

trial Greens, was the fact that the CDU was unwilling to attack ecologism head-on, but only criticized its most extreme forms, such as anti-project protests and acts of sabotage.

Instead of fighting the ecologists and exposing the weak flanks of the SPD-Green government in Hesse, the CDU decided to be “pragmatic,” and that pragmatism set the stage for the CDU leadership to allow its treasurer, Sayn-Wittgenstein, to secretly bring funds into the party from abroad, in the range of up to DM 8 million. This flew in the face of the stricter party-funding laws that were introduced in 1984.

### Seamy financial transactions

But, such activity was also outside the bounds of strict financial-market regulations on speculative transactions. In an interview with the Sunday edition of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on Jan. 16, Sayn-Wittgenstein himself revealed that the money which he placed in accounts with the Union Bank of Switzerland, had, among other things, also been used for speculative transactions on the Frankfurt Metallgesellschaft. By the end of 1999, during the 16 years in which the money had been deposited in UBS, it had quadrupled, to DM 32 million; DM 14 million had been transferred back to Germany, but, as of Jan. 14, when the scandal broke, DM 18 million was still with UBS.

Frankfurt stock market sources are wondering how Sayn-Wittgenstein was able to turn DM 8 million into DM 32 million; it could not have been done with normal investments, at normal profit margins. It could have been done only via high-risk operations—for example, deals involving junk bonds, derivatives, or, specifically, Russian GKO bonds (until the Moscow default crisis of August 1998).

The case of Sayn-Wittgenstein’s special financial deals, from which the Hesse CDU has benefitted for so many years, takes one into the murky financial world of the tiny duchy of Liechtenstein, an enclave couched between Switzerland and Austria. It has 33,000 citizens, but twice as many bank accounts, many of them held by firms for which there is no material evidence of their existence, except for a post office box or a file administered by a trustee. Liechtenstein is to Europe, what certain Caribbean islands are to the Americas—an offshore haven for shady operations, with its extremely lax investment and banking laws. There certainly was a good reason why Bruno Gehrig, the governor of the Swiss National Bank, who has ardently warned over the last two years about uncontrollable “cluster risks” related to highly speculative transactions, recently hinted at risks in the deregulated Liechtenstein market. Gehrig, naturally, has to consider broader risks, affecting banks and markets internationally.

Thus, the unravelling party-funding scandals in Germany, which have already provided leads into a number of other long-kept political secrets, may now also lead into some of the big secrets of the methods by which the global financial markets have managed to muddle through the explosive crisis over the last few years.

## Pope leads ecumenical effort as his enemies plot succession fight

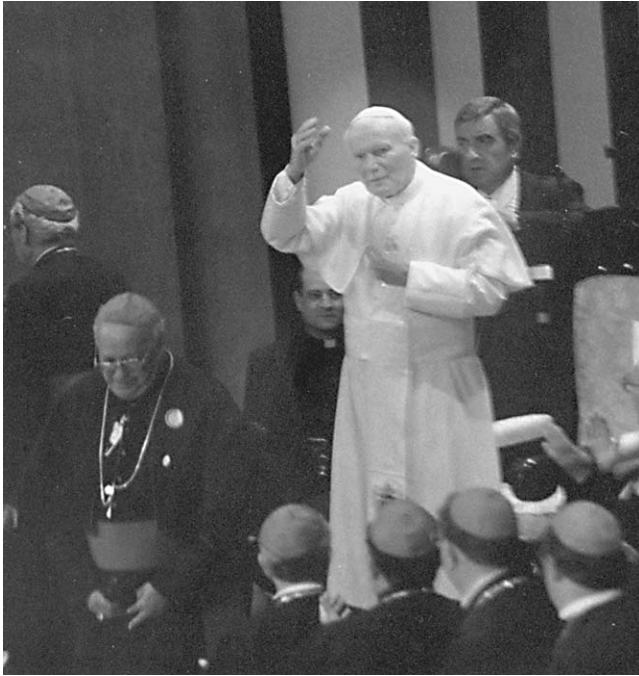
by Claudio Celani

As Pope John Paul II initiates the Jubilee Year of the millennium, factions antipathetic to his policy have signalled the beginning of hostilities inside the Roman Catholic Church to determine a shift of policy for his successor. Karol Wojtyla, despite being 79 and sick, has made it clear that he intends to carry out his mission until the end—that is, leading the Roman Catholic Church into the new millennium. To this purpose, he has organized for this year the crowning of his Pontificate’s ecumenical efforts, in a number of travels and highly significant meetings with leaders of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths—meetings which can represent important steps toward ecumenical unity among the religions, and thus strengthen the role of reason in world affairs.

Nevertheless, a notorious representative of the liberal opposition to the Pope, Bishop Karl Lehmann of Mainz, Germany, raised the issue of the Pope’s resignation in an interview which was clearly designed to spark debate inside the Church. Lehmann is the chairman of the German Bishops Conference. A follower of Martin Heidegger, the existentialist philosopher who wrote scandalous apologies for the Nazis, Lehmann has well-known differences with the Pope’s views on matters of theology and doctrine, which have kept him from being made a Cardinal. This means that Lehmann will not participate in the Conclave that will elect the next Pope.

