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From Bucharest to Cairo

-20 Years of United Nations Population Conferences-

Dr. Toshio Kuroda



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Born: 1909

Present posts

- Director Emeritus, Nihon University Population Research Institute (NUPRI)
- Member of the board of directors,
Asian Population and Development Association (APDA)
- Chairman, Foundation- Institute for Research of Population Problem-

Academic career

- Graduated from the College of Economics, Nihon University
- Completed graduate course, Tokyo University of Commerce
- Studied at the Office of Population Research, Princeton University
- Studied at the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED),
Ministry of Public Health, Paris, France
- Professor Emeritus, Jilin University, China
- Doctor Emeritus of Economics, Dong-a University, Korea

Previous positions

- Director, Institute of Population Problems, Ministry of Health and Welfare
- Director, Nihon University Population Research Institute
- Chairman, Population Association of Japan

Major publications

- Introduction to Population Problems, (collaboration) Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc.
- Longevity of the Japanese, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc.
- Living in an Aging Society, Toyo Keizai Inc.
- Transitional Structure of the Japanese Population, Kokon Shoin

Prologue: Background to the World Population Plan of Action

In 1974, the United Nations invited governmental representatives of its member countries to the Romanian capital of Bucharest for the World Population Conference, the world's first discussion of population problems. This conference was followed 10 years later by the International Conference on Population in Mexico City, Mexico. A further decade later, Egypt hosted the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.

The names of these three conferences differ somewhat. First, the 1974 gathering was called a "world" conference, while those held in 1984 and 1994 were termed "international". Second, while the Bucharest and Mexico City gatherings were convened to discuss "population", the Cairo meeting focused on "population and development." In other words, the most recent conference probed various population problems in the wider context of development. Third, the World Population Plan of Action (WPPA), which was adopted in Bucharest and refined in Mexico City, was replaced at the Cairo conference by the "Programme of Action," a more detailed set of action programs.

In retrospect, it is worth noting that a set of programs incorporating policy concepts as progressive as that of the World Population Plan of Action was successfully adopted as early as 1974, albeit only after an unusually spirited exchange of opinions. At that time, some countries with socialist policies rejected the concept of overpopulation and favored increasing their populations. Among this group were China and the then-Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, including Romania, the host of the conference. Moreover, the Catholic countries of Latin America, where family planning was denied for religious reasons, constituted another group opposed to population policies.

It was indeed epochal that such a diverse group could discuss and eventually agree on the World Population Plan of Action, which had implications far beyond the policy level. Several factors led to the eventual adoption of the action plan, despite strong opposition.

The first factor was that, prior to the Bucharest conference, the rapid increase in the world's population had been taken up at previous international meetings, in particular two meetings held in 1972: the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, and the Second Asian Population Conference in Tokyo, Japan. The Stockholm conference witnessed sharp differences in opinion on the relationship between population

growth and environmental deterioration. The Tokyo conference was a follow-up meeting to the first conference held in New Delhi, India, in 1963, where the need for population control had been stressed in light of the negative impact of population growth on economic development. The New Delhi meeting should be remembered as the first United Nations gathering in which family planning and population policies were taken up.⁽¹⁾ The expansion of family planning services was incorporated in recommendations and resolutions adopted at that conference. The Tokyo gathering in 1972 did not see arguments opposed to population policies or family planning. The opinions expressed there sought further strengthening of these measures combined with greater controls on population growth in the region.⁽²⁾ For the representatives of Asian countries who shared this consensus, the Bucharest conference was something abnormal, something they could never accept. Even China, whose representative delivered a speech in Bucharest based on Marxist thinking, seems to have been heading in a new direction. Mr. Yu Wang, director of State Family Planning Commission of China, who was a member of the same working committee at the Bucharest conference to which this writer belonged, one day sought a meeting with me. I willingly accepted his offer, and had several opportunities to exchange opinions with him. On these occasions he mentioned that, as China lagged Japan in the study of population problems and in gathering information on the state of the Asian population, his country needed advice and guidance from Japan, a country with much richer knowledge and experience in these fields. Our meetings may have been the first-ever contact on population between our two countries. Our exchanges with the State Commission on Family Planning of China continued to deepen thereafter, aided by the normalization of diplomatic relations following Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's visit to China two years earlier.

Another point to note was the strong international impact exerted by *The Limits to Growth*, a report published by the Club of Rome in 1972.⁽³⁾ Making the argument that civilization would collapse within a century, were the world's population growth and industrialization to continue unabated, the report sent shock waves around the world.

Earlier, in 1968, U.S. biologist Paul Ehrlich had dwelled on the possible crisis of exploding

Note 1: Tachi Minoru, "Introduction to Population Problems," the Nikkei Library, Nihon Keizai Shimbun Incorporated, 1969, pp. 79-81

Note 2: Kuroda Toshio, "An Overview of the Second Asian Population Conference," Issue No. 125 of Studies of Population Problems, 1973, pp. 60-70

Note 3: Meadows, Donella et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report on the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, Potomac Associate Book, 1972

population growth in his book, *The Population Bomb*.⁽⁴⁾

The warnings contained in these publications played an undeniable role in awakening people worldwide to the serious repercussions of a rapid increase in the human population. Clearly, academia's acknowledgment of the rapid, unprecedented growth in the human population led to the international publicizing of this issue and to the increasing interest of the mass media. Consequently, it may be necessary to refer to the basis of current population problems; specifically, the abnormally rapid increase in world population that is without parallel in human history.⁽⁵⁾

The global population increased at an average annual rate of 0.5 percent in the 19th century, accelerated to 0.8 percent in the first half of the 20th century, and gained further momentum following World War II: during the first decade of the second half of this century, the average annual growth rate soared to 1.8 percent, rising to 2.06 percent in the second half of the 1960s - four times the average of the 19th century and 2.5 times the rate of the first half of the 20th century. This rapid increase in the human population occurred chiefly in countries that had acquired independence in the postwar period. When global population growth first exceeded 2 percent a year in the 1960-65 period, the population in developing nations alone was increasing at a rate of 2.54 percent, while that of developed countries grew at a rate of 0.90 percent.

It was around 1800 that the population of the human race first reached the 1 billion level; by 1930, it had doubled to 2 billion. While hundreds of thousands of years were needed to reach the 1 billion mark, the 2 billion mark required only another 130 years. Yet by 1960, or only 30 years later, the global population increased to 3 billion. The fourth billion was added in a mere 15 years, and the fifth billion only 12 years later. As the human population is estimated to reach 6 billion by 1998, the latest billion will have been added in only 11 years.⁽⁶⁾ These figures eloquently demonstrate how rapidly the human population has been increasing in the second half of this century.

The rate of growth, however, has already crested. The peak of 2.06 percent was reached in

Note 4: Ehrlich Paul, *The Population Bomb*, Ballantine, New York, 1968. In 1990 Ehrlich published *The Population Explosion*, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Note 5: The United Nations, *The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends, Vol. 1*, 1973, p. 10; also the United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 1992 Revision*, New York, 1993

Note 6: World population in 1980 is the average of the low and high estimates for that year listed in *The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends, Vol. 1*, 1973, p. 10; figures for 1930 are based on *The World Population Yearbook, 1967 Edition*, and those for 1960, 1975, 1987 and 1998 are from *World Population Prospects: The 1992 Revision*.

the latter half of the 1960s, and is estimated to have dropped to 1.68 percent for the 1990-95 period. Notably, however, the absolute annual increases remain greater than before, despite the slowdown in the growth rate. During the current decade, the last of the 20th century, the average annual increase will top 90 million. In each of 1996 and 1997 in particular, the human population is expected to increase by more than 94 million people. With annual increases of at least 90 million expected until roughly the year 2025, the next 30 years will require very careful monitoring.⁽⁷⁾

It also should be noted that the remaining three years of this century will be a short yet strategically significant period for our future. Whether humanity takes action during this brief period will have a vital impact on our collective destiny.

The population projections by the United Nations, revised in 1992, suggest three possibilities: high, medium and low estimates. The world population in 2015 will be 7.27 billion, if the low estimate proves accurate, but will reach 7.93 billion if the high estimate is correct. Whether the difference between the two projections - 660 million people- exist only 20 years from now depends on us. To put this figure in perspective, it is 150 million greater than the current population of Europe.

The difference between the high and low estimates is even greater for the year 2050. The high and low projections for the mid-21st century are 12.5 billion and 7.8 billion.⁽⁸⁾ The difference between the two - 4.7 billion - is roughly equal to the world population of 1985, 4.85 billion.

