

Time is running out for Cairo-maniacs

by Nora Hamerman

Only three weeks before the scheduled opening of the International Conference on Population and Development under United Nations auspices in Cairo, Egypt on Sept. 5, the pressure is building up on western governments and the United States in particular, to renounce the genocidal agenda mapped out in pre-conference meetings.

On Aug. 9, Italy became the first industrialized nation to break ranks, when the minister who will head its delegation to Cairo announced support for the position of Pope John Paul II. Since late last year, the pope has been escalating his attacks on the plans for Cairo. One day earlier, the sharpest criticisms to date of the Draft Program for Cairo and the governments that support it, were made by Vatican spokesman Joaquín Navarro-Valls.

Then on Aug. 11, the Islamic Studies Center of Cairo's influential Al-Azhar University, with the blessing of the Grand Imam Ali Ga'ad al-Haq, released a report demanding key policy changes in the Cairo document. Several European newspapers headlined that a "holy alliance" is emerging between the Vatican and the Islamic world against the Cairo conference. The London *Independent* called the new report from Al-Azhar "a severe embarrassment" to the Cairo conference host, President Hosni Mubarak, "who seeks to derive international prestige from such a conference."

Vatican: Future of humanity at stake

"The Holy See is conscious that what is under discussion is the future of humanity," Navarro told a news conference on Aug. 8. He said the pope's personal intervention was beginning to bear fruit, and that the number of countries opposed to controversial sections of the draft had grown since April. Asked whether John Paul II held the key to success or failure of the conference, he replied, "I prefer to say that good sense should prevail in Cairo."

"My feeling is that many people, even non-Catholics, have been listening clearly to the Holy Father," Navarro said. "The positions of some of the delegations going to Cairo, coming from different countries, different backgrounds, and certainly not from a Catholic and even Christian background, are now closer to the position of the Holy See." According to *Corriere della Sera*, the major Italian daily, most Latin American countries and some Islamic nations support the Vatican. Germany, Ireland, and Israel were reported "close" to the Vatican position.

Navarro repeated that "there is no agreement on 10% of the draft document" for the Cairo conference and that "in the last months, disagreements increased." The conflicts, Navarro said, concern Chapters 7 and 8, which "present aspects that clash against personal dignity." Navarro pointed to the absence of a statement excluding the use of abortion as a family planning measure, a step back from the previous population conference in Mexico, where that statement was included. When a journalist confronted him with denials of such an intention from conference chairman Nafis Sadik, Navarro replied: "Our reading of that document is different." Any time the expressions "reproductive health" and "accessible" abortive measures are in the text, Navarro said, it means that the governments will have to finance it.

In his weekly Angelus message on Sunday, Aug. 7, Pope John Paul II voiced his fear that the Mexico City language would be reversed at Cairo (the Clinton administration, for example, has yet to retract its pledge to abolish the Mexico City formula). This would "give further legitimacy to the legal practice of abortion," the pope said, and as a result, "humanity would suffer another great failure of rights and justice."

Vatican spokesman Navarro said that the U.N. draft program of action for Cairo defines "reproductive health" in a way that includes "fertility regulation." "In this manner, abortion

comes to be considered as an essential component of reproductive health," said the Vatican statement. The terms "reproductive health" and "sexual health" are "tremendously ambiguous."

"In the absence of any clarification, the concept of 'sexual health' could, for example, be applied to a whole series of sexual activities which, by their nature, are not reproductive, particularly homosexual relations." Navarro declared, "This ambiguity is unacceptable, even if looked on only in terms of scientific seriousness, let alone on ethical grounds."

Italy rejects 'third colonization'

Interviewed in the Aug. 9 issue of *Corriere*, the Italian ambassador to the Holy See, Bruno Bottai, said that Italy would support the pope's position. "Italy is very sensitive to some demands from the Holy See," Bottai explained. "We believe that two points in the draft document have to be reviewed. First, you cannot force the hand of developing countries, subordinating [economic] aid to adopting measures of birth control. Secondly, it is necessary to clarify that abortion cannot be considered as a method of birth control."

