

Globalization Is Not An Ideology

AN INTERVIEW WITH FR PIERO GHEDDO

Father Piero Gheddo, of the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions, and author of *David and Goliath: Catholics and the Challenge of Globalization* (St. Paul Publications, 2001), replies to some of the questions addressed by the anti-globalization movement at a meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as a counterpart to the Davos summit held in New York.

Q: What do you think of globalization?

Father Gheddo: There are negative and positive things, but to demonize globalization is not realistic: It is to close one's eyes to reality; it induces pessimism about the future because the world—whether we like it or not—is moving toward unity.

The problem lies in making it go forward while respecting the rights of man, and not in demonizing an unstoppable phenomenon. Research by Harvard University has shown that between 1970 and 1990 the economy of poor countries open to the outside world grew by 4.5 per cent a year; while that of the autarkic nations stagnated at 0.7 per cent.

Q: Influential currents of the anti-globalization movement state that the South of the planet is poor because the North is rich.

Father Gheddo: I don't agree. When it is said that 20 per cent of the world population has 80 per cent of the wealth and 80 per cent of the population has only 20 per cent of the goods, we are playing with words.

What should really be said is: 20 per cent produces 80 per cent of the wealth and 80 per cent of people produce only 20 per cent. This is the reality and we cannot ignore it. The prob-

lem lies in producing wealth. If wealth is not produced, there is impoverishment.

We don't realize that a good part of poor peoples do not know how to produce; they are not educated to production. In Italy, between 7,000 and 8,000 kilos of rice are produced per hectare, while in African agriculture between 400 and 500 kilos are produced. Why?

Because they do not have selected seeds, or artificial irrigation; they don't have instruments to level the ground; they don't use fertilizers. The gap between 8,000 and 500 kilos is the gap between the rich and the poor. It has its origin in the capacity, and education, to produce.

Q: Currents of the anti-globalization movement state that, in environmental terms, the earth cannot sustain the present level of production of goods and consumption.

Father Gheddo: I don't at all share these catastrophic predictions that, since the time of Malthus, have been continually denied by history.

The earth has enormous possibilities of space, production of foods, of environmental paradises for all men. We do not know the limits of our universe nor of Man himself. The more one progresses, the more one discovers that God has made things well; that is, we discover unimagined resources. Of course the environment, air, water, the seas, etc., must be protected.

Q: What is the ideological origin of the anti-globalization movement?

Father Gheddo: There are many currents. However, I think there is a 'Third World' ideology that still pre-

vails. It is a theory of dependence: a theory that is clearly declining among experts, because it has been contradicted by the facts, but which remains alive.

The theory of dependence states that the evils of the poor always have external roots, creating among them a profound conviction of frustration. In this way, people are discouraged and responsibility is removed from them.

African bishops have written: 'It would be unsustainable to state that colonization alone has put an end to Africa's capacity to take the reins of its own destiny'.

Third World ideology has become an excuse for tyrants and continues to create illusions among African peoples.

In Ecuador, Comboni Bishop Enrico Bartolucci of Esmeraldas told me as early as 1989: 'Since the subject of the external debt has come up, it is not possible to speak about any problem in the country without blaming the external debt'.

He took me to visit his city's hospital, built by the European Community in 1982. By 1989 the elevators did not work; the mattresses and sheets had been stolen; the doors did not close; the operating room no longer had air-conditioning; and there was filth everywhere.

'If you tell them', Bartolucci said, 'that they must clean and maintain the installations, the first thing those responsible tell you is that the country is poor because of the external debt.'

NOTE

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