

'American System' solution to poverty proposed by John Paul II

by Valerie Rush

In June 1982, during President Ronald Reagan's visit to the Vatican, Pope John Paul II called upon the United States to act as a force for progress in the world, in line with the great traditions of American history. During his early March 1983 tour of Central America, the Pope again raised his voice on behalf of those principles once commonly known as the "American System"—the notion that human life is sacred, and that the only road to enduring peace is through economic development. The Pope invoked two papal encyclicals, Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* of 1967 and his own 1981 *Laborem Exercens*, to drive home these themes.

Speaking to hundreds of thousands of impoverished peasants in Panama, Pope John Paul II offered modern production techniques as the answer to the hunger and misery which has made the Central American isthmus a maelstrom of violence. This speech, monitored on radio broadcasts in South America, went unreported in the United States.

Citing *Populorum Progressio*, the encyclical in which the Roman Catholic Church went on record saying that debt payment must be subordinated to the economic development needs of nations, the Pope pledged the Church's support for "urgent programs and reforms" which could free the rural populations from economic backwardness. In Guatemala, speaking to 1 million Indians, he called on the government to pass legislation guaranteeing not only their civil rights but also concrete means for their "normal development" as citizens of a modern age.

In San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Pope John Paul II gave this message to a delegation of Central American workers: "The worker has to be aided technically and culturally to qualify himself for development with the purpose of liberating himself from injustice. . . . The method for ending violence and warfare among social classes is not to be ignorant of the injustices, but to correct them."

The Pope also supported the "incipient process of industrialization in Central America" that will produce "for you [the workers] a more important role as leaders in your countries."

In Haiti, the Pope attacked the voodoo and primitive

cults, saying that the Church is against "certain syncretic practices inspired by fear of forces that one does not understand." He attacked also the sects that "lack the true apostolic message." In Port au Prince, Haiti, before an audience of 150,000 to 200,000 people, the Pope demanded an end to "misery, starvation, and degradation."

The papal tour, undertaken at great personal risk, has thus provided the basis for transforming one of the most volatile strategic tinderboxes into a zone of technology-vec-tored economic progress, should the U.S. government decide to make its policies on the basis President Franklin Roosevelt envisioned as the American Century at the close of World War II.

So far, Washington's actions in the region have been to exactly the opposite effect.

On March 10, President Reagan gave a speech calling for the United States to send an additional \$110 million in arms into El Salvador, to fuel that country's civil war. Reagan's advisers are telling him that the United States must defend the "democratic" Magaña government from the encroachments of pro-Soviet forces. But the population-control fanatics in the State Department are on record as viewing the Salvadoran carnage as the means to their murderous goals. In an interview *EIR* published in March 1981, a State Department official referred to El Salvador as a "model" population war and applauded the elimination of women of child-bearing age.

No superpower intervention

For precisely this reason, the Pope did not hesitate to denounce superpower intervention in Central America. In Costa Rica, his first stop, he pleaded for an end to the national security doctrines used to justify such interference. The people of this region can solve their own problems, the Pope insisted—a view that was seconded editorially by regional papers [see below].

The Pope's stopover in Guatemala challenged the State Department's model genocide regime in the region, the bi-

zarre government of born-again fundamentalist Riós Montt, who has proliferated "Protestant" cults across Guatemala in attacks against the Catholic communities. Without naming any names, John Paul II denounced in his speeches leaders who permit their people "to suffer misery, contempt and injustice." He spoke to 1 million Guatemalan Indians, who have been the target of Riós Montt's Dark Age-style campaign of extermination by religious warfare, saying: "I ask that your resources be respected and above all the sacred nature of your lives be safeguarded, that no one for any reason scorn your existence, because God forbids us to kill and orders us to love one another like brothers."

As important as the content of the speeches was the fact that they brought together millions of Catholic citizens, since large gatherings of any kind had been prohibited in Guatemala as potentially subversive. Riós Montt's reaction may be gauged by the fact that a private meeting between the Pontiff and the dictator reportedly lasted only six minutes. Riós Montt was said to have interrupted the Pope at least three times before stalking out.

