

The 'Year of St. Augustine' readies the Church for its biggest battles

by Vivian Freyre Zoakos

Few would disagree that 1986 was a dramatic, hallmark year in the life of the Catholic Church. For some, such as the Gnostics, or self-proclaimed "radical liberals," in the American Church and elsewhere, this fact has inspired more gnashing of teeth than rejoicing. But for the editors of *Executive Intelligence Review*, who have always placed themselves squarely in the Augustinian tradition, the decisive actions taken by Pope John Paul II, in conjunction with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (in particular) this past year, are of enormous global cultural and strategic significance.

One appropriate way to characterize what has occurred is that the Vatican lived up to its pronouncement of 1986 as "The Year of St. Augustine."

The close of 1985 saw the Church poised to initiate a transformation of its internal life, and its relationship to the temporal affairs around it. The Extraordinary Synod, held from Nov. 25 to Dec. 8 in Rome, set forward the principles of that coming transformation. These were outlined in the Synod's *Relatio Finalis*.

The indivisibility of truth

First and foremost was the emphasis on the fact that truth is not "divisible," and that Church teaching is grounded in a unified tradition. Second, this treatment of Ecclesial truth circumscribed the way in which the subject of "collegiality," i.e., the relationship between bishops and the Pope, is to be understood. As the *Relatio Finalis* put it, there exists no collegial relationship among the bishops without the Pope:

"No distinction can be made between the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops, considered collectively, but [only] between the Roman Pontiff alone and the Roman Pontiff together with the bishops . . . because the college [of bishops] exists with its 'head' and never without it. . . . *Pluriformity must be distinguished from pluralism* [emphasis added]."

Finally, the entirety of the proceedings of the Extraordinary Synod, as *EIR* reported in its 1985 year-end review, already made clear that the Pope and Cardinal Ratzinger were preparing to intervene into the foremost global strategic problem of today: the question of economic policy.

The 'American Heresy'

The first two points already presaged the dramatic events later to occur in the United States. The Pope and Ratzinger's repeated, polemical interventions into the core of the Amer-

ican Catholic Church, including the disciplining of at least one entire religious order, leading theologians, archbishops, and the American Church's moral teaching, are all premised on the Synod's emphasis on the unity of truth, and its reemphasis on the powers and the primacy of the Pope. In fact, the Vatican's intervention into the U.S. Church in 1986 demonstrated beyond any doubt that the evaluation of the Extraordinary Synod presented by this magazine was correct. The same American and Latin American liberation theologians who last December tried to portray the Synod as their victory, are now justly eating their words.

It is not accidental that the national Church first singled out for the Vatican's housecleaning was that of the United States. The fact that this choice was made proves the seriousness of John Paul and Ratzinger's intent.

Writing on the side of the opposition, in the Sept. 15 issue of the *Washington Post*, Chicago Church historian Martin F. Marty said: "Rome is threatening to do grave damage to the richest, and most powerful Catholic Church in the world. . . . The process of Catholic assimilation into the mainstream of American life has become so advanced, that on virtually all topics . . . surveys now show Catholics holding views almost identical to those of their non-Catholic fellow citizens."

Although Marty is exaggerating his position, with respect to the laity, it certainly can be said that the majority of the American Church *hierarchy* have indeed come to echo the teachings of degenerate American popular culture. This "richest" and "most powerful" Church has become the engine for the transformation of Catholicism into a pluralist, Gnostic cult. The cultural mores of what Lyndon LaRouche has called "that fading, collapsing, rotting superpower we call the United States" are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Christian principles on which this nation was founded. As Cardinal Ratzinger put it, in his 1985 book *The Ratzinger Report*, what is not grasped today is that the authentic Christian is now distinctly in the minority in society. To the pluralist ideology rampant today, Ratzinger counterposes "truth, [which] cannot be created through ballots."

