

“THE FALL OF THE SECOND WALL”: THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CUBA AND THE UNITED STATES AND THE ROLE OF POPE FRANCIS

Abstract

The pastoral trips of Pope Francis to Cuba and to the United States were not only religious. The political activity that he organized to consolidate the relationship between the two recently reconciled countries was remarkable. Through visits, meetings and masses the Pope expressed his position and concerns about various arguments, beyond the recomposed Cuban-American relationship. During the trip he addressed subjects including the environment, poverty, family, union, freedom, all of which were themes that the Pontiff had clearly stated in his encyclical *Laudato Si* (2015) and his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). With this trip, Pope Francis ended up consolidating his status as a global politician as well as a pastor with a high degree of acceptance not only among Catholics.

Keywords: Pope Francisco, Cuba, United States, Obama, Castro, Apostolic Journey

Introduction

The centrality and notoriety that Pope Francis² has obtained over the last few years is undeniable. It can even be said that few pontiffs have played as much of a global political role as Francis. This, of course, has raised voices from both defenders and detractors. The former have affirmed that a renewal was necessary, and praise the Pope's approach to addressing the “common” people with simple language and an energetic way of acting, defying the rigid vatican structures. Many also stress the high level of social and ecological commitment that the Pope has been building through his writings and pastoral visits, with sometimes high doses of politicization. On the other hand, he has also been accused of being a Marxist due to his “socializing” and populist language, and because of

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2 Consult the extended biography of Pope Francis in the webpage of the Holy See <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/biography/documents/papa-francesco-biografia-bergoglio.html> (accessed 31.03.2017).

his preference for focusing on the most unprotected in society. He has even been accused of being a Peronist because of his background. Even so, Pope Francis does not leave anyone indifferent, and there is no doubt that he is a world-class opinion maker.

Many of the papers dealing with Cuba and religion, among them *Religión y Revolución en Cuba: Veinticinco Años de Lucha Ateísta* and *Between God and the Party: Religión and Politics in Revolutionary Cuba*, argue that Fidel Castro drank in many of the Pre-revolutionary influences. The authors analyze Castro's views on religion and its effects on the Cuban revolution. Finally, with regard to works on religion and religiosity in the United States, one book stands out - Emilce Cuda, *Democracia y catolicismo en Estados Unidos*. This book describes the historical development of the relationship between Church and State in the United States. Cuda highlights the influence of religion on the social policies and structures that created a solid democracy. Concluding the section I would like to add two articles and a book also from Emilce Cuda which will help better understand Pope Francis. These are *The Theology of Francis. Difference between Liberation Theology and Theology of the People; Francis and the theology of the people*; published between 2013 and 2015; and *Para leer a Francisco. Teología, ética y política*, which offers an excellent vision to understand the theological and political formation of the pontiff.

The developing relationship between the United States, Cuba and the present pontificate is a timely and interesting topic, with a history of more than 60 years, and which, until the arrival of Pope Francisco, had not been resolved. For this reason, although academic studies on the aforementioned actors are extensive, very little has been written about the Vatican's role in bringing all parties closer to full reconciliation. Hence the purpose of this article is to expose the particularities of this approach and the promotion of it through the Vatican diplomacy headed by Pope Francis. In particular the article tries to understand if the action carried out by the Pope Francis was of pastoral character or if there was a politicization of the sacred for the attainment of the long awaited reconciliation. If this is so a further question arises: Was this politicization of the sacred instrumented by the Vatican to achieve rapprochement between both countries or were both countries instrumented by the Vatican to achieve a rapprochement without political costs? Was there a Third way that could be considered a mutual "utilization" between both States and the Vatican in which all those involved obtained satisfactory returns?

To this purpose the article will analyze the speeches delivered by the pontiff before his arrival in Cuba, during his visits, and subsequent speeches as well. Of great value are the sources offered by the official page of the Vatican (<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/it.html>), as well as those sources presented in the page of the Embassy of the United States in Cuba (<https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/>). To this will be added an important diversity of articles offered by newspapers

and magazines from many parts of the world as well as academic articles and books that will undoubtedly help to sustain the main argument of this investigation.

Church and State in Cuba. A dangerous relationship

Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, there was a mismatch between the Catholic Church and the Cuban State. In a speech on December 15, 1959, at the opening ceremony of the first revolutionary plenary of the National Federation of Sugar Workers, Fidel Castro said: "We are accused of wanting to found a church, accused of wanting to separate the Cuban Church from the Church of Rome. We cannot be disturbed by religious sentiments; what is in the way of the Revolution are counterrevolutionary sentiments"³.

Revolución, the official newspaper of the 26th of July Movement, violently attacked the Church and religious teaching in an editorial. The title of the article was: "*Roman Education, For What?*" Members of the clergy were expelled or repressed for opposing the regime. Others, like the fathers Eduardo Aguirre and Juan Ramon O'Farrill, asked for political asylum in the United States. The first noted that Fidel Castro had suggested that an independent national church would be founded. Evidently the political system after the revolution had an atheistic projection⁴. Some authors have pointed out that in reality the Church was the victim of its own class orientation, which is strategically wrong, since it was dedicated to the wealthy class and disregarded the poor of the countryside and small towns⁵. In this way, the Cuban population lived their religiosity mostly unrelated to religious organizations. The contrast between religion and the Revolution was perceived as a social class confrontation⁶. Fidel Castro said in October 1991 at a conference during the Group of Three summit meeting in Mexico: "The Catholic religion was the religion of the rich [...] we did not want to establish a dilemma [...] to whom obey, to the party or to the church"⁷. In 1967 Fidel Castro gave a closing speech for the First Conference of the Latin American Organization of Solidarity (OLAS). Speaking of the religion, he affirmed: "The revolutionary movement, and in general the communist movement [...] has a method, a style and in certain things, not a few characteristics of the church, and we sincerely believe that this

3 Fidel Castro, *Discurso e intervenciones*, t1, 1959 Año de la liberación, s/e.

4 Córdova Efrén, *Apuntes para una historia de la dictadura castrista*, Editorial Hispano-Cubana, Madrid, 2006, pp. 126-128; Ruiz Leovigildo, *Diario de una traición. Cuba: 1959*, Florida Typesetting of Miami, Miami, 1965, pp. 29, 228; Alonso Aurelio, Las relaciones entre la Iglesia Católica y el Estado cubano a la altura del 2003, in *Cambios en la sociedad cubana desde los noventa*, Tulchin Joseph et. al. (eds.), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC, 2005, p. 308.

5 Carlos Romeo, Che, in *1959: Una rebelión contra las oligarquías y los dogmas revolucionarios*, in Sandra Valmaña Lastres (ed.), Ruth, Havana, 2009, p. 366. See *The Church in Latin America, 1492-1992*, Dussel Enrique (ed), Maryknoll, New York, 1992.

6 Cárdenas Medina René, Religión, producción de sentido y Revolución, in *1959: Una rebelión...* op.cit. pp. 453, 456.

7 *El partido, una revolución en la revolución. Selección temática 1961-2005*, Guerra López Dolores et.al. (comps), Editora política, Havana 2011, p. 305

character must be overcome⁸.

Austen Ivereigh, one of the biographers of Pope Francis, stated in March, 2016 that 200 out of the 3500 priests left Cuba during the 1970s. Tom Quigley journalist of *Commonweal* magazine contested that there had never been so many priests since Fidel Castro maintained a number of approximately 200. Religious properties were, however, confiscated by the State⁹. Other issues that Quigley rejected were about the Christmas ban on the island. On December 3, 2016, the *Catholic News Agency* confirmed that it had indeed happened in 1969. For this author, the prohibition had been abandoned since Christmas was celebrated in particular houses or churches, but it stopped being an Official holiday because, according to official reports, it interfered with the sugar harvest. In 1971 Fidel Castro, together with Chilean priests, held a meeting in which he expressed the need to "unite Christians and revolutionaries" in the struggle for freedom. Later, on a visit to Jamaica in 1977, he mentioned the subject of the "strategic alliance" between religion and socialism. Even so, the Cuban constitution of 1976 officially declared an atheist State, while the Afro-Cuban religions were fomented¹⁰. By the end of this decade, the government had become more tolerant of some autonomous citizens, cultural and religious entities, partly because the government needed help to meet the basic needs of the population¹¹.

