

Triage in Asia

In the fall of 1974 because the World Bank-IMF withheld credit approximately 30 million people died on the Indian subcontinent from famine and disease in the wake of uncontrolled flooding. Decades of war ravaged the population and agricultural production capacity of south Vietnam. This year Asia's once booming economies — South Korea, a light industry exporter; Indonesia; the Philippines, exporter of timber, sugar, coconut products; Malaysia, a rubber exporter—can find no market for their products and each has a balance-of-trade deficit at least in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Bangladesh: Apart from a sub-subsistence level of agricultural production, the country has no economy. The country produces 15 per cent less food than is required for a slow starvation diet of 1800-2000 calories per person per day for Bangladesh's population of 80 million. There are no records for current death rates from starvation and disease. Last fall in the aftermath of severe floods about 6 million Bengalis died of starvation and infectious disease — 7 per cent of the population. The shortfall from this summer's crop, barring massive aid, will cause mass starvation worse than last year.

The World Bank and the so-called Aid Bangladesh Consortium (a subgroup of the International Monetary Fund) have forced a 42 per cent devaluation of Bangladesh's currency, the taka, in order to make jute, the country's only significant export, more competitive. The 42 per cent price rise in all imports will drastically increase the price of consumer goods, which heavily depend on imports. The World Bank plans to switch 700,000 acres of land now producing rice for over 3 million people a year back to jute for export. Such a pattern of looting the land through overcropping for export profits created the conditions which have caused the floods over the years.

Bangladesh's bill for imports is four times its income from exports; and the latter totally depend on the jute market, which is dwindling.

The World Bank recently announced a long-term loan of \$48 million to Bangladesh to be used only for "family planning." The money will finance sub-stations throughout the country to sterilize the population.

Politically Bangladesh is in chaos. President Mujib has announced that in recent months thousands of Awami Party workers have been murdered by gangs and counter-gangs. Mujib has assumed dictatorial powers.

India: Extended drought has parched and impoverished the states of Gujarat and more recently Orissa, which produces food for the vast city of Calcutta. About 25 million

starved to death in the wake of last fall's floods. To avert immediate catastrophe India has imported food and recently concluded trade and assistance deals with the Soviet Union. India's desperate poverty — a large annual food deficit, no food reserves, and a very low standard of living—cannot be solved solely through bilateral trade with the Soviets and Soviet aid. India had to buy 7 million tons of grain at commercial prices to try to meet last year's food crisis, thus using up a large portion of the country's foreign exchange. India's foreign debt to Rockefeller banks is \$15 billion.

Pakistan: Pakistan, unable to pay debt service on its \$10 billion foreign debt, is now effectively in receivership to the OECD's Pakistan Aid Consortium. The Government recently announced a severe budget deficit. The huge Tarbela Dam, central to Pakistan's planned development program, is malfunctioning; salination and waterlogging are ruining much of the irrigated area (most cropped land is irrigated). Pakistan's import bill is triple export income. Pakistan's food deficit is at least one million tons. The World Bank is pushing Pakistan to export wheat, cotton, and rice — in the face of internal agricultural collapse — to solve the country's balance-of-payments crisis.

Sri Lanka (Ceylon): This country's official figures for per capita caloric intake are far below 1800 calories per person per day. The vast majority of the population of 13 million are dying of slow starvation.

Indonesia: The bankruptcy-collapse of Pertamina, Indonesia's state oil company, has forced cancellation of major development projects, the heart of Indonesia's development program — a fertilizer plant, steel production, capital intensive rice farms. Indonesia's debt is \$6 billion; Pertamina's alone is \$650 million in short-term liabilities and \$1.5 billion in long-term liabilities.

As a condition for any further loans, the World Bank is demanding forced relocation of hundreds of thousands of peasants from the most populous island of Java to malaria-infested Sumatra, where scarcely any infrastructure awaits them, and the World Bank intends they work on slave-labor projects half the time entirely unpaid. Current per capita daily caloric intake is below 2000 calories.

Indochina: The Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam reports that thousands have starved to death in the South because of U.S. government policy since the PRG's victory. The U.S. government cut off all deliveries of food — including food already in transit or in storage in Hong Kong bound for South Vietnam — as soon as Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) was liberated. The U.S. Department of Commerce has also embargoed shipment of all medical supplies to Indochina.