Although the annual growth rate of the global population has slowed from 2.06 percent in the period 1960-65 to 1.74 percent in the period 1985-90, the decline during this quarter century was a mere 0.32 percentage points. The huge numbers being added to the world population

Note 7: The revisions of world population projections made by the United Nations in 1994 reveal remarkable changes. Downward revisions have been made not only in estimates of past population statistics, but also in likely increases for the future. Some of the foremost examples are shown below.

According to the previous projections of 1992, world population was expected to increase by more than 90 million a year in the 1990s. The new projections call for an increase of slightly more than 86 million. The probable population in the year 2015 is as shown in

Population Projections for 2015	(unit:millions)				Population projections for 2050	(unit:millions)			
	Low	Medium	High	High/Low differential		Low	Medium	High	High/Low differential
1994 projections	7104	7469	7826	722	1994 projections	7918	9833	11912	3994
1992 projections	7271	7609	7928	657	1992 projections	7813	10019	12506	4693
Balance	Δ167	Δ140	Δ102	—	Balance	105	Δ186	Δ594	—

Note 8: Figures for 2050 are based on the United Nations "Long-Range World Population Projections: Two Centuries of Population Growth 1950-2150," New York, 1992.

each year clearly indicate that the planet's capacity for sustaining such numbers is nearing its limits.

This population growth affects the future of Spaceship Earth and all human beings, regardless of race, religion or stage of development. The Asian Population Conference and the international gatherings in Bucharest, Mexico City and Cairo resulted from the recognition that this issue requires a global-scale solution.

The World Population Plan of Action and the Bucharest Conference

The United Nations World Population Conference was held in Bucharest from August 19 to 30, 1974. It was the first international population conference in which governmental representatives participated. The serious clash of opinion that took place at this conference eventually resulted in the World Population Plan of Action. Considering that, at that time, population policies were deemed mere government policies and were viewed, even by demographers, as unworthy of serious academic scrutiny, the adoption of an action plan with such great policy significance was truly revolutionary. Since this action plan remained the basic guideline for population policy during the following two decades, its very beginnings are worthy of scrutiny.

First, it should be noted that the original plan tabled before the Bucharest conference underwent numerous revisions as a result of in-depth discussions. The basic philosophy behind these revisions was the need to integrate population issues with development. This consideration is often repeated in the text of the action plan.

The second paragraph of the plan, for instance, reads:

Policies whose aims is to affect population trends must not be considered substitute for socio-economic development policies but as being integrated with those polices in order to facilitate the solution of certain problems facing both developing and Developed countries and to promote a more balanced and rational development.⁽⁹⁾

For the Bucharest meeting to present such a balanced and rational prescription for development was laudable, but doing so was beyond the purview of the conference, as the

Note 9: World Population Plan of Action, paragraph 14(a)

majority of the government representatives assembled there were either diplomats or welfare officials.

In Bucharest and Mexico City, policy discussions evolved around both population and development, but the two conferences were still called “population” meetings. In contrast, the meeting in Cairo in 1994 was called a conference on “population and development”.

One notable feature of the 1974 World Population Plan of Action was its optimistic view of the future of humankind, with its emphasis on the importance of human beings as a resource and its prediction that we would be able to ensure a bright future for ourselves through our own self-control and environmental preservation efforts. This line of thinking reflected the views espoused by the socialist countries of the time.

Repeating a focus of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment at Stockholm, the great discrepancies in wealth between the North and South and the massive consumption of natural resources in developed countries were the subjects of heated discussions, with developing countries casting harsh criticisms on richer countries in Bucharest. As a result, it was decided that developed countries adopt appropriate policies to regulate their high consumption levels in order to narrow the difference in standard of living ascribed to unjust international economic relations, particularly by promoting better utilization of global resources and improving international justice.

The conference also adopted many social and economic policies founded on human rights, rather than on population policies. Special emphasis was placed on the need to improve the social status of women, particularly on the right of women to participate fully in decision-making and implementation of social and economic policies and on the importance of equal participation by men and women in education and in social, economic, cultural and political activities. In every paragraph, the action plan demanded that governments abolish existing discriminations against women and invest more in educational and health strategies. Although human rights considerations were behind some of these recommendations, they were clearly important in themselves. It was the Cairo conference in 1994 that defined a strengthened position and role for women as a basic strategy for solving population problems while presenting the concept of “the empowerment of women” as an integrated framework. Although women’s rights in specific fields were discussed at length in Bucharest, the discussions remained rather general in nature.

A great failure of the Bucharest conference was its discussion of the theme of integration of population issues and development in the context of development policies largely unrelated

to population policies; consequently, little or no time was available for concrete discussion of population policies. The conference should have discussed specifically how to arrest population growth, the root cause of weak or stagnant economic growth. It should have devoted more discussion to methods of distributing information on family planning as a means of preventing unplanned births.

During the first two-thirds of the Bucharest meeting, not a single problem related to family planning was taken up. The representatives of developing countries either ignored family planning completely or branded it as unrelated to development. Their discussions centered on development policies envisaged in the concept of a New International Economic Order. These were empty discussions totally unrelated to population issues. An unusual change, however, occurred during the last days of the conference. As the working committee continued its daily paragraph-by-paragraph examination of the draft action plan until late into the night, the topic of family planning was suddenly suggested and approved. The family planning programs recommended in the draft were authorized and added to the final action plan with only a few revisions.

Although one expert termed this last-minute change a “miracle,” it was actually the result of behind-the-scenes negotiations witnessed by this writer, who was a member of the working committee.⁽¹⁰⁾ Confronted by fierce opposition to the concept of population policies, especially family planning, during the first week of the conference, the shocked representatives of Asian countries held their own daily meetings to discuss a countermeasure. The First Asian Population Conference in 1963 and the Second Conference in 1972 had established a consensus among Asian countries on the need to stem population growth and promote family planning services. Building on this foundation, the Asian representatives resorted to an all-out effort to persuade opposition groups to change their minds. It was through such efforts that the conference managed to keep alive the spirit of the draft action plan on family planning. Thus, what appeared to be a miracle to outsiders had a much different appearance to insiders. Interestingly, a similar occurrence transpired in Cairo, as well, and will be presented later in this report.

One of the major revisions was the scrapping of population growth targets as inappropriate. Where family planning was offered in a limited number of developing countries and was

Note 10: Demeny Paul, “*IUSSP Population and Development: International Conference on Population and Development*,” Cairo, 1994, IUSSP Distinguished Lecture Series, p. 7

completely voluntary, establishment of specific target population growth rates was meaningless. Even in Cairo 20 years later, no targets were agreed on for population growth rates or birthrates, although improvement targets were adopted for death rates.

The population projections by the United Nations, revised in 1994, represent downward revisions from those prepared two years earlier. The world population projected for the year 2000 will be 6.158 billion, or 70 million fewer than the projection made in 1992, while the new projection for the global population in 2025 points to a level of 8.294 billion, or a reduction of 178 million from the projection made in 1992. These downward revisions were based chiefly on predictions of slower growth for developed countries. The 1994 projection for developed countries in 2025 is 165 million fewer than the 1992 projection, accounting for as much as 93 percent of the projected decline in global population.

This, however, does not represent a decline in the relative importance of the populations of developing countries in the global population picture. Developing countries have long accounted for an overwhelming share of the increase in the global population and will continue to do so in the future.

Certainly, the additions to the population that are taking place in the 1990s are the largest on record and the projected world population for the middle of the next century will range from 9.833 billion (medium estimate) to 11.912 billion (high estimate). No matter which estimate proves the more accurate, a population of 10 billion would make it very difficult for humanity to maintain even a minimal standard of living.

Against this background, a population of 8 billion - close to the low projection of 7.9175 billion for 2050 - should be accepted as the maximum human population, not only for the sake of the peaceful coexistence of all, but also to ensure sustainable development and environmental conservation. It is ardently hoped that international population conferences cease to be venues for "nonsense ostensibly grounded in religion" and instead become opportunities for the discussion of conditions and policies to ensure the survival of humankind.

Ten Years Later

Although the Bucharest conference ended with unexpectedly strong confrontations, the next conference in Mexico City ended with a flurry of amicable agreements forged in an unexpectedly calm atmosphere. The achievements of these two meetings were both difficult

to predict and totally different in content.

