

THE WORLD HAS
TOO MANY
PEOPLE

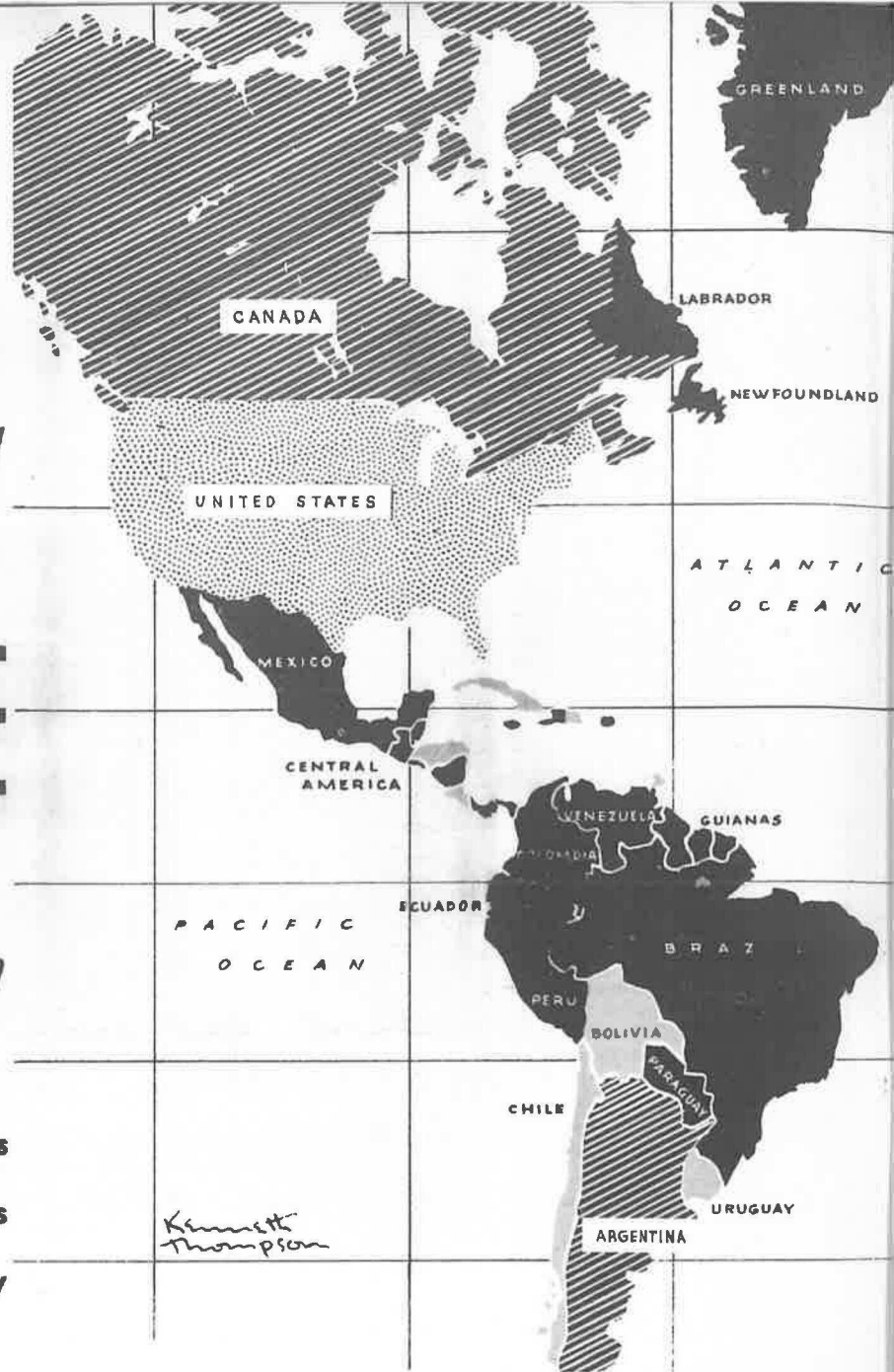
by
Guy Irving Burch



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Why three-quarters
of the earth's population is
chronically hungry



AS DIRECTOR of the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D. C., the author is one of the leading authorities on trends in population over the world. His organization was founded in 1929 by leading scientists as a non-profit clearinghouse of information on the subject, and he is consulted constantly by government officials and scientific organizations.

THROUGHOUT history, wars and microbes have been pretty effective in keeping the world's population within bounds. But today the human race is multiplying at such a furious rate that the bombs and bugs just aren't keeping up.

