

End of an extraordinary era of papacy

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

THE death of Pope John Paul II on April 3 terminates an era of extraordinary papal reign. He was the third longest reigning Pope in history and became one of the most familiar faces in the world. At the age of 58 (a young age for Pope) he became the Pope in 1978 and was the first non-Italian Pope for more than 450 years. He was Cardinal Karol Wojtyla from Poland and his election stunned the Catholic world.

There is an interesting story before the election of Pope John Paul II. When his predecessor Cardinal Albino Luciani became Pope in 1978 as Pope John Paul I, he is said to have commented: "I will only rule for a short time. There is a Cardinal near me, who will soon be Pope in my place." Ironically, what was to prove one of the shortest pontificates in the history of the papacy, that of John Paul I, has been followed by one of the longest. Pope John Paul II served 26 years as the head of one billion Catholics all over the world.

In 1981 he was shot and wounded in St. Peter's Square by Turkish national Mehmet Ali Agca, and was operated on for six hours. He pardoned Agca for his crime

and in later years he met and befriended Agca.

He was known as the "Pilgrim Pope" because he visited more than 120 countries and his style was to kiss the ground of the airport of a visiting country after his arrival. Some say his total foreign trips would be equivalent to circumnavigating the globe more than 26 times. He has been the most televised Pope and the first to have his own website.

As head of the Catholic Church, he appointed more Cardinals from all parts of the globe than his predecessors and made saints more than others. He wrote many books and only a few months before his death, he published another book. During his reign he released many encyclicals (instructions sent to all Catholic Bishops on issues of importance). His 13th Encyclical in 1998 called for a reconciliation of faith and reason while condemning the spiritual poverty of Western philosophy.

He was born in 1920 in Krakow, Poland. As a young man he was known to be wrestler and a good sportsman. He had a great love for theatre and at one stage considered seriously becoming an actor. The Second World War saw Karol Wojtyla working as a labourer. He

Pope John Paul II was a remarkable person. Throughout his reign, he relentlessly campaigned against war, underscored the maintenance of dignity of all individuals, and cautioned against the dangers of modern life. His personal magnetism and warmth made the Pope one of the few men who has left an indelible mark on history.

studied theology from 1942 and was forced into hiding in 1944 following a crackdown on religious teaching by the communists. He had experienced bad days under communism and he had been a lifelong crusader against communist rule in Eastern Europe including his native land, Poland.

He was secretly ordained as a priest in 1946 and by 1964 he became the Archbishop of Krakow. He was appointed Cardinal in 1969. His journey to Rome began as a Cardinal and soon he impressed others in the Vatican by his depth of theological knowledge.

His legacy

His lasting legacy was the removal of communist regimes in Eastern Europe. As Pope he visited Poland many times and his speeches for freedom ignited the Solidarity movement led by the union leader of Gdansk shipyard Lech Walesa. He reportedly met Walesa during his many trips to Poland, and the Vatican supported his movement

with both moral and material assistance. It is no coincidence that the first country in Eastern Europe to discard communism was his homeland, Poland.

He was always opposed to war and termed war as "defeat of humanity." In 1991 he wrote letters to President Bush Sr. and President Saddam Hussein in a bid to avert the first Gulf War. In 2003, he was again at the forefront of the international church campaign to avert the Iraq war. In 2001, he invited Catholics to take part in a day of fasting for peace after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

He was the great reconciliatory Pope with other major religious leaders. He apologized to the Jews and Muslims for past wrong doings to them, and in 2000 visited Jerusalem and Israel to patch up the long-standing enmity between Jews and Christians. He apologized to Muslims for horrors created by crusaders under the direct patronage of Pope Urban II in the

11 century.

His critics say that the Pope was socially very conservative. He opposed abortion, stem cell research, women's ordination, and family planning practices, and his opposition to these issues have had an effect on million of lives. He inherited a divided Church and left it divided.

How is the Pope elected?

The choice of who will succeed Pope John Paul II is to be decided by a conclave -- a meeting held under lock and key in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican -- by up to 120 Cardinals under the age of 80, the maximum allowed under a law adopted in 1975 by Pope Paul VI.

