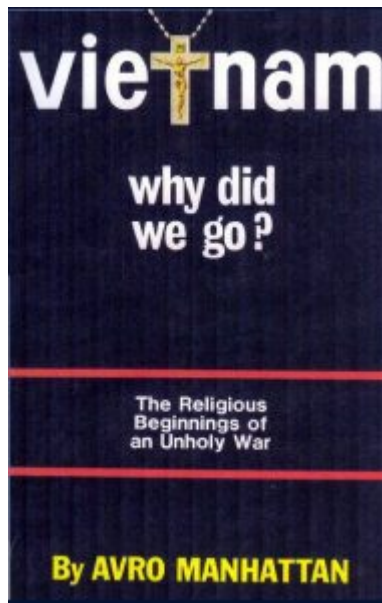


# Vietnam: Why Did We Go? – By Avro Manhattan



## About The Author



Avro Manhattan

Avro Manhattan (1914-1990) was the world's foremost authority on Roman Catholicism in politics. A resident of London, during WW II he operated a radio station called "Radio Freedom" broadcasting to occupied Europe. He was the author of over 20 books including the best-seller *The Vatican in World Politics*, twice Book-of-the-Month and going through 57 editions. He was a Great Briton who risked his life daily to expose some of the darkest secrets of the Papacy. His books were #1 on the Forbidden Index for the past 50 years!!

## Preface

The political and military origin of the war of Vietnam has been described with millions of written and spoken words. Yet, nothing has been said about

one of the most significant forces which contributed to its promotion, namely, the role played by religion, which in this case, means the part played by the Catholic Church, and by her diplomatic counterpart, the Vatican.

Their active participation is not mere speculation. It is an historical fact as concrete as the presence of the U.S., or the massive guerilla resistance of Asian communism. The activities of the last two have been scrutinized by thousands of books, but the former has never been assessed, not even in a summarized form.

The Catholic Church must be considered as a main promoter in the origin, escalation and prosecution of the Vietnamese conflict. From the very beginning this religious motivation helped set in motion the avalanche that was to cause endless agonies in the Asiatic and American continents.

The price paid was immense: thousands of billions of dollars; the mass dislocation of entire populations; political anarchy; military devastation on an unprecedented scale; the disgrace upon the civilized world; the loss of thousands upon thousands of young Asian and American lives. Last but not least, the wounding, mutilation and death of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

The tragedy of Vietnam will go down in history as one of the most pernicious deeds of the contemporary alliance between politics and organized religion.

Factors of a political, ideological, economic and military nature played no mean role in the unfolding of the war, but the religion of the Catholic Church was one of its main instigators. From the beginning her role has been minimized when not obliterated altogether. Concrete facts however, cannot be wiped away so easily, and it is these which we shall now scrutinize, even if briefly.

### **Dedication**

To the people of the U.S.A.  
as a warning:  
trusting that the tragedies of the past,  
no less than the hopes of the future,  
may soon bind them together  
in brotherly love.

## **Chapter 1 Preliminaries**

When in 1940, France was defeated by Hitler, the French surrendered Vietnam to the Japanese who asked them to continue to administer the land in their place. A French puppet, Bao Dai who had already ruled the country during the previous twenty years, did so.

Bao Dai however, came face to face almost at once with a vigorous nationalism. This became belligerently concrete and took the form of an increasing effective guerrilla warfare. It's ultimate goals were two:

riddance of French and Japanese rule, and total independence. The freedom fighters known as the Viet-Minh, were supported by the general population with the result that they became identified at once with the national aspirations of all the Vietnamese.

At Japan's defeat in August, 1945, the Vietnamese were in control of most of Vietnam. In September of that same year, the freedom fighters declared Vietnam's independence. The French-Japanese puppet, Bao Dai, resigned. After more than a century, Vietnam was once more free, or so it seemed. The Vietnamese, although dominated by communists, realized that a solid minority of the country were Catholics. Recognizing that most of the Catholics had supported their fight against both the French and the Japanese, they elicited their support by appointing several prominent Catholics to their new government.

Ho Chi Minh, their leader, nominated a Catholic as his economic minister, indeed he even had a Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolic. Furthermore, to prove how, although a Marxist, he was not biased against the Church, he adopted the first Sunday of each September as the official day of Vietnamese Independence. This because it coincided with the National Catholic Day.

Religious liberty was assured to all. The achievements of the Viet-Minh were so popular that in September 40,000 Catholics demonstrated in support of Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi itself. Indeed four Catholic bishops even appealed directly to the Vatican asking it to support the new independent Vietnam under its new rulers.

It appeared as if a new chapter had been initiated, not only for Vietnam, but also for the Catholics, who until then, although protected by the French, nevertheless had increasingly resented, French colonialism.

While the new Vietnamese government in Hanoi was working for the establishment of a democratic republic in North Vietnam, the British, knowing of the surrender of Japan, handed back South Vietnam to the French. The French, smarting under their defeat in Europe, imposed a most drastic colonial administration, with the objective of extending their dominion over the rest of the country. The Vietnamese, affronted, organized guerrilla warfare to prevent the re-imposition of French rule.

In February, 1950, the U.S. recognized the Bao Dai government. Almost simultaneously France asked for military help. In March, two U.S. warships entered Saigon to support Bao Dai. Soon afterwards, in May, Washington announced aid for the French, with a \$10,000,000 grant. The U.S. had agreed to let France deal with Vietnam while the U.S. was engaged in a war in Korea. In June, President Truman announced the U.S. was going to finance the French army to fight the government of North Vietnam. By November, 1952, the U.S. had sent 200 shiploads of material, 222 war planes, 225 naval vessels, 1,300 trucks, paying one third of the war bill in Vietnam.

When Eisenhower succeeded Truman in July, 1953, an armistice was signed with Korea, but by 1953 the U.S. financial support had already reached 400 millions a year. In October the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles,

declared that the U.S. help for France's colonial rule had been "his brightest achievement of the year."

By 1954, the U.S. was already paying 80% of the total. The French government itself stated that the U.S. had spent a total of \$1.785 billion for their war. But the end of that same year, the U.S. in fact had paid \$2 billion to keep French colonialism in power.

The Vietnamese, however, determined to rid themselves once and for all of the French, fought with a ferocity which astonished friends and foes alike. On the brink of defeat in Dienbienphu, France asked for U.S. help. John Foster Dulles demanded U.S. intervention (to defend Indo-China from communism). Then, he announced a plan, the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). In April he called a secret meeting of congressional leaders. The objective: to give Eisenhower power to use U.S. air and naval forces to help the French in Vietnam. The plan was called appropriately "Operation Vulture." Lyndon Johnson, later president, objected to committing American troops and most of the congressional leaders agreed with him. By November, however, (that is from 1950 to 1954) the U.S. had already sent 340 planes and 350 warships.

In May, 1954 the French surrendered Dienbienphu. The following July, the Geneva Agreement was signed. The 17th parallel was indicated to be the provisional demarcation line between the Vietnam Republic of the North and the French in the South. On July 21 at a "Final Declaration," nine countries endorsed the agreement with the exception of the Bao Dai government and the U.S.

The Declaration pointed out that the north-south division of Vietnam was only a "military" division, to end the military conflict, and not a territorial or political boundary. This meant that the French had been made the trustees for South Vietnam for a two year period, that is until a general election took place and the people could choose the kind of government they wanted.

In certain quarters, the Geneva Agreement created fear that if the elections were permitted, the Viet-Minhs, being so popular throughout Vietnam, would take over also in the South.

The military and above all the Catholic lobbies in Washington set to work, determined to persuade the U.S. government to prevent the election. Pope Pius XII gave full support to their efforts. Cardinal Spellman, the Washington-Vatican go-between, was the principal spokesman from both. The policy of Pope Pius XII and John Foster Dulles eventually was accepted, and implemented, notwithstanding widespread misgivings in the U.S. and in Europe.

President Eisenhower, himself, before and after the fatal decision, admitted in a moment of political candor that "had the elections been held, possibly 80% of the population would have voted for communist Ho Chi Minh, rather than Chief of State, Bao Dai." President Eisenhower had stated the truth about the political reality of the situation in Vietnam at that momentous period.

## Chapter 2 The Vatican-American Grand Alliance

So far the chronological description of events against French colonial imperialism, seem to be the logical expression of the Vietnamese people to rid themselves of an oppressive and alien domination, which for centuries had attempted to uproot their traditional culture, identity, and religion.

At first sight it seems incomprehensible for the U.S. to get ever more committed to the deadly Vietnamese morass. The tragic American involvement cannot be properly understood, unless we take a birds-eye view of the U.S. global policy following the end of World War II. Only a retrospective assessment of the world which emerged after the defeat of Nazism, can spell out the reasons which induced the U.S. to pursue the policy which it did.

The policy was inspired by the sudden, awesome realization that the new postwar world was dominated by two mighty giants: the U.S. and Soviet Russia. Both had fought the same enemies in war, but now in peace they faced each other as potential foes. It was a belligerent peace. Communist Russia gave notice from the very beginning, if not by word, at least by deeds, that she was determined to embark upon a program of ideological and territorial expansion. The U.S. was determined to prevent it at all costs. The conflict, fought at all levels, and simultaneously in Europe, Asia and America, became known as the "Cold War."

That the "Cold War": was not mere verbal fireworks was proved by the fact that soon the two superpowers were arming at an ever faster rate. Also, that Soviet Russia, following a well defined expansionistic postwar program, was inching with increasing ruthlessness to the conquest of a great part of Europe. Within a few years, in fact, she had gobbled up almost one third of the European continent. Countries which had been a integral part of the loose political and economic fabric of pre-war Europe, were now forcibly incorporated into the growing Soviet empire.

This was done via naked aggression, ideological subversion, concessions and ruthless seizure of power by local communist parties, inspired and helped by Moscow. Within less than half a decade, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Albania and others had been transformed into Russian colonies. If this had been all, it would have been a bad enough policy, but Soviet Russia intended to promote a similar program in Asia as well. Her ambitions there were as far reaching as those in Europe. Indeed even more so, since she intended to convert the Asiatic continent into a gigantic communist landmass. To that effect, she encouraged Asian nationalism, combined with Asian communism, exploiting any real or fictitious grievances at hand.

If we remember that at the same time the sleeping third giant, China, was on the verge of becoming Red, then the rapid communist expansion in the East seen from Washington was a real menace. Hence the necessity of formulating a policy dedicated to the proposition that world communism must be checked both in Europe as well as in Asia.

The "Cold War," the child of this tremendous ideological struggle, as the tensions between the U.S. and the communists increased, threatened to explode

into a "hot war." And so it came to pass, that only five years after the end of World War II, the U.S. found herself engaged in the war of Korea, in the opinion of many, considered to be the potential prelude of World War III.

Reciprocal fear of atomic incineration restrained both the U.S. and Soviet Russia from total armed belligerency. The conflict ended in a stalemate. Korea was divided. It seemed a solution. The confrontation, for the moment at least, had been avoided.

But if it was avoided in Korea, it was not avoided elsewhere. Certainly not in the ideological field, or in that of subdued guerrilla warfare, since the U.S. had given notice without any more ambiguity, that she was determined to stop the Red expansion wherever communism was threatening to take over.

It was at this stage, that she started to view the situation in Indo-China with growing concern. The harassed French had to be helped. Not so much to keep their colonial status quo, but to check the Vietnamese, in the South, and in the North. The U.S. could not afford to see the French supplanted by communism, disguised as anti-colonialism, or even as genuine patriotism.

The U.S. strategy was based upon the domino theory. This assumed that, in Asia, once any given country became communist, all the others would become so likewise. Vietnam fitted neatly into this pattern. It became imperative, therefore, that the French should not be defeated by the Vietnamese communists.

The determination of the Vietnamese people to get rid of the French rule, therefore, ran contrary to the U.S. grand strategy, or the strategy of anyone determined to stop the advance of communism in Southeast Asia.

And indeed there was another ready at hand. The Catholic Church had watched the advances of communism in Indo-China with a greater concern even than the U.S. She had more at stake than anyone else, including the French themselves: almost four hundred years of Catholic activities. Seen from Rome, the rapid expansion of world communism had become even more terrifying than for Washington. The Vatican had witnessed whole nations, those of Eastern Europe swallowed up by Soviet Russia, with millions of Catholics passing under communist rule. In addition, traditional Catholic countries like Italy and France were harboring growing communist parties. For the Vatican, therefore, it was even more imperative than for the U.S. to prosecute a policy directed at stopping communism wherever it could be stopped. It became inevitable that the Vatican and the U.S. should come together to stop the same enemy. The two having soon formulated a common strategy turned themselves into veritable partners.

The exercise was nothing new to the Vatican. It had a striking precedent as far as how to conduct an alliance with a mighty lay companion, to fight the advance of a seemingly irresistible enemy. After World War I, a similar situation developed in Europe. Communism was making rapid advances throughout the West. The existing democratic institutions seemed impotent to contain it. When, therefore, a forcible right wing movement appeared on the scene declaring communism as its principal foe, the Vatican allied itself to it.

The movement was fascism. It stopped communism in Italy as well as in Germany with nazism. The Vatican-fascist alliance had successfully prevented Soviet Russia from taking over Europe. Although it ended in disaster with the outbreak of World War II, nevertheless, its original policy of breaking the power of communism had succeeded.

Now the process had to be repeated, since the situation was the same. The urgency of the task was self-evident everywhere. Soviet Russia had emerged from the nazi debacle, a more formidable enemy than ever before. She was threatening Europe not only with the ideological Red virus, but also with powerful armies. It became a necessity for the Catholic Church, therefore, to forge an alliance with a lay partner, as it did after World War I. The U.S. was the only military power sufficiently strong to challenge Russian expansions. In Europe the U.S.-Vatican partnership had proved an undisputed success from the very beginning. The prompt creation of political Catholicism on the part of the Vatican, with its launching of Christian democracy on one hand, and the equally prompt economic help of the U.S. to a ruined continent, had stopped a communist takeover.

But if the U.S.-Vatican alliance had succeeded in Europe, the problem in Asia was more complicated, more acute, and more dangerous. A direct confrontation was possible. Not only on political grounds but also on a military one. This was proved by the fact that the U.S. had had to fight a true war in Korea, as already mentioned. The lesson of Korea was not easily forgotten. The U.S. saw to it that the vast unstable surrounding territories did not become the springboard from which another ideological or military attack could be launched to expand communism.

When the situation in Vietnam, therefore, started to deteriorate and the military inefficiency of the French became too apparent, the two partners which had worked so successfully in Europe came together, determined to repeat in Southeast Asia the success of their first anticommunist joint campaign. True, the background and the problems involved were infinitely more complicated than those in Europe. Yet, once a common strategy had been agreed upon, the two could carry it out, each according to its own capabilities.

As in the past, each could exert itself where it could be most effective. Thus, whereas the U.S. could be active in the economic and military fields, the Vatican could do the same in the diplomatic, not to mention in the ecclesiastic area, where it could mobilize millions of Catholics in the pursuance of well conceived ideological and religious objectives.

### **Chapter 3 Fatimaization of the West**

Before proceeding with the chronological events which ultimately were to lead to the direct U.S. intervention into the war in Vietnam, it might be useful to glance at the ideological climate of the years which preceded its outbreak. Otherwise certain basic issues could not be properly understood.

After World War II, the U.S. and the Vatican had forged a mutual alliance, as we have already said, mainly to contain Russian communism in Europe and in Asia. The belligerency of their joint policies plus Soviet Russia's

determination to plant communism wherever she could, produced what was labeled, "The Cold War." The Cold War was seen in many quarters as the preliminary step to a Hot War, which in this case meant but one thing, the outbreak of World War III.

This was not speculation or fantasy, but an expectation, based upon concrete military and political factors. The U.S. and the Vatican became active, each in their own field, set to prepare for "The Day." Whereas the U.S. busied itself with military preparations, the Vatican busied itself with religious preparations. This spelled the mobilization of religious belief, and even more dangerous, the promotion of religious emotionalism.

The Vatican is a formidable diplomatic and ideological center, because it has at its disposal the religious machinery of the Church. During the Cold War, it used such machinery with a skill unmatched by any other church.

Pope Pius XII was a firm believer in the inevitability, and indeed, "necessity," of the Third World War. To that effect he worked incessantly in the diplomatic field, chiefly with the U.S. itself, with the cooperation of the powerful Catholic lobby in Washington, D.C.

Although we have related elsewhere the intrigues of that body, it might not be amiss to focus our attention upon those of a religious character, which Pope Pius XII and certain American politicians carried out in the purely religious area, with the specific objective of preparing for World War III.

This was possible because Pope Pius XII, by now, had succeeded in conditioning millions of Catholics, both in Europe and in the U.S., to accept the inevitability of such a war, almost as a crusade inspired from heaven. He justified it on the assumption that the Virgin Mary herself, had become his ally. Since, during the Vietnamese tragedy, the Vatican used the religious emotionalism of Our Lady of Fatima for political objectives, we must glance at the background of this cult.

Our Lady of Fatima had first appeared to three illiterate children in Fatima, a desolate locality in Portugal, during the fateful year of 1917, which was also the year of the Russian Revolution.





Pope Pius XII (1939-58) was a brilliant diplomat, a cunning politician and a religious crusader. These characteristics made him one of the paramount personalities of our times. He transformed the Catholic Church into a global political instrument. He, more than anybody else outside Germany, helped Hitler to power. His pet obsession was communism and he became the main instigator of the Cold War. He was the religious pivot upon which the Catholic crusade against communism revolved. Cardinal Spellman, as his spokesman in the U.S., greatly influenced American politicians and public opinion giving an almost mystical interpretation of the anti-Russian policies of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Through Spellman, Pius XII attempted to steer the U.S. military power against communism in Korea and Vietnam and kept wholly "silent" when, in 1954, the U.S. military planned to use atomic weapons at the beginning of the Vietnam War.

Her apparition had been accompanied by a somewhat strange miracle:

*"The sun became pale, three times it turned speedily on itself, like a Catherine wheel ... At the end of these convulsive revolutions, it seemed to jump out of its orbit and come forward towards the people on a zig-zag course, stopped, and returned again to its normal position."*

This was seen by a large crowd near the children and lasted twelve minutes.

The fact that the other two thousand million human beings the world over never noticed the sun agitate, rotate and jump out of its orbit did not bother the Catholic Church in the least.

On the contrary, the Catholic masses were told to believe that the sun, on the appearance of the Virgin Mary, had truly moved on "a zig-zag course" as proof of the authenticity of her presence, and of course, of "her messages."

The Virgin's messages had been to induce the pope to bring about "the consecration of the World to her Immaculate Heart," to be followed by "the consecration of Russia." "Russia will be converted," she foretold. "The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me." But, she warned, should this not be accomplished, "her (Russia's) errors will spread throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions ... different nations will be destroyed ... " In the end, however, the Virgin promised by way of consolation, that the Catholic Church would triumph, after which "the Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me. Thereupon she (Russia) shall be converted and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

These quotations are from the authenticated messages of the Virgin Mary herself, as related to one of the children and fully accepted by the Catholic Church as a genuine revelation by the "Mother of God".

Within a few years, the cult of Fatima had grown to great proportions. The number of pilgrims multiplied from sixty on June 13, 1917 to 60,000 in October of that same year. From 144,000 in 1923, to 588,000 in 1928. The total for six years: two million.

The Vatican took the promises seriously. Msgr. Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, then the gray eminence behind Pope Pius XI, sponsored a policy supporting fascism in Italy and then the nazis in Germany, to help the prophecy come true. In fact, he became the chief instrument in helping Hitler to get into power. This he did by urging the German Catholic Party to vote for Hitler at the last German general election in 1933.<sup>4</sup> The basic idea was a simple one. fascism and nazism, besides smashing the communists in Europe, ultimately would smash communist Russia.

In 1929 Pope Pius XI signed a Concordat and the Lateran Treaty with Mussolini and called him "the man sent by Providence." In 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. In 1936, Franco started the Civil War in Spain. By 1938 two-thirds of Europe had been fascistized and the rumblings of World War II were heard more and more ominously everywhere.

Concurrently, however, Europe had also been Fatimaized. The cult of Fatima, with emphasis on the Virgin's promise of Russia's conversion, had been given immense prominence by the Vatican. In 1938, a papal nuncio was sent to Fatima, and almost half a million pilgrims were told that the Virgin had confided three great secrets to the children. Thereupon, in June of that year, the only surviving child – advised by her confessor, always in touch with the hierarchy and hence with the Vatican – revealed the contents of two of the three great secrets.

The first was the vision of Hell (something well known to the modern world).

The second was more to the point: a reiteration that Soviet Russia would be converted to the Catholic Church. The third was sealed in an envelope and put

in custody of the ecclesiastical authority not to be revealed until 1960.

The dramatic reiteration of the revelation of the second secret about Soviet Russia immediately assumed a tremendous religious and political significance. The timing of the “disclosure” could not have been better chosen. The fascist dictatorships were talking the same language: the annihilation of Soviet Russia.

The following year, 1939, the Second World War broke out. In 1940, France was defeated. The whole of Europe had become fascist. In 1941, Hitler invaded Russia. The Virgin’s prophecy at long last was about to be fulfilled. At the Vatican, there was rejoicing, since by now Pacelli had become pope under the name of Pius XII (1939).

Pius XII encouraged Catholics to volunteer for the Russian front. Catholics – most of them devotees of the Virgin of Fatima – joined the nazi armies, from Italy, France, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Latin America, the U.S., and Portugal. Spain sent a Catholic Blue Division.

In October 1941, while the nazi armies rolled near Moscow, Pius XII, addressing Portugal, urged Catholics to pray for a speedy realization of the Lady of. Fatima’s promise.

The following year, 1942, after Hitler had declared that communist Russia had been “definitely” defeated, Pius XII, in a Jubilee Message, fulfilled the first of the Virgin’s injunctions and “consecrated the whole world to her Immaculate Heart.”

“The apparitions of Fatima open a new era,” wrote Cardinal Cerejeira in that same year. “It is the foreshadowing of what the Immaculate Heart of Mary is preparing for the whole world.” The new era, in 1942, was a totally nazified European continent, with Russia seemingly wiped off the map, Japan conquering half of Asia and world fascism was at its zenith everywhere.

The fascist empire vanished with the collapse of Hitler. In 1945, World War II ended. And Soviet Russia, to the chagrined surprise of Pope Pius XII, emerged the second greatest power on earth.

## **Chapter 4 The Pope’s Blessing for a Preventive War**

The cult of Fatima, which had suffered a devotional recess with the defeat of the nazi armies and the suicide of Hitler, was suddenly revived. In October, 1945, the Vatican ordered that monster pilgrimages be organized to the Shrine.

The following year, 1946, our Lady was solemnly crowned before more than half a million pilgrims. The crown, weighing 1,200 grams of gold, had 313 pearls, 1,250 precious stones and 1,400 diamonds. Pope Pius XII from the Vatican addressed the pilgrims by radio, saying that our Lady’s promises would be fulfilled. “Be ready!” he warned. “There can be no neutrals. Never step back. Line up as crusaders!”

