World Bank presses 'delinkage'

Last year its goal was eliminating modern technology; now it frankly proposes eliminating children.

The World Bank has just released the 1980 installment of its World Development Report, the third volume of a survey project launched in 1978. In reviewing the contents of this report, it is useful to remember that the World Bank is nothing more than the postwar successor to the British Colonial Office.

The latest report signals that the British technocrats and their London-New York financial networks have in recent months come to complete agreement with the People's Republic of China on how to design a "final solution" for the economic problems of the Third World. While the contents of the report itself provide ample evidence that a "Chinese model" for the Third World is now on the agenda, the importance of the rapprochement with the PRC for Third World policy is also shown by the PRC's decision earlier this year to become a member of the World Bank's sister organization, the International Monetary Fund.

The 1980 World Development Report diverges from the first two World Bank surveys. Last year, the World Bank report focused on a push for the policy of "appropriate technologies." Its aim was to convince developing nations that it is in their own interest to steer away from large volumes of borrowing; for reasons of social and political calm, it argued, developing nations should strive to implement low-technology, labor-intensive programs of minimal subsistence and small-scale farming.

Remarkable as it may seem, this year the World Bank asserts that economic policy is only a facet of Third World problems; the largest sections of the report focus on social policy, in particular, family planning and birth rates. Taking as its assumption that for the next 10 years, capital infusions and real economic development in the Third World will stagnate, it argues that simply training impoverished populations how not to overly reproduce can suffice to stabilize income, life expectancy and output.

For example, its section on sub-Saharan Africa, where a savage drought is currently threatening 10 million lives, only discusses agriculture problems in passing. The report instead focuses on human 'fertility" in Africa. It states: "Africa is the only region where fertility still shows no sign of decline—women surviving to the end of their child-bearing years average six to eight children. . . . The contribution slower population growth can make to raising incomes is particularly marked in Africa. The region's high infant mortality and low adult literacy are major reasons that population growth remains high. . . . Extending and strengthening family planning efforts, however, would cause an earlier and faster decline in fertility."

This is a polite version of the Chinese-model of genocide practiced from 1975 to 1978 in Cambodia. It is also the policy of "delinkage" or "economic decoupling" defined and recommended for the Third World by the "Project 1980s" study published by the New York Council on Foreign Relations. The outcome would be the elimination of 1 billion "useless eaters" over the next decade.

The World Bank report makes it clear that "delinkage" assumes a continuing severe economic crisis in the industrialized nations. The argument in favor of "delinkage":

The industrialized countries all suffer from current-accounts deficits. These deficits mean it is impossible for them to finance large bilateral aid programs. While loans to the developing sector will continue to rise, reaching at least $175 billion in 1990 (compared to $96 billion for 1980), only 20 percent of those 1990 funds will represent new deployable income; the remaining 80 percent will go to finance old debt.

Simultaneously, the continuing economic crisis in the developed countries will make it virtually impossible for the Third World to generate income by exporting to industrialized countries. In fact, since 1973, developing countries' exports to each other have been growing at a much faster rate than their exports to major capital-goods producing nations.

Nor can developing countries expect assistance from the surplus-generating oil producers in OPEC, according to the World Bank. The OPEC countries themselves are rapidly facing a decline in their surplus generation due to energy cutbacks in the industrial nations. By 1985, the report predicts, OPEC countries will be borrowing funds to finance their own development.