

By John B. Judis

This is second of a two-part series on politics and religion.

IN DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL candidate John F. Kennedy's 1960 speech before the Houston Ministerial Association, he advocated an "absolute" separation of church and state, "where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the pope, the National Council of Churches, or any other ecclesiastical source, where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials."

Twenty-four years later, on September 13, New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, in a speech at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Ind., argued that Catholic politicians could vote for public abortion funding and still be "fully Catholic."

Although the framework of Cuomo's speech was ostensibly narrower than Kennedy's, the contrast was astonishing. In 1960 Kennedy was trying to draw the sharpest line between his religion and his politics. He wanted voters (at least in the Protestant South) simply to ignore that he was a Catholic. In 1984 Cuomo was trying to find the right combination of Catholic religion and responsible liberal Democratic politics.

Of course, Kennedy was running for president, and Cuomo need not face New York's substantially Catholic voters for another two years. But Cuomo was still speaking indirectly on behalf of Catholic vice-presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro, who had been under attack from New York Archbishop John J. O'Connor for opposing a constitutional ban on abortion and favoring abortion funding for the poor.

The profound alteration in this debate over politics and religion reflects in part the public's acceptance of Catholics as a political interest group with their own internal dialectic. It also reflects the public's growing hunger for a new national *raison d'être* (the optimism of Horatio Alger and the American Century having gone the way of Bretton Woods and Vietnam). The current religious revival is part and parcel of the quest for "roots" and "community."

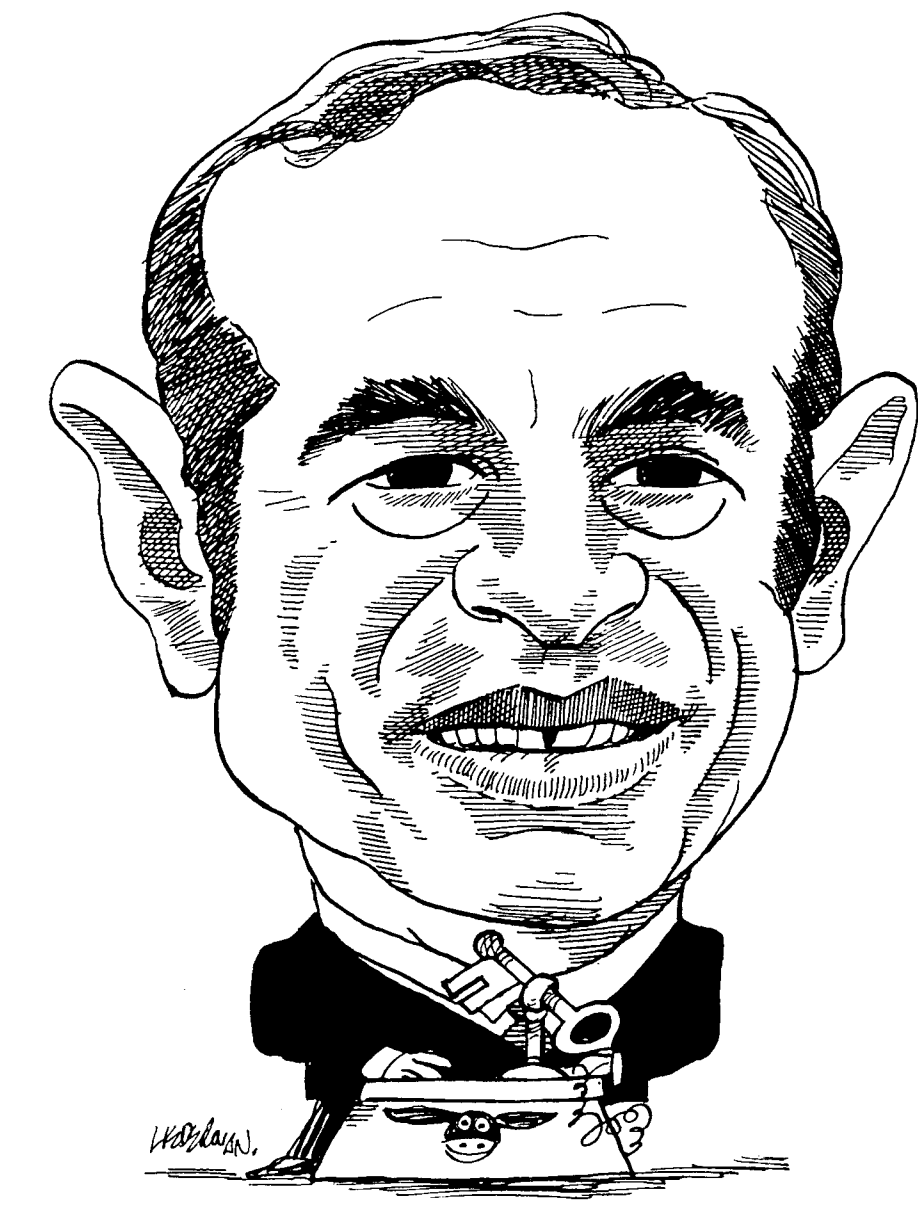
In such a context there is probably little danger of new religious wars, but there is substantial danger of public policy being obscured and the Constitution subverted by doctrinal presuppositions. At Notre Dame, Cuomo was trying to show how a good Catholic could oppose a constitutional ban on abortion.