In 1947, the Cold War began. Hatred against communist Russia was promoted,

headed by the Vatican which sent a statue of our Lady of Fatima, with her "message" on a "pilgrimage" around the world. She was sent from country to country to arouse anti-Russian odium. Whole governments welcomed her. Within a few years, as the Cold War mounted, the statue had gone to Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and Australia and had visited fifty-three nations. The East-West split continued to widen.

In 1948, the frightful American-Russian atomic race started. In 1949, Pius XII, to strengthen the anti-Russian front, excommunicated any voter supporting the communists. And soon afterwards American theologians told the U.S. that it was her duty to use atom bombs.

The following year, in 1950, the "pilgrim statue" of our Lady of Fatima, who had started to travel in 1947, the very year of the outbreak of the Cold War, was sent by airplane, accompanied by Father Arthur Brassard, on the direct instructions of Pope Pius XII, to ... Moscow. There, with the warm approval of Admiral Kirk, the American Ambassador, she was solemnly placed in the church of the foreign diplomats. For what specific reason? "To wait for the imminent liberation of Soviet Russia."

Not content with this, Our Lady appeared in person fifteen times to a nun in the Philippines. She repeated her warning against communism, after which a shower of rose petals fell at the nun's feet. An American Jesuit took the miraculous petals to the U.S., to revive the energy of fanatical Catholics, headed by the criminal Senator McCarthy and many of his supporters.

American warmongers, led by prominent Catholics, were meanwhile feverishly preparing for an atomic showdown with Russia. Top Catholics in the most responsible positions were talking of nothing else.

On August 6, 1949, Catholic Attorney General Mac- Grath addressed the Catholic "storm-troopers" of the U.S. – namely the Knights of Columbus – at their convention in Portland, Oregon. He urged Catholics "to rise up and put on the armor of the Church militant in the battle to save Christianity." (Christianity, of course, meaning the Catholic Church.) He further urged "a bold offensive."

In that same year another Catholic, one of the most highly placed personages of the U.S. government, James Forrestal, the crusader against communism at home and abroad, helped Pope Pius XII to win the elections in Italy by sending American money, plus money from his own pocket. James Forrestal, who was in very frequent contact with the Vatican and with Cardinal Spellman, knew better than anybody else what was going on in certain Catholic and American quarters. For one simple reason: he was none other than the American Secretary for Defense.

One day, upon hearing a civilian aircraft overhead, he dashed along a Washington street with a most fateful message: "The Russians have invaded us!" he shouted. Later on, notwithstanding the assurance of Pius XII that the Russians would be defeated with the help of Our Lady, Catholic James Forrestal, American Secretary of Defense, jumped from a window on the 16th floor of a building in the American Capital, yelling that the Russians had

better be destroyed before it was too late.

The following year another fanatical Catholic was appointed to another important post. Mr. Francis Matthews was nominated Secretary of the American Navy. On the morning he took the oath of office (in June, 1949), Mr. Matthews, his wife and all their six children contritely heard Mass and received Holy Communion in the chapel of the Naval station in Washington, D.C.

A few months afterwards (October, 1949) Cardinal Spellman was summoned to Rome by the pope, with whom he had repeated and prolonged private sessions. Although giving rise to sharp speculation, it remained a well guarded secret.

The new Catholic Secretary of the U.S. Navy, strangely enough, soon afterwards began unusually active contacts with other prominent American Catholics. Among these, Father Walsh, Jesuit Vice-President of Georgetown University; Cardinal Spellman, the head of the American Legion; the leaders of the Catholic War Veterans and with Senator McCarthy, the arch-criminal senator, who upon the advice of a Catholic priest, was just beginning his infamous campaign which was to half paralyze the U.S. for some years to come. The Catholic press began a nation wide campaign of psychological warfare. Open hints of a quick atomic war were given once more.

The culmination of all these activities was a speech delivered in Boston on August 25, 1950 by Mr. F. Matthews. The arch-Catholic Secretary of the U.S. Navy, the spokesman of certain forces in the States and in the Vatican, called upon the U.S. to launch an attack upon Soviet Russia in order to make the American people "the first aggressors for peace." "As the initiators of a war of aggression," he added, "it would win for us a proud and popular title: we would become the first aggressors for peace." The speech created a sensation, both in the U.S. and in Europe. France declared that she "would not take part in any aggressive war ... since a preventive war would liberate nothing but the ruins and the graveyards of our civilization."s Britain sent an even sharper protest.

While the people of the world shuddered at the monstrous proposal, George Craig of the American Legion declared (August, 1950) that, yes, "the U.S. should start World War III on our own terms" and be ready when the signal could be given "for our bombers to wing toward Moscow."

The fact that the advocacy of a "preventive atomic war" was first enunciated by a Catholic was no mere coincidence. Mr. Matthews, the head of the most important branch of the American armed forces, the American Navy, the largest naval war instrument in the world, had become the mouthpiece of his spiritual master, Pope Pius XII.

Arch-Catholic Matthews was not only the frequent ring kisser of the members of the Catholic hierarchy in America, he was one of the most active promoters of Catholicism in action in the U.S. In addition to which, this Catholic Secretary of the American Navy was the chairman of the National Catholic Community Service and, more sinister still the Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus,<sup>6</sup> the shock troops of Catholic power in the U.S. And last but not

least, a secret privy chamberlain of Pope Pius XII. The Catholic hierarchy, the Catholic press, the Knights of Columbus – all supported Matthews' advocacy of a preventive atomic war.

Jesuit Father Walsh, the foremost Catholic authority in the U.S. and a former Vatican Agent in Russia (1925), told the American people that "President Truman would be morally justified to take defensive measures proportionate to the danger." Which, of course, meant the use of the atom bomb.

When the U.S. went ahead with the manufacture of the hydrogen bomb, even the Chairman of the Atomic Commission, Senator Brian MacMahon, shrank in horror at the prospect of the sure massacre of fifty million people with such a monster weapon.

Yet Catholics approved of its use. Father Connel declared that the use of the hydrogen bomb by the U.S. was justified, because "the communists could utilize their large armed forces ... to weaken the defenders of human rights."

Advocacy of a preventive atomic war by a Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus – i.e. Mr. Matthews – assumed horrifying significance when it was remembered that the Secretary of the U.S. Navy's war speech did not come as a surprise to certain selected Catholic leaders or, even less, to the Vatican. How was that? Simply that Mr. Matthews had disclosed the contents of his Boston speech to top Catholics several days prior to its delivery. Chief among these top Catholics was the head of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy, Cardinal Spellman.

Now it must be remembered that Cardinal Spellman was in continuous personal contact with Pope Pius XII, whose intimate friend and personal advisor in political matters he had been since the Second World War. Cardinal Spellman, moreover, was the counselor and personal friend of most of the influential military leaders of America. So that whatever of importance was known at the "Little Vatican" in New York, as Cardinal Spellman's residence was called, was instantly known at the Vatican in Rome, and vice-versa.

Pope Pius XII had been kept well informed about the whole process long before Matthews' Boston speech. Indeed, the evidence is that he was one of its main tacit instigators. The continuous visits at this time of top U.S. military leaders to the pope (five in one day), the frequent secret audiences with Spellman, the unofficial contacts with the Knights of Columbus – all indicated that Pius XII knew very well what was afoot.

A few years later, in a hate crusade speech broadcast simultaneously in twenty-seven major languages by the world's main radio stations, Pius XII reiterated "the morality ... of a defensive war" (that is, of an atom and hydrogen war), calling for – as the London Times somberly described it, "what almost amounts to a crusade of Christendom" and what the Manchester Guardian bluntly called "the pope's blessing for a preventive war."

## **Chapter 5 The Miraculous Zig-Zagging Sun**

Pius XII not only was cognizant of the Boston "preventive atomic war" speech

delivered by the Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus but he came out in the open to magnify its message in one of the most astounding performances ever staged by any modern pope. That is, he mobilized the Catholic world to support Catholic Matthews' preventive atomic conflict, indeed to condition hundreds of millions of members of his own Church to accept it as the necessary measure ordained by Heaven itself, so as to further his own long-range political schemes. How did he do it? By staging the greatest fake miracle of the century.

Only three months after his Privy Chamberlain, Mr. Matthews, Secretary of the American Navy, had called on the U.S. to begin the war against Bolshevik Russia, Pope Pius XII was visited at the Vatican by none other than the Virgin Mary herself, in person and with no little commotion. It happened in October of that same year, 1950. Pope Pius XII kept the celestial visitation to himself for a short while. Then disclosed it to a few Vatican inmates, after which, being the skillful strategist that he was, he set in motion his religious machinery with the specific intent of coming to the help of Mr. Matthews' "preventive war" policy.

Pius' objective was a logical one. Once he had made sure that Mr. Matthews' war seeds had sunk well into the minds of political and military leaders, he gave himself the task of implanting them with equal effectiveness in the minds of the Catholic millions, not via politics or propaganda, but directly via religion. To that end, after the Virgin had visited him at the Vatican he ordered that her coming celebrations at Fatima, Portugal, should be the most spectacular ever staged. The papal ordinance was fulfilled to the letter. The following year, in October 1951, a monster pilgrimage of well over one million people was convened before the shrine.

To mark the exceptional character of the celebration, Pius XII dispatched there his own personal representative, a top cardinal. He charged Cardinal Tedeschini with a most extraordinary task, namely, to disclose to the millions of devotees that the Virgin Mary had visited him, Pope Pius XII.

And so it came to pass that one October day, after the one million throng had sung the Ave Maria, recited the Rosary, and re-sung the Litanies, Cardinal Tedeschini faced the massive crowd, and in a voice filled with emotion, solemnly disclosed to the astounded pilgrims that "another person has seen this same miracle ..." (namely the miracle of the Virgin Mary appearing to the three children back in 1917, when the sun zig-zagged in the sky.) "He saw it outside Fatima," the cardinal went on to say. "Yes, he saw it years later. He saw it at Rome. The pope, the same our Pontiff, Pius XII ... yet he saw it." 1 The cardinal then gave a few relevant details concerning when and how the miracle occurred. "On the afternoon of October 30th, 1950, at 4 p.m.," said the cardinal (that is, three months after Catholic Matthews delivered his preventive atomic war speech), "the Holy Father turned his gaze from the Vatican gardens to the sun, and there ... was renewed for his eyes the prodigy of the Valley of Fatima." And what was the prodigy?

Here are the exact words of the cardinal, sent there specifically by Pope Pius XII himself to disclose the story to the world:

*"Pope Pius XII was able to witness the life of the sun (author's reminder: a huge burning sphere 866,000 miles in diameter) ... under the hand of Mary. The sun was agitated, all convulsed, transformed into a picture of life ... in a spectacle of celestial movements ... in transmission of mute but eloquent messages to the Vicar of Christ."*

This did not occur once, but on three successive days: October 30 and 31 and November 1, 1950.

The Catholic press and hierarchies exulted. Catholic theologians, including Jesuits, gave thanks to the Virgin for the privilege. Some of them, nevertheless, commented that Pope Pius XII must have been a greater saint even than they had suspected since, while Catholic tradition was full of visions in the lives of the patriarchs, apostles and martyrs, there were no recorded instances in modern church history of a papal vision having been announced in the lifetime of a pope.

The one million pilgrims, at the cardinal's disclosure, became delirious. So did countless millions of Catholics throughout the world. If the Virgin Mary had appeared to the pope, obviously then her promises about Bolshevik Russia being converted to the Catholic Church were about to come true. And how could they be fulfilled if not via the "preventive war" preached by Catholic leaders in the U.S.?

Prayers, novenas and talk of the forthcoming "liberation" of Russia were renewed at Fatima and in hundreds of churches in many lands. The Catholic press, meanwhile, went on reminding its readers of the Virgin's second prophecy concerning that poor, atheistic country.

Having mobilized religious fanaticism, Pius XII and his friends in the U.S. set to work in the more practical fields of open and secret diplomacy and politics.

Only one week after the disclosure of Pius XII's greatest miracle, the U.S. was stunned by the announcement that the first American ambassador had been appointed to the Vatican (October 21, 1951) – something strictly forbidden by the American Constitution's article of Separation of Church and State.

Who was the ambassador? General Mark Clark, a friend of the Supreme Knight of Columbus, Secretary of the American Navy Matthews, personal friend also of Cardinal Spellman and of Pope Pius XII. But more ominous still General Clark was Chief of the American Army Field Forces.

Ten days later in November, 1951, the first American ambassador designate to the Vatican busied himself as one of the leading military men directing atomic manoeuvres in the Nevada desert; the first atomic warfare exercises in history in which troops were stationed near the atomic burst detonated by atom bombs of a new type.

Almost simultaneously, another no less important American personage was given a new assignment. Mr. George Kennan was appointed American Ambassador to Moscow. Mr. Kennan was none other than the head of the Free Russia Committee,



a body, as its name implies, set up to promote the liberation of Russia from communism – most of its supporters, of course, being leading Catholics.

The new ambassador was not the only one to lead such bodies. The American ambassador, who early in 1950 had welcomed the pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Moscow, Admiral Kirk, subsequently became chairman of the American committee for The Liberation of the People of Russia.

While Pius XII was telling the Catholic masses that the Virgin Mary had communicated with him regarding Russia, and while sundry American generals and ambassadors were preparing for the “liberation,” another spectacular event occurred. In October, 1951 (notice the same month that Pius revealed his miracles), the bookstalls of America and Europe were flooded with over four million copies of a top U.S. magazine, *Colliers*. The whole issue, of well over 130 closely printed pages, was dedicated ... to what? To the imminent atomic war against Soviet Russia. The war, it predicted, would begin in 1952. Russia would be defeated and occupied. After the “liberation,” which would occur in 1955, while the economic reconstruction would be handed over to the U.S. Corporations, religious freedom would be proclaimed.

Religious freedom, of course, meant that the Catholic Church, which had been preparing for just that, would have the lion's share, which with the help of the Virgin of Fatima and of American Catholics, would turn into an obvious monopoly. The “conversion” of Russia, as predicted by the Virgin, would thus become a reality.

In Eastern Europe, Catholic churches were filled with people praying for a “war of liberation.” In the West, Catholics did the same. “There is something shocking about praying for war,” commented a leading Catholic organ, “but we shall not understand contemporary history if we forget that this is what millions of good Christians are doing.”

To foster even further the Catholic zeal for a “war of liberation,” a few months after Pius XII's “miracle” the Vatican's official organ, the *Osservatore Romano*, related with all its massive authority how Pius XII had truly witnessed a “miracle of the sun,” as referred to by Cardinal Tedeschini when he told the story at Fatima, Portugal, on October 13, 1951.

And the pope's newspaper, to prove the authenticity of the miracle, published on its front page two “rigorously authentic” photos showing the prodigy of Fatima. The captions were even more matter of fact: “At 12 o'clock the vision began. At twenty minutes past 12, the rainy weather cleared up and soon afterwards a voice cried: ‘Look at the sun!’ The two ‘authentic’ photographs clearly show the black spot in the sun caused by its rapid whirling, and the position reached by the sun almost level with the horizon, although the photographs were taken at 12:30 p.m.” “This position,” commented the sober *Osservatore Romano*, “would have been absolutely impossible at the hour when the pictures were taken at 12:30 p.m.”

The sun, in other words, was on the horizon when it should have been where any well behaved sun is, at an ordinary common noon. An even greater miracle, which the *Osservatore*, having no proofs, did not mention, was that apart from

the photographer, the rest of mankind never noticed the sun falling to the horizon at noon on October 13, 1917.

The *Osservatore* then recalled "another surprising fact" which occurred at the Vatican thirty years later (that is, in 1950): "At the time when the entire Catholic family was rejoicing, in union with the Vicar of Jesus Christ, in the dogmatic definition of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven" (that is, the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary, defined by Pius XII in 1950) – in a curt authoritative summing up, the *Osservatore* commented: "It is not our task to draw deductions from these singular analogous events ... but Our Lady's interventions frequently happen in the gravest days of the Church's history, even with signs directed *personally* to the successor of Peter."

## **Chapter 6 The Pope's 'Preventive War' Miscarries**

The signs were in that same year (February, 1951) that Pius XII had warned Catholics of the "barbaric invasion." The U.S. and sundry other Catholic Hierarchies followed suit. Pius XII's was not mere rhetoric. It was the colorful wrapper of a colossal promotion of religious mass superstition, directed at fostering ideological fanaticism via the cult of Fatima, the miracles of the whirling sun, and the divine messages direct from heaven to the pope, as complementary aids to the diplomatic, political and, above all, military activities which, meanwhile, had been set in operation throughout the West.

These military activities were not confined to any abstract armchair strategies. They were real, positive and concrete. The general of the American Army, on the active list, who had been designated ambassador to the Vatican had not been assigned there to count the number of rosaries being granulated by American visitors. He had originally been posted to Rome "to assist coordinating the effort to combat the communist menace" with the Vatican (i.e. with Pope Pius XII) "vigorously engaged in the struggle against communism," as the explanatory statement from the White House had itself declared on October 21, 1951, after announcing the appointment.

Mr. Kennan, leader of the "Free Russia Committee," designated as U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, went there in 1952, while Mr. Dulles appealed to the world to speed up a powerful atomic striking force "to deter the threat of Russian aggression by a decisive counterstroke."

In Europe super-Catholic Chancellor Adenauer, who daily recited the rosary to Our Lady of Fatima, in November 1951 went to Paris to meet another Catholic leader, also a devotee of Our Lady, French Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister Schuman, to plan the building of a supranational army "to fight to save Christian civilization."

Simultaneously with all these sinister events, a gloomy world press reported that the head of all the American and European armed forces, General Eisenhower, had arrived in the Holy City, preceded and followed by the Foreign, economic and war ministers of twelve European nations, meeting in Rome to organize the "anti-Russian military front." General Eisenhower informed the war ministers of the twelve nations that they had met to rearm

the West as fast as possible, because of the imminence of a new Dark Age and of a "new barbaric invasion," the very words used by Pope Pius XII.

Their task? The prompt organization of an American-led European Army of forty fully-armed fighting divisions by 1952 and of one hundred by 1953, the very same dates when Collier's special issue had so confidently predicted the invasion and occupation of Russia would take place.

General Omar Bradley, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, meanwhile was received in audience by Pius XII (end of November, 1951), followed shortly afterwards (December 6, 1951) by Field Marshall Lord Montgomery, Deputy Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe.

Sundry Army, Navy and Air Force saturation-bombing experts from Spain, France, England and, above all, the U.S., continued to be granted audiences by His Holiness, Pius XII. To read the official lists of war leaders visiting him at this period is like reading a list of war leaders going to be briefed at a global super-Pentagon.

While the council of the war ministers of twelve nations, and the sundry generals on active lists, were sitting under the walls of the Vatican, the Australian Parliament were asked to give a pledge of secrecy before being addressed by one of their generals, H. Robertson, former Commander in Chief, Commonwealth Forces in Japan. The general's secret message? "Major hostilities (that is, World War III) were going to break out soon."

The following year (June, 1952), the Vatican protested that communist agents had tried to steal secret documents from the Vatican Radio Station. These consisted of a "cipher book," which according to the radio director, Jesuit Father F. Soccorsi, "did not exist." Yet scores of Vatican staff were thoroughly fingerprinted. Cominform agents had, indeed, been ordered by Soviet Intelligence to get hold of the "nonexistent" Vatican Radio's cipher book. Why? Simply because Vatican Radio was beaming code messages to anti-communist intelligence and Catholic underground elements in sundry communist countries. At that time it was broadcasting in over twenty languages, most of them those of Russia's satellites, such as Albanian, Ukranian, Lithuanian, etc.

Notwithstanding repeated denials, the Vatican finally had to admit that, while its Secretary of State was in communication with apostolicnunciatures "in cipher" quite often, information which it transmitted "and received" via its radio reached Rome through "underground channels."

The reality of the situation, of course, was that the Vatican was communicating with its most active agents, as well as with some of the members of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (very often the same persons), ready to combine their efforts for the forthcoming "liberation" of Russia and other communist countries. In this manner, the Vatican was acting not only for the U.S. but as the top intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency itself.

Only a few months before, the U.S. government had passed a bill of the most

ominous nature. This was the American Mutual Security Act. Its central mission: the planting, coordinating and directing of a vast intelligence system within the countries soon to be "liberated." The Act allocated no less than 100 million dollars for the creation of an army of saboteurs, spies, agents and terrorists, not only composed of anti-communists residing in the U.S. and Europe, but "to help any selected persons who are residing ... in the Soviet Union and her satellites ... to form such persons into elements of the military forces." This, as a Congressman who introduced the Act explained, in order "to render aid for underground movements in communist countries, starting with Russia."

By 1952 (the year when the U.S. was to attack Russia), uniforms, the regulation shoulder flashes on which, instead of being U.S.A. ominously enough were U.S.S.R., had already been issued to selected groups of Eastern European emigres who could speak fluent Russian. Significantly, the majority of these were Catholic. In Rome, Catholic priests and Jesuits who had learned Russian and been trained in the practices of the Orthodox Church, were asked to "stand by."

Rome, claiming to be a center of peace, had become a vast, sinister center of war. The ever more imposing procession of generals, admirals, war ministers, saturation bombing experts, clanking their boots along the Vatican's marble corridors, was the damning demonstration that these individuals, professional war leaders, were there to see another war leader, Pope Pius XII – who, by way of a most ominous contrast, at this period had hardly received a peace delegation, either from the East or from the West. The skillful amalgamation of papal diplomacy, religious administrative might and organized superstition had made of the pope one of the supreme war leaders in the active promotion of a third World War.

The identification of Fatima with the Vatican, and the calculated political exploitation of the religious belief in the new cult, were made crystal clear by the Papal Legate, Cardinal Tedeschini, when, after having told his one million listeners of "the messages" so miraculously sent to Pius XII by heaven, concluded with the significant question mark statement: "Is this not Fatima transported to the Vatican? Is this not the Vatican transformed to Fatima?"

It was. For as the promise of Our Lady was the occupation and liberation of Russia, resulting in that country's ultimate conversion to the Catholic Church, so the sundry war leaders of the West, by planning an atomic war, had become the instruments of a vast politico-religious plot directed at the final attainment of that very objective. At the center of it all stood Pope Pius XII, repeatedly telling the Catholic millions that Our Lady had again performed the miracle for him personally in Rome in 1950, in order to cause him to go ahead with fulfilling her Fatima promise: the occupation, liberation and conversion of Soviet Russia. Thus, he had come squarely on the side of those lay forces which had decided to risk an all-out conflict to further their own plans.

