

Pope proposes a bill of rights of nations

by Leonardo Servadio

Immediately upon his return from the United States, Pope John Paul II proposed a "Bill of Rights of Nations," or a "Charter of Nations," to clearly identify the rights and duties of all the nations of the world, in order to contain aggressive nationalisms and to promote the right to freedom of the peoples of the world.

The pope launched his proposal during his Wednesday public audience in St. Peter's Square on Oct. 11. In his speech he summarized the content of his historic address on Oct. 5 to the General Assembly of the United Nations, commemorating the U.N.'s 50th anniversary. (The full text of his U.N. speech appeared in *EIR*, Oct. 20.)

John Paul's proposal

"The universal declaration of the Rights of Man, which solemnly upheld the dignity of the human person with its own rights, beginning with that of freedom of conscience and of religion, has shown its everlasting actuality.

"But thinking over this anniversary, I was led to note that, till now, there does not exist a similar international agreement which establishes in an adequate way the rights of the nations. If the bill of the fundamental human rights clarifies in an adequate way the rights of persons, now it is time to work in order to establish a charter that preserves and promotes the right of the peoples to exist in a spirit of respectful living together, of reciprocal tolerance and concrete solidarity.

"Today we confront two phenomena apparently in contradiction: On the one side, we see the free coming together or coming into federation of entire groups of nations or countries in wider community entities; on the other side, we see the bursting reemergence of particularisms, which are the symptoms of the need of identity and of survival in the fact of broad processes of cultural assimilation. A 'Bill of Nations,' therefore, which reinterprets and which brings order into these complementary pushes in the context of the fundamental ethical-juridical principles of humanity, cannot but contribute to a more peaceful living together of peoples.

"It is a question of recognizing and promoting, for all the nations of the world, above and beyond the different

configurations that they might take on the State juridical level, some original and inalienable rights: the right to exist, to have its own language and culture, to educate the younger generations according to one's own traditions, yet always respecting the rights of all and in particular of the minorities.

"The U.N., which is called upon to become the guarantor and promoter of these desires, will correspond with efficacy to such an engagement, to the extent to which, as a true family of nations, it will favor a fruitful 'exchange of gifts' among the many different nations which characterize the peoples of the earth.

"People shall not fear diversity; each culture, in fact, is a testimony of the unending and exalting effort brought about by humanity in order to interpret the mystery of God, of the world, and of man. In this path, which is translated for each nation into values, institutions, culture, there can be also limitations and mistakes, which the moral law universally inscribed onto the human heart and the very intercultural exchange, will help to bypass. From that vantage point, the differentiations become a common richness for the entire humanity.

"People shall not confuse, nonetheless, the defense and promotion of one's own national identity; with the insane ideology of nationalism, which induces contempt for others. In fact, the right love for one's own country is one thing; nationalism is a different thing, which sets one people against another. This one is deeply unjust, because it is contrary to the duty of solidarity, and provokes reactions and enmities in which the germs of violence and war dwell.

"Therefore, the hoped-for Charter of Nations shall mark, in addition to the rights, also the duties to which each single nation is called, so that a responsible culture of freedom, deeply rooted in the quest for freedom, be promoted. . . ."

In his U.N. speech, John Paul II had already clearly distinguished between the evil, newly emerging nationalisms, causes of wars and conflict, and a true patriotism, which leads, through the love for one's own nation, to the love for the well-being of all other nations.

In a front-page editorial commenting on the new proposal by John Paul II, the daily of the Italian Bishops Conference, *Avvenire*, indicates that this speech opens a new way to bypass the bipolarism that emerged after the collapse of the Yalta system, represented by the emerging conflict between "globalism" and "nationalism." This conflict, *Avvenire* writes, runs through all the elites of the world. According to *Avvenire*, the pope's project would change the United Nations itself, which would become "not a world government prone to multinational lobbies, but a 'U.N.O. of the fatherlands': no more (as the pope said in New York) an 'organizational' instrument of coexistence . . . but an organic promoter of actions to 'elevate the relations among nations,' in the perspective of a future 'existing for,' in a 'fruitful exchange of gifts, first of all toward the weaker nations.' An incredible new world order for civilization."