Personal and political.

Cuomo's approach was prompted by a running debate this summer between him and newly appointed New York Archbishop John J. O'Connor. On June 24 O'Connor said, "I don't see how a Catholic in good conscience can vote for a candidate who explicitly supports abortion." In an August 2 interview Cuomo accused O'Connor of counseling Catholics to vote against liberal Democrats, including himself and Ferraro. Cuomo explained that while he personally opposed abortion on religious grounds, he could not, as a Catholic politician, "insist that everybody believe what we believe." In interviews Ferraro drew a similar distinction between her personal religious beliefs and her public political practice.

What Cuomo deplored in O'Connor's stand was not his opposition to abortion *per se*—the modern Church has been on record against the right to abortion all along—but his making a politician's stand on abortion the single measure of a Catholic's support. Boston's newly appointed Archbishop Bernard F. Law confirmed Cuomo's fears when, in a statement supported by 18 other New England bishops, he described abortion as "the key issue" in the 1984 elections. To Cuomo and other Catholic Democrats, O'Connor and Law seemed to be throwing their support to Reagan and the Republicans.

O'Connor denied any political motives, reiterating the centrality of abortion. And the U.S. Conference of Catholic



ABORTION

Democrats versus Catholic Church

Bishops issued a statement that was intended to clarify the official Catholic position. But the statement, issued by Bishop James W. Malone, only further inflamed the controversy.

The bishops asserted that the Catholic Conference does "not take a position for or against political candidates," and restated the broad range of issues from nuclear war to aid for the poor that Catholics are concerned with (Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's "seamless web" of issues). But they also reiterated that "with regard to the immorality of the direct taking of innocent life...our views are not simply policy statements [but] a direct affirmation of the constant moral teaching of the Catholic Church."

They also indirectly attacked Cuomo and Ferraro's division between their religious and political positions. "We reject the idea that candidates satisfy the requirements of rational analysis in saying their personal views should not influence their policy decisions. This position would be as unacceptable as would be the approach of a candidate or officeholder

Gov. Cuomo understood the Reagan strategy. His intervention could prevent a larger rush to Reagan by the Bishops and an even more strident assault on Ferraro.

who pointed to his or her personal commitments as qualifications for public office, without proposing to take practical steps to translate these into policies and practical programs."

On this last point, the bishops won the day, as a broad range of Catholic and non-Catholic publications noted. The liberal Catholic journal *Commonweal*, while calling for the Catholic bishops to admit "the reasonableness of divergent views among Catholics on abortion policy," declared its impatience with the "I'm-personally-opposed-to-abortion-but" politicians. "Why are they personally opposed? Why does their personal opposition on other issues—hunger, child abuse—regularly produce proposals for state action, but not on abortion?"

This was a question that Cuomo set out to answer in his Notre Dame speech.

Abortion and civil peace.

