

Peru imposes IMF's depopulation policy

by Sara Madueño

On Oct. 23, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori announced that he was implementing, by decree, a drastic population control policy, arguing falsely that "the welfare of the Peruvian population is threatened by the high birth rate." Fujimori characterized resistance to this promotion of genocide—especially that of the Peruvian Catholic Church—as "medieval opinions."

Apparently, Fujimori prefers the "modern opinions" of the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, which are financing the Peruvian program and which have a policy of killing off Third World populations rather than permitting their industrialization.

Drawing on the typical malthusian argument that there are "limits to growth," Fujimori argued that, if current growth rates continue, Peru's population in the year 2000 will reach 30 million, adding, "It is hard to imagine what Peru's cities of the future will be like, with such a large population, without being able to satisfy the most elementary needs for survival."

The President's goal is to reduce the annual growth rate of the population from today's 2.5% down to 2.0% by 1995, and 1.7% by the year 2000.

Immediately after the President's announcement, Health Minister Carlos Vidal Layseca announced that the new presidential decree would enter into effect immediately (Nov. 1), and would consist of television ads promoting population reduction, and the free distribution of birth control devices at all medical facilities in the country, thanks to the financial aid of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and other international organizations. The U.N. has already handed over its first grant of \$1.2 million to guarantee the program's success.

Population and development

It is a fallacy to argue that "the development of Peru is threatened and being slowed by the growth of the population," rejoined the Permanent Council of the Peruvian Bishops Conference on Oct. 26. "It is a proven fact that demographic growth is possible if socio-economic policies are promoted which make production grow rapidly, which edu-

cate people toward rational consumption, and which simultaneously ensure the equitable distribution of benefits, starting with the poorest people," the Church communiqué stated.

Msgr. Miguel Irizar, a member of the Permanent Council and the bishop of the city of Callao, explained the matter further in an interview with the weekly magazine *Oiga*: "The country's problem is not demographic growth, but rather of the growth of society's goods and services. . . . The production of these has not grown in the last 25 or 30 years, so the same goods are at the service of a population which is growing. This means that the problem is not the increase of population, both rather the decrease of GNP. . . . There are countries that have less natural wealth and more people than we do, and they have developed."

Monsignor Irizar added: "Peru has a territorial area equivalent to that of Spain, France, and England combined, which jointly have 150 million inhabitants. So the issue is not so much whether or not there will be 30 million Peruvians in the year 2000, but to pose a reasonable exploitation of our natural resources. I do not think that our country is overpopulated or anything like it . . . we are still an insufficiently populated country. . . . In fact, there is a part of our territory which isn't even inhabited," he concluded.

Congressman Rafael Rey, of the Popular Christian Party, argued in a televised debate that Peru could readily sustain a population of as many as 100 million people.

IMF imposes 'the culture of death'

The Peruvian Catholic Church did not stop at merely criticizing President Fujimori's incompetent economics. Spokesmen went on to expose the source of those policies, and to blast the President for their consequences.

In answer to Fujimori's accusation that their ideas were "medieval," Bishop Luis Bambaren, the president of family commission of the Peruvian Bishops Conference, stated: "What I think is really medieval is when hospitals in this country don't have gauze, or thread for sutures, which are necessary for the treatment of patients. . . . In the Middle Ages none of these medical implements existed, and for that reason I think that Peru has regressed. . . . This is a very sensitive subject and cannot be treated lightly; this does constitute a return to the Middle Ages, when the poor are treated as if they were animals."

Monsignor Bambaren explained further: "The statements issued by the President . . . should be seen in the context of the demands that the international financial institutions make on Third World nations, with regard to the population question, as a requirement for granting credits." Bishop Bambaren added that, behind these population reduction policies, "there is a culture of death . . . that opposes the culture of life." He revealed that, in recent years, "Peru has been a laboratory for a series of anti-life institutions that have carried out over 200,000 sterilizations in the poorest sectors of Peruvian society, taking advantage of the ignorance of women."