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Note préalable

In this month issue, it seemed to us of a particular interest to present an analysis written by French journalist and essayist, Daniel Hamiche, chief editor of L'Observatoire de la christianophobie and administrator of Riposte Catholique.

Father Claude Barthe

The Parolin hypothesis

In their quite imprudent prospectives, some rather renown vaticanists, have imagined the following scenario for the next conclave ; though maybe not to happen very soon : up against a « conservative » cardinal (Cardinal Sarah, 74 years old, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship was often mentioned, and maybe too often) there would be a « progressist, » Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle (60 years old), archbishop of Manila. A scenario in which non of the two contestants would be able to gather the two thirds of the necessary votes. Thus, a third man, a centrist, could then emerged, reassuring one side without scaring away the other. He would be introduced as showing all the garanties of seriousness in the organisation of the government to which the Sacred College aspires today : this man would be Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State (64 years of age).

Parolin, a centrist ?

It could be the Secretary of State only has the appearance of a centrist. One will remember that the cardinals who called themselves the Saint Gallen Group, and who brought to power Jorge Bergoglio, in 2013 used a maneuver consisting in putting forward the name of Cardinal Scherer of Sao Paulo, to move forward, and under cover, their true candidate the Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Supporting Cardinal Tagle, we would find today Cardinal Parolin.

Originally from Venetia, he quickly entered the diplomatic services of the Holy See, Cardinal Casaroli being then Secretary of State and Achille Silvestrini, Secretary for Relations with States (minister of Foreign Affairs), head of liberal Rome for many years. Hard worker, Pietro Parolin quickly acquired, under the mentorship of Silvestrini, a great knowledge of the Curia at the highest level, and at the same time of the world chancelleries. He immediately served in the various nonciatures, then returned to Rome in 1992, Cardinal Sodano being Secretary of State. Once appointed under-secretary for the Relations with States, under Jean-Louis Tauran who had succeeded his boss Silvestrini as Secretary of Relations with States and then Cardinal in 2003, Pietro Parolin was noticed in this position by his savoir-faire in delicate transactions (Mexico, Vietnam). But, he did not please Cardinal Bertone, Secretary of State of Benedict XVI in 2006, who wanted to replace him by one of his faithful, Ettore Balestero, today a nuncio in Congo. Bertone sent Parolin in 2009 in the most difficult of the nonciatures, in Venezuela (there he met Edgar Peña Parra, a very controversial Venezuelan prelate, whom

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nonetheless he will elect as his first collaborator as Substitute to General Affairs in 2018).

Furthermore, in Caracas, the clever attitude of Pietro Parolin with Hugo Chavez was very much appreciated by Cardinal Bergoglio, then Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Once elected to the papacy he was easily convinced by Cardinals Silvestrini and Tauran to call, in August 2013, the experienced and liberal fringe diplomat to replace... Cardinal Bertone. Did the pope believe Parolin could help him become a sort of moral representant for Latin America, with the old Western world represented by the arrogant United States and by decadent Europe ? If this is the case, great must have been the disappointment. Parolin indeed only accompanied the fall of this bergoglian dream, a fall provoked by Donald Trump rise to power (which he had never thought possible) and also by the various setbacks of the pontificate, with scandals in Chile, Brazil, Colombia, where the political pope Bergoglio showed its limitations.

Because of his age, Pietro Parolin was 58 when he became like a second in command within the Roman Church, he has been compared with Cardinal Pacelli, future Pius XII, who became Secretary of State at the same age. In fact, the nomination of Parolin, a spiritual son of Cardinal Silvestrini, renewed with the line of a diplomacy of « ouverture » once represented by Cardinal Casaroli, the principal artisan of the *Ostpolitik*, abandoned in 1990 after the nomination of Angelo Sodano as Secretary of State, in a context of dissolution of the Soviet Empire and as a consequence, for the Church, of a more or less successful regaining over liberation theology in Latin America.

As a result, a new man considering his age, Parolin is also man of an old world which resurrected with Francis, after a long period of wojtylan-ratzingerian « restoration ». As a matter of fact, we should not expect him to take any clean up actions against members of the homosexual lobby, nor should we expect him to keep away from power contentious men such as Mariadaga, Coccopalmerio, O'Brian, Farrell, Paglia, Zanchetta, all of them men of the present faction in power.