The cult of Our Lady of Fatima, therefore, independently of its purely mystical factor, in the hands of Pope Pius XII had been expressly transformed

into a psychological weapon of war directed at conditioning millions of Catholics to accept the outbreak of an atomic conflict. This, so as to carry out one of the most sinister designs of conquest of the Catholic Church in modern times. Albeit potentially to repeat, on a colossally large scale, all the horrors of Croatia. That Pius XII knew very well that his sinister activities with the many generals and politicians with whom he was continually dealing were no mere political bravado but terrible realities was proved not only by the secret disclosures at the Australian Parliament. It was authenticated by a person, who, more perhaps than anybody else, knew what was going on in the sacred corridors of Washington and the Vatican. Namely, none other than the president of the United States himself.

Harry S. Truman, when all the above was going on, was president. As such, being at the very center of these machinations, he was bound to deal with the very forces then working for the promotion of a Third World War. "There are a few misguided people who want war to straighten out the present world situation," he wrote. After which (December 9, 1951) he added in despair: "We had conference after conference on the jittery situation facing the country. I have worked for peace for five years and six months, and it looks like World War III is near."

This, it must be noted, was while Pius XII was telling Catholics to prepare to fight "the barbaric invasion" and had disclosed to them how the Virgin of Fatima had personally sent him a message concerning the conversion of Russia to the Catholic Church, with all the horrific implications of a war holocaust in it.

The launching of an "atomic preventive war" miscarried. Yet the attempt to unleash it upon the world should not be forgotten. It might have succeeded.

## **Chapter 7 The Men Behind the Vietnamese War**

The background to the oncoming Vietnamese War could not have been more somber or ominous. It was consonant with the fast deteriorating situation in Indo-China, where the French were being soundly defeated by the relentless Vietnamese guerrillas, and the U.S. had started to side with the French forces by sending them ever larger consignments of war materials.

Within a relatively short period American aid had become more than substantial. From 1950 to 1954, in fact, the U.S. had dispatched more than 400,000 tons of war material, 150,000 fire arms', 340 airplanes and 350 warships as already quoted. Notwithstanding all this, however, the French were finally routed. There followed the Geneva Agreement, when the 17th Parallel, was defined as the "provisional" demarcation line between the Vietnam of the North and the Vietnam of the South, as we have already seen.

It was a fateful compromise. At that time however it appeared to be justified, in so far that it gave breathing space to the U.S. and to the signatories of the Geneva Convention. With good will on both sides, it was reasoned, a final and just solution would eventually be found. The Vietnamese people in the long run would decide for themselves what form of government they wanted by means of a general election as proposed by Geneva.

The compromise however, had been reached without taking into account the reality of the joint long range Asian strategy of the two major anti-communist partners, the U.S. and the Vatican, which they had already set in motion behind the scenes. Their joint strategy as already indicated had been inspired and promoted by religious and ideological interests which transcended any localized conflict, no matter how strategically important.

The formulators were ready at hand on each side of the Atlantic. In Rome there was the most formidable and relentless anti-communist crusader of the century, namely Pope Pius XII. In Washington there existed his political counterpart, the U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. John Foster Dulles was the center of powerful anticommunist groups and anti-Russian lobbies, whose chief objective was in total harmony with that of the Vatican. These groups were disproportionally influenced by the Catholic elements and with few notable exceptions, were supported by the Catholic Church in the U.S.

The Catholic anti-communist crusade burst out into the open, with a virulency unmatched for decades and it externalized itself with the phenomenon of McCarthyism, which adumbrated American domestic and foreign policy for years. McCarthyism gave an unprecedented impetus to the U.S. anti-communist strategy. It was in the interest of the Vatican to see that such strident anti-communism be maintained at home, the better to influence the U.S. to carry on a similar aggressive anti-communist policy abroad. This meant an anti-communist strategy in Asia.



John Foster Dulles was Secretary of State under President Eisenhower. Generally considered the most powerful and controversial Secretary of State in U.S. history. A deeply committed anti-communist, he willingly joined Pope Pius XII and Cardinal Spellman in promoting the Cold War. He placed great faith in treaties and established several NATO type pacts with pro-American Asian nations. He enjoyed the complete confidence of President Eisenhower and went beyond the normal duties of the State Department and originated foreign policy on his own. Normally this was strictly the function of the Presidency. He relished brinkmanship, three times steering the U.S. to the very brink of a preemptive atomic strike against Russia.

When, therefore, the Vietnam problem came increasingly to the fore both the Vatican and the U.S. focussed their joint activities toward that country. The chief formulators of the strategy were Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in the diplomatic field, and Cardinal Spellman in the ecclesiastical. The importance of the latter was paramount, since Cardinal Spellman was the linch-pin between Washington and the Vatican. This was so because Spellman had the ear not only of powerful politicians and military men with the U.S. but equally that of the pope, a personal friend of his. Other Catholic individuals played no mean part, one of these being John Kennedy, the future president. "It is important that the Senate demonstrate their endorsement of Mr. Dulles' objectives," declared Kennedy at a secret meeting of Congressional leaders on April 3, 1954. "If necessary, the U.S. will take the ultimate step - war."

J.F. Kennedy was speaking as the political exponent of the powerful Catholic lobby in Washington. Prior to this in January of that same year, Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had demanded that the U.S. intervene directly in Vietnam, as had done John Foster Dulles himself.

Their demands were supported by similar requests from the Vatican wanting to help the French in order to prevent Vietnam from becoming communist. After the French failed however, and the communists took over North Vietnam, the Vatican and the military and Catholic groups in Capitol Hill renewed their activities at such feverish tempo, and with such effect, that a radical new policy was finally formulated and adopted. The new policy was simplicity itself. The Vatican and the U.S. had concurrently determined to prevent South Vietnam from holding the promised elections, in accordance with the Geneva Declaration.

One of the first moves directed at the implementation of this secret policy, was carried out by General Collins. In December, 1955 the general signed an agreement with France in the name of the U.S. The U.S. was taking over military duties in South Vietnam. France agreed to leave the country altogether, although theoretically France was to stay in South Vietnam another two years.

The new policy had to promise to fit the worsening situation. The general strategy had to be carried out simultaneously in the religious, political and military fields. It had to be staggered, according to the reaction of North Vietnam, of the guerrillas in the South and of American and world opinion.

It was divided into three principal subsections: The prevention of the elections, the setting up of a man who could rule with an iron fist and the swift Catholicization of South Vietnam.

One of the first moves was the selection of a man fit for the task. This was ready at hand. His name Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem had been carefully groomed by the Catholic establishment, was an ardently religious person, a fanatical anti-communist, and a ruthless religious and political dogmatist. He had been watched for some time, both by the Vatican and certain individuals in the U.S. When the moment for the choice came, the decision was taken, mostly by American Catholics, the best known of these being Cardinal Spellman, Joe Kennedy and his son the future President John F. Kennedy, and last but not least, by John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles, and their secret entourage.

Diem was a genuine believer, considered the Catholic religion the only true religion, and had dedicated his life to its maintenance and propagation. He was so religious from his earliest childhood, that at one time, he wanted to become a Catholic priest; indeed a monk. Curiously enough, he did not enter the priesthood, because the life of a priest was – too soft. At fifteen he spent some time in a monastery. He prayed two whole hours every day and attended mass regularly. He worked for the French Administration holding responsible posts. Then when aged 33 he left and went into self-exile for about 15 years.





President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam was a practicing Catholic who ruled South Vietnam with an iron fist. He was a genuine believer in the evil of communism and the uniqueness of the Catholic Church. He had originally been "planted" into the presidency by Cardinal Spellman and Pope Pius XII. He transformed the presidency into a virtual Catholic dictatorship, ruthlessly crushing his religious and political opponents. Buddhist monks committed suicide by fire, burning themselves alive in protest against his religious persecutions. His discriminatory persecution of non-Catholics, particularly Buddhists, caused the disruption of the government and mass desertions in the army. This eventually led to U.S. military intervention in South Vietnam.

In this terrorization he was aided by his two Catholic brothers, the Chief of the Secret Police and the Archbishop of Hue.

The U.S. finally decided to discard him as an ally. Agents of the CIA engineered a coup against him, and he, with one of his brothers, was murdered immediately after hearing Mass in 1963.

In 1946 Diem retired into a Catholic monastery near Hanoi. In 1947 he moved near Saigon to be next to his brother. While there, he organized a movement which advocated not only resistance against the French but also against the Vietnamese. Diem's chief objective at this stage was significant. It indicated the shape of things to come, to organize and increase Roman Catholic strength to obtain the real unity and independence of Vietnam. His activities came to nothing, but his objective was duly noticed in two important centers – the Vatican and in Washington.

Following his failure, Diem started to travel. In 1950 he went to Japan and then to the U.S. He pilgrim aged with his brother, Ngo Diem Thuch, who was a Roman Catholic archbishop to Rome. While there, he was seen by Pope Pius XII. When he returned to the U.S., he lived in various Catholic seminaries. He went frequently to New York and to Washington, D.C., where he met influential individuals, including John F. Kennedy, then Senator. It was Diem, who

allegedly persuaded Kennedy to make a speech in 1954 against a potential negotiated peace in Vietnam. Diem was in the U.S. till 1953. Afterwards he went to France and then to Belgium, where he lived in another Catholic monastery, St. Andre-Ies-Burges. There he met Father Jaegher, who later became his private advisor in political matters. Diem's self-imposed exile lasted about 21 years.

Diem had convinced himself that he had been chosen by God to fulfill a definite task, and that a day would come when he would be ready to carry out his mission. When he judged the time to be appropriate, he approached Cardinal Spellman, at this time the confidant not only of the pope, but equally of powerful political figures in the U.S. Spellman introduced Diem to William O. Douglas of the Supreme Court. The latter introduced Diem to Mike Mansfield and to John F. Kennedy, both Catholics and Senators. Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA adopted him – following the decision of his brother, John Foster Dulles and of Cardinal Spellman, who was acting for Pope Pius XII. Diem became their choice; he was going to be the head of the government in South Vietnam.

The decision having been taken, Dulles advised France to tell Bao Dai to appoint Diem as prime minister. France, having by now decided to abandon Vietnam, agreed. Diem became premier in June, 1954. The 19th of that same month, Bao Dai invested Diem with dictatorial power. This entailed not only civilian but also military control of the country. Diem arrived in Saigon June 26, 1954 and on July 7 set up his own government.

## **Chapter 8 Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary Go South**

Diem started at once to set in motion the Vatican- U.S.-CIA grand strategy, directed at the preservation and consolidation of South Vietnam. His eagerness as a political protégé of America, and his zeal as a fervent son of the Church were seldom displayed with such concrete immediacy.

Stringent legislations, by laws and edicts, all consonant with what he had in mind, were formulated and enforced, almost at once. The Catholic hold at all levels of the administration took many – including certain Catholics themselves – by surprise. In the army, Catholics were inexplicably promoted to commanding positions. The police likewise soon became the inner monopoly of zealous Catholics. Diem's own brother, became the head of the secret police, with unlimited power. Within the shortest possible time, the whole machinery of the Diem Administration was inspired and was made to function by the tightly knit structure of the Catholic community.

The object of the exercise was a well calculated preparatory step to strengthen Diem's hand during his forthcoming most objectionable move; refusal to hold the elections commanded by the Geneva Declaration. Diem, having decided long ago in secret accordance with the U.S. not to have the elections, had to build a reliable police machinery, in case of trouble, not only in the domestic but also the international fields. The refusal might have provoked the north to take drastic military actions; while in the South, guerrillas and discontented patriots might have risen up in revolt against Diem's breach of the solemn Geneva agreement. When finally the time came for

the election to be held, Diem, backed by the U.S., refused. Following vague general protests abroad, the *fait-accompli* was accepted by an indifferent world public opinion.

Having succeeded in his first act of defiance, Diem then set out promoting another no less spectacular move. The basic idea was to disrupt the North Vietnamese government by engineering a vast internal dislocation of North Vietnamese population. The machination had three main objectives: 1) the weakening of the North 2) a damaging smear campaign against the communists and 3) the immediate strengthening of South Vietnam by the mass absorption of fellow Catholics. The policy had the gravest implications, both for the North as well as for the South. The scheme had been conceived not in Vietnam but simultaneously at Washington and at the Vatican. It was the brain child of Cardinal Spellman, of Pius XII, the two Dulles brothers, Diem and certain American military elements who God-fathered it at once. The participation of Pius XII had an even more sinister objective, but we shall look at it presently.

The necessary moves were taken almost immediately. The vast propaganda, hierarchical, religious and sabotage machineries were promptly set in motion. In different circumstances and with a different religious background, the plan would have succeeded. Without the full participation of the Catholic Church, it would have been a total failure.

The scheme of mass dislocation indeed became possible, thanks exclusively to the Catholic Church. This was due to the fact that the vast majority of Catholics lived in North Vietnam. The Catholics there were numerous, powerful and had enjoyed exceptional privileges for decades. The French saw to it that it was so, the better to rely upon them for the continuance of their colonial administration. French colonialism and the Catholic Church had been identified as two inseparable twins for a very long period, as we have already seen.

When the Vietnamese started to fight the French, most Catholics in the North fought on behalf of the French and against the Vietnamese because the latter were communists. Once the French had been defeated however, these same Catholics, instead of submitting themselves to the new administration, retained their own para-military groupings, para-military organizations, armaments and the rest. This they did in many parts of the North, especially at Phat Diem and Nam Dinh in Tonkin.

Following the Vietnamese take-over, they refused to cooperate, except on their own terms. The situation became a very dangerous one, since the Catholics being so well organized and commanded by Catholic priests, unless propitiated could put up an effective resistance.

This state of affairs had originated in the days of Bao Dai, when the Catholic bishops had fully cooperated with him in all matters, and had been appointed as his representatives. The bishops, protected as they were by the government, took full advantage, and set up their own civil and military units, transforming themselves into the rulers of their own regions. The Catholics, in short, within a very brief period, had turned themselves into a

state within a state.

The Vietnamese administration, therefore, upon taking over the North, came face to face with this extraordinary situation. Realizing that, unless they dealt very carefully there might be an internecine war, they set about handling the anomaly with the greatest care. This they did by avoiding antagonizing the Catholics on religious grounds, going so far as to appoint Catholic priests and even Catholic bishops to their administration. Ho Chi Minh, himself, had a Catholic bishop as his chief advisor.

Soon Vietnamese legislation, however, began to disturb the state of armistice between the Catholics and the regime. The many privileges which the Catholic Church until then had enjoyed were abolished. All religions were put on the same footing. Buddhism, the predominant faith of the majority, was given the same status as the Catholic Church. In August, 1953, to prove that the regime was not against the Catholic Church, there was organized a National Congress of Religions. Its main message: assurance that all religions would enjoy equality.

The Catholics objected most strongly to these measures. They expected and wanted special treatment. Only their church was the "true church." They started to resist, and to stultify the measure. When the law was invoked against them, they accused the authorities of religious persecution. Violence ensued. Arrests were made. The new legislation of equality for all religions, and the arrests, were called at once, by the Catholic machinery at home and abroad, as unprecedented persecutions. The incidents were magnified beyond recognition by the Catholic and American propaganda apparatus everywhere. To promote even more confusion, the U.S. and Diem sent sabotage workers inside North Vietnam. These promoted demonstrations blew up bridges, and harassed the authorities, to no end. Rumor inspired by Diem and the CIA spread like wildfire, to the effect that the Catholics would be arrested and executed. Their own salvation was to escape to the South, where any Catholic from the North would be welcomed, given food, shelter, and a job.



Catholics fleeing North Vietnam, following the intense religious and political propaganda from the South. They were told that if they stayed under a communist atheistic government, they would be atom bombed out of existence and they would lose their souls. Catholic President Diem wished to create economic and political disruption to the North with an accelerated population dislocation. Catholic priests and the South Vietnamese radio declared that the Virgin Mary and even her Son, Jesus Christ, had gone to South Vietnam to live under Catholic Diem. Ultimately three-quarters of a million North Vietnamese Catholics fled their homes and villages within a few months. The authorities in the North tried to stop the human flood but were helpless against the religious emotionalism used by the Catholics of South Vietnam.

To accelerate the exodus, or rather the disruption, the religious factor came to the fore. Suddenly all the villages were flooded by millions of leaflets. These told the faithful that Jesus Christ had gone south. When some Catholics expressed their doubts about Jesus' migration, additional millions of leaflets appeared all over, declaring that His mother, the Virgin Mary, had departed from the North. Why had the Virgin Mary left the North? – Because the Mother of God wished to go south and live under a Catholic premier, Diem.

Since many still expressed their unwillingness to migrate, other rumors, no less sensational, were heard: the North was going to be atom-bombed. Only the South was safe for Catholics. A Central Evacuation Committee was set up. It was headed by a Catholic priest, and was financed directly by the U.S. One of its leaflets read as follows: "Dear Catholic brothers and sisters, hundreds of gigantic airplanes are waiting to transport you free to Saigon, in the

South ... There you will be given fertile rice fields ... By remaining in the North, you will experience famine, and will damn your souls ... ”

Similar and other types of religious terrors, literature and manufactured fear news flooded the Catholic population, creating as much confusion and incertitude as they could, by spreading rumors of all kinds. Indeed, it created panic. This was done chiefly by the distribution of emotional books, many written by U.S. Catholic priests, in which atrocities were described and narrated. Their titles helped to inflame odium against the enemy – “Deliver Us From Evil” being one of the most popular. Such literature appeared from nowhere, financed by U.S. Catholics who distributed propaganda, disguised as news, to the American public all over the U.S. The media was saturated by a Catholic slanted version of the whole story. This flood of Catholic literature had one main objective: to create sympathy for Diem and his Catholic regime. The additional religious fire was added from the Vatican itself, although done indirectly, was nevertheless highly effective.

The Catholic-CIA-Diem emotion-making machine came to the fore, with its most potent weapon: it enrolled our Lady of Fatima, promising an evacuation campaign. We have already seen what role our Lady of Fatima had been made to play in the religious-ideological strategy in the grand design of Pope Pius XII at the height of the Cold War and its aftermath. Now at the height of the Catholic mass dislocation of North Vietnam, Our Lady came once more to the forefront, as the standard bearer of religious ideological objectives.

A statue of Our Lady of Fatima was paraded in long meaningful processions in villages and cities. The statue had a particular significance, for it had been given by Pope Pius XII, himself, to the Catholics of Haiphong during their pilgrimage to Rome. The pope had given personal blessing to it after explaining that Our Lady had a unique significance for Asia, especially for the Catholics of Indo-China, namely Vietnam.

At this delicate juncture the statue was given added dramatic significance by the skillful use of further emotionalism. The Catholic-CIA-Diem propaganda machinery came out with the disclosure that the blessed statue “had been rescued” from the evil intents of the atheistic communists. What the communists intended to do to it, was never disclosed. The individual and collective sense of relief experienced by the already disturbed Catholics of North Vietnam, about the mother of God having escaped probably a fate worse even than death, however, was tremendous.

The statue of the rescued Lady of Fatima, now safe and sound in the hands of her worshippers, was paraded again and again in long emotional processions, as priests and others were reminding the populace that she had a special message for them, that she had been personally blessed by the Vicar of Christ on Earth, and above all that she had been rescued from the communists, because she wished them to leave the North and go south to live under a Catholic president. The participation of the Virgin was the last straw. Thousands upon thousands who until then could not make up their minds, finally, seeing how the Virgin of Fatima herself was leaving, plunged southward. The North Vietnamese government, alarmed at the scale of the migration, tried to stop it by giving assurances of all kinds. It was too

late.

The first thousands were joined by the fast growing crowd. Within a very short time, the whole of the Catholic population appeared to have decided to leave, and became a veritable mass exodus. Catholic priests, and Diem agents mingling with them, encouraged those who were still uncertain what to do. The emotional impact of the religious pressure, however, became so irresistible, that whole villages, led by their bishops, left en masse. Repeated rumors of impending atomic attacks hastened their departure.

As the rivulets of fleeing Catholics became a flood, Catholic Diem sent personal messages to President Eisenhower: Could the U.S. help with the evacuation of the persecuted Catholics from the North? Answer: Yes, the U.S. would help the Catholics. The Seventh Fleet was sent in. French warships joined in the mass exodus. A well organized Flight to Freedom was commenced. Catholic organizations, Catholic newsmen, and Catholic priests came over from the U.S. Some of them with the American Navy itself. During the three days voyage, masses were celebrated by Catholic priests in the American ships, the religious emotionalism, was kept at boiling point with emotional sermons and admonitions of certain Catholic padres of the U.S. Navy.

When the first vessel with the Catholic refugees arrived in Saigon, the brother of President Diem, Bishop Ngo Dinh Thuc, Vicar Apostolic, and therefore the official representative of the pope, went to meet them and to bless them. The American ships had Catholic brethren from the North. Then to cap it all – at Christmas, Spellman himself went to Saigon as the special envoy of the pope, and the official representative of the American armed forces, where he gave the first check of \$10,000, a gift from the U.S. Catholics. The many-branched efficient Catholic propaganda and charitable machinery meanwhile had set to work in earnest. Funds were raised to help the refugees, headed by the American Roman Catholic Welfare Fund. The Catholic lobby pestered President Eisenhower to give more and more money and more transport to the poor Catholics, the victims of unheard of religious persecutions; their plight was compared to that of the early Christians under Nero. The Catholics of the North were escaping, as the U.S. Catholic propaganda machinery was never tired of repeating, "to preserve their faith."

Certain unscrupulous personalities in Washington joined in the humbug fanfare, eager for political favoritism. This was headed by Vice-President Nixon, who persuaded the president to "put across the first American aid to Catholic Diem." When it was all over, between 800 and 900 thousand North Vietnamese Catholics had fled from the North to be welcomed by Diem in the South.

The colossal influx of Catholics created problems of all kinds. These however were going to be solved with the goodwill of all concerned, beginning with those who had engineered the whole campaign, namely the Catholics of South Vietnam, certain elements of the U.S. and the CIA and the Vatican, since the ultimate goal was worth any sacrifice, be it of suffering, of principles, or even of lives. The real promotion of the campaign, however, had come not from the U.S. Catholics and the politico-military of Washington, but by the pope himself, in conjunction with the communist leader of North Vietnam, Ho Chi

Minh, in a secret deal, as we shall see presently in a subsequent chapter.

## **Chapter 9 The Pius-Spellman-Dulles Secret Scheme**

The ultimate objectives of the operation, in addition to those already described, were two: 1) The creation of a solid homogenous Catholic community upon which Diem and the U.S. could rely for the prosecution of the war against the North, and against domestic guerrilla units. 2) The erection of a Catholic controlled state, from which the Vatican could operate its many-branched-religious administration in Asia.

The U.S., as the Vatican's principal ally, supported both objectives in so far that it regarded them the necessary instruments, via which it could carry out its main strategy. At this stage, its goals being: the hastening of the end of the Vietnamese war, the future pacification and subsequent stabilization of the entire region.

While to the Vatican, these objectives, in political and military terms, were worthy of support, yet, behind and beyond them, it had a scheme of far more import than either, as far as its long range religious global policy was concerned. The scheme could be summarized in the setting of a model Catholic state in the heart of Southeast Asia. Its creation entailed an administration which was totally Catholic, which was inspired by a nucleus of Catholics, which were 100%reliable, religiously and ideologically, notwithstanding the fact that they had to rule a vast majority which practised Buddhism. The achievement of this goal necessitated first the neutralization of those who might object to the scheme; secondly the elimination of those who would actively oppose it; and ultimately the removal of anyone or anything which did not accept the Catholicization of South Vietnam.

