

THE INSIDE STORY



New pope won't break with rigid past

Guest Column by Gary MacEoin & Nivita Riley

Cardinal Albino Luciani, known only to a few people in northeast Italy and to the other 110 members of the exclusive club that chose him in secret to lead and rule 709.6 million Roman Catholics as Pope John Paul I, inherits a heavy load of problems. How he deals with them will affect not only those who see him as vicar of Christ on earth but countless other millions.

As Pope John XXIII demonstrated, the pope can influence mightily the search for a world order in which wealth is shared more equitably and all people have a voice in determining their own destiny. If Pope Paul by his negativeness and navel-gazing in recent years dissipated some of the moral stock accumulated by John, the papacy still remains one of the potentially most important influences on world opinion.

Will John Paul renew the hopes John raised? Obviously, a firm answer is not yet possible. When John was elected from similar obscurity in 1958, nobody suspected he would inaugurate the revolution in Catholic thinking and action that followed his encyclical on human rights *Pacem in Terris* and the Second Vatican Council that opened in 1962. But on the basis of John Paul's known views, the likelihood that he will respond positively and creatively to the challenges that face him is remote.

Rich vs. Poor.

Most acute of all the world issues the pope can influence is the growing gap between the few wealthy individuals and corporations (the globals or multinationals) that have a monopoly of power, and the masses of people in the Third World who lack food, clothing, shelter, and sanitation to live at a human level. The issue is assuming greater importance for the Catholic church. Its center of gravity has recently shifted from the rich countries of Western Europe and North America, and by the year 2000, 70 percent of its members will live in the economically poor and dependent countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Vatican Council II faced this issue realistically. Rejecting the earlier teaching that the church should concentrate on "saving souls," it called on its members to join with all the other forces working to make the world a better place to live in, giving the same priority to improving the condition of the poor that characterized the teaching and life style of the historical Jesus.

Pope Paul in the first years after his election in 1963 took this call seriously. A major encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, gave an analysis in depth of the economic distortions that created and perpetuated systemic poverty. It moved further toward a socialist solution than earlier papal documents, as did a later statement on the eightieth anniversary of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, the papacy's first major attempt to tackle world social

issues. Paul admitted, in a phrase smothered in reservations, that it might be permissible for a Christian to use the Marxist analysis as a tool for understanding reality.

Various groups of bishops followed the lead. The most striking statement was made by the bishops of Latin America meeting at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968. They opted positively for the poor, the voiceless, the oppressed. They identified the source of oppression as institutionalized violence, the neocolonialism of the national oligarchies, and the external neocolonialism of "the international monopolies and the international imperialism of money." They said that the situation called for "global, daring, urgent, and basically renewing change." The commitment to radical transformation was unambiguous: "a thirst for complete emancipation, liberation from every subjection, personal growth, and social solidarity."

Response from the people and many priests was enthusiastic. In intimate ecumenical cooperation with like-minded Protestants, Latin American Catholics began to develop a "theology of liberation." They rejected the developmentalist approach of the Alliance for Progress, an approach deeply imbedded in Catholic thinking, and many of them openly opted for socialism. An organization called Christians for Socialism was formed in Chile during the Allende regime and gradually spread all through the Americas and to other continents.

Support for Christian Democrats.

The reaction that set in with the recession that world capitalism has been experiencing since 1967 has affected Roman Catholicism too. While the poor who bear the burden have become more radicalized, the church leadership has grown steadily more conservative and frightened. Well organized and heavily financed worldwide forces or reaction whose spokesman is the rebellious French archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, urge the church to "return to the sacristy," that is, to abandon its defense of the poor and resume its traditional role of legitimating the status quo.

The moment of truth will come for John Paul and for the church when Latin America's bishops assemble Oct. 12-28, a decade after the Medellin meeting. The reactionary forces gained control of the secretariat that prepared the basic document for the meeting, and they have been as brazen as Madison Avenue pitch-men in selling their product.

