

Truths of new encyclical must be acted upon now

by Nora Hamerman and Maria Cristina Fiocchi

The leader of the Schiller Institute, German political figure Helga Zepp-LaRouche, has issued an appeal to European governments to take concrete steps to bring into being a new, more just world economic order in fulfillment of the principles which have just been reiterated in Pope John Paul II's latest encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, which was issued the day after the worldwide Labor Day celebrations on May 1.

The encyclical's name means "Hundredth Year" and celebrates the first great social encyclical of the Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* of 1891.

Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche wrote on May 10, in an appeal which is being circulated for endorsements all over Europe, "We are living at this moment through a catastrophe in the developing sector so dreadful that it staggers our power of comprehension. In Bangladesh, beyond the 500,000 victims of the cyclone, a further 5 million Bangladeshis are threatened by death from starvation and epidemic disease. In Iraq, death stalks at least 5 million people as a result of the destruction of infrastructure by 'precision bombing.' In Africa, 27 million people have been struck by a catastrophic famine. And if in Ibero-America \$200 billion are not invested in infrastructure and disease control measures, the cholera epidemic will not be brought under control, and 120 million people will get the disease and more than 1 million will die.

"The boundless suffering which now is afflicting hundreds of millions of individuals is not the result of unavoidable natural catastrophes, but the consequence of the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has prevented urgent investments in sanitation, health care, water management, and protective structures against disasters, as well as in infrastructure, agriculture, and industry, through

its genocidal loan 'conditionalities.'

"The international aid organizations have nearly come to the end of their resources. The scale of aid requirements has reached dimensions which far surpass the level of available catastrophe relief up to now. Yet, it must be clear to every reasonable person that Europe or Japan cannot be islands of happiness and prosperity, while the rest of the world sinks into a frightful holocaust.

"There is only one way out, and that lies in immediately turning the new encyclical *Centesimus Annus* of Pope John Paul II into reality and building a just new world economic order.

"The encyclical says that 'it will be necessary above all to abandon a mentality in which the poor—as individuals and as peoples—are seen as a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced. The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity to work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. The advancement of the poor is a great opportunity for the moral, cultural, and even economic growth of all humanity.'

"Later on it says, 'The Western countries, in turn, run the risk of seeing this collapse [of socialism] as a one-sided victory of their own economic system and therefore failing to make necessary corrections in that system. Meanwhile countries of the Third World are experiencing more than ever the tragedy of underdevelopment, which is becoming more serious with each passing day.'

"The encyclical points out that today the situation of people in the developing sector is comparable to the situation of the working class of a hundred years ago, when the first

social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* appeared, and that they must be accorded the same rights which today are normal in developed nations.

“To be sure, the Pope adds that the Church ‘has no model to present’ of its own, and that ‘models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems.’ ”

LaRouche provides the model

“Yet such concrete models are on the table. For the past two decades, the American economic thinker Lyndon LaRouche has elaborated comprehensive development programs which make it possible to begin putting a just new world economic order into practice. Among them are the Europeanwide infrastructure program of the Productive Triangle for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Oasis Plan for the Middle East, an infrastructure program for Africa, a 40-year, comprehensive development program for India, a 50-year, comprehensive development program for the Pacific Ocean Basin, and the Ibero-American continental development plan called *Operation Juárez*.

“We call on the European governments to begin at once the implementation of the program of the Productive Triangle as the locomotive for the world economy. Europe can and will be no island of prosperity; rather it has a great historical and moral responsibility, and must now contribute its potential to preventing the further ruin of humanity and to helping to develop a world in which all the people on this planet can live according to the inalienable human dignity bestowed upon them by natural law.”

Man at the center of the economy

In Rome, the new encyclical was presented to the press on May 2 by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, president of the Pontifical Council “*Justitia et Pax*.” He stressed that *Centesimus Annus* “is not anti-American,” but is against every type of consumerist society which denies spiritual values and reduces man solely “to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs.”

The 113-page encyclical is organized on three levels, one which “looks back” with a rereading of *Rerum Novarum*, a current one which “looks around” at the “new things” (the literal meaning of the Latin phrase *rerum novarum*) that surround us today, and finally, a third level which “looks to the future.”

The collapse of the communist regimes in 1989 is the historical backdrop to the encyclical. The error of Marxism, according to the Pontiff, is fundamentally “anthropological in nature.” “Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socioeconomic mechanism.” He continues: “From this mistaken conception of the person there arise

both a distortion of law, which defines the sphere of exercise of freedom, and an opposition to private property.”

Having taken note of communism’s failure and the limits of laissez-faire capitalism, the encyclical counterposes a healthy economic theory. In paragraph 42, which has touched off the harshest controversies, the Pope states: “If by *capitalism* an economic system is meant which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, of the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector,” then it is a model to attain economic and civil progress in the Third World, “but if by *capitalism* is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality and which sees it as a particular dimension of that freedom, whose core is ethical and religious,” then it is to be decisively rejected.

The capitalistic system, therefore, is not rejected in itself, but it must be corrected in its materialistic and consumeristic ideology, and it must receive Christian values.

Man’s resource is man himself

An important section is dedicated to the role of human labor: “Besides the earth,” the document declares, “man’s principal resource is man himself. His intelligence enables him to discover the earth’s productive potentials and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied.” Today, “the possession of know-how, technology, and skill” is more important than ever. The wealth of industrialized nations is based much more upon “this kind of ownership than on natural resources.”

Therefore, to overcome the discrepancy between the North and the South, we must give Third World countries the chance to acquire the basic knowledge, the technological know-how to develop a modern economy. “Whereas at one time,” the encyclical says, “the decisive factor of production was the land and later capital,” today it is man himself, “that is, his capacity for knowledge, especially, his scientific knowledge.”

How to respond to these numerous challenges which are presented to humanity at the threshold of the third millennium? Individual acts of good will are not enough. The state must also intervene. John Paul II thus dedicates an entire chapter, the fifth, to laying out a “sound theory of the state.” He reiterates the Vatican’s condemnation of the “recent tragic war in the Persian Gulf,” and writes, “For this reason, the new name for peace is development. Just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war, so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development. . . . This is the culture which is hoped for, one which fosters trust in the human potential of the poor and consequently in their ability to improve their condition through work or to make a positive contribution to economic prosperity. . . . Creating such conditions calls for a worldwide effort to promote development.”