

# KINGS & PAWNS IN THE GAME OF GLOBALIZATION

BY JAMIE BRENDAN

**There is a player upon the grand chessboard of globalization that is often overlooked by the average North American.**

Even so-called "news buffs" tend to ignore the importance of this singular entity. Yet this player has demonstrated an extreme potency on the national and global political scene; and now, as has been the case for centuries, world leaders gingerly approach the high offices of this institution, seeking special blessings and paying homage to its long-standing position of "high-authority."

One of the primary reasons that the average Westerner fails to notice this institution is because it is predominantly viewed as a solely religious body. However, for almost two thousand years, it has arguably been the most dynamic political organization on the face of the globe. Yes, this organization is "religious," and yes, it is political – some have even claimed that it's the "perfect blend of politics and religion." But no matter how it's viewed, either

by the casual observer or by the most hardened political researcher, the fact remains that the Roman Catholic Church and its political/spiritual hub – Vatican City – is a geopolitical powerhouse that cannot be ignored.

History has a funny way of being forgotten. When Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, granted religious freedom to the persecuted Christians in AD 313, it was much more than just an act of human compassion centered on "Christian conversion" – it was a shrewd political move meant to unify the Empire. And when Christianity became recognized as a Roman-state religion, Constantine was elevated as "head of the church" [Ed. Note: at the same time he was still the head of Roman paganism].

Through Constantine's actions, the Roman Catholic Church was birthed as an institutionalized political-religious Roman alliance. Thus, via this morphed spiritual-governmental entity, Romanism remained alive in spite of the fact

that the "national" Roman Empire fractured and collapsed. Ironically, even the name "Roman Catholicism" reflects this historical reality. "Catholic" means "universal," Roman Catholicism literally means "Universal Romanism." Today, the Catholic Church is the living and enlarged extension of Constantine's political-religious experiment.

And the experiment continues. Since the time of the Church's beginnings until the present day, the Roman hierarchy has been involved in countless political intrigues. Speaking on the Vatican's hand in world affairs, Avro Manhattan, a BBC commentator and expert on Vatican geopolitics, wrote in 1949,

"This power of the Catholic Church to interfere in social and political spheres is rendered infinitely more dangerous by the fact that it is not limited to any given country: it reaches all countries in which there are Catholics. Thus there is no continent where the Pope cannot influence, to a greater or



The Vatican COREL WORDPERFECT SUITE, ACADEMIC EDITION, CLIPART PHOTO FILES.



Cover image from "Fathers of Europe" by Keyserlingk

less degree, the social and political life of the community." (*The Vatican in World Politics*, p.18)

And Europe, of all the continents during the last one hundred years, has felt this hand the hardest – a hand that was directly involved in negotiating the Armistice of World War I, a hand that added authenticity to the Nazi regime of World War II (Pope Pius XII has accurately been described as "Hitler's Pope"), a hand that perpetrated the slaughter of the Serbs during the German occupation of Yugoslavia (historian John Cornwell described it as an "attempt to create a 'pure' Catholic Croatia by enforced conversions, deportations, and mass exterminations...one of the most appalling civilian massacres known to history"), and a hand that has applauded the work of "world government," the United Nations, and European unification. This "world government" and United Nations aspect is particularly striking.

On April 6, 1951, Pope Pius XII made some interesting statements while addressing the Fourth Congress of the World Movement for World Federal Government,

"Your movement, Gentlemen, has the task of creating an effective political organization of the world. There is nothing more in keeping with the traditional doctrines of the Church, or better adapted to her teachings on the rightful or unjust war, especially in the present world situation. An organization of this nature must, therefore, be set up...There, Gentlemen, is a vast field of work, study and action. You have understood this and looked it squarely in the face; you have the courage to give yourself to this cause. We congratulate you. We would express to you Our wishes for your entire success..."

Pope Pius XII wasn't the only Vatican voice to laud global governance. Speaking to the United Nations on October 4, 1965, Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the grand international design of the UN,

"Your Charter goes further than this, and Our message advances with it. You exist and operate to unite the Nations, to bind States together. Let Us use this second formula: to bring the ones together with the others...Is there anyone who does not see the necessity of coming thus progressively to the estab-

lishment of a world authority, able to act efficaciously on the juridical and political levels? Once more We reiterate Our good wish: Advance Always!"

Pope John XXIII made similar remarks in his Encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*, in April 1963. A special synod which convened as a result of the Second Vatican Council again offered support to the United Nations in 1971, remarking that it looked forward to the time in which the world community would be able to use an international police force in world affairs (*Justice in the World*, ¶65). Although the Vatican and the United Nations have been at odds over certain social issues, it's obvious

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*The Vatican in World Politics*

ous that the office of the Holy See has keen interest in the overall empowerment of the UN.