In the blood-letting of World War II, for example, many millions of people were killed. Yet during the course of the war the population continued to soar, while the means of support fell off. (There is now 10 per cent less food per person, partly due to less food, but

mainly due to the fact that population has increased during the war.) And the population will continue to surge upward at the staggering rate of 200,000,000 a decade if present trends continue. That's something, when you consider that the total population of the entire United States, which is mildly overpopulated itself, is only 140,000,000.

By the end of this century there will be—at the very least—500,000,000 more people on this already crowded globe than there are today. And actually it is probable that unless some world-wide brakes are applied, more than 1,000,000,000 people will be added.

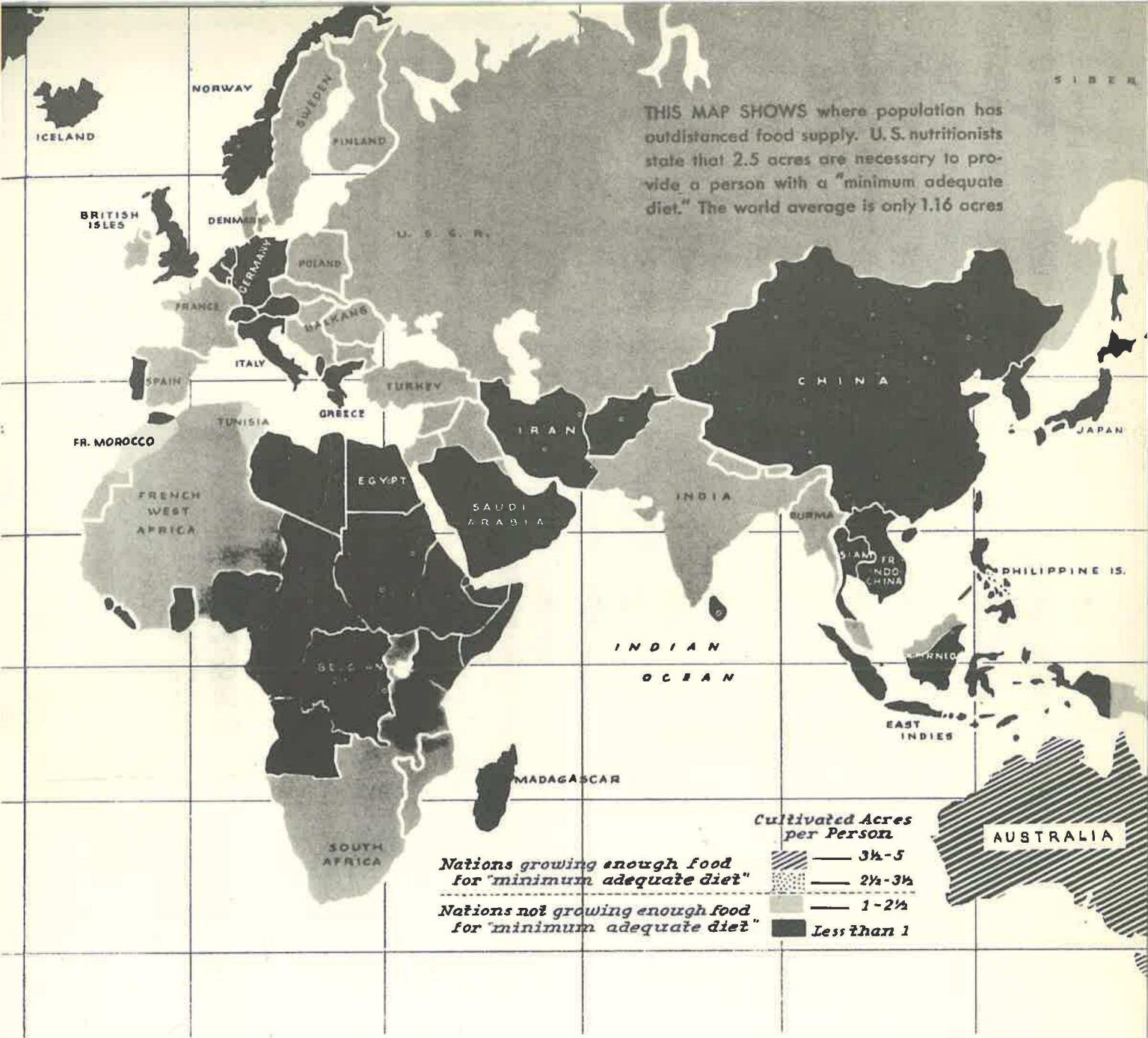
Yet we hear alarmed cries from many nations that they are losing out in the birth-rate race. Some Americans are deploring our "low" reproduction rate. And in most European nations official action is being taken to encourage more babies.