The scheme had been the brain child of Pope Pius XII, and had been supported by Cardinal Spellman, and had been abetted by John Foster Dulles. It had been approved by sundry U.S. politicians of the inner circle of the Catholic lobby in Washington, not to mention by certain elements at the CIA, many of whom were non-Catholics. Also by certain political strategists at the Pentagon, whose main concern was, that as long as the scheme served American strategic objectives, everything went.

Operation resettlement began in earnest. Agencies of all kinds were set up for the purpose. The Diem government spawned them daily. The most efficient and the most effective being provided by the U.S., or rather by the American taxpayers, the majority of whom are Protestants. U.S. money was poured in at once. The U.S. gave an instant 40 million dollars to resettle the Catholics. This meant that every Catholic, who had left North Vietnam, was given about 89 dollars each by Protestant America to reinforce the Catholic administration of Diem. This, it must be remembered, in a country where the average income of the average Buddhist was only 85 dollars per year.





Cardinal Spellman

Cardinal Spellman, one of the ablest of the American cardinals. He was a skillful financial operator and a vigorous politician. He became one of the main inspirers of the Cold War because of his belief that Bolshevism, as incarnated in Soviet Russia, was intrinsically evil and must be contained and if possible, destroyed. He was a personal friend of Pius XII since the days when Pius was Papal Nuncio in Germany and helped the Nazis form a legal government in January, 1933. Pius XII used Spellman as the spokesman for the Vatican in America to influence politicians, businessmen, military leaders, and the Catholic lobby. He was active in persuading the U.S. to select Diem and support him as president of South Vietnam. He was made Vicar General of the U.S. Armed Forces and called the GI's the "soldiers of Christ" in his frequent visits to the Vietnam war front. He was convinced that the war was a just war to save Christian (read Catholic) civilization.

The U.S. taxpayer supported the Catholics for more than two years. In addition to pouring out millions of dollars, it sent millions of tons of food, surplus agricultural instruments, vehicles and uncountable goods of kinds, everything covered and paid for by the U.S. "Relief Program." This American never-ending abundance was distributed and therefore controlled by the "Catholic Relief Services," a branch of the Diem machinery. The government and the Catholic hierarchy worked hand in hand.

State officials consulted the Catholic priests as to where the U.S. relief or money should go, or to whom it should be given. The result was that the Catholics got everything, whereas those who were not Catholic were lucky if they got a meal or a few cents. This in contrast to the Catholic communities which got the bulk of the U.S. donation. Individuals or Buddhist villages were practically ignored, whether they had come from the North or were native Southerners. The result was that the U.S. aid, food, technicians and general assistance was given almost exclusively to Catholics. The latter, to court the favor of the American Relief Fund Authorities, organized themselves into paramilitary militias "to fight the communists and all those who supported

them," meaning the Buddhists.

These Catholic armed groups were encouraged by American personnel, with the help of the Vietnamese Catholic bishops. The latter inspired and blessed numberless local self-defense Catholic groups. These became known as "Mobile Catholic Units, for the Defense of Christendom" – that is, for the defense of the Catholic Church. They sprang up everywhere and were soon labeled the "Sea Swallows."

In addition to the above, Diem saw to it that the new Catholic immigrants were given key positions in the government, the regular army, the police, from the top down to provincial and district levels. So that soon many officials and officers who were not Catholic were replaced or downgraded, if not dismissed altogether. The Catholicization of the state machinery was being promoted in record time, it must be remembered, with the active approval of the U.S.

That the U.S. was behind this incredible sectarian operation was demonstrated by the fact that the U.S. mission itself set up the Vietnam Bureau of Investigations. This open para-military unit was supported by a rural Catholic militia composed of more than 40,000 men.

Every echelon of Diem's new administration was filled with practicing Catholics. To make sure that only Catholics got all the key positions, Diem terminated the 500 year democratic tradition of the local villages by which chiefs were elected by the population and replaced them with the Catholics who had arrived from the North. His personal slogan: "Put your Catholic officers in sensitive places. They can be trusted. "

To add more weight to such undemocratic structure, Diem then charged the Catholic priests with the administration of the land owned by the Church, which meant that in almost every village, the local Catholic priest, became a quasi public official, endowed with religious, administrative and political powers.

Besides this, Diem then hastened government aid to Catholic organizations of all kinds. He gave extra help – to Catholic units – for good work. The vigilantes and the para-military groups, including sections of the army were employed to build and to repair Catholic buildings. Catholic propaganda was transmitted by the national radio. Catholics were hastily promoted to the top ranks in the Army and in the bureaucracy. The bishops were treated as state ministers in all public ceremonies.

The massive result of this blatant partiality for anything or anybody who was Catholic was that many decided to join the Catholic Church. More than 33,000 people became Catholic by the end of 1954. Officials in the national or local administration were converted, not to risk endangering their careers. Ambitious individuals did the same. Others became Catholics, having discovered that Catholics got the best food, clothing and money, indeed having found out that even when the U.S. sent relief – food for the Vietnamese population at large, only the Catholics were assured of help, the Buddhists more often than not, got nothing.

This outrageous favoritism eventually came into the 'open in the U.S. when finally it was discovered how all the aid which had been sent to South Vietnam and which had been distributed mostly by the "Catholic Relief Services" during two whole years, had been deliberately used to persuade Buddhists to become Catholic. Having proved such mishandling of American aid, the U.S. officials at long last refused to give more aid to Catholic Relief Service.

The inner Catholic and military cliques in South Vietnam and in the U.S. exercised pressure on Capitol Hill to such effect that eventually the ruling was changed. Yet, notwithstanding their efforts to hide the scandal for fear of Protestant reaction at home, it came to light that the hundreds of , thousands of tons of food sent by the U.S., and meant for an estimated 700,000 people – "of all denominations" was received by only 270,000 individuals.

One American general involved in the request for food to be given to the Catholic Relief Services, was none other than General William Westmoreland. Curiously enough, this leading general became himself a convert to the Roman Catholic Church while conducting military operations in South Vietnam, an illustrious victim of Diem's Catholic proselytizing. It was eventually discovered that, whereas the Catholics got their food absolutely free, the Buddhists had to pay for it. This applied not only to funds which had been sent by Catholic organizations from the U.S., but also to funds which had been sent by the U.S. administration to be used for the relief of all independently of their religious affiliations.

The result of such deliberate discriminations was that thousands of individuals, or families and indeed in many instances of entire villages, became Catholics, encouraged by the Catholic authorities, or by the Diem government. Many changed their religion not only to retain their jobs, but to avoid bodily transfer, better known as resettlement. Resettlement more often than not, spelled the loss of the houses, or of the lands of those who had been resettled. By being transferred elsewhere, they had to leave behind all they had in terms of physical assets, or of social, family and religious ties.

Diem's main objective was a fundamental one as far as his short and long range policy was concerned. He wanted to strengthen Catholic communities with additional Catholic communities, to transform them into reliable centers from which to promote his religious and political objectives.

## **Chapter 10 The Promotion of Catholic Totalitarianism**

Having consolidated the State machinery with loyal Catholics, and feeling sure of their loyalty, not to mention of the tacit and indeed active support of his protector, the U.S., Diem took the second step to make his dream come true. He undertook a systematic and well calculated policy against the non-Catholic religions.

His policy was directed at the neutralization, disruption and finally, elimination of the Buddhists or Buddhist inspired religions of Vietnam. These

sects, many opposing each other on religious and political grounds, could nevertheless equal, and indeed effectively oppose any Catholic administration, had they created a united front.

Diem's policy was a subtle one. He encouraged their dissensions. This he did by giving bribes, by sending agents in their midst, by promising official protection, and by denying the same to others. The result became apparent in no time. The religious sects fell into the Diem trap. They began to fight one another with increasing bitterness. This culminated with the internecine religious-political feud, between the Binh Xuyen, and the Hao Hao and the Cao Dai groups. Their enmity was not only religious, it was concretely real. Their battle was a bloody one. At one time various quarters of Saigon itself were devastated. The Buddhists set up a committee to give aid to the victims. Diem suppressed them at once.

The struggles between the opposing religious-political rivals gave a sound excuse to Diem to do what he had in mind long ago. He set about to arrest the leading members of the hostile religions. The arrests eliminated the most potentially dangerous of his opponents. As a result, in due course opposition from the religious quarter had almost vanished.

Having made sure that the indigenous religious-political opponents had been neutralized, Diem then took a further step, the consolidation of his political power. To that effect, he organized a referendum and replaced Bao Dai, who until then, had been the official head of government. Thereupon he proclaimed a Republic of Vietnam. Having succeeded in this, on October 22, 1955, he became or rather he made himself its president.

The next year, October 26, 1956, he promulgated a new Constitution. imitating Mussolini, Hitler, and also Ante Pavelich of Catholic Croatia, (not to mention Franco of Catholic Spain, and Salazar of Catholic Portugal,) he inserted an article, Article 98, which gave him full dictatorial powers. The article read in part as follows: "During the first legislative term, the president (that is Diem) may decree a temporary suspension of ... (there followed almost all the civil liberties of the nation) to meet the legitimate demands of public security, etc."

The article should have expired in April, 1961, but it was maintained indefinitely. But even more dangerously ominous was a decree that Diem had issued before that. In January, 1956, he had already promulgated a personal presidential order, which was already portending the shape of things to come. The Order 46, read as follows: "Individuals considered dangerous to the national defense and common security may be confined by executive order, to a *concentration camp*."

Although some American "advisors" had blinked at the decree, it was taken for granted. They were mere threatening words. Others, however, knew they were meant to be preparatory measures to be taken once the transformation of South Vietnam into a total Catholic State started to be put into force.

The campaign began with a mass denunciation of communism. That is, it was given a purely ideological undertone. It was officially called "The Anti-

Communist Denunciation Campaign." The operation was acceptable and, in view of the circumstances, was even a plausible one. Yet, behind its facade its real objective was the Catholicization of the country. It was McCarthyism transplanted into Vietnam. The campaign, in fact, had been inspired and promoted by the same elements which had supported McCarthyism in the U.S. Chief amongst these were the Kennedy brothers, Mr. Richard Nixon, Cardinal Spellman and certain factions of the CIA.

The Vietnamese McCarthyism turned even more vicious than its American counterpart. It was brought down to street and denominational levels. Sections of villages denounced other sections because they were not as Catholic as themselves, under the excuse that they were not as anticommunist. Students, and indeed children, were encouraged to denounce their parents. School teachers instructed their pupils to listen and to report members of their families who criticized either Diem or the bishops, or the Catholic Church.

Parents, grandparents, professors, monks, Buddhists were arrested without any warrant or legal formalities. Soon searches and raids were organized in a systematic scale all over South Vietnam. A fearful pattern came quickly to the fore: denunciations and arrests of suspects, interrogations by the police, re-groupings, the encirclements of whole villages, the disappearance of individuals, without leaving any trace. Brutal interrogations, deportations, and indiscriminate tortures were used wherever those arrested did not cooperate in denouncing others.

The jails were soon bursting with prisoners. The mass arrests became so numerous that finally it was necessary to open detention camps followed by additional ones euphemistically called internment camps. The reality of the matter being that they were veritable death camps. To mention only one by name, that of Phu Loi, Thu Dai Mot province, where there occurred a mass poisoning of more than 600 people, there were over 1000 dead.

There followed massacres within and outside such detention sites, like those which took place at Mocay, Thanhphu, Soctrang, Cangiuoc, Dailoc, Duyxuyen, to mention only a few. Religious sects and racial minorities were persecuted, arrested and whenever possible eliminated. To save themselves from arrest or even death many detainees had to accept the religion, language and customs of the new South Vietnam, as did the minority of Chinese and the Khmer, whose schools were closed down. Minor groups were exterminated or accepted the Catholic Church to save their lives.

## **Chapter 11 Consolidation of Terrorism**

Whereas a democracy is inspired by certain basic democratic principles, and a communist dictatorship is erected upon the tenants of Marxism, so Catholic totalitarianism, must be promoted by the doctrines enacted by the Catholic Church., Because of this, Diem became determined to create a model Catholic State in Southeast Asia. The tenets which inspired him most were embodied in the social teachings of three of Diem's favorites, Pope Leo XIII, Pope Pius IX and Pope Pius XI.

Diem took the teaching of these popes literally. For instance, he firmly held, as Pope Pius IX declared in his Syllabus of Errors, "that it is an error to believe that: the church is not a true and perfect society." For the Church to be perfect, the state must be integrated with her so that the two become as one, because quoting again Pius IX "it is an error to believe that: the Church ought to be separated from the State and State from the Church" a principle, which went totally against the Constitution of the U.S., his sponsor.

Elements preventing such union, therefore, had to be eliminated. These meant the Protestants, at that time numbering about 50,000, mostly Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists. Diem had planned to eliminate them chiefly via legislation by prohibiting their missions, closing their schools, and refusing licenses to preach or have religious meetings. This he would have done legally in accordance with the future concordat to be signed with the Vatican, modeled upon that of Franco's Spain. Such anti-Protestant legislation would have been enforced once the war was over and a Catholic state had been firmly established.

That this was no mere speculation, curiously enough was confirmed at that period in London, England. The present author at that time lived only a few hundred yards from the Embassy of South Vietnam, Victoria Road, Kensington. He called at the embassy a number of times to find out the reason for the Diem regime's "harassing certain disruptive Buddhist sects." Documents, all official, were given justifying the harassment. The official explanation was that the Buddhists were "prosecuted" not on religious but on political grounds. When the present author mentioned the Protestants, an official explained that they were a special case. Since they were Christians, their "prosecution" would be justified, once the domestic situation had become normal, on the ground that a state – in this case, the Catholic State of South Vietnam – had to be inspired by the tenets upon which it is founded. A perfect Catholic State, therefore, could not tolerate Protestants nor Christians who did not believe in the uniqueness of the Catholic Church. This, it should be pointed out, was at the time when Pope John XXIII had launched the era of ecumenism. The high official who gave the explanation should have known, since he was none other than President Diem's own brother, also a staunch Catholic, Ambassador Ngo Dinh. Another official, a former Baptist, subsequently confirmed that there existed already a blueprint for the formal elimination of Protestantism in a future United Vietnam.

That these were no mere theoretical plans for the future, was proved by the fact that Diem started his program in earnest. Prior to eliminating any Protestant or Buddhist, he had first to Catholicize the fabric of Vietnam. One most important section of these is education. The Catholic Church is adamant on the subject.

To create a total Catholic State one has to shape its youth, the future citizens of tomorrow. A tenet, which has created no end of trouble in many lands, including the U.S. itself, with her problem of parochial aid and the claim of the Catholic church for special educational exclusiveness. Since Diem had no restriction, he saw to it that the command of his Church be strictly enforced.

In 1957, he instituted a Roman Catholic university at Dalat; by 1963, it had already over 500 students – the future intelligentsia of the country. Diem also made sure that Catholic professors and teachers be given seats at two state universities, at Hue and at Saigon respectively. The following year the Jesuits set up seminaries in the same cities. The regime built 435 charitable institutions; between 1953 and 1963 Diem set up 145 middle and upper schools, of which 30 were in Saigon alone, with a total of 62,324 pupils.

During the same period the Catholic Church in South Vietnam, from having only three upper and middle schools in 1953, had multiplied them to 1,060 schools by 1963, a brief period of only ten years.

Simultaneously to the above, Diem built 92,000 square meters of hospitals, charitable and educational institutions; but 526,000 square meters of luxury residences and Catholic Churches.

At the same time, Diem set to build his Catholic State upon the social doctrines of the popes. These, during the beginning of our century, had inspired sundry social movements which had caused deep repercussions in Europe. Most notable of all in Italy.

It was the spirit of such Papal social doctrines in fact, which had first inspired Italian fascism, for setting up the Corporate State in Vietnam, but with a veneer of contemporaneity and with certain modifications suitable to an Asian country.

To add an additional touch of originality, thereupon Diem invented his own philosophy, derived not only from the teaching of the popes, but equally from a social farrago, first conceived by a group of Catholic intellectuals, around 1930, when fascism was at its height and called "personalism."

After his attempts to set up a corporate machinery, Diem started to pass laws to enforce his plan. This entailed not only repressive legislation, but equally the use of brute force.

Once more Diem found inspiration in certain papal teaching, that of Pope Pius IX, according to whom, it is an error to believe that: "the church has not the power of using force, nor has she any temporal power, direct or indirect." (Error No. 24 – *Syllabus of Errors*)

Justifying his religious credence with his personal political ambition, Diem, during the ensuing eight years, became increasingly dictatorial, disregarding ever more openly any democratic formality, flouting any advice, becoming ever more impervious to any criticism, including the criticisms of certain U.S. military and civil "advisors." Many of these sent meaningful reports of what was going on to Washington, predicting disaster. The Dulles-CIA-Catholic lobby however, saw to it that they never reached the right quarters, beginning with President Eisenhower himself.

Diem's religious-political egocentrism meanwhile assumed fearful proportions. His philosophy of "personalism" turned into a blatant personality cult on the par with that promoted in Soviet Russia by Stalin and in Nazi Germany by

Hitler. His portraits invaded every corner of the land; absence of his image, even in private homes, could render anyone suspect of opposition and hence liable of sudden arrest, prison and detention camps. The personality cult, so typical of the European dictatorships, reached such an extent that finally altars with his portrait were erected in the street where the national anthem was played or sung as a hymn of praise to Diem.

With the personality cult, there developed a fanatical hatred against any form of opposition. The two are inseparable. This meant a relentless elimination of any semblance of civil liberties or freedom of thought, religious and political. Diem kept ever more strict personal control of the police, headed, as we have already said, by one of his brothers. Security networks were multiplied and toughened. Commando squads were formed. Riot control – always on the ready – were trained with ruthless efficiency. It is of particular interest to the American reader that the crack-model of the latter, were created, trained and toughened up by the Southern Michigan University group, under the sponsorship of the CIA.

Blatant violations of civil liberties, of personal freedom, multiplied by the thousands. Dissenters, of all ages and political or religious persuasion, were hauled off to jail or to concentration camps. To better check the dissatisfied, every peasant was compelled to carry an identification card.

With the toughening of the Diem regime, these dissenters were no longer the communists or the Buddhists. Catholics by now had also joined the opposition. These were the Catholics Diem had originally lured away from the North. Thousands of them had demanded that Diem keep his word. They demonstrated, asking for the land, homes, and jobs which they had been promised. An ever increasing number finally said that they wanted to be repatriated back to North Vietnam. Diem's response was typical. The demonstrations were ruthlessly suppressed~ any identifiable individual, or group, whether Buddhist or Catholic, was arrested, jailed, sent into a camp, or even summarily shot.

It has been reckoned, and the figures although lacking any official confirmation are considered to be concretely reliable, that during this period of terror – that is from 1955 to 1960 – at least 24,000 were wounded, 80,000 people were executed or otherwise murdered, 275,000 had been detained, interrogated with or without physical torture, and about 500,000 were sent to concentration or detention camps. This is a conservative estimate.

The creation of a totalitarian Catholic regime was made to go on regardless. The opposition from all sectors of the country increased. Strikes took place with ever increasing frequency, chiefly because of the deteriorating economic situation. In May, 1957, 200,000 workers demonstrated in Saigon alone. Next year May Day 1958, the demonstrators had increased to 500,000. There were strikes and demonstrations throughout the country in subsequent years. The Catholics from the North asked chiefly for repatriation.

The state-machinery of suppression, however, had become too efficient to be weakened by any resistance, whether of an economic or political character. The native and American expertise directed the control of the populace and of



any individual dissension, having worked like a miracle machine. It was thanks chiefly to this, that Diem felt confident he would ride the storm in the streets, and it was also mainly thanks to such a miraculous machine of repression, that Diem finally felt sufficiently strong to undertake another measure, directed at the establishment of his Catholic Vietnam.

He boldly turned to a direct confrontation with what he considered to be the principal obstacle to his religious-political dreams. That is, he attacked the main religion of the country, Buddhism itself.

## **Chapter 12 A CIA Spy Plane Cancels a Summit Meeting**

The Catholic repression of South Vietnam was not the work of a fanatical individual, or of a group of individuals, like the three Diem brothers, dedicated to the Catholicization of a Buddhist country. It was the by-product of a well calculated long range policy conceived and promoted by minds whose basic objectives were the expansion at all costs, of a religion which they were convinced was the only true religion on earth.

The main inspirer and prosecutor of such a policy, as we have already seen, was Pope Pius XII. Such policy was totally consonant with his global strategy, directed at two fundamental objectives: the destruction of communism, and the expansion of the Catholic Church.

Pope Pius XII had dedicated his whole life to the pursuance of both, with a dedication which was admired by friends and feared by his foes. He was one of the inspirers of the Cold War. The Vietnam War, in its turn, was the logical offspring of the greater global ideological conflict which had come to the fore following the termination of World War II, and which had involved the continuous expansion of communist Russia, in Europe and Asia. The U.S. determined to stop such Red expansion at all costs.

As we have indicated earlier, such conflict had drawn the Vatican and the U.S. together in the pursuance of a common anti-communist strategy. Each used whatever weapons it could muster, in their own respective military fields. Where the U.S. employed its economic and military might, the Vatican deployed the subtler weapons of diplomacy, political pressure and above all, of religion.

These weapons were used with increasing liberality in Vietnam, from the very beginning. The two partners had the same political objective: the elimination of communism in IndoChina. In the 50's the U.S. had attempted the same in Korea, and had failed. Encouraged by such American failure, Soviet Russia attempted another territorial conquest, this time in Europe. In 1956-7 justifying herself with the excuse of a Catholic-Nationalist-anti-communist plot, Soviet Russia sent her tanks rolling into Hungary, occupied that country, and set up an iron-fist communist dictatorship in Budapest.

The latent tension between Soviet Russia and her communist empire and the U.S.-Vatican partners came to the fore once again, and talks about an impending outbreak of World War III were heard once more on both sides of the Atlantic. The fear was not caused by rhetorical threats or by empty

diplomatic gestures.

How close to war the world had come at this juncture, only a few years after the Korean conflict, was eventually disclosed by the highest American authority who knew more than anybody else what had been going on behind the scenes, namely, John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State. He knew simply because he was one of the main organizers of the grand CIA-Fatima scheme.

As we have already said, John Foster Dulles at this time was the veritable foreign policymaker of the U.S. General Eisenhower, the President, a good, man, knew more about war than about the intricacies of foreign policies. As a result, he left practically the entire field in the hands of Dulles, whose paramount obsession was communism. Such obsession matched that of Pius XII. Dulles mobilized all the immense resources of the U.S. to deal with it the world over. He turned into the staunchest associate of Pius XII.

