

scene of bitter military fighting. Artillery assaults have forced the population to flee back to the camps they were released from earlier in August. On Aug. 23, a grenade attack on a marketplace in Bujumbura left at least 11 dead and 25 critically injured.

In short, there is no cease-fire, there is no agreement, there is no peace. Nevertheless, under the cover of such prolonged negotiations, the international community has placed pressure on the democratic Hutu forces (already operating without international support) and sat idly by in silence as the Tutsi military:

- escalated its illegal military rule;
- incarcerated 850,000 Hutu civilians in concentration camps with no means of subsistence;
- carried out massacres against Hutu civilians as their primary military rebuttal to any rebel attack; and
- deployed its troops illegally in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in alliance with British-backed Uganda and Rwanda, in pursuit of that country's gold and diamonds.

The Problems Are Straightforward

The issues put forward by the warring parties, fraught with distrust, bitterness, and hatred, are difficult in the extreme. But, they are at least straightforward. It is the mediators, the facilitators, and "donors to the peace process" who are neck-deep in double-talk, saying they want peace, even claiming that there is peace, as they pursue their real agenda for continued conflagration—and death of Africans—in the mineral-drenched Great Lakes region. Witness the Aug. 23 interview of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice with AllAfrica.com, downgrading the purpose of President Clinton's visit to Arusha to one of "supporting the peace process" for Burundi: "The negotiations have been ongoing for years and they continue as we speak," Rice intoned. "In the short time he [President Clinton] is there he won't be able to get involved deeply with the substance of the issues with the parties, but I don't think that was the reason for which he was invited by President Mandela. He was invited to show yet again, as we've been working on this since 1996, that the United States is committed to supporting a lasting peace; that we will make the necessary investments along with others in the international community should there be a comprehensive and solid peace achieved."

However, Rice is the chief enforcer for the policy of U.S. backing to the invasion and continuing occupation of the Congo by the allied forces of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. Until that support is decisively withdrawn, peace in Burundi is highly unlikely, as any foreign service officer would know. Under the current framework of U.S. policy in the Great Lakes region, a peace settlement is likely to be a re-run of the disastrous September 1994 coalition government imposed on Burundi, which will only result in continuing assassinations of Hutus and Tutsis opposed to the Tutsi military, and the slaughter of innocent civilians.

Pope Mobilizes Youth To Change the World

by Claudio Celani

If only a fraction of the immense crowd of young people who gathered in Rome for the World Youth Day, were to accept the challenge thrown out to them by Pope John Paul II, it was worth the effort. It was less a "demonstration of strength" of the Catholic Church, as some commentators wrote, than a meeting of as many young Christians (there were also non-Catholics) as possible with the Pope. Not an abstract idea of Christianity, but its embodiment in the figure of the Pope, is the reason why so many young people poured into Rome in the week that culminated in the meetings of Aug. 19-20, where more than 2 million gathered. John Paul II once again proved to be the most charismatic leader of the world, which he has shown through the greatness by which he interprets his mission as the Vicar of Christ on Earth.

Even if many of the youth could only see the Pope as a white dot in the distance, or, coming from all over the world, could not understand a word he said (the Pope spoke in Italian) and will have to read the translation when they return home, coming here was worth it for them to contribute to the success of such a gathering. Whereas 1 million were expected, more than 2 million came. The logistical effort was comparable to a war mobilization. More than 2 million people had to be fed, lodged, and transported daily from one side of the city to the other, many of them for an entire week. And, to the final meeting on Saturday, Aug. 19, everybody converged on the Tor Vergata campus outside of Rome—which meant a walk of up to 20 kilometers, with temperatures sometimes reaching 40°C. At the campus, there was enough space for everyone spread out a sleeping bag. The next day, after the Sunday celebration, the immense crowd returned to the city as a body, mostly to leave Rome by train or by plane.

The gathering was therefore already a logistical success, beyond expectations. The Rome authorities in charge of the logistics, managed to supply the crowd with enough water, food, toilets, and medical assistance. About 2,000 people were medically treated, mostly for sun stroke, and almost all of them were immediately released. (All this will increase the chances of the Mayor of Rome, Francesco Rutelli, to become the next Prime Minister, but that is another story.)

