

Editorial

Celebrating the end of progress?

When the Earth Summit opens in Rio de Janeiro on June 6, its participants will seek to hammer out an agreement dedicated to the ethic of environmentalism. The axiomatic basis of these discussions will be the idea that the rampant progress of the human race over the last 500 years has created such disastrous problems that it must be stopped.

Thus the Earth Summit directly opposes those who celebrate the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Columbus's voyage and the subsequent colonization efforts were fruits of the Italian Golden Renaissance, and as such, an effort to create a system of sovereign nation-states devoted to spreading the commitment to science, and the development of man as a creature in the "living image of God."

To those with eyes to see, and the honesty to say, of course, the problem which the world faces is not an excess of progress, but its stagnation over the past 20 years or so, and, in some respects, over the entire 20th century. Technological potentials which have been developed in the early part of this century, have not been permitted to be put into practice, and science itself is being strangled in its cradle.

The representatives of the developing sector are the closest to understanding this problem. As some have put it in recent interviews on the Earth Summit, they are committed to saving the species which is the most endangered one of all—the human species. This species is threatened by the lack of economic development, which means that people in poor countries do not have clean water, productive agriculture, industry, and other essential components of a healthy life. In other words, humanity is threatened by the lack of progress.

The organizers of the Earth Summit pretend they are also concerned about the miserable conditions under which people in the developing sector live. But their solution is: just have fewer people born!

You see, for today's environmentalists, people are just talking beasts, who consume natural resources and create a lot of waste. They believe that the waste products of man are more significant than the products of

his mind. So, even when they claim to be concerned that poor people have their conditions alleviated, they are somewhat dishonest. They would improve people's "creature comforts," without nourishing the very aspects of the human being on which humanity's future existence depends.

This fact is also exemplified in the way that the environmentalists have ruled out technologies on which human health depends, without any consideration as to whether affordable or workable replacements are available. The case of nuclear power is one of the most obvious. Despite the fact that western commercial nuclear reactors have proven eminently safe—and certainly safer than coal mines—this source of energy has been ruled out, leaving countries to suffer from an absolute lack of electricity, which becomes devastating during droughts.

Even more shocking is the case of the banning of DDT, the most effective known pesticide against mosquitoes. There was absolutely no reason to ban DDT in 1972—no birds killed, no scientific evidence at all, as even the official government-solicited studies showed. But the decision was made for what EPA head Ruckelshaus called "political" reasons, despite the fact that no equally cheap and effective substitute was available. As a result, mosquitoes have thrived, and malaria has been on a murderous increase now for two decades, with a death toll of over 100,000.

This case of DDT is an acid test for environmentalists who claim that they are interested in saving human beings after all. If they support this admittedly unscientific decision, they are saying that genocide is a "necessary" component of environmental protection. They are admitting that they are genocidalists, no better than the Aztecs of 1492.

The contrary approach is to use the wonderful results of human scientific discovery to both improve our living conditions, and the condition of the earth for future generations. Let us choose Columbus and progress, before the environmentalists succeed in destroying us all.