In May 1985, Fidel Castro gave an interview to the Liberation Theologian and a political activist, Frei Betto, at the Palace of the Revolution in Havana. The Cuban leader affirmed that the Cuban communist party was confessional, and he also declared himself an atheist and proclaimed the non-existence of God. He added that at the current stage (mid-1980s) the coexistence between the Cuban communist party and the churches was of mutual respect. When it comes to the relationship with the Catholic Church he pointed out that the difficulties had been overcome. Besides, he emphasized that the party could tend to act as or become a kind of religion. He added: "As the Church has, of course, its martyrs and heroes, the history of any country has its martyrs and its heroes, it is also almost a part of a religion"¹². The events which happened in this decade showed a more important presence of the Catholic Church in society. Indicative of this could be the final document of the Cuban National Ecclesial Encounter (ENEC) of

8 OLAS. *Primera Conferencia de la Organización latinoamericana de Solidaridad*, 1967, s/e., p. 123.

9 According to the Vatican Information Service in recent times the number of religious on the island grew because many Cubans entered into the seminary and were granted permits to religious orders. It is estimated that there are about 361 priests and more than 656 religious. Quigley Tom, *Faithless Fidel*, *Commonweal*, February 24, 2017, p. 10, New York.

10 Córdova Efrén, op.cit., p.185. Cfr. Burgaleta Claudio, *La fe de los hispanos: Diversidad religiosa de los pueblos latinoamericanos*, Libros Liguori, Italy, 2013.

11 Crahan Margaret, *Sociedad civil y religión en Cuba: pasado, presente y futuro*, in *Cambios en la sociedad cubana...* op.cit., p. 300; Rodríguez Lissy, *Cuba: el país que recibirá al Papa Francisco*, *Granma*, September 3, 2015.

12 *El partido, una revolución en la revolución...*, op.cit., pp. 220, 229, 231. See *Conversaciones con Frei Betto. Fidel y la religión*, Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, Havana, 1986, p. 158.

1986¹³. At the end of the 1980's the Cuban bishops published a pastoral reference to the imminent arrival of the pontiff with the support of the Cuban government. The international events of 1989 impeded the arrival of the pontiff to Cuba.

During the early 1990s, Castro allowed a new religious renaissance in Cuban society, considering religion safe and tolerable, and recognizing that the difficult moment of the Special Period made religion more attractive. Believers were even allowed access to the Communist Party¹⁴. The reform of the constitution in 1992 is a symptom of this approach. This included an article that emphasized religious freedom and beliefs. As a State religion, the project of "scientific atheism" had failed and had given way to reconciliation between the political and religious conscience of the people¹⁵. A new pastoral document emerged in 1993 called "Love All Waits" in which religious positions were more nuanced and proposed the basis for a transition to capitalism where Catholics would perform a relevant role¹⁶. In addition, in the period 1997-2000, a Global Pastoral Plan was promoted with the aim of extending evangelization through prophetic and acculturated communities, promoting human dignity, as well as reconciliation, and building a society based on love and justice. Some priests suggested a national dialogue between the Church and a broad coalition of sectors of civil society, although the government stopped that initiative¹⁷. During the 1990s, Castro was progressively lessening restrictions on the Catholic Church, especially after the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1998. Among other issues, the celebration of Christmas was reestablished in the official calendar, some processions were organized and diocesan newspapers were published. In recent years the Church in Cuba has begun to play an important sociopolitical role, being the most important independent voice. There is an example that can demonstrate this situation. In 2010 Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana met Raúl Castro and agreed to release 53 prisoners of the regime and more than a hundred in the next year. In 2011, the Cuban Interreligious Platform was established, which includes representatives of all religious manifestations. It marked the end of the economic blockade, the return of Cuban prisoners in the United States, and the renamed case of the res-

13 Alonso Aurelio, op.cit., p. 308; *Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano. Documento Final*, Tipografía Don Bosco, Rome, 1986.

14 Crahan Margaret, op.cit., p. 300; Coltman Leycester, *The Real Fidel Castro*, Yale University Press, New Heaven and London, 2003, p. 295.

15 Valdéz Paz Juan, Cuba en el "Periodo Especial": de la igualdad a la equidad, in *Cambios en la sociedad cubana...* op.cit., pp. 97, 98. See *La Voz de la Iglesia en Cuba, 100 Documentos Episcopales*, Conferencia de Obispos católicos de Cuba, Mexico, 1995 and Fernández Santalices Manuel, *Religión y Revolución en Cuba: Veinticinco Años de Lucha Ateísta*, Saeta Ediciones, Miami, 1984.

16 The Catholic lay movement has also been revitalized in the period with the creation of the Catholic University Student Movement (MECU), the Civic-Religious Formation Center of Pinar del Río, the Promoter Team for Social Participation of the Laity, the Justice and Peace Commission, the Association of Catholic Journalists, the Association of Catholic Historians, centers of cultural studies in various dioceses, to name but a few relevant manifestations of the organization of the laity. In Alonso Aurelio, op.cit., pp.310, 311.

17 Crahan Margaret, op.cit., p. 298; *Iglesia Católica y Nacionalidad cubana: Encuentros nacionales de Historia*, Estrada Montalbán Joaquín (ed.), Ediciones Universal, Miami, 2005; Del Rey Annet and Yalaxy Castañeda, *El reavivamiento religioso en Cuba*, *Temas*, No.31, Havana, 2002.

titution of Elián González¹⁸. In 2012 the successor of the Polish Pope, Benedict XVI, visited the island again and gained certain media coverage. In 2015, Pope Francis made a historic visit to the island and then to the United States bringing the two countries closer for the first time in over 50 years, thus sweeping away the last remains of the Cold War. In 2012 the successor of the Polish Pope, Benedict XVI, visited the island again and gained certain media coverage. In 2015, Pope Francis made a historic visit to the island and then to the United States bringing the two countries closer for the first time for over 50 years, thus sweeping away the last remain of the Cold War.

The Vatican and the United States. A Changing Relationship

The United States did not maintain diplomatic relations with the Holy See until the beginning of World War II. At that time President Franklin Roosevelt, politically motivated by the growing number of American Catholics, and worried about Italy's possible entry into the war, decided to appoint Myron Taylor his personal representative to the Holy See. Roosevelt commissioned Taylor to work for peace and create a close liaison between the Pope and the president. President Truman renewed his mandate and even tried to promote Taylor to the rank of extraordinary ambassador in 1946. Hoping to take advantage of the Vatican's condemnation of the anti-Catholic and atheist policy of various communist regimes in Europe, Truman attempted to build an ideological affinity with the Holy See. However, Taylor resigned four years later under the constant pressure of American religious activist groups.

During the 1950s in the United States there was a religious renaissance. By 1955, Catholicism became the largest religious denomination in the country with a population of around 31 million. There was a religious pluralism that had never seen before (at least 18 religious denominations had more than one million members) accompanied by a collective hysteria against "atheist" communism. Religion was the place in which American patriotism was supported. In the mid-1950s the Congress emblazoned the national motto "In God We Trust", instituted a national day of prayer and added the words "under God" to the Loyalty Commitment.

