

GLOBAL REACH

by Dennis J. Dunn

John Paul II, the pope from Poland, broke with precedent and shunned the imperial tiara at his consecration in 1978, but like each of his 263 predecessors he still wears two hats. As pastor of the Holy See, he guides the spiritual life of six million Oceanians, 50 million Africans, 55 million Asians, 151 million North Americans, 199 million Latin Americans, and 263 million Europeans. Because his vast flock, a sixth of mankind, is dispersed across national boundaries—and because they are impoverished and oppressed in many places, or bled white by war and revolution, or divided on moral questions that may also be dividing courts and legislatures—the pope must play the role of statesman and politician as well.

In essence, observed French Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé in 1904, “every act of a pope is political.” He cannot escape politics, and politicians cannot escape him—often not even physically, given the present pontiff’s penchant for travel. (He has visited 25 countries on five continents since 1979.) Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos sat by helplessly in his white *guayabera* as John Paul chided him for his unimpressive record on human rights. Well-to-do Brazilians winced as he rebuked them for living high amid so many poor. In Ireland, among its sympathizers, John Paul denounced the outlawed Irish Republican Army for its terrorist tactics in Ulster. He did not visit Spain, but his opposition to pending legislation that would allow abortion contributed to the downfall of Adolfo Suarez’s government in 1981. He *did* visit Poland, and though he could not prevent the imposition of martial law, John Paul’s public statements and behind-the-scenes maneuvering probably prevented a bloodbath there, and the church remains intact.

The pope’s only weapon is his moral authority—any political fallout is a by-product of its use—and its importance should be neither overestimated nor underestimated. “Deal with the pope as if he had 200,000 men at his command,” Napoleon instructed his envoy in Rome, but of course the pope does not now and did not then command an army of 200,000. The pope *does* have some Swiss Guards, but the last time they saw action was in 1527, when 147 Guardsmen died defending Pope Clement VII during the Sack of Rome by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles

V. (The last battle fought by papal troops of any kind was in 1870.) If Attila the Hun should again suddenly descend on Rome as he did in 452, the pope could only meet the threat with words, as Pope Leo I did, but Leo's voice was persuasive then and John Paul II's can be persuasive now. As head of the largest and (for all its quirks) best-organized church in the world, the pope can move men's minds and hearts.

This ineffable quality is the great equalizer in the Holy See's day-to-day dealings with hostile ideologies and puissant nations. It is the tool with which the pope may sometimes affect, as peacemaker, mediator, or teacher, the course of international events. Stalin's sarcastic query—"How many divisions has the pope?"—revealed more about that former seminarian's base of power than the Roman pontiff's. The Holy See did not need an army to persuade Stalin's successors to allow it to begin rebuilding its hierarchy in the heavily Catholic Baltic States. It was not because the pope lacks divisions that the Kremlin permitted Eastern European regimes to work out a *modus vivendi* with the church and sent Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to confer with the pope in 1965, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1975, and 1979.

Doing No Harm

The Vatican today is enmeshed in what foreign policy journals call the "geopolitical order." Some 95 states have *de jure* relations with the Holy See (including Iran and Cuba, Yugoslavia and England), while at least 26 others send a semiofficial representative to the papal court. Every week, monarchs, heads of state, diplomats, and religious leaders of every stripe affix their signatures to the leather-bound guest book in the pope's poorly ventilated Renaissance study. Like the United Nations, Vatican City-State has become a kind of free-trade zone for unpublicized exchanges between diplomats, and for "back-channel" messages between governments.

Because the Holy See has a reputation for discretion, and because it lacks a conventional "national interest," it has often been cast in the role of mediator. Brazilians today speak

Dennis J. Dunn, 39, a former Visiting Scholar at the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, is professor of history at Southwest Texas State University. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, he received his B.A. (1966) and M.A. (1967) from John Carroll University and his Ph.D. (1970) from Kent State University. He is the author of The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government, 1939–1949 (1977) and Détente and Papal-Communist Relations, 1962–1978 (1979).



Papal authority, January 1077: When Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor, sought Pope Gregory VII's forgiveness for illicitly investing bishops, Gregory made him wait three days in the snow before lifting excommunication.

