Towards the end of last month (Aug. 2017), the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, made a diplomatic visit to Moscow on behalf of Pope Francis and the Holy See. His trip, announced by the Vatican in late July, marks the first visit to Russia of the Church's "prime minister" in nearly 20 years.[1] The fact that it occurred during the Fatima Centennial makes it all the more noteworthy, considering the prime importance of Russia in Our Lady's Fatima Message.

Shortly before arriving in Moscow, Cardinal Parolin outlined his schedule and goals during an interview with TASS, the official news agency of the Russian Federation:

> "We have been working on the idea of the visit to Russia for a long time, and it will take place from August 20 to 24. The meeting with President Putin is scheduled for August 23. A day earlier, I will have a conversation with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. On August 21, I will meet with Catholic bishops of Russia and on the same evening I will serve a liturgy for the Catholic community of Moscow at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin Mary.
>
> I will also meet with Patriarch Kirill and have a conversation with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk [NB: Parolin's counterpart as head of the Russian Orthodox Department of External Church Relations]. As you correctly noted, the Holy See simultaneously performs both a spiritual and a diplomatic role. That is why the Vatican diplomacy is of [a] special nature. It does not rely on any other force, except for taking care of every person and every nation through dialogue. Taking into account these very aspects, I will discuss with my Russian dialogue partners the issues which are of mutual interest for us, as well as crises in different parts of the world, which are both distant and very near. The conversation with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church proves the openness that emerged in recent years and was marked by the historic meeting in Havana last year. Then Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill spoke of rapprochement as a shared path. When we walk this path together and conduct fraternal dialogue, we can feel the moments of unity. This path requires the search for truth, as well as love, patience, persistence and determination.

During his trip, Cardinal Parolin described his meetings with Metropolitan Hilarion and Patriarch Kirill in positive terms, noting the plight of Christians in the Middle East as a topic of central importance during their discussions.[2] He characterized his talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, his secular counterpart, and President Vladimir Putin in a

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similar manner, while mentioning other key topics discussed such as the current tensions in Venezuela and the return of Catholic church properties confiscated by the Soviet regime to their rightful owners.[3]

After returning to Rome, His Eminence shared with Vatican press personnel that Pope Francis "was pleased with the impressions and positive results" of his trip. During his remarks to the press, Cardinal Parolin emphasized:

> "**Russia**, for its geographical position, its history, its culture, and its past, present, and future, **has an important role to play in the international community and in the world. Therefore, it has a particular responsibility regarding peace**: both the country and its leaders have a great responsibility to build peace, and they must truly strive to put the higher interests of peace above all other interests."

The tragic irony of this statement is that, while Russia does indeed have a vital role to play, it is only the Catholic hierarchy – not Russian leaders – which possesses the power to transform that nation into an instrument of world peace. The means of engaging this power is none other than the public, solemn, explicit consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Pope in union with all the Catholic bishops of the world. This is what God has commanded through Our Lady of Fatima[4] and it requires the Pope, in particular, "to put the higher interests of peace above all other interests," including fear of offending Russia's leaders or damaging "ecumenical dialogue." Unfortunately for Cardinal Parolin, even if he wanted to advocate for obedience to Our Lady of Fatima, he would face the daunting task of overcoming a long legacy of opposition still fresh in the very department he leads.

The Legacy of *Ostpolitik*

In his book *False Friends of Fatima*, Christopher Ferrara outlines the history of this opposition to God's will for Russia, as communicated by Our Lady of Fatima, and explains how it is integrally related to the Second Vatican Council:

> "The new 'orientation' of the Church that emerged after the Council and has been carried out in its name is not limited to a doctrinal or liturgical 'updating' whose horrendous results are obvious. The new orientation extends as well to the Church's relation with the powers of the world according to the new 'spirit of