As a result of a religious renewal of the Church, the Holy See changed its political position between 1963 and 1978, seeking a non-aligned position in the international arena. In 1969, President Richard Nixon reestablished links with the Holy See and appointed Henry Cabot Lodge his personal representative in the Vatican until 1977. With the election of President Jimmy Carter in 1976, policy of

18 Rodríguez Lissy, Cuba: el país que recibirá al Papa Francisco, *Granma*, September 3, 2015, Havana; Elian Gonzalez: 15 years after his rescue, a quiet life, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/elian-gonzalez-15-years-after-his-rescue-a-quiet-life/> (accessed 01. 04. 2017). See: Fandl Kevin, Cuban migration to the United States in a post-normalized relations World, *Minnesota Journal of International Law*, No.26/1, 2017.

the United States and Vatican coincided again around issues like social justice. With John Paul II's arrival to the Holy See in 1978 and the presidential election in the United States of Ronald Reagan in 1981, there was another change in relations between the two States. Based on their mutual hatred for communism, the President and the Pope strengthened bilateral cooperation with the aim of destabilizing the "evil empire". After the election of William Clinton in 1992, the bilateral relationship was energized with increasingly significant communications, issues of mutual policy, and social justice commitments. Along with the collapse of the Soviet Union, these convergences created an openness that served the national interest of the United States and the Vatican's religious mission¹⁹.

Antecedents in Francis' thought

In recent years Cuba shows a notable opening to the rest of the world²⁰. When Pope Francis was appointed the Primate of Argentina in 1998, he wrote a book titled *Diálogos entre Juan Pablo II y Fidel Castro* enunciating some of his cardinal political points, one of which is the refusal to circumscribe the "soul" of Cuba within the bounds of communism or individualism, rather than nationalism. Therefore, he added that Cuba's fall into the Soviet orbit was a catastrophe. He stressed the value of dialogue and John Paul II's request for freedom, dignity and democracy of the Cuban people, and also appealed to end the United States embargo. He reaffirmed the missionary task of the Cuban Church, which not only faced the resistance of the regime, but also a part of society²¹. Another position that Francis took to the Vatican was that established in the General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate in 2007 (Aparecida, Brazil 2007). He was responsible for editing the final document highlighting the urgency for helping the poor, the sick and the marginalized. He opted for a popular religion aimed at "common" people as well as the protection of the environment²². This

19 Formicola Jo Renee, U.S.-Vatican Relations: Toward a Post-Cold War Convergence?, *Journal of Church and State*, 1996, pp. 801-812; Barrett Lain Corinna, God, Civic Virtue, and the American Way: Reconstructiong Engel, *Stanford Law Review*, No. 67, 2015, pp. 490-499. See: Cuda Emilce, Pope Francis: It is the Politics!, *Political Economy and Religion*, No. 1, 2017 and Cuda Emilce, *Democracia y Catolicismo en Estados Unidos*, Ágape, Buenos Aires, 2010.

20 The Summit of the Americas in Panama (2014), was the first meeting between Raúl Castro and Barack Obama; host of the second summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac, 2014); In 2015 the country was able to return to participate in the Summit of the Americas of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Panama. Likewise, the Cuban government intervened, actively mediating between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Relations with Europe and Asia also advanced. The European Union will replace the so-called "Common Position" established in 1996, which conditioned the opening up of the market to an improvement in the human rights situation on the island. The new agreement was signed in March 2016 in Havana. China and Japan also accentuated their relations with Cuba. In September 2016, during the visit of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, 12 agreements were signed. Ganther Sara, In Cuba everything is different, *Nueva Sociedad*, No.266, November-December, 2016; Álvarez Soledad, Francisco, the first Pope to travel to reconciled Cuba, *EFE News Service*, September 14, 2015, Madrid.

21 Pagni Carlos, La diplomacia americana del Papa, *El País*, April 28, 2015, p.11, Madrid; Lucero Schmidt Fernando, La perseverancia en la fe de Cuba apasionó al Papa, *La Nación*, September 21, 2015, Buenos Aires. See Spadaro Antonio, *Entrevista a Papa Francesco*, La Civiltà Cattolica, September 19, 2013, Rome.

22 Yardley Jim, Francisco, Un papa humilde que quiere cambiar al mundo, *New York Times*, September 22, 2015, New York.

latter question is taken up with greater force in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013).

In the Exhortation there are several arguments declaring the forms of segregation and violence as well as the Church's will of being a mediator. It also revealed the existence of "non-citizens", "half citizens" and "human surplus" (p.61); the will of non-imposition on those cultures that had not welcomed Christian preaching to avoid falling into a "vain sacralization of one's culture" (p.95). Later he said: "Sometimes I wonder who are in the world today those which really care about generating processes that build people, rather than obtaining immediate results that produce an easy, rapid and ephemeral political return, but do not build the fullness Human" (p.172). In November 2013 the Pope gave a speech to the participants in the plenary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue saying: "The future is in the coexistence respectful of differences, not in the homologation of a thought. We have seen the tragedy of unique thoughts in history". "For this reason, it is essential to recognize the fundamental right to religious freedom in all its dimensions".

As the historian Emilio Gentile illustrated, there was a politicization of the sacred when the religion absorbed the political dimension or directly developed a political role. As far as the political scientist, Juan José Linz, is concerned, this - the polization of the sacred - could be produced by two very different processes: one is the desire of institutions, authorities, leaders and even religious believers to obtain the support of the State against the secularized forces; the other is that rulers, politicians, state institutions and political movements could instrumentalize religion to gain legitimacy and support, thus politicization of the religious sphere. Linz pointed out that most likely could be found a convergence between these two objectives²³.

Religious diplomacy or politicization of the sacred?

Francisco's visit to Cuba coincided with the 80th anniversary of establishment of relation between the Vatican and Havana, which was never interrupted despite the various crises experienced since the revolution. The success of the Pope's undertaking in reconciling the two countries was the conclusion of a process that had been taking place for years at the diplomatic level²⁴. Unlike his predecessors, Francis had wide access to radio and Cuban TV and Vatican diplomacy was very different from those of Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI. For Ivereich the

23 Gentile Emilio, *Le religioni della politica. Fra democrazia e totalitarismi*, Laterza, Bari, 2001, pp. XIV-XV; Linz, Juan, *El uso religioso de la política y/o el uso político de la religión: la ideología-sucedáneo versus la religión sucedáneo*, Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas, No.114, Madrid, 2006, pp. 16, 26, 28 and 33.

24 Castro agradece al Papa por el deshielo de las relaciones entre Cuba y EE.UU., *El Comercio*, May 11, 2015, Lima; Lüters Gamboa Erika, Francisco abogará en Cuba por el diálogo, la libertad religiosa y el fin del embargo, *El Mercurio*, September 19, 2015, Santiago de Chile; Quigley Tom, Faithless Fidel, *Commonweal*, February 24, 2017, pp. 10-11, New York; Lamet Pedro, La otra revolución, *El Mundo*, September 21, 2015, Madrid: 27; Rol político de la Iglesia para acercar a los pueblos, *La Razón*, December 27, 2014, La Paz.

difference between the visit of Pope Francis and those of his predecessors was his "Latin American" origin and his profound knowledge of Cuba²⁵. For Leonardo Boff, the Liberation Theologian, it is not only his origin from the "Third World", but the fact that he broke with the European hegemony, almost domination, that had displayed Europe - and especially Italy - as the final authority of Catholic Church. He adds that Europe represents 24% of the Christians of the world, whereas in the "south of the world", around 60% of the population identify as Christian. Besides, his personal charisma: "a universal brother" in a new relationship with the earth and nature. The greatest problem, he concludes, is not in the Church, but in the survival of civilization, of life, of the vitality of the earth, which is terribly threatened²⁶. Based on these criteria, the Pope had to possess both pastoral and political virtues.

On August 25, 2014, Cardinal Jaime Ortega arrived at the White House carrying a letter from Francis to Obama, having done the same with Castro. The letter emphasized the papal desire to dispel the misunderstanding between both countries and offer his services as mediator. To unlock the situation Francis appealed for the prompt acquittal of the United States contractor Alan Gross who was detained on the island and accused of espionage. With the same purpose United States Secretary of State John Kerry visited the Vatican in January 2014. In October Obama and Castro accepted mediation and sent representatives to the Vatican to reach an agreement of the normalization of relations. On November 9, during an Angelus in St Peter's Square, the Pope asked: "to commit ourselves so that humanity can overcome the frontiers of enmity and indifference, to build bridges of understanding and dialogue". After the Angelus, the Pope was more direct. He referred to the fall of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of ideological division of the entire world. He asked to pray that "all the walls that still divide the world will fall, and that innocent people will not be persecuted and even murdered because of their creed and their religion [...] Bridges, not walls!". A week later, on November 16, in another Angelus in St. Peter's Square, the Pontiff returned to the same question: "to make the walls that raised our selfishness fall, to make us take the first step in blocked relations, Resume the dialogue where there is no communication"²⁷.

