

Cardinal Ratzinger calls for the 'freedom to do good'

by M. Cristina Flocchi

On the morning of April 5, during a crowded press conference at Vatican City, the new document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Liberty and Liberation*, was presented to the press. Besides Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation, Archbishop Alberto Bovone, secretary of the same the Salesian order Egidio Viganò, the Jesuit Angelo Macchi, and Peruvian Bishop Julio Alzamora Rovedo were present.

The document, 58 pages long, was drawn up by more than 40 experts over 18 months, and follows the first document *Instruction on Some Aspects of the Theology of Liberation*, published in 1984. The previous document condemned "the deviations, dangerous for the faith and the Christian life, contained in certain forms of the Theology of Liberation, which resort in an insufficiently critical manner to concepts shared by various currents of Marxist thought." The purpose of the second document was supposed to be to shed light on the positive aspects of the theme of freedom.

The issuance of the new document, which was announced by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger at a press conference right after the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops that concluded last December in Rome, has awakened great interest, and naturally the "experts" have hastened to interpret the new indications given by the important Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. According to *Newsweek* the document gives a free hand to the activists of Theology of Liberation. One of their biggest exponents, the Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez, is quoted saying jubilantly: "It is the end of an era, the debate is over." Less positive were the comments of the Italian friends of Theology of Liberation, who accused the former Holy Office

(Inquisition) of having exhumed old philosophical devotional formulas, and betrayed the aspirations of the poor churches of Latin America.

In the steps of *Populorum Progressio*

There have been many generic and superficial judgments, and attempts to restrict the content of the document to the slogan, "armed struggle no, passive resistance yes," but in fact the document brings up to date the admissibility, already present in the 1967 papal encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, of armed struggle as "the last remedy against an evident and prolonged tyranny, which gravely threatened the fundamental rights of the individual and harmed in a dangerous way the common good of a country." The new document says in fact that "the concrete application of this measure can be foreseen only after a very rigorous evaluation of the situation."

From a first examination of the "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," it is clear that the Theology of Liberation is not even named. Whereas in the first Instruction, such theology was analyzed and condemned, in the second, there was clearly a desire to take definitive distance from that theme. Ratzinger himself made the point during the press conference, that the document is a reply to accusations too often made against the Roman Catholic Church, both by the free-market liberals and the Marxists, of being the negation of freedom. "It is a duty of the Church to clarify," the Cardinal said, "the two opposite concepts of freedom," one which has as its model *anarchy*, and the other, the Christian one, which has *alliance* as its model.

In the second document, the Church proposes an orthodox interpretation of the theme of freedom: "The consciousness of freedom and the dignity of man," stresses the introduction, written by Cardinal Ratzinger, "joined with the affirmation of the inalienable rights of the individual and of peoples," is one of the outstanding characteristics of our time. Now, freedom demands certain conditions of economic, social, political, and cultural order, which make its full exercise possible. The church of Christ makes such affirmations its own." Hence, it is reiterated here that there is an organic link between the first and second document: "They must be read, one in the light of the other."

In fact the second *Instruction* repeats the condemnation of the philosophy of "class struggle," contained in the Theology of Liberation. The document says, "Although it encourages the creation and action of associations, such as trade unions, which fight for the defense of the rights and legitimate interests of workers and for social justice, for that very reason the Church does not admit the theory that sees the structural dynamism of social life in the class struggle. The action, which it recommends, is not the struggle of one class against another to obtain the elimination of the adversary; nor does it proceed for an aberrant submission to a presumed law of history. It is a noble and reasonable struggle, with a view to social justice and solidarity."

The myth of revolution is also very emphatically condemned, which is one of the constant themes of the Theology of Liberation, "those who discredit the way of reforms," says the *Instruction*, "in favor of the myth of revolution, not only nourish the illusion that the abolition of an evil situation is enough in itself to create a more human society, but they even favor the advent of totalitarian regimes. The fight against injustice has no meaning, if it is not conducted with the intention of establishing a new social and political order in conformity with the requirements of justice." Concluding the press conference, Cardinal Ratzinger had stressed the necessity to fight against the myth of revolution "so that reason may triumph."

Free-market economics condemned

The new theme, with respect to the first document, dealt with in the *Instruction*, is that of a clear-cut condemnation of free-market economics and of the philosophical conception on which it is based: "In regard to the modern movement of liberation, it must be stated that the effort being made to free thought and the will from their limits has been pushed to the point of maintaining that morality, as such, constitutes an unreasonable limit that man must overcome, if he wants to become truly his own master."

In the chapter on man's vocation for freedom, the problem of man's freedom is addressed with great depth. "Man must learn to bring his will into accord with his nature," because it is "the harmony with the demands of human nature, which renders the will itself human . . . far from fulfilling itself in a total autarchy of the ego and in the absence

of relationships, freedom does not truly exist where there are not mutual ties, regulated by truth and justice, to unify individuals.

"Freedom is not the freedom to do anything whatsoever: It is the freedom to do good, in which alone happiness resides. The Good, therefore, is its purpose."

