

A COMMENTARY ON THE NSSM BOOK BY STEPHEN MUMFORD

by

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Stephen Mumford's valiant exhumation of long-buried highest-level U.S. population policy documents - now presented in his new book, *THE LIFE AND DEATH OF NSSM 200*, provides a unique revelation of the virulent anti-American machinations of the Roman Catholic Church during this half century, as it asserted papal infallibility and strove to aggrandize the Vatican Empire by denying poor people and nations access to effective means of fertility control.

The title of Mumford's book is drawn from White House shorthand standing for "National Security Study Memorandum." NSSM 200 was the definitive interagency study of world population growth and its implications for U.S. and global security, requested by President Nixon.

Dr. Mumford's book is a must-read for anyone interested in this country's survival and wellbeing, and in the global issues of religious zealotry and genocidal conflict, poverty and hunger, population and environment, war and peace. Many readers will be saddened, as I am, by what might have been:

- Had Paul VI, accepted the recommendation of the Papal Commission on Population and Birth Control in 1966 that the Church should change its position on birth control.
- Had President Nixon implemented the recommendations of the Rockefeller *Commission on Population Growth and America's Future* in 1972; had he vetoed the Helms Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act in 1973; and had he survived long enough in the Presidency to receive and implement the recommendations of the NSSM 200 study he commissioned in 1974.
- Had our presidential elections in '76, '80, '84, and '88 yielded presidents with outstanding population vision and courage, rather than a trio of Vatican sycophants - Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush - all of whom pandered to the Vatican and the American Catholic bishops while degrading U.S. population leadership and programs for improved fertility control at home and abroad.
- Had John Paul I survived in the Vatican long enough to have implemented his vision and determination that the Roman Catholic Church should support birth control.

Indeed the human condition of this world would have been vastly improved during the last several decades had Vatican forces helped rather than hindered progress toward universal availability of the most effective and desired means of fertility control. Throughout this millennium, while growing

forces of scientific inquiry and intellectual freedom struggled mightily to overcome the tenacious grasp of general ignorance and religious dogmatism to create an earthly Eden, the Roman Catholic Church remained the foremost obstacle to attainment of that goal as it strove for survival and aggrandizement of its medieval power. Since collapse of totalitarian communism, Vatican opposition to universal birth control and its corrosive manipulation of American democratic processes have posed the principal threat to the continued survival and wellbeing of this great nation.

At mid-century, Paul Blanshard, in *American Democracy and Catholic Power*, warned of the on-going danger to this republic posed by a foreign religious power in our midst asserting papal infallibility and seeking to exercise religious authority over this nation's democratic institutions and governmental decisions. Now Mumford's *THE LIFE AND DEATH OF NSSM 200* makes it ominously evident that what Blanshard warned could happen if this nation relaxed its vigilance, has happened! Furthermore, the principal deterrent to a possible takeover of this democracy by a fanatic adversarial power—a free and vigilant press—no longer exists with the requisite courage and strength to protect this country from the destructive machinations of the Vatican and its American minions. The inability of U.S. print and broadcast media to defend this nation against the palpably treasonous activities of the American Catholic bishops, as detailed in their November 20, 1975 PASTORAL PLAN FOR PRO-LIFE ACTIVITIES, is amply demonstrated by the heretofore virtual total lack of publication and condemnation of the many blatant anti-American activities documented in Mumford's book.

The current situation is reminiscent of Nazi Germany during the 1930s, when all potential leaders against Hitler were effectively muzzled. What was tyrannically possible then—in a relatively primitive technological era—is even more possible now that all relevant data for a tyrannical enterprise can so easily be assembled, manipulated and disseminated by computer.

The statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on November 25, 1959, following the Draper Committee recommendation that the United States "should apply its resources to assist the LDCs with their rapidly growing population problems," remains their policy:

United States Catholics believe that the promotion of artificial birth control is a morally, humanly, psychologically, and politically disastrous approach to the population problem. . . . They will not support any public assistance, either at home or abroad, to promote artificial birth prevention, abortion, or sterilization, whether through direct aid or by means of international organizations.

But with the election of President John F. Kennedy in 1960 and with the rapid technological and programmatic progress toward universal availability of effective means of fertility control achieved during the administrations of Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, moderating factions within the Catholic church were in the ascendency. Indeed, as we launched USAID's population program during the latter 1960s and early 1970s, many of our key staff and valued colleagues were liberal Catholics who fully shared our common belief that extension of effective means of fertility control worldwide was this nation's most important developmental mission.