Cuomo made two different arguments to justify his own unwillingness to back a constitutional amendment. The first one recalled that of Justice Blackmun in the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Comparing the Church's position on abortion to its position on birth control and divorce, he argued that the choice to have an abortion was a private decision that stemmed from an individual's particular moral and religious values. If the Church tried to impose its religious view of abortion on the populace, then it would be violating the separation between church and state.

Catholic politicians, Cuomo said, take an oath to protect people's "right to divorce, to use birth control and even to choose abortion...not because they love what others do with their freedom, but because they realize that in guaranteeing freedom for all, they guarantee our right to be Catholics."

But this argument ignored rather than came to terms with the presuppositions of the Catholic theologians and prelates. Catholic doctrine on abortion unequivocally rejects the view that abortion is purely a "religious" issue like the Jews'

Mario Cuomo believes politicians can vote for abortion funding and still be fully Catholic.

Sabbath or the Catholic doctrine of the immaculate conception. "Respect for human life is not just a Christian obligation," the Vatican's 1974 *Declaration on Abortion* states. "Human reason is sufficient to impose it on the basis of analysis of what a human person is and should be."

The Catholic prelates, who view abortion as murder, reject that it is comparable to contraception or divorce or that it is a purely private act with no bearing on the welfare of others.

Cuomo's second argument spoke more directly to the bishops. Employing Catholic theologian John Courtney Murray's notion of civil peace—to the preservation of which some evils can be condoned—he contended that a Catholic like himself could agree with the Church's view of abortion, but not accept its political strategy for eliminating it. He said that a constitutional amendment to ban abortion would not eliminate abortions but only "allow people to ignore the cause of many abortions instead of addressing them, much the way the death penalty is used to escape dealing more fundamentally and more rationally with the problem of violent crime."

Slavery and abortion.

His speech won widespread praise, but failed to convince the bishops. If Cuomo's first argument appeared to ignore their fundamental premise, his second argument accepted their premise—that abortion is murder—but then ignored the consequences.

In an interview published in the September 23 *New York Times*, Archbishop Law drew an analogy between the bishops' opposition to abortion and the Protestant ministers' opposition to slavery. Law noted that the Abolitionist ministers had faced the same charge of divisiveness that the pro-life lobby faced.

In his speech Cuomo compared his own position favorably with that of the Catholic Church during the Civil War. While the Church was on record against slavery, it refused to take the political step of favoring a constitutional ban on it. He urged Catholic officialdom to take the same "realistic" attitude toward abortion. But Law and the pro-life bishops turned the same analogy against Cuomo. If abortion is an evil comparable to slavery, why shouldn't those opposed to it press for a constitutional ban?

In a September 24 speech at Notre Dame, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) posed the question in more contemporary terms. "No consensus was demanded before adopting the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or fair housing legislation," he said. "These were rights, and their proponents helped create a consensus by advocacy and example."

In his battle with the Bishops, Cuomo appears from local polls to have the clear support of the average Catholic in New York, if not elsewhere. A cynic might say that Cuomo's support stems from the fact that he restates on a higher level the contradictory impulses that Catholics have toward abortion.

Like Cuomo, the average Catholic shares the Church's view of abortion as evil, but rejects its call for a ban on abortions. According to a National Opinion Research Center survey last fall, 62 percent of Catholics agreed that "abortion is the same thing as murdering a child," while 66 percent agreed that "abortion sometimes is the best course in a bad situation."

Commonweal editor Peter Steinfels describes the average Catholic's view as "somewhat illogical." "Catholics are like most people when faced with a concrete moral problem," he said. "They rely on a mixture of principle and intuition and cutting corners. When they think about whether to ban abortion in the case of rape or a threat to the mother's life, their intuition tells them they would say no. These intuitions have some validity."

Cuomo's speech falls heir to the illogicality of the lay Catholic position. He believes abortion is murder, but he clear-

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By Diana Johnstone

B O N N

EAST GERMAN PRESIDENT Honecker's cancelled trip to West Germany could be the non-event of the year. The fanfare and catcalls before, and the heated debate after East Germany called off the trip, showed that the political mood is shifting fast in West Germany in the wake of the Pershing II missile deployment. German reunification is no longer a tabu subject. And signs are growing that conservative-led West Germany, forced into an arms buildup by the U.S., expects to use its military might to drive harder bargains in Eastern Europe.