The oppressed "must not be carried away by the temptation of violence," however. In Nicaragua, John Paul II's mission was to denounce the "absurd and dangerous" creation of parallel or "people's" churches being promoted there and elsewhere by left and right schismatics.

He said, in reference to the radical priests in Nicaragua who have disobeyed papal orders to abandon their government posts, that "no Christian, and much less a person with a title of special consecration within the Church, can make himself responsible for breaking Church unity." Such unity, he said, is vital to counter the manifold forms of materialism and hedonism that threaten to destroy humanity.

But the government of Nicaragua, based on the Sandinista party that led the revolution of three years ago, lent itself to the provocations of the Jesuit order which heads the so-called Theology of Liberation current and controls broad aspects of Nicaraguan policy.

According to Vatican radio, while John Paul II tried to give an open-air homily, "organized groups of Sandinista activists situated in the first rows and using loudspeakers chanted political slogans almost without interruption." The Pope's words were either drowned out or silenced by unexplained microphone failures.

Leaving Nicaragua, the Pope said he was "spiritually discouraged" by his trip there.

What policy for El Salvador?

In El Salvador John Paul II repeatedly emphasized the need for dialogue to end the violence and initiate political and economic reforms, but he stressed: "The dialogue that the Church asks for is not a tactical truce to strengthen positions so that the fighting can continue, but a sincere effort to respond with a search for opportune solutions to the anxiety, the pain, the exhaustion of so many." He insisted that "no one must be excluded from the effort for peace. . . . The Love

of Christ the Savior does not permit us to enclose ourselves in the prison of egoism that denies authentic dialogue, ignores the rights of others, and classifies them in the category of enemies to be combatted."

Observers from all political camps have identified these words as papal backing for the one-year-old Venezuelan-Mexican peace initiative, consistently rejected by the Reagan administration and the Magaña government in San Salvador. The peace initiative calls for mediated negotiations between the government and the guerrilla opposition.

The day the Pope arrived in El Salvador, the government announced that new elections would be held in December 1983, instead of in 1984 as previously planned. This amounts to a very different strategy from the Pope's "tactical truce." George Shultz's State Department has convinced President Reagan that by giving a "democratic" tinge to the Magaña government, the U. S. can continue to increase funding, advisers and military involvement in El Salvador. On March 6, the U. S. Ambassador to El Salvador Deane Hinton gave a U. S. television interview saying that as long as the U. S. continues to supply arms to the Salvadoran government, the war will continue.

Thomas Enders, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, was quoted by *New York Times* columnist Flora Lewis saying that as long as the guerrillas continue their strategy of "prolonged warfare," then "we must demonstrate that we, too, can persevere." Enders, one of the State Department's most rabid population reduction fanatics, helped Henry Kissinger bring the Pol Pot regime to power in Cambodia.

Excerpted from an editorial in the Colombian daily, El Espectador, March 7, "The Pope in Hell":

The Pope has not gone [to Central America] on a courtesy call, but to bring a message of peace: the most binding. The desire of Russia and the United States to be the protagonists in the Central American case, where there should be only Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, Hondurans, Guatemalans, Panamanians and Costa Ricans, is repudiated by the people of those countries. The Holy Father is identified with them, and his visit is a memorable historic happening. . . .

The Pope has gone to the Inferno. But his presence very probably will turn Central America into a heaven, because beyond the evil and the foreign 'interference,' the natural goodness of the people of those countries . . . is predisposed to forming a Christian civilization in this part of the world. To them has come the Pontiff, with his unique charisma. . . . We Colombians can play a role in that problem, a role we have abstained from playing before because of historic stupidities; a role as friendly mediators, far from the antipathies of powers like Russia and the United States. . . . Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela are the countries which should fulfill the role of friendship and collaboration, of good understanding in the Caribbean region.