The document ends with a chapter, perhaps the clearest and most complete, on the social doctrine of the Church, for a Christian praxis of liberation, to be counterposed to the false liberations of the Theology of Liberation. Many subjects are treated: the value of human labor, profit considered positively if it favors the common good, wages as not charity but a resource, development aid to Third World countries as the only guarantee of peace, the moral obligation to not hold unproductive capital, and universal education and the elimination of illiteracy.

Cardinal Ratzinger at the press conference had presented the document as the outcome of an organic continuity of the teaching of the Church expressed in the constituting of the

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Vatican II Council's *Gaudium et Spes* and in the encyclicals *Populorum Progressio* and *Laborem Exercens*; perhaps the final chapter is that which condenses the teachings of the Church in the most complete form, putting just social demands, which are often utilized by the Liberation Theologists for other ends, in their proper framework in the line of action today conducted by the Church.

"Expert in humanity, the Church through its social doctrine offers a collection of principles of reflection, of criteria of judgment, and hence of directives for action, so that those profound changes which the situations of misery and injustice require, may be carried out, and so that this be done in a way that contributes to the true good of mankind." The Church, says the documents, is fighting for the full recognition of the dignity of every human being, who is in the image of God, and so that every human being can contribute to the common good of society, and for this reason the Church condemns every form of "social and political individualism," i.e., free-market economics, and every form of "collectivism," i.e. Marxism.

Here are some quotations from the most interesting affirmations from the final chapter:

A true civilization of labor. "Thus the solution of most of the serious problems of misery is found in the promotion

of a true civilization of labor. Labor is, in some way, the key to the entire social question."

The national and international common good. "Such a culture of labor will imply participation tending to promote the national and international common good, and not to defend individual and corporative interests."

The value of human labor. "Every man has a right to work, which must be recognized practically through an effective commitment to the end of resolving the dramatic problem of unemployment. The fact that this maintains broad layers of the population in a condition of being outcasts, and most markedly, youth, is intolerable. For this reason, the creation of jobs is a primary social task, which is imposed on individuals and on private initiative, and in equal measure on the State. Broadly speaking, here as in other sectors, the State has a subsidiary function; but often it can be called upon to intervene directly, as in the case of international accords between different States."

Priority of labor over capital. "Entrepreneurs have the moral obligation to not hold unproductive capitals and, in investments, to look above all to the common good."

Universal destination of goods. "The principle of the universal destination of goods, together with that of human and supernatural brotherhood, dictates precise duties to the richest countries with respect to the poor countries. These duties are of solidarity in aid to developing countries."

Development aid. "International solidarity is a requirement of a moral order. It is not imposed only in the cases of extreme urgency, but also for aid to real development. There is here a common work to do, which requires a concerted and constant effort to find concrete technical solutions, but also to create a new mentality in the men of our time. Peace in the world depends in large measure upon it."

Right to education and culture. "Every man has the right to culture, which is the specific force of a truly human existence, to which he accedes with the development of his faculties of consciousness, his moral virtues, his capacities of relations with his fellow man, his aptitudes to produce useful and beautiful works. From that derives the requirement of promotion and diffusion of education, to which everyone has an inalienable right. The first condition of that is the elimination of illiteracy."

The choice of the Church of Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger to align themselves with "those who have no voice, the poor of the world," is evident. In some respects the document of the former Holy Office is revolutionary and demands a profound transformation of even many sectors of the Church. "The direct conclusion of this profound reflection," says the document, "is the elaboration and the implementation of audacious programs of action in view of the social and economic liberation of millions of men and women, whose condition of economic, social, and political oppression is intolerable." The message is clear.

Western accomplices

by Paolo Serri

After a trial lasting eight months, the Rome court deliberating on the plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981, found three Bulgarians and three Turks "not guilty," because of "insufficient evidence." With this verdict on March 29, the almost five-year-old investigation is back to square one, marking a failure not so much for the magistrates and investigators involved in the case, but for the political and intelligence leaderships in the West. In other words, there has not been the political will by Western circles to fully expose the evident Bulgarian and Soviet masterminding of the plot which brought the Turkish murderer Ali Agca to St. Peter's Square in May 1981.

The Rome court acquitted the Bulgarian officials Sergei Antonov, Jelio Vassilev, and Todor Ayvazov (the latter two tried in absentia), as well as the Turkish "Grey Wolves" leader Musa Serdar Celebi and followers Omer Bagci and the fugitive Oral Celik. They were found not guilty of the crime of conspiracy and complicity in the murder attempt against the Pope, "because of lack of proof," an Italian juridical formulation in the cases where doubt persists on the culpability of the defendants. The verdict means that Ali Agca is not the sole actor and that there was an international plot to kill the Pope, but that the circumstantial evidence against the Bulgarians and Turks are not enough to convict them.

The decision came as a surprise to prosecutor Antonio Marini, who had asked for the acquittal of the Bulgarians "for lack of proof," but life sentences for the Turks. Reflecting the failure in pinpointing the Bulgarian connection in court, with its Turkish mafia and right-wing extremist ramifications, Marini said, "Everything is open again. Nothing definite has yet been established; in practice we are back at the starting point."

The problem faced by the magistrates and jurors was that the bulk of the accusations relied on the testimony of papal assailant Ali Agca, who during infinite public interrogatories at the trial undermined his own credibility. With his testimony discredited, the multifaceted circumstantial evidence collected by the Italian investigators could not have sufficed