

We have a duty toward the people of Vietnam. Especially is this true of those of us who opposed the war and thus—although perhaps in small part and only indirectly—helped bring the present regime to power. We must resist the temptation to cruel forgetfulness of that duty, while at the same time we persist in advocating the calculated forgetfulness, a comprehensive amnesty, that will enhance both healing and justice in our own country.

EXCURSUS II

Lester R. Brown on **World Population Trends: Signs of Hope, Signs of Stress**

World population growth is slowing in the 1970's. This is largely because of falling birthrates, but in some countries because of rising death rates. The decline in birthrates, paced by two of the world's most populous countries, China and the United States, is occurring in rich and poor nations alike. In several Fourth World countries sporadic rises in death rates due to increased nutritional stress have contributed to the slowing of population growth.

The rate of growth in world population, which apparently peaked around the beginning of the decade, has begun to slow, reversing a long-standing trend of gradually accelerating growth that may have begun with the discovery of agriculture. The annual world population growth of 69 million in 1970 declined to 64 million last year. Early projections for 1976 indicate a continuation of this trend.

The apparent decline in the birthrate of China between 1970 and 1975, the most rapid of any country on record, may be family planning's greatest success story. China's achievement is a hopeful sign, not only because the birthrate dropped from an estimated 32 to 19 per thousand in a five-year period of concerted effort, but also because China represents one-fifth of humanity. It indicates what a government committed to reducing fertility can do if it provides easy access to family planning and if it structures laws to facilitate its practice.

A second sign of hope—the decline by one-third of the U.S. population growth rate between 1970 and 1975—was not widely anticipated. The upturn in birthrates expected during the 1970's, when the children of the postwar baby boom entered their prime reproductive years, has not materialized. New social trends, including an unanticipated drop in the marriage rate, steady growth in female employment, and a sharp upturn in female enrollment in graduate and professional schools, are undoubtedly contributing factors. Young women are now exploring alternatives to childbearing. They now comprise 42

per cent of the U.S. labor force and a fifth or more of the students in U.S. law and medical schools.

In Western Europe, where female participation in the labor force in some countries is even higher than in the United States, birthrates are falling in virtually every country. Four nations—West Germany, East Germany, Austria, and Luxembourg—now have stable or declining populations; others are fast approaching stability. If recent trends continue, nations representing one-eighth of the world's people could stabilize their populations by 1980. The few countries that have rising birthrates are concentrated in Eastern Europe, where the recent adoption of incentives to encourage births has reversed a long-standing fertility decline.

Tragically, the slowdown in population growth is not due entirely to falling birthrates. In some poor countries population growth is being periodically checked by hunger-induced rises in death rates. These recent upturns in national death rates represent a turn-around of postwar trends. It is a matter that political leaders in the countries affected are not eager to discuss.

Data gathered in parts of Bangladesh, by separate teams from the Ford Foundation and Johns Hopkins University, indicate death rates rose dramatically there in two of the last four years. If these figures are extrapolated to the entire country (not an unreasonable procedure given the representative nature of the areas studied) there is every indication that three-quarters of a million Bengalis died over the last five years due to the lack of food.

Figures recently made public by the Indian Government show that during 1972, when the world experienced severe crop failures and most American grain was bought up by the Russians, the shortfall in Indian food supplies probably cost close to a million lives.

Today's complex population/food relationship would perplex even Malthus, who postulated two centuries ago that population growth tends to outstrip the demand for food. In some situations population growth now acts as a double-edged sword, simultaneously contributing to growth in demand and to a reduction in food output. The two-way cut is most clearly seen and measured in oceanic fisheries, where the growing global demand for fish has led to overfishing and shrinking catches. It is also visible in land-based agriculture in densely populated, poor countries, where overgrazing, deforestation, and overplowing are leading to soil erosion, desert encroachment, and the abandonment of cropland.

Food consumption has moved ahead of production during the 1970's, leading to a depletion of world food stocks. Making it from one harvest to the next has become a major preoccupation for the entire world. More or less chronic food scarcity and unprecedented food price hikes have exacerbated nutritional stress in the world's poorest countries.

In a world without an adequate system of food reserves, rising world food prices translate into

rising death rates among the poorest of the poor. In such a world, crop failure in a rich country has an economic impact, but in a poor country it can have a measurable demographic impact as well.

Population trends of the last five years indicate population growth has peaked. The choice now facing governments is whether to allow sporadic rises in death rates to slow their growth or to develop effective family planning programs to reduce the pressure on food resources. The success in bringing down birthrates in China and the United States suggests there is a wide range of social and economic programs that can be effective in stabilizing population size.

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QUOTE/UNQUOTE

Where the Fleet Meet to Eat

In order to provide a place where interested persons might meet with delegates to the symposium a reception/supper will be held at the Church Center for the United Nations, 777 U.N. Plaza, on January 15, beginning at 7:00 and ending at 7:00....

—A recent invitation received by *Worldview*

Nader's Catered

...Among those who felt Mr. Carter had made a poor choice were a number of civil rights leaders who felt he had not done enough as a Federal judge to speed the pace of school desegregation; Ralph Nader, the consumed advocate....

—*New York Times*, December 23, 1976

Touching All Bases, So to Speak

Obviously, the biggest challenge was to come into the harbor safely. I think we've met that challenge. As I've said, I think we've turned the corner and seen the light at the end of the tunnel.

—New York City's Mayor Abe Beame

Personal Frailties

...any realistic assessment of his career would have to conclude that Stalin's societal accomplishments far outweigh his regrettable frailties.

Fascist dictators usually rise to power by military force financed by wealthy industrialists, and are noted, not for any exemplary qualities they may possess, but rather for their selfish ambitions, lack of ethics, and an utter disregard for human suffering. On the other hand we find that communist/socialist dictators have been motivated principally by the compelling need for social justice, and power came to them merely by winning the hearts and confidence of the people. Thus, they should be remembered, not for their personal frailties but rather for their faith and good works in a glorious cause—the liberation of mankind. In this same context it might be helpful to compare the driving motivations of such modern dictators as Augusto Pinochet of Chile with those of Josip Tito of Yugoslavia, and the same with Resa Shah Pahlevi of Iran and the late Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam. What contrast!

—Edward Drew Gourley in *U.S. Farm News*, December, 1976

Mao Answers Prayer

...many Christians, believing that God acts in human history to liberate mankind from the sins of oppression and greed and exploitation, have come to characterize Mao's revolution as this century's most significant answer to Christ's prayer: "Thy kingdom come!"

—*Target* (Nairobi), September 18, 1976

Self-Censorship

"In the academic world," [Professor Richard L. Park of the University of Michigan] contended, "I would say that more than 50 per cent would rather not rock the boat. As long as they can continue their work, they don't want to get blacklisted. That's a pretty nasty thing to say, but I'm afraid it's true."

Mr. Park and Mr. [Myron] Weiner of M.I.T. were among the few scholars who signed a private American appeal last March expressing distress at repression in India.

Professor Weiner said that he had attempted earlier to organize a similar petition of his own. "I circulated it to academics around the country," he said, "but only seven or eight people would sign. Many apologized but said that they had visa applications pending."

—Paul Grimes in the *New York Times* January 2

A Lesson in Tolerance

I do my thing and you do your thing. If we should ever meet again, it's beautiful.

—Christmas card from Morris Lynn Johnson, an escaped convict, to the FBI agent in charge of his case