Pietro Parolin was made a Cardinal in February 2014. The Holy Father even included him to the eight cardinals forming a Council destined to draw propositions for the reform of the Curia. To everyone's surprise, actually, because everyone thought that one of the main focus of this reform would be to diminish the considerable power of the Secretariat of State, as wished by Paul VI. Pietro Parolin has in fact manoeuvred skilfully to invalidate the efficient tidying-up actions begun by Cardinal Pell, around the Secretariat for the Economy, regarding the financial institutions of the Holy See and of the Vatican City State. This tidying-up was to take away a lot of Parolin's control. With the help of Cardinal Calcagno, President of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See

(APSA), and of Cardinal Versaldi, former President of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs and who later became Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, and of Cardinal Bertello, President of the Governorate of Vatican City State, Pietro Parolin made sure the audit carried by fiery Cardinal Pell over all Vatican financial institutions would fail. Thus, in June 2016, Parolin asked for the exclusion of the Secretariat of State, which rendered all Pell's reorganisation obsolete, and thus suspended.

An insightful episode : the straightening-up of the Order of Malta

The facts are known. The German branch of the Order, the richest of all branches, manages numerous caritative projects around the World. But, it happened that the Grand Master, elected for life in 2008, Fra Matthew Festing, an English man, was informed that agencies depending on the German branch of the Order were giving out male contraceptives, particularly in the regions of Africa and Asia, under the responsibility of the Great Hospitaller, Baron Albrecht von Boeselager (who had not organised this distribution but had been informed). Von Boeselager had just been elected Grand Chancellor (Prime minister of the Order).

The Patron of the Order (a sort of papal ambassador), Cardinal Burke, in November 2016, in an audience with the pope, informed him of the affair, asking for the authorisation to act against the Grand Chancellor. The pope gave an oral approval and then in writing with a letter of approbation to Cardinal Burke dated December 1st, 2016, in general terms. The Grand Master asked then Von Boeselager for his resignation by virtue of his religious obedience and, facing a refusal, dismissed him personally.

But Von Boeselager, furthermore, had gotten into a risky business of obtaining the Order thirty millions of Euros from a Swiss organisation. Thus time was of essential to him. Being very well connected with Cardinal Parolin, the cardinal offered him his help, interpreting, against all evidence, the pope's letter as only asking for a « dialogue » with Von Boeselager and not his « resignation » (instead it was Festing's that was being prepared). Continuously, on December 22nd, 2016, Cardinal Parolin designated a commission in charge of examining the dismissal of the Grand Chancellor. In other words, he organised a sort of canonical visit over a sovereign political entity ; even though, as a religious order, Malta falls within the jurisdiction of the Congregation for Religious (but definitely not of the Secretariat of State). On January 24th, Pope Francis demanded the immediate resignation of Fra Matthew. As to Baron Von Boeselager, he was to be reinstated in his position as Grand Chancellor, position he used to now take the reins of the Order. Strange reversal of situation, surely detrimental to Fra Matthew, but in the end, to Catholic moral too.

The effective functions of Cardinal Burke were suspended, and Msg. Becciu, then Substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State (now Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints), was appointed Special Papal Delegate with the mission to manage the Order in lieu of the Grand Master and to lead a reform intended to reduce the Order to a sort of charitable non-governmental organisation (NGO). Von Boeselager did obtain, for the Order, the thirty millions of Euros that we mentioned earlier and held by a Swiss organisation.

Parolin - China, disastrous agreement

As soon as his taken of office, the professionalism of the new Secretary of State had allowed vatican diplomacy to recover a more favorable image than under his predecessor Bertone. Did his constant success, since the beginning of his career, in delicate and audacious negotiations, caused him to get accustomed to a sort of thrill and dizziness ? In any case, the temporary agreement he signed with the People's Republic of China on September 22nd, 2018, has stunned by its irenicism which could only bring disastrous consequences.

Exploratory negotiations had been carried out for a long time by the Holy See, in particular with successive visits of Cardinal Etchegaray. A certain number, first, of « official » bishops, appointed by Beijing, then slowly the vast majority of them had, to their request and on a case by case basis, been reintegrated into Catholic communion with Rome. Furthermore, Msg. Nugent, in a position at the « Study Mission » in Hong-Kong (whose bishop, Msg. Zen, was made cardinal by Benedict XVI), acted so that, starting in 2002, some bishops appointed by Beijing be also appointed by Rome, following a mutual agreement.