Portuguese thanks to Pope Alexander VI, who arranged for the division of Latin America between Spain and Portugal in 1494. Pope Leo XIII resolved the Carolina Islands dispute between Spain and Germany in 1886. The very notion of "third-party" arbitration in international law owes much to papal precedents.

John Paul's record has been mixed. His efforts in 1980 to secure the release of 52 American hostages in Iran prompted only a barrage of insults from the Ayatollah Khomeini. In 1981, however, Vatican envoy Antonio Samore's shuttle diplomacy staved off open warfare between Chile and Argentina over disputed sovereignty of three islands in the Beagle Channel. John Paul's attempt that year to end the fast of IRA hunger-striker Bobby Sands—the pope's legate visited the prisoner and then conferred with British authorities in Northern Ireland—came to naught, just as Argentina and Britain were unmoved in April 1982 when the pope sought a peaceful solution to the Falkland Islands crisis. But in May, the Holy See's *nuncio*, or ambas-

sador, in Honduras negotiated a settlement between four leftist jet hijackers and the Honduran government. Add up the pluses and minuses as you will. One may in any event applaud the Vatican's effort and note that the Hippocratic dictum was observed: "At least, do no harm."

The Holy See was the world's first international organization—St. Ignatius of Antioch, after all, declared the church to be "catholic," meaning universal, in A.D. 110—and Rome has not, during the postwar period, ignored the proliferation of multilateral agencies and conferences. Quite the contrary. It is represented on all of the major UN bodies, sends a permanent observer to both the Common Market and the Organization of American States, and is party to international agreements ranging from the Geneva Conventions to the Outer Space Treaty. While it is unlikely that the Vatican will ever take prisoners of war or send a man to the moon, other nations obviously will do so, and the Holy See's signature is avidly sought as a measure of moral support.

Such accords may sometimes be used for more devious ends, of course. In February 1971, Monsignor Agostino Casaroli, now the Vatican's Secretary of State, arrived in Moscow to deliver the Holy See's signed copy of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. While the trip, technically, was unnecessary, it served as an excuse to get the first papal diplomat onto Russian soil since 1924. When the Soviets received Casaroli—as they had to—they heard less about plutonium than about the plight of the USSR's four million Roman Catholics.

Foreign Aid

In some international agreements, the Vatican has had a keen—and direct—interest. It acceded to the various telephone, telegraph, and postal conventions, for example, simply in order to function. But usually the stakes are higher. Invited to participate in the 1975 Helsinki Conference on European Security and Cooperation, the Holy See played the key role in drafting the "freedom of religion" provisions. As signed, these go well beyond the published laws (let alone the practice) of most of the communist signatories, most notably the Soviet Union. By tacking these provisions onto an agreement the Kremlin desperately wanted (ratifying the present European territorial borders and providing for trade and technological exchanges), the Vatican, at least on paper, extended Soviet law.

Like other states, the Vatican has varied interests abroad. Its Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples oversees the

activities of some 50,000 missionaries around the world—men and women deeply involved every day in economic development quite aside from their avowedly religious mission. The Vatican's purely humanitarian efforts (providing food, clothing, medicine, and shelter for the needy) are loosely coordinated by the pontifical council, *Cor Unum* (One Heart). All of this amounts, in effect, to a vast foreign aid program, one that the U.S. State Department has described as too massive, complex, and diverse "to quantify." The sum of money spent every year is staggering and undoubtedly surpasses, if military assistance is excluded, the foreign aid outlays of the Soviet Union or of many an industrialized country in the West.* And the Catholic aid apparatus is unusually efficient: Many Western governments have found it expedient to channel some of their Third World relief and development funds through agencies operating under the Vatican's foreign aid umbrella. Two-thirds of the \$350 million annual budget of the U.S. Catholic Relief Services, for example, is provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

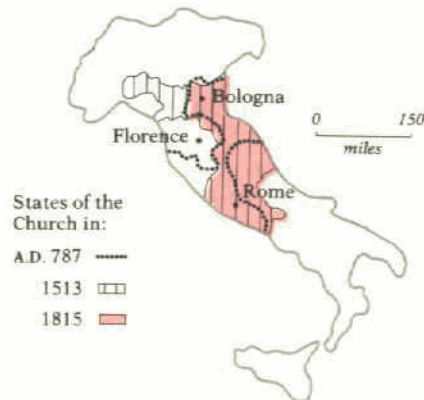
Defining Objectives

Because the worldwide activities of the pope and the Holy See are so diverse—and therefore reported unsystematically (though regularly) in the secular press—it is sometimes easy to miss the forest for the trees. In fact, the Vatican's basic foreign policy aims are simply stated. The first is survival—chiefly by maintaining its hierarchy (and hence the capacity to consecrate bishops, and thereby ordain priests, and thus administer the sacraments) in working order, or by rebuilding it where it has fallen into disrepair. More on this in a moment.