There are 117 Cardinals under 80. Of these nearly 100 were appointed by John Paul II, who are known to reflect his conservative views in the choice of the successor. When a Pope is selected a plume of white smoke emits from the chapel and black smoke indicates that no Pope has yet been

elected. Two-thirds vote of the Cardinals plus one is required to elect a Pope. That means that out of 117 Cardinals, 79 votes must be obtained by the successful candidate to become the Pope. Some say that the Cardinals believe the Holy Ghost is with them to guide their decision.

Under John Paul II, the College of Cardinals has become so internationalized that the next Pope could come from anywhere in the world, although there is a powerful sentiment to return to tradition and elect an Italian. If this were to happen, Vatican watchers believe that strong candidates include Cardinals Dionigi Tettamanzi (70) of Milan, Angelo Scola (63) of Venice, Tarcisio Bertone (70) of Genoa, Angelo Sodano (77), the Vatican number 2 person, and Giovanni Battista Re, (71), the head of the Vatican Congregation.

The Pope's other hat

The Pope is not only the supreme head of the Catholics, but also the

head of the state of Vatican in Rome, on the western bank of the River Tiber, containing a total area of 0.44 square kilometres. The Vatican is the seat of government of Roman Catholicism. The Holy See is the central government of the Church while the Vatican is a territorial state.

The Papal temporal authority, dating from the 8th century when it was recognized by Pepin the Short, King of Franks, and has been exercised from 1377. During the 19th century, the Vatican was merged with Italy, and in 1929 Mussolini recognized the Vatican's sovereignty.

Diplomatic representation of the Holy See extends to more than 100 countries including Bangladesh. Vatican diplomats are active in all forums including at the UN. They often perform mediation on disputes between states. In recent times, Vatican diplomats successfully mediated between Chile and Argentina on the dispute of the Beagle Channel and a peace treaty was concluded between them in 1985.

Pope John Paul II and Bangladesh

Pope John Paul II visited Bangladesh in 1986. During his visit to

Dhaka he rode a cycle rickshaw in Baridhara diplomatic enclave. He was so moved by the hard labour of the rickshaw puller that he bought the rickshaw for the puller.

The writer had the privilege and honour to represent Bangladesh as Ambassador to the Holy See for more than three years from Geneva and met with the Pope several times. Pope John Paul was very warm and spoke in a baritone voice. He had great respect for the Bangladeshi people for the heroic struggle in 1971 against the Pakistan army's brutalities. He was a champion of liberty and freedom all through his life. Pope John Paul II could speak 12 languages.

Conclusion

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Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Rescuing morality in a globalizing world

LECH WALESA

DEFEATING Communism and ending the Cold War was a success with many fathers. All of them deserve credit for helping to achieve this peacefully. But it is impossible not to bow, as a dutiful son, before the paramount champion of the cause of freedom -- Pope John Paul. I do so looking back at the miracle the pope wrought, which gave meaning and confidence to our efforts and changed the face of the world.

During his first pilgrimage to Poland, the Holy Father uttered two sentences of great significance: "Be not afraid" and "Renew the face of the Earth." The pope showed us how numerous we were and showed us the power we had if we joined together as one. We stopped being afraid and gathered together 10 million people in our trade union, Solidarity, which changed the face of this earth.

Communism's real strength until then had been the weakness of society and our isolation as individuals. Apart from its brute force -- the militia, army, and tanks -- our social weakness and separateness were the main pillars of Communist strength. In 1979 and 1980 these pillars collapsed in Poland. And in their place stood the great hope contained in the word Solidarnosc (Solidarity).

They tried to take it away from us. That was the aim of martial law. But they did not succeed. Martial law failed to destroy our unity. Many of us had our faith severely tested, but they could not take away our hope. There was a lot of pain at the loss of dear ones and much longing for those imprisoned. In the hardest moments we always had the words of the Holy Father in our minds. After his pilgrimage to his native land, we were fortified and strengthened.

The pope is with us now as he was then. Now it is a new world. He helps us face the problems of today with his whole personality and whole heart. In difficult times of destruction and violence, he calls for solidarity among mankind, for building a civilization of love, for sympathy with those in need, for religious and cultural dialogue and for an awakening of the consciences of men. He is rescuing morality in a globalizing world. It gives us hope of building a real and lasting peace. Because, above all, hope is what we need.