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> dialogue.' … This 'opening to the world' would not bring about the penetration of the world by the Catholic spirit, as the Modernists had disingenuously promised, but rather precisely the opposite: the invasion of the Church by worldly thinking that Paul VI bemoaned but did little or nothing to repel.
>
> As part of the 'opening to the world,' just before the Council's commencement there would be an explicit betrayal of the mission Our Lady had launched with Her request for the Consecration and conversion of Russia—a request in keeping with the Church's staunch opposition to the errors of Communism, which at the time of the Council were indeed spreading throughout the world as She had predicted at Fatima. In the spring of 1962, in Metz, France, Cardinal Eugene Tisserant had a meeting with none other than Metropolitan Nikodim of the Russian Orthodox Church—a KGB operative, as were the other Orthodox prelates.[5] At this meeting Tisserant and Nikodim negotiated what came to be known as **the Metz Pact, or more popularly, the Vatican-Moscow Agreement**. …
>
> In substance, the agreement was that Pope John [XXIII], according to his fond wish, would be 'favored' by the attendance of two Russian Orthodox observers at the Council. In return, the Catholic Church would agree that the Council would refrain from any condemnation of Soviet Communism or Soviet Russia. In essence, the Council would compromise the moral liberty of the Church by pretending that the most systematized form of evil in human history did not exist—even though, at the very moment the Council opened [Oct. 1962], the Soviets were persecuting, imprisoning, and murdering millions of Catholics, just as Our Lady of Fatima had warned in 1917."[6]

Mr. Ferrara goes on to highlight the incompatibility of Heaven's plan for peace with the new diplomatic program of Vatican II:

> "Obviously, given the Vatican-Moscow Agreement, the Consecration of Soviet Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary to effect its conversion would be absolutely out of the question. On this point alone, the 'new orientation' of the Church that emerged after Vatican II was already radically in conflict with the Message of Fatima. And so it has been ever since the meeting at Metz, which marked the beginning of the conciliar and post-conciliar pursuit of ***Ostpolitik*, the policy by which the Church has ceased all condemnation and opposition to Communist regimes in favor of 'dialogue' and 'quiet**

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> **diplomacy.'**
>
> The two most famous architects of *Ostpolitik* were **Archbishop Agostino Casaroli**, employed by the Vatican Secretariat of State under John XXIII and elevated to the cardinalate and the office of Secretary of State under John Paul II, and **Cardinal Achille Silvestrini**, a top-ranking Vatican diplomat under Secretary of State Casaroli [served 1979-1990]. Casaroli would be succeeded by **Cardinal Angelo Sodano** [1991-2006], who would continue the *Ostpolitik* throughout his tenure, as would his successor **Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone** [2006-2013]. **The policy continues to this day, as we see with the Vatican's studious avoidance of any condemnation of the vicious persecution of the 'underground' Church in Red China.** It is no coincidence that both Sodano and Bertone … have pursued a parallel policy of 'decommissioning' the Message of Fatima, and in particular its imperative of the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, which is quite irreconcilable with a 'New World Order' of democratic pluralism—the great Masonic dream—whose erection is now facilitiated even by Vatican prelates in their diplomatic relations with the United Nations and other worldly powers, including Russia itself."[7]

Thus, we see how the Vatican Secretariat of State has been intimately involved in the policy of *Ostpolitik* since its inception. And sadly, Cardinal Parolin seems content to carry on the legacy he has inherited. While in Fatima this past May for the canonization of Francisco and Jacinta Marto, he declared to pilgrims during a homily:

> "The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council met in order to renew the face of the Church, and presented itself essentially as the Council of love. The faithful, the bishops, the Pope did not fail to heed the requests of the Mother of God and of man: the whole world was consecrated to her."

Yet Our Lady did not come to ask for the consecration of the "whole world," but only *Russia*, to Her Immaculate Heart, and arguably the most opportune moment to accomplish this simple act was during the Second Vatican Council, when nearly all the world's bishops were gathered together in Rome with the Holy Father. The claim, therefore, that "the Pope did not fail to heed the requests of the Mother of God" is false and indefensible.

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A Meeting of Marxist Minds

It is a curious development, nonetheless, that diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Russia have seen marked improvement under Pope Francis. His historic meeting with Patriarch Kirill in February 2016 is a feat that neither John Paul II nor Benedict XVI managed to achieve, even though they were no less desirous of a face-to-face discussion with the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. How is it that Francis seems to be succeeding where his predecessors failed?