Something had happened during the 10 years between 1974 and 1984; we should consider what made the Mexico City conference a quiet gathering that differed so much from the meeting in Bucharest. A change, international in scope, had occurred during the preceding 10-year period, and largely in the 1970s.

The greatest change of all was the global recession of the 1970s, which followed the postwar reconstruction and prosperity that shaped the world economy of the 1960s. The first and second oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 plunged the international economic markets into considerable chaos. The world economy, which had grown at an average annual rate of 4.9 percent in the 1950s and 5.2 percent in the 1960s, began to lose momentum and managed a growth rate of only 3.4 percent. In per capita terms, the growth rate during the 1970s averaged a mere 1.6 percent.⁽¹¹⁾

The 10 years preceding the Mexico City conference were thus marked by a global economic stagnation under which developed countries, with their weakened economies, became reluctant to offer a helping hand to developing countries.

Some developing countries, however, in East and Southeast Asia, were overcoming the international recession and attaining economic growth far higher than that of developed

Table 1. Population Growth Rates in Some Asian Countries (%)

Country	1965-70 (A)	1970-75	1975-80 (B)	Rate of decline (A)-(B)/(A)
China	2.61	2.21	1.48	43.3
Korea	2.25	2.00	1.55	31.1
Singapore	1.97	1.73	1.30	34.0
Thailand	3.08	2.92	2.44	20.8
Japan	1.08	1.53	0.89	17.6

Source: United Nations: World Population Prospects; The 1994 Revision, Institute for Population Problems, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Japan

Note 11: Worldwatch Institute, "State of the World 1995," W.W. Norton & Company, New York, p. 13; Table 1-2.

World economic growth by decade, total and per person		
Decade	Annual Growth (%)	Annual Growth per person (%)
1950-60	4.9	3.1
1960-70	5.2	3.2
1970-80	3.4	1.6
1980-90	2.9	1.1
1990-94 (prel.)	1.4	-0.3

countries, thanks in part to their population control efforts. Table 1 shows changes in the population growth rates in some of these countries in three five-year periods beginning in the mid-1960s.

This table clearly shows that the rapid population growth in these countries in the 1965-70 period declined sharply in the 1970s, especially during the second half. In Thailand, for example, the economic growth rate already averaged 8.1 percent in 1961-66, when the population was growing at an annual rate of more than 3 percent. The country continued to enjoy high growth: 7.8 percent in 1967-71, and 7.1 percent in both 1972-76 and 1977-81.⁽¹²⁾ Japan controlled its population growth much earlier than its Asian neighbors, achieving a growth rate of less than 1 percent as early as the second half of the 1950s. Evidently, Japan's economy grew quickly in parallel with its success in population control.⁽¹³⁾

The second major change during the 10 years between Bucharest and Mexico City was seen in the behaviors of some of the largest developing countries, China in particular. In Bucharest in 1974, China's representative delivered a speech marked with typical socialist ideology. According to the representative, no population problem existed under socialism and, should any arise, its solution would lie in fighting the imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, aggression and usurpation of the superpowers. The representative added that a population could never be too large because all people were a precious resource. Only five years after Bucharest, however, China embarked on a policy without historical precedent: it replaced its two-child policy with a one-child policy. Few people in developed countries and in the United Nations believed that such a drastic birth-regulating policy would be successful. Most other developing countries were also skeptical about the Chinese policy.

Note 12: Asian Population and Development Association, *Reports on Urbanization and Development in Asian Countries-Thailand*, 1995, p. 31, Table 2 "Targets and Achievements of Economic Development Plans"

Note 13: Minami, Ryoshin, *The Economic Development of Japan, a Quantitative Study*, Second edition, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994, p. 40, Table 3.2 Economic growth rate G (Y), population growth G (N) and growth of per-capita GNP G (Y/N) in Japan 1876-1988 (%)

Lists only postwar figures from this table

Period	G (Y)	G (N)	G (Y/N)
1956-60	8.35	1.01	7.34
1961-65	9.98	0.99	8.99
1966-70	9.67	1.25	8.42
1971-75	5.30	1.33	3.97
1976-80	4.06	0.92	3.14
1981-85	3.90	0.67	3.23
1986-88	4.45	0.50	3.95
(1995-88)	6.71	0.98	5.73

Note: Growth rates are simple averages of annual growth rates.

China's birthrate, however, dropped to 24.8 per 1,000 people in 1974, the year of the Bucharest conference. This was a sharp drop from the birthrate of 33.3 recorded only four years earlier; moreover, by 1979 - the year the one-child policy was launched - the birth rate had decreased to 17.8, a level usually seen in developed countries. The decline in China's birthrate was much faster than that experienced in the developed countries of the West in their so-called demographic transition from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates. Moreover, China's one-child policy, widely regarded as unrealistic, achieved success only five years after the Bucharest meeting. Evidently, although China had rejected the idea of population policy in its official speech at the Bucharest conference, it had, in effect, begun promoting family planning before that conference.

Understandably, China, with a population of 900 million at that time, may have resorted to population control in order to ensure adequate food supplies, but doubts remain about what prompted Chinese leaders to impose a one-child policy that might have sparked domestic social and political unrest. Most likely, Chinese leaders were well aware of the severity of the food problems that would surely arise should its population continue to increase unabated. It is also likely that the international consensus on population control, in the form of the World Population Plan of Action just attained at the Bucharest conference, influenced the Chinese leaders' decision to implement the one-child policy. Ironically, the action plan incorporates China's official Marxist insistence in Bucharest, yet it remains significant that the country adopted major changes to its population policy only five years after the international conference.

Remarkable changes also appeared in India, the world's second most populous country, after China. India was the first developing country in Asia to adopt a government-sponsored family planning program. The Indian government, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, energetically assisted the family planning movement, but in Bucharest, the country attracted attention from many developing countries suffering from rapid population growth and slow economic progress with its insistence that *"development is the best contraceptive measure."* In April 1976, or less than two years after the conference, India announced a new population policy. Part of this new policy, with great implications, read as follows:

"If the future of the nation is to be secured... the population problem will have to be treated as a top national priority and commitment....it is clear that simply to wait for education and economic development to bring about a drop in fertility is not a practical solution. The very increase in population makes economic development slow and more difficult of achievement. The time factor

is pressing, and the population growth so formidable, that we have to get out of the vicious circle through a direct assault upon this problem as a national commitment....We are of the view that a state legislature, in the exercise of its own powers, decides that the time is ripe and it is necessary to pass legislation for compulsory sterilization, it may do so.”⁽¹⁴⁾

This statement reveals that, shortly after the conference, the Indian government completely rescinded its official position in Bucharest. Its recommendation that state governments be allowed to undertake forcible contraception can be considered no less significant than the one-child policy disclosed by China three years later. Some estimates claim that this new policy resulted in more than six million sterilizations throughout India during the second half of 1976 alone.⁽¹⁵⁾ We must remember that the adoption of the World Population Plan of Action played a role in India’s dramatic turnabout from an emphasis on family planning and “development as the best contraceptive” to a belief in direct population control.

The combined populations of China and India total two billion. It is worth noting that, shortly after the Bucharest conference, both these giants resorted to policies quite different from the ideas they had espoused prior to and during the conference. Their actions also directed the attention of many other developing countries to their population problems. Quite possibly, their bold policies encouraged countries with existing population control policies to be more active in their implementation, and inspired countries on the verge of implementing population policies to make firm decisions. These two population giants’ lack of enthusiasm for the plan of action, despite their experiences in family planning, can be ascribed to their governments’ tendency to support the contentions of the South.

The thoroughgoing population control measures adopted after the Bucharest conference seem to have become the very foundation of the broad consensus reached at the Mexico City conference.

Another basis for the agreement in Mexico City was the interest shown by Latin American countries - who had been strongly opposed to previous population policies - in obtaining United Nations assistance for their family planning programs soon after the Bucharest conference. The public endorsement of family planning programs by such Latin American powers as Brazil and Mexico, following their strongly voiced opposition to the concept of family planning in

Note 14: Government of India, “National Population Policy,” 16 April 1976 (Paul Demeny: “Bucharest, Mexico City, and Beyond,” *Population and Development Review*, 11, No. 1, March 1985, p. 100)

Note 15: Demeny Paul, “Bucharest, Mexico City, and Beyond,” *Population and Development Review*, 11, No. 1, March 1985, p. 100

Bucharest, indicated their recognition of the negative impact of population growth on their modernization efforts. Despite the tremendous confusion that prevailed in the conference rooms in Bucharest, the adoption of the World Population Plan of Action can be understood to have had an extremely strong influence worldwide. The adoption of drastic population policies by China and India and the increased understanding and promotion of family planning programs in many other developing countries can be viewed as the greatest achievements of the Bucharest conference.