We were a small band of true believers working mightily to implement a common fertility control vision of what must be done to overcome poverty, hunger, ignorance and conflict throughout the world. And during the early 1970s

fertility control progress was so rapid that we were optimistic that the bulk of essential international family planning assistance needed for resolution of the world population crisis could be accomplished by the end of the twentieth century. In 1973, a confluence of favorable events crested our optimism:

- In January came the Supreme Court decision on Roe vs Wade, legalizing abortion in the United States and giving many family planning workers an illusory sense of definitive victory in the long and bitter struggle for abortion rights against fanatical Vatican and U.S. Catholic Bishops' opposition.

- In April came the fruits of a research project we had launched two years earlier with Battelle Institute to develop simplified non-electrical suction equipment for uterine aspiration. We quickly purchased 1000 "Menstrual Regulation Kits" (for \$8.50 ea) and distributed them for clinical testing by the International Fertility Research Program. Within weeks, clinical reports from IFRP enabled us to order 10,000 additional MR Kits; and we organized a Menstrual Regulation Conference to be held at the University of Hawaii that December, to which we invited 300 selected obstetricians, mainly from the LDCs, to whom we gave a plentiful supply of MR Kits on that occasion-thus achieving global distribution of this new and durably effective technology within the year of its invention.

- In June, by contract with USAID, the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore hosted a gathering of 143 chairmen of Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology from throughout Latin America for two week's intensive orientation and training in the latest technologies for control of fertility, including laparoscopic sterilization and MR Kits. This conference, with follow-on conferences, consultant visits, and provision of equipment and supplies seeded these breakthrough technologies most quickly and powerfully in Latin America, where they have contributed greatly to the remarkable decrease in unwanted fertility in Mexico, Brazil and elsewhere.

- In 1973 we made rapid progress with the creation of the World Fertility Survey we had originated in 1971, and which during the following decade became "the largest international social science research project ever undertaken." This finally gave indisputable evidence that roughly half of the women of reproductive age in the less developed world did not want additional children.

- In September, at a conference of Asian family planning leaders in Lahore, Pakistan, I learned authoritatively from the representative of the Peoples Republic of China, Minister of Health Li Shiu Chen, that the crude birth rate of the PRC was then approximately 25 and plummeting in response to the maxi-family planning program implemented there during several years. This demonstrated that "where there is a will there is a way" to achieve rapid, nation-wide reduction in fertility with the technology at hand despite abject poverty and great population size.

In retrospect, 1973 was the peak year for USAID's full-bore population program capability, and we drove with utmost speed to extend fertility control services throughout the less developed world. The Office of Population then included all designated population officers in AID/W, enabling us to work directly with AID's Country Missions on design, implementation support and measurement of population projects and programs. Our earmarked population budget that year of \$125 million was \$25 million more than in 1972. We then

had a staff of 110 able, experienced and dedicated population personnel. Key improvements had been made in fertility control technology and a full set of cooperating institutions had been created and funded. This enabled us to implement powerful new initiatives with remarkable speed, and we expected to move with even greater strength during ensuing years. But, alas, it was not to be. Action begets reaction, and our cascade of successes provoked such intense counter measures by Catholic hierarchy adversaries of fertility control that we were soon struggling to keep the program intact and moving ahead:

- The first serious blow to the population program was passage of the Helms (anti-abortion) Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act in December 1973, which abruptly ended AID's freedom to support abortion services. Although general availability of effective contraceptives greatly diminishes the need for abortion, access to a hindsight means of fertility control is an indispensable element of all sound population control programs. It is known that John Sullivan of Congressman Clement Zablocki's staff and other Catholic zealots were leaders in the preparation and enactment of the Helm's Amendment-which has subsequently coerced millions of women in the LDCs to bear children they did not want, could not care for, and many died for.

- The second blow to AID's population program followed President Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974, and thereupon the retirement of Administrator John Hannah-the best administrator AID had during my 14 years with the agency. He was succeeded by Administrator Daniel Parker, whose Catholic deputy, John H. Murphy, created a task force for the purpose of reorganizing and thereby decapitating the Office of Population. But this action was abandoned after six months when committee chairmen Senator Hubert Humphrey, Senator Daniel Inouye, and Congressman Otto Passman all registered strong support for me.

- The third blow to our population program was the death of General William Draper, Chairman, Population Crisis Committee, December 26, 1974-whose unfailing population vision, utter dedication to program needs, indefatigable energy, and warm friendship had inspired and strengthened us throughout. No one has ever fully replaced him.

- The fourth blow to the program was the cuts in AID's population budget-to \$112 million in 1974 and \$103 million in 1975-which sharply curtailed our capacity to seize opportunities for expansion of family planning in many countries, especially in Africa. Doubtless the stated adversarial actions of Congressman Zablocki, then Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and some other Catholic legislators contributed to these untimely cuts in population budgets and programs.

