

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS: GREAT EXAMPLE OF DIPLOMATIC MEDIATION OF POPE JOHN XXIII

On 25 October 1962, during the worst stage of the Cuban missile crisis, Pope John XXIII sent a message to the peoples of the world and a letter to the then Russian President Krūščëv. Both the message and the letter became a great example of mediation of papal diplomacy. After the Russian President received the letter, a détente started. All the missiles established in Cuba were dismantled. The Cuban missile crisis originated from the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. On 15 October 1962, the United States took pictures of missile installations in Cuba. These pictures confirmed that the Soviets were building missile bases in the island. The day after, President Kennedy held a meeting with his closest members of staff, such as the Secretary of State Dean Rusk, the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, the CIA Director John McCone and his brother Robert Kennedy. They had to face one of the most difficult situations of the East-West confrontation. On 23 October 1962, President Kennedy ordered the naval blockade of the island, requiring President Krūščëv at the same time to dismantle the missile bases. Furthermore, the United States decided to fix a line in the proximity of Cuba, which could not be exceeded. If a Soviet navy had gone beyond the line, a violent and tragic armed conflict of the two superpowers would have exploded. In this dramatic crisis of the Cold War, we find the extraordinary mediation action of Pope John XXIII. Before the beginning of the Cuban missile crisis, Pope John XXIII started a dialogue with the non-Catholic population of the Soviet bloc. During the Cuban missile crisis, Pope John XXIII sent messages not only to Communist Governments, but also to all the peoples of the world. On 25 October 1962, he launched an appeal to support peace. This appeal was recorded and broadcasted by Radio Vaticana all over the world. He hoped the message was listened to by the responsible for the crisis, namely the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Immediately after, the Pope sent a letter to President Krūščëv, which was published by the daily newspaper Pravda. The letter urged the Soviet Union to protect peace on the basis of its love for the Russian people. In the Pope's words: "If you will be brave enough to stop the navies bringing missiles, you will prove your love for your neighbor, not only for your nation, but for all humankind. You will be described in history as one of the pioneers of a revolution based on love. You can say you are not religious, but religion is not a sum of precepts, but the commitment to actions made of love for mankind". The extraordinary mediation of Pope John XXIII contributed to the end of the Cuban missile crisis. On 28 October 1962, the Russian President ordered to dismantle the missiles established in Cuba and the United States declared that they were going to dismantle some of the missiles established in Turkey as a sign of détente. On 15 December 1962, President Krūščëv sent his Christmas wishes to John XXIII, congratulating with him for the commitment to peace, happiness and wellbeing. Hence, a new line of papal diplomacy was born. It was called "Ostpolitik", which was later on carried out by Pope Paul VI and reached its acme with the then Pope, today Saint, John Paul II.

POPE JOHN XXIII SIGNING ENCYCLICAL PACEM IN TERRIS:

<https://youtu.be/XwFl4I2niWA>

TESTO RADIO MESSAGGIO

GIOVANNI XXIII

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"Signore, ascolta la supplica del tuo servo, la supplica dei tuoi servi, che temono il tuo nome" Questa antica preghiera biblica sale oggi alle nostre labbra tremanti dal profondo del nostro cuore ammutolito e afflitto. Mentre si apre il Concilio Vaticano II, nella gioia e nella speranza di tutti gli uomini di buona volontà, ecco che nubi minacciose oscurano nuovamente l'orizzonte internazionale e seminano la paura in milioni di famiglie. La Chiesa – e noi lo affermavamo accogliendo le ottantasei missioni straordinarie presenti all'apertura del Concilio – la Chiesa non ha nel cuore che la pace e la fraternità tra gli uomini, e lavora, affinché questi obiettivi si realizzino. Noi ricordiamo a questo proposito i gravi doveri di coloro che hanno la responsabilità del potere. E aggiungiamo: "Con la mano sulla coscienza, che ascoltino il grido angoscioso che, da tutti i punti della terra, dai bambini innocenti agli anziani, dalle persone alle comunità, sale verso il cielo: pace! pace!"