In considering the “Bucharest effect,” we should not forget that the member countries of the then Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (CAFE) - the predecessor of today’s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) - were firmly united in advocating the need for a plan of action and in defusing opposition opinions. These countries included the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Australia and other Asian countries, with the exceptions of China and India. In their part of the world, the promotion of population control and family planning already had been established as indisputable modernization strategies following the two Asian Population Conferences in 1963 and 1974. As a pioneer in the field of population control, Asia had already established a policy line that was implemented in other regions through the Bucharest conference. Asia had already implemented the basic ideas of the Bucharest plan of action and had established the foundation for a global consensus.

A Ripple on the Surface - The Backward Step of the U.S.

In April 1984, exactly 10 years after the Bucharest conference, representatives of more than 150 countries gathered in Mexico City for the renamed International Conference on Population. The purpose of the gathering was to examine the reports of participating countries on their implementation of the World Population Plan of Action adopted in Bucharest. Not a few developing countries reported on policies that differed greatly from what they had promised in Bucharest. Nonetheless, these and other governmental reports were surprisingly consistent in their widespread recognition of the negative influence of population growth on development and of the high priorities given to their policies for easing population pressures. It seemed that the countries of the world joined in a chorus of praise for the World Population Plan of Action. Also remarkable were the changes seen in the attitude toward family planning,

which far exceeded the expectations of participants. Almost every country proudly reported on the achievements made during the preceding 10 years. Missing were arguments based on ideologies and political systems. The countries were reminiscent of students reporting on the homework they had completed during their summer vacations.

This emphasized and validated the principles and purposes of the Bucharest plan of action. The only major achievement of the Mexico City conference was the adoption of a set of recommendations for further implementing the plan of action that, in effect, created a “refined” version of the Bucharest document.

The Mexico City conference was not completely smooth, however. A ripple appeared that, although not big enough to disrupt the conference, was still interesting enough to provide a topic for lively discussion. Unexpectedly, the disturbance came from the United States. In its report, the U.S. representative denied the priority accorded in Bucharest to population policies and instead preached the classical Western theory on demographic transition that population control was impossible without economic development. This opinion repeated India’s textbook-like insistence of 10 years earlier, which could spark socialist thinking on population. The activities of the U.S. delegation, headed by William H. Draper, Jr., drew great attention, although they represented a great regression and the intellectual degeneration of the American delegation, which had devoted much of its energy to the adoption of the plan of action in Bucharest. Once a foremost advocate of family planning programs as a countermeasure to rapid population growth, the United States entered Mexico City as a would-be champion of a worn-out population theory. Branding the emphasis on population policies a “demographic overreaction,” the U.S. delegation made the following statement:

“too many governments pursued population control measures without sound economic policies that create the rise in living standards historically associated with the decline in fertility rates. This approach has not worked, primarily because it has focused on a symptom and neglected the underlying ailments.....Population control programs alone cannot substitute for the economic reforms that put a society on the road toward growth and, as an aftereffect, toward slower population increase as well.”⁽¹⁶⁾

It is no wonder that learned people assembled in Mexico City were surprised at the U.S. delegation’s intention to become a champion of a new population policy in Mexico City. This writer sounded out many experts from the United States, but they, too, were stunned by the

Note 16: Demeny Paul, *ibid.*, p. 101

comments of the delegation sent by the White House.

The U.S. mistake began when the members of the delegation were chosen. Experts affiliated with the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), which had devoted vast resources and many personnel searching for solutions to the world's population problems in the 1960s and 1970s, were excluded from the delegation at the very start of the selection process. Chosen instead were people recommended by pro-life organizations opposed to abortion and with optimistic views of the global population situation. Their ideas were similar to those of Catholics, and the Mexico City conference was chosen as an ideal venue for them to express their views. Such views would never be accepted by the Western world in general. Ignored and cold-shouldered by others, the U.S. delegation was isolated in Mexico City.⁽¹⁷⁾

One could dismiss the issues surrounding the U.S. delegation as a domestic problem for the United States, but the opinions it expressed in Mexico City ran counter to the international agreement already reached. In the end, it was but a small voice in a loud international chorus.

Three Global Upheavals

The Second World War is regarded as a watershed that changed human history. According to Lattimore (1947)⁽¹⁸⁾, this historical change was characterized by the debut of Asia, and especially China, onto the world stage. In the long view of human history, the "pre-civilization" phase eventually gave way to the "civilization" phase. Now, the world is changing again, entering the next stage of "post-civilization." The 20th century will therefore be called the period of the third Great Transition (Boulding, 1964)⁽¹⁹⁾.

It is generally acknowledged that the 20th century, especially the latter half following World War II, has had peculiar characteristics.

This essay aims to define the features of this century by focusing on the two decades between 1974, when the first World Population Conference was held, and 1994, the year Egypt hosted the third such conference in Cairo. In other words, it is an overview of this century in light of the globalization of several phenomena. Here, globalized phenomena means incidents

Note 17: As to the U.S. situation at that time, see Finkle Jason L. and Crane Barbara B., "*Ideology and Politics in Mexico City: The United States at the 1984 International Conference on Population*," *Population and Development Review*, 11, No. 1, March 1985, pp. 1-28.

Note 18: Lattimore, Owen and Eleanor, 1947. "*China, A Short History*", W. W. Norton & Company, New York.

Note 19: Boulding, Kenneth, E., 1994, *The Meaning of the Twentieth Century*, Harper & Row Publishers., Inc., New York.

that are found not in a limited area such as a region or a nation, but those that, it is generally recognized, are spreading worldwide. Proper measures must be taken internationally, on a global scale, in response to such developments. No such phenomena had occurred in human history before World War II.

The first globalized phenomenon is the world population explosion. The rationale behind the first World Population Conference was the 2 percent annual rate of population increase in the 1960s, an extraordinary figure unprecedented in human history. At that time, the world was horrified at the prospect that the world's population might exceed its food supply. The World Population Conference was held in Bucharest in 1974 as a result of this development and several conferences and reports, including the First Asian Population Conference in 1963, *The Population Bomb*⁽²⁰⁾ by P. Ehrlich in 1968, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, and the world-shaking report, *The Limits to Growth*,⁽²¹⁾ published by the Club of Rome the same year. Before the Bucharest gathering was called, the fuse had burned and the population bomb exploded, as Ehrlich stated in his 1990 follow-up work, *The Population Explosion*.⁽²²⁾

The population explosion, the first of the global phenomena, started in this century and will continue to threaten human existence at least until the middle of the next century.

The second global phenomenon is the destruction of the global environment, which arose in limited areas or nations as pollution problems, generally confined to developed countries in the 1970s, when the world economy was growing. In the 1980s, the destruction developed into a global phenomenon involving developing regions. The environmental destruction took the shape of global warming, water shortages, acid rain, desertification and air pollution, none of which is confined to a particular nation or region; on the contrary, all these threats are crucial to the human race. The Second International Population Conference was held in 1984, while these environmental problems were spreading globally. (The name of the conference had been changed from "The World Population Conference.")

The third globalized phenomenon was the confusion in world politics that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The resulting independence and liberation of racial and religious tensions resulted in acute conflicts spreading everywhere on the globe like wildfire. Tens of

Note 20: Ehrlich, P., 1968. *The Population Bomb*, Ballantine, New York.

Note 21: Meadows, D. H., and others, 1972. *The Limits to Growth*, a Report by the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind, A Potomac Associates Book, Universe Book, New York.

Note 22: Ehrlich, Paul R. and Anne H. 1990. *The Population Explosion*, Simon and Schuster, New York.

millions of refugees have now left their homes in search of safety.

During this globalization of social disorder, the Third International Population and Development Conference was called. (The name of the conference had again been changed from "The International Population Conference" to "The International Conference on Population and Development.")

Three Aspects of the Population Crisis

There are three important aspects to the world population crisis that confronts the human race, and these aspects should not be confused.

The first aspect is the population growth rate; the second is the size of the annual addition to the world population; and the third is the total global population. These three aspects result from a momentum that is peculiar to population phenomena. (The physics term inertia is used metaphorically.) However, when the principal factors of population change - such as births, deaths and migration - are stable and changes progress slowly, the momentum is so small that we can ignore its socioeconomic effects.