The foreign debt

Over and above its well-publicized American interventions, the Vatican is now positioning itself to carry through on the attacks against the Malthusian, "free market" economic policies which both the Pope and Ratzinger began to target

the end of 1985. By so doing, the Catholic Church is intervening into the core of the international strategic fight today. As Ratzinger told a Rome seminar that took place Nov. 19, 1985, the unpayable international debt burden is a problem as explosive, and potentially as dangerous to human survival, as the threat of thermonuclear confrontation. This was the same seminar in which Ratzinger issued his devastating attack against the "immorality" of "free market" economic ideology, and the legacy of Adam Smith, which he charged with responsibility for the mess of the international economy and financial system today.

The concluding *Pastoral Message* issued by the Synod thus promised that the Church must and would involve itself in the "international debt situation." Even before the *Message* was issued, the Pope was telling Ibero-American heads of state in December to unify their continent as a precondition for coming to grips with its destructive indebtedness. In July of this year, during his historic trip to Colombia, the Pope questioned whether it is just for the world's poorest and most underdeveloped countries to be crippled by a foreign debt that totaled \$970 billion in 1985. He made similar statements during his visits with political leaders in Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

His efforts were echoed by the Latin American Episcopal Conference, which maintained Nov. 15 that "the Latin American debt cannot be paid" at current schedules, and proposed to investigate alternatives to the rule of the International Monetary Fund. The Bishops contended that another way to deal with the debt must be found, unlike the IMF methods which merely serve to create greater impoverishment.

This activity is culminating in the encyclical or pastoral letter which, it was announced Oct. 1, the Pope has commissioned for sometime in the immediate future. The Italian monthly *Trenta Giorni* reported that John Paul had ordered the Vatican to prepare a document examining the moral aspects of the Third World's massive foreign debt. This was later confirmed, on Dec. 11, by Cardinal Cegare of the Justice and Peace commission. Cegare told a Vatican news conference that such an encyclical or pastoral letter would be issued shortly, and that it would be "in the wake of *Populorum Progressio*." This was the 1967 encyclical of Pope Paul VI which had called for the creation of a new international monetary and economic order, in which the IMF would be supplanted by a new international lending institution committed to the development—and not the impoverishment—of the Third World.

The dignity of man

Speaking the same day, the Pope himself confirmed that he categorically opposes "any policy which contradicts the fundamental dignity and human rights of each person, or group of persons," seeing such a policy as "one which must be rejected." Concerning the debt now suffocating the developing sector, John Paul stated: "The foreign debt of the developing sector must be looked at with new eyes. . . ." Ech-

oing *Populorum*, which coined the phrase that "development is the new word for freedom," John Paul added: "Development is a question of men. Man is the subject of true development, and the aim of true development is man."

Making the same anti-IMF point as the Latin American bishops, the Pope went on to say that one must reject programs which, under the mask of "aid, force communities . . . to accept contraception and abortion as the price for development."

From 1967 to 1987

All of this is sufficient indication that the coming encyc-

A papal intervention in Ibero-America

by Valerie Rush

Pope John Paul II's week-long visit to Colombia in July 1986 represented a stunning strategic intervention into the affairs of the Western hemisphere and beyond, an intervention as powerful in the political arena as in the spiritual. Specifically, by openly endorsing the peace efforts of then Colombian President Belisario Betancur on both the domestic front and through the regional Contadora Group peace initiative in Central America, the Pope not only boosted those regional forces committed to the economic development of Central America but, equally important, threw a roadblock into the path of the would-be geopolitical puppetmasters of "Irangate" fame, for whom Central America has served too long as a private preserve.

By pleading for a new international order in which "man is the subject and not the object of economics and politics," John Paul II resurrected the universal standards of morality so eloquently outlined by his predecessor, Paul VI, in his 1967 encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*. The Pope went on to give those principles concrete form by denouncing "the new and more subtle form of slavery" that has emerged in this century, the narcotics trade, and in demanding the establishment of "a new order of priorities" in which the right to development is not sacrificed to usury. "What remains clear . . . is the urgency of Latin American solidarity to mutually contribute to our development, and to change unjust relations with the affluent countries, such as the external debt, which has become the eternal debt. . . ."

lical or pastoral will define economic policy as a major point of Vatican activity and intervention for the coming year.

