
Demographic Overview

How the Colombian population was cut

by Cynthia Rush

Almost without exception, the advocates of global depopulation surveyed by *EIR* in recent months agree that the case of Colombia represents a stunning success for "their side." In little over 12 years, beginning in 1968, Colombia's population went from one of the fastest growing in Latin America to one of the most rapidly declining. And, say the neo-Malthusians, the most important part of this story is that it was all done very quietly. "We did it without too much noise," boasted Colombia's former Finance Minister Rodrigo Botero recently. "An understanding with the Church hierarchy was arrived at . . . and the [birth-control services] were just made available."

As much as the genocide lobby would like to leave the story at "the services were just made available," this is *not* how it was done in Colombia. Nor is the dramatic decline in population growth rate from 3.2 percent in 1968 to 1.9 percent today the result of greater urbanization, or more educational and job opportunities for Colombian women, as many population experts claim.

Colombia was depopulated through application of what Colombian economist Julio Silvacolmenares in his 1975 book *No Mas Hijos*, (*No More Children*) terms "preventive genocide": centering a development strategy around the goal of population reduction. Using Colombia as one of its earliest guinea pigs, the World Bank authored one "development" program after another for it which systematically dismantled or prevented the creation of industrial capacity, and slashed vital health, education, and transportation services to guarantee future debt repayment, while telling Colombians that reducing their numbers would accelerate the industrialization process and permit them a more comfortable future.

The comfortable future is non-existent. Categorized as a "middle-level" industrializing nation, Colombia today cannot sustain its population of 27 million people. As a result of World Bank policy:

- Colombia is a massive net exporter of marijuana and cocaine, industries that have flourished while Friedmanite austerity destroyed textile, steel, and other capi-

tal-intensive industries. Denied credits and inputs for productive employment in agriculture, hundreds of thousands of peasants have been forced into producing marijuana or coca.

- Colombia currently has one of the highest infant-mortality rates in Latin America—80 children per 1,000 live births die in the first year of life. Last year 150 children died daily from gastroenteritis and acute malnutrition.

- Sixty-four percent of children under the age of 5 suffer from acute malnutrition.

- An average of two hospital beds are available for every 1,000 inhabitants. Since 1974, hundreds of hospitals and health facilities have closed due to lack of funding. Over the past 15 years, the national health budget has dropped by 57 percent, and the country today has a shortage of doctors, as many leave the country to seek employment elsewhere.

Breaking the Church

Since its first mission to Colombia—and to Latin America—in 1949, the World Bank had tried to "officialize" population policies, openly offering money, technical assistance, and advice. But it was only in the 1960s that it succeeded in getting governments to impose depopulation policies themselves, "without foreign intervention."

There was no lack of individuals willing to implement this policy inside Colombia. Avowed Malthusian Alberto Lleras Camargo, President from 1961-65 and a 1977 recipient of the Aspen Institute's "humanist statesman" award, testified before numerous U.S. congressional hearings in the mid-1960s on the need to *legislate* population control measures. His cousin, and the man who succeeded him as President, Carlos Lleras Restrepo, shared his views completely, as did his successor Misael Pastrana. But if their commitment were to be translated into policy, they first had to take on the Catholic Church whose doctrine of "grow and multiply" posed a formidable obstacle.

The man charged with "educating" the Church on the need for a population policy was German Bravo, today a member of the Evaluations Division of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. As Director in 1969 of Colombia's National Planning Department's socio-demographic unit, Bravo formed a group of laymen and priests whose task was to "advise" the Church hierarchy on how to approach the sensitive population issue. In several months of weekly seminars in late 1969 and 1970, Bravo presented the bishops with "all information regarding social, economic and demographic conditions in the country," and alerted them to the way in which overpopulation acted as a "multiplier" of existing economic and social problems.

After five months, during which the medical and

social-scientist community were mobilized to build public support for a population policy, the plenary assembly of the Episcopate approved a document titled "La Iglesia Ante el Cambio" ("The Church in the Face of Change"), the population section of which was written by Bravo. It read in part:

The present economic, social, cultural, and spiritual situation of the country becomes worse given the demographic reality. . . . In such circumstances, the possibilities of obtaining integral human development are far and away from accompanying rapid population growth . . . married couples must have paternal responsibility . . . among couples this demands wise family planning according to the conditions indicated at the Council.

This was a far cry from the Episcopate's July 1967 warning that "every kind of indiscriminating campaign centered on anti-natalist propaganda and the diffusion of immoral methods must be rejected." According to one leading bishop in the present Church hierarchy, the brainwashing of the clergy was so complete that, by 1969, the Church had "no fundamental dispute with Malthusian arguments."

A 'nationalist' policy?

