

The pope's historic intervention in America

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

The great keynote speech of principles which Pope John Paul II delivered to the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations, as well as his other appeals to the best ideals of the American nation, represent a first-class intervention into the world strategic situation. The passionate love for the idea of an understanding among peoples, which inspired the pope's speeches and sermons, had a profound, uplifting effect on the American population, even, astonishingly, affecting the liberal media, which celebrated him enthusiastically.

The five-day visit of the pontiff in America, which ended on Oct. 8, strengthened the already-existing collaboration between His Holiness and President Clinton in such a way that the whole world could see it—a collaboration which has grown out of their mutual concern for the profound historical crisis confronting mankind today. One further expression of this was reflected in the praise which the Holy Father found for the role played by First Lady Hillary Clinton at the United Nations conference on women recently held in Beijing.

But, especially, his emphatic admonitions to care for the poor and the sick, as well as immigrants, could only be understood as a powerful attack on the policies promoted by the enthusiasts of the Conservative Revolution, who in recent weeks have been spreading hysteria and fear among the socially weak layers of the population, through their draconian austerity programs. The pope's reminder of the attitude of solidarity, which is self-evident to all Christians, contrasted all the more starkly with the moral hypocrisy with which the Republican-supporting "Religious Right" likes to adorn itself—a "morality" which does not prevent them from throwing unmarried mothers and their children and other poor people to the wolves.

The spirit of the great Nicolaus of Cusa was alive in the U.N. hall, when Pope John Paul II unfurled his magnificent vision of a global order of world peace before the United Nations General Assembly, addressing it, as it were, to the "entire family of nations" of the globe.

The pope identified the recently intensified search for freedom as one of the great moving forces in the history of mankind, a force whose moral strength has



Pope John Paul II travels through Baltimore on Oct. 8, to Camden Yards Stadium, where he celebrated an open-air Mass. In his speeches on American soil, the pope appealed to America's better self: "Is present-day America becoming less sensitive, less caring toward the poor, the weak, the stranger, the needy? It must not! Your power of example carries with it heavy responsibilities. Use it well, America!"

just been demonstrated afresh in the peaceful revolutions of 1989, and which has taught us a lesson whose implications extend far beyond the geographical borders of any particular region.

The fact that the pope made this desire for freedom his point of departure for his elaborations is all the more significant, because it is, of course, painfully clear to this Polish-born head of the Catholic Church, that the communist structures that were eliminated in 1989 are now on the comeback trail in eastern and central Europe, and that under the ongoing conditions of economic collapse, we are seeing a potentially very dangerous increase of national and ethnic tensions—and those tensions are being manipulated from the outside by “unscrupulous persons,” as the pope pointed out.

It is all the more important, therefore, that the pope, who denounced political and economic utilitarianism (in his encyclicals, he has often spoken of “unrestrained liberal capitalism”) as being responsible for the suppression of nations, has nevertheless taken the visibly global character of today’s worldwide movement for freedom, as proof that there are indeed universal human rights, based on human nature and reflected in a universal moral law.

This law, based on natural law, which is “written in the heart of every human being,” said the pope, is a kind of grammar, which man needs in order to begin a discussion about his own future, because it represents the basis for communication among individuals and among nations.

The Holy Father not only reaffirmed that there can be no peace among the nations without the acceptance of natural

law—a most noteworthy concept in a world in which 53 wars are raging at this moment—but he also made transparent, in a truly Cusanus-like way, that the resolution of conflicts is only possible on the highest level.

The importance of the nation

Only because there exists, above all the particulars, a higher unity of universality among nations, which consists of the fact that all human beings are members of a single great family, can there be legitimate grounds to hope that a “just world order” can be realized. Nations—which, as the pope said, are not identical to the State, and which, owing to their specific historical conditions, can sometimes have other than sovereign forms of government—are the necessary mediators between the individual and mankind as a whole.

It is impossible to overestimate the significance of the fact that the pope chose the forum of the U.N., and American soil, to redefine anew the concept of the nation based on natural law, and to formulate anew the rights of nations as a special expression of human rights; and the fact that he appealed for an international agreement on the rights of nations, in keeping with the International Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

The pope also disavowed the right of international organizations such as the U.N., to deny nations the right to exist—an obvious criticism of the behavior of the United Nations in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But at the same time, he made it clear that the rights of nations never can be directed against the interests of mankind as a whole.

