

~~SECRET-EYES ONLY~~

EXEMPT

10 May 1963

NLK-77-997, NK72-219, NK-02-072-4-6-2, 10/01
UPHELD, NK-11-113 10/11

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Discussion with Pope John XXIII - May 1, 1963 - 11:30 A.M.

1. Mr. and Mrs. McCone were accompanied by Archbishop Martin J. O'Connor, Director of the North American College in Rome. After an exchange of greetings, Mr. McCone conveyed respectful greetings of the President of the United States. Pope John accepted these and asked that his greetings be conveyed to the President.
2. His Holiness then explained in considerable detail that he felt a responsibility for the souls of the peoples of all countries, that they were equally important to him, and that his responsibility as Head of the Church extended to the peoples of every country and therefore could not be restricted only to peoples of countries following certain ideological or political thought. He therefore could make no distinction between countries or between their people and he said this was "the starting point in all of his efforts for peace".
3. He was conscious of the differences dividing nations, but he constantly hoped that by urging all people and all of their leaders to follow the pathway of truth that he could influence understanding where differences now occur and therefore contribute towards peace in the world.
4. His Holiness said it had come to him from responsible but undisclosed sources that the people of Russia had begun to feel the Pope was working for peace and therefore he was willing to receive Adzhubey and to discuss with him his broad objectives and to extend his blessing to the people of Russia, but not to discuss Russia's domestic or international political problems. His Holiness stated that Adzhubey did not request the audience, nor was the request made by the Vatican, but it grew out of a general audience of representatives of the press attended by Mr. and Mrs. Adzhubey and following this Adzhubey met privately with the Pope in his chambers. Adzhubey confirmed the people of Russia had begun to conclude the Pope was really working for peace.

~~SECRET-EYES ONLY~~

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

5. Since this is the attitude, efforts must always be made, said His Holiness, to find ways for understanding and he was sure President Kennedy was doing this, but we must also realize the possibilities of deception. There must be compromises on issues if agreement is to be reached but there can not be a compromise in the opinion of His Holiness on Christian doctrine or on the Catholic faith.

6. I said that President Kennedy and the United State Government were willing to explore every avenue of peaceful compromise of differences between the Free World and the Communist Bloc and this extended to such vital issues as disarmament, nuclear testing, etc. but that we had for many years been blocked by the "high wall of secrecy" erected around Communist states. I referred to the repeated frustrations in our attempt to negotiate reasonable means of verification of agreements in vital areas, the shocking secrecy that surrounded the introduction of threatening nuclear missiles into Cuba, the disappointments in Laos and South Korea, etc., etc. Furthermore, the United States Government knew that the Soviets, while pursuing discussions in these areas, were expanding their nuclear war-making potential and this, coupled with their adamant refusal of verification, had caused me to question the sincerity of the Soviet purpose.

7. The Pope responded that these were all very real problems but we must continue to work towards their solution. I agreed, but at the same time pointed out that in our Free society and the Free society of other free nations, the Soviets knew all about everything we are doing because we are "open, not closed", but they persist on maintaining a closed society and that this was a stumbling block as we knew from our intelligence sources they possess great resources for world destruction and were adding to these resources constantly.

8. The Pope on many occasions referred to his Encyclical "Pacem in Terris", expressed pleasure in its reception throughout the world, particularly in the United States, and said that he tried to write a simple, understandable, non-provocative Encyclical which would pave the way to understanding between all people and their leaders. He said that if the principles he laid down were were followed, some progress should be made although he recognizes the hurdles which I mentioned.

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

9. After a short discussion of family affairs, the Holy Father asked that I call on his Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Cicognani, prior to leaving Rome. An appointment was arranged later for the following day.

10. The Pope's health seemed better than I expected, [redacted]

[redacted] 50X1, E.O.13526

[redacted] He obviously tired during the 35 minutes of the meeting but his alertness did not wane and he willingly stood for a photograph.

The following day (May 2) I met with Cardinal Cicognani for about an hour, covering the following:

1. The Cardinal reviewed in great detail the Adzhubey visit emphasizing that it was more of a happenstance than a planned arrangement. The Cardinal's explanation was the same as the Holy Father's although in greater detail and furthermore the Cardinal recognized there might be some incorrect conclusions drawn from the meeting.

2. The Cardinal spoke of the Encyclical, recognizing it as an important document, going out of his way to reaffirm his strong conviction that the Free World must carry on an unrelenting fight against Communism, that we must not trust Communists, that we must not enter agreements unless we can prove reasonable compliance, and that we must do all possible spiritually, economically, through education and in other ways to advance the cause of freedom and to retard Communism.

3. The Cardinal spoke with deep concern over Cuba and I reviewed in some detail the current status. He said they had been under great pressure to withdraw official Church representation from Cuba but had decided that they must stay in Cuba if at all possible and therefore were continuing official representation. He asked my opinion and I concurred that the views he expressed seemed correct to me. He said that once they leave a country, they have an extremely difficult time getting back.

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

4. The Cardinal then spoke at some length of their efforts in Latin America, their attempts to revitalize the clergy, the transfer of many priests from Europe and America to Latin America, the creation of seminaries in the United States and Europe for the training of Latin American priests, the meetings of Latin American Bishops which occur frequently, and a variety of other steps which he stated is "our way of advancing the cause."

5. We spoke at some length of the difficulties of negotiating with the Soviets, their penchant for secrecy, their refusal to agree to verification on such matters as disarmament, nuclear testing, etc., and their conduct in many situations after agreement had been reached. The Cardinal seemed thoroughly familiar with all of these and continually warned that we must be on the alert and must be careful. Nevertheless, we must pursue all avenues of agreement in the interests of world peace.

6. In conclusion, it seemed to me that Cardinal Cicognani expressed a more militant view than the Holy Father and that he held an underlying concern over the consequences of the Adzhubey visit, the Encyclical, etc. He did not indicate the extent to which negotiations of understanding were being pursued in countries such as Poland and Hungary and I did not question him on this point. However, press reports which were apparently authentic indicate the discussions have been taking place between Church representatives and Government representatives in several of the Bloc countries. I think there are some differences of opinion in the Church hierarchy over the handling of the Church's relationship with the Communist Bloc countries, with the Holy Father taking a somewhat broader and more benevolent attitude than his Papal Secretary of State.

JAM/mfb