

Vatican by Augustinus

Back to 'Populorum Progressio'

On his return from India, John Paul II is emphatically reviving Paul VI's work for a new world economic order.

Now that the papal pilgrimage to India is over, there is not the slightest doubt that this trip will pass into history as a crucial stage in bringing about a more just world economic order. This was stated by the Pope himself upon his return from India, at an audience for participants in a conference on famine.

John Paul II said that the Church looks favorably on all initiatives that help to shape public opinion on the common responsibility to deal with underdevelopment and hunger in the world, and that the role of the Church is to act so that all countries enact a new form of cooperation to promote development and bring about a "new international economic order."

It was during the Vatican II Council, where the Church's role in the modern world was being discussed, that the late Pope Paul VI decided to go to India. That trip inspired him to write, in 1967, his historic encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*. As Paul wrote in the introduction, "We were able, in the course of new journeys to the Holy Land and India, to see with our own eyes and almost touch with our hands the very serious problems that assault the peoples of ancient civilization grappling with the problem of development . . . and we became the advocate of poor people."

John Paul II, talking to journalists on his return trip from India, made a point of his fidelity to Paul VI's teachings. Typical of his Paul VI-like approach was his handling of the ques-

tion of dialogue with such a large country with such a small Catholic population. This belied predictions from some quarters that the visit would rekindle inter-religious conflict. During the mass in the Delhi stadium he said: "God is present in the very heart of human cultures because it is present in man—man who is created in his image and who is the maker of culture. God is present in the culture of India." Meeting with cultural leaders in Delhi, the Pope compared Indian national hero Mohandas Gandhi to St. Paul: "The words used by Gandhi in his spiritual search, echo the words cited by St. Paul. God is not far away from each one of us."

Also in Delhi, he said: "The noble efforts of India's great men and women, efforts tending to promote social liberation and integral human development, are in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel. All those who cause their brothers' and sisters' dignity and freedom to progress, are blessed in the eyes of Christ. Through their efforts, such persons contribute to create a civilization of love."

A central point of the Pope's speeches was the spiritual vision of man as treated in Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*. To religious and cultural figures at a meeting in Delhi, the Pope said, "My predecessor, Paul VI, came back often to the concept of integral human development. He proposed it as the only way to make possible a true progress of mankind in every period,

but especially in this phase of history. In particular, Paul VI considered integral human development as a precondition to reach that great and universal good which is peace," and said, "Development is the new name of peace."

John Paul II went on: "In a word, integral human development requires a spiritual vision of man. If we wish to promote man's progress we must pinpoint everything that hinders or contradicts his general welfare; we must pinpoint all that hurts, weakens, or destroys life, all that undermines man's dignity."

He stressed the importance of culture: "The continuation of integral human development beckons the world to reflect on culture and consider it in its relation to man's ultimate goals. Culture is not just an expression of man's temporal life, but also an aid in achieving eternal life.

"With Paul VI, I repeat the conviction by which 'there is therefore no true humanism if it is not open to the Absolute in recognizing a vocation that offers the true idea of human life. . . . Man does not realize himself except by transcending himself (*Populorum Progressio*).'"

This humanism is St. Augustine's. Echoing *The City of God*, he went on: "What is at stake is the welfare of all of human society: the building of a city on earth that already prefigures the eternal one and contains in germ-form the elements that will be part of man's eternal destiny forever."

In India, the Pope relaunched his proposal for an ecumenical encounter in October in Assisi to discuss peace and development. In the present crisis, as the Kremlin dictatorship prepares for world conquest by 1988, the Church is using its undisputed ecumenical authority to appropriate the subject of peace, and take it away from Moscow's servants in East and West.