First, let's examine the growth rate of the global population. The growth ratio of the world population reached 0.4 percent only after the Industrial Revolution, which started in the mid-18th century. In the long history before that time, the rate was a remarkably low 0.1 percent or less. The population alternatively increased and decreased through sudden increases in the death rate due to war, famine or disease. The growth rate finally achieved a stable increase after the Industrial Revolution. The annual rate was 0.4 percent during the revolution, but grew to 0.5 percent in the first half of the 19th century. In the first half of the 20th century, however, it marked a huge increase to 0.8 percent.

The Second World War marked a significant halfway point as well as a new point of departure for the 20th century. During its latter half, the growth rate of the world population rose to an incredibly high level. In the first half of the 1960s, the annual rate rose as high as 1.99 percent, and in the latter half reached the unprecedented peak rate of 2.04 percent. This figure finally drew the attention of scholars and other learned people, as well as UN institutes and other international organizations. From a global standpoint, they became interested in the uncommon speed of the population increase. Should the annual growth rate remain at 2 percent, the population will double within 35 years. In our estimation, the world population

reached 5 billion around 1987; thus, if the population grows by 2 percent a year, it will reach 10 billion in 2020 and 20 billion in 2057.

It is now estimated that the annual growth rate of the global population has fallen to around 1.6 percent. Considering the level of our current behavior, systems, technologies and welfare, however, this rate is still too high to endure for long. Some believe this rate will likely change within a century (Cohen, 1995).⁽²³⁾

In some isolated societies or regions, it has not been, and indeed is not, rare for the annual growth rate to temporarily exceed 2 percent. For example, following the Second World War, the population sometimes grew at an even higher rate in the following Asian countries: North Korea (3.47%, 1955-1960), South Korea (3.09%, 1955-1960), and Thailand (3.08%, 1965-1970). Similar examples can be found in Latin American countries, particularly Mexico (3.14%, 1965-1970) and Brazil (3.15%, 1950-1955). In Africa even today, several countries maintain annual growth rates of over 3 percent (United Nations, 1995).⁽²⁴⁾ No matter how hard it may appear, solutions to problems of increasing population in limited areas, either in the above countries or in other domestic regions, are expected through the efforts of their residents and international cooperation. Nevertheless, devising effective countermeasures against sudden population increases on a global basis is very difficult, since it requires a worldwide consensus and forceful measures. The human race has never faced a problem of this extent.

If these problems are considered in light of the planet's limited capacity to support human beings, it is clear that such a high global population growth rate cannot be maintained for long. Salk has estimated the growth rate and total world population for the long period between B.C. 8000 and A.D. 8000 (Figure 1).

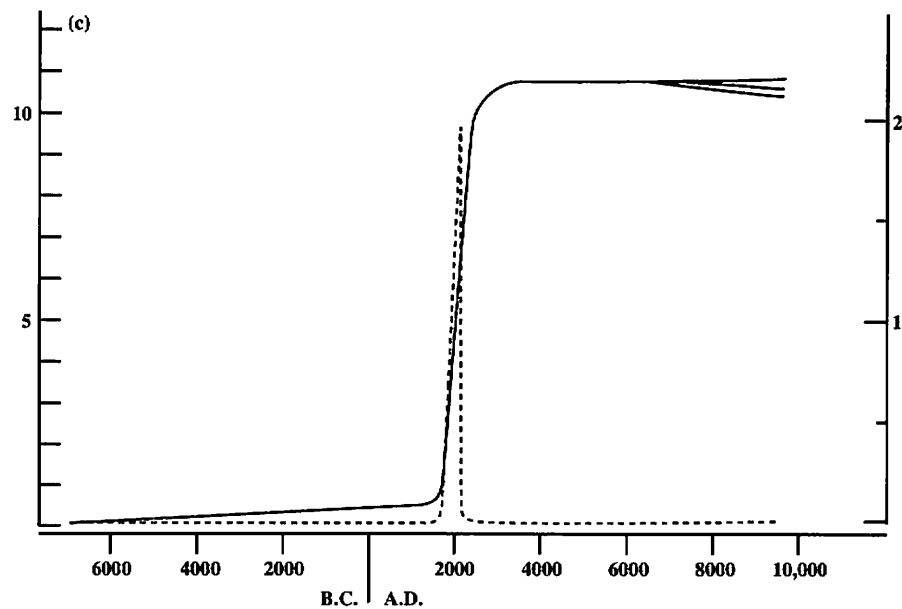
According to his chart, the world population shifts at around 10 billion, while the growth rate rises to 2 percent and, after several dozen years at the most, suddenly drops nearly to a standstill and remains stable (Salk, 1985).⁽²⁵⁾ This suggests that the current high population growth rate will not endure for long.

Note 23: Cohen, Joel E., 1995. *How Many People Can the Earth Support?*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, P.25.

Note 24: United Nations, 1995. *World Population Prospects: The 1994 Revision*.

Note 25: Salk, Jonas. 1985. "The Next Evolutionary Step in the Ascent of Man in the Cosmos," *Leonardo*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 9. 238. From *World Population and Human Values: A New Reality*, New York, Harper & Row, 1981, by Jonas Salk and Jonathan Salk.

Figure 1. Growth Rate and Total World Population



Source: Jonas Salk, "The Next Evolutionary Step in the Ascent of Man in the Cosmos," *Leonardo*, Vol. 18, No.4, 1985, pp. 238

The second aspect of the world population crisis is the size of the annual increase (Table 2 and Figure 2). During the first half of the 1950s, the average annual addition to the world population was only 47 million. However, 30 years later, the average value soared. During the 45 years between 1980 and 2025, the average annual addition will total 80 or 90 million. One could say that the annual addition will reach its first huge historical peak during this 45-year period. As mentioned, the most important point is that a gap of 25 years exists between the peak population growth rate and the peak annual additions to the population in absolute value. In other words, the peak of annual additions begins 25 years after the peak in the growth rate.

This is a result of population momentum, and clearly shows that we cannot be so sure of success in population policies simply because the population growth rate is beginning to decline. The additions to world population during next 45 years already totals 3.850 billion. This figure is approaching 4 billion, and is nearly equivalent in size to the world population in 1975. Without doubt, this population increase of almost 90 million per year will seriously influence food, housing, employment, medical care, welfare systems and the environment.

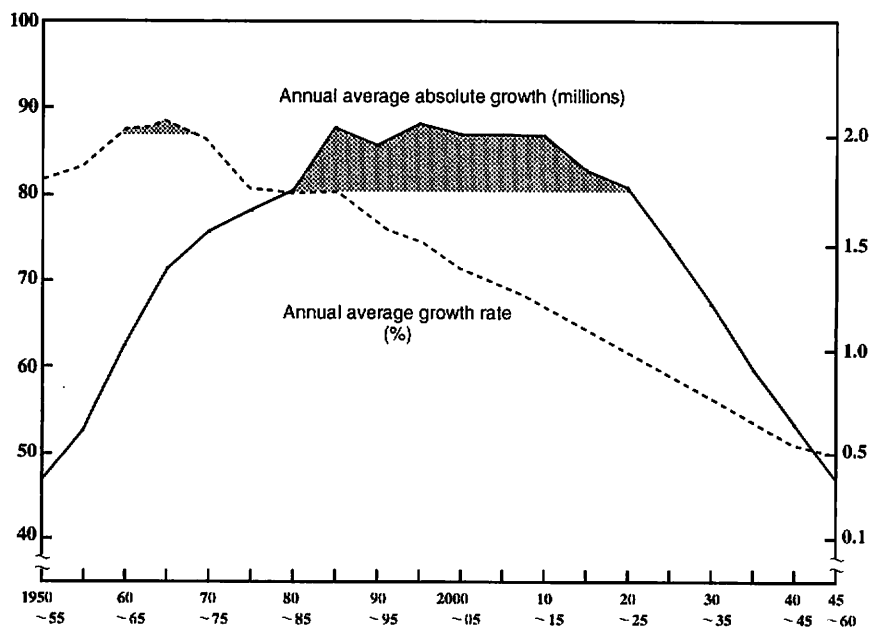
The third aspect of the crisis in world population is the size of the world population itself (Table 2). When the population becomes too large, it forces the human race to face the limits of our planet's capacity to support mankind, as we have no other place to live. It will lead to

Table 2. Annual Growth Rate and World Population (1950-2050)

Period	Average annual growth rate (%)	Average Number of Growth (Million)
1950-55	1.78	46.9
1955-60	1.85	53.5
1960-65	1.99	63.3
1965-70	2.04	71.9
1970-75	1.96	76.0
1975-80	1.73	72.5
1980-85	1.73	80.4
1985-90	1.73	87.7
1990-95	1.57	86.3
1995-2000	1.49	88.3
2000-05	1.37	87.3
2005-10	1.29	87.6
2010-15	1.20	87.3
2015-20	1.09	83.8
2020-25	1.00	81.3
2025-30	0.89	75.3
2030-35	0.78	68.7
2035-40	0.66	60.9
2040-45	0.57	53.8
2045-50	0.51	49.2

Source: United Nations World Population Prospects: The 1994 revision

Figure 2. Difference between Growth Rate and Additions to World Population (From 1950-1955 to 2045-2050)



conflicts between the earth and mankind, and between the earth and all living things.

