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Pope Led Unlikely Victory Over Pro-Death Forces at UN Conference

By Douglas A. Sylva

On the long lists of dragons slain and giants toppled that have been proffered over the past two weeks as evidence that our late pope should enter history with the sobriquet "the Great," one triumph has gone strangely unmentioned and unheralded, and that is his victory over the international forces intent on using the United Nations to create an international right to abortion on demand.

It was 1994, and the international elites, under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, were poised to impose this new right to abortion upon the entire world. The Clinton administration wanted this; the European Union wanted it; certainly the United Nations bureaucracy – still under the sway of an ideology that saw the growth of humanity as an infestation on the earth – wanted it.

Cairo was as close to a pre-ordained outcome as any multinational negotiation could be. The document to be debated by the nations of the world was already peppered with pro-abortion language, inserted by the UN's population control agency, UNFPA. Some national delegations included members of the world's largest abortion provider, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), who were there to provide scientific "evidence" that international public health depended upon the peddling of their wares. And dark rumors swirled that poor countries were being told by rich countries that aid money for vaccines, food, and the like would disappear if they resisted the revolution.

But then John Paul II learned of what was looming in Cairo. In response, he prepared the Holy See diplomatic corps to do battle, truly David without the sling, since as a UN Permanent Observer State the Holy See does not even have the ability to vote. And then John Paul II called all people of goodwill to come to Cairo to bear witness to what would take place there. Many heeded this call, and he and they stopped the international justification of the killing of the innocents.

An Italian journalist captured John Paul's central action in the drama: "he so adamantly brought home his disagreement, first with the leaders of the whole world, then with the directors of the birth control programs of the UN, and then again in a tempestuous audience with the then president of the United States, Bill Clinton, that the entire Cairo Conference was in turmoil. The pope was never actually physically at the meeting, but it revolved around him. He stood alone against the rest of the world."

The New York Times certainly knew who was responsible for stopping the revolution; looking back at its coverage of the event, one can see the veneer of smooth objectivity pierced repeatedly by bias, proof of the paroxysms of rage that must have animated the reporters as they watched one man, whom they considered irrelevant, representing an organization they considered an atavistic remnant of medieval oppression, stop what should have been inevitable through the sheer power of his moral authority.

In one article, the Times claimed that the Vatican was "allying itself with radical Islamic forces backing the overthrow of governments in the Muslim world." The reporter did not feel it necessary to offer proof that the pope would seek ties with what amounts to terrorists; perhaps members of all "fundamentalist" religious groups have an affinity for one another.

In another article, the Times gave a platform to the worst sort of Catholic-haters. "'These Latin American nations are trying to make the Vatican happy,' said Miguel Trias, head of Colombia's largest, government-backed family planning organizations, Profamilia. 'But in 2,000 years the Vatican has never been happy.'"

Andrew Sanger, president of Planned Parenthood of New York, said, "There are two churches, one where the hierarchy talks to the presidents of countries, and then there's the church of the people. The people are picking and choosing what parts of Catholicism they want to carry over to their personal lives." The Times reporter saw no irony in the fact that Sanger's own grandmother founded the organization he now leads at least in part to reduce the number of Catholics polluting American through their prolific breeding.

But the pope won, at Cairo and at all of the other UN conferences that have since entered the lexicon as battle sites between the international Culture of Life and the international culture of Death – Beijing, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Rio. No doubt other names will be added to this list, and no doubt the pope's diplomats and volunteer lobbyists will be there, fighting on and winning.

As millions of ordinary people descended on Rome along with the kings and queens and presidents, just on the chance of seeing John Paul II one last time, one wonders if Andrew Sanger and his allies felt petty, felt small, and whether they allowed themselves to grasp just who the true giant of the last few decades happened to be, not because he was above the people, but because he loved all people, the poor, the weak, the vulnerable and the unborn.