The Russian online news outlet *Pravda.ru* offers one possible answer. In anticipation of Cardinal Parolin's visit, *Pravda.ru* ran a rather bizarre commentary that, despite its obvious propaganda in matters historical, gives some insight into the reason for Francis' success:

> "In the second half of the 16th century, Catholicism that [sic] had reached the peak of its power by that time, saw the Russian Orthodox Church as its prime enemy.[8] In the Time of Troubles, at the beginning of the 17th century, the Vatican tried to use the Polish-Lithuanian invasion of Russia to subordinate the country to its will. Yet, Russia defended itself courageously.
>
> In the 20th century, the Vatican's struggle against Orthodoxy resumed with greater vigor. The struggle was conducted under the pretext of opposing the danger of atheism that was emanating from the USSR. Yet, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the world communist movement, the Vatican could not fend off its misfits in the Russian Orthodox Church.
>
> **The situation changed dramatically on March 13, 2013, when Francis became the 266th head of the Roman Catholic Church.** …
>
> **Immediately after his election, Pope Francis called for the elimination of age-old dogmas, including negative stereotypes against Orthodox believers.** The great reconciliation of the two churches started soon afterwards. The epoch-making meeting of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill and Pope Francis was held on February 12, 2016 in the building of the Jose Marti International Airport in the capital of Cuba, Havana."

How interesting that *Pravda.ru* identifies Pope Francis' disregard for "age-old dogmas" as the primary catalyst for "reconciliation" between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches. One of those "age-old dogmas" happens to be the proper relationship between

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Church and State, including the intrinsically evil nature of Communism and its incompatibility with Christianity.

Prior to the Metz Pact (Vatican-Moscow Agreement) mentioned above, the Popes forcefully condemned Communism as a "satanic scourge"[9] that threatens to "change and overthrow"[10] Christian civilization. In stark contrast stands Pope Francis, who says "if anything, it is the communists who think like Christians." Readers may recall the following from my review of George Neumayr's *The Political Pope*:

> "To understand Pope Francis and his radical pontificate, we must examine his words and deeds through the lens of his self-professed Marxism. As unbelievable as it is, the current occupant of the Chair of St. Peter is a firm adherent of **liberation theology** – that is, Communism with a Christian veneer – which was concocted by the Soviet KGB (secret police) and brought into Latin America by KGB agents as a means of subverting the Catholic Church. During his four years as Supreme Pontiff, Francis has personally rehabilitated several previously censured liberation theologians, including Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff, and Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann."

How, you might be wondering, does this relate to improved relations between the Vatican and Russia? As mentioned in the notes of my review, Neumayr cites Ion Mihai Pacepa, former head of intelligence for communist Romania, who defected to the United States in 1978. Lt. Gen. Pacepa offers a detailed account of the Soviet origins of liberation theology in his 2013 book *Disinformation: Former Spy Chief Reveals Secret Strategies for Undermining Freedom, Attacking Religion, and Promoting Terrorism*. His account reveals the answer:

> "**The *Mitrokhin Archive***, a voluminous collection of Soviet foreign intelligence documents smuggled out of the Soviet Union in 1992, **provides the identities and Soviet intelligence code names of many Russian Orthodox priests** dispatched over the years to the World Council of Churches for the specific purpose of influencing the politics and decisions of that body. In fact, in 1972 Soviet intelligence managed to have **Metropolitan Nikodim** (its agent 'Adamant') [NB: the same who negotiated the infamous Metz Pact!] elected WCC president. A 1989 KGB document boasts: 'Now the agenda of the WCC is also our agenda.' Most recently, **Metropolitan Kirill** (agent 'Mikhaylov'), who had been an influential representative to the World Council of Churches since 1971 and after 1975 a member of the WCC Central Committee, **was in 2009 elected**

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> **patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church**."[11]

More specifically regarding liberation theology, Pacepa explains:

