

Editorial

When hunger reigns

At the close of the Second World War, a horrified world learned of the existence of Nazi death camps. These were the places where "useless eaters"—those too weak to perform slave labor, or those like Jews and gypsies who were targeted for racial reasons—were starved to death or killed outright.

Today at least 25 million people in Bangladesh, on the Indian subcontinent, are homeless. Much of that nation's capital city remains under water. Food supplies have been destroyed and water supplies contaminated. Yet the response of the nations of the world remains pitifully inadequate. The prevailing "wisdom" among world leaders and international bankers appears to be that "realism" rather than sentiment is in order.

This tragedy could have been averted or at the least ameliorated, had the proper flood control measures been taken, but how could a poor nation such as Bangladesh support the cost?

Lester Brown said it all in an editorial statement printed in the Sept. 8 edition of the *Washington Post*. His article was entitled: "Bring on the Family Planners." For malthusians, such as Brown, drought and flood conditions are a welcome confirmation of his scenario for halving the population of the globe through brute-force methods such as famine and plague.

Bangladesh's government has requested 3 million tons of food as an immediate relief measure, and sufficient seed to replant the present crop which has been destroyed by the flood waters. To date, only token amounts of food have been sent in, to the amount of hundreds or thousands of tons at most.

Another case in point is the nation of Sudan in Africa. Millions of political refugees had been living in camps which were destroyed by the recent floods there. Over the past three months over 3,000 people are reported to have starved to death, and the death toll is continuing to rise. Many, in particular children, are simply too weak to travel the one-and-a-quarter mile trip to the area where food is distributed; these are simply left to die of hunger.

In other words, whole nations are being turned into

concentration camps because of the callous disregard of all of us who fail to do battle for the sanctity of human life.

A like situation exists in the refusal of the United States Department of Agriculture to sell food to Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia, and Egypt, because those countries cannot afford the rapidly escalating market prices. The viciousness of this policy would appear to speak for itself, except that it is compounded by the willingness of that same Department of Agriculture to subsidize massive shipments of wheat and corn at prices well below market values, to the Soviet Union.

Just two days ago, the Soviets bought an additional 300,000 tons of grain from the United States. This brings total sales to the Soviets to above 2 million tons, with a like amount of corn purchased by them. The European Community (EC) has negotiated deals with the Russians on a similar scale. Yet no food is now available to help millions of starving people in Bangladesh and Sudan who have been the subject of natural disasters!

Over the Labor Day weekend, a new organization, Food for Peace was formed in the United States, with the support of farmers from thirty U.S. states and an international delegation including Europeans, Ibero-Americans, and Africans.

This conference passed a number of resolutions guaranteed to expand present world food reserves, in order to counter the current adverse weather trends. It also called for emergency relief to Sudan and Bangladesh.

In the short term, there is sufficient food to prevent the death of millions from starvation—if this food is not wantonly diverted to the U.S.S.R.—but over the next immediate period, we face a dire international food shortage. Food for Peace must become the rallying cry of a worldwide organizing campaign, whose purpose will be to ensure that the production and distribution of world food supplies is given the highest priority, in order to prevent famine from once again stalking this earth.