

Dampening the aspirations to independent development

countries providing the raw materials is seen as a direct and intolerable threat. And, indeed, this challenge will continue to build as population growth and political pressures for internal development make it more imperative for Third World countries to control their own resources. Thus the strategy of certain industrialized countries displays an all-too-ready tendency to dampen this political aspiration toward autonomous and independent development (as opposed to dependent economic growth). Unfortunately, this strategy has a subtle effect on population trends. For, in fact, in the absence of an integral development program, the mass of the rural and urban poor and underprivileged are bounded by the limited horizons of a hand-to-mouth existence, whereas, in order to adopt more enlightened and less short-term procreation habits, they need to feel that there is hope of improving their lot. At the present time, it is psychologically and sociologically impossible for them to plan their future or, more specifically, to lengthen the intervals between childbirths.

Thus we are caught in a vicious circle: the maintenance of privileged access to the world's resources presupposes a more or less conscious strategy of maintaining the world-wide status quo, coupled with the use of tactics to stifle consistently demands for a new world economic order. In this context, development aid policies are basically ineffective. Consequently, not only are the conditions lacking for a spontaneous change in population patterns but the governments of under-developed countries often resist policies designed to reduce population growth. Bucharest all too clearly brought this reaction to light. As a result, population growth in the Third World will probably slow down only slightly during the coming decades.

This unchanging pattern of population growth is disturbing in the extreme to planners in the dominant countries, who see it as inevitably leading to upheaval on a world-wide scale in the next half century. Population pressures, accentuated by insufficient economic development, must necessarily result in a situation in which the extreme of poverty becomes explosive and breaks through all the bulwarks erected by conservative or insufficiently progressive governments with the support of "development aid" (aid for "communications" systems, for example) or military aid.

Third World governments ambivalent
It is at this point that the ambivalent position of the Third World governments comes into focus. In terms of international

relations, they are resolutely progressive, stressing the priority of development, demanding an end to neo-colonialist meddling and similar kinds of interference and calling for the establishment of a new international economic order. And yet, on the domestic level, development requires profound structural reforms that these same governments have almost always passed over in silence. For example, at Bucharest they had the second part of Paragraph 29 of the draft of the World Plan deleted; the omitted passage was the following: "Countries that wish to affect fertility levels may do so by means of measures that affect the socio-economic determinants of desired family size. This may imply major social, institutional and structural reforms that can affect the entire society." The setting of the passage makes it clear that it refers to national situations, but the same governments that are calling for a new international economic order do not wish to hear any mention of a new internal economic and social order.

This refusal was clearly in evidence at the preparatory conference in San José, Costa Rica where the Economic Commission for Latin America had submitted for discussion by the various governments a very-well-constructed working paper that, among other things, pointed out that "the close inverse relationship between the levels of socio-economic stratification, on the one hand, and the fertility rates and average family size, on the other, poses the problem of social classes as a central issue of a population strategy", claiming that "the way income is distributed, the groups among which it is distributed, the economic and social functions of those groups and the amount of power they possess to accumulate and retain income are all factors which help to define the nature of the prevailing social order". The only delegation that ventured to allude to this remarkable document during a full week of deliberations was no other than the one from Canada. In refusing to promote strenuously the domestic reforms necessary to improve the future prospects of the masses living in poverty, the governments of many under-developed countries are more or less unconsciously condemning themselves to succumb sooner or later to the effects of the irresistible population pressures mentioned above; in the meantime, a number of these governments will continue to underestimate the pressing reality of their population problem, the future dimensions of which may very well appear to them only when it is too late.

While many Third World governments bear their own — all too often misunder-

Resistance to policies of population reduction