

Will the Cairo conference take place in Cairo?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

“Even if the conference is held in Cairo, clearly the document as it stands will *not* be signed,” was how one Egyptian diplomat summed up the state of disarray into which plans for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) have fallen. The conference, slated to open in Cairo in September, may have to be relocated, due to fears that internal opposition groups may try to disrupt it.

Internationally, the campaign carried out by the Vatican, through the bishops’ conferences, has bolstered opposition among dozens of mainly Catholic nations, especially in Ibero-America, which have made known that they will refuse to accept the draft document. And, finally, the aggressive campaign spread by the Schiller Institute of Lyndon and Helga LaRouche has rallied thousands of individuals and organizations behind a petition to stop the conference.

The reasons for the surge of protest lie in the ICDP’s pledge to ram through commitment to a depopulation policy worldwide, aimed at halving the current world’s population, to 2.5 billion, by the year 2150. This is stated on page 1 of its draft program, which identifies the lowest of three projected demographic rates as the option chosen. Thanks to the campaign led by the Schiller Institute, government leaders, especially in the so-called Third World, have realized the genocidal implications of the program and have rejected it. The Egyptian government has now been placed in the uncomfortable position of playing host to a conference which has been branded as the followup to the 1932 Eugenics Conference in New York, which endorsed Hitler’s racial purification policies.

The Egyptian government has felt obliged to respond publicly to the opposition. In Germany, in the closing week

of the European election campaign, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, who headed the slate from the Civil Rights Movement-Solidarity, briefed a group of diplomats during a public meeting in Bonn on June 6, on the U.N.’s malthusian project. A few days later, at a campaign rally in Berlin, she reiterated the charges, based on ample historical documentation of the eugenics lobby.

Two representatives from the Egyptian Embassy took the floor to state their government’s position. Reading from a prepared statement, one official said, “In one point, I agree with you fully: The population development on our Earth is one of the hottest problems which moves humanity today. How this problem can and must be overcome, on this point we hold obviously very different views.” The Egyptian view, in summary, is that overpopulation, and not underdevelopment, is the real problem. Egypt rejects the demographic projection of 11 billion people by 2030, on grounds that “such a population explosion would lead concerns for economic and social development to absurdity.” The “population bomb” is said to generate a vicious circle of poverty and violence. “More people need more food, more livestock, more cultivated land, more water, more energy.” There will not be enough, “hunger will remain.”

The Egyptian document goes so far as to assert that “\$20 is more wisely invested in population policy than \$2,000 in the economy.” Thus, the document supports the aims of the U.N. conference, and lauds the fact that Minister Maher Mahran, leader of the Egyptian Population Council and government coordinator in preparing the conference, has succeeded over the last seven years in lowering Egypt’s fertility rate “from 39 to 29 births per 1,000 women.” Notwithstand-

ing, the Egyptian diplomat read: "The Cairo world population conference in September this year does not want to go down in history as a 'depopulation' conference," and he urged non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which oppose the program to take their objections to Cairo, and debate them there. The same message was conveyed a few weeks later in Bonn, by an Egyptian Embassy official to a representative of *EIR*.

Opposition within Egypt

It has been learned that inside Egypt, opposition to the depopulation conference, which had been significant but relatively quiet, has begun to make itself heard. Two articles have appeared in the newspaper *As Sha'ab (The People)*, expressing the views of the Islamic political faction, which opposes birth control on religious grounds. The large Muslim Brotherhood, which controls most of the professional associations in the country, has, according to a recent feature in *Le Figaro*, come under the same kind of government harassment which had formerly been reserved for the radical, terrorist groupings which work under an "Islamist" label. Since last summer, government-controlled media outlets have carried out a vast campaign aimed at discrediting conservative Muslim lifestyles as "Saudi"—a barely veiled reference to the conservative Muslims at home. Since June of this year, according to the French daily *Le Figaro*, a government paper and the Interior Minister Al Alfi went so far as to characterize the Muslim Brotherhood as "a terrorist organization."