A second aim is keeping the peace, peace being a good thing in itself and the ideal environment for the conduct of the church's business. The third objective, inseparable from the others, might loosely be defined as "doing good": exercising moral leadership, alleviating poverty and suffering, pressing the case for human rights. Again, all of this is both desirable in itself and helpful to the church's cause.

*Tracking down the source of every Vatican aid dollar is impossible. Much of the church's foreign assistance comes directly out of the Vatican treasury, but most of it is raised by individual charitable groups and religious orders in the wealthier Western nations. (The West Germans, thanks to incentives in their tax code, are the biggest contributors per capita.) Some of these funds may be handled by the Vatican bank and by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (whose finances are separate from the Holy See's), but in many cases Rome does not even see the money. While the Vatican in a sense "charters" the myriad organizations responsible for missionary and humanitarian work, these organizations typically are jealous of their autonomy.

THE OLD PAPAL STATES



The jurisdiction of the Papal States grew and shrank over the centuries. Territories once included the French county of Venaissin and the city of Avignon.

These objectives follow logically from the Holy See's conception of its very purpose: the pastoral mission of saving souls. Pope Paul VI, a few months before his death, told the graduates of the Pontifical Diplomatic Academy in 1978 that "a diplomat of the Holy See is first and foremost a priest." John Paul II made the same point at the 1979 Latin American bishops conference in Puebla, Mexico, emphasizing that the church has no business linking its mission to "ideological systems," and must "stay free with regard to the competing systems, in order to opt only for man."

This, at least, is the position taken by the modern papacy. Before the loss of the pope's own kingdom in 1870, however, it would have taken the tortuous reasonings of a Jesuit to argue convincingly that the pope was primarily a pastor. Beginning with the Donation of Pepin in 756—when Charlemagne's father ceded what became the Papal States to the Holy See—the Bishop of Rome behaved like what he was: a temporal ruler on an unruly continent. Pope Gregory VII humbled the German emperor Henry IV at Canossa in 1077, at least temporarily, and by the beginning of the 13th century, Pope Innocent III controlled the destinies of entire peoples. Innocent referred to the papacy as the sun and the Holy Roman Emperor as the moon and pointedly reminded audiences whence the moon obtained its light.

The sun set as the 14th century dawned. When Pope Boniface VIII in 1303 reiterated Innocent's claim to control both the temporal and spiritual realms by telling the envoy of the

French king, Philip IV, that "we hold both the swords," Philip's man replied: "True, Holy Father, but where your swords are but a theory, ours are a reality." Spiritually and politically, the papacy faltered, beset by scandal, schism, and war. Dante numbered popes among the damned in his *Inferno* and Erasmus poked fun at their follies. A bastard son (Cesare Borgia) of one pope proved to be the model for *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli. Even so, the Vatican remained an influential factor in international affairs as the jurists in the papal chancery helped develop the foundations of modern diplomacy: the concept of sovereignty, the sanctity of treaties, the notion of diplomatic privilege, the rules of war.

Waiting for Volume Two

Stunned by the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, the papacy mounted an aggressive campaign to reclaim its spiritual and temporal authority. The popes became embroiled in the wars of religion and mercantilism raging throughout Europe. Papal diplomacy aimed to keep the Vatican's political position in Italy secure by playing off the major powers one against the other. Sometimes it failed, as when Charles V sacked Rome. Sometimes it succeeded, as when Pius VII regained the Papal States, following Napoleon's defeat, at the Congress of Vienna.

