reopen one of these avenues, the Pope presented Washington with a daring proposal: that the Pope could be a neutral, third-party mediator, and Vatican City could be the site of peace talks. It was not a ridiculous idea; but the fact that the Pope had not proposed the Vatican as a possible negotiation site until March of 1968 was baffling. According to the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, in February of the previous year an unknown "specialist in international law" gave the Holy See a proposal to pass to the White House on options for third-party facilitators. The proposal considered not only nations, but individuals and organizations as well, including Haile Selassie, Charles De Gaulle, and the UN. However, the proposal considered the most agreeable candidates to be Sweden and the Pope – yet the Vatican kept this proposal a secret for more than a year. The Apostolic Delegate did comment that the "Holy See was not interested in academic exercises", and would only go through with such a proposal if there were a reasonable chance of success, implying that the success of the plan was previously considered unlikely, but he provided little information besides that.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Memo, Conversation between Luigi Raimondi and Daniel Davidson, 3/18/68, “Raimondi (Archbishop) procedural proposal regarding Vietnam,” Files of Walt Rostow, NSF, Box 5, LBJ Library

The first response to the proposal was lukewarm. The Ambassador to South Vietnam considered the timing too soon after Tet to have a good bargaining position, and believed that the content of the proposal was too vague to be balanced.¹⁵³ However, Sweden was quickly ruled out as an alternate. Johnson's staff drafted multiple versions of a letter of acceptance of the offer to use the Vatican as a site for talks.¹⁵⁴ Yet, by later in May, Washington had already decided that Paris would be the site of the actual peace talks. However, that was not the end of the proposed use of the Pope as mediator. Because of the months-long stalemate at the negotiations, there was one last push for Pope Paul to step in, so that he might put pressure on North Vietnam to reinstate a demilitarized zone between North and South. But, by this point, the Vatican's influence had waned too much. The Secretary of Defense feared that using the Pope as a mediator would close off the Russians as an option. Rusk, however, was much more sympathetic to the papacy as a mediator.¹⁵⁵ Despite this sympathy, the moment passed without note. The leader of world peace had been stymied at every turn, such that Rusk himself would later quip that Paul VI's efforts "were of no consequence in terms of the final solution to the problem [of the war]."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Telegram, Ellsworth Bunker to Dean Rusk, 3/28/68, "Raimondi (Archbishop) procedural proposal regarding Vietnam," Files of Walt Rostow, NSF, Box 5, LBJ Library

¹⁵⁴ Draft of Letter, Lyndon B. Johnson to Pope Paul VI, 4/30/68 & 5/1/68, "Pope Paul VI [2 of 2]", Head of State Correspondence File, NSF, Box 11, LBJ Library

¹⁵⁵ Memo, Walt Rostow to Lyndon B. Johnson, 8/31/68, "Pope Paul VI [2 of 2]", Head of State Correspondence File, NSF, Box 11, LBJ Library

¹⁵⁶ Kent, Peter and Pollard, John eds. *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age*. Praeger: Westport. 1994. p. 213

Conclusion: Abandoning the Crown

Although dashing his hopes of being the man to end the Vietnam War was demoralizing enough, it was not the last shunning the Pope would receive. Even if the war could not further the Vatican's goals then, it had still been possible to cultivate a working relationship with the Johnson administration. Perhaps they could have called in a favor at some other time, or otherwise capitalized on the mutually respectful relationship between the Pope and the President. However, President Johnson's March 31st announcement that he would not seek reelection put the U.S.-Vatican relationship totally on halt. There was no longer hope of formalizing relations and establishing a permanent nunciature in the United States once the President was a lame duck.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, since Johnson was no longer as concerned with courting the Catholic vote, he put less effort into meeting with members of the Catholic hierarchy. After the death of Francis Cardinal Spellman, Johnson was invited to attend the Mass and dinner in honor of the new Archbishop of New York, Terrence Cooke. Although the Archbishop of New York is generally one of the most powerful Catholic figures in America, he rejected the invitation. With an attitude of begrudging defeat towards public opinion, President Johnson was less keen on prioritizing Catholic issues domestically in his last months in office.

With the opportunity to directly influence the Vietnam peace negotiations past and the U.S.-Vatican diplomatic partnership temporarily on hold until the ascendance of the next President, Pope Paul, discouraged but not stopped, turned his attention to the Nigerian Civil War. But the first failure of his peace attempts in Vietnam would curse him. The ecumenical global diplomacy brought on by the Second Vatican Council had proven ineffectual. A reconciliation with the present, hijacked and morphed into a dangerous relativism, eroded the moral authority

¹⁵⁷ An apostolic nunciature is equivalent to an embassy, in contradistinction to a delegation.

of the clergy and protestantized the laity. The bishops of the Catholic hierarchy, too, were in disarray as theological positions and political positions became muddled and intertwined in a globalized way.