A New Image of Youth

For once, 2 million young people projected an image of themselves antithetical to what the usual rock concerts, "love parades," and so on, give of a young generation corrupted by



Pope John Paul II called on his youthful audience “to engage yourself with humility and perseverance to improve yourself and society, making it more human and brotherly.”

a hedonistic, self-destructive culture dominated by drugs and sex. They gave the image of youth seeking a universal meaning of life, looking for an idea, as the Pope said, “able to satisfy the deepest aspirations of the human heart.” Sure, outbursts of infantilism belong to those of young age, and a formalist could have listed millions of examples, including the soccer game variety, in which an enthusiastic uproar broke out when the Pope arrived and repeatedly expressed itself even during his speech. But, if their youthfulness was their excuse, that cannot be said of the organizers of the cultural offering in preparation for the Pope’s arrival. The crowd was entertained with a “Christian” version of pop music, which is as primitive and banal as pop music can be. The Italian Bishops Conference was responsible for organizing the entertainment, which has set up a whole structure, including a school (“Hope Music School”) and a concert organization (“Hope Music Management”), which trains and manages pop singers and concerts!

It seems as if the Bishops provided an additional cross for the youth to carry, who had come to Rome to be uplifted, but had to wait for the arrival of the Pope in order for the uplifting to occur. And the Pope issued a challenge for all of them. To be a Christian today, he said, means to be active in improving the world, to make it better for man to live in the image of God. Never cease to work for that, never lose your faith, even if today’s world seems to be so full of evils that one easily becomes demoralized.

“I think,” the Pope said, “of those who want to live relationships of solidarity and love, in a world where only the

logic of profit counts, or of personal or group interest. I think as well of those who work for peace, and see growing and developing in various parts of the world, new war spots; I think of those who work for man’s freedom, and see him still enslaved by himself and by others; I think of those who fight to allow human life be loved and respected, and must witness frequent assaults against it, against the respect which is due it: Dear Youth, is it difficult to believe in such a world? In the year 2000, is it difficult to believe? Yes! It is difficult. There is no sense in hiding it. It is difficult, but with the help of Grace, it is possible.”

The Pope continued: “It is Christ who provokes in you the desire to make of your life something great, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to let yourself be swallowed by mediocrity, the courage to engage yourself with humility and perseverance to improve yourself and society, making it more human and brotherly.”

Reminding his listeners of the mass insanities of the 20th Century—fascism and communism—the Pope said: “Today you are here gathered to state that in the new century you will not lend yourself to being instruments of violence and destruction; you will defend peace, paying even with your person if necessary. You will not be resigned in the face of a world where other human beings starve, are illiterate, have no job. You will defend life in each moment of its Earthly development, you will use all of your energy to make this Earth more and more livable for everybody.”

The Pope has indicated that the mission of the Christian today is a highly political one. Without mentioning it, he has condemned a system which today rules the world, called “globalization,” by condemning the principles on which it is based (“the logic of profit”), and condemning its effects (war, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment). Go out and fight to put an end to that, said the Pope. And Christ indicates how: not through an anarchist rebellion, but “with humility and perseverance to improve yourself and society.”

To take up the Pope’s challenge means to engage in a process of self-education to be able to offer solutions, to provide leadership. It means to educate oneself and others to the power of reason. Only a reasonable man can believe in God: “That is Faith: the answer of Man, reasonable and free, to the word of the living God,” the Pope said. A practical application of this approach is found in the battle against poverty, one of the campaigns launched by the Catholic Church. A true Christian is the one who refuses to accept easy, empiricist explanations for underdevelopment, such as “corruption of local leaders,” and does not fall into the trap of environmentalist paganism, like “appropriate models of development” for the Third World. A real Christian fights for supplying the highest technologies, the best fruit of the creative human mind, to all peoples in the world, in order to liberate them from a state of need and ignorance.

Let us pray that as many as possible will accept that challenge.