The world population amounted to 2.5 billion in 1950. However, as of 1987 it had doubled, and by 2050 it will reach 10 billion. In other words, world population will quadruple within the century between 1950 and 2050.

The world population exceeded 5.7 billion in 1995; and its annual additions neared 90 million. These two indices on the current world population are sufficient for us to understand the unusual nature of this increase, which is unprecedented in human history (Cohen, 1995).⁽²⁶⁾

We should note that the aforementioned global population figures are medium estimates. They are the most probable figures and are based upon a precise analysis of the principal causes of recent population changes. The birthrate in particular should be noted, as the above estimation was made on the assumption that, as of the mid-21st century (2040-2050) the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) would reach the replacement level of 2.10 percent. Although the average TFR among developed countries has already fallen to 1.70, below the replacement level, developing countries continue to maintain a significantly high TFR of 3.50. In South Asia the birthrate is remarkably high, while Africa has an exceptional rate of 5.80. Should current family planning policies, which are being vigorously promoted, fail to work as expected in the following fifty years, the global population will greatly exceed the medium estimate and reach the high estimate.⁽²⁷⁾

According to the high estimate, the TFR in the period 2040-50 will reach 2.57. There is, however, another estimation that foresees birth control measures achieving better-than-expected results. This low estimate for TFR in the period 2040-50 is 1.57. This figure is even lower than the current average value of all developed countries, 1.70, which was calculated from data in the 1990-95 period.

The main difference in these three estimates is the birthrate, because, as with the death rate, all these estimations assume a fixed rate for calculation. In the period between 2045 and 2050, the average life span at birth is specified as 74.7 years for male, 79.6 years for female and 77.1 years on the average for both sexes. The results of above three estimations are shown in

Note 26: Cohen, Joel E., 1995. *How Many People Can the Earth Support?*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York. p. 25.

Note 27: Bongaarts, John, 1995. Population Growth Scenarios and Policy Options, paper printed for the UNU Conference on the Sustainable Future of the Global System, Tokyo, 16-18 October 1995. p. 10. The quoted world population estimates from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis allow for a slow decrease in the high birth rates of developing countries. According to the United Nations medium estimate of 9.8 billion in 2050, the IIASA figure of 11.3 billion is remarkable because it is very close to the high estimate of 11.9 billion made by the United Nations. (IIASA figure Wolfga Luts (ed.): *The Future Population Gang of the World: What Can We Assume Today?* London, 1994, Earthscan Publications for International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis).

Table 3 and Figure 3.

According to the medium estimate, the world population will exceed 9.8 billion in 2050. Will the earth's capacity to support life reach a ceiling at 10 billion? This figure is often referred to as a target for the basics of human survival, including food, daily needs and the environment.

The high estimate, in comparison, suggests exceptionally high numbers. In 2050, for which the medium estimate is nearly 10 billion, the high estimate reaches almost 12 billion. The difference between these two estimates exceeds 2 billion. In other words, if the population increase does not slow to the medium value, we should prepare for huge growth.

In the meantime, if birth control works better than expected in the medium estimate, and the TFR in the mid-21st century falls to 1.6, the world population will reach its peak at 7,960 million in 2040 and then start decreasing. In that case, the world population in 2040 will be close to the medium estimate of 7.89 billion for the year 2020.

In these three United Nations estimates, the difference between the highest and the lowest is only 154 million in 2000, in spite of the different conditions respectively adopted by medium, high and low estimates. But in 2020, the difference exceeds 1 billion, and furthermore, reaches 4 billion by 2050. This enormous additional number will be created merely because of a difference in TFR - that is, depending on whether TFR decreases to 1.57 in the 2040-50 period or decreases only to 2.57. Put succinctly, this gap in population depends on whether each woman bears one more child in her life or not.

The human race has the above three choices for the coming several decades, and among them the medium estimate represents the most probable figures. However, even this medium estimate was made on the premise that the world population reaches 10 billion in 2050. This figure is still too large to be optimistic in view of the planet's capacity to support life or the potential for expanding food supplies. Such an extraordinary growth in population may end in tragedy due to unfortunate incidents such as famines, epidemics of infectious diseases, wars or other calamities of nature that will impede this growth.

World population has been growing rapidly since the dawn of history, and it is quite obvious that such growth cannot continue indefinitely. Only two ways of resolving this problem exist: as stated above, one is to end the distressing self-destruction resulting from uncontrolled population increases. The other is to find a way out through the efforts of all, by launching a global challenge to achieve those figures represented by the low estimate through humanity's intelligence and resolve.

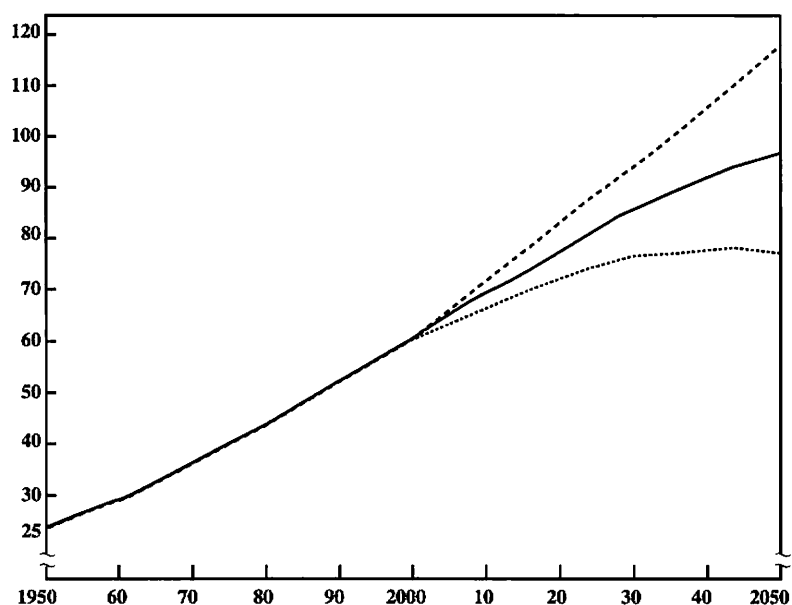
The growth rate of the world population - the first factor in the population crisis - has

Table 3. Estimated World Population, 1950-2050: medium, high and low estimates

Year	Medium	High	Low	In millions			
				Ratio against Medium Variant: 100		Difference from Medium Variant	
				High	Low	High	Low
1950	2520	2520	2520	100.0	100.0	0	0
1960	3021	3021	3021	100.0	100.0	0	0
1970	3697	3697	3697	100.0	100.0	0	0
1980	4444	4444	4444	100.0	100.0	0	0
1990	5285	5285	5285	100.0	100.0	0	0
2000	6158	6235	6081	101.3	98.8	77	-77
2010	7032	7274	6791	104.0	96.6	292	-241
2020	7888	8392	7372	106.4	93.5	504	-516
2030	8671	9567	7781	110.3	89.7	896	-890
2040	9318	10734	7959	115.2	85.4	1416	-1359
2050	9833	11912	7918	121.2	80.5	2079	-1915

Source: From the United Nations: *World Population Prospects: The 1994 Revision*
 Note: Estimated to 1990, projected after 2000

Figure 3. Estimated Future World Population (High, medium and low estimates) 1950-2050



continued to decrease gradually, though it has not yet decelerated enough. Although we must continue working to bring it down, we can safely say that the situation is changing in our favor.

