

Pope John Paul II in Germany, gives moral support to industrial labor

by Rainer Apel

The pontiff's West German tour, which led through 11 cities between April 30 and May 4, made a very specific point about the moral values of a Christian in this world. In a way unprecedented for the Vatican's approach on German affairs, this papal visit also emphasized the importance of a just organization of the economy, as an indispensable precondition for a dignified life of man.

On May 2, Pope John Paul II visited the traditional center of coal mining and steel production in the Ruhr region, Germany's industrial heartland. Unlike the first papal visit to Germany in 1980, which was dedicated to "strictly clerical" questions, this visit was to state moral support for the working people and for industrial labor as such.

The two cities visited by the pontiff, Bottrop and Gelsenkirchen, have an official jobless rate of more than 16%, and all their future depends on the future of mining and steel. The politicians, but also many of the industry managements, have given up on the allegedly "old and obsolete" industries, for the sake of post-industrial values, and more than 20 years of industrial dismantling have broken most of the workers' resistance here. Because of that, the papal visit to this region was highly welcomed by the labor organizations. Thus, Heinz-Werner Meyer, national president of the German Mining Workers Union, said he considered the pontiff's visit "a signal of moral support for the working people of this region."

The Pope did not disappoint labor's expectations. In a public event at the Prosper Haniel coal mine in Bottrop, he addressed about 15,000 workers and their families on the values of labor.

The pontiff began: "The Church, being at the center of the world, cannot pass by the working people. . . . The Church, standing in the succession of Jesus Christ, has a mandate to fight every misuse and threat to human life." The Pontiff explained that God himself has often been presented as an architect, and that working man, being in the image of that same God, was following the example of working God himself. "Labor belongs to man—it is expressing his likeness to God. It is, therefore, an indispensable, central aspect of the dignity of Man."

"Jesus himself," continued the pontiff through the ap-

plause of the working-class audience, "was born the son of a worker, he grew up in a family of workers, learned a craft himself, and called craftsmen into his own circle of followers later on. Every situation which excludes man from labor, is against his dignity." Addressing the problem of current mass unemployment, the pontiff recommended: "Those bearing responsibility in the industry, in the administration and in society, must act to reinstitute work for everybody." He continued: "They cannot be allowed to leave it to so-called mechanisms of the free markets alone, to provide jobs."

Then, the pontiff made a specific point about the fact that labor alone does not make man's dignity; he must have family and religion, culture and the natural sciences, as well. "Only a society that is defined by cultural values," reminded Pope John Paul II, "will be able to wake the creative powers of man—which is his share in the labor of God himself."

More specifically, Pope John Paul II wanted to address the following aspect: "Man needs the sciences, but the sciences must go together with responsibility. They must, most of all, respect the inalienable rights of Man, as bestowed upon Man by God."

This passage of the speech, which concluded the papal visit to Bottrop, took up an aspect mentioned in the pontiff's public prayer the night before, in the city of Muenster: the ongoing euthanasia debate, and the corruption of public morality.

Christians must fight euthanasia

As Pope John Paul II warned in his public prayer at the Cathedral of Münster, a broad mobilization of Christians against the resurfacing debate on "useful life" was required today, as much as it was required in the early 1940s, when the Cardinal of Münster, Clemens August Graf von Galen, opposed the Nazis' euthanasia programs in fiery church speeches.

"There are today in society, strong forces which threaten human life," the pontiff warned. "Again, euthanasia, or so-called mercy-killing, on the basis of apparent compassion, is a frightening, recurring phrase that finds its new misguided defender." Here, Pope John Paul very directly took on the Green movement, which endorses mercy-killing and broad-

scale abortion: "No peace movement deserves this name, if it does not with the same force denounce the war waged against unborn life, and begins to mobilize against this war. No ecological movement can be taken seriously if it avoids mistreatment and extermination in the mother's womb, of innumerable children with the potential of life. Life is the most precious thing on earth, and our civilization must place the respect of human life at its center, again."