Reprinted from "Pope John Paul II: Reaching Out Across Borders" (2003).

Lech Walesa, the leader of the Polish trade union, Solidarity, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983.



Picking the next pope

ACCORDING to centuries-old tradition, the papal election will be handled entirely by the Sacred College of Cardinals. The college is technically supposed to consist of a maximum of 120 cardinals, though Pope John Paul II has bent this rule by adding a few more (the current cardinal count is 135). Fifteen to 20 days after the pope's death, the cardinals will convene in the Sistine Chapel, in a secret meeting known as the conclave.

There, they'll be handed strips of paper emblazoned with the Latin words "Eligo in summum pontificem" -- elect as supreme pontiff. Each cardinal will write down the name of the fellow cardinal he'd like to see elevated to pope and place the ballot in a chalice. (Although the name of any Catholic man can technically be submitted, cardinals, almost without exception, vote for other cardinals.)

A cardinal is not supposed to vote for himself. And per a 1975 rule change made by Pope Paul VI, cardinals 80 years old or greater are barred from voting. There are currently 117 cardinals eligible to vote.

The votes will be tabulated by the camerlengo (currently Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo of Spain), head of the college and the man who manages the pope's secular affairs. An assistant will then bind the ballots together with a needle and thread. A victor must receive more than two-thirds of the votes, so it's unlikely anything will be decided after the first round of ballots. If the vote is inconclusive, the ballots will be mixed together with straw and burned in the fireplace; the black smoke that issues forth signals to outside observers that the election is still ongoing.

In past elections, the balloting continued until a candidate received a two-thirds majority. But in 1996, Pope John Paul II tweaked the rules when he promulgated the *Universi Dominici Gregis*. Aside from mandating that the cardinals could stay in the nearby *Domus Sanctae Marthae* (St. Martha's House) during the election (rather than in cubicles in the Apostolic Palace), the document also stipulates certain circumstances under which an absolute majority can suffice.

Basically, if no decision is reached after three days, the conclave should take a one-day break. After the cardinals return, they should go through no more than 21 additional ballots, with a break for prayer and discussion after the seventh, the 14th, and the 21st. At that point, an absolute majority -- that is, half the cardinals plus one -- is all that's needed to tap the next pontiff.

Once the decision is made, the ballots will be burned sans straw; the resulting white smoke is the signal that a new pope has been successfully selected.

Pope John Paul II inside the Church and out The life of Karol Wojtyla

DAVID GIBSON

ON April 2, 2005, the 27-year pontificate of Pope John Paul II ended when he died of heart and kidney failure.

How is one to reckon a balance sheet of his reign? His outreach to Judaism, his battles with Communism, his championing of the poor, his stand against women priests, his promotion of interfaith dialogue, his hard line on Catholic theologians -- any one of his initiatives merits a book-length treatise.

One way to assess John Paul's pontificate is to consider the pope's track record outside the church and then inside as a leader of his own flock. Such an "inside-outside" prism helps explain why opinions about this pope differ so widely, and may also point towards the great challenge that will be left to his successor.

Viewing his accomplishments outside the walls of Roman Catholicism, we see the young Karol Wojtyla growing up in post-World War I Poland and living through the Nazi horrors of the Second World War that claimed millions of Poles, among them many Jewish friends from childhood, only to face down, as a priest and then a bishop, the Soviet overlords who kept his beloved church, and nation, under their heel.

Then, in a twist so novelistic that it was prefigured only in Morris West's 1963 novel, "Shoes of the Fisherman," Cardinal Wojtyla of Krakow was elected pope, on Oct. 16, 1978, the first non-Italian in more than 450 years. John Paul II immediately embarked on the first of his more than 100 foreign visits, taking the Roman papacy to places most popes had never heard of, and drawing crowds no apostle could

ever imagine.

No trips were more freighted than his visits to his native Poland. On his home turf, and facing down a still-formidable Soviet Union, John Paul attracted millions to his public masses and beyond of the grasp of Soviet control. His influence helped lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War that had menaced humanity with nuclear

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annihilation. In fact, many feel the shocking 1981 attempt on his life was inspired by Communist plotters afraid that he would single-handedly tear down the Iron Curtain.