Both presidents sealed the reconciliation on December 16, 2014, expressing gratitude to the Pope. The Vatican's symbolic cover was ideal to avoid political costs on both sides²⁸. The following day President Obama announced a new course in relations between the United States and Cuba. On the same day of

25 The nuncios in Cuba since the 1959, see: Nunciature to Cuba <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dxxcu.html> (accessed 31. 03. 2017); Quigley Tom, Another Pope, a Different Cuba, *Commonweal*, September 11, 2015, pp. 9-10, New York; Padgett Tim, Pope Francis: Our Man in Havana?, *America*, February 9, 2015, New York.

26 Vittar Daniel, *Clarín*, March 17, 2013, p.38, Buenos Aires; El nuevo sueño americano, *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 24, Rome.

27 Todos los muros se derrumban, *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 28, 2015, Rome.

28 Patterson Margot, Return to Havana, *America*, June 22-29, 2015, p.18, New York; Padgett Tim, A Pope for the Americas, *America*, June 23-30, 2014, p.24, New York; Dias Elizabeth, The New Roman Empire, *Time*, p.28, New York.

Obama's Announcement, Gross was released, as were three Cuban agents. From that moment on Washington and Havana resumed their relations²⁹. Obama affirmed the core role of the Pope: "He appealed personally and urged me and Cuban President Raúl Castro to resolve Alan's case and to attend to Cuba's interest in the release of three Cuban agents who had been imprisoned in the United States for 15 years". He thanked the Pope for his moral example; the government of Canada, who offered a neutral place for the conversations; and a bipartisan group of congressmen. Yet Obama warned that there were still barriers to ordinary Cubans: "No Cubans should face harassment, arrest or beatings, simply because they have a universal right to express their thinking, and we will continue to support civil society in that matter"³⁰. President Obama aligned himself with the Vatican's stance against the Cuban lobby in Miami to conclude with one of the "great anomalies of US foreign policy," as *The Economist* magazine called it an economic embargo on the island³¹.

The Pope, seizing the opportunity, launched a new appeal in the Angelus of January 4, 2015 in St. Peter's Square: "shutting down guns and turning off the lights of war is still the inevitable condition to start a road which leads to peace". On his return trip from Moscow in May 2015, the Cuban president had the opportunity to thank the Pope in a private audience: "If you continue to talk like this, I assure you that I will pray again" he said. The BBC World correspondent in Havana, Will Grant, said that the words of the Cuban leader showed a deep understanding between Havana and the Vatican. Despite his appreciation of current progress, the Pope returned to arguments about the people's right to be the creators of their own destiny. In his speech at the Second World Encounter of Popular Movements at the Santa Cruz de la Sierra Expo-Fair, Bolivia (July 9, 2015), he said: "They do not want tutelage or interference where the strongest subordinate the weakest. They want their culture, language, social processes and religious traditions to be respected" and if this is not respected then arise: "new forms of colonialism that seriously affect the possibilities of peace and justice". Referring more concretely to the people of Latin America: "they painfully gave birth to independence [...] they have almost two centuries of a dramatic and contradictory history trying to achieve full independence".

The pontiff mentioned the relationship between the United States and Cuba

29 López Zamorano José, La pregunta que cambió la historia en la relación EUA-Cuba, *Notimex*, March 3, 2016, Mexico; Aguirre Mariano, Cuba ante la presidencia de Donald Trump, *RFI in Spanish*, December 4, 2016, Paris; Rol político de la Iglesia para acercar a los pueblos, *La Razón*, December 27, 2014, La Paz; Adiós a 5 décadas sin relación con Cuba, *Portafolio*, December 22, 2014, Bogotá. See more in detail: LeoGrande William and Kornbluh Peter, *Back channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana*, The University of North Carolina Press, North Carolina, 2014.

30 Declaraciones del presidente Obama sobre cambios en la política de EE. UU. respecto a Cuba, <https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/declaraciones-del-presidente-obama-sobre-cambios-en-la-politica-de-ee-uu-respecto-cuba/> (accessed 31. 03. 2017).

31 There were other coordinations between the Vatican and Washington. In an unusual gesture, in March 2015, Obama appointed Bernard Aronson as envoy for the Colombian peace process in Havana. Pagni Carlos, La diplomacia americana del Papa, *El País*, April 28, 2015, p.11, Madrid; Cabrera Mauricio, Obama, el Papa y Fidel, *Portafolio*, December 23, 2014, Bogotá.

on the return flight to Rome after the apostolic journey that took him through Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay (July 5-13, 2013). He noted that there had been no mediation, but the desire of both sides. He added: "But what can be done with these two, after more than fifty years like this [...] We have done almost nothing, just small things". Then: "They will both gain something and lose something, because in a negotiation it is like that, but what they will surely gain is peace, that is certain: encounter, friendship, collaboration: that is gain". Both countries resumed "formal" diplomatic relations on July 20, 2015. In the first week of September, Cuba and the United States held their first bilateral commission and agreed on a working agenda to begin normalizing their ties. The Secretary of State John Kerry traveled to Havana to formally open the embassy; while Castro eliminated the prohibitions for Cubans to leave the island, and promulgated the Foreign Investment Law to attract capital³².

Before his trip to Cuba and to the United States (September 2016), Francis spoke via teleconference with Cuban and American students, stating: "A good leader is one capable of generating other leaders. If a leader wants to sustain leadership, he is a tyrant". This showed that his visit had both a pastoral and a political component, although the Vatican affirmed that only the pastoral issues impelled him to that trip. It is obvious that the Pope has firm conviction in the search, above all, of the peripheries³³ and the desire to fight back the "big powers" that promote an economy of "discard" and a deterioration of the environment³⁴. The secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, Guzmán Carriquiry Lecour, said about the Pope: "It is very critical of ideology because ideologies arise from intellectuals and politicians who seek to manipulate the hearts of people"; US ambassador to the Holy See Kenneth Hackett tried to tone down accusations that the Pope was Communist and anti-capitalist: "I do not think he hates capitalism, I think he hates excesses" The apostolic journeys to the "end of the world" that Francis made, and his diplomatic mediations consolidated him as a pastor and a politician of global reach. No one remains indifferent to their interventions³⁵.

A book written by journalist and researcher Marcelo Larraquy *Código Fran-*

32 Castro agradece al Papa por el deshielo de las relaciones entre Cuba y EE.UU, *El Comercio*, May 11, 2015, Lima; El inédito encuentro entre el papa Francisco y Raúl Castro, BBC Mundo, http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/05/150510_papa_franisco_recibe_Raúl_castro_vaticano_visita_privada_lv (accessed 31. 03. 2017); Álvarez Soledad, Francisco, el primer papa que viajará a la Cuba reconciliada, *EFE News Service*, September 14, 2015, Madrid.

33 Among his pastoral travels include Albania, Sri Lanka, Bosnia, the Philippines, Ecuador and Bolivia, the Central African Republic, Kenya, Uganda, among others.

34 See Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" and Encyclical "Laudato Si'". In: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es.html> (accessed 31. 03. 2017).