The association became one of the most formidable working partnerships of the period. Dulles conducted his policies very often without the approval or even the knowledge of the President. He was helped in this by the fact that, in addition to the regular U.S. diplomatic machinery, he used more than anything else the secretive and omnipotent apparatus of the CIA. Indeed, it can be said that he conducted American foreign policy via the CIA. This was facilitated by the ominous fact that the inspirer, director, and master controller of the whole CIA was none other than his own brother, Alan Dulles.

The two brothers worked so closely together that President Eisenhower more than once had his official policy "nullified" by the CIA. The most spectacular example being the collapse of the American-Russian Summit Meeting of 1960, when the CIA sent a spy plane over Russia so as to prevent the American President and the Russian Premier from terminating the "Cold War." The meeting, thanks to the CIA plane, was canceled. It was one of the CIA's most sensational triumphs.

John Foster Dulles (whose son, incidentally, became a Jesuit) and Alan Dulles, in total accord with the Vatican Intelligence, conducted a foreign policy based on threats of "massive retaliation" – that is, of atomic warfare.

At the height of the Hungarian insurrection – that is, in 1956 – John Foster Dulles openly acknowledged to a horrified world that the U.S. had stood on the brink three times:

*"Mr. Dulles admitted that the U.S. had on three occasions in the past eighteen months come closer to atomic war ... than was imagined,"*

as the London and New York Times somberly reported. "The Third World War had been avoided," they further commented, "only because Mr. Dulles ... had seen to it that Moscow and Peking were informed of the U.S. intention to use the atomic weapons."

What did Pope Pius XII do during these terrible crises? Particularly since

he, more than anyone else in the highest positions, knew what was going on behind the scenes between the U.S. and Russia?

He intensified the cult of Fatima. The cult was given added luster and impetus. Catholic churches prayed for the "liberation," – that is, for a speedy fulfillment of the "prophecy" of Our Lady. This also in view of the fact that the third "secret" of Our Lady of Fatima had to be revealed within a few years – that is in 1960.

Although no one knew what the Fatima "secret" was, it was whispered that it was the imminent liberation and conversion of Russia. Pope Pius XII, of course, could not let Our Lady's third and last "secret" remain a secret from him too. He had the sealed letter, containing the secret according to one of the children who had spoken to Our Lady at Fatima, opened. He then related that, upon reading it, he had almost fainted with horrified astonishment. It was as good a method as any to incite the Fatima frenzy to even higher expectations.

Not content with this, Pius XII came to the fore personally to condition the Catholic world to the oncoming war. Thus during the winter of 1956-7, immediately following the failure of the Hungarian counter-revolution, he brazenly called upon all Catholics to join in a veritable Fatima crusade. He urged them to take part "in a war of effective self-defense," asking that the United Nations be given "the right and the power of forestalling all military intervention of one State into another."

Indeed, at this very terrible period when the U.S. and Russia were truly on the brink of an atomic war, he went so far, as we have already quoted, as to reiterate "the morality of a defensive war," thus echoing the very words of his secret Chamberlain, the Secretary of the U.S. Navy, Mr. Matthews, in his famous Boston speech.

The following year (October, 1958), Pius XII, assailed by even more frequent attacks of nerves, asthma, and a general neurosis, died. For years he had been sustained by an immense amount of drugs, possibly the real cause of many hallucinations, promptly accounted as "miracles" by his admirers.

When during and after the Russian invasion of Hungary in Europe, communism set out upon a territorial conquest of Indo-China, the U.S., still smarting under the defeat of Korea, found a willing ally in the Catholic Church, as we have already pointed out.

## **Chapter 13 The Vatican's Attempts to Prevent Peace**

When the French started to crumble under the relentless blows of the communists of Indo-China, the Catholic Church welcomed the U.S. intervention, hopefully expecting that the American presence would help expedite the conquest of the entire province. The Church had already been in the field combating a retroactive campaign against Red expansionism.

The military and ideological success of the Viet-Minhs, and the increasing popularity of their cause, upset the Vatican's hopes. It led to something

which the Vatican had always opposed, namely the division of Vietnam into two halves – the North and the South.

The Geneva Agreement, which sanctioned such division, therefore became anathema to Vatican strategists as much as it was to its supporters in the U.S. But whereas the U.S. came to accept the split in military and political terms, no matter how provisional, the Vatican never did so. It judged the division as a major setback almost as great as the defeat of the French.

The Vatican however, while rejecting the split of the country, continued to cooperate and indeed to encourage an ever deeper intervention of the U.S., the better to use American economic and military strength to carry on with the promotion of a unified Vietnam, where ultimately the Church would rule supreme, once the war had been won.

The Vatican never accepted the division of Vietnam, as envisaged by Geneva, because of the consistency of its general strategy. This could be identified with the pursuit of four main objectives: 1) the maintenance of the unity of Vietnam; 2) total elimination of communism; 3) Catholicization of the whole country; 4) the creation of a totalitarian Catholic state, to achieve and to maintain the first three.

Steps had been taken long before the division occurred for the concretization of such a policy. As we have already seen, it was the Vatican, with the help of the U.S. Catholic lobby headed by Cardinal Spellman, that initially propelled Diem into power. The powerful trio, namely Pius XII, Cardinal Spellman and John Foster Dulles, were behind the setting up of a semi-totalitarian regime in South Vietnam from its inception. It was they, in fact, who advised Diem to challenge the Geneva Agreement; to refuse to have the elections as promised to the people of Vietnam, in order to find out whether the Vietnamese people wanted unification or not.

We have seen what the disastrous result of such refusal portended for Vietnam and the U.S. itself. Subsequent efforts to reach some form of understanding with North Vietnam were consistently scotched by President Diem, upon the direct advice of the Vatican and of Washington. In July, 1955, according to the Geneva Agreement, Diem had been expected to begin consultations for the elections scheduled in 1956: "The conference declares that, so far as Vietnam is concerned, the settlement of political problems on the basis of respect for the principle of independence ... national elections shall be held in July, 1956 under the supervision of an International Commission ... "

The Republic of North Vietnam suggested to Diem that the pre-electoral consultative conference should be held. This was done in May and June, 1956, in July, 1957, in May, 1958 and again in July, 1959. The offer was to be negotiated between North and South Vietnam, on the basis of "free general elections by secret ballot." All such offers were rejected. Diem refused to have the election called for in Article 7 of the Declaration of the Geneva Agreements. The U.S. supported him fully. The result of such refusal was the disastrous civil war which ensued. American Senator Ernest Gruening, in a speech delivered to the U.S. Senate April 9, 1965, had this to say about it. "That civil war began ... when Diem's regime – at our urging – refused to carry

out the provision contained in the Geneva Agreement to hold elections for the reunification of Vietnam." The accusation of the Senator was correct. What he failed to tell the Senate, and thus to the American people however, was the fact that the real culprits responsible for such a breach of faith had not even been mentioned. This for the simple reason that they were active, behind the scenes, in the corridors of a secretive diplomacy, which was beyond the reach of the government.

It could not be otherwise. Since such secret diplomacy was the brainchild of a church which was pursuing ideological objectives to ultimately aggrandize herself in the religious field. The better to conduct her policies, therefore, she had turned one of her representatives into a subtle relentless politician, who although never elected by any American voter, nevertheless could exert more influence in the conduct of American diplomacy than any individual in the House of Representatives, the Senate, or even the U.S. government itself. The name of such a person was Cardinal Spellman.

Cardinal Spellman was so identified with the Vietnam War that after he came out in the open prior to years of hidden promotional activities, he became the popular epitome of the war itself, and this to such an extent, that the Vietnam War eventually was labeled the Spellman War. This was not a scornful adjective. It was the verbal epitome of a concrete reality. Cardinal Spellman, as the personalized vehicle of the double Vatican-American strategy, had begun to represent the Catholic-American policy itself. To that effect he was fully endowed with the right attributes. He was the religious-military representative of both Catholic and military powers since he represented both, being the Vicar of the American Armed Forces of the U.S. He was always flown in American military aircrafts, visited regularly the U.S. troops in Vietnam, and repeatedly declared, with the personal approval of both Pius XII and J.F. Dunes, that the U.S. troops in South Vietnam were: "the soldiers of Christ." Which in this context, being cardinal of the Catholic Church, meant soldiers of the Catholic Church.

During the conflict, while the North was attempting to reach some form of agreement with the South, the Vatican intervened again and again to prevent any kind of understanding between the two. This it did, by the most blatant use of religion. During the Marian Congress of 1959 held in Saigon, for instance, it consecrated the whole of Vietnam to the Virgin Mary. The consecration had been inspired by Rome.

This sealed for good any possibility of peaceful cooperation between North and South Vietnam, since to the millions of Catholics which had fled, the consecration of the whole of Vietnam to the Virgin had the gravest political implications. To them it meant one thing: no cooperation with the North. The following year, the Vatican went further and took an even more serious step. It was a well calculated move, which although seemingly of an ecclesiastical nature, yet had the most profound political implication. On December 8, 1960, the pope established "an ordinary Catholic episcopal hierarchy for all of Vietnam." Thereupon, he took an even more daring step, he created an archdiocese in the capital of the communist North itself.

This was done not by Pope Pius XII, the arch-enemy of communism and the

architect of the original Vietnam religious-political strategy, who meanwhile had died in 1958, but by his successor, Pope John XXIII, the initiator of ecumenism and of goodwill to all men. The implication was that the Vatican considered the whole of Vietnam one indivisible country; which in this context meant that the North had to be joined with the South, ruled as it was by a devout son of the Church.

Sons, would have been a more realistic description, since South Vietnam, by now, had become the political domain of a single family, whose members had partitioned the land and the governmental machinery into fortresses from which to impose the Catholic yoke upon an unwilling population.

President Diem was not only the official head of the government, he was also the head of a family junta composed of exceptionally zealous Catholics, who monopolized the most important offices of the regime. One brother, Ngo Dinh Luyen, ruled the province of the Cham minorities, another brother Ngo Dinh Can, governed central Vietnam, as a warlord from the town of Hue – the center of Buddhism. A third brother, Ngo Dinh Thuc, was the Catholic archbishop of the province of Thuathien. Yet another brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, a trade union leader, was the head of the semi-secret Can Lao Movement, and the head of the fearful secret police. His wife was Madame Nhu, better known as The Dragon Lady. Her father became ambassador to the U.S. There were also nephews, nieces and others – all zealous Catholics. In addition to these, there were friends, army officers, judges, top Civil Service officials, all Catholics acting in total accordance with the Catholic had Church and her objective. Seen from this angle, therefore, the Vatican moves were most significant in religious and political terms.

This was so, not only because of the situation in Vietnam as a whole, and of South Vietnam in particular, but equally, because a no less portentous event, meanwhile, had occurred in the U.S. itself. The Kennedy Administration was taking over from President Eisenhower.

Kennedy, the fervent Catholic lobbyist and supporter of Diem, set in earnest to promote the policy he had advocated for so long while still a Senator. It was no coincidence that as soon as he was in the White House, Kennedy escalated the U.S. involvement in South Vietnam. By the end of 1961, 30,000 Americans had been sent to Vietnam to prosecute the war, and thus indirectly to help Catholic Diem and his Catholic regime. A far cry from the mere 1,000 American advisors sent so reluctantly by his predecessor, Eisenhower. The result was that the “limited risk” gamble of President Eisenhower had been suddenly transformed into the “unlimited commitment” by the Catholic Diem sponsor, Catholic President Kennedy. It was the beginning of the disastrous American involvement into the Vietnam War.

## **Chapter 14 Religious Persecutions and Suicides by Fire**

The gravity of Diem’s policy of religious repression can best be judged if we remember that Christianity in Southeast Asia was a minority, and furthermore, that the Catholic Church was a minority of a minority.

In Vietnam, out of a total population at that time of between 10 to 11

million peoples, only 1,500,000 were Roman Catholics. Of these, two thirds were refugees from the North, whereas the other Christians, mostly Baptists or Seventh Day Adventists, numbered approximately 50,000. The rest of the country was solidly Buddhist or professed religions derivatives from Buddhism.

This meant that the Catholics made up a mere 12 to 13 percent of the whole of South Vietnam. The equivalent would be, as if a mere 12 to 13 per cent of Buddhists, or Hindus, or Moslems should attempt to terrorize the 230 million people of the U.S., the great bulk of whom are Christian.

His campaign of erosion and of direct and indirect elimination of the religious and political influence of Buddhism, of course, had run concurrently with the creation of a police state, and with the increasing acceleration of his Catholicization of the state, of the army and of the police force.

While so engaged, Diem's anti-Buddhist activities had been astutely kept in the background. This policy was justified, since, before dealing with the problem, he had first to strengthen his political and police apparatus.

The spark was ignited when the sectarian volcano which had been simmering under the surface for some time finally burst out into the open on June 5, 1963. The Roman Catholics celebrated the day to honor Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc, Diem's brother. In their elation, they flew the flag of the Vatican at Hue, a predominately Buddhist city. There was no opposition or any violent protest on the part of the Buddhists.

Three days later, the whole of South Vietnam prepared itself to celebrate the 2,507th birthday of Buddha. The celebration centered in Hue, the center of Buddhist culture during more than 2,000 years. The Buddhists asked permission to fly the Buddhist flag. The Diem government's answer: a resounding No/When the day arrived, thousands of Buddhists protested the government's refusal. In addition Diem, two days before, had issued an ordinance which forbade the carrying of religious banners. The ordinance became known only after the Catholics had flown the Vatican's flag. Diem troops fired on the crowd and killed nine Buddhists. As a result of such blatant Catholic sectarianism, demonstrations took place all over South Vietnam. Buddhist leaders went to see Diem, asking for an end of such discrimination. Diem refused to pay indemnities for the victims, refused responsibility, and to cap it all, refused to punish those who had been responsible for the killings.

The Buddhist leaders, undeterred, gathered 400 monks and nuns, and on May 30 sat down for four hours before the National Assembly in the heart of Saigon. Then, since nothing happened, they declared a 48 hour hunger strike. The hunger strike spread elsewhere. After a token gesture during which he discharged three of his officials, Diem stated that the killings had been caused by – communist agitators.

The hunger strike spread to the general population, until – over 10,000 individuals participated in Saigon alone. To add to the solemnity of the mass protest, the giant gong tolled incessantly from its principal tower, the gong

of Xa Loi Pagoda. In the other Buddhist capital, Hue, the peaceful demonstration took a violent turn and fighting broke out. The violence was so unrestrained, that the main pagoda of Tu Dam was left almost in ruins.

The Buddhist tolerance finally gave way to concrete anger. A Buddhist crowd took the law into their own hands and burned to the ground a whole Catholic village next to Da Nang. In Hue, as violence recurred, the authorities imposed martial law. As a result, a Buddhist crowd, led by students, demonstrated before the house of government delegates who called in troops. Blister gas was used and over 77 individuals were hospitalized with blister burns.

More Buddhist demonstrations followed. All in vain. Finally, an elderly Buddhist monk, Superior Thich Quang Duc, sent a message to President Diem. The message: "enforce a policy of religious equality." Thereupon, having calmly sat down in a main street of Saigon, poured gasoline on himself and burned himself to death. It was June 2, 1963. The self-immolation caused enormous reaction within and outside South Vietnam. The world at large could not understand what was going on, the media having knowingly or unknowingly given muddled and contradictory reports about the true state of affairs. Diem, however, did not budge. Other Buddhist monks followed Thich Quang Duc's example. Within a brief period, six of them burned themselves to death as a protest.

Diem and most of his Catholic supporters were unimpressed. Indeed some of them even jested about the monks self immolation. Madame Nhu, Diem's sister-in-law, for instance, commented about the Buddhists "barbecuing" themselves.

Buddhist demonstrations continued during the following month. On July 30, 30,000 participated in protests at Saigon and Hue. In the latter city, August 13, there was quite uncontrollable violence. Another young Buddhist monk, Thich Thanh Tuck, burned himself to death in the Phuc Duyen Pagoda, following the example of yet another, a few days before, Thich Mnguyen Huong, who had done the same on August 4. Then on August 15, a woman, a Buddhist nun, Dieu Quang, immolated herself in the courtyard of the Tu Dam Pagoda.

Following such individual and mass Buddhist demonstrations, Diem finally took off the mask, promulgated a siege of the whole country by declaring a state of martial law. Diem's police were let loose. They occupied, sealed and plundered pagoda after pagoda in the capital, in Hue, Hkanhhoa, Da Nang and other towns. They put down demonstrations with the utmost brutality and beat many Buddhist monks. Finally an order was issued to close all the pagodas. The order was greeted with collective anger. Riots occurred. In the city of Hue alone, on August 21, no less than one hundred Buddhists were killed by Diem police, thirty of them Buddhist students.

The massacre was followed by mass arrests. Buddhist monks and nuns were detained by the thousands all over South Vietnam. Diem's agents shot at random or organized truncheon rampages against the Buddhist crowds. Special forces, under the aegis of Ngo Dinh Nhu, arrested any Buddhist leaders they could find. Prominent Buddhists were tortured by special police. Pagodas were



besieged. 200 students were arrested with another 6,000 individuals on August 25. Two days later, the 27th, 4,000 more were detained. On September 3, 5,600 pupils demonstrated at schools. On September 15, 6,000 more pupils demonstrated at Dalat, and in other places.

In early October, thousands of Buddhist students were arrested and tortured by Nhu's agents. Buddhist leaders went into hiding, one of the most prominent, Thich Tri Quang, seeking safety within the walls of the American Embassy itself. It is to the credit of many Americans in the civil and military administrations, that they expressed their horror at what they were witnessing with their own eyes. Most of them, although confused as to the basic issues of the religious-political conflict, nevertheless were highly shocked at the ruthlessness of the Diem regime. At Washington, the feelings were no less deep. There were recriminations and criticism. The South Vietnam religious persecutions were threatening the domestic peace within the U.S. itself. Besides, the rest of the world was beginning to take notice of the events by openly asking awkward questions as to the real objectives of the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia.

Finally the U.S. issued a declaration, " ... it appears that the government of the Republic of Vietnam, has instituted serious repressive measures against the Vietnamese Buddhist leaders ... The U.S. deplores repressive actions of this nature."

Notwithstanding this, and the worldwide publicity, the media of America remained strangely silent about the whole issue. When they were forced to report the news of the religious persecutions of the Buddhists by the Catholic Diem, either they gave them the smallest coverage, or minimized the whole issue when not slanting the news altogether. The Catholic-CIA-Diem lobby saw to it that the whole picture became effectively blurred, lest the American people take action.

## **Chapter 15 End of the Catholic Dictatorship**

To the Vatican, Vietnam was another exercise for the planting of Catholic authoritarianism in an alien land against the wishes of the majority of the population. The Vatican is a master at using political and military opportunities to further its own religious policies, which ultimately means the expansion of the Catholic Church which it represents. To promote such policies, as a rule she will use individuals who are genuinely religious to further her religious and political operations.

The case of Diem is a classic example. The Vatican supported Diem, because he was a genuine Catholic, the U.S. supported him because he was a genuine anti-communist. At this time, since the policy of the Catholic Church was totally anti-communist, it followed that a genuine Catholic would follow his Church and be as genuinely anticommunist as she was.

To the U.S. Secretary of State and to the Vatican, therefore, the religious genuineness and asceticism of Diem was the surest guarantee that Diem would execute their joint policy with the utmost fidelity, and in this they were right, as subsequent events demonstrated. People who knew better, however,

were not of the same opinion about Diem's suitability. The American Embassy, for instance, advised against him from the very beginning. The embassy's warning was completely ignored by Washington, and although the State Department itself was against the choice, the Special Operations Branch of the Pentagon insisted on Diem. It had its way. What was the explanation? A certain clique at the Pentagon inspired by another in the CIA with intimate links to the Catholic lobby in Washington and certain cardinals in the U.S. and consequently in perfect accord with the Vatican, had decided to have a staunch Catholic in South Vietnam.

It must be remembered that this was the period when the Cold War was at its worst. Its arch-exponents, the Dulles brothers – one at the State Department and the other at the CIA – and Pius XII at the Vatican, were conducting a joint diplomatic, political and ideological grand strategy embracing both the West and the Far East of which Vietnam was an integral part.

The choice proved a disaster for South Vietnam and for the U.S. Asian policy. As we have just seen, the religious issue was eventually to stultify the whole grand American strategic pattern there.

Two Catholic presidents, Diem and Kennedy, had become the heads of two nations so intimately involved in a most controversial war. From the Vatican's point of view and the promotion of its plans in Asia were concerned, this had unlimited possibilities. In different circumstances, the sharing of common religious beliefs might have helped in the conduct of a common policy, since the political interests of the two countries ran parallel.

With Catholic Diem pursuing such anachronistic religious persecutions, however, Catholic Kennedy felt increasingly ill at ease, since he was too astute a politician to compromise his political career or to sacrifice the interests of the U.S. for the sake of a fellow Catholic who, after all, was incurring the opprobrium of the vast majority of Americans, most of whom still looked upon Kennedy's Catholicism with suspicion. Hence the Kennedy Administration's blessing upon the final overthrow of the Diem regime. But it is often the case with Catholics in authority that whenever the circumstances permit and there is no restriction by either constitutional clauses or other checks, they tend to conduct policy more and more consonant with the spirit of their religion. The result being that, by combining the interests of their country with those of their Church, more often than not, they create unnecessary social and political fields.

When this state of affairs is nearing a crisis, owing to the resistance of the non-Catholic opposition, then the Catholics exerting political or military power will not hesitate to use that power against those who oppose them. At this stage, the interests of their Church will, as a rule, oust those of their country.

This formula proved to be correct in the case of South Vietnam. President Diem, having provoked such a crisis, disregarded the interests of the country, no less than those of its protectors, the U.S., to pursue what he considered were the interests of his church.

Whereas political and military factors of no mean import played a leading part in the ultimate tragedy, it was the religious factor which obscured the political and military vision of President Diem, and led him to disaster. Only twenty years before, in Europe, another Catholic, Ante Pavelich, had created the Catholic state of Croatia in which the Catholic Church ruled supreme to the exclusion of any other religion. Like Diem, Pavelich had justified Catholic totalitarianism on the ground that a Catholic dictatorship was the best defense against communism. According to such a concept that entitled him to launch not only the persecution of anyone or of anything who was not Catholic, in his case the Orthodox Church, but also the extermination of more than 600,000 men, women and children – one of the most horrific deeds of World War II.

In Asia, the situation being diverse and the political and military backgrounds being supervised by a mighty power, the U.S., such excesses were not permitted. Yet the preliminaries of religious persecution and concentration camps were indicative of what might have happened had not world opinion and the restrictive influence of the U.S. not intervened. The religious and political ambitions of the two Catholic dictators and their relationship with the Catholic Church, however, run parallel. Thus, whereas the political and military machinery controlled by South Vietnamese and Croatian dictators was put at the disposal of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church put her spiritual and ecclesiastical machinery at the disposal of the two dictators who made everyone and everything subordinate to her religious and political totalitarianism.

