
Documentation

Peruvian columnist on 'The battle for life'

*The following column appeared in the Lima, Peru daily Ex-
preso on Sunday, April 24. The author, Patricio Ricketts Rey
de Castro, is one of Peru's most respected journalists, and
an outspoken critic of the Shining Path narco-terrorists, who
firebombed his home earlier this year.*

In September, five months from now, one of the greatest battles in our era, if not in history, will be waged in Cairo. No detonation will be heard in it, except words, but the consequences will be felt around the world and especially in the poorest countries.

They could be so exceptionally serious that His Holiness John Paul II has come out in person to face the manipulators of the U.N.O., to prevent a defeat for man and the family and of the civilization which has been sustained for centuries upon this foundation, we would add.

Once again it is a question of blocking the way of the empires and in particular of the United States, which is up to its old tricks behind the U.N.O.'s ski mask. Not content with using it to promote the strange insolence of "limited sovereignty," which, if we allow it will bring colonialism back to the world, now it proposes to herd peoples like a flock of sheep, abiding by fertility quotas which are fixed according to imperial convenience.

In this respect, the pope directed a devastating message to Nafis Sadik, the general secretary of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development. It takes up a page and a half in *Osservatore Romano* and there is not a line that is not an inspiration. His Holiness has also written to President Clinton. He opposes the agenda of the Cairo conference which was released to him by the U.S. embassy. The pontiff calls the document "a disquieting surprise," and asks Clinton to reflect "deeply and conscientiously" on the proposals concerning sexuality, marriage, and abortion, which they wish to take to Cairo.

John Paul II denounces what there is of the unfounded, tendentious, and harmful in the "graphic" proposal for Cairo, called "perverse" by Cardinal Antonio Querracino. And he does it by hoisting high the moral banner which should reign over any analysis of the human condition, regarding demographics or any other focus.

The situation is very complex, the pope thinks, and if anything, this should encourage solidarity with the developing world, given that the growing abyss between rich and

poor is a threat to peace. But what no one can disregard is this: Every person has an unconditional and inalienable dignity and value; human life is sacred from conception until death; human rights are innate and transcend every constitutional order; and the unity of the human race requires from everyone the commitment to build a community free from injustices which promotes the common good.

Development programs, he adds, must be based on justice and equality, so that people can live in a dignified, peaceful, and harmonious way. They must also respect the cultural heritage of peoples and make men and women into active protagonists of their own development. Demographic questions must be seen in this context and not in consideration of simple "sexual rights."

They must also be related to the family, "the natural and fundamental cell of society," according to words which John Paul II cited with acumen from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, disdained by the United States since 1946. This is what today is being defended: the family. If its protection is not guaranteed, the pope notes, "the noblest ideals of the United Nations will be betrayed." To protect the family is to safeguard the freedom of the husband and wife for procreation within responsible parenthood.

What is unacceptable are the pressures for control over parents or peoples, such as sterilization and abortion. "We must go back to considering the family as the sanctuary of life," says the pope. "Against the so-called culture of death, the family constitutes the seat of the culture of life."

The draft of the Cairo document, John Paul II indicates, "ignores, brushes aside, or contradicts such basic principles." "Political or ideological considerations," he adds, "cannot constitute in themselves the basis of essential decisions for the future of our society. Here, the very future of humanity is at stake." The promotion of abortion-on-demand and contempt for marriage, as if it were something from the past, are mentioned as particularly grave threats. Unions between sodomites and lesbians have made them out of date.

Not only John Paul II is ready to take up this battle. The entire church, hierarchy and faithful, are with him. The Committee of Pro-Life Catholic Bishops rejected the pessimistic focus of the Cairo preparatory document. For sure, the Peruvian Bishops Conference is backing the pope and asks the government not to allow itself to be persuaded.

But this is not all. Voices of protest are starting to be raised on all sides. Rep. Chris Smith (New Jersey) is asking leaders of the underdeveloped world to resist and reject these proposals. "Do not let your governments be intimidated nor manipulated," he advises. "The State Department," he explains, "is instructing its embassies to pressure governments in favor of the pro-abortion plans of Cairo."

Here, fortunately, everything is clear. The Constitution approved by the Congress and the country completely coincides with the pope. We want family, not weddings between pansies. The vote in Cairo can only be one: "No!"