Notwithstanding this, Lehmann opened hostilities on the issue by releasing statements in a Jan. 9 radio interview that were reported by the Italian press agency ANSA as follows: “I personally believe that the Pope must have the courage to state: I can no longer carry out my task in an adequate way.” Subsequently, Lehmann corrected the ANSA report, saying that he had really said, “I personally believe the Holy Father able to confess courageously, ‘I can no longer etc. . . .’” Despite the correction, Lehmann’s statement was generally interpreted as undue, and shameful, pressure on the Pope.

Immediately, Lehmann’s interview provoked a chorus of reactions from the ranks of the Church. Especially Italians, who feel very close to the Pope, objected to Lehmann’s ill-considered remarks. Bruno Vespa, a well-known commentator—and the only anchorman in history to have enjoyed a live phone call with the Pope on a TV show—wrote a commentary in which he suggested that perhaps Bishop Lehmann does not believe in the Holy Spirit. How else, Vespa asked, other than



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the Holy Spirit, could one explain whence John Paul II has drawn the extraordinary energy he has shown, so far superior to what his unaided physical strength would allow?

The Pope himself indirectly answered Lehmann, commenting in a public appearance: “God always gives man the strength he needs to carry out what God demands from him.”

### **The issue of the Papacy**

But Lehmann’s action must not be taken at face value. He is far from thinking that a Papal resignation is a realistic possibility. He and others well know that, in the Church as it is now constituted, to have a Pope resign is like having the rivers stream from the sea up to the mountain. In the history of the Church, only one Pope has resigned: Celestine V in 1294. His place was taken by the infamous Boniface VIII, of the Caetani family, whom Dante Alighieri in his *Commedia* placed among the simoniacs in the Inferno (by the way, Dante also castigated Celestine as the Pope “*che fece il gran rifiuto*” — “who made the great refusal,” that is, left his post).

Lehmann has opened a new flank in the fight that will occur in the next Conclave, when the Cardinals will gather to elect the successor to John Paul II. In fact, Lehmann’s target is the role of the Papacy, the highly centralized government of the Roman Catholic Church. By raising the issue of resignation, Lehmann is addressing a major complaint which he and others of his ilk share: that in cases where the Pope is too sick

to carry out his duties, the Roman Curia prevents him from resigning, and simply usurps his Papal power and runs the government itself.

Disguised as a seemingly legitimate question, the issue raised by Lehmann is part of an offensive by a definite faction in the Church that wants a decentralization in decision-making power, to be accomplished by delegating certain categories of decisions to committees of bishops, who would be sensitive to “local realities.” Among the known representatives of this faction are Milan Archbishop Carlo Maria Martini, a Jesuit, and former San Francisco Bishop John Raphael Quinn, who has written a book on the subject, *The Reform of the Papacy*. Like Lehmann, however, neither Martini nor Quinn has a chance of being elected Pope. Martini is too much profiled as being on the “left,” while Quinn, like Lehmann, is not a Cardinal and therefore will not be a member of the Conclave. It is clear that the candidate, or candidates, of this “conciliar” faction are still under wraps, and it is not to be excluded that this faction will put up a “conservative,” in order to manipulate an assembly 90% of whom have been appointed by the current Pope, over the 22 years of his reign.

### **A visit to the Holy Land**

While his enemies were opening the succession war, the Pope was astonishing the world with the announcement of his next trip. The Vatican made known on Jan. 11 that John Paul will travel to the Holy Land in the week of March 20-26. He will visit Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, and will meet all three heads of state. The Pope’s trip is conceived as an ecumenical effort for the unity of world religions — an effort whose implications are crucial in the context of the “clash of civilizations” scenario being promoted by British geopolitics. The Pope will have public meetings with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders in the Holy Land, events which will send a powerful message of unity and peace among these communities throughout the world.

In another impressive such ceremony on Jan. 16, the Pope led the largest ecumenical event in history: Leaders of 22 Christian churches and denominations joined him in opening the Holy Door of St. John Lateran cathedral. In the act of opening the door, the Pope was flanked by the leader of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, and the Greek Orthodox leader Metropolitan Athanasios. Then, in a gesture of high symbolic meaning, the Pope took the Gospels from the hands of the Orthodox leader, showed the book to the crowd outside the basilica, and gave it to the Orthodox Coptic Metropolitan, Amba Bishoi, who showed it to the crowd inside. Then the Russian Orthodox Bishop Klin did the same eastwards, and the Lutheran Bishop Krause did the same westwards. Highly significant too was the choice of the readings: from the Letters of St. Paul, from the Russian theologian Vassilevic Florovsky, and from the German Lutheran Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian and martyr, one of the leaders of the Resistance against Hitler.