35 Montaner Gina, Milagro en Cuba, *El Mundo*, September 19, 2015, p.27, Madrid; Lüters Gamboa Erika, Francisco abogará en Cuba por el diálogo, la libertad religiosa y el fin del embargo, *El Mercurio*, September 19, 2015, Santiago de Chile; Yardley Jim, Francisco, un papa humilde que quiere cambiar al mundo, *New York Times*, September 22, 2015, New York; Beltramo Álvarez Andrés, Papa Francisco, consolida liderazgo mundial en 2015, *Notimex*, December 29, 2015, Mexico; Calero César, *El Mundo*, October 24, 2016, p.28, Madrid.

cisco helps to consolidate the image of the Pope as a leading international political actor who has pushed the Vatican to the center of the world scene. The author points out that the Pope used tactical allies depending on the region. For example, he sought support from Russian President Vladimir Putin to stop the imminent US attack on Syria and at the same time approached Obama to seal with Castro the historic reconciliation between the United States and Cuba. He is not a univocal Pope and he acts according to the circumstances. With time his "social" position has been radicalized. Consequently, Francis's discourse is not only in accordance with the roots of American Catholicism, but also brings into the public space the voice of the voiceless, Latin American people. Pope Francis is a legitimate politician who does not answer questions but asks them; a sovereign Pope who does not give in to media expectations of the politically correct; a pastoral theologian who does not speak of the effect of insecurity, but of the causes of a culture that kills³⁶.

Taking into account the trips made to Cuba, from there to the United States and finally to Rome, there are a total of 37 activities carried out by the Pope, including masses, meetings, visits, blessings, celebrations and conferences (See Appendix 1). Of this total, 23 times the Pope held a position that we could call "pastoral" - in that he did not mention political issues - this represents 62.1% of his total activities. On 13 occasions his position was "political", which would represent 37.9 % of his total activities. Within the last group are different degrees of political activity. Analyzing the "political" stance, 61.5% of his interventions were of low incidence; 15.5% of medium incidence and 23% of high incidence.

In both countries in total there were 34 activities, 13 of which were in Cuba and 21 in the United States, representing 38.25% and 61.75% respectively. According to the situation of both countries, I found that 6 "pastoral" activities were carried out in Cuba, accounting for 46.15%; And 7 "political" activities, accounting for 53.85%. Within this category the low impact activities represent the overwhelming majority with 85.70% and the rest correspond to medium impact activity with 14.30%. There were no "political" activities of high incidence in Cuba. In the United States the situation is diverse, because the pontiff not only was with representatives of the US government but also with members of international organizations, the reason why his speeches were more "political" in that case. Among the 21 activities carried out in this country, on 17 occasions they were clearly "pastoral", representing 80.95%, and the remaining 4 were of a "political" character with 19.05%. Unlike Cuba, and despite the low political percentage of activities, in the United States Francis produced a higher political incidence with 75% of interventions having a great impact, while the remaining 25% of his activities were of medium incidence. There were no low incidence activities.

36 Larraquy Marcelo, *Código Francisco*, Debate, Buenos Aires, 2016; Cuda Emilce, Fin de la luna de miel entre Francisco y la prensa hegemónica, <http://www.catholicethics.com/forum-submissions/fin-de-la-luna-de-miel-entre-francisco-y-la-prensa-hegemonica> (accessed 04. 04. 2017).

Francis' visit to Cuba and the United States (September 19-27, 2015)

To "bless" the pact between the two countries, the Pope visited Cuba and the United States from September 19 to 27, 2015. At 16:00 on September 19, he arrived at José Martí International Airport, where a welcome ceremony was awaiting him. Francis claimed that the bonds of cooperation and friendship were renewed between the Church and the Cuban people "with freedom and all the necessary means to bring the announcement of the Kingdom to the existential peripheries of society". He then congratulated the process of normalization of relations after years of estrangement³⁷.

The next day, he celebrated a mass at 9:00 in the Plaza de la Revolución de Havana and delivered an Angelus. For many journalists the homily was free of ideological connotations. Undoubtedly many people expected the Pope to have an excess of verbiage, that in fact did not happen. He said: "The service is never ideological, because it does not serve ideas, but serves people. Do not neglect them for projects that may be seductive, but do not recognize the face next to it" This reference to ideology has a particular target: the Castro government. In the Angelus, the Pope highlighted the difficult moment that went through Colombia, saying that "his children are seeking to build a society in peace" and then "That blood spilled by thousands of innocents during so many decades of armed conflict". Any Cuban people could have thought comparatively about the situation of their country at that time. Thousands of people came to see him speak - and many still consider the speech a symbol of freedom, dialogue, justice and reconciliation. At the end of the mass, Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega, the archbishop of Havana, thanked the Pope for his efforts to bring Cuba and the United States closer, and for providing the impetus to overcome internal disputes³⁸. Then, the Pope visited Fidel Castro. Nicaraguan Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes underlined the positive impact of Pope Francis' first mass in Havana, where he was received as a missionary of mercy: "The Holy Father is interested to see that the confrontations are over, the war is over and that we all shall be instruments of peace and reconciliation"³⁹. In the afternoon he had three itineraries: at 16:00 a visit to the President of the Council of State and of the Council of Ministers of the Republic, in the Palace of the Revolution of Havana; at 17:15 a celebration with

37 Esperanzas de futuro para Cuba, *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 19, 2015, Rome; Los líderes de EEUU y Cuba abordan la cooperación bilateral, *Sputnik*, September 19, 2015, Moscow.

38 El Papa Francisco debe jugar un decisivo papel en la reconciliación política en Cuba, *El Mundo*, September 21, 2015, p.3, Madrid; Lamet Pedro, La otra revolución, *El Mundo*, September 21, 2015, p.27, Madrid; Ordaz Pablo, *El País*, September 21, 2015, p.7, Madrid; El papa sobre los disidentes en Cuba: "yo no iba a dar audiencias a nadie", *EFE News Service*, September 22, 2015, Madrid; Cuba: 'I hope Pope Francis can promote peace among us', *The Guardian*, September 19, 2015, London; Pope calls on Cuba and US to set global 'example of reconciliation', *The Guardian*, September 19, 2015, London.

39 Cardenal Brenes destaca mensaje del Papa Francisco, *La voz del Sandinismo*, September 20, 2015, Managua; Papa Francisco realiza una misa en la Plaza de la Revolución en Havana, *Sputnik*, September 20, 2015, Moscow; Normalización de los lazos entre EEUU y Cuba requerirá resolver problemas, dice Castro, *Sputnik*, September 20, 2015, Moscow.

priests, religious, and seminarians in the Cathedral of Havana and at 18:30, to conclude the day, a greet to young people from the Padre Félix Varela Cultural Center in Havana. Francis elaborated on various issues concerning the youth and their hopes. He also left his “seed”: “And when I have my ideology, my way of thinking and you have yours, I am locked in that *conventillo* (gossip) of ideology”. He added shortly afterwards: “Everyone was different, but they were all working together for the common good. That is called social friendship, seeking the common good”. Finally he left a message to the Cuban youth in a very clear way: “Partial or ideological readings that deform reality are useless, so that enters in our small preconceived schemes, always provoking disappointment and despair”⁴⁰.

At 10:30, Monday, September 21st he held a mass in the Plaza de la Revolución de Holguín in the city of Holguín. With pastoral words he asked the assembled people not to remain restrained by appearances or political correctness. The Pope tried more or less in several speeches and homilies to introduce some political content to be interpreted and applied to the Cuban reality. In the afternoon the pontiff attended various activities and meetings: at 15:45 he blessed the city on the Cross Hill of Holguín. From there he traveled to Santiago de Cuba to meet the bishops at 19:00 at the San Basilio Magno Seminary; then, at 19:45, he prayed for the Virgin of Charity with the bishops and the papal entourage, in the Minor Basilica of the Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Charity of the Copper. Francis asked in his prayer: “Mother of Reconciliation! bring your people dispersed throughout the world. Make the Cuban nation a home for brothers and sisters so that this people can open their minds, hearts and lives to Christ”⁴¹. The specialist of the provincial delegation of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, Leonardo Nieves Cruz, said that the papal visit contributed to increasing the knowledge of Cuban believers and non-believers with the Holy See “and in particular with its guide, a man who uses the gospel for good as he demonstrates the way he censures poverty and social inequality”⁴².