Will John Paul intervene to redress the balance? There are strong rumors that he may attend the meeting (although he is fearful of airplanes). But whether he does or not, what open or behind-the-scenes part will he play?

The son of a migrant socialist laborer, one might expect him to identify with the poor. Unfortunately, his conditioning from the time he entered the minor seminary in his pre-teens has given him a very different stamp. Stridently anticommunist, he has denounced all the elements he sees as promoting revolution today, from the Beatles to Fidel Castro.

In the same vein, he was the leader of the majority bloc of the Italian bishops who insisted it was the moral duty of Catholics to vote for the Christian Democrats. This party, in power thanks to Vatican and U.S. support since 1946, is hopelessly corrupt and inefficient. Whether he has learned from the rebuff given him by the eight million Italian Catholics who voted for the Communist party remains to be seen.

Oldest bureaucracy.

Human rights, both as a world issue and as a domestic issue between governors and governed in the church, are also high on the list of challenges facing John Paul. The institutionalization of torture of suspects, arbitrary imprisonment, encouragement by reactionary

governments of vigilante death squads and wholesale exiling of political opponents have become commonplace in most Third World countries.

In much of Latin America, the Philippines and South Korea, Catholic church leaders are the only voice the regimes have been unable to still. Open papal support would greatly strengthen their impact. The Roman Curia, the world's oldest and most entrenched bureaucracy, which reasserted in Paul's declining years the arbitrary powers that Vatican Council II had tried to curb, is committed to secret diplomacy. John Paul, no linguist and lacking experience in diplomacy or in the workings of the Roman Curia, is likely to allow it to continue as hitherto.

Even more fundamental than the political rights, on which Carter concentrates his rhetoric, are the social rights to nutritious food, health care, clothing and a voice in the use of the means of production and in the distribution of goods and services. Here again, commitment to the Christian Democrats, whose record on all these issues is shameful, can be expected to keep John Paul silent or limited to vague generalities, as it does with nearly all of Italy's bishops.

Obsession with abortion.

In its dealings with its own members, the church in practice falls behind both its profession of commitment to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and to the ethical standards of contemporary society. Compulsory clerical celibacy is increasingly violated by priests who insist that the right to marry is inalienable, yet continues to be defended by the papacy. While not the only reason, the celibacy issue is the major reason for the decline in the number of priests and the parallel decline in the quality of those who choose the priestly life.

Women continue to be treated as inherently inferior, the refusal to ordain them being only the most obvious of many discriminations. Refusing to face the fact that many marriages fail and that the humane way to deal with such failures is to recognize divorce, the church has turned to legalistic devices to declare that a marriage had never taken place, devices that work for some and not for others, in part at least because of the arbitrary discretion of church courts. Many of those Catholics who divorce and remarry in violation of the rules become estranged from the church because of their social ostracism and denial of the sacraments.

Respect for life, the ultimate human right, has been excessively narrowed to condemnation of abortion, paying little attention to the reality that abortions tend to be statistically more frequent in countries of Catholic culture, including Italy, for the simple reason that social conditions combine with the prohibition of "artificial" methods of contraception to create situations in which the pregnant woman sees herself as having no alternative.

This same obsession with abortion is causing the church to direct much of its effort and resources to the support of laws that would impose its moral standards on all members of the community, not just its own members. In consequence, fewer resources are left to help improve the quality of life of all, especially the quality of life of the older people who are becoming a progressively higher proportion of the population.

The church, as Vatican Council II insisted, should be a sign and a service to the world: a sign of the continuing call of Jesus Christ to love and peace through justice; a service of sharing so that the world's limited resources would be equitably distributed for the benefit of present and future generations. Instead, what the world sees is a church primarily concerned with defending its own interests, using power to dominate people, the moral power of its threat of eternal punishment

Continued on page 18.

IN THESE TIMES

THE INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST NEWSPAPER

Published 50 times a year: weekly except for the fourth week of July and the fourth week of December by New Majority Publishing Co., Inc. 1509 North Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60622, (312) 489-4444, TWX: 910-221-5401, Cable: THESE TIMES, Chicago, Illinois.