The other two factors contributing to this crisis are, however, problematical. As explained, these two factors represent the enormous annual additions to the population and the total size of the global population. One of the specifically important elements of population policy is that

the annual additions to the population will remain between 80 and 90 million during the coming 30 years or so. Equally important is that avoiding this increase is almost impossible, as it results from the momentum of population.

This situation must be considered an emergency, against which global countermeasures should be taken as soon as possible. Mere policies devised by nations or races will not suffice; it will be necessary to devise measures to secure all passengers on Spaceship Earth and preserve their coexistence. On the one hand, epochal, comprehensive measures should be carried out in the social, economic, cultural and political arenas. On the other hand, revolutionary measures must be implemented in the field of birth control. The critical issue is that these global measures must achieve good results within only 30 years.

Cairo: The Last Population Conference of the 20th Century

Except for the risk of nuclear war, the biggest issue facing humanity is to control world population growth. Most of the difficulties that humanity faces today are deeply rooted in the excessive size and growth of the world population. Those difficulties include rapid consumption of renewable resources, deleterious environmental changes such as violent climate change, and rising international tensions. They are tightly bound to the population issue.⁽²⁸⁾

Following the conferences in Bucharest in 1974 and Mexico City in 1984, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was held in Cairo in 1994. During this brief 20-year period, the world's population policies had developed remarkably. However, an extraordinary incident took place shortly before the conference in Cairo: the world political systems had collapsed.

The Cairo meeting was unique in that it was the last conference on world population in the 20th century; moreover, it was held in the midst of an extremely unusual world situation. It is noteworthy that the threat of nuclear war, which had menaced the human race, receded when the Cold War ended due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, it put the population explosion, once considered secondary, at the forefront. On the other hand, however, regional disorder following the end of the Cold War created a diversion that

Note 28: Ehrlich, Paul R. and Anne H., 1990. *The Population Explosion*, Simon and Schuster, New York, pp. 18.

diminished recognition of the population crisis.

This complication in the world situation must be thoroughly understood as an important premise that characterized the Cairo meeting. This conference was outstanding because, in short, it achieved an epochal level of development and advancement, far exceeding those of the Bucharest and Mexico City conferences.

One of the achievements was related to the World Population Plan of Action (WPPA), which was adopted in Bucharest and reinforced in Mexico City. This "*Plan of Action*" was developed into the "*Programme of Action*" during the meeting. It is important that a majority consensus was achieved for the formulation of a detailed program that included all processes from planning to execution, and that, surprisingly, its content was agreed upon.

The second achievement of the Cairo gathering was that the conference incorporated strategic developments into its population policies. As indicated in the name of this conference, population and development cannot be separated. Marking this point, the participants discarded the old narrow concept of population policies and instead incorporated development policies as a fundamental element that indirectly affects demographic phenomena. Nonetheless, advice was only given with regard to population policy in a narrow sense, such as improvement of the death rate, and few political suggestions were made on other demographic phenomena, such as birthrate and migration.

The third achievement was the start of a discussion in the conference on the empowerment of women in order to redefine and reconstruct population policies. Specifically, a landmark strategy - termed "The Empowerment of Women" - was suggested. This suggestion will be discussed in detail later.

The fourth factor that characterized the gathering of Cairo was the adoption, as proposed during the conference, of 20 years as the population limit for the Programme of Action. This was a very important suggestion. As pointed out earlier in this essay, the coming 30 years should be regarded as the most critical period for population issues, and suitable countermeasures must be worked out for this period. The 20-year limit in the Cairo suggestion can be considered to correspond to this 30-year strategy.

The fifth achievement was the participation of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the conference, beginning with the meetings of its preparatory committee. Similarly, many governmental representatives took part in this conference as well. Unlike the Bucharest or Mexico City conferences, participation in activities was enthusiastic in Cairo. Many NGOs held their meetings in Cairo concurrently with governmental meetings, and

submitted their suggestions to governmental representatives. It was exceptional that non-governmental organizations and private groups showed such extreme interest in an intergovernmental conference and actually implemented their activities, although women's concerns in this conference may have been directly emphasized by the theme's focus on women's issues.

The theme included subjects of immediate interest to women, such as reproductive health and resolution of gender discrimination. Although it was exceptional, we should appreciate that, by attracting the attention of so many people, this meeting was an important step in promoting understanding of global problems.

Empowerment of Women -A Revolutionary Strategy on Population and Development-

The empowerment of women was an evolutionary concept that established the basis of the Cairo conference. It was an attempt to provide broad power to women in order to promote their participation in the new development and progress of society. Needless to say, women's issues had been taken up at every international meeting as a universal theme, grounded in human rights, as well as the status of women, gender equality in economic and political activities, gender-based role assignment in the home, and so on. However, these subjects were dealt with fragmentarily and viewed as individual problems related only to a specific area. Therefore, those discussions could not give much more than the impression that all suggestions were reasonable.

A fundamental achievement of the Cairo conference was to change the vertical relationship between men and women, which implies that a woman should serve a man, into a horizontal relationship that views women's social existence as equal to that of men. The most noteworthy point of this conference was that it recognized the importance of achieving equal rights for both sexes, and that it defined the systemization of corrective action for gender disparity as a strategy for pursuing sustainable social development. This attempt deserves high praise.

The conference referred to the overall improvement of women's position as the "empowerment of women." This concept comprises four elements: social, economic and political aspects, and the field of health care. Improving women's position in these areas is only natural, and accords with the principles of social morals. At the same time, this improvement

is also essential for continued human development, as was revealed in the integrated strategic framework of "empowerment of women."

Some countries have already achieved remarkable improvement in the status of women. In such countries, many women have entered the labor market; a female elite has arisen to play an active part; and women are enjoying greater participation in politics. While these countries are thus recording significant developments, most developing regions - which account for an overwhelming share of the world population - have not relieved the suffering of their women, who have been relegated to a dismally low position. These women are facing a crisis of overwork that is seriously affecting their lives, health and welfare. In societies where female infants are not received warmly, women are seriously abused and even subjected to such tragedies as abortion and infanticide. According to a recent report on India by UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), the number of girls aged up to five years old was 1.4 million fewer than in the census of 1991. This figure represents the total of eight states, where the number of girls per 100 boys in that age range is considerably less than India's national average. This means that 1.4 million girls had somehow disappeared, a fact that seems difficult to comprehend.⁽²⁹⁾

Another unbelievable finding is the demeaning custom of female genital mutilation (FGM), which has been found to be prevalent in 28 countries in Africa, some nations in the Arabian Peninsula, and among some minorities in Asia. It is estimated that between 100 million and 132 million women alive today have been subjected to this practice, and it is believed that even today it is performed on more than 2 million women per year. This reprehensible custom can be regarded as one of the most extreme examples of inhuman and discriminating practices against women.⁽³⁰⁾

In the Cairo conference, one representative denied the existence of FGM. Nonetheless, it is said that a TV documentary program on the circumcision of a ten-year-old girl in his country was aired during the conference period. It is also said that, even today, FGM is legal and professionals are permitted to offer this service.⁽³¹⁾

This shows that, from a global point of view, the status of women cannot be easily improved. The most effective method for empowering women is education. The Universal

Note 29: UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund) 1995. *The Progress of Indian States*, India Country Office, UNICEF House, New Delhi, India, pp. 56-60.

Note 30: Kiragu, Karungari, 1995. "Female Genital Mutilation: A Reproductive Health Concern," Population Reports, supplement to Population Reports, Meeting the Needs of Young Adults, Series J, No. 41, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, October 1995. Population Information Program, Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, Baltimore, pp. 1-4.

Declaration of Human Rights of nearly 50 years ago emphasized that “everyone has the right to education.” At the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, each participating government officially promised to create a compulsory education system to provide a basic education. However, the number of illiterate people in the world is now 960 million; moreover, two-thirds of them are female. There are 130 million children not enrolled in an elementary education system, 70 percent of whom are female.⁽³²⁾

It is essential that we increase women’s educational opportunities and educational level to those of men, in order to ensure women’s potential is sufficiently exercised in the social, economic and political spheres. Although women’s participation in these three areas had generally been emphasized, the Cairo conference was notable in its inclusion of “reproductive health and rights,” which created an integrated and novel framework.

Suggestions on Reproductive Health Care

Many countries do not have the sufficient capability, facilities or staff to provide proper medical care for physical or mental conditions related to pregnancy and delivery, and which are therefore unique to women. Since pregnancy, delivery, and raising a child are lifelong tasks assigned exclusively to women, society has the significant responsibility to ensure their health.