The next day, Tuesday 22nd, he gave a homily at 8:00 in the Basilica of the Virgin of the Charity of the Copper. He reflected: “every time we look at Mary we come back to believing in the revolutionary nature of tenderness and affection (*Evangelii gaudium*, 288) [...] Our revolution passes through tenderness, through joy”. At 11:00 he met families in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption and told those present: “people are transformed into isolated individuals easy to manipulate, to govern” and then “we find divided, broken societies in the world, separated or highly massed, which are a consequence of the rupture of family

40 Pope Francis praises US-Cuba rapprochement as role model for the entire world, *Russia Today*, September 20, 2015, Moscow; Ejemplo de reconciliación, *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 21, 2015, Rome; Superan las divisiones y los preconceptos, *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 22, 2015, Rome.

41 Yardley Jim and Ahmed Azam, Pope Careful In Navigation Cuban Politics, *The New York Times*, September 21, 2015, New York.

42 Veloz Placencia Germán, Visita para recordar por siempre, *Granma*, September 21, 2015, Havana; Los brazos abiertos del pueblo cubano, *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 21, 2015, Rome.

ties". He then blessed the city from outside the Cathedral. His visit to Cuba ended after a farewell ceremony. During the trip to the United States Francis supported his statements in interviews, saying that the position of the Holy See, on various blockades, was the social doctrine of the Church. Later he appreciated the effort of the Church of Cuba to get prisoners released⁴³. The emeritus professor of sociology and religion at the University of Buenos Aires, Ruben Dri, said about the Pope: "he is an excellent showman [...] The new positioning of the Church is paternalistic [...] This is not a revolution". Contrary to these words, the Harvard professor Joseph S. Nye Jr. countered: "He has a lot of soft power, and not just among Catholics [...] Many Popes have talked about poverty, but Francis has managed to keep it in the center of the debate". Uruguayan emeritus bishop, Luis del Castillo, who has been working in a parish in Santiago de Cuba since 2010, sees the Pope's message as a "reconciliation, see Cuba's tomorrow"⁴⁴.

At 16:00 on September 22, the Pope arrived at the Andrews Air Force in Washington, D.C. At 9:15, Wednesday 23rd the Pope was received at the White House's South Lawn. Without spending too much time in greetings, Francis directly requested that Obama "support the initiatives of the international community to protect the most vulnerable in our world and to elicit comprehensive and inclusive models of development". Shortly after he added that the current system generated millions of excluded people and encouraged the American people to be concerned about climate change⁴⁵. Obama commended his role in the rapprochement between the United States and Cuba, thanking him for his "invaluable support for our new beginning with the Cubans [...] with the promise of better relations between both countries [...] and a better life for the Cubans". At 11:30 the Pope met the United States bishops at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, D.C. and at 16:15 he performed a mass and a canonization of Blessed Junipero Serra in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception of Washington, D.C.

At 9:20, Thursday, 24th he visited the Congress of the United States. His speech there was more political than religious and had immediate effects on domestic politics of the United States. He mentioned the international system of "exclusion" as the internal "discard" system. "The world is becoming a place of violent conflict [...] even in the name of God and religion" said the pontiff. Then a direct message was delivered to members of Congress and many United States citizens who think they are the chosen people: "The simplistic reductionism that

43 Hines-Brigger Susan, Pope Takes United States, Cuba by Storm, *St. Anthony Messenger*, November, 2015, Cincinnati; Papa Francisco concluyó histórica visita a Cuba, *La Voz del Sandinismo*, September 22, 2015, Managua.

44 Yardley Jim, Francisco, un papa humilde que quiere cambiar al mundo, *New York Times*, September 22, 2015, New York; O'Connell Gerald, Pope Looks to a New Cuba, *America*, October 26, 2016, p.28, New York.

45 Obama y el Papa se alían por inmigración, Cuba y clima, *Portafolio*, September 24, 2015, Bogotá; Beltramo Álvarez Andrés, Papa Francisco, consolida liderazgo mundial en 2015, *Notimex*, December 29, 2015, Mexico; Hines-Brigger Susan, Pope Takes United States, Cuba by Storm, *St. Anthony Messenger*, November, 2015, p.10, Cincinnati; López Zamorano José, La pregunta que cambió la historia en la relación EUA-Cuba, *Notimex*, March 3, 2016, Mexico; 10 controversies swirling around Pope Francis' visit to the US, *Russia Today*, September 23, 2015, Moscow.

divides reality into good and bad [...] We know that in the eagerness to want to free ourselves of the external enemy we can fall in the temptation to go feeding the inner enemy". Not all were warnings, Francis said the rapprochement with Cuba "overcome the historical differences linked to painful episodes of the past". He identified himself as a "bridge builder" helping those who once were contenders to resume the dialogue. In the end, he advised those present: "A good politician is one who, having in mind the interests of all, takes the moment with an open and pragmatic spirit. A good politician always chooses to generate processes more than to occupy spaces (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 222-223)". In addition to political issues, he talked about climate change, immigration, family, death penalty, arms trafficking and war⁴⁶. At 11:15 he pay a visit to charitable center of St. Patrick's parish and hold a meeting with the homeless of Washington, D.C. In the afternoon Francis went to New York for a meeting at 18:45 with the clergy in St. Patrick's Cathedral. At 8:30 on the following day, Friday 25th, he visited United Nations Headquarters where held a meeting with the members of the General Assembly. Francis told the presents that the world is full of false rights and large defenseless sectors, such as the natural environment and the excluded: "Two sectors intimately united with each other, which the preponderant political and economic relations have become fragile parts of reality"⁴⁷. He added that the common house should be built on sacredness of the created nature⁴⁸. Hours later, at 11:30 he attended an interreligious meeting at the Zero Zone Memorial where he read some prayers. In the afternoon the Pope visited Our Lady of the Angels School of Harlem meeting children and immigrant families. At 18:00 he conducted a homily at Madison Square Garden.

On the 26th he traveled to Philadelphia where he performed a mass in the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul at 10:30, with bishops, priests and religious. At 16:45 he spoke with a Hispanic community and other immigrants about the context of the Religious Freedom Encounter at Independence Mall⁴⁹. He asked:

In a world in which various forms of modern tyranny try to suppress religious freedom [...] to reduce it to a subculture without the right to voice and vote in the public square [...] use religion as a pretext for hatred and brutality, it is necessary that the faithful of the various religious traditions join their voices to call for peace, tolerance, respect for the dignity and rights of others.

46 Valés José, Un peronista en el Capitolio, *El Universal*, September 28, 2015, Mexico; BeltramoÁlvarez Andrés, Papa Francisco, consolida liderazgo mundial en 2015, *Notimex*, December 29, 2015, Mexico; Kirchgassner Stephanie, Pope Francis's message to Congress: what was he really saying?, *The Guardian*, September 24, 2015, London.

47 Goldenberg Suzanne, Pope Francis demands UN respect rights of environment over 'thirst for power', *The Guardian*, September 25, 2015, London; Poverty, nuclear weapons and the environment: Pope Francis at the UN, *Russia Today*, September 25, 2015, Moscow.

48 Compare Francis' position with the speech given by Fidel Castro in the Aula Magna of the Central University of Venezuela, on February 3, 1999: "What kind of globalization do we have today? A neoliberal globalization. Is it sustainable? No. Can it last long? Absolutely not [...] But sooner or later it will have to cease to exist". Castro Fidel, Una revolución sólo puede ser hija de la cultura y las ideas, in *La historia me absolverá y otros discursos*, Castro Fidel, Colección Palabras Esenciales, Venezuela, 2009, p. 374.

49 View on the Pope's US visit: seeing with a Hispanic eye, *The Guardian*, September 23, 2015, London; Acabar con la exclusión, *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 26, 2015, Rome.

