

*The Economist* accuses Pope Francis of 'following Lenin'

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) First, Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck labeled Pope Francis a Marxist. Now, *The Economist* is accusing him of following Vladimir Lenin.

The respected financial magazine accused the pope of following the founder of Soviet communism in adopting an “ultra radical line” on capitalism.

In a blog entry titled “Francis, capitalism and war: The pope’s divisions,” the British weekly questioned aspects of a wide-ranging interview the pontiff recently gave to the Spanish daily *La Vanguardia*.

“By positing a link between capitalism and war, he seems to be taking an ultra-radical line: one that consciously or unconsciously follows Vladimir Lenin in his diagnosis of capitalism and imperialism as the main reason why world war broke out a century ago,” *The Economist* said.

“He observes what he calls the ‘idolatry of money’ in some places and hungry children in others . . . he concludes that economists must be missing some important point,” the magazine said.

“Francis may not be offering all the right answers, or getting the diagnosis exactly right, but he is asking the right questions,” *The Economist* said.

The Vatican’s chief spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, on Wednesday (June 25) declined to comment on the nature of the blog but said everyone knew the pope was driven by a strong concern for global poverty.

“The pope is very interested in involving himself with the problems of the poor and social justice,” Lombardi told Religion News Service. “It is part of his nature to speak out about economic and social issues. That is well-known.”

The article is likely to provoke renewed debate about the pope's social doctrine and his concern that the world's wealthiest are failing to wipe out poverty and social inequality.

"It is increasingly intolerable that financial markets are shaping the destiny of peoples rather than serving their needs, or that few derive immense wealth from financial speculation while many are deeply burdened by the consequences," Francis told a Vatican conference on ethical investing last week.

Many times during his papacy, Francis has said he was committed to helping the poor and underprivileged. On Tuesday, the 77-year-old pope tweeted his desire for everyone to have "decent work," which he said was "essential for human dignity."

Late last year, Francis brushed off accusations from U.S. critics that he was a Marxist. "Marxist ideology is wrong," the pope said. "But I have met many Marxists in my life who are good people, so I don't feel offended."

Limbaugh attacked the pope for his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, last November, in which Francis said it would be impossible to overcome global poverty without first addressing the structural causes of inequality and financial speculation.

"This is just pure Marxism coming out of the mouth of the pope. Unfettered capitalism? That doesn't exist anywhere," Limbaugh told his listeners. "Unfettered capitalism is a liberal socialist phrase to describe the United States. Unfettered, unregulated."

Glenn Beck, another conservative American commentator, rejected *Time* magazine's decision to name Pope Francis "Person of the Year" because of Beck's concern about what he described as the pontiff's "Marxist tendencies."