At the Cairo conference, this issue was comprehensively conceptualized as reproductive health. The word “reproductive” was here linked with “health,” which earlier had been defined by WHO. The following is the definition of “reproductive health” as defined by the Cairo Papers:⁽³³⁾

Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.

Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the right of men and women to be informed and to have

Note 31: Refer to Kiragu's theory, pp. 3 in previous article.

Note 32: United Nations, 1994. Programme of Action of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, unofficial information version, as adopted by the Conference at Cairo on Tuesday, 13 September 1994.

Note 33: From the reference material of the United Nations, Note 32.

access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate healthcare services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and child birth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant.

In line with the above definition of reproductive health, Reproductive Health Care is defined as the constellation of methods, techniques and services that contribute to reproductive health and well-being through preventing and solving reproductive health problems.

It should be noted that the details of reproductive health care encompass family planning. In many developing countries, the mortality rate for infants and young children, and even for mothers, is extremely high. Moreover, the abortion rate, whether legal or illegal, is high. Considering that many women in those countries are losing their reproductive ability due to the sequela of abortion, the meaning and role of “reproductive health” is significant.⁽³⁴⁾

Establishing Population Targets

One distinctive feature of the Cairo meeting was the goal of current population policies established for 2015. In other words, these policies are expected to come to fruition within 20 years of 1995. Notably, targets for population improvement were presented, mainly in connection with death rates.⁽³⁵⁾

The targets were following ;

- 1) to improve the death rate so that the average human life span would exceed 75 years of age by 2015.
- 2) to reduce the mortality rate of infants and children under five years of age to 35 or fewer per 1,000 births by 2015.
- 3) to bring down the death rate of expectant and nursing mothers to 60 or fewer, or 75 or fewer in countries with high death rates, per 1,000 births by 2015.
- 4) that all people in need should be able to enjoy reproductive health through primary health care.

Note 34: Medically, the issue of reproductive health is part of an important plan for comprehensive fertility medical care. Kuroda Toshio: “Analysis of Empowerment (Outline of Chapter 1),” *Female Empowerment in Asia*, from the *Human and Development*, Vol. 20, Asia Population and Development Association (1996, pp. 9-16, particularly pp. 13-14).

Note 35: Ministry of Health and Welfare, Institute of Population Problems, 1995 International Conference on Population and Development at Cairo (Cairo Conference) Research Material No. 282, pp. 10-12.

Only these four targets were presented at the conference. Since the fourth one cannot be called a quantitative target, only three, which concerned death rates, were left as quantitative targets with specific figures. It should be noted that no target values were presented regarding birthrate or population growth rate. As a matter of course, no countries contested the improvement of the death rate; however, each country has its own approach to policymaking and target values regarding births and population increases. Moreover, these targets are deeply affected by subtle religious and racial attitudes. Since the Bucharest gathering of 1974, a dormant confrontation has existed between developed and developing countries regarding target-setting, and the potential for discord regarding this topic is so serious as to render target-setting virtually taboo.

Conclusion: Seeking a Global Viewpoint

The last International Conference on Population and Development of the 20th century, held in Cairo, by far surpassed the meetings in Bucharest and Mexico City, since it resolved views on strategies and challenges for the 21st century. It is worth noting that this meeting introduced a theoretical framework to put women, who account for one-half the world population, on an equal footing with men. This framework was unprecedented in history and can even be called the result of a revolution in consciousness.

Nonetheless, the results of the Cairo meeting imply too many uncertain factors to be accepted and implemented by all religions, races, and cultures representing the peoples of the world.

The population phenomena of births, deaths and migration create specific population problems through their social, economic, cultural and religious interactions. Consequently, population problems can become remarkably complicated and diverse. This leads to individuality and peculiarity in each population problem and to difficulty in the search for international agreements. Population policies are differentiated by nations and by religious beliefs.

Furthermore, no suggestions made at United Nations conferences can be enforced. Besides, it is inevitable that the content and priorities of the Programme of Action in the Cairo Papers may be changed to accord with policies or budget allocation plans in each country.

The most significant matter is how each participant from respective governments

understood the Programme of Action in Cairo, and whether any concrete action will be taken regarding methods of execution.

Population problems differ by nation and region, and result in varied population policies. Some countries even insist that they do not need population policies. Considering these factors, whether to choose “population or development” is a highly relevant question.

It is necessary to promote the concept of Spaceship Earth to cope with the coming 30 years of rapid population increase. Human beings must revolutionize their way of thinking. By struggling with these problems, they will have to repeatedly ask one difficult question - “How can I achieve this?”

From Bucharest to Cairo

—20 Years of United Nations Population Conferences—

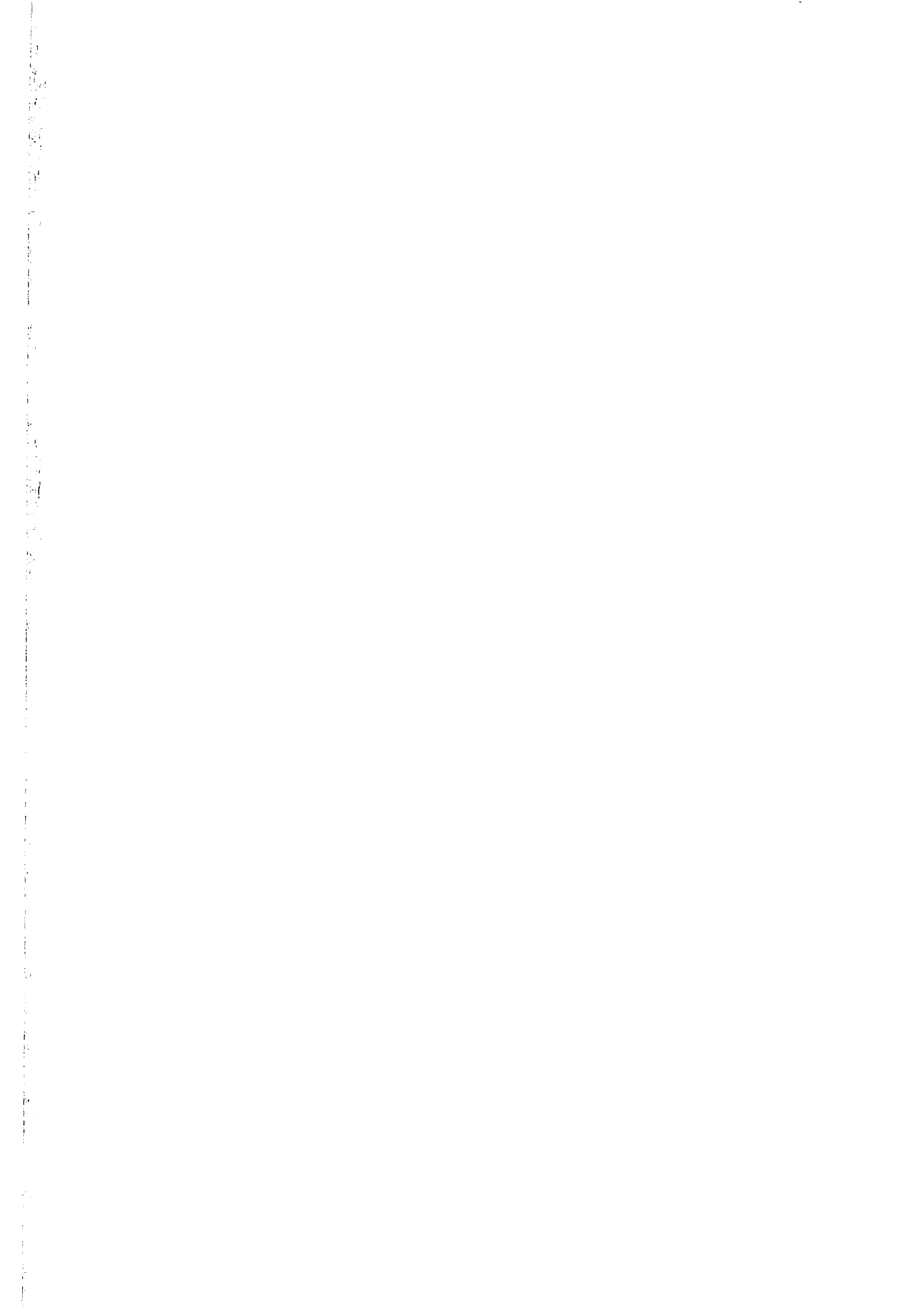
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