At 19:30 Francis attended a family feast and a prayer vigil at the Franklin Parkway. On the last day of his visit, Sunday 27th, he received victims of sexual abuse at the San Carlos Borromeo Seminary. He was also invited to the World Meeting of Families at the San Carlos Borromeo Seminary and after that he visited the prisoners of the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Institute. In the afternoon, at 16:00, Francis celebrated the closing homily of the VIII World Encounter of Families at the Franklin Parkway. Later at 19:45 the farewell ceremony was held at Philadelphia International Airport, where the organizing committee, volunteers and benefactors bid farewell to Francis. On the return trip to Rome the pontiff answered questions and reaffirmed the position he maintained throughout his political-pastoral journey: "all the walls collapse: today, tomorrow or in 100 years, but all will collapse [...]" The wall is not a solution [...] instead the bridges are"⁵⁰.

Boff thinks that the Pope started "a true revolution in the Catholic Church [...] the Church is not a defensive castle, but a field hospital for all [...] Matters more reach the hearts that meet the dogmas". As for Frei Betto the Pope is making a revolution within the Catholic Church⁵¹.

After the visit

The Pope's historic visit to the United States, resulted in huge repercussions in Cuba, the United States, and the Vatican. During the General Audience in September 30th, 2015, the Pope stressed that he was a "Missionary of Mercy" and affirmed: "The mercy of God is greater than any wound, any conflict, than any ideology [...] beyond all division" He recalled the words of Pope John Paul II: "Cuba should be open to the world and the world to Cuba". He emphasized that the reestablishment of the relationship between both countries was an emblematic step. A bridge was rebuilt because "God always wants to build bridges, we are the ones who build walls, and the walls always collapse". He said that in the United States, he had the opportunity to talk to civilians, the clergy, the poor and the marginalized. He declare that the foundations of the country are religious and moral, and for this reason it is still a land of freedom, and welcome to cooperation for a more just and fraternal world. Additionally, he made a video message for young Cubans attending World Youth Day (Cracow, July 29-31, 2016): "It is not necessary for everyone to think alike [...] What is important [...] is to build

50 Pope Francis ditches political speech for jokes and improvised address on family, *The Guardian*, September 27, 2015, London; Brereton Adam, Pope Francis departs US after historic tour from Havana to Philadelphia - as it happened, *The Guardian*, September 28, 2015, London; Carroll Rory and Yuhás Alan, Pope Francis issues final call for unity at end of historic US visit, *The Guardian*, September 28, 2015, London.

51 Francisco ha iniciado una verdadera revolución: Leonardo Boff, La Jornada en línea, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/ultimas/2016/11/24/francisco-ha-iniciado-una-verdadera-revolucion-leonardo-boff> (accessed 31. 03. 2017); "El Papa ha iniciado una revolución": teólogo Boff, <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/global/2016/11/25/1130333> (accessed 31. 03. 2017); Delgado Sheyla, Frei Betto: El Papa Francisco está haciendo una revolución dentro de la Iglesia Católica, *Granma*, September 19, 2015, Havana; Papa Francisco concluyó visita histórica a Estados Unidos y Cuba, *La voz del Sandinismo*, September 28, 2015, Managua.

“social friendship”. Following this idea, another video message was recorded for the General Assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (November 14-17, 2016): “Our great challenge is to create a culture of encounter that encourages each person and each group to share the richness of their traditions and experiences, to reduce walls and to build bridges”.

In the United States, as soon as the papal visit was concluded, a bilateral commission was established to advance the process of normalization with Cuba⁵². The National Security Council spokesman stated that the United States and Cuba had reached twelve agreements to expand cooperation. He also pointed out that President Obama’s objectives for Cuba had been simple: help the Cuban people achieve a better future by themselves and advance the interests of the United States⁵³. The renewed friendship led to a meeting between Castro and Obama at the end of September 2015, in the framework of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Both leaders exchanged views on the Pope’s visit and agreed on the agenda to normalize bilateral relations. President Castro reiterated that in order to create normal relations between Cuba and the United States, the blockade must be eliminated⁵⁴.

Before Obama’s trip to Cuba (March 2016), amendments to the sanction regulations for Cuba were announced which enlarged the authority of the United States citizens to travel to the island, encourage free trade, and attempted to remove barriers for Cuban people to conduct financial transactions⁵⁵. Obama arrived in Cuba on March 20, 2016. After a brief tour in the historic center of Old Havana, he met Cardinal Jaime Ortega in the cathedral who participated actively in the process of re-establishing relations. Enrique López Oliva, the professor of history of religions, appraised the United States president: “he is recognizing the role played by the Catholic Church in Cuban society and solving problems related to human rights”. The bilateral commission met again on May 16 in Havana, discussing issues related to environmental protection, civil aviation, direct mail, port and maritime security, health, agriculture, educational and cultural exchanges. Human rights and economic claims were also conferred⁵⁶.

52 See the areas of cooperation between the United States and Cuba <https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/our-relationship-es/policy-history-es/areas-de-cooperacion-entre-ee-uu-y-cuba/> (accessed 31. 03. 2017); On January 16, 2017, the United States and Cuba bilaterally signed the Law Enforcement Memorandum of Understanding in order to deepen cooperation in law enforcement and information exchange. The United States and Cuba sign a Memorandum of Understanding for Compliance with the Law <https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/los-estados-unidos-y-cuba-firman-memorando-de-entendimiento-para-cumplimiento-de-la-ley/> (accessed 31. 03. 2017).

53 See: <https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/declaracion-del-portavoz-del-consejo-de-seguridad-nacional-sobre-el-viaje-cuba-de-ben-rhodes-asesor-adjunto-para-la-seguridad-nacional/> (accessed 31. 03. 2017).

54 Presidente cubano sostiene encuentro con el presidente de los Estados Unidos, *Granma*, September 29, 2015, Havana.

55 Anuncian importantes enmiendas a los reglamentos de las sanciones a Cuba antes del histórico viaje del Presidente Obama a Cuba <https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/anuncian-importantes-enmiendas-los-reglamentos-de-las-sanciones-cuba-antes-del-viaje-historico-del-presidente-obama-cuba/> (accessed 31. 03. 2017).

56 Tercer encuentro de la comisión bilateral en Havana <https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/tercer-encuentro-de-la-comision-bilateral-en-la-habana/> (accessed 31. 03. 2017); Estados Unidos y Cuba ahora están participando en muchas más áreas que lo que se ha visto

In October, the United States presidential directive for the normalization of relations with Cuba was published. Among the various items the respect for individual rights in Cuba created the biggest differences between the two governments. Also: the integration of Cuba into international and regional systems and the easing of sanctions against Cuba⁵⁷. The next step was to remove Cuba from the list of countries of the promoters of terrorism by the United States State Department.

During the election campaign, Obama's successor, Donald Trump, said he would reverse the reestablishment of diplomatic relations. After Fidel Castro's death, Trump called him a "brutal dictator" but he will do: "everything possible to ensure that the Cuban people can finally begin their path to prosperity and freedom". The reform initiated by Raúl Castro has shown signs of stagnation. After the first meeting with Obama, he declared: "It is not fair, it is not correct, to take human rights as a reason for political confrontation". With Trump beginning his tenure, the Cuban government mobilized the army. The VII Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, held in April 2016, showed a personal continuity without giving answers to the political future or the development model. The issue of human rights in Cuba remains fundamental in the negotiations with the United States and the European Union⁵⁸.

Conclusions

Pope Francis carried out his "pastoral" trip to Cuba and to the United States in 2015 to consolidate rapprochement that had existed between the two countries since the previous year.

Francis was sure about the understanding and common view of both countries, but he also knew the situation through the travels of his predecessors in 1998 and 2012. As a Latin American, the Pope experienced a much closer relationship with Cubans and with Raúl Castro which can be shown by comparison to the treatment of Pope John Paul II when he visited Fidel Castro as a cardinal.