The incorporation of those territories into the Kingdom of Italy in 1870 left the Vatican bewildered. The Holy See sought to recoup initially by backing grass-roots Catholic political parties throughout Europe—with some success. But after World War I, shaken by the carnage and destruction wrought by Christian governments, the Vatican despaired of temporal meddling. Sir Odo Russell, the British legate to the Holy See, commented in 1927 that "Pius XI wishes to withdraw the church as far as possible from politics, so that Catholics may unite on a religious and moral basis." Challenged by new secular "theologies" (fascism, nazism, communism), the pope feared, perhaps rightly, that unequivocal opposition would merely invite retaliation—hence the formal accords with Mussolini (1929) and Hitler (1933), designed to insulate Roman Catholics from overt abuse and, ultimately, to retard the advance of communism, which Rome regarded as the greater long-term evil. Pius XI's successor, Pius XII, emphatically denounced Hitler's anti-Semitism before the outbreak of World War II. But during the war itself, fearing retribution against Catholics in Nazi-controlled countries, he failed to speak out against the Holocaust, which he knew about and abhorred.

After V-E Day, its fascist nemeses buried, the Vatican aligned itself wholeheartedly with the West. It supported the Marshall Plan, lobbied for the NATO alliance, and quietly aided the Christian Democratic parties throughout Western Europe—in West Germany, Belgium, Austria, and especially Italy. Though few but its hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries may remember, the Vatican Migration Office also helped reunite wartime refugees and prisoners with their families. Implacably opposed to Marxism, Pius XII refused to negotiate with the new Soviet-backed regimes, which had engulfed Eastern Europe and eviscerated the church hierarchy. “If you desire peace, prepare for war” was the pope’s message to free nations.

Angelo Roncalli—aged 78 when he succeeded Pius in 1958 as John XXIII—ushered in the papacy’s modern era. By convening the Second Vatican Council and writing such encyclicals as *Mater et Magistra* (“Mother and Teacher”), he encouraged a more expansive definition of the Holy See’s pastoral mission, one with heavy political and moral overtones. This did not mean a return to the pre-1870 preoccupation with territory and political power. The church recognized, instead, that man could not live by grace alone. Vatican II, in effect, revived the church’s



Reprinted by permission of Tribune Company Syndicate, Inc.

John Paul II's visit to his native Poland and the church's support for the trade union Solidarity inspired this 1979 Jeff MacNelly drawing.

“social gospel.” John Paul II defined it unequivocally in 1979: “We must declare by name every social injustice, every discrimination and every violence committed against man’s body, against his spirit, his conscience, and his convictions.”

The Vatican does not always react swiftly to events. In 1848, a cardinal approached Pope Pius IX with the first volume of Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* and warned that the book would change the world. The pope, unalarmed, decided to wait and see what Marx said in volume two. It was both ironic and unexpected, then, when Pope John XXIII, a decade before “détente” became a household word in the United States, initiated the Holy See’s rapprochement with the Soviet bloc, entrusting the task to Agostino Casaroli. Fond of quoting a remark of John’s—“There are enemies of the church but the church has no enemies”—Casaroli’s ultimate aim was to persuade communist regimes to allow complete freedom of religion. But he was willing to take small steps, working out partial agreements that gave his church—the Catholic Church—room enough at least to administer the sacraments. *Salus animarum*, after all, is the *suprema lex*: The salvation of souls is the highest law.

Healing the Breach

There was one other item on Casaroli’s agenda: laying the groundwork for reunification of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. The breach had occurred in 1054, and Rome has long been trying to heal it. Tsars and party secretaries alike have shamelessly exploited this desire. Ivan IV, for example, dangled the prospect of reunification before Pope Gregory XIII when he begged the Holy See to halt Stephen Batory’s Polish army as it advanced toward Muscovy in 1582. Gregory lived up to his side of the bargain; Ivan did not. During the tragic 1921–22 Russian famine, the Soviets promised to open their doors to Catholic missionaries if the Holy See organized a relief effort. The Vatican did, but the Kremlin reneged.

On balance, however, the Vatican’s *Ostpolitik* must be considered a success. The church hierarchy has been largely re-established in Hungary and the heavily Catholic former Baltic States. It is fully restored in East Germany and Yugoslavia. Poland—93 percent Catholic—is the Holy See’s strongest redoubt. But there have been some failures, too. In Romania, Bulgaria, and the non-Baltic regions of the USSR, the episcopal structure is weak to nonexistent. Albania, which indulged in a Neronian persecution of the church, and summarily executed or imprisoned all bishops and priests, remains a kind of black hole.