Once the Church was broken, the next step was to incorporate the specific proposals for population reduction into the government's "global" development program. Carlos Lleras Restrepo, President from 1966-70, facilitated this process by granting the National Planning Department—the primary conduit for World Bank programs into the country—control over policy formulation and "planning" in every ministry. At the same time, Robert MacNamara and lending agencies like the Agency for International Development (AID) were blackmailing the country by making loans contingent on the adoption of population policy. They were so successful that at the 1969 meeting of the World Bank, Colombia's Finance Minister stood up and announced:

We are sure that . . . there are no reasons to suspect that the World Bank is trying to impose conditions of adoption of family planning which, given its character, must be a matter reserved to the autonomous decision of each state. A new linkage of this kind will not be acceptable.

The population policy adopted by the Colombian government in 1970 as part of its national-development plan was based on the recommendations made by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, the Population Council, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), AID, the Milbank Memorial Fund, and numerous other agencies which carried out studies in Colombia or financed the efforts of domestic groups.

- A 1965 seminar sponsored by Ascofame, the Colombian Association of Medical Schools, which discussed the application of coercive methods, the use of media to "condition" the population, and the offering of such incentives as free clinic visits for family-planning counseling and free services for extended periods beyond that.

- Studies by the Ford Foundation's Dr. Lyle Sanders in the mid-1960s promoting university studies in Colombia to elaborate specific birth-control methods. One such study, conducted by a team from Notre Dame University, involved interviews and census-taking in which the personal and economic problems of the couples interviewed were linked to their having too many children.

- A 1970 "technical assistance" mission of the Population Council to Colombia which recommended that the government authorize a quiet program of family planning which "under the banner of mother-infant care," and health programs would promote depopulation.

The population policy that was approved by the Colombian Congress in 1970 and subsequently incorporated into the development of the Pastrana administration (1970-1974), was also based on Dr. Bravo's observation that the "first efforts at industrializing the country made it clear that social welfare did not necessarily flow from economic growth, and that there was no automatic decline in fertility as a consequence of urbanization and industrialization." The program's explicit goals were "to achieve a territorial redistribution of population," and "to reduce the present rate of population growth." Territorial redistribution was intended to achieve "full employment of human and natural resources." In addition to plans for manipulating the national budget, fiscal and monetary policy, and funding for "regional development" to begin the process of de-urbanizing the country, the program also called for:

- reorienting migration streams away from urban areas;
- promotion of labor-intensive labor enterprises.
- achievement of significant reduction in the rate of population growth through decreasing fertility levels;
- creation of a new "mentality" which "could produce a more favorable climate for development." This was to be arrived at through a more "efficient" educational system which could "introduce themes pertaining to population, family and sex education, and utilizing existing programs to reach the adult population with similar ideas."
- relying on the Church to create "youth movements" and other activities aimed at keeping young people in school longer—and marrying later—and communicating the need for a population policy.

The Population Council's proposal for the establishment of a quiet family-planning program "under the banner of mother-infant care" has been aggressively implemented in Colombia. The population policy section of the López Michelsen administration's National Development Plan (1974-1978) was in fact written, published, and distributed by the Division of Medical Attention, Mother-Infant Care Group of the Health Ministry.

Aside from government-sponsored family planning and "health care" programs, most of them written by the World Bank and affiliated agencies, there is also an extensive network of private family-planning clinics that operate with generous foreign financing. Profamilia, the local affiliate of IPPF, began operating family-planning clinics in Colombia in 1967 and had established 31 of them by 1970. By 1972 it was estimated that 20 percent of women of child-bearing age had been educated on the virtues of population reduction at such clinics. Profamilia director Miguel Trias's public attacks on "perverse development, characterized by promotion of capital-intensive industry, a small and relatively well-paid labor force, and overprotected national industries" provides some idea of the nature of the "counseling" received there.

In 1968, President Carlos Lleras Restrepo proposed that the government adopt a series of "negative incentives" such as those later proposed by Population Council Director Bernard Berelsen in his 1972 study "Beyond Family Planning." These included elimination of family subsidies after two or more children; limiting government-assigned housing, scholarships, loans, and subsidies for families with more than two children; eliminating social benefits for maternity after two children; and permitting free education only to the first two or three children. Lleras didn't dare propose what Berelsen later did: government use of a sterilizing agent in water and food supply; "selling" permission to have children; obligatory abortion in all illegal pregnancies; payments with money or specie for sterilization; and a sex-education campaign that would teach primary school-children that "one child *only* is better" and teach teenagers the necessity of achieving sexual satisfaction through "masturbation, heterosexual and homosexual relations, petting, and available birth-control measures."

In 1972, it is unlikely that the Church or the population would have stood for such a program. But that such Chinese-style measures have been, and will continue to be, contemplated for Colombia is indicated by German Bravo's 1974 report that researchers were "studying" the relationships between fertility rates and variables such as family subsidies, taxes, housing, and *levels of consumption* in order to "transform them into programs and policies."