Right now in Great Britain every tenth mar-

ried woman is being asked why she is having so few babies. One wife recently answered the investigators with disconcerting candor. She said, "Because there are too many people in Britain already." But as newspapers talk of the "impending disaster" impelled by Britain's falling birth rate, plans are being made to pay each British mother a bonus for each baby after the first.

IN FRANCE, an official commission has been formed to add 12,000,000 babies to the population within the next decade. There have been unofficial reports that Frenchmen are being encouraged to take injections of male hormones to increase their virility.

Russia—which looks big on the map but is really overpopulated for its productive soil and resources—is growing at a rate which will double her population in 40 years. Yet she is giving medals to prolific mothers, bonuses that



increase with each additional child, and is soaking unmarried men heavily with special taxes.

Without realizing it, people everywhere have absorbed the Hitlerian doctrine that there is a strong connection between numbers and power . . . that only "growing" nations are strong . . . and that nations with stable or declining populations are "old" or "has-beens."

Germany, Italy, and Japan were all explosively overpopulated before World War I. In the '20's serious-minded Italian and Japanese officials tried to apply brakes to their terrific rate of growth; but they lost out to militarists, who saw the situation made their nations ripe for military dictatorship and conquest.

As population pressure in the three Axis nations became intense, the people had to work harder and harder to escape their pre-

dicament. Because of overpopulation, poverty was closing in. They became desperate and fanatic and bartered their freedom for "strong" men who would bring them bread. The militarists' solution was clear and simple: more "living space."

They flattered their people as being "young" and "prolific" supermen to encourage them to produce more cannon fodder, and then led them into a holy war for a "just" distribution of the world's resources. Thus it was that Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo plunged the world into the most destructive of all wars to date. They couldn't have done it if their populations had not been near the explosive stage.

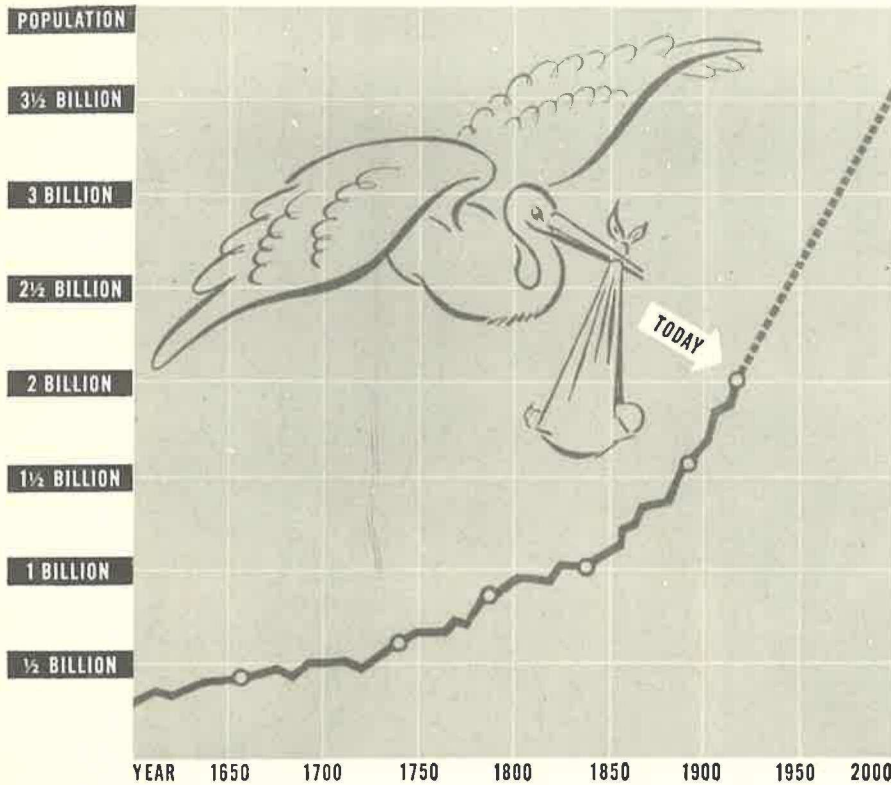
Democracy was not born until a new world called America was opened up. America did not know the pinch of population pressure until this century. In 1910 the great British historian, James Bryce, wrote that the American ship of state was about to encounter the

"fog" of population pressure, in which the "chronic evils and problems of old countries, such as we see them today in Europe, will reappear on new soil." Is it possible that this fog is responsible for some of our domestic headaches today?

A SURVEY of the facts should be enough to convince anyone that the world has been oversold on the desirability of a "growing" population. As one expert, Maj. Gen. Frederick Osborn, has put it: "Statistics recently available explode the idea that a high birth rate is a sign of national strength and virility."