There are several highlighted aspects that he would mention during his papal visit: the environment, human rights, civil liberties and the opening of Cuba. Thus his speech was placed on a political-pastoral level rather than the reverse. As Emilce Cuda pointed out in an interview: "The Pope has achieved an incredible worldwide consensus, he is in the press every day", and then added: "He has

en más de medio siglo, *Granma*, March 22, 2016, Havana; Diálogo entre Obama y Raúl Castro en Cuba sobre el embargo y los derechos humanos, *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 22, 2016, Rome.

57 Directiva Presidencial de Políticas para la Normalización entre los EE.UU. y Cuba <https://cu.usembassy.gov/es/directiva-presidencial-de-politicas-para-la-normalizacion-entre-los-ee-uu-y-cuba/> (accessed 31. 03. 2017).

58 Ganther Sara, op.cit., pp. 114, 116-117; López Zamorano José, La pregunta que cambió la historia en la relación EUA-Cuba, *Notimex*, March 3, 2016, Mexico; Grogg Patricia, Castro y Obama determinados a avanzar pese a sus diferencias, *Inter Press Service*, March 22, 2016, New York; Aguirre Mariano, Cuba ante la presidencia de Donald Trump, *RFI in Spanish*, December 4, 2016, Paris.

a contemporary, pleasant and simple discourse. Everyone can understand him⁵⁹.

And this simplicity was appreciated by Cuba and the United States, which followed the initial proposal of the Vatican, since there was a mutual interest in resolving their differences and ending the anachronistic embargo and enmity inherited from the Cold War. It was an issue in which both were interested but neither wanted to take the first step for fear of losing political capital. So the Vatican's "political" proposal was a win-win situation. Thus, the Vatican had to politicize the sacred within certain limits in Cuba but did so in a much more pronounced way in the United States.

The Pope, before traveling, prepared the ground by referring to questions that later were accentuated during his tour: respect for human rights, fraternity, and openness, in addition to the inevitable spiritual and properly religious themes. He even minimized the Vatican's political action to highlight both countries as the true protagonists of the historical event. In this way, they finally took over the reins of leading the negotiations. However, it was obvious that the politicization of the sacred promoted the agreement and enabled it to be made.

Although there were more "political" activities carried out by the Pope in Cuba in quantity and in percentage, it was in the United States that his speeches had greater repercussion and political influence. If we assign one point by low incidence; two by medium; and three by high, the results change substantially, with the United States bearing eleven points to Cubas eight. This means that the Pope, while in the United States, carefully chose the places where he would politicize the sacred in order to deepen his "political" speech so it would have more resonance and impact. Whereas in Cuba, he tried to do it in another way, that is, to reach from the people to the hierarchies and to the rulers without seeming strident or causing conflicts of interest.

There is no doubt that the Pope politicized the sacred and delivered, on occasion, a political discourse with specific purposes, without leaving aside the pastoral nature of his visit. Francis used all kinds of political and religious circumstances for reconciliation between Cuba and the United States. To this end he used people as "messengers of peace", from bishops and priests to top-level politicians and he was able to do so because his moral stature and growing popularity gave him enough legitimacy to use this kind of diplomatic negotiating tactic.

In conclusion, Pope Francis politicized the sacred and successfully accomplished his political mission (the rapprochement between Cuba and the United States). Both countries welcomed the initiative; they wanted full reconciliation without excessive political costs. All parties obtained revenues: the Pope was installed as a global political player with huge legitimacy; the United States ended an inefficient anachronistic policy, and found a potential new market and partner; and Cuba fully returned to international politics. in an honorable way, obtaining

59 Llorente Elena, El Papa tiene un discurso contemporáneo, *Página 12*, 26 de marzo de 2017, Buenos Aires.

recognition from Latin American and European countries. And it all started with a letter from Francis.

Appendix

Table 1

Apostolic journey of Pope Francis to Cuba and the United States(19-27 September of 2015)			
Activity	Day:	City/country	Political Influence
Rome toward Havana	19		None
Welcome ceremony at the international airport of Havana	19	Havana, Cuba	Low
Mass and Angelus in the Plaza dela Revolución	20	Havana, Cuba	Low
Visit to the President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers	20	Havana, Cuba	None
Celebration of Vespers with priests, religious and seminarians September 20	20	Havana, Cuba	None
Greeting to young people from the Cultural Center Father-Félix Varela	20	Havana, Cuba	Low
Mass in the Plaza of the revolution	21	Holguín, Cuba	Low
Blessing of the city	21	Holguín, Cuba	None
Meeting with the bishops in the San Basilio Magno Seminary	21	Santiago de Cuba, Cuba	None
Prayer to the Virgin of Charity with the bishops and the papal Entourage at the minor Basilica of the shrine of the Virgin of the Charity of Cooper	21	Santiago de Cuba, Cuba	Low
Mass in the minor Basilica of the shrine of the Virginof the charity of Cooper	22	Santiago de Cuba, Cuba	Low
Meeting with families in the Cathedral of our Lady of the Assumption	22	Santiago de Cuba, Cuba	Middle
Bless of the city from the outside of the Cathedral	22	Santiago de Cuba, Cuba	None
Farewell ceremony	22	Santiago de Cuba, Cuba	None
Interview on the trip from Santiago de Cuba to Washington DC	22		Low
Arrival in the United States	22	Washington DC, United States	None
Welcome on the South Lawn of the White House ceremony	23	Washington DC, United States	High
Meeting with U.S. president	23	Washington DC, United States	None
Meeting with bishops at St. Matthew's Cathedral	23	Washington DC, United States	None
Mass and canonization of blessed Junipero Serraa the National Shrine of the Immaculate	23	Washington DC, United States	None

Visit to the United States Congress	24	Washington DC, United States	High
Visit the charitable Center St. Patrick	24	Washington DC, United States	None
Celebration of Vespers with the clergy, men and women religious in St. Patrick's Cathedral	24	New York, United States	None
Visit the headquarters of the Organization of the United Nations	25	New York, United States	High
Interreligious counter at the ground zero memorial	25	New York, United States	None
Visit to the school Our Lady Queen of the Angels of Harlem	25	New York, United States	None
Mass in Madison Square Garden	25	New York, United States	None
Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul with Bishops, priests, and religious	26	Philadelphia, United States	None
Meeting for religious freedom with Hispanics and other immigrants at Independence Mall	26	Philadelphia, United States	Middle
Feast of families and prayer vigil in B. Franklin Parkway	26	Philadelphia, United States	None
Meeting with victims of sexual abuse at the St. Carlos Borromeo Seminary	27	Philadelphia, United States	None
Meeting with the bishops in the world meeting of families, in seminar San Carlos Borromeo	27	Philadelphia, United States	None
Visit prisoners of the Institute Correctional Curran-Fromhold	27	Philadelphia, United States	None
Closing mass of the VIII world meeting of families in the Franklin Parkway	27	Philadelphia, United States	None
Greeting to the Organizing Committee, volunteers and benefactors at the Philadelphia International Airport	27	Philadelphia, United States	None
Farewell ceremony	27	Philadelphia, United States	None
Press Conference of Francis during the flight back to Rome	27		Low

Personal Authorship

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**„ПАД ДРУГОГ ЗИДА“: НОРМАЛИЗАЦИЈА ОДНОСА ИЗМЕЂУ
КУБЕ И САД И УЛОГА ПАПА ФРАЊЕ**

Сажетак

Путовања папе Фрање у Кубу и САД нису била само религијске природе. Политичка активност коју је он организовао у правцу консолидовања односа између две до тада сукобљене земље је била изузетна. Кроз своје посете, састанке и мисе, папа је указивао на своју позицију и бригу у вези великог броја питања, која су била изван односа Кубе и САД. За време своје посете он се посветио питањима околине, сиромаштва, породице, заједнице, слободе, што су све теме које су обрађене у енциклици *Laudato Si* (2015) и у папској ексортацији *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). Овом посетом је папа Фрања утврдио статус глобалног политичара као и пастора који ужива велико поштовање, не само међу католицима.

Кључне речи: папа Фрања, Куба, САД, Обама, Кастро, апостолска путовања

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