

VATICAN DETENTE

The thawing of the Cold War Church

LIKE MOST other observers, B.A. Santamaria has welcomed the visit of Gorbachev to the Pope, but in approving of Pope John Paul, he has resurrected his earlier accusations against John XXIII and Paul VI that they betrayed their own anti-Communist fighters and abandoned the Church behind the Iron Curtain for more immediate gains.

Coming from a man of Santamaria's stature in the Catholic community, these accusations are extremely serious and the record clearly must be set straight.

A recent editorial of Santamaria's monthly, AD 2000, says that the present Slav Pope "will not be greatly influenced by the disfigurements which have been so manifest in Vatican policy towards Communist countries since 1959, a policy which has gained nothing whatsoever, and never could have done so."

Among the "shameful examples" listed are "the prohibition of the discussion of Communism at Vatican II, secured by the unconstitutional suppression of the petition signed by 454 Council Fathers asking that Gaudium et Spes deal specifically with the subject;" Pope John XXIII's "gesture of friendship" in receiving the son-in-law of Khrushchev while the latter was shelling down more churches; and "the betrayal of Cardinal Mindszenty."

Santamaria has made similar accusations before, and has even hinted at a Communist conspiracy to explain the change of Vatican position.

In several of his books he repeated Cardinal Beran's report of Communist Czechoslovakian claims that Communists had penetrated every commission at the Vatican Council. Santamaria did not query this claim, leaving the implication that it was true.

In *Against The Tide*, he wrote: "The nature of the new Vatican strategy had become clear from the quite disgraceful methods at the Vatican Council to stifle debate on a petition" signed by 200 bishops before 3 December 1963 for a condemnation of Communism. He complained that the petition was never put to the council for discussion.

"By October 1965, the number of bishops demanding a discussion of the question had risen to 450." When the council was alerted that the petition had not been noted properly in the documents sent to the bishops, Pope Paul instructed "that the Church's existing teaching on Communism be inserted as a footnote in the Schema."

Rather than supporting this policy of accommodation, Santamaria favored intransigent opposition. Only in Poland had substantial results been achieved,



The breaking of the Berlin Wall has focused attention on the changing face of Communism. But what of the Vatican's attitude towards Communism since World War II. Has the Church been too soft on Communism? Fr BRUCE DUNCAN CSSR (left), a lecturer in history and social ethics at Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne, comments.

Ratzinger commented: "On the whole a balanced and well-founded statement had resulted from the thorough debate (which was included in that of the question of atheism), and it may be counted among the most important pronouncements of Vatican II."

Both John XXIII and Paul VI had not wanted more condemnations since they thought they would make things more difficult for Catholics in Communist countries and set back efforts at accommodation.

This was also the advice of the Vatican's Secretariat of State. Despite all this, Bishop Carli of Segni, to reinforce the anti-Communist vote in Italy, campaigned for more explicit condemnations of Communism.

He was supported by bishops exiled from Communist regimes rather than those still living under those regimes.

What had happened was this: Carli had submitted his proposal on 9 October 1965, but it was only briefly referred to in the text distributed on 13 November for voting on 15-17 November. Instead of taking full account of the proposal, an official, Mgr Glorieux, thought that the matter had been dealt with earlier and did not submit it to the sub-commission as he should have. Ratzinger notes the error but did not accept a conspiracy theory about this.

The upset Bishop Carli quickly circulated a new proposal complaining that the submission had not appeared as expected; the resulting vote on the chapter as a whole counted 453 against,

about half of which came from Carli's motion, according to Xavier Rynne.

Cardinal Tisserant asked the sub-commission preparing the texts for an explanation; it replied that the proposal had indeed been overlooked, but that it had dealt with the same matter in response to the earlier petition from 200 fathers.

The vote of 15 November approved the text which included the question of atheism by 2957 votes to 74. This was a massive vote in favor, and hardly supports the theory that there was a conspiracy to manipulate the council.

Ratzinger also wrote that talk of 450 fathers signing the petition was not correct. It was 334 fathers, and only 297 of these signed in time. As a concession, however, a footnote was added, but it did not simply repeat earlier teaching on Communism as Santamaria claimed. It significantly omitted the Holy Office's condemnation of 1949, and instead referred only to Pius XI's *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), John XXIII's *Ad Apostolorum Principis* and *Mater et Magistra*, and Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam*.

