

## **BRAZIL LAUNCHES INQUIRY INTO U.S. POPULATION ACTIVITIES**

**The charge: millions sterilised  
to meet U.S. political objectives**

A U.S.-sponsored program that resulted in the sterilisation of nearly half of Brazil's women has prompted a formal congressional inquiry, sponsored by more than 165 legislators from every political party that is represented in the Brazilian legislature. The investigation was initiated after information about a secret U.S. National Security Council memorandum on American population control objectives in developing countries was published in the *Jornal de Brasilia*, *Hova do Povo* (Rio de Janeiro), *Jornal do Brasil*, and other major newspapers in early May.

That U.S. foreign policy document, officially known as National Security Study Memorandum 200 or NSSM 200, detailed a plan to target thirteen large developing nations with intensive efforts to promote population "policies" that would allow the U.S. to run massive birth control and sterilisation projects in those countries.

Brazil, the study said, was placed on the list of thirteen target nations because it "clearly dominates the continent [South America] demographically," and its population was projected to equal that of the United States by the turn of the century. This, said the report which was jointly prepared for the National Security Council (NSC) in 1974 by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Departments of State and Defence (DOD), and the Agency for International Development (USAID), suggests "a growing power status for Brazil in Latin America and on the world scene over the next 25 years."

The NSC report listed twelve other nations whose growth could give them increased political influence, and which were also to be targeted under the international population program. Those are: Nigeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Bangladesh, India, Thailand, the Philippines, Mexico and Colombia.

The document, which is over 200 pages in length, was written after a proposed "world population plan of action" was denounced by large numbers of African and Latin America nations, by the Vatican, and by the entire socialist bloc (with the exception of Romania), during a UN population conference held in Bucharest in 1974.

The formerly-classified strategy document was approved as an integral part of American foreign policy in 1975 by Brent Scowcroft, who served as then- President Gerald Ford's security advisor. He occupies the same office today under George Bush.

Reports about the document, as well as about the Brazilian inquiry, have since appeared in every part of Brazil and throughout Central and South America.

Brazil's Ministry of Health, which had begun an investigation into the sterilisation program even before the American population strategy documents were disclosed, has revealed that 44 percent of all Brazilian women between the ages of 14 and 55 have been permanently sterilised. The older women apparently had the operation done when the program started, nearly two decades ago. News reports charge that many of these women underwent the operation without their knowledge or consent.

Benedita da Silva of the Workers Party (PT), who represents the residents of impoverished sections of Rio de Janeiro known as *favelas*, will head the legislative investigation.

According to some reports, as many as 90 percent of all Brazilian women of African descent have been sterilised. If true, this would nearly eliminate future generations of black people in Latin America's largest nation. Brazil's black population is reported to be second in size only to Nigeria's. At least half of Brazil's 154 million people are believed to be of African ancestry.

The sterilisation program in Brazil, like those just now beginning in dozens of African nations, started as a relatively small, "voluntary" family planning campaign, which publicly stressed spacing children rather than reducing population growth. It quickly and quietly escalated, however, taking advantage of unfavorable economic conditions -- themselves largely imposed through the policies of the U.S. and other developed countries -- to press for limitations in family size.

The massive sterilisation activities were mainly orchestrated by BEMFAM, the Brazilian affiliate of the London-based International Planned Parenthood Federation, according to news reports.

Several private U.S. population contractors, operating with funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development, are also involved. These include the Pathfinder Fund, the Johns Hopkins University Population Communication Services project, Family Health International, the John Snow "Enterprise" program, the Program for the Introduction and Adaptation of Contraceptive Technology (PIACT), and the Association for Voluntary Surgical Contraceptive. All have current activities both in Brazil and in numerous African nations. Some of the Brazilian programs funded through these groups are subcontracted to BEMFAM, while other projects are run by the USAID contractors through paid contacts at Brazilian universities, family planning clinics, firms, and individuals.

In recent years, Brazilian officials have begun to raise objections to the level of population activities in their country. A large shipment of condoms from USAID was held up in customs for over a year and then seized by Brazilian agents as contraband, according to a report released in late 1989 by the Office of the Inspector General at USAID. The same report advised that Brazilian authorities had complained that the level of U.S. population assistance had become "overwhelming and unnecessary."

Last summer, health officials began the investigation that showed the incredibly high sterilisation rate. That information coincided with the revelations about U.S. intentions to curb births in developing countries.

Aside from advocating a strategy to contain the political influence of large and rapidly growing developing countries, the document stressed the need to maintain orderly, pro-U.S. leadership in countries that supply "strategic and critical" materials needed for normal U.S. military and industrial operations. The NSC report stated that the U.S. "will require large and increasing amounts of minerals from abroad, especially from less developed countries. That fact gives the U.S. enhanced interest in the political, economic, and social stability of the supplying countries. Wherever a lessening of population pressures through reduced birth rates can increase the prospects for such stability, population policy becomes relevant to resource supplies and to the economic interests of the United States."

It advised, too, that the relatively young populations characteristic of societies with high birthrates give momentum to nationalist movements because young people can more easily be persuaded to attack foreign investments and other influences seen as "imperialistic."

