

obscure interpretation.

"I was very glad to hear the second canto of *Paradise*," Borzi remarked, referred to the reading by actor Roberto Bramucci before the round-table, "which is never read in school because it is considered 'inferior.' Let us please not say 'that canto should have been written differently,' let us shut up, because the worst line of Dante is better than anything in contemporary production!" The speaker was warmly applauded.

Senator Mezzapesa, officially representing the Italian government, then posed the question of how Dante must be taught in order not to appear too difficult or outdated.

He blasted some new interpretations and "alternative" ways of teaching Dante as "a conspiracy against Dante," and added that the first enemy of Dante is the intellectual laziness which prevents a student from concentrating on his poem.

Monsignor Fallani, who chaired the round-table, emphasized Dante's importance in the moral formation of young people: "Every young person faces a certain point in his life, what Dante faced when he found himself lost in the forest [at the beginning of the *Inferno*], which means difficulties and obstacles, and intervention is needed at this point to get him out."

To no one's surprise, the corruption of the mass media was hit hard by the speakers. Dr. Mirak posed Dante as a way out: "If one thinks of the joy children feel when resolving conceptual problems, and if one thinks of the fact that life is short and should be used to contribute to the continuous progress of humanity, one will no longer lose time with television and comic books. In this sense the love for science brought about by Dante is morality."

Many members of the audience—particularly teachers and teachers in training—joined the discussion when it was opened to the floor. One student from a teachers' college stressed what the symposium sponsors had also deemed most significant—the number of young people attending. She said she was most struck by the words of Muriel Mirak in her inaugural speech on the death of civilization: "Participating in this symposium has made me realize that I am not adequate to my task of becoming a teacher—in all these years of school, all I saw in Dante's *Commedia* was the beauty of the verse."

"It will not be easy to take this enthusiasm and these intuitions into the schools," commented the daily *Il Tempo* in its article praising the symposium. "Nonetheless, the teachers and students were numerous and interested, ready to participate. From the audience, the [stage and television] director Orazio Costa also took the microphone and announced the news that he is preparing a dramatic reading of the *Commedia*, to be transmitted next year over Italy's national radio channel.

THE VATICAN

John Paul II wars against Malthusians

by Vivian Zoakos, European Editor

In a 175-page "apostolic exhortation" released Dec. 15, Pope John Paul II attacked head-on the neo-Malthusian "population control" forces of the Club of Rome and the Global 2000 "futurology movement."

Although he cited no institutions by name, the Pope's target was perfectly clear when he sharply criticized "the studies of the ecologists and futurologists, which sometimes exaggerate the danger of demographic increase to the quality of life."

Asserting that "the Church stands for life," John Paul said it "condemns as gravely unjust" the neo-Malthusians' policy of making economic aid to nations and individuals conditional on willingness to introduce and accept "programs of contraception, sterilization and procured abortion," to cite the population control policies specifically named by the Pope.

And he declared the Church opposed to all government "population control" policies, saying it "condemns as a grave offense against human dignity" governmental efforts "to attempt to limit in any way the freedom of couples in deciding about children."

Landmark statement

John Paul's statements, in a document intended to provide guidance for the Catholic clergy around the world, mark the first time the Vatican has explicitly identified the ecologist movement and the international futurologists as the purveyors of the genocide policy euphemistically dubbed "population control."

Instead of passively accepting the threats of schism in the Church proliferating from the neo-Malthusian genocidalists inside and outside the Church, the Papacy is finally putting the full weight of its authority behind an active battle to target these forces. The futurists have in the past voiced their insistent fears about the role of the Church in spoiling their well-laid plans—to the point of threatening John Paul with assassination as the only way to silence him.

Reins in Jesuits

The Pope's attack on the neo-Malthusians, the very networks behind the Polish crisis and the ongoing Central American bloodbath, is the latest in a series of

rapid-fire Vatican initiatives to cool out world hotspots.