- The fifth blow to the program-ultimately the most harmful-was the approval by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in November 1975, of their Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities. This detailed blueprint-presented in Mumford's book-guided the tax-free Catholic Church in its organization of political action bodies in all 435 congressional districts and in its mobilization of national, state and local political support for the Vatican agenda. Implementation of the overall plan contributed decisively to the election of three U.S. presidents-Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George Bush-all of whom supported the Vatican opposition to extension of contraception and abortion. Likewise the recent Republican/Religious Right takeover of the Senate and House is in accord with the Catholic Bishops' political action plan.

Catholic hierarchy machinations relating to the election and administration of Jimmy Carter-which I recall from agonizing personal experience-typify the political activities of the Catholic Church.

Following a meeting of Presidential Candidate Jimmy Carter and his campaign staff with 15 Catholic bishops at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington on August 31, 1976, on which occasion the bishops pressed Carter to deemphasize federal support for family planning in exchange for Catholic Church support of his candidacy, President-Elect Carter proceeded to place the two federal departments with family planning responsibilities under Catholic control: Joseph Califano became Secretary of HEW, and the first one to whom President-Elect Carter offered the USAID Administrator position was Father Theodore Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame University. When Father Hesburgh declined that appointment it was given to John J. Gilligan, a Notre Dame graduate and former governor of Ohio. Also, John Sullivan, a longtime adversary of AID's family planning program, moved from Congressman Zablocki's staff into AID during the Presidential transition and was given a key role in selecting Carter's political appointees, including Sander Levin, defeated Democratic candidate for Governor of Michigan. Not a Catholic but an opportunistic lawyer without prior family planning experience, Levin grasped and degraded AID's population program. Appointed Assistant Administrator for Population and Humanitarian Assistance, he immediately commenced reorganizing the Office of Population and sidelining and dispersing key staff while appointing "special assistants" to administrate population projects and programs, and he distributed budget to four geographic bureaus instead of the Office of Population.

On the afternoon of September 28, 1978 - within hours of the assassination of Pope John Paul I in the Vatican - Levin summoned me to his office in the State Department and again requested that I vacate my GS18 position as Director of the Office of Population. When I replied that I chose to remain, he said he would "destroy" me!

Such was my reward for 14 years of outstanding civil service along the Potomac; during which time we had built (from scratch) a mighty global enterprise-the Agency's most effective program. With the help of attorneys, costing me \$100 per hour, I battled a "stacked deck" of Catholic interests and government lawyers for two years, until, having expended \$57,000, I could afford no more. Seeing no light at the end of the AID population tunnel, I then moved to the Centers for Disease Control and resumed epidemiological interests interrupted 15 years earlier.

Although it is not inappropriate for Catholic and other religious leaders to exhort adherents and others to not use contraceptives and other means of birth control, it is surely unacceptable to the majority of Americans that any religious minority dictate what means of fertility control may be used by persons of other faiths-by denying them access to valuable products of scientific research through covert political deals and dirty tricks.

Many elected and appointed officials have been cowed by the power of the Catholic Church, and even family planning leaders have remained unacceptably mute. The current code of silence with respect to identifying the main adversary of reproductive freedom-the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church-is fomenting a world disaster analogous to that which would have ensued if during this century world political leaders had failed to identify the USSR and Communism as the main adversary of democratic political freedom.

The Vatican's machinations, obstructions and degradation of family planning programs has not been limited to the United States. As documented by Mumford in the oral history with Milton Siegel (25 year veteran Deputy Director of the World Health Organization), representatives from Ireland, Belgium and Italy worked vigorously during 1946-47 on behalf of the Vatican, even before WHO was formally born, to expunge family planning from the accepted agenda of WHO. When Dr. Brock Chisholm, the first Director General of WHO, vigorously objected to the Vatican dictate of "no family planning," the Vatican forces threatened to block creation of a unified World Health Organization; and thus succeeded in their objective of no family planning by WHO. It was the failure of WHO to provide support for family planning during the 1960s that led to creation of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

Likewise, the Vatican acted to delete family planning from the agenda of UNICEF. The mechanism was a \$100 million grant made in 1984 by Italy to UNICEF for the Expanded Program of Immunization - with the stricture that UNICEF not support family planning activities during the 10 years of the grant.

As emphasized by Mumford in his NSSM 200 book, it is essential that many secular encroachments of the Vatican be rescinded: especially, the appointment of a U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican, a practice begun by President Reagan, which clearly violates Constitutional proscription of religious dictation of governmental processes; as does also the "non-member state permanent observer status" of the Vatican at the United Nations.

More than 90% of fecund Catholic couples in America practice birth control - at least part of the time - despite the Vatican prohibition, and the laws and practices in America should reflect that fact rather than the obsolete and incredibly arrogant and destyrtrucrive demands of the Vatican.