Far from his native Eastern Europe, the poor and the oppressed in Asia, Africa, and Latin America also had no greater advocate than John Paul. From the start of his pontificate, he tirelessly crusaded on behalf of social justice and human rights, and by the turn of the millennium his efforts to convince wealthy nations of the industrialized world to forgive some of the debts of poor countries bore real fruit. Indeed, with the collapse of Soviet communism and the triumph of Western-style free market economics, John Paul became as critical of Western "materialism" as he once was of Marxist-Leninism.

He was also relentless in demanding an end to armed conflict. While those appeals all too often went unheeded, his forcefulness, his willingness to put his personal

prestige on the line, and his evenhandedness -- his denunciations of the United States war in Iraq were exceptionally sharp -- only increased his moral stature. It was no surprise that John Paul was a leading candidate for the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize.

Move inside the walls of Roman Catholicism, however, and the judgments on John Paul's reign become far more complex. Most

clearly there has been a particular restiveness in the Catholic Church that belies the widespread, and well-deserved, adulation of John Paul. These have come not so much about the usual critiques from the Catholic left, or even from the Catholic right, whose fringe members have caused John Paul as many headaches as any liberal reform group. Rather, there is a desire for change from what Scott Appleby has called "the deep middle" of Catholics, the folks who are by no means revolutionaries, but who want to see a different style at the top: a more pastoral leadership, perhaps a more decentralized church, and above all a church that allows more room for discussion, even about hot-button issues that John Paul has declared off-limits. It is less an eagerness to engage in edgy doctrinal debates than it is a desire for some openness to change, for a listening rather than a preaching papacy.

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the sacraments for the faithful. Of course, the Catholic Church is about much more than numbers and opinion polls, and there are no easy answers to the challenges faced by the Catholic Church. They are, in fact, challenges shared by virtually every faith today.

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His appointment as cardinal in 1967 was welcomed by the communist Polish government who saw him as a

useful moderate. He continued quiet, subtly subversive activities such as ordaining priests to work underground in Czechoslovakia, without angering the authorities.

On 16 October 1978 Wojtyla was elected the first non-Italian Pope since Adrian VI, a Dutchman, in 1523. He took the name of his predecessor, John Paul, to symbolise his desire to consolidate the innovation of Pope John XXIII, who had presided over the Second Vatican Council, and the caution of Pope Paul VI. The years of physical and spiritual survival in testing circumstances had shown him the value of conservatism, yet his intellectual curiosity and his understanding of the huge resources now offered the church by modern communications, technology and travel convinced him that the church could not stand still.

From the start the Pope was almost frenzied. In his first year as pontiff, he visited Mexico, Poland, the US and Ireland. In Poland, he received an ecstatic welcome from huge crowds, giving a massive boost to the trade union, Solidarity. His appointment came at a critical time. With the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and the election of Ronald Reagan in the US the Cold War suddenly got much colder.

Though lauded as a modernist because of his informal style and his willingness to intervene to influence current affairs, his conservatism was often evident too. In 1985 the Vatican declared that homosexuality was an "intrinsic moral evil" and must be seen as an "objective disorder." In 1988 the Pope ruled out women becoming priests. His aim was to preserve the Catholic church by making it fitter for the modern world, not to change the church itself. And when in 1989 nearly 300 theologians signed The Cologne Declaration criticising the Vatican for its authoritarianism, Rome imposed an oath of obedience on anyone in authority in the church to the teachings laid down by the Pope and the college of bishops.

In his last years, the Pope again showed his extraordinary capacity to respond to world events. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he held a historic meeting with the Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, in the Vatican. In 1998 he made an astonishing trip to Cuba -- continuing his lifelong work of subverting Communism in particular and totalitarianism in general -- after which Fidel Castro agreed to allow Catholics to celebrate Christmas. He visited Jerusalem and made an unprecedented apology for the role the Catholic church had played in the persecution of the Jews, became the first Pope to enter a mosque, reached out to Orthodox Christians on trips to Greece and Armenia, and even publicly rebuked President Bush over the invasion of Iraq.

This article first appeared in The Observer.