What is different between today and 1967, when *Populorum Progressio* was issued, lies not in any particular fault in that exemplary document. Pope Paul's encyclical not only laid out a generic moral policy respecting economics, it went even as far as to discuss the concrete institutional shape which a re-ordered world economic system could take. What was lacking in 1967 was not so much program, as it was a proven willingness to fight for that program.

Consequently, in one of the most ironic aberrations of recent Catholic history, *Populorum Progressio* was seized

by the liberation theologians as, practically, their "founding document." They could do that, because the Vatican at that time was unwilling to launch the internal housecleaning which it so dramatically began in 1986. Without neutralizing, and exposing, its own heretics, the papacy left these same people free to take even the best papal pronouncements and twist them to their wicked designs.

However, 1986, the Year of St. Augustine, has proven conclusively that this is unlikely to happen again. 1987 promises to be a year in which even more productive battles will be waged, both inside the Church, and with respect to the lay world around it.

The Pope's address to Colombia's business leaders emphasized the "practicality" of moral economic practice: "The greatest wealth, the best capital of a country, is its people. . . . Consequently, the center of reference of your economic activity must always be an interest in all human beings."

But he did not fail to present the concept of the *Filioque* as the ultimate criterion of humanity: "Each time you meet a fellow citizen who is poor or in need, if you look at him truly with the eyes of faith, you will see in him the image of God; you will see Christ; you will see a temple of the Holy Spirit, and you will realize that what you have done unto him you have done unto Christ Himself."

The 'politics' of human dignity

Pope John Paul II encapsulated in his intense seven-day visit to Colombia the process launched earlier at the December 1985 Extraordinary Synod in Rome—that is, the crusade for economic and political ethics to guarantee the dignity of man. When Ibero-American bishops and cardinals met in Peru on Jan. 17, 1986, to discuss implementation of the Synod, the theme of economic and political morality was already on the table. Colombian Cardinal López Trujillo spoke from the Lima meeting on the need for genuine dialogue between rich and poor nations to avoid fulfillment of the law of "Social Darwinism, in which only the powerful survive."

The final document of a Venezuelan bishops' conference held earlier that month was more explicit, calling on the Lusinchi government to use the nation's oil resources to promote economic development, "ing to pressures to pay the foreign debt." The Chilean bishops' council in May proposed that all Ibero-American Presidents form a continental common market and monetary system, to try to isolate the continent from an international financial system "which is inefficient and unjust for it and for the Third World."

The general secretary of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), Colombian Bishop Darío Castrillón, told the press on July 9, immediately following the Pope's departure: "For us, the debt is no longer debt, but has become misery, something central to our concerns. . . . We cannot establish the security of capital on the insecurity of man." One month later, the Mexican archbishop of Monterrey, Adolfo Suárez Rivera, denounced "the foreign debt that is drowning the country. . . . Priority areas are ignored and the maximum burden falls on the weakest."

In November, CELAM met and issued a document on "The gap between rich and poor in Latin America," which insists that, under its current terms, the continent's foreign debt simply "cannot be paid." The document also argues that the International Monetary Fund's austerity strategy could not be universally applied to the debtor nations, since it tends to undermine the very productivity which enables countries to pay their debts.

The Colombian Bishops Conference on Nov. 29, picked up the Pope's July challenge by issuing a document threatening the excommunication of drug traffickers for the "terrible evil" they have wrought in society, and hinting at the same for those who follow in their footsteps. And, on Dec. 3, the Argentine church took the giant step of publicly formalizing its alliance with that country's labor movement in its fight to recapture national economic sovereignty. Pastoral Commission president Monsignor Italo Di Stefano met with CGT labor federation head Saul Ubaldini for two hours, the support of the Church to the CGT's economic demands—including moratorium on the country's \$50 billion foreign debt.

The participation of the Ibero-American Church in the fight for economic justice can be expected through April of next year, when Pope John Paul II will be releasing a long-awaited papal document on Third World debt. The Pope will then travel again to Ibero-America.