In any case the opinion in the commission was that the decision would have been negative, even if the petition had been brought to its notice, because it concerned the spirit and structure of the text, and this, after the generally favorable conciliar vote, could no longer be modified.

As Ratzinger said, the footnote implied that the question was "in movement and that individual

he said, and this was won "not by accommodation, but by resistance."

In fact, Santamaria was wrong on this, for Cardinal Wyszyński of Poland followed a policy of firmness with accommodation, not of intransigence, and greatly upset Pius who thought such action complete compromise.

Santamaria interpreted the present Pope as continuing in the supposed Polish tradition of resistance and ending the accommodationist policies of his predecessors.

"They new Pope's policy thus reflects a total absence of illusions concerning either Marxism, or the possibilities of any deal with the Marxists."

In *Daniel Mannix*, Santamaria said Mannix disagreed with Pope John meeting Khrushchev's nephew and feared a weakening of the anti-Communist fight which "depended on the total refusal of Catholics to compromise with Communism in any form . . ."

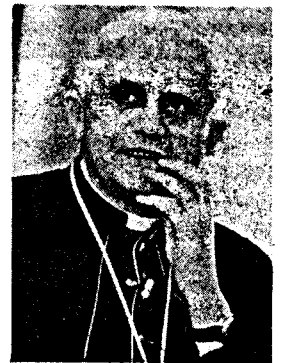
Santamaria and Mannix thus held the classic European intransigent position on this question.

Santamaria's arguments were rebutted by the Vatican commentator, Peter Hebblethwaite, (*National Outlook*, August 1985). He said that Santamaria relied on "utterly discredited" sources, notably *Ralph Wiltgen's The Rhine Flows Into The Tiber*.

So it is remarkable that now AD 2000 has continued to imply such a conspiracy in the Vatican, or suggest that trickery prevented the council condemning Communism.

To settle this once and for all, one has only to consult H. Vorgrimler's authoritative Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II; the sections concerning the council debates on Communism were written by none other than Joseph Ratzinger himself, the present head of the Congregation of the Faith.

It is clear that the question of whether to pronounce condemnations was fully debated in October 1964 and September 1965. With the support of such significant people as Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul, it was decided to avoid condemnations,



Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger . . . commentary of Vatican II's debates on Communism.

texts must each be read and understood in their own historical context." The footnote said:

"In fact, we may say that the weapon of condemnation had been tried to the limit of possibility by the decree of 1 July 1949, and that it is no longer possible to deal with the problem in that way now."

"It is clear that the Church cannot but reject atheism and must oppose quite universally not only the persecution of the faithful but also the attack on human freedom generally. It is no less clear, however, that in addition it must reflect on its own share in the whole question of Marxism and the defectiveness of its own "humanism," and so accept the comprehensive question represented by Marxism as also concerning the Church itself.

"That the Church in council decided on this step is the real drama behind Article 20, and makes it stand out like a milestone in the Church history of our century. It is scarcely less important than the decision represented by the Declaration on Religious Freedom.

"A new attitude is attained which will be fundamental for the possibility of announcing the faith within the structures and conditions of the present century . . . this examination of conscience will provide more guidance in coming discussions than any elaborate presentation of Communism and new condemnation could have offered. (p. 150-1).

The Vatican well understands that detente is necessary not only to secure world peace but also as a precondition for religious toleration and liberalisation within the USSR.

The present Pope has revealed himself not as a Cold War crusader against Communism but as a firm supporter of accommodation, without any sacrifice of moral principle, to promote gradual changes in Communist regimes till they embody more satisfactorily the demands of social justice.

He has not departed from the policies of John XXIII and Paul VI. A clear indication of this is the fact that Pope John Paul made Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the architect of the Ostpolitik (Church policies towards the Communist bloc) under John XXIII and Paul VI, not only cardinal but much more significantly Secretary of State. Pope John Paul II has continued in the steps of his predecessors.



Pope John XXIII . . . key player in building relations with the Soviet Union.

Fulcrum