This warning was addressed very specifically to the counter-movement in Germany against the pontiff's visit, an unsavory combination of revived pre-Christian cults, such as witchcraft, and the heirs of the Nazis' anti-clerical tradition in today's Green movement of Germany. They all pose, ironically, under the peculiar title of "church from below"—which tells that their origins are not in Heaven, but down in Hell. With his Münster remarks, the pontiff threw a gauntlet before this movement, which was on a nationwide mobilization against his presence in West Germany.

Witches and Satan are stirred up

The "church from below," the new witches, mobilized a march of several hundred witchcraft-worshippers against the pontiff in the city of Cologne April 30. Carrying broomsticks and other tools from the witches' traditional arsenals, they chanted the following slogans: "We wish the Pope a fiery welcome! . . . Fire and flame for this Pope!"

The terroristic character of the movement was illustrated in the early morning of May 1, when police found hateful slogans sprayed on the walls and doors of St. Agnes Cathedral in Cologne, reading: "We like churches, but only when burning!" That same morning, the St. Brictius Chapel in Cologne was destroyed completely by arson. Police did not rule out a direct connection with the protest march of witches and the assassination threat against the pontiff that appeared on a poster in Cologne one week before. The poster showed the face of John Paul II, with a gun-sight superimposed upon it.

The "movement" has prominent sponsors inside the Catholic Church. There are the two Catholic heretics Hans Küng and Norbert Greinacher, who make no secret of their open revolt against the Holy See. In an interview with *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* April 30, Küng said Pope John Paul II had introduced a "climate of repression" inside the Catholic Church, and in a radio interview the same day, Küng even accused the Vatican of being worse than the Kremlin: "The Soviet Union gives a better treatment to its dissidents, than the Vatican gives to its critical priests."

Opposition against the Pope also comes from the Lutherans, who refused to meet officially with Pope John Paul II during his trip, and from Jewish rabbis, who denounced the sanctification of Edith Stein, a Catholic victim of the Nazi regime, in a papal ceremony in Cologne on May 1.

The rabbis' argument was that Edith Stein, who converted from Judaism to Catholicism in 1922, was "a Jew, and not a Catholic," when she died in the Auschwitz concentration

camp on Aug. 9, 1942. More than that, the Jewish community blamed the Catholic Church as responsible for her death, and refused the open hand the Vatican had extended to the Jews for conciliation, by choosing Edith Stein for sanctification. Apparently, the Vatican still has a long way to go, to achieve the unified mobilization of all groups in the Christian-Judaic sphere against the "forces of evil."

Satan does exist

The pontiff dealt again with the old and new Nazis, with the role of the evil in history, in his two speeches in Munich

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(May 3) and Speyer (May 4). The papal visit to Munich was to officially pronounce the sanctification of Rupert Mayer, a German Jesuit priest active in the resistance movement against the Nazis. In his speech before an audience of more than 82,000 at the Olympic Stadium of Munich, Pope John Paul II warned: "There is no doubt that Satan does exist!" Taking the example of Father Rupert Mayer, who fought the Nazi movement from the early 1920s on, he said, the mandate of God obliged the Christians to "withstand, with courage, the forces of evil, that appear in many shapes also in our time." The pontiff warned of "Satan's deceptive temptation, not to take this challenge seriously and to avoid hardships, which often accompany the fight against the forces of evil." The forces of Satan, the pontiff laid out here in Munich, as also the next day in Speyer, can be located in all places where Christians meet hostility. "There is no difference between the rights of God, and those of Man," said Pope John Paul II, warning: "There is a lot of talk these days about human rights. They are violated in many countries, but nobody talks about the rights of God—the rights of God and the rights of Man belong together, however. Where there is no respect for God and his law, man is deprived of his rights as well."

When the pontiff left Germany in the evening of May 4, to fly back to Rome, he was certain to have set new moral challenges to the community of Catholics in Germany. The papal visit may have done much, to restore public morality, among Christians in the first place, in this country.