Exponents of high fertility often quote the Bible. They remember the command to "Be fruitful and multiply." But that command was made in the time of Adam and Eve, when the world was pretty empty of people. They might better note the wry comment in Isaiah 9:3, which reads: "Thou

HOW THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS GROWING



fast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy."

Today there are few spots in the world that are not being handicapped by having to support more people than their natural resources can comfortably bear. Western Europe is sick from its population binge which began a century ago. . . . Teeming Asia is in the last stages of disorganization because of overpopulation. . . . Africa, Latin America, and Australia (which many people imagine to be the last geographical frontiers) are rapidly wasting away their resources and on the whole are increasing in population too rapidly for the general welfare of their inhabitants. Topsoil in Australia has blown as far as New Zealand.

While the U. S. is as yet only mildly overpopulated, two of our stepchildren, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, are bursting at the seams despite their high death rates and are increasing at a rate that would double their populations every 30 years. Only constantly increasing aid from Uncle Sam can save them from mass starvation.

We appear to have taken the responsibility of bringing democracy to Japan now that we have successfully pushed its 75,000,000 people back into the home islands. Japan now has 13 times as many people per square arable mile as the United States, and yearly adds another million souls to its sardine can. Simply splitting up the estates is not going to help much.

It is possible, of course, that scientific developments—such as the use of atomic power—may provide ways to supply food for more

people. But if the food supply goes up, the populations will soar at an even more staggering rate, unless the nations learn how to keep their populations under some control.

IT IS no accident that the areas most congested for their resources and trade have the lowest level of living. The resources have to be divided among more people. It is also no accident that populations are soaring most spectacularly in the "backward" "civilized" areas of the world—Asia, Africa, Latin America, Russia, and southeast Europe. The birth rate may not be increasing, but as these areas adopt Western techniques in sanitation, medicine, epidemic controls, famine relief, they lower the death rate and lengthen the life expectancy of each inhabitant.

If India could lower its death rate to the U. S. level and keep its present birth rate it could fill up 5 earths in a century. China could, too. And it would not take Russia much longer.

Most people are still wedded to the concept of strength in numbers. They want to be able to match battalion for battalion and have men left over. But if America's safety depended on numbers we would be beaten at the start. Yet we admittedly threw the decisive punches in both world wars. Happily, mere manpower is not dangerous in modern war. And it will be even less important in any future atomic, push-button wars. It is the quality of man that will count—his intelligence, his ingenuity, his foresight, his humanity—in our fight to sur-

vive and achieve a stable world peace.

And it is the nation that has a surplus of goods over and above its needs of daily living that wins wars today.

This tremendous surplus of materials and effort which we were able to throw into the war was what swamped the Axis. This fact was conceded by the close-mouthed Marshal Stalin of Russia when, at Teheran, he proposed a toast to American war production, "without which our victory would have been impossible."

IHAVE said that even the United States is mildly overpopulated. Professor P. K. Whelpton, of the Scripps Population Foundation, when on the U. S. Central Statistical Board produced facts and figures showing that the "United States is now overpopulated from the standpoint of per capita economic welfare, but fortunately not so seriously overpopulated as most nations."

He stated that a stationary population of 100,000,000 would be better from an economic standpoint than our present 140,000,000. Yet, according to the government estimates, we are due for a further population increase of some 40,000,000. And, believe it or not, that assumes we can cut our birth rate by about a third during the coming 50 years.

Such a growth is particularly disturbing when you consider our vanishing resources (which former Secretary of the Interior Ickes depicted so vividly in THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE a few months ago) and our frightening loss of topsoil through careless agricultural methods.

A thin layer of topsoil, often less than a foot thick, is all that stands between life and death for us all. It takes at least 300 years to bring back a single inch of topsoil, yet some of our farms lose that much in a single heavy rain. The chief of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service has testified before a Congressional Committee: "We are losing every day as a result of erosion the equivalent of 200 forty-acre farms . . . and actually we do not have enough good land left in the United States."

But more important than the erosion of our soil is the erosion of our people. Our increase in population is coming almost entirely from the least educated, least successful, and lowest I.Q. third of our human resources.

Many studies have been made which point out the gruesome details. Census Bureau records show that American women with completed families who had themselves completed seven years or less of grade school averaged 3 2/3 children, while women of the same age who were graduated from high school and college averaged only 1 2/3 children.

Another study, of school children in 4 U. S. cities, showed that the children with the lowest intelligence scores came from families averaging nearly 6 children, while the children who were rated "very superior" in intelligence came from families that averaged less than 2 1/2 children.

If the present situation continues for about 70 years the descendants of our least intelligent and least successful families will become 16 times more numerous than the descendants of our most intelligent and most successful families.

THE END ★★