If, on the other hand, nations commit themselves to improving the “social progress” of all, and to “better living conditions in greater freedom” for the entirety of humankind, as it is actually written as a demand in U.N. Charter, so John Paul II reminded the world, only then can the “best human and economic energies of the population” be set free.

Only if each nation declares the best possible development of other nations to be its own most fundamental self-interest, and if there occurs a fruitful exchange of gifts and talents—only then can the unity of the entire human family be strengthened. This is the Cusan idea of an understanding among peoples: Concordance in the macrocosm is only possible if there is the maximum development of all microcosms! Only if all nations can realize their human right to development, can world peace be secured!

It is of no less importance that the pope countered the oligarchical concept of the suppression of the poor and the weak, and any form of exploitation based on utilitarian motives, with a passionate call for solidarity. We are called upon, he declared, to be conscious again of our Christian solidarity, which allows others “to unfold that creativity which is uniquely a characteristic of the human person, and which is the source of the wealth of nations in the world today.”

A clear rebuttal of monetarism

Human rights, therefore, are not only the right to life, health care, education, housing, etc., but the right to develop our own creativity, because it is this which is the source of wealth! A clearer rebuttal against monetarism and liberal economic models the pontiff could not have made.

Pope John Paul II’s new definition of the principles upon which the U.N. must be built, can only be characterized as brilliant, and a fruit of divine inspiration. On the one hand, it is true, as the pope noted, that the ideas expressed in the U.N. Charter were formulated under the shadow of the horrible crimes and violations of human rights during the Second World War, and were already established on a very high level.

Nevertheless, regarding its underlying principles, from the very beginning the United Nations Charter has lacked a clear anchoring within natural law. And exactly here, we find, perhaps, the most crucial reason why the practice of the United Nations, over its 50 years of existence, has often degenerated into the opposite of what it should be; namely, it has become an instrument of the arrogance of power, as the U.N.’s behavior in the case of the Persian Gulf war and the war in former Yugoslavia has so painfully demonstrated.

The U.N. has been a miserable failure; and yet, the idea of an understanding among peoples is more necessary than ever. Thus, it was a magnificent idea when the pope, in a sense, gave the U.N. a “homework” assignment to move itself out of its “cold status as merely an administrative organization,” and “to become a moral center, in which all nations of the world feel at home, and develop a common conscious-

ness that they are a family of nations.”

Alter the U.N. model

The pope proposed an “alteration of the current model of the United Nations,” which must be concretely thought about now. Above all, the idea of the “family” as a community based on mutual trust, mutual support, and respect, the idea of an “existence for others,” is in fact the concept of a “message of better well-being for all.”

The vision of cultural optimism that the Holy Father painted with his “Civilization of Love,” and the idea that all the sufferings of this century have prepared the ground for a new springtime for humanity in the next century, has established a basic standard of measure for all future discussions, and will serve as a guiding light on the international level for conquering all of today’s existing problems.

For the United States, the pope defined, in the same loving way, the role it must play by virtue of its relative prosperity and power. Because of this, America has a special responsibility to the poor and the weak, and thus, now, a special responsibility to climb into the political arena, and to fight for the ideas that the pope set forth throughout his trip, as he emphasized in Baltimore.

In a clear critique of the fascist concepts of the politicians of the “Contract with America,” the pope stated that Americans have no right to tolerate that the rights which are enshrined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, be sacrificed—even if a majority would have it so. And America shall also not loot the poor, even if a majority should vote for such a policy.

In the same way that the pope drew upon the highest principles of the international community, he also reawakened the best ideals of the American nation, citing from perhaps the most poetic document in American history, President Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, that all men are created with the same inalienable rights, and from the Emancipation Proclamation, that no nation can survive “half-slave” and “half-free.” And how true his words were, when he stated that this question, in the present, has lost none of its relevance. If America today turns its back on the poor, it is in danger of losing what makes it America.

“Is present-day America becoming less sensitive, less caring toward the poor, the weak, the stranger, the needy? It must not!” the pontiff appealed emphatically to America’s better identity. “Your power of example carries with it heavy responsibilities. Use it well, America! Be an example of justice and civic virtue, freedom fulfilled in goodness, at home and abroad!”

The fact that the Pope John Paul II had such a profound effect on America’s conscience, gives grounds for hope that his “new springtime of the human spirit” is not far off. Not just Catholics, but the whole international community has now been called upon to bring human society into harmony with all Creation.