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This edition (Vol. 2, No. 42) published Sept. 13 for newsstand sales Sept. 13-19, 1978.

U.S./MIDEAST

Carter wagering peace, popularity on summit success

By Joseph Gerson

AS IN THESE TIMES WENT TO press, the biggest stories emerging from Camp David were that Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin, and Anwar Sadat had met together, and they planned to recess for the weekend. While lines of communication have enabled the three to hear the rumblings of the Arab world and of Begin's political rivals in Israel, their meetings have been shrouded in a secrecy uncharacteristic of the Carter administration.

When Carter departed for the isolated mountain retreat, the press described him as a "somber man." He said himself that chances for a complete success at Camp David were "very remote." Days before he had remarked, "It is a very risky thing for me politically, because now I think that if we are unsuccessful at Camp David, I will certainly have to share part of the blame for that failure."

On a personal level, failure at Camp David will underline Carter's incompetence as a national security manager and will add incentive to those who are challenging his place on the 1980 Democratic presidential ticket. What statesman, after all, would call a summit meeting without having lower-level diplomats first resolve the major points to be negotiated?

If, on the other hand, Carter is able to engineer something more substantial than what the State Department calls "constructive ambiguity" or if he is able to breathe just enough life into the Israeli-Egyptian exchanges to keep them going a while longer, his newly acquired statesmanlike aura may win him some enduring points in the Harris Gallup opinion polls.

Israel or oil.

When Carter spoke of the "risks of failure," he was also speaking as a representative of the American power elite who have, since World War II, molded a three-pillar Mideast system based on alliances with Israel, Iran and conservative Arab states. A collapse in negotiations may well force the U.S. to choose between Israel or oil—something policy-makers in Washington have sought to avoid for 30 years. Should the negotiations provide nothing concrete—no substantial Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and no significant steps toward Palestinian self-determination—it will be difficult for American loyalists in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and the PLO to continue to contain the nationalist imagination of their peoples.

To avoid mass defection among the Arab states, U.S. policy would have to tilt openly and forcefully away from Israel and toward the Arab states. This is something that no Israeli government can afford. It would be intolerable to the majority of American Jewry. Its political costs for the President would be tremendous.

Failure at Camp David also means greater Arab confrontation with Israel and possibly war—a war that would threaten the stability of the capitalist world economy. The U.S. is currently meeting 50 percent of its oil needs through imports. Western Europe and Japan depend on Mideast oil for 50 percent of their oil supply. Retired Gen. Maxwell Taylor recently referred to this flow of oil as the "jugular vein of the West."

Short of war, the Arab world may well turn toward Western Europe, if not the Soviet Union, for diplomatic initiatives. If "moderate" Arab leaders do not turn away from the U.S., their failure to ob-

tain results may well mean a wave of resignations or coups—a transition to an era of greater Arab independence and militancy. Before departing Cairo, President Sadat moved to guard against this possibility. He indicated a willingness to meet with his Syrian and Palestinian critics at an Arab summit meeting later this month.