At the same time, the Coptic Church is known to oppose birth control. Many of the Coptic Christians, who make up 10-11 million of the population and tend to have large families, particularly in the south, fear that population reduction measures will further alter the Christian-Muslim ratio to their disadvantage.

In May, when a conference was scheduled to take place in Cairo, under the rubric of "Minority Rights in the Middle East," the Copts were identified as a "minority," alongside southern Sudanese forces of John Garang, the Kurds, and numerous others. The conference was funded by an assortment of organizations committed to stoking the coals of "religious" and "ethnic" conflict: Dr. Suadin, a professor of political science at the American University in Cairo; Dr. Suada Sabah, a member of the Kuwaiti royal family; and the Minority Rights Association of the United Kingdom and the American University in Cairo. Even before it was held, the conference was exposed in the Egyptian press as a foreign-backed operation, and the Coptic Church protested, on the grounds that Copts are Egyptian citizens, not a "minority," and encouraged Copt intellectuals to boycott the conference. This made it impossible to hold the conference in Cairo, and it was relocated to Lanarka, Cyprus, and its title changed to something less offensive.

The Egyptian government therefore has good grounds for being worried that the U.N. pow-wow may be sabotaged.

European opposition

Not only Egypt is feeling the heat. Germany, which is the third-largest donor to U.N. programs (after the United States and Japan), has been in the forefront of schemes to reduce the world's population. A hearing took place in Bonn on June 14, gathering hundreds of representatives of NGOs involved. Alongside officials from the German organization of the United Nations, the German Population Fund, the One World organization, etc., were officials from several German ministries and members of parliament from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Free Democratic Party (FDP), and Social Democratic Party (SPD).

The purpose of the "hearing" was supposed to be to put forward the "facts," in the form of bite-sized exchanges between a questioner and an expert with the answers; then to thrash out the problems raised in "working groups;" and, finally, to draw conclusions in a plenary session. Had the Schiller Institute not been present, the script would no doubt have been scrupulously followed. But that was not to be. Delegates entering the Protestant Church building which hosted the hearings, were greeted by a picket line of Schiller Institute activists who denounced the ICPD program as genocide, and pointed to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (who himself is an Egyptian Copt) as being "worse than Hitler" for promoting a "holocaust" through the U.N.'s demographic blueprint. The presence of picketers destabilized many of the hearing organizers so much that the first three speakers of the day felt obliged to defend themselves from the charges of "depopulation through malthusian genocide" in their opening remarks.

Nonetheless, the organizers attempted to ram through the ICPD programmatic draft, in a series of "factual" presentations by "experts" such as: Prof. Dr. Klaus Leisinger of the Ciba-Geigy Foundation for Cooperation with Developing Countries, from Basel, Switzerland; Corinna Kuhl of the U.N. Development Program; Prof. Dr. Charlotte Hoehn, of the German Institute for Population Research; and Klaus-Henning Rosen, who works for the German Interior Ministry and is particularly close to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

With cheerful disregard for scientific rigor, the "experts" expounded views such as, "Malthus proved scientifically that underdevelopment and population growth are linked," or, "Population growth is the cause and effect of poverty." Prof. Dr. Leisinger outlined a gruesome picture of agricultural land shrinkage worldwide—without ever hinting at the reasons—and concluded that "more people will want more food, and there will be less available." His implicit message was that if food production worldwide continues to be curtailed, the population problem will be "naturally" solved. To regulate matters, the speakers proposed vast propaganda campaigns in the Third World, coupled with heavily funded distribution of contraceptives, to "allow" women to reduce family size.

Most significant among the "experts" was Dr. Hoehn,

who revealed something important in spite of herself. Referring to the demographic development of Germany—which, through the process of industrialization over the last century, witnessed a slow reduction in family size, speeded up by widespread introduction of the contraceptive pill, from five children to two—she pointed out that as a result, Germany now faces a social and economic crisis. An increasingly large aging population has to depend on a dwindling young labor force for its survival.