Noi rinnoviamo oggi questa solenne implorazione. Noi supplichiamo tutti i governanti a non restare sordi a questo grido dell'umanità. Che facciano tutto quello che è in loro potere per salvare la pace. Eviteranno così

al mondo gli orrori di una guerra, di cui non si può prevedere quali saranno le terribili conseguenze. Che continuino a trattare, perché questa attitudine leale e aperta è una grande testimonianza per la coscienza di ognuno e davanti alla storia. Promuovere, favorire, accettare i dialoghi, a tutti i livelli e in ogni tempo, è una regola di saggezza e di prudenza che attira la benedizione del cielo e della terra. Che tutti i nostri figli, che tutti coloro che sono segnati dal sigillo del battesimo e nutriti dalla speranza cristiana, infine che tutti coloro che sono uniti a noi per la fede in Dio, uniscano le loro preghiere alla nostra per ottenere dal cielo il dono della pace: di una pace che non sarà vera e duratura se non si baserà sulla giustizia e l'uguaglianza. Che a tutti gli artigiani di questa pace, a tutti coloro che con cuore sincero lavorano per il vero bene degli uomini, vada la grande benedizione che Noi accordiamo loro con amore al nome di Colui che ha voluto essere chiamato "Principe della pace".»

RADIO MESSAGE TEXT

JOHN XXIII

"Lord, hear the plea of your servant, the plea of your servants, who fear your name." This ancient biblical prayer today rises to our trembling lips from the depths of our dumbfounded and afflicted hearts. As the Second Vatican Council opens, in the joy and hope of all men of good will, threatening clouds once again darken the international horizon and sow fear in millions of families. The Church - and we affirmed this by welcoming the eighty-six extraordinary missions present at the opening of the Council - the Church has in her heart only peace and fraternity among men, and she works to make these objectives come true. We recall in this regard the grave duties of those who have the responsibility of power. And we add: "With their hand on their conscience, let them listen to the anguished cry that, from all parts of the earth, from innocent children to the elderly, from people to communities, rises to heaven: peace! Peace!" We renew this solemn plea today. We plead with all rulers not to be deaf to this cry of humanity. Let them do everything in their power to save the peace. In this way they will save the world from the horrors of a war, the terrible consequences of which cannot be predicted. May they continue to negotiate, because this loyal and open attitude is a great testimony to everyone's conscience and to history. Promoting, encouraging, accepting dialogues, at all levels and at all times, is a rule of wisdom and prudence that attracts the blessing of heaven and earth. May all our children, all those who are marked by the seal of baptism and nourished by Christian hope, and finally all those who are united with us by faith in God, join their prayers to ours to obtain the gift of peace: of a peace that will not be true and lasting if it is not based on justice and equality. May all the artisans of this peace, all those who work with a sincere heart for the true good of mankind, go to the great blessing that We accord them with love to the name of the One who wished to be called "Prince of Peace"

NOTE: PARALLEL

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES

Video Ettore BERNABEI

<https://youtu.be/1YE7nntz9z0>

In addition to the broadcasting of the Radio Message, the existence of diplomatic activity between the parties, skilfully coordinated by the Holy See and the Italian Government, chaired by the Christian Democrat Amintore Fanfani, seems to have a basis to avert a possible nuclear war. At the time, in fact, the Vatican had no official relations with Moscow, except through Italy. It is certain, however, that, on the morning of October 27, 1962, less than forty-eight hours after the Pope's radio message, Ettore Bernabei, a trusted man of Fanfani, was present in Washington with the task of delivering a note from the Italian government to President Kennedy with which accepted the withdrawal of nuclear missiles from the base of San Vito dei Normanni, as a counterpart for the return of Soviet ships to their homeland and the dismantling of Cuban positions. Since Nikita Khrushchev's proposal concerning the aforementioned exchange arrived in the capital of the United States on that very day, at 11.03 (with the request for the withdrawal of American nuclear warheads also from Turkey, as well as from Italy) [5] it seems it is likely that, behind the scenes, there was Italian and Vatican mediation. On the other hand, no documents have yet been published on the activity for peace exercised in those days by the Vatican diplomacy towards the Catholic Kennedy but, the next day, the United States accepted the Soviet proposal and the crisis subsided.