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December 11, 1970

American Embassy, RIO

Attitudes toward Population and Family Planning

A-481, November 5, 1970

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SUMMARY: Rio's Jornal do Brasil on November 22 published a MARPLAN poll on attitudes toward population and family planning. The sample over-represented the better educated, and omitted the very poor who constitute about one-fifth of Rio's population. This, and the failure to use random sampling, make interpretation difficult and somewhat risky. The post is reporting the survey, however, because it is one of the few published polls on this subject and because, despite the deficient sampling, results may be taken as broadly indicative of attitudes held by the better-educated 80% of Rio's population.

About half of the 326 respondents had not heard of "population explosion," only about a third are aware that a world population explosion exists, and only 28% believe it exists in Brazil.

A paradoxical finding is that while birth control is favored by a ratio of two to one, most respondents believe that a larger population will help rather than hinder Brazil's development. This supports other observations, and earlier reporting by the mission, that while many Brazilians accept family planning for themselves, often the same persons either are unaware of Brazil's high birth rate or do not see it as constituting a public or national problem.

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USAID/P. Davies (in draft) *ms*
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THE SURVEY

On November 22 the Jornal do Brasil reported the results of a survey conducted by MARPLAN in Rio de Janeiro on attitudes toward population and family planning. MARPLAN, the research affiliate of McCann-Erickson, frequently conducts surveys for Jornal do Brasil but this is the first one dealing with this subject.

As Jornal do Brasil's accompanying story noted, the survey produced results which seemed to be confusing and self-contradictory. On the one hand, by two to one the respondents said they were in favor of birth control, and 80% said Brazil's cities have too many people. On the other hand, by about three to two, respondents thought that birth control was strictly a private matter and that the government should take no initiative, and by almost two to one they regard Brazil's population increase as beneficial rather than harmful to the country's economic development.

(In reporting the story in a front-page box and on an inside page, Jornal do Brasil chose to play up the last named finding. The headline read: "Larger Population is Seen as a Factor for Progress." This is in keeping with the paper's editorial position. It is ironic to note that Jornal do Brasil, progressive on most issues, takes this line whereas the conservative Estado do São Paulo is the only major paper in Brazil which has consistently editorialized in favor of a national population and family planning program.)

The survey showed large areas of ignorance (even among this better educated sample) concerning the population explosion and Brazil's actual rate of population growth. It seems clear that many respondents approve family planning for themselves and are aware that the cities become progressively more crowded, but at the same time they are either ignorant of the national population growth rate or else see it as being useful or necessary to "fill up Brazil's great empty spaces," an oft-heard argument.

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CAUTIONS ABOUT THE SAMPLE

A total of 326 persons were interviewed in Rio de Janeiro, 33 in economic class A (well-to-do), 134 in Class B (middle class), and 159 in Class C (poor). Because of logistic problems and the chronically large percentage of "don't knows" among Class E, the "very poor", MARPLAN deliberately omits interviewing in the slums (favelas) of the city, thus eliminating roughly the poorest 20% of the population from the universe sampled. Furthermore, the description given of the present survey indicates that persons of "university level" were deliberately and greatly oversampled, amounting to 30% of the total sample. The sample thus was skewed away from those with least education and toward those with most education, and this must be kept in mind in reading the results. Had a truly random sample of Rio's total population been used, the results certainly would have reflected significantly higher ignorance on most questions.

The MARPLAN survey uses probability methods, only at the initial stage, of randomly selecting areas and blocks within areas, after which quota techniques are employed. Thus, even for the stated universe (omission of slums and over-sampling of university-level persons), in the absence of a truly random sample it is not possible to apply statistical techniques to determine sampling error.

Since the survey was obviously subject to a significantly large (but undeterminable) sampling error, it is cautioned that the percentages cited must be treated with considerable reserve. At best, they should be regarded as approximations of what a truly random sample of the stated universe might have yielded.

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PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Presentation of the data by Jornal do Brasil leaves much to be desired. Dates of interviewing are not indicated. On some questions, the tables show breaks by sex, age, socio-economic status, and education -- on other questions only the "university" vs "non-university" break is shown. Some questions described in the narrative text are not included in the tables.

The following results of the poll, abstracted from the rather hodge-podge presentation in the Jornal do Brasil, appear to be the most significant.

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Awareness of Population Explosion: "Have you heard about the so-called population explosion?" YES 47%, NO 53%. In Class A awareness was 91%, Class B 60%, Class C only 26%. Among men 60% showed awareness, among women only 32%.

Existence of World Population Explosion. "Do you think that there is currently a population explosion in the world?" (Asked only of those who have heard of population explosion.) YES 28%, NO 17%, DON'T KNOW 2%, HAVE NOT HEARD OF POPULATION EXPLOSION, 53%.

Existence of Brazilian Population Explosion. "In your opinion, is there a population explosion in Brazil?" (Asked only of those who had heard of population explosion.) YES 28%, NO 17%, DON'T KNOW 2%, HAVE NOT HEARD OF POPULATION EXPLOSION 53%.

Brazil Compared to Other Countries. "In your opinion, is the population growth rate in Brazil more or less equal to that of most other countries (61%), one of the highest in the world (25%), one of the lowest in the world (6%)," don't know 8%.

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Population Predictions. "What population will Brazil have in the year 2000 at the present rate of demographic growth?"

Less than 120,000,000	5%
120,000,000	16
130,000,000	13
150,000,000	17
180,000,000	10
200,000,000	15
215,000,000	2
250,000,000	6
300,000,000	10
Over 300,000,000	2
Don't know	4

Crowded Cities. "Do you think Brazil's big cities today have too many people, or not?" Too many, 80%. Not too many, 20%.

Effect on Economic Development. "Do you think Brazil's growing population affects the country's economic growth favorably or unfavorably?" Favorably 49%, unfavorably 27%, don't know 24%.

Reasons for Positive Outlook. "Why do you think it affects economic growth favorably?" By occupying uninhabited areas, 28%. More people will be studying, to help economic and cultural development, 19%. A larger work force will result in agricultural and industrial growth, 11%.

Reasons for Negative Outlook. "Why do you think it affects economic development unfavorably?" It causes housing, food, schooling problems and will increase poverty, making national development difficult, 14%. When population grows more rapidly than the economy, per capita income goes down, 9%. There will be more unemployment, 6%. Devaluation and lower purchasing power, 4%.

Birth Control. "Are you in favor or opposed to birth control?" In favor 66%, opposed 28%, don't know 6%. Among women, 75% in favor. Among men, 58% in favor.

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Reasons for Favoring Birth Control. "Why do you favor birth control?" (Asked of the 56% in favor.) Financial, educational, standard of living problems do not permit us to have large families, 33%. Because the poor cannot afford to raise their children, 29%. Because it would permit better economic planning and development, 11%.

Reasons for Opposing Birth Control. "Why do you oppose birth control?" (Asked of the 28% opposing.) We need more population to occupy Brazil's large empty areas, 14%. Religious reasons, procreation is aim of marriage, nobody should avoid having children, 12%.

Birth Control a Private Matter. "Do you think birth control is an exclusively personal responsibility or do you think the state should take the initiative?" It is a private matter, 59%. The state should take the initiative, 39%. Don't know, 2%.

BOONSTRA

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