Vatican Secretary of State Agostino Cardinal Casaroli travelled to Mexico the week of Dec. 7 for a historic visit with Mexican President José López Portillo. Ostensibly timed to coincide with the 450th anniversary of the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe—Mexico's patron—the visit in fact represented an important step in the reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Mexican republican government.

The tenor of Cardinal Casaroli's trip was prepared by a series of important public statements from various quarters, including the Pope. In early December, Pope John Paul released a statement on the Church in Central America whose content was reiterated a week later. While condemning "injustice" and all forms of "oppression" in the region, the statement reaffirmed in no uncertain terms the Pope's insistence that *the Church* in Central America must "avoid all modes of activity that respond to the class struggle."

John Paul was thus telling the Central American bishops, a sizeable percentage of whom support the political guerrilla activities of the Jesuits, that he was not about to accede quietly to their activities.

The Pope's statement made pointed reference to last June's extraordinary conference of Central American bishops and heads of religious orders held in Rome.

The conference had been convened by Cardinal Baggio, one of the powers within the Curia, to attempt to put a stop to the local political destabilizations in which portions of the local Church had become enmeshed under the guise of "Liberation Theology." Far from being able to impose Vatican authority in forcing the curtailment of such activities at that time, Cardinal Baggio had been forced—under likely threat of outright schism—to accept a document adopting the guidelines of the Jesuit Order for Church collaboration with Marxist guerrillas in dealing with local situations.

John Paul calls a bluff

That document, which was sent to the Pope for approval, was strongly rejected by John Paul in his statement. He had called the bishops' bluff. The week of Dec. 7 the head of the Latin American bishops conference made public a letter written to Cardinal Baggio containing much the same message.

Cardinal López Trujillo, who was himself an attendee at the cited June conference, violently attacked in his letter the head of the Jesuit Order, superior General Arrupe, as well as other Liberation Theology prelates, for the "Leninization of society," and for being "friends of the enemies of Christian society."

The unmistakable reference to Jesuit and other participation in Central American destabilization operations was clear to all concerned, creating an uproar in the Jesuit Order.

Since Mexico, as the only stable republican government of the region, has been the prime target of these destabilization operations, these various Church condemnations of such activities were crucial in laying the groundwork for the Secretary of State's historic visit to that country.

No statement whatsoever was released to the public about the nature of the private discussions between Cardinal Casaroli and President López Portillo. It was significant, however, that upon emerging from the meeting Casaroli was asked whether Rome and Mexico might ever re-establish full diplomatic relations. His response was, "Anything can happen." In any case, the Mexican press was correct in its general assessment that the very fact of the meeting itself "constituted a new level of rapprochement" between the Vatican and the Mexican government.

The Secretary of State also re-stated the Pope's position on the proper role of the Catholic Church in the field of political activity. Speaking in Guadalajara, Casaroli said that the Church "has no direct political power." However, he continued, since politics must be based on moral principles," in this sense the activities of the Church in its own field, which is morality, can and must have consequences on the political plane."

Pope John Paul had defined the Church's proper political role in nearly identical words in a homily delivered earlier this month in Rome. It is on the basis of this transcendent "moral duty" that he has based his political interventions worldwide both in Central America and around the globe.

Casaroli's trip to Mexico coincided with a second dramatic initiative of the Vatican.

It was announced on Dec. 13 that John Paul was sending delegations to the U.S., U.S.S.R., France, Britain, and the United Nations, consisting of scientists from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences to argue against the rising danger of thermonuclear war.

The U.S. delegation met with President Ronald Reagan on Monday, Dec. 14, a day before Casaroli himself stopped off in Washington for meetings with the President following his Mexican tour. The delegation to Moscow met with Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev on Tuesday.

That this occurred at the beginning of the Geneva U.S.-Soviet disarmament negotiations was significant, but the pontifical delegations to Moscow and Washington were rendered strikingly dramatic by the ongoing events in Poland. Here, where the Vatican and the Pope personally have acted as a crucial moderating force before and after the institution of martial law Dec. 12-13, the Polish Pope is being perceived internationally as the crucial element in preventing the situation from degenerating into the trigger for an eventual nuclear war.