Both Diem and Pavelich had pursued three objectives simultaneously: 1) the annihilation of a political enemy, i.e. communism; 2) the justification for the annihilation of an enemy church, i.e. the Orthodox Church in the case of Pavelich and Buddhism in the case of Diem; 3) the installation of Catholic religious and political tyranny in each country.

Notwithstanding the different circumstances and geographical and cultural backgrounds, the pattern of the two regimes was exactly the same: anything and anyone not conforming or submitting to Catholicism was to be ruthlessly destroyed via arrest, persecution, concentration camps and executions. With the result that by relegating the interest of their country to the background, so as to further the interests of their religion, both dictators finally brought their lands into the abyss.

In the case of President Diem, when he put Catholicism first, he alienated not only the vast majority of South Vietnamese masses, but even more dangerous the greatest bulk of the South Vietnamese army, who on the whole had supported him politically. It was this, the potential and factual endangering of the anti-communist front upon which Diem's policy had stood, that finally set into motion the U.S. military intervention, with all the disastrous results which were to follow.

Although Diem remained as the U.S. political protege, by pursuing a policy inspired by his own personal religious zeal, and by disregarding certain diplomatic and political interests interconnected with the general military strategy of the U.S., he had endangered a whole policy in Southeast Asia.

This became even more obvious, not only because of the exceptional restlessness which he provoked throughout the country, but above all, because his religious persecutions had seriously imperiled the effectiveness of the army.

It must be remembered that the vast majority of the South Vietnamese troops were made up of Buddhists. Many of these, upon seeing their religion persecuted, their monks arrested, their relatives in camps, had become despondent, and indeed, mutinous. There were increasing cases of absenteeism, desertions, and even rebellions. The overall result of this was not so much that the religious war was incapacitating the Diem's regime itself, but even worse, that the military calculations of the U.S. were being seriously imperiled.

The whole issue, at this juncture, had become even more tragic, because in the meantime the U.S., had elected her first Catholic president, and even more so, because on the personal level, Kennedy himself, before reaching the White House, had been a consistent supporter of Catholic Diem. Indeed he had been one of the most influential members of the Catholic lobby which had steered the U.S. towards the Vietnam War.

As the domestic and military situation inside South Vietnam went from bad to worse, the manipulators of Southeast Asia made it clear to him with the full support of the military authorities on the spot that something drastic had to be done to prevent the total disintegration of the South Vietnamese army. The mounting tension with Soviet Russia and Red China made a move from Washington imperative and urgent, since further internal and military deterioration might provoke the whole of the anti-communist front to collapse from inside.

The pressure became irresistible and the first ominous steps were taken. Subsidies to the Vietnam Special Forces were suspended. Secret directives were given to various branches closely connected with the inner links between the V.S. and the Diem regime. Finally, on October 4th, 1963, John Richardson, the head of the CIA in Vietnam was abruptly dismissed and recalled to Washington. Certain individuals understood that they were given a free hand for a coup against Diem.

A coup was successfully engineered, President Diem and his brother, the hated head of the secret police had to run for their lives. They were discovered by rebel troops hiding in a small Catholic Church. Having been arrested, they were placed in a motor vehicle as state prisoners. Upon arrival at their destination – both Diem and his brother had been shot to death. Their bodies were laid at St. Joseph's Hospital only a few hundred yards away from the Xa Pagoda, the center of the Buddhist resistance to the Diem denominational persecution.

Twenty days after the assassination of Diem, the first Catholic president of South Vietnam, the first Catholic president of the U.S., John F. Kennedy, was himself assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Why, and by whom has remained a secret ever since.

After the collapse of President Diem's dictatorship, the U.S. involvement in

the war of Vietnam was to last another ten long years, from 1963 to 1973.

On April, 1975, Saigon the capital of South Vietnam fell to the communists. The following year on June 24, 1976, the first session of the Vietnamese National Assembly opened in Hanoi in the North. On July 2, 1976, North and South declared themselves reunited, thus ending 20 years of separation. Their new flag, a five pointed yellow star on a red background, became the symbol of the new nation, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

It had cost the Vietnamese people hundreds of thousands of wounded and dead, the devastation of their country and immense human misery. It had cost the U.S. billions and billions of dollars, domestic and external bitterness, the participation of more than 5.5 million American men with the loss of more than 58,000 young American lives.

It could be that the war in Vietnam was bound to come, regardless of the intrigues of organized religion. Yet it could be also that, had not the Catholic Church interfered so actively in the affairs of that country, the war in Vietnam might never have happened.

[Chapter 16 title="Catholic Expansionism in Southeast Asia in the 19th Century

The tenacious political activism of the Catholic Church during Diem's rule and the massive military defeat suffered by the U.S. can best be comprehended by studying the Catholic Church's actions prior to the conflict. They were both determined to defeat an aggressive brand of Asian communism, yet they had diametrically opposite reasons for intervening.

To the U.S., Vietnam became a military conflict, part of a policy focused on the two Euro-Asian centers of global communism: Peking with one thousand million Chinese only recently regimented into Marxism by Mao Tze Tung, and Moscow, the Mecca of Western Bolshevism.

To the Catholic Church, however, Vietnam was more than a mere stepping stone in America's fight against world communism. Vietnam had long been "hers, by right." Because of this, Vietnam had to be "rescued" from the impending ideological chaos and military anarchy which followed France's evacuation after World War II.

But even more important to her as a religious entity, was the rescue of Vietnam from Buddhism with which the Catholic Church had fought for hundreds of years. This motivation, although never mentioned in any circles during the Vietnamese conflict, nevertheless had become one of the major factors that influenced the general conduct of the Catholic Church in her relationship with Vietnam, before, during, and after President Diem's regime. The failure to recognize this factor became one of the major causes of the ultimate political and military disintegration of Vietnam and therefore of the final collapse of the U.S. military effort itself.

It might be asked how the Catholic Church could enlist the aid of Protestant U.S. and intervene with such active political pressure in Buddhist

impregnated Vietnam where the racial, cultural, and religious background made her and the U.S. both alien powers. Her claims were based upon the proposition that she had had a very "special" relationship with Vietnam. Strictly speaking, that was true.

Diem, as already seen, was from the typical Catholic Vietnamese culture, a by-product of this special relationship. Patrician by birth, Catholic by tradition, he belonged to a special elite which had greatly influenced the destiny of Vietnam for centuries. The riddle of his behavior could be explained by the fact that all his activities were motivated basically by his religious convictions.

He was a stubborn, dogmatic believer persuaded that he had a mission. This quality brought his ultimate ruination, and the U.S. into the Vietnamese War. He had convinced himself that the policy of repression which he so stubbornly pursued was his duty as a traditionally Vietnamese Catholic. Providence had positioned him to promote the interests of the Catholic Church, as his ancestors had done before him in the past.

What were the factors which helped to create such dedicated Catholic individuals in Vietnam? Historically the Catholic Church was the first Christian Church to operate in the Indo-Chinese peninsula as far back as three hundred or so years ago. Vietnam was the spearhead of her penetration from the very beginning of the sixteenth century, when her stations were manned chiefly by Spanish and Portuguese missionaries.

Religious settlements were followed by commercial ones. In due course, other European nations such as England, the Netherlands and France started to compete for the attention of the native populations.

The most vigorous introducers of Western enlightenment, which in those days meant Christianity, were the Jesuits, then in the prime of their exploratory zeal. The Franciscans, Dominicans, and others, although prominent, never exerted the influence of the Jesuits who were determined to plant the spiritual and cultural power of the Church in Southeast Asia. Having arrived there about 1627, they spread their activities practically in all fields. They attempted with varied success to influence the cultural and political top echelons of society, unlike the other missionaries who contented themselves exclusively with making converts. Their efforts were helped by the printing of the first Bible in 1651, and the growing influence of several individuals, men of sophistication, who were welcomed in certain powerful circles.

The result was that in due course, owing to political intrigues and commercial rivalries, the European influence declined. The Catholic Church increased in reverse proportion however, and during the following century came to dominate the ruling elite, thanks chiefly to the liberality of certain native potentates, beginning with the Emperor Gia-Long. In fact, it was mainly thanks to his protection that the Catholic Church was soon granted privileges of all kinds which she used vigorously to expand her influence.

Like in so many other instances however, the privileges very quickly gave way

to abuse. In no time the Catholic communities came to exercise such a disproportionate religious and cultural domination, that reaction became inevitable throughout the land. The reaction turned into ostracism, and eventually into veritable persecution of anything European which, more often than not, meant anything Catholic.

The Catholic communities reacted in turn. From passive opposition they became actively belligerent. Ultimately revolts were organized practically all over Cochinchina. The disorders were inspired and very often directed by the Catholic missionaries, supported by French national and commercial interests. The continuous inroad of Roman Catholicism, the spearhead of the European culture and colonial incursion into the land, in the long run inspired the hostility of the Emperor Thiệu Trị, who ruled between 1841 and 1847. By this time the French intrigues with the Catholic missionaries had become so intermingled that the two ultimately became almost identical. The Catholic missions were boycotted, restrictive legislation was enforced, and Catholic activities were banned everywhere.

The reaction in Europe was immediate cries of religious persecution. This was typical of the European Imperialism of the period. In 1843, 1845, and 1847, French war vessels stormed Vietnamese ports, with the pretext of requesting the release of the missionaries. As a reply the Vietnamese rulers intensified their objections to European ecclesiastical and commercial intervention in their country. This strong Vietnamese resistance gave France and Spain further pretext to intervene.

In 1858 a Franco-Spanish force invaded Darnang. Saigon was occupied in February 1859, followed by the adjacent three provinces. In June 1862, a treaty was imposed upon Vietnam. The treaty confirmed the French conquest and gave the provinces to France. One of its clauses provided the Catholic Church with total religious freedom.

Within a few years, France had occupied almost the whole country. Hanoi, in the North, was taken in 1873. In August 1873, the final "treaty" was signed. The Vietnamese independence had come to an end. The whole of Indo-China: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, had become French colonies. The conquest had been pioneered and made possible chiefly by the activities of the Roman Catholic missionaries, and the Catholic Church which had first sent them there.

This was proved soon afterwards when Catholic missionaries were given special privileges throughout the new Vietnamese regions. The missionaries had not only supreme power in religious and cultural matters, but equally in social, economic and political ones. And since the power of the French military and civil authorities were always behind them, they never hesitated to use the French bayonets to impose the cross upon the reluctant natives.

Friars, Jesuits, priests, nuns, bishops and French military and civil governors set to work to implant Catholicism throughout Vietnam. The original native Catholics were regrouped into special villages. Intensive, mass conversion to Catholicism was undertaken everywhere. Whole villages were persuaded to "see the light" either because the conversion brought food and

assistance of the missionaries, or because money, position or privileges in the educational or colonial echelons were beyond the reach of anyone who refused.

Such inducements, more often than not, became irresistible to those who were ambitious, restless or did not care for the traditions of their fathers. The temptation was great since only those converted were allowed to attend school, or had a chance to undertake higher education. Official positions in local and provincial administrations were given exclusively to Catholics, while the ownership of land was permitted only to those who accepted the Catholic faith. During recurrent famines, thousands of starving peasants were induced to receive baptism, either in family groups or even entire villages, prior to being given victuals from the Catholic missions.

The methodical Romanizing of Vietnam was promoted not only by the machinery of the Church, it was enforced by an increasingly repressive French colonial legislation inspired behind the scenes mostly by the missionaries themselves. As a result of such intensified religious colonial double pressure, in no time the French colonial administration had been transformed into a ruthless conversion tool of the Catholic Church, over the mounting protests of the liberal religious and political sections of metropolitan France.

After more than half a century of this massive ecclesiastical and cultural colonization, the native and French Catholics practically monopolized the entire civil and military administration. From there sprang a Catholic elite stubbornly committed to the Catholicization of the whole country. This elite passed the torch of the Church from generation to generation down to President Diem and his brothers. Their actions were true to their ancient traditions.

It cost them their lives, the disestablishment of the whole of Vietnam, and finally the military intervention of the U.S., with all the horrors before and after her ultimate humiliation and defeat.

## **Chapter 17 Early History of Catholic Power in Siam and China**

The attempt to set up repressive Catholicism in Vietnam via President Diem, was only one of the latest efforts in the pattern which she had pursued many times on the Asiatic continent. In the past the pattern had been varied but consistent. In the case of Vietnam a couple of centuries ago, closely knit Catholic groups cemented themselves into the surrounding non-Christian Buddhist environment. Once well established they assert themselves over their Buddhist neighbors as independent economic and political factions.

Their assertions required not only bold, religious self confidence, but also the imposition of Catholic authority upon their Buddhist co-religionists. Such imposition led to punitive legislation, which, when resisted brought repression, leading in time to the use of brute force.

In the case of President Diem and his Catholic junta they established themselves and their authority first with gradual legal discrimination against the Buddhist majority. The unrestricted use of terror followed when



the Buddhist population refused to submit. Diem's approach was not just a freak example of contemporary Catholic aggressiveness in a largely non-Christian society. It has been repeated on the Asian continent for three hundred years.

In those times of course, there were kings, a ruling aristocracy, with cultural mandarins, the ruling trio of society, whose acceptance or rejection was paramount. However, the basic pattern of Catholic religious exclusiveness and aggression, like that exercised by Diem and his brothers, was no mere coincidence. Without going into too many details, we shall therefore confine ourselves to illustrate one or two typical instances which occurred in a regional ethnic conglomerate once known as Indo-China.

France's first bid for Asiatic dominions took place as already indicated, in the early 17th century via the French East India Company. The company's goal was to bring that region into the French commercial orbit. A less visible, though no less concrete aim, was the propagation of the Catholic faith. This last objective, although apparently prompted mainly by individual Catholics, was directly inspired by the Vatican, which backed the French East India Company from the very start.

However having established its first outposts in India, the company soon encountered unforeseen resistance by the British until the French decided to look to other fields and turned her attention to the small kingdoms of Indo-China and, in particular, to Siam. The first exploration of the new regions on behalf of the French East India Company was not undertaken by company officials or French diplomats, but by Catholic missionaries. These went with the permission and encouragement of the Vatican, under the pretense of religion, to investigate the commercial, political and strategic resources on behalf of French imperialism.

Alexander de Rhodes, a Jesuit, arrived in Indo-China about 1610, and only a decade later sent a very accurate description of the possibilities of Annam and Tonkin. French Jesuits were promptly recruited to help him in his double work of converting those nations to the Catholic faith and of exploring the commercial potential. These tasks, in the eyes of both Rome and Paris, could not be separated, being the two most important stepping stones to political and military occupation.

The missionaries were so successful that by 1659 Indo-China was marked as an exclusive sphere of French commercial and religious activity. Subsequent missionaries extended their dual activities into Pegu, Cambodia, Annam and Siam. Siam, the most highly developed country of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, soon became the base for religious, commercial and political activities of both the East India Company and the Vatican. Their plans were simple: each would contribute to the Siamese subjugation according to its means; the company through its commerce, the French government through its armies, and the Vatican through its religious penetration.

When commercial bases and missionary stations had been successfully established, the French government pressed for an official trade alliance with Siam. Simultaneously the Vatican concentrated on expanding its spiritual

influence, not so much by converting the populace as by focusing upon the conversion of a single person: the Siamese king himself. If this could be accomplished, Catholic priests would then attempt to persuade the new Catholic king to admit French garrisons into the key cities of Mergui and Bangkok upon the pretext that this was in the best interests of the Catholic Church.

In 1685 the French government concluded a favorable trade alliance with its ruler. Two years later the Siamese king and the ruling elite converted to Catholicism. This powerful Catholic group set out to dominate not only the governmental machinery, but also use it to exert pressure upon the Buddhist society. Relentless streams of discriminating regulations were issued against Buddhist institutions and in favor of the Catholic minority.

Catholic Churches were erected everywhere while pagodas were closed at the slightest pretext or even demolished. Catholic schools replaced Buddhist ones. Discrimination against the Buddhist majority could be found at all levels. In no time the Catholics became top citizens to be found wherever there was power, privilege and wealth.

The Catholic ruling elite, like in Diem's time, turned into a kind of religious political mafia, identified with the unrestricted exercise of absolute power which it used and abused without discretion. Resistance was ruthlessly suppressed by the Church's main supporter, the French, always ready to come to her help with their gunboats.

Like with Diem, the Buddhist majority finally, after many fruitless protests, organized popular resistance. This was also ruthlessly suppressed. The measures provoked widespread anti-Catholic feelings, which in no time swept the whole country. Churches were attacked or destroyed. Catholics were hunted down and soon the resistance, which curiously started at the royal court where originally the Catholics had been so welcomed, surged at all levels.

Catholic priests and French officials as well as native Catholics were expelled or arrested until finally all Catholic activities ceased. In no time the Catholic minority which had acted as the persecutors, became the persecuted. French commerce ceased entirely and missionary work was stopped. The French-Vatican bid for the political and religious control of Siam ended in 1688. Result: for a whole century and a half Siam became practically a forbidden land to both.

At almost the same time the Catholic Church was also attempting to impose herself upon another Buddhist culture, the largest in the world: China.

Early in the seventeenth century, Jesuits had managed to penetrate the Imperial Court and convert a Chinese Empress to Catholicism. This conversion was a major coup for the Catholic Church in her strategy to impose herself, upon the whole of Buddhist China. Since the Empress was the center of the Imperial Court, the source of Supreme power, she became the pivot round which the Catholic Church planned her exercise of mass conversion.

The potential appeared unlimited. The Chinese Empress had become a pliable

tool in the hands of the Jesuits, who manipulated her to implant Catholic influence at all levels. Her piety had turned into a personal zeal to serve the Catholic Church in everything. She even changed her Chinese name into that of the Empress Helena after the Roman Empress, mother of Constantine, who had given freedom to Christianity in the Roman Empire. Indeed, not content with that, she baptized her son with the name of Constantine to indicate the role which the boy was intended to play in the future conversion of Buddhist China to the Catholic Church.

Her religiosity soon radically altered the practices and regulations of the entire Court so that Roman Catholicism seemed to have superseded everything. Conversion to the Catholic Church meant advancement, privilege, and wealth, not to mention power in the administration and even in the Army.

This Catholic minority grouped round the Empress began to exert such influence that it became first resented, then feared, and finally opposed by those who wished to maintain the traditional Buddhist culture of China.

If the Empress and her advisors the Jesuits had contented themselves within the restrictive circles at court, her religious operations, although objectionable to the Buddhists, might have been tolerated. But the Empress and those surrounding her set out on a grandiose scheme: the conversion of the whole of China to the Catholic Church.

They sent a special mission to Rome to ask the pope to send hundreds of missionaries to help accelerate the conversion of China to the Catholic Church.

While waiting for the pope's response, the Catholic minority began implementing this conversion from the Empress to the Mandarins, to the bureaucratic machinery, and finally to the teeming millions of Chinese peasantry.

The scheme however, encountered wide spread resistance from the beginning. Persuasion to conform to the semi-official influence of the Catholic Church soon necessitated special regulations, and later legislation. Opposition was suppressed at first by discriminatory measures, then arrests, and finally with brute force.

Outside the Court circle and the Catholic minority, the campaign met bitter mass resistance. This bitterness was nourished by the fact that those who became Catholic enjoyed the most blatant privileges, while the Buddhists suffered under the most discriminatory laws ever recorded in living memory by the Buddhist majority.

The campaign reached its most controversial level, when rumors came that the pope had agreed to send hundreds more missionaries to help convert the whole country to Catholicism. The news created more unrest and mass demonstrations which were ruthlessly suppressed.

Popular resistance eventually grew to such intensity that finally the European nations had to intervene to quell the "rebellion" as it was called,

using diplomacy and commercial measures carried out under the menacing presence of European gunboats off the Chinese coast.

The Catholic Church's attempt to rule and then convert China through a Catholic indigenous minority ended in total failure; but not without having first created unrest, chaos, revolution, national and international commotion, in her attempt to impose herself upon a great, unwilling, Asiatic nation.

## **Chapter 18 History of Catholic Aggressiveness in Japan**

In the history of Japan we have an even more striking instance of Vatican aggressiveness with profound repercussions in the world. As in China and Siam, the basic policy was to see that Catholic merchants and Catholic priests worked together so that both, by extending their own interests, should ultimately extend those of the Catholic Church.

Contrary to popular belief, when Japan first came into contact with the West she was eager for the interchange of ideas and commercial commodities. From the first chance landing of the Portuguese in Japan, foreign merchants were encouraged to call at Japanese ports. Local potentates vied with one another in opening their provinces to Western merchants. Catholic missionaries were as welcome as the traders, and set about spreading the Catholic faith in the new land.

These missionaries found a powerful protector in Nobunga, the military dictator of Japan (1573-82). He was anxious to check the political power of a certain movement of Buddhist soldier-priests, but also held a genuine sympathy for the work of the Christians who were newcomers. He encouraged them by granting them the right to propagate their religion throughout the Empire. He donated them land in Kyoto itself and even promised them a yearly allowance. Thanks to this, in no time the Catholic missions had spread throughout the country, converts were made by the thousands, establishing sizable Catholic centers in various parts of Japan.

Had the Catholic missionaries confined themselves exclusively to preaching religious principles, it is likely that Japan would have yielded them tremendous spiritual rewards. But once a Catholic community was established the juridical-diplomatic-political domination of the Vatican came to the fore. As is explicit in her doctrines, the Japanese converts could not remain the subjects only of the Japanese civil authorities. The mere fact that they had entered the Catholic Church made them also the subjects of the pope. Once their loyalty was transferred outside Japan, automatically they became potentially disloyal to the Japanese civil rulers.

This brought serious dangers to both the internal and the external security of the Japanese Empire. Internally, religious intolerance led to violence against other religions because of the fundamental Catholic tenet that only Catholicism is the true religion. This, of course meant civil strife.

In the external field, Japanese communities, by following the directives of foreign missionaries, had to favor not only the commercial interests of

Catholic foreign merchants but also the political plans of Catholic powers intent on political and military penetration of the Orient.

Not many years after the first Catholic missionaries appeared, Japanese civil rulers began to realize that the Catholic Church was not only a religion, but a political power intimately connected with the imperialistic expansion of Catholic countries like Portugal, Spain, and other Western nations.

The nefarious tenet of Catholicism that only Catholic truth is right and that error must not be tolerated began to produce its fruits in newly discovered Japan. Whenever Catholic converts were made and Catholic communities expanded, Catholic intolerance raised its head.

Whenever Japanese Catholics formed a majority, the Buddhists and members of other local faiths suffered. Not only were they boycotted, but their temples were closed and, when not destroyed, were seized and converted into churches. In numerous cases Buddhists were forcibly compelled to become Christians, their refusal resulting in loss of property and even of life. Faced with such behavior, the tolerant attitude of the Japanese rulers began to change.