Pope Francis and Cardinal Parolin organised direct negotiations with Beijing with the help of a mixed commission, led by Msg Celli on the Roman side. In various occasions, the Holy Father showed publicly the best possible will vis-a-vis China. What is more, he utilised the services of Cardinal McCarrick, former archbishop of Washington, sanctioned by Benedict XVI for his predatory sex crimes. He had already traveled to China several times : the pope gave him a mandate to travel again to visit « official » Catholics, up to 2016. But, at the same time, the persecutions against catholic and protestant Christians continued, notably with the organised destruction, at a large scale, of churches.

The Parolin agreement of 2018 went further than the *Ostpolitik*, in effect under John XXIII and Paul VI, since it conceded to Chinese authorities, though actively persecuting, nothing more than the « presentation » of the bishops to be appointed by Rome. This immediately provoked scandalised critics, notably from Cardinal Zen, accusing Pietro Parolin, « man of little faith », to « *sell the Catholic Church to a communist government.* » In its critic, Cardinal Zen stigmatised also the reintegration into Roman communion,

in accordance with the agreement, of the last seven official bishops, 2 of them being married. He specially vigorously denounced the fate of the clandestine bishops, kept away from diocesan government when they are not approved by the communist authorities (two clandestine bishops already had to vacate their episcopal seat in favor of « official » bishops).

The saddest thing, said Cardinal Zen, is that the Secretariat of State quoted the 2007 letter of Benedict XVI to the Church in China – « *the solution to existing problems cannot be pursued via an ongoing conflict with the legitimate civil authorities* » – too happy that Pope Ratzinger had recognised the legitimacy of the communist authorities, but truncating the sentence of the following – « *at the same time, though, compliance with those authorities is not acceptable when they interfere unduly in matters regarding the faith and discipline of the Church* » – and Cardinal Zen to invite the guilty party of this « *incredible treason* » to resign. The events that immediately followed the agreement have in fact shown it was only a smokescreen for communist persecutors. Their real intentions being to slowly bring under their control the Church of the martyrs.

Friend of the powerful

Very surprising has been the participation of the man who is second in the Church, to the meeting of a club which endeavours are perfectly estrange to the Church social doctrine, that is to say its sociopolitical teaching. We are talking about the annual conference, behind closed doors, of the Bilderberg group, which took place in Torino, Italy, from 7 - 10 June 2018. On its agenda for the meeting figured the analysis of the « worrying » rise of populisms. This group of a good one hundred people, co-opted among influential personalities in the diplomacy, business world, politic, and media, of which a good number do not hide their humanistic views, was founded in 1954 by David Rockefeller, and intends to be today a successful relay for the ideology of globalism. English speaking media noted that the group passes for a « kingmaker », having welcomed several political figures now heads of State such as French President Emmanuel Macron : the invitation made to Parolin could indicate that the elite of the World decision-makers would favour... Definitely, the Vatican spokesperson wanted to be reassuring : the Secretary of State of the Vatican was only present for a « *short time – about an hour and three quarters* », during which the cardinal gave an address about the « *social doctrine of the Church* ». The spokesperson insisted : the cardinal was there « *simply to convey Catholic social teaching* ». In short, to evangelise the world bank.

No less surprising was the reception by the Secretary of State, on April 5th, 2019, of about fifty lawyers, magistrates, politicians, advocates for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. The key personage of this delegation was the Emeritus Criminology professor from Buenos Aires, Raul Zaffaroni, a

long time friend of Jorge Bergoglio, well know for his very liberal positions and his involvement for the legal recognition of homosexual « marriages », as well as the decriminalisation of abortion.

A manipulation/lobbying was organised by Zaffaroni and by the advocacy journalist for the cause, Frederic Martel, the author of the recently published scandal book, *Sodoma* : Zaffaroni and Martel announced that Pope Francis would receive the delegation and would give an « *historical* » address on the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Information refuted by he spokesperson of the Press Room of the Vatican, Alessandro Gisotti. As a result, per a sort of compromise, the Secretary of State received for a long time the spokespersons of the LGBT revendications, unprecedented gesture and of a great symbolic power.

