

The World Congress of Families

by Allan C. Carlson

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As "demographic winter" descends over Europe, plunging birthrates coincide with heavy immigration, primarily from Muslim lands. Following the logic of Mark Steyn's *America Alone*, many conservatives have largely written off "old Europe" as a lost cause.

This is unfortunate, for two reasons. First, courageous pro-family champions and organizations exist in every European country, even in hotbeds of militant secularism such as France, Sweden, and Spain. Second, several recent members of the European Union have elected strong pro-family governments, notably Latvia, Slovakia, and Poland. Despite intense pressures from EU bureaucrats in Brussels, these countries have implemented innovative programs to support natural families, grounded in marriage and welcoming towards children.

To encourage these developments, the World Congress of Families will hold its fourth Congress (WCF IV) in Warsaw, Poland, May 11-13. "If Europe is lost to demographic winter and radical secularism, much of the world will go with it" reasoned the WCF IV planning committee. "Poland saved Europe before," by lifting the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 and helping to demolish the Soviet empire three centuries later. "It is likely she will save Europe again," the committee concluded. And so, it resolved to convene this congress "among the brave people of Poland."

The first World Congress of Families was held in Prague, the Czech Republic, in 1997. This congress focused on the anti-family legacy of communism in Eastern Europe, as well as the sources of family decline in the West. World Congress of Families II, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in late 1999, posited the "natural family" as an ideal to counter recent anti-family initiatives at the United Nations. The third congress convened in Mexico City in 2004. Over 3,000 delegates condemned efforts at population control and affirmed the family as the source of economic progress. The Warsaw Congress will look "beyond demographic winter," by promoting the natural family as the "Springtime of Europe and the World."

Foes of the natural family fear the international pro-family network we're developing. Writing in April 2 issue of *The Nation*, Katha Pollitt called me a "right-wing 'family-values' ideologue" and complained that WCF "inveighs against abortion, same-sex marriage and secularism." (In that, she is correct.) *Ms. Magazine* warns its readers that the WCF's "objective is to reverse progressive social initiatives on reproductive rights, gay rights and population issues, particularly those negotiated at the United Nations." The Sex Information and Education of the U.S. (SIECUS), the voice of the "sexual revolution" in America, recently reported that "groups [opposed to our agenda] continue to claim that

marriage benefits individuals, children and society (as if this was actually open to debate)...Arguably the most prominent international meeting of opposition forces is the World Congress of Families, held in 1997, 1999, and 2004."

Ellen Sauerbrey, Bush-appointed U.S. assistant secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, spoke at the Mexico City Congress, noted the World Congress of Families has had "a huge impact," by the "networking of people around the world with shared values and concerns about the deterioration of the family structure." Paul Weyrich, the patriarch of the modern conservative movement, says the Congress has "set up an international operation with the ability to combat the forces of darkness wherever they show themselves in whatever part of the world."

The Warsaw Congress will open with an address by Lech Kaczynski, Poland's pro-family president, together with welcomes from the prime minister and the leaders of Poland's Senate and Sejm. The Congress will also be addressed by Archbishop Kazimierz Majdanski, a survivor of Dachau, a close associate of Pope John Paul II, and founder of Poland's ground-breaking Institute for Study of the Family.

Other confirmed speakers are Wade Horn, U.S. assistant secretary for Children and Families (HHS), noted French demographers Gerard-François Dumont and Jean-Didier Lecaillon, University of Virginia sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox, *The Empty Cradle* author Phillip Longman, *City Magazine* contributing editor Kay Hymowitz, and **Movieguide®** editor Ted Baehr.

In 1944, The Polish Home Army rose against the Nazi occupiers. Their common cry became

"Save the children, ours, yours, Poland's, Warsaw's....buildings can be rebuilt, but lost generations cannot be replaced."

This spirit remains alive and well in Warsaw, guided now toward rebuilding a family-centered Europe. It deserves the support pro-family activists in the United States and worldwide. For more information on World Congress of Families IV (May 11-13), go to www.worldcongress.org.

Mr. Carlson is the founder and International Secretary of The World Congress of Families and president of The Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society. His latest book, ♦The Natural Family: A Manifesto, ♦ co-authored with Paul Mero, is forthcoming from Spence Publishing.