In addition to this internal strife, the political ambition of the imperialistic Catholic nations began to present itself in ways that the tolerant Japanese rulers could no longer ignore. The Vatican, on hearing of the phenomenal success of Catholicism in the distant empire, set in motion its plan for political domination. As its custom was, it would use the ecclesiastical administration of the Church, together with the military power of allied Catholic countries. These were eager to bring the cross, the pope's sovereignty, profitable commercial treaties and military conquest all in the same galleons.

The Vatican had followed this type of political penetration ever since the discovery of the Americas. Numerous popes, including Leo X, had blessed, encouraged, and indeed legalized all the conquests and territorial occupation by Catholic Spain and Portugal in the Far East. Chief among them was Alexander VI, with his grant to Spain of all "firm land and islands found or to be found towards India, or towards any other part whatsoever." Japan was included in this Papal benediction of Portuguese and Spanish imperialism.

When, therefore, Japanese Catholic communities became strong enough to support secular Catholic power, the Vatican took the first important tactical step toward its long-range political stranglehold: the coordination of the new Catholic communities in Japan as political instruments.

To carry out this policy, in 1579 the Vatican sent one of the ablest Jesuits of his time, Valignani, to organize the Japanese Church along those lines. Of course for a time Valignani's design remained screened behind purely religious activities and received enthusiastic support from numerous powerful Japanese princes, such as Omura, Arima, Bungo, and others. In their provinces he erected, with their help, colleges, hospitals, and seminaries where Japanese youth trained in theology, political literature, and science.

Once this penetration was deep enough into the religious, educational, and

social structures of the provinces of these princes, Valignani took his next step and persuaded them to send an official diplomatic mission to the pope.

When the mission returned to Japan in 1590 the situation there had altered drastically. Hideyoshi, the new master of Japan, had become keenly conscious of the political implications of Catholicism and its allegiance to a distant Western religio-political potentate like the pope. He decided to unite with Buddhism, which owed no political allegiance to any prince outside Japan.

In 1587 Hideyoshi visited Kyushu and to his astonishment found that the Catholic community had carried out the most appalling religious persecution. Everywhere he saw the ruins of Buddhist temples and broken Buddhist idols. The Catholics, in fact, had forcibly attempted to make the whole island of Kyushu totally Catholic. In indignation Hideyoshi condemned the attacks on the Buddhists, the Catholic religious intolerance, their political allegiance to a foreign power, and other real misdemeanors and gave all foreign Catholics an ultimatum. They had just twenty days to leave Japan. Churches and monasteries were pulled down in Kyoto and Osaka in retaliation for the attacks upon the Buddhists, and troops were sent to Kyushu.

Such measures were only partially successful since the society had been so deeply penetrated. In 1614 all Catholic foreign priests were ordered to be deported once more. The injunction was precipitated by an even more serious issue. The Catholic missionaries, besides fostering religious intolerance among the Japanese, had begun to fight a most bitter war against each other.

Vicious quarrels between the Jesuits and the Franciscans had split the Christian communities themselves. These feuds became so dangerous that the Japanese ruler feared they would lead to civil war. They also saw that civil war could mean the military intervention of the Portuguese and Spaniards to protect either the Jesuits or the Franciscans. This involvement of foreign armies could mean the loss of Japan's independence.

Was this fear exaggerated? The tremendous expansion of Catholic Portugal and Catholic Spain was there to prove that the danger was a real one. The coming of the Franciscans as special envoys from the already subjugated Philippines in 1593 caused Hideyoshi no end of alarm. The Franciscans ignored the ban on Christian propaganda, constructed churches and convents in Kyoto and Osaka, defying the authority of the State. To complicate matters, they began violent quarrels with the Portuguese Jesuits. What at last made Hideyoshi take energetic measures was a small but significant incident.

In 1596 a Spanish galleon, the San Felipe, was shipwrecked off the providence of Tosa. Hideyoshi ordered the ship and its goods confiscated. The angry Spanish captain, wishing to impress or intimidate the Japanese officials, indulged in some boasting how Spain had acquired a great world empire. For proof the captain showed the Japanese officials a map of all the great Spanish dominions.

His astonished hearers asked how it had been possible for a nation to subjugate so many lands. The Spanish captain boasted that the Japanese would never be able to imitate Spain, simply because they had no Catholic

missionaries. He confirmed that all Spanish dominions had been acquired by first sending in missionaries to convert their people, then the Spanish troops to coordinate the final conquest.

When this conversation was reported Hideyoshi's anger knew no bounds. His suspicions about the use of missionaries as a first stepping-stone for conquest was confirmed. He recognized this pattern of cunning conquest at work within his own empire.

In 1597 both Franciscans and Dominicans came under the Imperial ban. Twenty-six priests were rounded up in Nagasaki and executed and an order expelling all foreign preachers of Christianity was issued. In 1598 Hideyoshi died, and Catholic exertions were resumed with renewed vigor until Ieyasu became ruler of Japan in 1616 and enforced even more sternly his predecessor's expulsion edict.

Foreign priests were again ordered to leave Japan, and the death penalty was inflicted on Japanese Christians who did not renounce Christianity. This persecution took a more violent turn in 1624 under Jemitsu 1623-50 when all Spanish merchants and missionaries were ordered to be deported immediately. Japanese Christians were warned not to follow the missionaries abroad and Japanese merchants not to trade any longer with Catholic powers.

To make certain that these decrees were respected, all seaworthy ships which could carry more than 2,500 bushels of rice were to be destroyed. The government decided to stamp out Catholicism in Japan. Further edicts in 1633-4 and in 1637 completely prohibited all foreign religion in the Japanese islands.

At this point Japanese Catholics began to organize themselves for violent resistance. This broke out in the winter of 1637 in Shimbara and on the nearby island of Amakusa. These regions had become wholly Catholic, mostly voluntarily, but some by use of forcible conversion. Led by their Western priests, these Catholic communities began to arm and organize themselves in military fashion to fight against the government.

The Japanese government, fearing that these Catholic groups might be used by Western Catholic governments for the territorial conquest of Japan, taxed them to the point of destitution. The Jesuits, who meanwhile had been preparing for physical resistance, set on foot a Catholic army of 30,000 Japanese with standards bearing the names of Jesus, Maria, and St. Iago fluttering before them.

They marched against the civil and military representatives of the Japanese government, fighting bloody battles along the promontory of Shimbara near the Gulf of Nagasaki. Having murdered the loyal governor of Shimbara, the Catholic army shut itself in his wellconstructed fortress and held out successfully against the guns and ships of the Japanese forces. Thereupon the government asked the Protestant Dutch to lend them ships large enough to carry the heavy guns needed for bombarding the Catholic fortress. The Dutch consented and the Japanese were able to bombard the citadel until it was finally destroyed and practically all the Catholics in it massacred. The

immediate result of the Catholic rebellion was the Exclusion Edict of 1639 which read as follows:

*"For the future, let none, so long as the Sun illuminates the World, presume to sail to Japan, not even in the quality of ambassadors, and this declaration is never to be revoked, on pain of death."*

The Edict included all Westerners with one exception, the Dutch, who had earned their privilege of remaining by aiding the defeat of the Catholic rebellion. Nevertheless, even they were put under extreme restrictions simply because they were also called Christians. To the Japanese, anything connected with Christianity had become suspect of deceit, intolerance, and conquest.

The Dutch themselves had to move their headquarters to the tiny island of Deshima, in Nagasaki Bay. They lived almost as prisoners, permitted to set foot in Japan proper only once a year.

The most forcible restrictions, however, concerned Christianity's religious ceremonies. The Dutch were not permitted to use Christian prayers in the presence of a single Japanese subject. The Japanese had become so incensed with anything which even reminded them of Christianity that the Dutch were forbidden to use the Western calendar in their business documents because it referred to Christ.

By now Christianity represented in their eyes nothing but the torturous Western device for political and military domination. When finally the Dutch signed a trade agreement, among its seven points were four connected with Christianity:

- 1. Commerce between Japan and Holland was to be perpetual.*
- 2. No Dutch ship should carry a Christian of any nationality or convey letters written by Christians.*
- 3. The Dutch should convey to the Japanese governor any information about the spreading of Christianity in foreign lands that might be of interest.*
- 4. If the Spaniards or Portuguese seized countries by means of religious machination, such information should be given to the Governor of Nagasaki.*

In addition to this, all books belonging to Dutch ships, especially those dealing with religious subjects, had to be sealed in trunks and turned over to the Japanese while the ship was in port. The Dutch, who at first were permitted to sail seven ships a year, were later restricted to one.

Suspicion of the perversity and cunning of Christians became so profound that they even strengthened the first edicts by new ones. It became a criminal offense for any Christian ship to seek refuge in a Japanese port or for any Christian sailor to be shipwrecked off the coast of Japan.

To all intents and purposes Japan became a sealed land, "hermetically" closed to the outside world. It remained sealed about two hundred and fifty years, until Commodore Perry, in the middle of the last century, opened the gates of the Land of the Rising Sun in unmistakable Western fashion – by pointing against the recluse nation the yawning mouths of heavy naval guns.



## Chapter 19 Creation of a Dangerous Alliance

It has frequently been asked what induced the U.S. to be caught in the quicksand of Asian commitments, with particular regards to the Vietnamese imbroglio.

Explanations have been many, diverse and contradictory. Yet the part played by religion is usually relegated to the background or obliterated altogether. Being an intangible force, it is generally disregarded in the context of contemporary problems, where the focus is confined almost exclusively to economic and military belligerency.

Some of the factors which brought the U.S. into Vietnam have already been examined in the previous chapters. Certain historical activities carried out by the Catholic Church during the past centuries in various parts of Asia followed a set pattern similar to that of our own times. Such patterns contributed to a very great degree to the involvement of the U.S. in the Vietnamese nightmare.

Her commitment there did not appear directly connected with the U.S. war machine, yet it contributed to the U.S. debacle. Few in the U.S. identified her interests with those of the U.S. unless they took the time to scrutinize her unique past history.

This study of historical patterns reveals a formula which the Catholic Church has used for centuries, namely the identification of her religious objectives with those of a major lay political power of a given period. As we have already seen, she used this formula in Asia when she identified herself with the major powers of those days, Portugal, Spain, and France. In Europe the formula was applied several times in this century. She identified herself at various intervals with France, then with the Catholic Empire of Austria-Hungary during the First World War, and with the right wing dictatorships of Italy and Germany, before and during the Second World War. She advanced her interests in the wake of these Powers by identifying herself with their economic, political and war interests.

Since the end of the Second World War and the annihilation of European fascism she adopted the U.S. as her lay partner, in the absence of a Catholic superpower. This was prompted by the grim reality of the appearance of world Bolshevism and the growing military presence of Soviet Russia after World War II. The menacing reality of these two compelled the Vatican and the U.S. together and in due course forced them into a veritable alliance known as the Cold War.

As sponsors of the Cold War, the U.S. and the Vatican under Pope Pius XII sealed a concrete alliance prompted by a genuine terror of communist expansionism. Their alliance was formulated with the precise objective of preventing such communist expansionism from controlling even larger sections of the emerging post war world. While Washington came to the fore with economic help and armed contingents, Rome supplied the combat troops with vigorous religious and ideological zeal, the most important ingredient for a genuine crusade.

We have already described how far Pope Pius XII had gone in his eagerness to stamp out the Bolshevik nightmare. Thus, the U.S., to fulfill her military role as a superpower, was compelled to fight almost a major war in the Korean conflict in the fifties, where Catholicism was implanted two hundred years before.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic Church in her turn fought with ecclesiastic weapons beginning with the excommunication of any Catholic who dared to join or to support any communist movement including the socialist ones.

The battle had to be fought simultaneously on two fronts; in the European, in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and other Eastern European nations, and in Asia, in Korea and the disintegrating Indo-Chinese peninsula. The political and military collapse in Indo-China and its potential communist takeover, double sponsored by Moscow and Peking alarmed the U.S. and the Vatican. The two came together by formulating a mutual war policy: the taking of military measures by the U.S. and the carrying out of religious activities by the Catholic Church.

The Vatican's intervention in the growing anarchy of the Indo-Chinese peninsula passed almost unnoticed by the international community. This gave the church a favorable start to her almost intangible operations in the region.

The silent promotions of her force operated not only directly from the Vatican with its mobilization of its ecclesiastic machinery in the very midst of Vietnam itself, but also through the Catholic lobby in the U.S. The importance of the Catholic lobby in American external policies has often been greatly minimized, when not ignored altogether. Yet it has often steered the U.S. external affairs to a degree seldom imagined by anyone not consonant with such matters.

Vietnam is a classic example of effective Catholic pressure by pushing America, inch by inch, into the Vietnamese quicksands.

It was the fear of another Korea, somewhere in Asian territory, which pushed the U.S. towards the Vatican for cooperation in Vietnam. A common objective, the stabilization of Vietnam, drew the two together. The next step was the formulation of a common strategy in which each partner had to play a determined role.

Many voices, inside and outside the U.S. alarmed at the drift towards escalating military commitments warned the U.S. to use prudence. Yet the fear, after France had left, of an ideological and military void in the region, plus a chronic incompetence of Vietnamese politicians, prompted the U.S. to adopt a policy of gradual intervention. Pope Pius XII's hysterical visions and fulminations against communism encouraged Catholics everywhere to support him (and thus the U.S.) in his anti-Bolshevik crusade.

The Catholic politicians of Vietnam, before and after the partition, were mobilized as were certain Catholic quarters in the U.S. itself. There the most belligerent segments of American Catholicism were encouraged not only by certain prelates but also by the State Department, and in due course, even by the CIA, respectively dominated by the Secretary of State, John Foster

Dulles, and his brother Allen.

Their promotion was paramount, since the two brothers were the most ferocious anti-communists then in power, second only to Pope Pius XII. The combination of the diplomatic Cold War strategy of the State Department with the religious one of the Vatican, created a most formidable partnership. The mass media with their daily bombardment of sensationalism did the rest.

The Catholic strategy became the most vociferous in their denunciation of the peril of potential take over by world communism, emphasizing the danger to religion. Even more effective than that was the personal lobby vigorously operating behind the scenes. The lobby specialized in recruiting the most influential Catholics or pro-Catholic personalities in the U.S. administration.

The most successful recruiter of them all was a master builder of political intrigues, Cardinal Spellman of New York whom we have already encountered. Spellman was a personal friend of Pius XII and also of the two Dulles brothers, although his relationship with them had been purposely minimized. He acted as a very confidential intermediary between the State Department and the CIA, and the Vatican.

The Dulles brothers sent Spellman to the Vatican to conduct the most delicate negotiations and often used him to dispatch very personal communications directly and exclusively to the pope himself. On more than one occasion, in fact, it was reported that Spellman was charged with strictly oral communication with the pope to avoid any written or telephonic devices.

These precautions were taken to lessen the risks of leaks but also to bypass official or semi-official records since neither the Vatican nor the State Department trusted ordinary diplomatic channels. The delicate nature of their communications necessitated such measures, they being very often of the utmost explosive character.

The three men worked in unison, united by a profound belief that they had been specifically charged by God Himself with the destruction of God's chief enemy on earth: Bolshevism.

It was this trio more than anyone else, who helped formulate and shape the external policies of the U.S. in this Vatican – U.S. partnership. And it was this alliance which was ultimately responsible for the U.S. involvement in the ideological and military Vietnamese imbroglio.

## **Chapter 20 The Two Catholic Presidents and a Revolutionary Pope**

The role played by Cardinal Spellman in the consolidation of the Vatican-U.S. partnership should not be underestimated. Without his acting as the privileged ambassador of the Dulles brothers to the pope, and visa-versa, the special relationship of the U.S. with the Vatican would never have developed. Thanks to Spellman, Dulles was able to forge a semi-secretive link with the Vatican and bypass the official vigilance of the State Department including his statutory reporting to the president and his advisors.

General Eisenhower, essentially a military man, credited any alliance not backed by the big battalions as unimportant. Thus he had convinced himself that the role of a church in the anti-communist campaign was minimal, whether represented by the Vatican or not. The Dulles brothers did nothing to discourage this belief since it gave them a free hand to pursue their own ideological crusades and strategic schemes which they had already set in motion.

Spellman, the man with one foot on Capitol Hill and another in St. Peter's at Rome, and with a finger in most of the problems relating to the Dulles brothers and the pope, became indispensable to both in operating the Vatican-U.S. Alliance.

Besides his value in promoting Catholic interests in the domestic fields, he was a kind of genius in his own right in most other areas such as high finance. Besides making his own archdiocese the richest in the U.S., he helped to solve certain financial problems for the Vatican itself. But Spellman was at his best in political, national, and international matters. There his diplomatic intrigues became proverbial.

Endowed with the personal protection of the pope and that of the Secretary of State, his power of persuasion on behalf of their joint policies became almost irresistible in the most influential circles of the U.S. These included diplomatic, financial, and political ones as well as the mass media. Because of this broad influence, Spellman acted very much like an American pope. Indeed his archdiocese was nicknamed the little Vatican of New York.

To add weight to his sponsorship of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam, Spellman eventually was nominated Vicar of the American Armed Forces, and became a frequent visitor – carried in U.S. military jets – of the Vietnamese battle fields. When not inspecting the American soldiers, whom he called the Soldiers of Christ, he moved in the political milieu in his role of an American ecclesiastic, diplomat, and official ambassador.

Spellman, as mentioned elsewhere, had been one of the earliest sponsors of the then unknown Vietnamese leader, Diem. From the very beginning when Diem went to seek American sponsorship in the U.S., Spellman persuaded many influential politicians, including Senator Kennedy the future president, to support Diem in preference to other candidates. He praised Diem for his honesty, integrity, religiosity, and above all for his dedication to anti-communism. It was this last quality which endeared Spellman's protégé to the State Department, which finally decided to opt for him.

When Pope Pius XII died in 1958, Cardinal Spellman's operations multiplied as did his lobbying on Capitol Hill. There rumors were heard about him becoming the first American pope. Spellman never scotched the rumors, since he secretly entertained a long standing ambition to the papacy. Indeed he confidently expected that the cardinals at the forthcoming Conclave would select him as the successor of Pius XII in recognition of his effective diplomatic anti-communist efforts, which he had so successfully conducted on behalf of the deceased pope and the State Department.

Spellman was a firm believer in the prophecies of St. Malachy, the 12th century Irish prophet, and had taken such prophecies about the papacy with the utmost seriousness. St. Malachy had characterized each pope, from his days onwards, with a Latin tag indicating the basic characteristics of each pontificate. He had distinguished the successor to Pius XII as "Pastor et Nauta", Shepherd and Navigator.

During the Conclave of 1958, Spellman's papal ambitions became the talk of Rome, encapsulated in a current joke. Spellman, so the joke went, had hired a boat, filled it with sheep and sailed up and down the river Tiber in the belief that he was helping the fulfillment of the prophecy.

The result of the election was anything but what Cardinal Spellman had expected. Cardinal Roncalli, the Patriarch of Venice became the new Pope John XXIII (1958-63).

The contrast between Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII could not have been more striking. The partnership between Washington and the Vatican collapsed almost overnight. Cardinal Spellman was banished almost at once from the papal antechamber. No longer was he the welcome and frequent messenger from the two most ferocious anticommunist Dulles brothers. His sudden banishment from the Vatican was such a personal blow to his inner pride that he never recovered from it for the rest of his life.

The State Department was no less shocked and worried at what might follow. The Vatican under Pope John had completely reversed its former policy. The U.S.-Vatican anti-communist strategy had crashed in a matter of days. The result of such unexpected disaster was unpredictable and was bound to force the U.S. to reshape its own anticommunist grand strategy from top to bottom.

While the U.S. was considering how to do so, two events of major importance had taken place in Vietnam and in the U.S. itself. In Vietnam Diem, thanks to his protectors, had become president and had begun to consolidate his regime with an able mixture of religious motivation and acts of political ruthlessness. In the U.S., Kennedy, Diem's former sponsor, had entered the White House as the first Catholic president in American history.

The hopes of Cardinal Spellman were partially and briefly revived. His dream that a Catholic president would help to consolidate the Catholic presidency of Vietnam soon came to nothing. While Kennedy played a waiting game about what to do with his Catholic presidential counterpart in Vietnam, the latter had started to irk American public opinion with his repressive anti-Buddhist operations.

Kennedy, while succumbing to the Catholic lobby of the U.S. and to the arguments of Spellman, resisted their pressure to put all the weight of America behind the Catholic regime of Diem. The latter had not only alienated public opinion in Vietnam and created enmity with the Buddhist population, he had alienated also public opinion in America to a degree seldom experienced even there. The Buddhist monks' suicide by fire, had been too macabre and horrifying not to adversely influence U.S. public opinion against Catholic Diem.

Kennedy was too astute a politician to risk compromising his future career to support the religious idiosyncrasies of a fellow Catholic president and the silence of the Vatican. Ruthless politician that he was, he put his political career at home first, and the equivocal policies of his church, embodied by Diem, second.

Kennedy's attitude chagrined Spellman, even though Kennedy, as a palliative to the cardinal, ordered 16,000 American troops into Vietnam; the first fateful step by the U.S. into the Vietnamese military bog. The expedition assuaged the most vocal sections of the Catholic lobby in the U.S., who saw it as a move in the right direction. By now however, the politics of the old U.S.-Vatican partnership had already radically changed.

Pope John XXIII had promptly begun to steer the church towards a "modus vivendi" with communism, with the ultimate objective of doing the same with Soviet Russia itself. His motto, contrary to that of Pius XII and the Dulles brothers, became no more a struggle against communism, but cooperation; not war, but understanding.

While such papal policy was being put into effect, Diem continued to intensify his repression against the Buddhists of Vietnam with increasingly horrendous results.

Pope John while never openly condemning such persecutions, privately warned Diem to use prudence and moderation. Not only were the persecutions tarnishing the image of the Catholic Church in the world at large, and specifically in the U.S., but Pope John himself genuinely believed in conciliation with non-Christian religious and revolutionary ideologies.

The results of such papal credence fathered a hybrid called ecumenism, an ecclesiastical creature which, more than anything else, characterized his pontificate, the original inspirer of the Second Vatican Council, from which it emerged.

The harassed Buddhists, encouraged by Pope John's ecumenism, appealed to him to intervene with Diem. A Buddhist delegation went directly to the Vatican and was received in audience by the pope. John gave them words of reassurance and told them that he would do his best to persuade Diem to relent and to be fair to their religion.

The Buddhist delegation went back to Vietnam, but the persecution, instead of abating, increased violence. Buddhists were arrested, beaten and imprisoned. The world at large was shaken. So was American public opinion. So was President Kennedy, who threatened to cut off all aid to Vietnam and to President Diem. But again to no avail.

It might be of interest at this stage, although we have already dealt with it in earlier chapters, to describe in some detail the sequence of events which pushed the main protagonists towards the edge of the precipice. It will be seen how the religious zeal and the dogmatic stubbornness of the two brothers, Diem and the chief of police, prompted them to disregard American and world opinion, the warning of Kennedy, and the mounting opposition of the

Buddhists. This sense of a mission on behalf of Catholicism inspired them to dismiss the ominous warning of the impending collapse, which was to end with their assassination.