The next day, Family Minister Antonio Guidi, who will lead the Italian delegation to Cairo, blasted birth control as a neocolonial project against poor and developing countries. "Today, on the side of strong countries, there is the temptation . . . of implementing a third colonization, by imposing their idea of quality of life. And this would be tragic. We must give those suffering populations the means, first of all economically, to self-determine. After having taken away from them so much wealth, we cannot take away the fundamental one, of creating life, of having children," he said, in an interview with *Corriere*.

Guidi, whose country suffers from the lowest birthrate in western Europe, added: "We must, instead, create conditions for large families, which for those populations represent wealth, to live in a climate of democracy and peace, of respect of their culture. We must respect and recover a strong idea that in the West is no longer valid: The child is wealth in itself, but he must live in human conditions, above all from a material standpoint."

Another member of the Italian delegation to Cairo, Environment Minister Altiero Matteoli, gave an Aug. 10 interview with Vatican Radio where he stated that he will be "totally opposed to abortion" and to the "egotistical birth control" which some nations "would like to impose on the whole world."

Rocco Buttiglione, the secretary general of the Italian Popular Party—the successor to the once-ruling Christian Democracy, which is out of the government for the first time in the postwar period—exposed the geopolitical motives of the population controllers in an interview published Aug. 10. "Is it not diabolical that economic aid to the poor is given in exchange for birth control policies through abortion? Think about a large and rich country such as Brazil or Chile. If they

choose development, they can become dangerous economic competitors, right? Why then favor the 'reproduction' of Brazilians or Chileans? And then all those Blacks who create so many problems. . . . Wouldn't it be better if they are not born?" he asked ironically.

Muslim critique 'unexpected'

On Aug. 12 the liberal western media were filled with front-page reports that the pope was receiving support from an unexpected source: the Islamic Studies Center of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the world's most prestigious center of Islamic learning. *Corriere della Sera* called the critique all the more devastating, as this represents the Sunnite Muslim establishment, who were thought to be less doctrinaire against Cairo than the Shiite Muslim hierarchy.

This critique represents a stunning failure of the subversive effort to "reform" Al-Azhar, the premier center of Islamic orthodoxy going back to around 1000. The effort pivoted on the International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Development, a U.S. AID-funded outfit planted at the university with the purpose of shifting Al-Azhar overall to conform with birth-control objectives (see *EIR* of Aug. 12, p. 49).

The Al-Azhar statement accuses the draft program of condoning extramarital sex and easy abortion, undermining parental authority, and encouraging prostitution. The statement calls on Muslims to press for significant changes in the draft program at the Cairo conference.

Like the Vatican, the Al-Azhar statement found the draft program rife with perilous "ambiguities." "The ambiguous expressions, abstract terms, and innovative jargon which abound in it suggest that it aims to adopt the opposite of the basic precepts which Islam has laid down," it charges. "It aims to defend sexual relations which arise between members of the same sex or between different sexes outside legal marriage, which destroys the values to which all revealed religions aspire."

The Al-Azhar report particularly denounces the section of the document entitled "Reproductive Rights, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Family Planning." This section contains "expressions and terms which must be changed to correct and strengthen the wording," the Al-Azhar statement says. "The Center . . . calls on the participating states to reword the draft so that it does not contain anything in opposition to Islamic law. . . . The Center recommends expressing reservations about [such violations] so that the Islamic nation is not bound by any of them."

The liberal *Washington Post* observed that Cairo's supporters "fear that such opposition by leaders of the world's two largest groups [Islam and Catholicism] could prevent consensus at the conference." U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Tim Wirth is quoted lamenting, "There's no mystery that [Vatican officials] were going to reach out to religious leaders. They've made it very clear that they've embarked on a very aggressive global strategy."