As to European regionalism, the role of Roman Catholicism and the Vatican cannot be overlooked. Each of the three main "Fathers" of the present European Community – Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman – had strong Catholic ties and defended the Church as an institution within the broader concept of a unified Europe. In fact, Schuman, who was head of the European Parliament, is now a candidate for Catholic sainthood, and the beatification of De Gasperi and Ade-



Pat Cox SOURCE: EIB

nauer is also being examined.

In a biography on these three "Fathers of Europe," R.W. Keyserlingk – who was General Manager of the British United Press – explained that their larger motivation was "the sacrifice of absolute national sovereignty" within a "federated" political, economic and military alliance. Steps toward this European "sacrifice" of sovereignty was greatly advanced in 1957 by the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the official declaration which established the European Economic Community as a precursor to today's European Union. Not surprisingly, five of the six signers of the Treaty of Rome had political and religious ties to Roman Catholicism, as did other leading figures during this important formative era.

From the early years of European cooperation until today, the Vatican has vocalized its support and offered direction – and at times admonition – to the machinery of continental unification. When the Presidents of the Parliament of the European Union went



**Enlarging the European Union** pamphlet  
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**Romano Prodi** SOURCE: EU OFFICE FOR OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

to the Vatican on September 23, 2000, Pope John Paul II greeted them by affirming that "my predecessors and I have lent our support to the great project of rapprochement and cooperation between the States and peoples of Europe."

The Pope also expressed his thoughts on the importance of "fundamental human rights" as detailed by the Council of Europe, and in particular, the



**Schuman** SOURCE: EU OFFICE FOR OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

European Social Charter. This "Social Charter," which was formulated by Jacques Delors, a social Catholic, had been addressed earlier when John Paul was visiting the Council of Europe in 1988. What is particularly interesting is that on both occasions, the Pope's 1988 visitation and the pilgrimage of the EU Presidents to the Vatican, the Holy See emphasized the special role of "Christianity" - read Roman Catholicism - in developing the common spirit upon which European solidarity should be realized.

This aspect of Roman social/political posturing cannot be underestimated. As part of setting up Vatican diplomatic channels within the emerging federated Europe, Rome established a Permanent Mission to the Council of Europe - the oldest and most established political unification entity on the continent. The Vatican also created the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community, which ensured a continued interaction between European political players and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, through the power of national agreements and special long-term political arrangements, various arms of Roman Catholicism, such as the German Catholic Church, have been granted special political and economic privileges which can be found no-where-else.

During the 2000 visit of Presidents to the Vatican, one item of paramount importance came up. The Pope, in welcoming the EU delegates, openly suggested that the time was ripe for the European Community to begin drafting a comprehensive European Constitution - a necessary step in solidifying the continent's political integration.

With the arrival of ten new members to the EU in May 2004, European leaders were given the task of fast-tracking a draft European Constitution. Understandably, the Vatican saw this as a prime opportunity to assert itself. But to Rome's surprise, no church was asked to participate in the drafting of this vital document. Instead of participating at the Convention level, Rome had to privately lobby participating Catholic officials, including Valérie Giscard d'Estaing (President of the European Convention, the group in charge of drafting the constitution), Pat Cox (Presi-

dent of the European Parliament), and Joschka Fischer (German Vice-Chancellor), along with a host of Ambassadors and other leading figures. Various national Bishops' Conferences were also put to work, applying pressure on a country-by-country basis.

On July 19th, 2003, the draft Constitution was released in its "secular" form. Now, as Europe nears the 2004 expansion deadline, the Vatican is seeking to place wording within the finalized constitution that would reaffirm Europe's "Christian heritage." If this type of wording comes into play, it would grant Roman Catholicism a unique place within the political framework of a unified Europe. Already the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, has openly published in an Italian Catholic magazine his support for this constitutional Vatican tie-in.

This blending of "politics and religion" within the Vatican/EU power structure was especially highlighted this past October in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. According to Ankara television channel "TRT 2," unnamed European Commission sources told Turkey that it would need Vatican approval for its long-term EU membership bid. Underlining this struggle is the fact that Islam is rapidly growing throughout Europe, and this faction, possibly combined with Turkey's predominantly Muslim population, could challenge Rome's unique "religious" position within the EU.

Regardless of one's thoughts on the "separation of church and state" - a distinctively American phenomenon - the fact remains that the Vatican's strength as an international player cannot be denied. As one commentator recently stated, "even the most cynical politician knows that the Pope, with nearly one billion followers, wields remarkable power in world affairs."

The Roman Catholic Church, as a spiritual-governmental entity directly connected to the ancient Roman Empire, is the world's oldest and most experienced political player. In the analogy of the "grand chessboard of globalization," the position of the Holy See could be likened to the exceptionally skilled "king" who wields power and authority over the "pawns, bishops and rooks" of global governance. ❏