

party, led by Tudjman, is for the strategic alliance with Bosnia and the serious realization of the "Washington Accord" for a Croatian-Bosnian alliance. This position has been consistently represented by the Croatian opposition. The opposition includes the HND party of the former chairman of Parliament, Stipe Mesic, the former HDZ leader Josip Maolic, and the former Defense Minister Martin Spegelj; the regionally influential Liberal Party; the Christian Democrats under Marco Veselica; as well as a number of well-known, strong personalities from Croatian intelligence, who do not have party affiliations. Also the leadership of the Catholic Church under Cardinal Franjo Kuharic, along with Cardinal Pulic in Sarajevo, are unanimously for the Croatian-Bosnian alliance.

### **The winning back of West Slavonia**

The military operation for the reconquest of West Slavonia, carried out with the highest precision, proved the sharply increased fighting strength of the Croatian Army. Also the quantity and quality of weaponry has clearly improved. As for the Croatian population, one senses, that after nearly four years of helplessly standing still while the Serbian invaders marched in and seemed to consolidate more and more regions of the nation under their control, now confidence has returned. This mood among the Croats, it goes without saying, is also affecting the Tudjman government. I hold that further Croatian military operations against the Serbian occupiers are probable. One has to consider that the Serbian lines reach into Croatia as close as to 40-50 kilometers from Zagreb, the capital. From this region in central Croatia, south of the Sisak-Karlovac Line, Serbian short-range rockets have even been fired on Zagreb. Important for the further development of the situation in Croatia and Bosnia is the advance of the Bosnian-Croatian HVO units toward the "capital" of the occupied region of Croatia, Knin. The HVO has pushed so far in the direction of Knin that the strategically important road linking Knin to Banja Luka, the center of Serbian-occupied Bosnia, could be broken at any time.

The "shift" in Bosnia and Croatia sketched here, should in no wise lead anyone to jump to flippant conclusions. The almost incomprehensible sacrifices, for those outside, which have been brought upon the Bosnian people and also those of Croatia, are by no means at an end: quite the contrary. But the victims of the aggression are no longer unarmed victims, who must practically await their own annihilation helplessly. Already the Serbian aggression in Bosnia and Croatia has been "rolled back." A decisive military action by the United States from the air, and the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia, could bring the war to a rapid end. The political result of that would be that London would be forced to look reality in the eye: British geopolitical warfare in the Balkans, which first was waged against Germany and then against the United States, has failed. Belgrade would be forced to see that the "Greater Serbia" war of annexation has failed, and then, finally, it could agree to real peace talks.

## **Vatican hits 'imbalance' in Beijing draft**

*On June 20, Joaquín Navarro-Valls, the Holy See Press Office Director, held the first briefing on the U.N.-sponsored 4th World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing on Sept. 4-15. He spoke on the Draft Platform for Action and outlined the themes that will be discussed. Following are excerpts from the briefing, as provided by the Vatican Information Service:*

This 4th conference will deal with topics such as dignity, the rights and the roles of women in every aspect of social life, equality and human development. The point of departure for every other consideration for the Holy See is the human dignity of women, which is the foundation for the concept of universal human rights recognized by the United Nations Charter.

The document that will be discussed in Beijing—"Proposals for Consideration in the Preparation of a Draft Declaration and the Draft Platform for Action"—favors the operative aspects of the diverse topics. The Holy See shares this definition: The dignity of women in too many social and geographical contexts is far from being fully recognized.

At the same time, the Holy See sees in this document pressure of an ideological character which seems to want to impose on women all over the world a particular social philosophy belonging to some sectors of western countries.

If, on the one hand, the document wishes to liberate women from certain cultural conditioning, on the other hand it seems to wish to impose a western model of female advancement which does not take into account the values of women in the majority of countries of the world.

**The Dignity of Women and Universal Human Rights.** One has the right to think that the unanimous goal in Beijing will be to attain a common operative effort for the defense of the dignity of women and the promotion of their universal human rights. Incidentally, it becomes paradoxical and incomprehensible that the word "dignity"—referring to women—appears systematically within brackets throughout the document. In the same way the term "universal" is placed in parentheses when referring to the human rights of women.

One reason among many for which the Holy See has insisted that the Platform for Action include some reference to the universality of human rights is that women in many countries do not enjoy the human rights recognized by the International Declarations. We think that it is not possible to promote and defend that which has not been defined. If

every country limits itself to promoting generic rights of women not defined on an international level, then this conference will not represent any progress in the area of human rights for the majority of the world's women.