The Council ! The Council ! The Council !

If so, Pietro Parolin has a « program », one could say it is the Bergoglian program, but better thought out, for the long run and free of the roughness of the Argentine pope.

On the one hand, for example, he is seen as adopting for himself the theme of the revision of the discipline of priestly celibacy. In an interview he gave to the Italian daily published in the United States, *America Oggi*, on September 2nd, 2018, he expressed his belief in the necessity to « *question ourselves* » in order to verify if the celibacy of the priests « *is lived in all its potentialities and if it is appreciated and valued* ». A bit of uneasiness in this words, better understood at the light of the rest of the statement : « *the teaching on ecclesiastic celibacy goes back to the apostolic tradition, but was not applied in certain Catholic Oriental Churches* ». And to moderate the statement he right away added : one must not expect « *drastic changes* » in this regard, but a « *gradual deepening* » that the assembly of the Synod for the Amazon will realise, October next.

On the other hand, while he had inserted on June 7th, 2017, in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, under the title of « *authentic magisterium* », the praise addressed by the pope to the Argentine bishops for their ultra-liberal interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia*, he commented, on September 28th, 2017, the *Correctio filialis* of sixty-two theologians who found seven heretic propositions in the apostolic exhortation. He said : « *Dialogue within the Church is also important !* » Though without having ever, since, put personally this resolution into action.

But the address which is most instructive on Parolin's ecclesiology was pronounced on November 14th, 2017, in Washington, where the Secretary of State has numerous contacts, at the Catholic University of America, where he was awarded a doctorate degree *honoris causa* in Theology. There, he gave a magisterial lesson, fifty-five minutes long, in Italian, to the glory of Vatican II. It had all the aspects of a manifesto, in which he positioned himself following the lead of Pope Francis as realising fully the intentions of the Council.

Was it too clear an address, and a bit embarrassing ? It is no longer on line, not even on the university website. By luck, though, a video of the whole address is still available on youtube using the following search phrase : Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Parolin.

For Pietro Parolin, the Vatican II Council is *fons et origo* for the Church of today and of the future. The Fathers have adopted a new paradigm, one of a Church which has certainly always been catholic, but which has expanded globally, free of its coincidence with Europe. From which paradigm various consequences result, such as the introduction of local idioms in the liturgy and the legitimation of theology adapted locally. The adjective « *global* », next to Church, being used with the same ambiguity as the adjective « *ecumenical* » to qualify the Council (General Council or rather Council that rendered triumphant the coming closer with the separated brethren ?). Parolin explained that, in the same way the Church would have gone, according to him, at its origin, from Judaeo-Christian to Pagan-Christian, with Vatican II the Church has mutated just as radically.

Irreversible process

Pietro Parolin quotes Msg. Doré, for whom, after Vatican II, nothing will ever be as before. Irreversible process, hammers the cardinal. And he underlines that among the profound innovation of Vatican II, put into light by Pope Francis, is the « *irreversible* » introduction for all and at all levels, of the synodality (a notion which widens collegiality, passed the bishops, to the whole People of God). Parolin qualifies it as conciliarity, which brings balance back to the pre-conciliar monarchical organisation.

His address also let to believe that the episcopal conferences are part of the divine constitution of the Church as a result of the episcopal ordination of the bishops : the sacramentality of the episcopate, from which results the *munus* of each bishop, is implemented by the conferences. Thus, the sacramental character conferred to the bishop would, in all, be of a synodal nature and the collegiality of a sacramental origin.

In the end, this address of Cardinal Parolin placed him in the position of the one person, sharing Pope Francis' thinking (the full realisation of the Council), « *correcting lurches without betraying his spirit* » (Julia Meloni, *Cardinal Parolin : The next pope ?*, onepeterfive.com, March 20th, 2019). Pietro Parolin would thus be destined to be the one who would succeed in the project undertaken since the election of Francis : lead Vatican II up to its term. ◆

Daniel Hamiche

1. Cardinal Parolin actually omitted to answer to a May 2014 letter in which Msgr Vigano, then nuncio in the United States, questioned him to know if the measures taken by Pope Benedict XVI against McCarrick were still or no longer valid.