Pope Paul's reasons for continuing Vatican II – to embrace modernity on a pastoral level and to fashion a new foreign policy on the diplomatic level – were immediately disputed in the first major challenge for the Holy See, the Vietnam War. It had taken the Vatican nearly a century to answer the Roman Question for itself and renounce temporal power. But, with that renunciation, there was a hope for the Roman Pontiff to exercise a *de facto* political power using his own claims at being apolitical. For a short time in 1965 it seemed plausible, successful even. But his own political leverage was based on an orthodox clergy and a docile laity; both things that Vatican II could not maintain. Papal monarchy could perpetuate dogma, but embracing modernity meant embracing democracy – something the Pope could not easily withstand.

These issues were only exacerbated by Papal involvement in the search for peace in Vietnam. The Holy See's burgeoning relationship with the United States promised mutual positives for both entities, but experience revealed that neither could provide what they offered. The Holy See sought to use Vietnam as its testing ground for its policy of promoting peace, but the Johnson administration could never honestly promise peace negotiations. The Johnson administration believed it could leverage a relationship with the Pope to improve its moral standing, but overestimated the Pope's abilities. In fact, they ended up benefiting more from the laity and clergy dissenting from the Vatican, rather than submitting to it, especially regarding contraception and abortion. In trying to show its relevancy in the modern world, the Vatican only seemed to prove its irrelevance, as dissident clergy, morally unbound laity, and its own humiliating diplomatic missions refuted its new foreign policy in its first implementation.

Granted, it may have begun with a difficult, even impossible issue, but its aftermath was nevertheless the same.

It is now generally agreed that the Pope suffered from undiagnosed depression in his last years.¹⁵⁸ Seeing the legacy left behind, it is easy to see why – in opening the window to the world to let in some air, he ended up blown away by practicalities, despite good intentions. The king of kings and vicar of Christ on earth had given up his crown and received little in return. Ironically, the crown that he had sold back in 1964, to shouts of “Long live the poor Pope,” ended up in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.¹⁵⁹ Instead of giving the symbol of his power to the poor, he bequeathed it to one of the richest countries in the world, and, arguably, the most diplomatically powerful. In 1970, on the hundredth anniversary of the fall of the Papal States, the Pope sent the Vicar General of Rome to the Aurelian Walls, where soldiers of the Italian unification had breached to capture Rome. He commemorated there the loss of the Pope’s temporal power, calling it, after all, “providential.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Williams, Thomas D. “The case for sainthood for Pope Paul VI.” *Crux*. 4 October 2014.

<https://cruxnow.com/church/2014/10/the-case-for-sainthood-for-paul-vi/>

¹⁵⁹ “A Moment in History: The Papal Tiara at the Basilica.” *The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception*, 6 February 2020. <https://www.nationalshrine.org/blog/a-moment-in-history-the-papal-tiara-at-the-basilica/>

¹⁶⁰ Cardia, Carlo. “Paolo VI e l’Italia, quel bene speciale.” *Avvenire*, 14 October 2014.