Much farther east, the situation in China is both confusing and complex. Premier Chou En-Lai had offered in 1951 to allow the small church in China (Catholics currently make up less than one percent of the country's population) to maintain ties with the Vatican providing that the local church and the Holy See unequivocally supported the Revolution—and that Rome cut all ties to "American imperialism." When both the Chinese church and the Vatican flinched at these demands, the government purged priests and bishops loyal to the Holy See and, like Henry VIII, set up its own agency, the National Association of Patriotic Catholics, to run the church. The pope in 1981 named Msgr. Dominic Tang Yiming archbishop of Canton, ostensibly with Beijing's approval, but the Chinese church reacted to this "thaw" with charges of Vatican meddling.

A Matter of Principle

In pursuit of *Ostpolitik* there have also been some noisome compromises. In Czechoslovakia, where more bishoprics are unfilled than filled, the Vatican has consecrated three "peace priests" (clerics who collaborated with the communists) as bishops. In 1974, at the insistence of the Hungarian government, Pope Paul VI removed Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty, a pillar of anticommunism in Europe, from his archepiscopal see of Esztergom. (The cardinal had lived in "exile" inside the American embassy in Budapest for 15 years, unable to leave.) The Vatican has also abandoned its earlier defense of the persecuted Ukrainian Uniate Church in order, typically, to promote more harmonious ties with the Russian Orthodox Church and to viti-ate the Kremlin's innate suspicion of Rome. (The Ukrainian Uniate Church was organized in 1596. It was a new rite which permitted orthodox believers to accept union with Rome but keep their own liturgy and practices. In 1946 this church was forcibly "reunited" with the Russian Orthodox Church, but an underground church continues to this day.)

Looking at the past two decades from the Holy See's perspective, one must conclude that, on balance, matters have gone well. The scope of its humanitarian and missionary efforts is broad. The Holy See's hierarchy is intact in most countries and is being restored in the remainder, with very few exceptions. The Vatican's diplomatic machinery seems to have operated with the unhurried efficiency for which it was designed.

The greatest difficulty for the Holy See in foreign affairs has come, not surprisingly, in those areas where principle and practice seem to be irreconcilable, where morality and politics col-

lide. All governments face this dilemma, but none have so much at stake as the Holy See.

It is not as if popes have been reluctant to state, in general terms, their emphatic support for human rights and the dignity of labor, for freedom of conscience, for self-determination, for the right of every individual to enjoy food, shelter, medical care, and for religious liberty. They have done so tirelessly. And yet in specific situations, and for purely pragmatic reasons, the Holy See has sometimes pulled its punches.

The financial support the Vatican receives from Western capitalist nations, for example, has unquestionably tempered papal criticism of social injustices and moral lethargy in the developed countries. In Latin America, the Holy See has condemned the violent and ideologically tinged aspects of "liberation theology." But it has not indicated what course priests and prelates should pursue instead, nor, for fear of inviting a backlash, has it publicly condemned repressive Latin regimes. In Africa, similarly, the tendency has been to not rock the boat. And then there have been the diplomatic compromises, some of them noted above.

One cannot help but sympathize with the Holy See's predicament. The Vatican's foreign policy goals are worthwhile, but they are not always compatible. And when they clash, the Holy See must calculate where its true interests lie. Fundamentally, its interests are those of the church, and on some matters the church should not compromise.

"We cannot apply moral criteria to politics," George F. Kennan has written, yet if that were true the Holy See would be irrelevant, and clearly it is not. Moral authority is its only weapon. Its standards are different, its time frame unique, its motives not those of Whitehall or the Quai d'Orsay. Do not judge us by your usual yardstick, Pope Paul VI cautioned foreign correspondents at the Vatican in 1973, for the Holy See's "decisions are based upon the Gospel and her own living tradition, not on the world's spirit nor on public opinion." Though honored in the breach even by Paul, the formulation is apt. It may not be easy to play both politician and pastor, but such is the pope's role, and when the jobs conflict, he must stand for principle.