In the West, a chorus blamed the cancellation on Soviet dictates and predicted that East Germans would resent seeing their head of state reined in by Moscow. But the *Schadenfreude* was all too obvious. Commentators in the U.S., Britain and France more or less openly rejoiced that Chernenko or whoever is running things in the Kremlin woke up long enough to crack down on the East Germans.

The Western ballyhoo in anticipation of the visit originally planned for September 26-30 seemed designed to arouse Soviet distrust. Honecker's trip was interpreted in advance as a sign of East Germany's growing independence, even defiance of Moscow. Much was made of the financial advantages offered Honecker by Bonn.

Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader Willy Brandt afterward criticized the "simple and materialistic" notion—which he said cropped up time and again—that the way to deal with Communist states was to buy them off.

Brandt said that when the Soviet Union and the U.S. were on bad terms, the freedom of movement of both German states was severely cramped. Perhaps, he said, in the shadow of the American presidential elections there was just enough room for a few cautious steps forward. But this opportunity had been lost.

Indeed, the ruling Christian Democrats didn't seem sure they wanted Honecker to come, or that they knew what to do with him once he arrived. The visit was a return for former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's visit to Honecker in December 1981. At that time Honecker wanted to continue discussions on disarmament, but Chancellor Kohl would not go along. He ruled out in advance any discussion at all (much less any settlement) of the three demands Honecker has been making for

The folks in Wiebelskirchen in the Saarland, where the East German Communist leader was born 72 years ago in a coalminer's family, seemed genuinely eager to welcome their native son and genuinely disappointed when his visit was called off. Bonn was another matter. The chancellor's office seemed afraid of anything being there that would lead to eventual recognition of East Berlin as the capital of a legitimate state.

From detente to Reaganism.

The uncertain welcome being prepared for Honecker was a sign of the transitional nature of Kohl's policy, and perhaps his government. Part of his job is to make the transition from SPD detente policy to something else more in line with Reagan administration demands, without unduly alarming the German people, who never asked for any such shift. Last year's mass movement against the stationing of Pershing II nuclear missiles in

DER SPIEGEL



IN THE WORLD

EUROPE

Honecker non-visit stirs debate over German policy

West Germany showed the popular attachment to detente. Kohl's first concern was to reassure the public that the Pershings would not change anything—relations with East Germany, where many West Germans have relatives, would go on as before.

Therefore Kohl jumped at the chance when Honecker proposed "in the name of the German people" to "limit the damage" in the face of a looming "ice age." But Kohl was visibly also trying to reassure his NATO allies and his own party's right wing that he was not going to make any concessions to Honecker. So he made it known that his talks with Honecker could center on environmental problems. Honecker was offended. After

usual exhortation of Communist slave states and paid a visit to Honecker, even negotiating a West German credit line of a billion marks. Strauss has been discreet ever since and joined in criticizing Kohl and his entourage for too much idle chatter and "dilettantism" in preparing the Honecker visit.

East Germany has a favorable trade balance with West Germany and does not need those credits. And there may be reason to be wary of Strauss bearing gifts when it is recalled how lavish Western bank credits led the Polish economy to collapse and brought down Gierek, much appreciated by Western leaders while he lasted.

Brandt said that to save the Honecker visit, Bonn would have had to give it political "substance," and that substance was arms control. Honecker wanted to promote a joint German-German initiative at the Stockholm conference for confidence-building measures and disarmament in Europe. A suitable subject would have been renunciation of chemical weapons.

In a September 12 Bundestag debate on the cancelled visit, Antje Vollmer of the Greens made an important speech calling for practical cooperation between the peoples of the two German states on the basis of "recognition of the realities." She said that when Soviet support to German-German *rapprochement* is thought to be flagging is exactly the time West Germans should have been sensitive to the need to avoid creating the painful impression that the GDR was selling out its principles for credits. Vollmer called the Honecker cancellation a "Waterloo" for Kohl's German policy, and said his government had gone into a spin when it perceived "the uneasiness of our Western allies" over growing German-German dialog.

