

Suicides Rising

Suicide now ranks among the first 10 causes of death in the industrialized world, yet even at that many cases go unreported. Each year an estimated 15 million people threaten to kill themselves, about three million try it, and 365,000 actually take their own lives. That's more than cholera, smallpox, tetanus and rabies combined, and more than traffic accidents.

The World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, medical agency of the United Nations, has published a voluminous global Health Statistics Annual for 1963, and interpretive tables are being worked up to include suicides.

Preliminary study indicates that the number of suicides is rising rapidly among the world's youth; roughly one in every three student deaths is suicide. In the U.S., the suicide rate for the entire population has risen about five percent in a decade, yet the increase is 44 percent among boys of 15 to 19, and 29 percent in the 20-to-24-year-olds.

WHO's volume also reveals separate trends for the sexes, with a higher rate usually among men than women. Poland's ratio is highest, with about five male suicides for every female one; France is next at three to one, followed by the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and Israel at 1.5 to one.

The highest suicide rates overall are in Finland and Hungary, where about 30 people out of every 100,000 commit suicide annually. The U.S. has about 24 suicides per 100,000 people, England about 18, and other major countries 10 or less.

The rates rise with age for both sexes in most of the world, and are highest in old age, according to WHO's doctors, reflecting the severe ego losses in most cultures. National culture also influences the method of suicide, so that Englishmen often use coal gas, American men guns or iodine, and Austrians and Nigerians hanging, says Dr. Norman Farberow, a California psychiatrist particularly concerned with suicide prevention.

Dr. Farberow directs the Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles, believed to be the first professional organization of its kind. He has helped to organize the new International Association for the Prevention of Suicide. The Association, based in Vienna, has 250 members in 30 countries, and plans to hold conferences to exchange international research, as well as to build regional centers for the counselling of possible suicidal patients, somewhat like the regional chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous. *David Alan Ehrlich*

Rainmaking Projects

In India the distribution of rainfall is neither equitable nor regular. Regions in this country where the heaviest and the lowest rainfall occur are Chera-punji and Rajasthan respectively. Drought has become more or less a chronic disaster especially in Bihar and some areas of Utter Pradesh. In Bihar the drought has hit more than 33 million of the 53 million residents.

Now, as part of the fight against drought, the Government of India's Department of Agriculture will soon launch an experimental project on artificial stimulation of rainfall. The American Agency for International Development has agreed to supply the necessary equipment and scientists.

In collaboration with the United States Government a preliminary scientific experiment for a brief period was conducted earlier this year.

The experiment confirmed that a properly organized scientific experiment on a small scale, but spread over a number of years, is necessary. The project is designed to benefit the long-range rainmaking capability in India. It is intended also to augment the general meteorological knowledge. It involves cloud-seeding from a specially adapted aircraft as well as ground-based data gathering equipments. *K. S. Nayar*

Machine Senses Robber's Footfall

No bank or warehouse need ever be broken into again during the quiet hours. Equipment, developed primarily for military use, is available to pick up the vibration in the ground from the lightest footfalls, even against a background of heavy traffic.

The existence of the system was first disclosed in the recent Mountbatten Report on the shortcomings of the British prison system. It is described as the only device which offers security from outside a protected area.

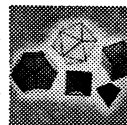
It consists of a special type of microphone linked to a receiver smaller than a briefcase and giving either audible or visual indication of an unwanted presence. The signals are so presented that it is possible to differentiate between man and animal, or a herd and group of soldiers.

The market potential in police, frontier and surveillance organizations all over the world is formidable, amounting to several tens of millions of dollars over the next few years, although a unit to protect a bank should cost under \$3,000. *F. C. Livingstone*

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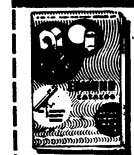
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