Documentation

Three views of the World Bank program

The following are excerpts from the book No Más Hijos (No More Children), by Colombian economist Julio Silvacolmenares (Ediciones Paulinas, 1975). Subtitles have been added. Emphasis is in the original.

Friedrich List, the famous German economist (1789-1846) who in his main work "National System of Political Economy" (1840) criticized and defined the colonialist policy of England as a means of perpetuating its political and economic domination and as a major obstacle to the development of other nations, felt that Malthusianism erred in taking the incipient development of productive forces at the moment as a measure of future production. . . . This same idea, with only slight variation, is held by the neo-Malthusians today. . . . List said that "one must have a very narrow view to take the present strength of productive forces as a measure of the number of men who can find subsistence in a determined space."

World Bank imposes 'preventive genocide'

The principal instrument that has been used by U.S. imperialism to impose its demographic colonialism is the World Bank, assisted by certain international foundations . . . like the Population Reference Bureau, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and the Population Council. . . .

Through these organizations and associations which covertly imposed the theory of *preventive genocide*, they have passed to . . . imposing it as government policy; witness the current National Development Plan of Colombia, in which can be seen the direct involvement of the Technical Aid Mission sent by the Population Council to Colombia in 1970. U.S. imperialism should be satisfied, now that it has achieved one of its principal goals: to force Latin American governments from a position of official intolerance to official initiative; that is, to directing with their own hands the preventive genocide of the Latin American people, so that imperialism could wash its hands. . . .

In the "Population Bulletin" edited by one of these world foundations [Population Reference Bureau—ed.], it is acknowledged that the World Bank had adopted its imperialist conception of "demographic explosion" beginning in 1949, but until the decade of the sixties had been unable to figure out how to "put the bell on the

cat,” that is, how to expand and make this preventive genocide official policy. . . .

In its 1949 study on Colombia, the World Bank warned that “population is in complete disequilibrium in relation to other factors.” . . . From that time onward their concern was how to take a country like Colombia and make it into a “guinea pig” for a development scheme based on population control. . . .

And while the U.S. senators and strategists struggled to come up with the ideas that would permit them to construct their anti-natalist strategy, there arrived a prominent Latin American who ironically had been honored by the poor and ignorant of his country as the man who brought them “democracy” . . . and he showed [the U.S. strategists] how to put the bell on the cat, a trick the World Bank had been seeking to learn since the fifties. That man was [Colombian ex-President] Alberto Lleras Camargo, who in a speech before a [U.S. Senate] subcommittee July 9, 1965, said among other things, “Latin America is feeding misery, revolutionary pressures, hunger and many other dangers potentially more disastrous than we can possibly imagine, even in this age of nuclear war. . . . The only path to solving these problems is population control. . . .”

We well know that the criteria on population expressed in the [Colombia] Development Plan . . . were designed by foreigners. . . . The Working Report of the Population Council in 1970 . . . explained the Trojan horse by which birth control was introduced: “Authorize a silent program of family planning under the rubric of maternal-infant care, orienting it in the right direction, but hiding its controversial demographic content under the appearance of more acceptable health purposes. . . .”

‘Scientific’ investigations

The first investigation on a national level was titled “Study on Children and Families” and was led by the U.S. University of Notre Dame . . . this was no simple investigation or procedure to gather statistics. . . . In reality it was an intensive course psychologically calculated to create in the parents it surveyed a prejudice against large families as *the supreme cause* of all family ills. . . . The second investigation . . . was also led by the University of Notre Dame and was conducted in several urban neighborhoods which were under the influence of the Catholic social service centers . . . [Analyst] Nicolás Buenaventura concludes his report on these investigations with the following observations. . . . “What they dealt with was that the U.S., through AID (the agency that funded these studies—J.S.) was seeking to establish direct ties with the Catholic entities of the country (Notre Dame is led by Jesuits—J.S.) in the hope of forcing the issue, putting the Church before a fait accompli and thus breaking the “doctrinaire resistance”

to birth control. . . .”

We cannot ignore the admonition of Pope Paul VI when he said that “We are aware of the serious difficulties the Public Powers face in this respect [population pressures]. It is to their legitimate concerns that we have dedicated our encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. And with our predecessor, John XXIII, we continue to say: ‘These difficulties will not be overcome with resorting to methods and means which are unworthy of man. . . . The true solution can only be found in economic development and social progress, which respect and promote the true human values, individual and social.’ ”

Former Colombian President Alberto Lleras Camargo made the following remarks to the First Pan-American Assembly on Population, in Cali, Colombia, August 1965.

There is no indication that the growing population in the industrial countries is going to enjoy a very comfortable life, quite aside from the fact that it will be living under a virtual state of siege by hordes of overpopulated, restive, half-civilized nations in the developing regions. . . .