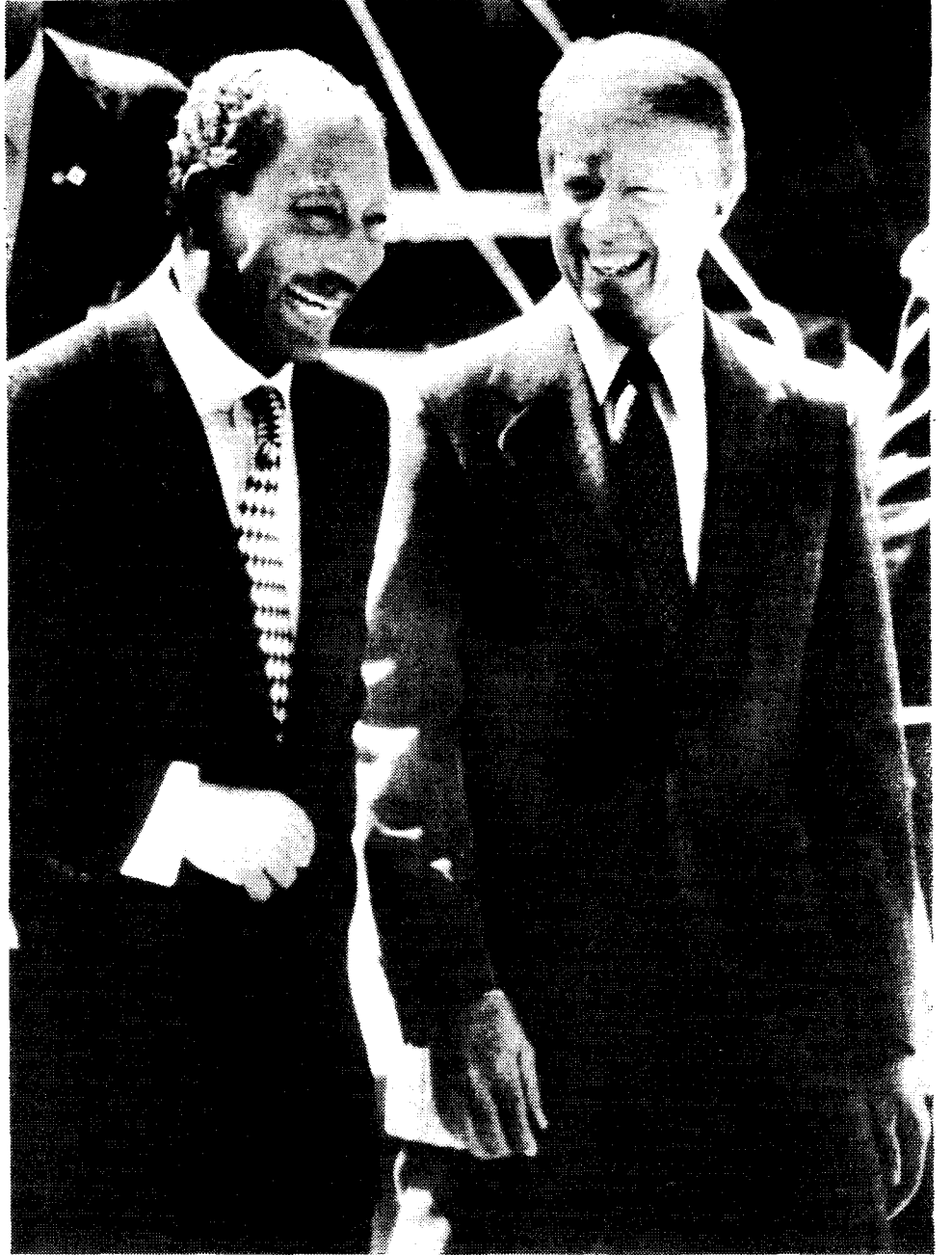
Axiom Number One.

Contrary to Begin's rhetoric, Jimmy Carter has not contented himself with the role of "honest broker." He has been more than a "full partner in the negotiating process," as Sadat likes to say. Carter has quietly and consistently followed what Noam Chomsky has referred to as "political axiom number one: maintenance of primary U.S. control over the stupendous oil reserves of the Middle East and the exclusion of our European allies and the Soviets from independent access to these reserves."

There are several consistent components to this policy that Carter inherited from previous administrations. Traditionally, the policy has included the use of direct American military intervention

Continued on page 10.

UPI



President Carter and Egyptian President Sadat walk to their cars after Sadat arrived at Camp David Sept. 5.

