

# Pope denies Time's 'Holy Alliance' story

By Cindy Wooden and John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Several high-ranking church and labor leaders — including Pope John Paul II — have denied allegations that the pope and former President Ronald Reagan had formed a "holy alliance" to destabilize Poland's communist government.

Although many acknowledged that the United States and the Vatican worked to help keep the outlawed Polish trade union Solidarity alive, they said a *Time* magazine article's conclusion that Reagan and the pope hatched a plan in 1982 was false.

The pope told journalists flying with him Feb. 19 to western Africa that there was never "any formal understanding or alliance." He said the *Time* article describing the alleged secret pact used "after-the-fact reasoning" in an effort "to find a cause for the consequences," that is, for the 1989 fall of Poland's communist government.

The pope said that 10 years after his meeting with then-President Reagan — at which the plot was allegedly hatched — he could not remember exactly what they said about helping Poland.

But, he said, "one cannot speak of any formal understanding or alliance." *Time* said in its Feb. 24 cover story

that the alliance was part of a larger strategy to bring about the collapse of the Soviet economy, loosen the ties binding the former Soviet Union to its client states and force reform inside the Soviet empire.

"The fact that the Holy See, the church, defended the victims of a totalitarian system is nothing negative," Pope John Paul said. "It is not an accusation. Rather, it is an act that merits appreciation."

The pope called Reagan "a great world leader," who opposed the evils of communism.

Pope John Paul said, "the position of the Holy See and my own position, despite the fact it concerned my homeland, was always guided by the principle of moral order."

At the Vatican Feb. 18, spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the reported secret agreement was an "imaginative conclusion" of the reporter.

He said the Vatican would not respond to specific allegations and "errors" in the article because the list "would never end."

The article was written by Carl Bernstein, the journalist who helped break the Watergate story in the 1970s with fellow *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward. The article reportedly was based on interviews with some 75



AP/Wide World Photos  
**BRAVE OLD MAN** — An old Sikh sitting on his donkey collects his ballot paper at this polling station in Attari, located just one mile from the Pakistan border in Punjab, India Feb. 19. The first elections in Punjab in six years are threatened by violence from Sikh separatists demanding independence and boycotting the elections.

officials of the former Reagan administration and the Vatican.

The *Time* article quoted Reagan's first national security adviser, Richard Allen, as saying of the alleged Reagan-pope agreement: "This was one of the great secret alliances of all time."

Navarro-Valls, citing that passage, said with laughter: "Let's be serious."

"The whole conception (of the article) seems mistaken to me," Navarro-Valls said.

The article asserted that during

the 50-minute pope-Reagan meeting at the Vatican June 7, 1982, the two leaders agreed to undertake a "clandestine campaign to hasten the dissolution of the communist empire," committing their resources to destabilize the Polish government and keep the outlawed Solidarity union alive.

The article claimed that a secret network was later established "under the auspices of Reagan and John Paul II" to supply Solidarity with electronic and printing equipment.

# Campaign seen as way to end abortion ban in Ireland

By Patrick Nolan  
Catholic News Service.

DUBLIN, Ireland — The debate over abortion heated up in Ireland as advocates of a liberalized law considered a campaign to change the Irish Constitution, which prohibits abortion.

Ann O'Donnell, a spokeswoman for the Campaign Against the Amendment in 1983, and Maxine Brady, president of the Union of Students in Ireland, said Feb. 19 that groups for deleting the constitutional ban on abortion are looking seriously at a national effort to gain support for their cause.

Their announcement followed a high-court decision prohibiting a 14-year-old girl from traveling to Britain for an abortion. The girl had

become pregnant after allegedly being raped by the father of her best friend. She is said to have repeatedly threatened suicide since the rape.

The case came to the attention of the authorities after the girl's parents, who had planned to take her to Britain for an abortion, offered police the possibility of genetic fingerprinting from the fetus as evidence for a prosecution.

Attorney General Harry Whelehan took out an injunction to prevent the abortion, and the high court ruled that the rights of the unborn child had to be considered.

Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds met opposition leaders in Dublin Feb. 19 to discuss options open to the government in the light of the controversy which follow the court's decision. The Progressive Democrats

Party, a junior partner in the Reynolds coalition government, has already called for a change in the wording of the constitution.

Support for deleting the constitutional amendment — approved by a 2-1 margin in a 1983 referendum — is likely to be strongest in Dublin and other major Irish cities. Student groups are among the most vocal advocates of the change. Rural Irish are seen as supporting the ban.

Although the Irish bishops have not spoken as a group on the latest controversy, their position against abortion is well-known.

Mary Lucey of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child said that the proponents of the amendment in 1983 had no plans now to campaign in its defense. But if a campaign were

launched to delete or change the amendment it would be resisted.

"You don't solve the girl's problem by killing her child," another prominent campaigner for the amendment in 1983, Dr. Bernadette Bonnar, said. "Two wrongs don't make a right and you don't have to kill a child for the crimes of the father."

O'Donnell said that the debate this time would be more specific. "We can't hide behind vague concepts because we are dealing with real problems now brought about by the amendment," she said.

Anglican Archbishop Donald Caird of Dublin said that his church's 1958 Lambeth Conference rejected abortion in the strongest terms, except in case of strict medical necessity.

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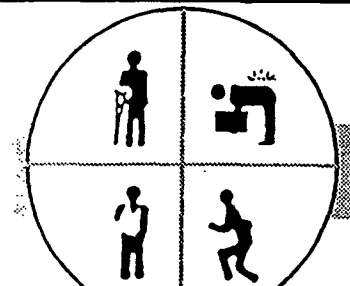
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