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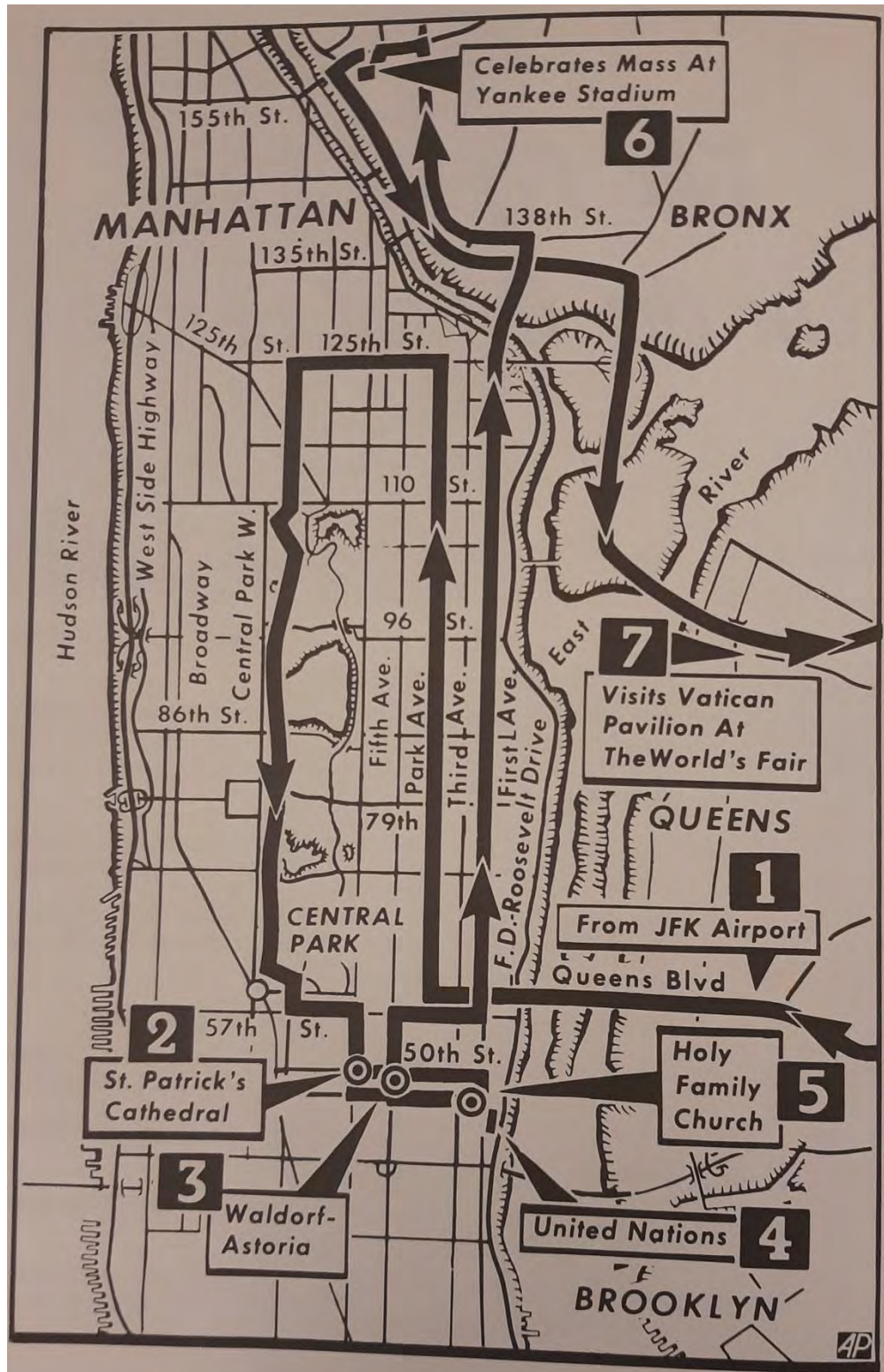
Appendix

Table 4. Changes in Attitudes and Behavior of Catholics between 1963 and 1974

	1963	1974
Attend mass weekly	70%	50%
Attend confession monthly	38%	17%
Pray daily	72%	60%
Receive communion weekly	13%	26%
Have attended a parish mission within past year	34%	6%
Have read a Catholic paper within past week	61%	56%
Believe sex before marriage is always wrong	74%	35%
Have had a conversation with a priest within past year	24%	20%
Believe missing Mass is a sin		53%
Have thought of leaving Church		14%
Believe Jesus made Peter and popes head of Church	70%	42%
Believe pope is infallible		32%
Believe sex for pleasure alone is acceptable	29%	50%
Believe remarriage after divorce is wrong	52%	17%
Believe contraception is always wrong	56%	16%
Believe legal abortion acceptable if child would be handicapped		72%
Accept Church's right to teach what books are immoral	87%	60%
Accept Church's right to teach about acceptable birth control	54%	32%
Would support decision of son to be a priest	66%	50%
Rate sermons as excellent	30%	23%
Rate priests' level of sympathy as excellent	62%	48%
Percent of income contributed to Church	2.2%	1.7%

SOURCE: Greeley, McCready, and McCourt 1976.

Appendix A: Fr. Andrew Greeley's "Catholic School Study" of American Catholic behaviors. Source: Greeley, Andrew. *The Catholic Revolution: New Wine, Old Wineskins, and the Second Vatican Council*. University of California Press: Los Angeles. 2004.



Appendix B: Map of Pope Paul's journey through Manhattan on Oct. 4th, 1965. Source: Adler, Bill. *Pope Paul in the United States*. Hawthorn Books: New York. 1965, p. 84



Appendix C: Pope Paul and President Johnson's first meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City, accompanied by their translators, October 4th, 1965. Photo by Yoichi Okamoto. Courtesy of LBJ Library.



Appendix D: Paul VI and his translator, Fr. Paul Marcinkus (an American), view the bust President Johnson has just presented during his visit to the Vatican, December 23rd, 1967. Photo by Yoichi Okamoto. Courtesy of LBJ Library.

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