The remarks of Dr. Hoehn, known as “Mrs. Population” in Germany, raised disquieting questions: If Germany proved historically that family size is a function of industrialization, why should not Third World countries be helped to industrialize? And further, if deliberate family planning measures, such as contraceptives, lead to an inverted population pyramid, jeopardizing social security for the elderly and undermining the process of economic growth, what good are they? Finally, does this not mean (as she and other experts had to admit) that Germany would have to rely on imported foreign labor to keep its economy going?

The fundamental policy directives issuing from the hearing were in perfect conformity with the ICPD draft: Finance distribution of contraceptives of all kinds in order to reduce fertility rates in the Third World, and fund propaganda campaigns to force the subjected populations to accept.

The pointed interventions of Schiller Institute representatives in the eight working groups succeeded in altering the agenda. The main point made was that the draft document called for reduction of the world population to 2.5 billion, a feat which could be performed only through genocidal means. The central point driven home was: Can Germany—with the Nazi Holocaust written in its history—afford to participate in a conference in Cairo, whose deliberations would repeat that genocidal experiment on a world scale? Despite attempts by organizers of the hearing to snuff out the protest by undemocratically limiting debate, the message was delivered and received. In the final plenum, in fact, coordinators reporting on the course of their “working groups” had to bring this crucial question to the entire assembly: Can Germany afford to take part, given its history?

Two days following the Bonn hearings, a parliamentary debate which was to pass a resolution on the government’s position for the Cairo conference, failed to do so. Opposition coming from Catholic parliamentarians of the Bavaria-based Christian Social Union prevented it.

A conspiracy to save humanity

What most upset the leading organizations behind the Bonn event, however, was not that glitches had emerged in the national context. Rather, it was the gnawing suspicion that the Schiller Institute’s overall activity might be part of a carefully coordinated “plot” involving other powerful institutions like the Vatican, on a world scale. This emerged in a curious article appearing in a northern German newspa-

per, the *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, on June 16. In it, Dr. Hans Fleisch, head of the German World Population Foundation, who had emceed the Bonn hearings, was quoted as complaining that the Vatican had mounted a massive campaign against Cairo at the New York preparatory committee meetings, which he had attended. The article alleged that the anti-Cairo opposition, though numerically small, is “efficient and powerful” because it involves not only “fundamentalist sects” (a slanderous reference to the Schiller Institute) who “equate United Nations activities with Adolf Hitler’s race policies,” and who insist that “the world needs more people”; but also “the influential Vatican,” which warns against “contraceptive imperialism” and “the ideology of fear of life.”

The Vatican’s efforts to defend the sanctity of human life by defeating the Cairo conference agenda have been far-reaching, increasing in pungency and impact. Not only has the pope led the charge against genocide personally, calling on bishops to be prepared for “martyrdom” to seize victory, but Rome has apparently used its moral influence to bolster the opposition among political personalities. Leaders of the Bonn hearing complained to journalists that the German parliament’s logjam on a Cairo resolution has been caused by Vatican intervention.

Malthusians scurry for cover

The net effect of the international move against Cairo has been to throw the depopulation lobby onto the defensive. Even leading proponents of malthusianism, such as Harvard Prof. Sissila Bok, daughter of Swedish social engineers Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, are being forced to repackage their rhetoric. Speaking at an event sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in Stockholm on June 17, Bok betrayed nervous concern, lest the radical malthusians produce a backlash with their promotion of cutting down population size. She criticized Stanford University’s Dr. Paul “population bomb” Ehrlich for having a “non-ethical” view of people as “statistical figures.” Such “fundamentalists,” she said, “give priority to the reduction of the number of people, by any means necessary, and forget the social side of the problem.” This, she said, would lead to travesties, as for example in China.

Others at the Stockholm gathering were outspoken about their fears that the Cairo event may flop. Bok herself, in answer to a question by *EIR*, said she was “fearful that the tense political situation [in Egypt] might harm the conference.” When she expressed hopes that the conference would take place nonetheless, she was contradicted by an official of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), with 17 years’ experience in northern Africa and Egypt, who bluntly stated that he thought the “fundamentalists” might indeed be able to stop the conference. Goeren Dahlgren, a SIDA bureaucrat responsible for “family planning,” indicated full agreement with this assessment.