The document also detailed a strategy for persuading leaders in the developing world to cooperate with the population program, urging that various agencies of the United Nations,

**the U.S. Information Agency, the World Bank, and USAID collaborate with other industrial country donors to influence leaders of targeted "LDCs" [less-developed countries]. "We should give higher priorities in our information programs world-wide for this area [population control] and consider expansion of collaborative arrangements with multilateral institutions in population education programs," it said.**

**It warned, however, that there was a "danger that some LDC leaders will see developed country pressures for family planning as a form of economic or racial imperialism; this could well create a serious backlash." The U.S., it added, "can help to minimise charges of an imperialist motivation behind its support of population activities by repeatedly asserting that such support derives from a concern with (a) the right of the individual to determine freely and responsibly their number and spacing of children ... and (b) the fundamental social and economic development of poor countries." It also recommended that U.S. foreign service and diplomatic personnel "be alert to opportunities for expanding our assistance efforts and for demonstrating to their leaders the consequences of rapid population growth and the benefits of actions to reduce fertility."**

**The secret document also noted that it is "vital" that officials avoid giving the impression of "an industrialised country policy to keep their strength down" because this could "create a serious backlash adverse to the cause of population stability."**

**The study also suggested that, where diplomatic initiatives fail to persuade leaders their populations should be reduced, "mandatory programs may be needed and ... we should be considering these possibilities now." Specific forms of coercion proposed in the study were limited to food rationing and "taking account of family planning performance" in foreign assistance payments.**

**The document further advised that in countries where leaders had raised strong objections to population control plans -- specifically including Brazil, Nigeria, and Ethiopia -- population funds "would have to come from other donors and/or from private and international organisations," although these groups would receive contributions from USAID. In other words, at least in those countries, the U.S. planned to conceal its funding of such "private" population activities.**

**Nations in Asia and Latin America took most of the pressure in the early 1970s, largely because African leaders were strongly opposed to population control. But by the early 1980s, the World Bank had revised its guidelines for funding consumable supplies, and began promoting population reduction projects as an integral part of development loans in Africa and as a condition for credit.**

**Today, most African nations have adopted formal policies that state birthrates are "too high." While such official statements do not necessarily translate into actions, they nonetheless open the door to further diplomatic maneuvers and pressure tactics by foreign governments and international lending agencies. Eventually, such pressure is intended to bring about the kind of coercive "family planning" programs in Africa were enacted in India (and which are credited, at least in part, with the 1984 assassination of Indira Gandhi) and those now under investigation in Brazil.**

**Still, there are several African nations that have not yet even produced these formal policy statements: Mozambique, Somalia, Angola, Tchad, Congo, Gabon, Libya, Sudan, Namibia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Togo among them. And in others, there are strict rules that make such statements unenforceable by Western governments and their private intermediaries; sterilisation, for example, is a criminal offense in Ethiopia, according to a study of national policies done by the UN**

several years ago.

The action of Brazil's legislature is an example of an effective response that comes too late. Already about 25 million Brazilian women have permanently, and, in many cases unwillingly, been deprived of the capacity to bear children.

Said Heraclio Salles, one of Brazil's most respected journalists and columnists: "They have given and are giving millions of women procedures that do not differ in their final objectives from those employed by the nazis under the Hitler regime to affect the removal of the Jewish population."

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## **FROM THE UNITED NATIONS DATABASE**

A U.S. \$67 million program, funded by USAID and implemented by the Pathfinder Fund, includes (among scores of others) a "PAMPA" project to implement "psycho-social assistance" with emphasis on "family planning" in Sao Paulo, Brazil; a joint Pathfinder- BEMFAM program to survey adult attitudes on birth control and to sponsor a Latin American population conference; and a program to "continue participation in the shaping of the national discussion on population issues" with an emphasis on the impact of such discussions on Brazil's new Constitution. In Nigeria, Pathfinder has an even larger number of current activities, including the training of medical personnel to perform birth control procedures in just about every state, as well as projects to "improve knowledge, attitude and practice of family planning" among both rural and urban women. It funneled approximately \$2 million from USAID into a national family planning campaign in Zimbabwe between 1987 and 1990, and has contributed large amounts of money to similar projects in Kenya and Tanzania, with smaller activities in several other African nations. The Association for Voluntary Surgical Contraception (formerly Assn. for Voluntary Sterilisation) conducts activities primarily to promote methods that cause permanent infertility. It has U.S. \$80 million in AID contracts, with numerous activities both in Brazil and Nigeria; it has made several recent payments to universities, hospitals and family planning associations in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Malawi, Burundi, Zaire, Mali, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. The PIACT program funds publications and media projects, as well as contraceptive distribution networks in Brazil. It conducts similar activities in about a dozen African states.

***Source: United Nations Population Fund Inventory  
of Population Projects in  
Developing Countries Around the World***

This news release is based on published reports in *Jornal de Brasilia*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Hova do Povo* (Brazil), *El Financiero*, *El Dia Latinoamericano* (Mexico), and other newspapers in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico which appeared between 1 May 1991 and mid-July. Information on the U.S. National Security Council population memorandum is taken from the document itself, titled "Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for U.S. Security and Overseas Interests," which is on file at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Other material comes from reference books published by the U.S. government, the United Nations and the World Bank. Permission to reprint, to translate, or to edit this article is granted to editors and publishers. This news service is sponsored entirely by private, voluntary donations, and no compensation is requested or expected from users. For more information about this story or about the Baobab Press, please contact us at P. O. Box 43345, Washington, DC 20010--U.S.A.