



## *Book Notes*

Title: *His Holiness, John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time*

Author: Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi

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Carl Bernstein, along with Bob Woodward, set the standard for modern investigative journalism with their Pulitzer Prize winning Watergate reporting for the *Washington Post* and in their books *All the President's Men*, and *The Final Days*. Now, with *His Holiness*, Bernstein and Marco Politi, the dean of Vatican journalists, turn their attention to, perhaps, the greatest geo-political drama of our time, the fall of communism, unlocking the remarkable hidden history of one of the dominant figures of the twentieth century and his impact on our era. In the end, it was Pope John Paul II who held the key to the destruction of the “evil empire.” Startling Politburo minutes obtained by Bernstein and Politi show the Kremlin elders struggling in vain to overcome his alarming power and influence in Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Ronald Reagan secretly made the Vatican and John Paul II his principal ally, and covertly dispatched CIA director William Casey to meet regularly with the Pope. John Paul II became the inspiration and protector of “Solidarity,” the anti-communist

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workers' movement in the heart of the communist world. John Paul II eventually came to influence his own historical time, much as Churchill and Roosevelt did theirs. With Reagan, he fashioned a Holy alliance against the communists that kept Solidarity alive underground after Moscow seemed to succeed in crushing it. *His Holiness* tells how, shortly after John Paul and Reagan were shot by would be assassins, they met in Rome and committed the vast resources of two superpowers-one spiritual and the other strategic-to hastening the demise of communism. Both believed they were guided by Providence.

*His Holiness* is compelling reading as it blends journalism, drama, history and biography. John Paul II, elected as the first non-Italian pope in five hundred years, readily used his global pulpit to speak out on behalf of human rights and those who were ignored by other world leaders-whether in the communist or non-communist worlds.

Born in a small Polish town where twenty percent of the population was Jewish and later bishop of the diocese that contained Auschwitz, Karol Wojtyla was painfully aware early on of the horror of anti-Semitism, and as pope he facilitated the Vatican's recognition of the state of Israel. In numerous other ways, too, *His Holiness* clearly shows us the links between his early experiences and his later papacy. Drawing on hundreds of interviews with the key players in Rome, Washington, Moscow, and Warsaw, Bernstein and Politi tell an amazing story, recreating the remarkable character of a boy who turned to God after losing almost all of his closest family members, (except his father), and whose almost unbelievable destiny was shaped as a youth in the midst of Nazi (and later communist) Europe. *His Holiness* offers the real story behind the end of the cold war, and more, the personal story of the man who became the leader of one billion plus Catholics.