Vollmer said that as in the postwar decade, the question was again arising of West Germany's role in the middle of Europe. Then, as always, there were two basic conservative positions: Germany as a firm part of the West or as a bridge between East and West. Konrad Adenauer, "as a man of the West, of big industry and anti-communism," for whom, she said, "Siberia began at the Elbe," chose a separate West Germany firmly attached to Western Europe. West German heavy

industry was sufficient to build a major economic power. Conservatives and liberals supported by some medium business and agrarian interests who wanted Germany as a decentralized, federated central European country lost out.

If German unity was really wanted, there might have been a chance then, she said. But besides Soviet and Western allied pressure, the division of Germany was the clear choice of Adenauer and German heavy industry. It was "one of the political masterpieces of the Adenauer era to have bound this fact of the conscious, deliberate, planned renunciation of German unity through one-sided Western integration and economic and military rearmament, to demands for reunification in the preamble to the basic law" (or Constitution) of the Federal Republic, she said.

The Green Party spokeswoman, who was born in 1943, said it had taken her and her generation a long time to get over the "lie of reunification." But they were realists, not Utopians, she said, and as realists they accepted the consequences of 40 years of German policy based on Western integration, just as they accepted the consequences of being the "sons and daughters of a nation bearing the main responsibility for causing two world wars." Just as the outcome of the Second World War culminated in the construction of the bloc system in the middle of Europe," she continued, "so the existence of two German states and two social systems on German soil is the result of the years when German policy was your responsibility. We bear these consequences with anger and also with sorrow."

Therefore, she said, we want to "recognize realities": the two states and the two citizenships, the border in the middle of the Elbe.

"After a time of developing socially in very opposite directions in the '70s," she said. "Germans in East and West have been forced to look for similar common solutions and prospects by the present extreme common threat through the superpowers' military potential and through the ecological destruction of the environment." The Greens were for *rapprochement* of people in the two social systems.

The day after his trip was cancelled, Honecker himself showed his receptiveness to such an approach by warmly welcoming the first visiting delegation of West German environmental activists led by Jo Leinen. A key figure in bringing together the environmental and peace movements, Greens and Social Democrats, Leinen said the East Germans were making interesting efforts in environmental protection and were ready to continue exchanges between environmentalists. Honecker's efforts at "damage limitation" in relations with West Germany seemed to be concentrating on contracts with what he called "sensible forces," mainly Social Democrats.

Unlike the SPD, Kohl has seemed to have no long-range policy toward the East. Initially he emphasized continuity with the detente policy initiated by Brandt. But in more and more articles and speeches, German conservatives have been reverting back to the old demand for reunification. There have also been speeches to organizations of *Vertriebene*, Germans driven out of territories taken over by Poland at the end of the war, suggesting revival of claims to old German territory East of the Oder-Niesse line. This has alarmed Poles, revival of the German threat indirectly strengthens Soviet influence in Poland.

This may be why Italy's Christian Democratic Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti, aware of Vatican concerns, took a crack at "pan-Germanism" during a debate at the Italian Communist Party fair in Rome on September 12. "There are two German states and two German states must remain," Andreotti said flatly.

There was a flurry of protest from Bonn. But SPD Bundestag deputy floor leader Horst Ehmke said, "Andreotti has had the courage to say honestly and openly what our Western allies really think on the German question."

Next week: answers to "the German question."



Antje Vollmer of the West German Green Party

normalization of German-German relations: an agreement on the exact location of the Elbe River boundary, recognition of German Democratic Republic citizenship and the closing of the Salzgitter Institute that collects data on criminal activity in East Germany from West Germany. The last two issues are particularly controversial, as they involve the Federal Republic of Germany's claim to be the only permanent, legal German state. But why not at least talk about the Elbe boundary?

all, competent authorities existed at a lower level to deal with environmental problems.

If Kohl's refusal to discuss political issues reassured his own allies, it could only get Honecker into trouble with his. To justify this trip to Soviet leaders, Honecker needed to show that it was politically useful, either to gain recognition for the GDR or to promote peace and disarmament.

Last year Bavarian leader Franz-Josef Strauss did a sudden about-face from his

Bernd Kuster