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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

**Joseph S. Rossi**. *Uncharted Territory: The American Catholic Church at the United Nations, 1946-1972.* C.: Catholic University of America, 2006. xiii + 288 pp. $79.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8132-1456-6.

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**Published on** H-Catholic (January, 2008)

**World Progress Derailed by Budget Cuts**

*Uncharted Territory* continues a saga that Joseph Rossi, currently an associate professor of theology at Loyola College in Maryland, began in his dissertation.[1] In the previous volume, the Vatican decided against compromising its own neutrality by joining the United Nations. American Catholics understood they had to join to influence UN actions, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) participated in efforts that led the UN Charter to include a role for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The first chapter of the present volume explains how the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), gatekeeper for NGOs, ranked organizations. The more truly international an NGO's membership and finances were, the more privileges it had. As an American organization, the NCWC had limited privileges. However, by selecting long-time NCWC Social Action Department employee Catherine Schaefer as director of the Office for UN Affairs, the NCWC enhanced its reach, because Schaefer had credentials stemming from membership in the Catholic Association for International Peace (CAIP) and the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues (later the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, WUCWO). Schaefer used her contacts to make the NCWC office into a clearinghouse that that linked Catholics at the United Nations, from NGOs to individual delegates who happened to be Catholic (Lebanon's especially). Schaefer deployed these contacts to bring a Catholic perspective to bear on multiple UN deliberations.

Rossi then leaves the story of organizational development and office politics for theology. Chapter 2 provides a theological justification for U.S. participation in the United Nations, based on papal encyclicals and on the writings of Monsignor John A. Ryan. The chapter shows the church working toward a position centered on individual human rights, with the state being responsible for respecting those rights insofar as the its own work is concerned and protecting them from violation by other states or by forces such as the invisible hand of the marketplace. Chapters 3 through 7 show how Schaefer brought human-rights theology to bear in specific instances, specifically, the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (chapters 3 and 4), the Arab-Israeli conflict of the late 1940s (chapter 5), the Cold War (chapter 6), and the status of women (chapter 7). In her review of Rossi's previous book, historian Debra Campbell pointed out the dangers of thinking the creedal oneness of the church means a unity of Catholic opinion in historical situations.[2] That is an issue in the current book as well. Rossi does not indicate any conflict within Catholicism over issues of human rights, the Middle East, or women's role in society. He did treat one specific and important conflict in Catholicism, American Catholic opposition to U.S. participation in the United Nations. Even there, the field is not equal; the pro-United Nations forces have theology on their side, while opponents have placed their commitment to U.S. isolationism above their commitment to Catholic social teaching.

Developments force Rossi to return to organizational history and office politics in chapters 8 and 9. In 1967, the Vatican sent its first permanent observer to the United Nations, and over the next five years support for the Office for UN Affairs dwindled until the office was finally shut down. Rossi places most of the blame for closing the office on then-United States Catholic Conference/National Conference of Catholic Bishops General Secretary Joseph L. Bernardin. Bernardin went on to become cardinal-archbishop of Chicago, architect of the American bishops' statement on "The Challenge of Peace" (1983) and advocate of a "consistent ethic of life" that opposed the death penalty along with abortion. However, in 1972 he was so new to national Catholic leadership that he did not know much about the office he was closing. Rossi sets apart in an epilogue a particularly unflattering recreation of the events of May 24, 1972,

when, after having arranged for the closing of the Office for UN Affairs that June, Bernardin contacted the office to ask what it did. Rossi does credit Bernardin with recognizing the laborers were due their hire: Schaefer, who was nearing retirement, did not lose any benefits due to management's actions, and her assistant, Alba Zizzamia, had a job available with the Archdiocese of New York.

*Uncharted Territory* exemplifies the inverse relation between the small fields scholars cover in their studies and the wide vistas these studies open up. Rossi consulted the archives of the CAIP, but did most of his research in the archives of the NCWC and USCC/National Conference of Catholic Bishops. His sources are entirely English-language office papers. At times, the documents need to be supplemented with further information; for example, pages 194-195 refer to a WUCWO delegate from Togo who in 1962 addressed the General Assembly on the subject of polygamy as a threat to women's rights. Would it be possible to find out who this woman was? Similarly, the discussion of the decision to close the UN office makes reference to budget cuts but not to other issues roiling the NCCB in 1972, such as decisions about how thoroughly to support the United Farm Workers.[3] Despite its narrow focus, *Uncharted Territory* raises large issues. It is really the story of how a determined group of people from one of the world's oldest NGOs convinced UN architects that the nation-state is not the only way that human communities relate to each other. Then, these same subversives fought on two fronts, trying to convince both the United Nations and American Catholics that religion had a role in international affairs. Schaefer had her successes at the United Nations: she helped to incorporate into the Declaration of Universal Human Rights language respecting parental choice in children's religious education, and, in a time before women's issues were given widespread attention she joined with other women to call to UN attention the potential for human rights abuse in child marriage and bridal prices.

Libraries that have Rossi's first volume may acquire *Uncharted Territory* as a matter of course. *Uncharted Territory* also contains material of interest to scholars of American Catholicism, the Middle East after World War II, the United Nations, and women's history in the years before the mass movement of the 1970s. It is hoped that the contents of the book will overcome two disincentives to purchase, one of which is the current hardcover price. Also, its production values are excellent except for the design, but that is important. The cover, which has a little black-and-white photo of the UN superimposed on a larger 1957 black-and-white photo of NCWC headquarters in Washington, does not convey what the book is about. There are only four photos and Schaefer is in only one, in the background, head down. There are other photos of her; one accompanies an article on her work for women at the UN that appeared in the *Catholic Historical Review*.[4]

Notes

[1]. Joseph S. Rossi, S.J., *American Catholics and the Formation of the United Nations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993).

[2]. Debra Campbell, review of *American Catholics and the Formation of the United Nations*, *Church History* 64, no. 4 (1995): 721-722.

[3]. Marco G. Prouty, *César Chávez, the Catholic Bishops, and the Farmworkers' Struggle for Social Justice* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 81-88.

[4]. Joseph S. Rossi, "'The Status of Women': Two American Catholic Women at the U.N., 1947-1972," *Catholic Historical Review* 93, no. 2 (April 2007). The picture is on the cover.

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**Citation**: Mary Elizabeth Brown. Review of Rossi, Joseph S., *Uncharted Territory: The American Catholic Church at the United Nations, 1946-1972.* H-Catholic, H-Net Reviews. January, 2008.
**URL**: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14050

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