

## Vatican by Augustinus

### A not so 'holy' foreign policy

*What hath been wrought by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See?*

**T**he hyperactive Vatican "foreign minister," Mons. Achille Silvestrini, after his Mideast adventures, has won new friends among the shy and difficult Arabs. Why, even the turbulent Druze leader Jumblatt, no sooner had he arrived in Rome, did not hesitate to rush to the monsignor's office to have his wounds licked, after Prime Minister Bettino Craxi and Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti refused to meet with him. Of course, the gnostic leader Jumblatt, not satisfied despite the notoriously affable Vatican diplomacy, went to seek further consolation in the arms of the wife of the existentialist writer, Alberto Moravia.

Moving from the Arab world to the East bloc, the dynamic Monsignor Silvestrini did not miss the opportunity offered by a convention of intellectuals meeting in Warsaw to talk about peace. When old Prof. Bogdan Suchodolski, ex-Catholic, ex-atheist, now communist, sent a letter to the Pope, as organizer of the convention, to inform him about the initiative, the industrious archbishop took pen and paper in hand and dashed off a letter of warm greetings to the conventioners.

In the letter, Monsignor Silvestrini thanked, in the Pope's name, Professor Suchodolski, the organizer of the convention of intellectuals in defense of a peaceful future of the world, and offered words of gratitude and encouragement from John Paul II to him and the spokesmen of the world of science, art, and culture.

"I am pleased," Silvestrini writes, "to transmit to you, with the Pope's authorization, expressions of gratitude for the contents formulated in your letter." The Pope, the archbishop noted, looks with special care upon all noble efforts for justice and peace in the world.

May this congress, continued Silvestrini, lead to effective results which will reinforce new relations based on true human solidarity, and may it lead to a fruitful dialogue. The letter closes by sending best wishes and expressions of deep respect for the important convention.

Warsaw political authorities took the message of Monsignor Silvestrini, in the Pope's name, as manna from heaven, since more than 200 Polish Catholic scientists had sent a protest note to the convention, denouncing it as a government propaganda maneuver, with the clear intent of using the popular topic of peace to hide the injustices and systematic denial of human rights perpetrated in Poland.

But, for the Polish government, only the message from Rome existed. On Jan. 21, Polish radio broadcast the following note, commenting on the convention's work: "We have succeeded in broadening the platform of dialogue among men in the most important affairs of the globe; it is significant that the scientists congress in Warsaw received greetings from Gorbachov and from John Paul II."

The Polish government's spokesman on the same day praised the War-

saw convention for having drawn out new ideas on peace, seeking what unifies men of diverse opinions, and mentioned that it had received an explicit message of support from the Pope, via the Secretariat of State.

The Polish government had at one blow promoted Archbishop Silvestrini to the rank of Secretary of State. Back in Rome, it was pouring denials: The message of greetings had *not* been undersigned by the Pope, who had not even been informed. Practically speaking, it was a forgery.

Bygones were soon bygones, as far as Monsignor Silvestrini's operations went. It was not the first time that the shrewd and prudent officers of Vatican diplomacy let something get out of hand, above all in the recent period.

The reason for the various diplomatic *faux pas* can be imputed to the close ties between the Secretariat of State's foreign policy and that of the U.S. State Department, which is carrying out a New Yalta project for a separate accord with Moscow, heedless of nationalities and creeds.

Nor is it accidental that the Italian foreign ministry went a bit too far in encouraging a possible official visit by General Jaruzelski, the Polish strongman, to Italy, which would imply an "obligatory" visit to the Pope. Likewise, the Vatican Secretariat of State is angling for a new papal visit to Poland—although the Polish government had laid down many roadblocks to the places the Pope wants to visit—with the aim of feeding the false image of a Polish government as an outpost of Moscow's "peace proposals."

Prisoners of their own game, the heads of Vatican diplomacy don't realize the strategic significance of the U.S. intervention in the Mediterranean, and the damage to the image of a peaceloving Russia done by the Chernobyl disaster.