Begin probably won't budge

By Gidion Eshet

JERUSALEM

WHEN THE NATIONAL rights of the Palestinians first became a political issue after the 1967 war, Prime Minister Golda Meir, was the strongest opponent. Ever since, Israel has opposed the recognition of the Palestinians as a national entity and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

When Meir was first asked about her opinion on Palestinian rights she said: "I am a Palestinian. I hold a Palestinian passport issued by the British Mandatory Government." At the time, others explained her opposition with the following reasoning: The Zionist movement was the liberation movement of the Jewish people. In the process of establishing the Jewish state no harm was done to the local Arab population. On the contrary, the socialist Zionist movement opposed the exploitation of the Arabs. It aimed, successfully, at self-reliance. There were, so goes the reasoning, very few Arabs in the area and they never constituted a nation.

If a Palestinian entity or nation now is recognized, this would imply that this nation existed in the past and that the Zionist movement built the state in an area inhabited by another nation and expropriated the rights belonging to others. So that such a conclusion is not reached, the idea of Palestinian rights should be dropped.

No wonder, therefore, that Meir's colleagues in the Labour party were the first to oppose the new political plan put forward by Labourite and chairman of the Settlement Department in the Jewish agency—Raanan Weitz.

New plan opposed.

In a memorandum to Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Prof. Weitz wrote that Israel should not oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza if the Arabs agree to Israel holding to its settlements along the Jordan River and in the Rafah area in northern Sinai. The boundaries sketched

by Weitz are those of the Allon plan.

Yigal Allon, the former Foreign Minister of Israel, issued a similar plan in the late '60s which was rejected by King Hussein of Jordan. The difference between Allon and Weitz is that the former proposed returning the remainder of the West Bank to Jordan while Weitz thinks the Palestinians should have it.

The Israeli peace movement continues to be fragmented and poses no threat to the ruling Likud party policies.

Labour opposition to the plan is an example of the lack of change in Israeli politics, even as the Camp David Summit takes place. Here is another example:

Fragmented opposition.

One hundred Israeli reservists sent a letter to Prime Minister Begin notifying him that they are not able to defend and will thus oppose defending Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. They hinted that if, during military service, they are given an order to defend these settlements, they will disobey.

Logically, the first to defend them against rightist accusations should have been those political forces opposing the settlements and especially the Peace Now Movement. But the opposite occurred. The Peace Now Movement was the first to denounce the one hundred, claiming that the army should not be involved in the current political debates.

The opposition in Israel continues to be fragmented and does not pose a threat to the ruling Likud party. The Labour-MAPAM alignment continues to talk of a territorial compromise in the West Bank—a position rejected by Anwar Sadat and other Arab moderates. Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said not long ago that if the Arabs proposed real peace

he would still reject withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 borders. This holds true, he added, also for Sadat's new proposal for minor modifications in the pre-1967 borders.

Sadat's concessions.

The Likud is unwilling even to discuss the word withdrawal. This became evident when Begin, in a televised interview, clarified what seemed to be a minor modification in the Israeli official line proposed by Defense Minister Moshe Dayan in the Leeds Castle meeting of foreign ministers. Israel opposed any "foreign" rule over the West Bank. Until now it was even unwilling to discuss this issue.

In Leeds Dayan told Secretary of State Vance and Egypt's Foreign Minister Kamal that this subject could be discussed. Dayan's words on this subject were unclear. A debate began on the subject. Did Dayan say, "If the Arabs raised the subject of sovereignty in the territories Israel would be willing to discuss it"? Or did Dayan say, "Had the Arabs raised the subject, Israel would have been willing..."?

Begin gave the answer. Dayan meant the latter not the former. In other words the whole issue is related to the past not to the future.

It therefore seems that if the Camp David Summit's success depends on a moderation of the Israeli position, the chances are slim. Sadat, however, made two important concessions. He declared that he accepts the five-year interim period before the future of the West Bank and Gaza is determined. He also accepted that some minor modifications be made to the pre-1967 borders.

These two changes are intended to bring the Egyptian position as close as possible to that of the U.S. Sadat hopes that now the U.S. will put the necessary pressure on Israel.

The likelihood of such pressure seems poor.

But if President Carter is unwilling or unable to twist Begin's arm, the Middle East will be on the route to more trouble.

Gidion Eshet is an Israeli journalist who regularly covers Mideast politics for IN THESE TIMES.