> "In the 1950s and 1960s, most **Latin Americans** were poor, religious peasants who had accepted the status quo, and **Khrushchev was confident they could be converted to communism through the judicious manipulation of religion**. In 1968, the KGB was able to maneuver a group of leftist South American bishops into holding a **conference in Medellin, Colombia**. At the KGB's request, my DIE [Romanian intelligence agency] provided logistical assistance to the organizers. The official task of the conference was to help eliminate poverty in Latin America. **Its undeclared goal was to legitimize a KGB-created religious movement dubbed 'liberation theology,'** the secret task of which was to incite Latin America's poor to rebel against the 'institutionalized violence of poverty' generated by the United States.
>
> …
>
> "**The Medellin Conference did indeed endorse liberation theology, and the delegates recommended it to the World Council of Churches (WCC) for official approval.** The WCC, headquartered in Geneva and representing the Russian Orthodox Church and other smaller denominations throughout more than 120 countries, had already come under the control of Soviet foreign intelligence. **It remains politically under the control of today's Kremlin, through the many Orthodox priests who are prominent in the WCC and are at the same time Russian intelligence agents.**"[12]

Patriarch Kirill is one of those agents and was no doubt intimately involved with the dissemination of liberation theology in Latin America and the World Council of Churches. Is it any wonder, then, that he agreed to meet with Pope Francis, the most high-profile Latin American supporter of liberation theology in the world? And in communist Cuba, of all places! Now perhaps we can understand the outwardly cordial reception recently given by Kirill, Putin, and Co. to the Vatican Secretary of State.

Recognize the Time of Visitation

The Gospel tells us that Our Lord wept over the holy city of Jerusalem, due to the obstinate

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rejection of Him by a majority of its inhabitants. He lamented:

> "**If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes.** For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: **because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.**" (Luke 19:42-44)

The Church, of which Jerusalem is a figure (see Apoc. 21:1-2, 9-14), finds herself facing the same looming threat from her enemies because the shepherds have largely ignored "the things that are to [her] peace," most notably, the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lady visited us one hundred years ago to give the Vicar of Christ the key to peace for the Church and the world. Let us pray fervently that he will soon turn away from the error of *Ostpolitik* and cooperate with God's plan!

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[1] Cardinal Angelo Sodano (Sec. of State, 1991-2006) visited Moscow in December 1999 to re-consecrate the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, which had recently been restored.

[2] See "Parolin describes meeting with Hilarion as 'very constructive,'" *Vatican Radio*, Aug. 21, 2017; Claire Giangravè, "Patriarch Kirill and Parolin: Russian Orthodox and Catholics united for peace," *Crux*, Aug. 22, 2017.

[3] See Devin Sean Watkins, "Vatican, Russia agree visa-free diplomatic travel, need for dialogue in Venezuela," *Vatican Radio*, Aug. 22, 2017; Inés San Martín, "Parolin presses Russia to give back churches taken by the Soviets," *Crux*, Aug. 25, 2017.

[4] On June 13, 1929, Our Lady appeared to Sister Lucia, together with the Most Holy Trinity, in her convent chapel (Tuy, Spain) and announced: "The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father to make, and to order that in union with him and at the same time, all the bishops of the world make the consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart, promising to convert it because of this day of prayer and worldwide reparation."

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[5] This fact is independently corroborated by Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin in their 600+ page scholarly tome *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 487-492, 501.

[6] Christopher A. Ferrara, *False Friends of Fatima* (Pound Ridge: Good Counsel Publications, 2012), pp. 23-24.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 25.

[8] This claim is absurd, considering that during the second half of the 16th century the Church was devoting all of her energies to combating the Protestant revolution. Likewise, the remaining Catholic nations of Europe were much more worried about repelling the Muslim Turks than anything relating to Russia.

[9] Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (19 Mar. 1937), n. 7.

[10] Leo XIII, Encyclical *Humanum Genus* (20 Apr. 1884), n. 27.

[11] Ion Mihai Pacepa and Ronald J. Rychlak, *Disinformation: Former Spy Chief Reveals Secret Strategies for Undermining Freedom, Attacking Religion, and Promoting Terrorism* (Washington, DC: WND Books, Inc., 2013), p. 3.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 106, 107; see also Pacepa, "The Kremlin's Religious Crusade," *FrontPage Magazine*, June 30, 2009.

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