

Editorial

On the Election of Pope Benedict XVI

The elevation to Pope of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the closest collaborator of John Paul II, whose ecumenical action he supported with theoretical writings, represents a choice of continuity with the pontificate of his predecessor. It is good, even excellent news, commented Lyndon LaRouche, noting that Ratzinger's election will be reassuring to many.

His quick election on April 19 (only two "black smokes" before the announcement) indicates that a strong consensus on his name had already existed in the College of Cardinals. This, and his profile, are analogous to the election of Paul VI, the Pope whose great legacy lives on in ecumenical circles with his statement, "Development is the new name of peace."

Benedict XVI's first words were: "After a great Pope like John Paul II, God has chosen a humble worker of His vineyard to serve Him. I am comforted by knowing that God makes good use of even the most imperfect instruments."

Ratzinger is the first Pontiff to have published in LaRouche's publications. In the Spring 1992 issue of the German magazine *Ibykus*, Cardinal Ratzinger authored an article entitled "Diagnose und Prognose zur Lage von Kirche und Welt: Wendezeit für Europa" ("Diagnosis and Prognosis on the Situation of the Church and the World: Time of Change for Europe"). It was an adaptation, done by Ratzinger himself for *Ibykus*, of a speech he had given at a conference at the Catholic University in Milan.

The name of Benedict XVI which Ratzinger chose is a precise signal. Benedict XV was an anti-synarchist Pope, who was elected in 1914 as successor to Pius X, and who fought against European oligarchies. He tried unsuccessfully to mediate a peace between Germany and France, and called the war "a useless massacre." In his first call for peace in September 1914, he drafted a five-point program which included the renunciation of any "winner's vengeance" in the spirit of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, which ended the Thirty Years' War. In his call of July 28, 1915, he warned that "humiliated and oppressed nations . . . prepare the reaction and transmit from generation to generation a sad heritage of hate and revenge." Again, in 1918, he called on U.S.

President Wilson not to impose humiliating conditions on the losers. Unfortunately, Wilson did not listen to him.

Pope Benedict XV dissolved the ultramontane, synarchist organization La Sapinière in France, and the Sodalitium Pianum, the inquisitory organization built up in the Vatican against "modernists." He supported the formation of the Zentrumpartei (Center Party) in Germany. He also lifted the ban preventing Italian Catholics from actively participating in national politics, and introduced reforms to take missionary organizations out of the political control of colonial powers.

In his first homily following his election, Pope Benedict XVI gave a strong programmatic message demonstrating his continuity with the policies of John Paul II: "In undertaking his ministry, the new Pope knows that his task is to make Christ's light shine in front of men and women of today: not his own light, but that of Christ.

"With this awareness, I address myself to everyone, even to those who follow other religions or who simply seek an answer to fundamental questions of existence and have not yet found it. . . . I assure them that the Church wants to continue to build an open and sincere dialogue with them, in the search for the true good of mankind and society.

"I invoke from God unity and peace for the human family, and declare the willingness of all Catholics to cooperate for true social development, respectful of the dignity of every human being.

"I will make every effort and dedicate myself to pursuing the promising dialogue started by my venerable predecessors with various civilizations, so that out of mutual understanding, the conditions for a better future for everybody will spring."

It is notable that Cardinal Ratzinger's writing on "Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian Relations" begins and ends with a discussion of Nicolaus of Cusa's "On the Peace of Faith," the dialogue which the great Cardinal and scientist of the 15th Century wrote as a guide to combining ecumenical dialogue (in the midst of bitter conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the West), with the search for truth.