**Lack of Continuity with Respect to Previous International Documents.** In many places the Document does not respect continuity with precedents and often with United Nations Declarations. For example, paragraph 12, whose inclusion was proposed by the Holy See Delegation, appears in parentheses, even though its contents come from the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993). We retain that when one speaks of Human Rights there should be a general consensus on their content and, possibly, reference to international documents.

A similar reservation should be expressed on paragraph 107 j which, as it is formulated, intends to suppress the affirmation "In no case will abortion be promoted as a method of family planning," an affirmation adopted by consensus at the International Conferences in Mexico City (1984) and Cairo (1994).

**Ideological Unbalance.** The recurrence of some concepts illustrates in some way the tacit social philosophy of the Draft Document. One can cite as an example that the term "gender" appears around 300 times; "mother/motherhood" appear fewer than 10 times, while the terms "sex/sexual/sexuality" appear about 100 times. From this point of view the document appears to be extraordinarily unbalanced.

This ideological unbalance is more evident, for example, in the section that proposes the defense of women's right to health. While the document talks 40 times of health problems related to sexual life (AIDS, reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, fertility control, etc.), only in two cases are tropical diseases mentioned. Still, the World Health Organization estimates, for example, 4 million cases of HIV infection in 1994, while the same World Health Organization estimates the cases of tropical diseases during the same period as hovering between 650 and 850 million.

**Linguistic Ambiguity.** . . . The ambiguities of international language are often a way to avoid a concrete will to carry out what is expressed.

Some terms in the document are often vaguely defined: "sexual orientation" and "lifestyle" lack a precise definition, and moreover, no juridical recognition in an international document exists for either one. This semantic and conceptual ambiguity could lead one to consider, for example, pedophilia as simply a mode of "sexual orientation," thus easily acceptable as a "right." The term "sexual orientation," proposed by some western countries, was not accepted by developing countries.

**Some Aspects of Particular Interest. Violence against Women.** The Holy See shares the emphasis that the Platform for Action places on physical, sexual, psychological, and moral violence against women. For the Holy See this topic is a priority.

The Holy See would like, however, a more decisive and radical condemnation of every kind of violence, also psychological, perpetrated against women, including forced sterilization, forced use of birth control or inducement to abortion. The Holy See has always expressed its deep worry regarding the number of women made objects of systematic sterilization plans which take place especially in developing countries.

The Holy See Delegation proposed that these practices be included in paragraph 115 among the violations of the rights of women. Some delegations have wanted to put this proposal in brackets.

In paragraph 40, the Holy See Delegation would like to have added to the list of attacks against young girls—limits to access to food, to education and to health care—also the denial of the very access to life ("and even life itself").

**Family.** Surprisingly the theme of family and motherhood receives scarce attention and little space in a document of nearly 120 pages on women. Already in Chapter II the concept of the family as "the fundamental unit of society. . ." is placed within brackets, in contrast with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 16,3. In fact, all of paragraph 30 goes to Beijing in brackets.

On the topic of the advancement of women, the Holy See certainly shares the emphasis on the importance of their full participation in all the activities of social life. Nevertheless, it goes against all evidence to think that this emphasis should cancel the unique role of women in the family: a role that does not exhaust all the personal resources of femininity but that however is specific to women. Obviously this point of view is shared by the immense majority of women all over the world and by the societies to which they belong.

Juridical regulations on the family should guarantee to women also the fundamental right to be mothers. Indeed laws should create conditions—environmental, legal, economic, etc.—favorable to the practice of motherhood. Perhaps the moment has come to affirm that the struggle for equal dignity between men and women implies also recognizing for women their being different and their being treated in a different way.

It is the conviction of the Holy See, as has been recognized already in Copenhagen, that the work of women, today not remunerated, should be recognized adequately; work that nevertheless holds a particular social value. None of this is mentioned in the Beijing document.

**Emigration.** The Holy See attributes great importance to the rights of emigrant women. . . . This topic has already gathered ample consensus at the Conference in Cairo.

The Document addresses this theme in various places. It is nevertheless the opinion of the Holy See that the attention is insufficient, as are also insufficient the proposals suggested, which seem to represent a step backward with respect to Cairo.