Meanwhile President Kennedy pressed Pope John through Cardinal Spellman to try to restrain Diem. There was no apparent result. To show that he meant business, Kennedy took a drastic step and changed the U.S. ambassador to Vietnam. Then in July, 1963, he sent Diem a personal message via Ambassador Nolting in a desperate effort to persuade Diem and his Catholic brothers, the chief of police, the archbishop to alter their policies of repression.

Kennedy's efforts were again of no avail. On the contrary, it seemed that instead the head of the secret police, with the excuse that Red elements had been found among the Buddhists had turned the harsh discriminatory campaign into religious persecution.

Buddhist monks, Buddhist nuns, and Buddhist leaders were arrested by the thousands. Pagodas were closed and besieged. Buddhists were tortured by the police. One day another monk burned himself alive in public, to draw the attention of the world to the Catholic persecution. President Diem, undeterred, continued his policy. The secret police packed the jails with more monks. A third monk committed suicide by fire, and then another. Within a brief period, seven had burned themselves alive in public. Vietnam was put under martial law. Troops now occupied many pagodas and drove out all monks offering resistance. More Buddhist monks and nuns were arrested and taken away in lorries, including a large number of wounded. Many were killed. Nhu's special forces, whenever the opportunity arose, went on storming pagodas and monasteries with submachine guns and grenades to enforce martial law.

Ten thousand Buddhists took part in a hunger strike in blockaded Saigon, while a giant gong tolled from the tower of the main Xa Loi Pagoda in protest against the persecutions. At Hue, in the North, monks and nuns put up a tremendous struggle at the main pagoda of Tu Dam, which was virtually demolished, while eleven Buddhist students burned themselves inside it.

The Diem government, instead of trying to appease its restless opponents with a policy of compromise, refused to see the portents. It went on with suicidal assurance and self righteousness. It appealed to both teachers and students, not with concessions, but with invitations to remain calm and clear-sighted, so that they might be enabled "to see the truth" concerning "this Buddhist affair." President Diem added insult to injury by stating that the solution had to be his solution. "I confirm," he said at the time, "that the policy of the government ... is *irreversible*."

But, while President Diem's attitude to the rapidly deteriorating situation was inflexible, the reaction of his closest associates was of such blind placidity as to border on the incredible. This, perhaps, can best be summarized by a remark of the vice-president in answer to a reporter who raised the issue of the self-immolation of Buddhist monks and to the efforts of a young girl student who tried to chop off her arm at the Xa Loi Pagoda at 10 p.m. on August 12, 1963. "I am very saddened," replied the vice-president, "to see that the cases of self-immolation and self-destruction only waste

manpower."

Vice-President Tho went even further. "Such acts," he declared, "are not very necessary at the present time." Thereupon he added what must be the greatest understatement of the century: "They may make the public believe," he said, "that the Buddhists are putting pressure on the government."

Soon the U.S. applied even stronger pressure and threatened to cut off all aid to President Diem. Again, to no avail. South Vietnam's Ambassador in Washington, a Buddhist, resigned in protest. President Diem's brother and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Nhu, scoffed openly at the Buddhist monks who had committed suicide, declaring that they had used "imported gasoline" to "barbecue" themselves.

By this time the Buddhist leader, Thrich Tri Quang, had to seek asylum in the American embassy to escape with his life.<sup>8</sup> The American government grew openly impatient. The American State Department issued an official declaration deploring the repressive actions which the South Vietnamese government had taken against the Buddhists. "On the basis of information from Saigon it appears that the government of the Republic of Vietnam has instituted serious repressive measures against the Vietnamese Buddhist leaders," it said. "The action represents direct violation by the Vietnamese government of assurance's that it was pursuing a policy of reconciliation with the Buddhists. The U.S. deplores repressive actions of this nature."

Vietnam was split. The army became openly restive and put up passive resistance, not against the communists, but against their own government. Result: The war against the communist North was rapidly being lost, since the population at large, upon whose support the struggle ultimately rested, refused to cooperate.

At long last the U.S., realizing that its strategy in that part of Asia was in serious danger, took action. The American Central Intelligence Agency, in cooperation with Vietnamese Buddhist elements, successfully engineered a *coup*.

The extreme right-wing Catholics in the U.S. were no longer at the center of things as they had been under the Eisenhower administration although ironically they were now under an administration run by the first American Catholic president. Yet they were still on good terms with certain top elements of the CIA. Getting wind of what was afoot, they made a last desperate effort to mobilize the American public opinion in Diem's favor. They sponsored a campaign to counter the one waged by the State Department and the others who had decided Diem's fate. Madame Nhu, the wife of the head of the secret police, was invited to come over and "explain" the true situation to the Americans.

Madame Nhu came and her first call was upon the principle sponsor of the Diem regime, Cardinal Spellman. The vast Catholic machinery went in to action to make the campaign a success. Catholic papers, individuals, organizations and all the vast tangible and intangible ramifications of Catholic pressure upon the mass media of the U.S. were set in motion.



While the hidden Catholic promotional forces worked behind the scenes, influential Catholics came to the fore to sponsor, support, and promote Madame Nhu's advocacy of the Diem regime. Clare Booth Luce, the converted Catholic who, it had been said when she was ambassador to Rome, was more Catholic even than the pope himself, acted as press agent, campaign manager and general sponsor of Madame Nhu.

The reception that President Diem's sister-in-law received demonstrated how Catholics in the U.S., far from condemning the religious persecutions, tacitly approved of or openly supported them. On the other hand the American Protestant and liberal segments told Madame Nhu in no uncertain terms that the persecutions carried on by her husband and brother-in-law were abhorred by the American people. During a visit to Columbia University, for instance, Madame Nhu was greeted by the students with catcalls and boos. At Fordham University, however, she had an "enthusiastic" reception from 5,000 Catholic students at the Jesuit school.

The striking difference in her reception by two diverse sections of American youth was significant, particularly in view of the fact that the 5,000 students with their Jesuit teachers claimed to believe in religious liberty. The Jesuit reception was even more startling because the Vatican, since the accession of Pope John XXIII, far from encouraged the Diems in their religious fervor had, as we have already mentioned, cold shouldered them. On more than one occasion the Vatican had even asked the archbishop to stop offering "spiritual guidance" to the president and to the head of the secret police. These reproaches the archbishop completely ignored stubbornly refusing to believe that the ideological climate was no longer promoted by John Foster Dulles and Pope Pius XII.

But while it was true that Pius XII's policy had been greatly modified, it was no less true that Pope John and President Kennedy had to tread very cautiously in the situation. Although each for his own particular reasons wished to tone down the super-Catholicity of the Diem dynasty, neither could do so in too obvious a manner. This was owing mainly to the Asian-American-Vatican policy spun jointly by the previous American administration, via Cardinal Spellman and Pope Pius XII. The open reversal of the Dulles-Pius grand strategy could trigger suspicions of pro-communism and of appeasement towards aggressive communism in Asia – something which had to be avoided, particularly if accusations of such a nature were made by the powerful Asian lobby in Washington or the American lobby at the Vatican, not to mention South Vietnam itself.

One major event outside South Vietnam helped to precipitate matters. Pope John died. A few days before the downfall of President Diem, the seventh Buddhist monk was self-immolated only a hundred yards from the Roman Catholic cathedral of Saigon with a United Nations fact finding mission nearby.

President Diem and the head of the secret police, by now totally blinded by their religious blinkers, isolated themselves from all and sundry in South Vietnam, as they had already done from all outside it.

Diem, now more than ever, lacked any capacity for compromise. Like his

brothers, he had no compassion. His Ambassador in Washington, before resigning from his office in protest against the persecution of Buddhists, summed up Diem and his brothers: "They are very much like medieval inquisitors," he said, "who were so convinced of their righteousness that they would burn people for their own sake, and for the sake of mankind, to save them from error and sin."

That is precisely what made Catholic President Diem think and act as he did. "We must continue to search for the Kingdom of God and Justice," he wrote, years before he became president, from a seminary in which he was then living (ironically in the U.S.), "All else will come of itself."

It came. But with the help of the U.S.

Kennedy and his military advisors had become increasingly anxious about the military effect which Diem's fanatical antagonism against the Buddhists might have in the general conduct of the U.S. and South Vietnamese operations. Unless stopped at once, Diem was becoming a most serious obstacle for the efficient prosecution of the war against the communist North. His anti-Buddhist campaign, when added to the mass antagonism which the Northern Catholics had caused following their flight from the North, was beginning to impede U.S. plans.

After prolonged and painful assessment, Kennedy and his closest associates finally reached the conclusion that the only way to get rid of the Diem regime was to get rid of President Diem himself. There have been contradictory reports of how the ultimate decision was reached and by whom. Although books, and newspapers have described the step by step evolution, in the end it turned out to be a planned cold blooded assassination of Diem.

Meanwhile Diem and his brothers, as confident in the righteousness of their actions as ever, continued to act as if nothing had happened, notwithstanding the ominous behavior of certain American officials. On the afternoon of November 1, 1963, President Diem had tea with Admiral Harry Felt, Commander-in-Chief of the American forces in the Pacific, and with Henry Cabot Lodge, the American Ambassador, who hours before had cabled Washington that President Diem's last hours had arrived. Soon afterwards the plotters set their plans in motion. At dawn the next day their troops invaded the presidential palace.

The president and his brother, head of the dreaded secret police, had gone. A few hours later, however, they attended mass at the Church of St. Francis Xavier in Saigon and devoutly took Holy Communion. Upon being discovered there they were promptly apprehended and shot. It was the 2nd of November, the Feast of All Souls.

Their bodies were laid in St. Joseph's Hospital, only a few hundred yards from the Xa Loi Pagoda, where Buddhist resistance had first lit the spark of revolt which was ultimately to put a tragic end to President Diem's Catholic authoritarianism. Thus died two most devout sons of Holy Mother Church.

And with them died the political regime they had attempted to impose for her

sake upon an unwilling non- Catholic – even non-Christian – nation.

## **Chapter 21 Secret Deal Between the Pope and the Communists of North Vietnam**

While the doomed Diem-Kennedy plot unfolded like a classic Greek tragedy, a no less fascinating calamity had been shaping up within the secretive walls of the Vatican.

Pope John XXIII, in standard Vatican duplicity, had secretly contacted Ho Chin Minh, communist leader of North Vietnam. This step was taken without the least consultation with either the State Department, Cardinal Spellman, or indeed anybody else in Rome or Washington.

The pope presented a simple proposition. The Vatican was willing to reach a kind of “modus vivendi” or practical compromise with the future communist leader of a United Vietnam.

The implications of the Vatican move was, to say the least, portentous. Vatican recognition of a future United Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, could only mean the acceptance of defeat in South Vietnam and its eventual absorption into a communist North. In other words it would mean the recognition of a future United Republic of Vietnam ruled by the communists.

Ho Chi Minh, although a Marxist, kept diverse Catholic advisors by his side, including a Catholic Bishop. He accepted the proposal in principle and countered with tempting offers of his own: total religious freedom in the future United Vietnam, plus special treatment of the Catholic Church, including favorable educational facilities and frequent financial grants for buildings and the clergy. All this was carried out in the utmost secrecy, since at the same time the Vatican was loudly reiterating that the objective of the Vatican-U.S. joint operations in Vietnam was the reunification of the North with the South under Catholic Diem.

In contrast to his predecessor, Pope John XXIII was a genuine believer in the coexistence of the Church with communism, both global and regional. He had convinced himself that both North and South ultimately were bound to come together to form a United Vietnam. But under a kind of communism peculiarly indigenous to Indo-China.

He had equally convinced himself that the Catholic Church under Ho Chi Minh, would fare well, because of the traditional role which she had played in Indo-Chinese history and culture.

Such thinking resulted in three important moves: 1) the gradual relenting of the Vatican’s official hostility against North Vietnam; 2) the cold shouldering by the pope of President Diem, and 3) the opening of secret negotiations with Ho Chi Minh. These three were set in motion without breaking the Vatican’s public opposition to a total takeover of Vietnam by the communists.

The first result of such policies was seen at the Marian Congress held in

Saigon in 1959 where the pope consecrated the whole of Vietnam to the Virgin Mary. Although this seemed religious in nature it had evident political implications. Many Catholics and non-Catholics took notice of this including Cardinal Spellman and his supporters. Their frown became shock, however, when in December of 1960 Pope John created an episcopal hierarchy, again for the whole of Vietnam.

Not content with this, Pope John took an even more ominous step. He created an archdiocese of the Catholic Church in the capital of communist North Vietnam itself.

These announcements astounded religious and political pundits everywhere, beginning in Vietnam, North and South, and in the U.S. However many interpreted the move in a favorable light. They saw it as the pope preparing to set in motion the ecclesiastical machinery of the church, while waiting for the inevitable take-over of a United Vietnam, under President Diem and his protector the U.S.

In the political circles of Washington these religious moves and comments were judged to be mere inspirational bravado, and dismissed as such. Their potential implications for the future were dismissed except by the few who recognized the pope's gestures as a dangerous exercise of ecclesiastical brinkmanship. Though disguised under the mantle of piety, it was clear that the Church was no longer seriously interested in the U.S. military efforts to defend South Vietnam. In other words, the Vatican had given notice, even if tangentially, that from then onwards it was going to look exclusively after the interests of the Catholic Church.

Negotiating with the communists of the North, the Vatican reached a secret agreement with Ho Chin Minh concerning the freedom of movement of all the Catholics of North Vietnam. These North Vietnamese Catholics formed the majority of all Catholics in the whole of Vietnam. By this agreement they were permitted "if they so desired" to emigrate to South Vietnam and to settle under the protection of President Diem and his Catholic administration.

To avoid giving the impression that the Vatican was conniving with the communists, however, the exodus of the North Vietnamese Catholics had to appear to be a flight of religious people apprehensive of an irreligious regime run by atheists. The image had to be maintained to impress public opinion and even more to create a worldwide sympathy for the Catholic Church and for President Diem, her staunch defender against intolerant communism.

Ho Chi Minh was too astute a politician not to see in the request, beside a ruse advantageous to the Church, also a deal with long range political and military implications for the potential advancement of his own cause. He reasoned that a mass exodus from the North would greatly embarrass rather than help the Catholic regime of Diem by increasing the tension which already existed.

The competition for jobs and privileged positions amidst the already harassed Diem administration would be greatly increased by those coming from the

North. Ho Chi Minh saw that this emigration could only increase the disruption in a government busy harassing its most troublesome majority, the Buddhists.

His calculations proved correct. After a short honeymoon between the Catholics of the North and those in the South, thousands of the new arrivals asked for repatriation. They demanded help from the local authorities and then directly from the government of Diem. Even the Catholic Church, though willing to give out aid, was unable to cope with the problem which grew with each passing day.

The economic situation continued to worsen. The prospect for the new arrivals of any kind of employment diminished, the lack of money became acute, and starvation made its appearance.

The emigrants began to agitate and create minor commotions which soon degenerated into riots, many of which were suppressed with the utmost severity. The slogan, "The Virgin Mary had gone South," which had encouraged the emigrants to follow her to the Catholic paradise of a Catholic administration had proved to be the siren's call to disaster, both for them and the stability of South Vietnam – just as Ho Chi Minh had envisaged.

## **Chapter 22 Disintegration of the Vietnam-U.S. Partnership in Vietnam**

The Pope John XXIII – Ho Chi Minh agreement initially contained a subtle reciprocal ruse by both negotiators. It then turned into a double-edged sword threatening the future stability of Vietnam and all of Southeast Asia.

Spellman and his supporters had watched the development of the whole affair with a sense of impotent outrage and ideological affront. This new papal dialogue with the -comm unists trespassed into the field of practical politics and threatened the whole grand strategy of President Diem and the U.S. military efforts in the region. Their bitterness however, soon was mollified by the sight of hundreds of thousands of North Vietnamese Catholics fleeing from an atheistic regime. In the long run this would be beneficial to the cause of Diem.

After the rivulets of emigrations had turned into a veritable human flood, the pope came out with a masterstroke of religious emotionalism. He invoked the Virgin Mary and then solemnly dedicated the who/eof the Vietnam personally to her. In this manner the Virgin Mary became at one stroke the official protectoress of all Vietnamese North and South, whether Catholics or not, including President Ho Chi Minh, himself.

Ho Chi Minh had other cause for rejoicing, however, as he watched the hundreds of thousands of North Vietnamese streaming southward. As he had earlier envisioned, instead of alleviating the chaotic conditions in the South the new arrivals only increased the mounting confusion there a hundredfold.

The migration, besides proving an astute political move for Ho Chi Minh, set

a precedent of great importance. The pattern became a formula successfully exploited during and after the war. Following the U.S. withdrawal from the region the united Marxist Vietnam created a politically inspired "migratory wave" characterized by the world media as "the boat people."

Hundreds of thousands of these refugees were encouraged and even helped to "escape" mostly by sea. While thousands drowned, hundreds of thousands were received by the West, the largest portion becoming guests of the U.S.

This exodus turned into a long range victory for the Catholic Church. After having suffered a crushing defeat with the fall of Diem and then of South Vietnam, importation of the Catholic migrants into the U.S. helped to increase her battalions in pursuit of the Church's final objective: to become the most powerful church of America.

Meanwhile the inter-Vietnamese conflict between North and South was being intensified, the slippery escalation leading towards a full U.S. military involvement.

In 1963, Pope John XXIII, the father of the Vatican Council II, died. Yet, as he put it, he had opened the window to the wind of change. Soon after his death, this wind of change turned quickly into a veritable hurricane in the swing towards world Marxism.

His successor Paul VI, who only a decade before had been exiled from the Vatican by anti-communist Pius XII for his extreme left wing views, went even further than John in appeasing communism. Soon after his election, in fact while the U.S. was still heavily involved in her conflict in Vietnam, Paul VI made the first tentative offer to Moscow. This offer was labeled by the present author the Vatican-Moscow Alliance in a book by that name.

The political results of the Vatican-Moscow Alliance was spectacular and concrete. Eastern Europe with its large Catholic population was pacified in a very short time in its struggle between the Catholic Church and their militant communist regimes. Priests, bishops, and cardinals who until then had been systematically persecuted, arrested and imprisoned were released. Churches were opened and the clergy and the state began cooperating.

To the chagrined surprise of the U.S., who was waging ~ her vigorous Cold War against Soviet Russia and her satellites, the two former mortal enemies now began unprecedented cooperation.

In Europe the effect of the Vatican-Moscow Alliance was spectacular but in Asia caution had to be exerted. There, as the U.S. was escalating an increasingly ferocious war, the Catholic Church began to retreat as imperceptibly as she could, trying to avoid giving any formal shock to her ideological American partner.

Not only must she avoid upsetting the U.S., but also not offend the patriotic susceptibilities of the American Catholics who had supported the Vietnam War. Many of them had done so in the belief that it was not only their country which had supported it, but also their Church, preoccupied with opposing the

devil incarnate, world communism.

The process of the Church's withdrawal was as subtle and imperceptible as it had been grossly overt in Europe. It was hardly noticed also because the American Church formally went on supporting the war as if the former Vatican-U.S. partnership was still functioning.

This general impression was given daily substance by the frequent and much publicized trips to the Vietnamese front by the Vicar of the American Armed Forces, Cardinal Spellman. Although persona non grata at the Vatican, he was a genuine supporter of the war and acted as if Pope Pius XII was still conducting the Cold War with the Dulles brothers.

The cooling of the Vatican-U.S. Alliance, in spite of Cardinal Spellman's efforts, finally became apparent even to the Pentagon. As the political void in Vietnam became increasingly felt at every level, military pressure was substituted to fill that void. If the Vatican-U.S. anti-communist crusade was weakened by Pope John XXIII's winds of change, the attitude of Pope Paul VI gave the final blow to its very existence. Thus the new policy of the Vatican had become a major contributor to the ultimate defeat of the U.S. in that region.

With the assassination of Diem and the fall of his regime, Catholics both in Vietnam and in the U.S., although continuing to support the prosecution of the war, were no longer a major factor in its conduct. In 1964, after Diem's elimination, Vietnam was governed by increasingly incompetent presidents, generals and a corrupt amalgam of political-military puppets dancing to the tune of an ever more bewildered and confused American administration.

After Kennedy's initial send off of the first 16,000 troops into Vietnam, the U.S. slid ever more swiftly into the abyss. By 1965 President Johnson had imprudently crossed the fatal "advisory limit" to military aid and authorized a gradual escalation against North Vietnam – The beginning of a full fledged war.

Following mounting massive air operations against the communists of the North, the U.S. dispatched an increasing number of combat troops fully entering into the land war which she had tried to avoid a few years before by supporting a Catholic dictator in the recently partitioned South Vietnam on the advice of the Catholic lobby in Washington.

When Pope Paul VI finally died in 1978, only one year after Vietnam had become a united Marxist nation, the chapter of the Vatican- Washington-Vietnam Alliance came officially to a close.

The same year a new pope, hailing from Poland, a communist country and a satellite of Soviet Russia succeeded him (1978). The new pope, John Paul II, initiated at once an even more ambivalent policy toward Soviet Russia and world communism. He has sponsored an ambiguous kind of radicalism, though disassociated from that of Soviet Russia, yet openly encouraging social unrest and ideological conflict in both the West and the East. The unrest and revolution in communist Poland and in Central America are the most striking

examples of his policy.

Meanwhile the history of the tragedy of Vietnam terminated when the new Marxist nation, the United People's Republic of Vietnam, was made to spin along the orbit of the great Asian giants, Soviet Russia and Marxist China, as another Red satellite.

For the U.S. however, the bitter aftermath of an unimagined military defeat had become a national humiliation unmatched since the War of Independence.

A timely reminder to the still idealistic young America that her eagle, as a symbol of national might, should avoid the example of the legendary rapacity of the imperial eagles of the great superpowers of yore.<sup>3</sup> In the future she had better instead identify herself with the legendary dove, as the harbinger and the keeper of peace.

By disregarding the counsel of the Founding Fathers to exert the utmost prudence when dealing with world problems, the U.S. became embroiled in unpredictable misadventures and un-calculated calamities.

Ignoring the maxim of the Monroe Doctrine, she trespassed into the military quicksand of the Asian conflict, and was caught in the vortex of a major global political military turbulence which she had never expected, first in Korea in the fifties, and then in Indo-China in the sixties and the seventies.

This she did reluctantly, even if imprudently, in the pursuit of an unreachable chimera. The encouragement of interested allies who prompted her to go for the chase. Chief amongst these was the Catholic Church, determined since the end of the Second World War to promote her own religious and ideological schemes of expansionism on the wake of American political power.

The imprudence of a vigorous superpower like the U.S., associating herself with an aggressive religious crusader like the Catholic Church will yield as it did in the ancient and recent past, not dreams, but nightmares. And in the case of the Vietnamese tragedy the nightmare became the greatest traumatic politico-military misadventure experienced by the U.S. since the American Civil War.

A lesson and a warning.

(End of article.)

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