When the global population attained 1 billion . . . a Protestant clergyman, Thomas Robert Malthus, published a book entitled *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. This study was prophetic. But . . . the Malthusian thesis was distorted and maliciously oversimplified. For this reason it is still wreaking havoc and is inhibiting today’s students of the problem.

[Malthus’s] theory held that mankind, far from increasing without limit, would prudently reduce its fertility as technical progress . . . and the new ways of life of the industrial society would . . . exert restraining effects on population growth. But then came the revolution of chemicals and antibiotics which had their greatest impact in the backward regions of the world. . . . The first consequence was that it slowed the progress of those nations toward industrialization. . . .

Under the pressures of overpopulation and growing unemployment in the rural areas—a problem accentuated by the beginnings of agricultural mechanization—millions of men and women have been migrating from the countryside to the cities. . . . The migrants crowd together outside the workers’ suburbs, and within just a few hours they build the unbelievable slums which have ruined and blackened the image of Latin American cities. . . . One might even compare them to the filthy agglomerations of humanity which in medieval times sought shelter by huddling against the walls of castles. . . .

It is not my place to say what measures are best suited to advance the only solution that is available: the orderly

and controlled reduction of the birth rate. . . .

Some people are dreaming up schemes of how scientific and technical advances might enable mankind to expand at an even higher rate than today's and how these masses of people could find homes in currently uninhabited stretches of Latin America. . . . Future technological advances will be beyond our reach, just as our farmers today have failed to master the techniques of United States agriculture.

Dr. Rodrigo Botero Montoya, former Finance Minister of Colombia (1974-76) and member of the Aspen Institute and Brandt Commission, made the following remarks to an American journalist on Oct. 19, 1981:

Q: What is your assessment of how the population issue will be treated at the North-South conference in Cancún, and what is the role of the Brandt Commission on this issue?

A: I'm sure you've seen the Brandt report . . . there is a chapter there on the points we make on the population question and the more or less obvious observation that it is going to be difficult to defeat poverty worldwide unless something is done about the population issue. . . . Also accepting the understanding that this is something that is much more amenable to internal, domestic politics—that is, to policy decisions that are taken *autonomously*, rather than something that is recommended or pushed across international frontiers because of the sensitivity of the question.

What I have seen, again reflecting on the Colombian experience, is that instead of launching a massive campaign to say that we're going to bring down the birth rate, you go about improving the status of women, improving job opportunities for women and doing all kinds of indirect things . . . these have a very large repercussion on the birth rate without the political flak from addressing the thing head-on.

Q: What about the role of the Catholic Church in Colombia; wasn't it an obstacle to population policies?

A: Well, the way the thing was done was without making too much noise. The services just quietly became available. The thing did not become a hot political issue. More or less an understanding with the Church hierarchy was arrived at. The hierarchy saved face, the services were made available, and nothing too much was said about it. So that the government has in no case come out, say as in India, saying that anyone that gets a sterilization has a free transistor or whatever. The government has spoken very little about this . . . it's made no pronouncements. The services have just become available. . . .

As far as handing this issue internationally, my recommendation is to exercise enormous caution, and if possible *not bring it up publicly*.

Agricultural Case Study

Dope, Inc. destroyed the cotton industry

by Carlos Cota Meza in Bogota and
Valerie Rush in New York

A recent series of reports in the Colombian press on the crushing bankruptcy of that country's once substantial cotton industry has focused on "human interest" stories about the 15 major growers from the province of Cesar whose financial dissolution drove them to suicide. What the press reports have ignored is the fact that the "white agony"—as the cotton crisis in Colombia is called—is the result of a conscious policy of sabotage begun under the López Michelsen administration of 1974-78 for one exclusive purpose: to eliminate a viable and productive sector of the economy, and to free up land and labor for the far more lucrative cultivation of marijuana and coca.

The history of the so-called cotton crisis is as follows.

In 1977, the Colombian cotton industry was facing its best prospects ever. On the Atlantic Coast, 283,015 hectares had been sown with cotton, while the departments of Meta, Huila, Tolima, Valle del Cauca, and Cundinamarca combined added another 115,000 hectares—a total cultivation area not reached before 1977 nor since. Nearly 500,000 people were either directly or indirectly involved in cotton cultivation.

The marijuana industry had already captured the barren northeastern province of the Guajira Peninsula and stretches of land along the Atlantic Coast, and had sopped up at least 100,000 of the seasonal workers who traditionally survived on subsistence wages across the border in Venezuela. If "narcodollars" were going to continue to swell Colombia's reserves, the marijuana growers would need more land and more hands to work it. President López Michelsen decided to provide both.

Colombia's unexpected 1975-76 "coffee bonanza" had flooded the country with literally billions of dollars which, combined with growing monies from the dope trade, threatened to seriously unbalance Colombia's fragile monetary situation. The López administration