

Birth control appears successful in China despite its low esteem in Marxist theory

## 750 million Chinese might be wrong

Conflicts between ideology and practical need create some strange ironies in human affairs, and one of them became evident in July when a new report on family planning in China was released in the United States by the Population Council. Although China scholars (and even the Chinese themselves) lack the kind of precise demographic data about that nation which is furnished routinely about Western nations, the indications are that population control is a high-priority program in China and that the program is achieving considerable success. With an estimated 750 million Chinese, the need is great.

The irony is that classical Marxists regard Malthusian doctrine as totally false, and the Chinese Communists have traditionally claimed that China is the only nation in the world that practices classical Marxism. Thus the assumption would be that the Mainland Chinese would oppose population control, and, indeed, this was the line Chinese delegates took at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in June. The root problem of mankind, claimed these delegates, is not the Malthusian specter of overpopulation but, rather, economic and social inequity. When the affluent share their wealth with the poor, there will be enough for everyone even if there is a lot of everyone.

But the new study reveals that the Chinese external preaching and internal practice vary widely. Written by two obstetricians who traveled through much of China this year, Anibal Faundes of Chile and Tapani Luukkainen of Fin-

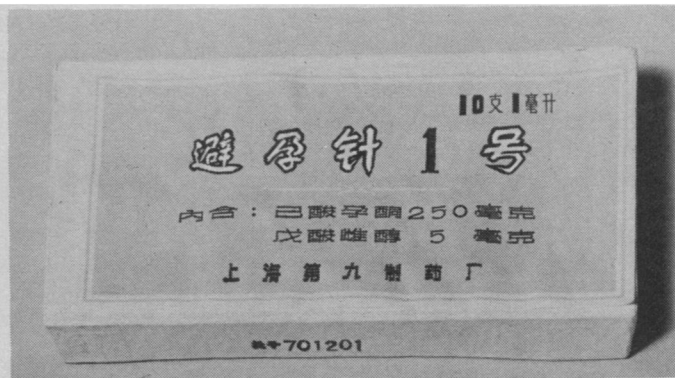
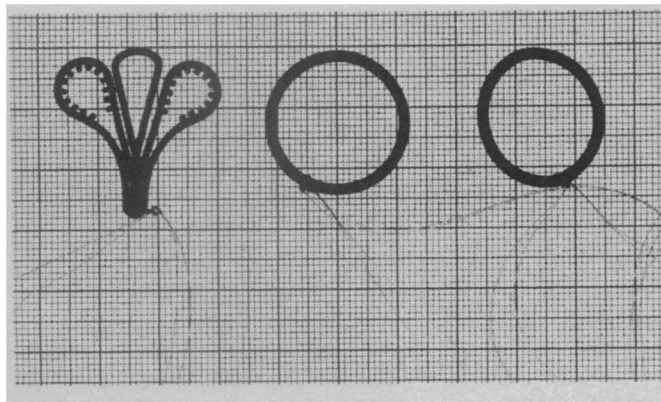
land, the study reveals that the Chinese are carrying on vigorous programs to limit births, and, in fact, the birth rate there may now be less than 20 per thousand, regarded as a low rate even by Western standards. (The study appears in the July issue of the Population Council journal, *STUDIES IN FAMILY PLANNING*.)

At the same time, suggest the two authors, the Chinese contention that an equitable social and economic system is more important than birth control, *per se*, may be borne out in part by the Chinese practice. It appears that birth control there is an integral part of far broader programs, a key one being provision of medical care to all citizens. Adds Pi-chao Chen, Wayne State University political scientist: "The short-run reason for birth control in China is not Malthusian; rather, it is aimed at more efficient labor force utilization, reduction of dependency and reduction of structural unemployment." Thus the irony may be less real than it appears at first glance. Birth control may be practiced in China mainly to keep a high percentage of citizens, especially women, in the work force.

Nonetheless, says Leo A. Orleans, China research specialist at the Library of Congress, birth control programs in China have had a hard row to hoe, and they were attacked frequently by Marxists in the early days of the Republic. After early agitation by some partly officials for birth control, contraception was in and out of vogue until the Cultural Revolution when the Red Guards gave family planning a

clear "Maoist" imprimatur. Since then, suggests Orleans in a study written for the Population Reference Bureau, birth control has been in. ". . . During the decade of the 1960's," he says, "the Chinese managed to start a gradual downward trend in the country's fertility." The trend continues, report the two obstetricians. Although birth control enjoys more success in the cities than in rural areas, the rapid growth of the "barefoot doctor" rural paramedical program may enable the rural areas to catch up, they suggest.

"The most important factor contributing to population limitation in China today," say the two obstetricians, "appears to be the relatively late age at marriage accompanied by strictly observed chastity prior to marriage." In short, a kind of puritanism a Southern Baptist might approve appears to be the prime tool of Chinese birth control programs (a fact which may dismay young U.S. admirers of China who place sexual freedom high on their list of goals). But, the researchers add, there appears to be little blunt coercion of young people; rather, there is such a homogeneity of values in China that young people almost universally accept the need for chastity. (Although premarital sex is illegal in China, two Chinese girls told the obstetricians they did not know what the punishment was because the offense never occurred.) Added to this general acceptance of chastity is unisex: men and women dress alike, women use no cosmetics and sex roles in work situations have been deemphasized. Thus there is little



Photos: Population Council

A "Flower of Canton" IUD (left) and Chinese ring IUD's; and a box of ampules of injectable steroid contraceptive.

artificial stimulation of sexual desire.

And late marriages are encouraged by the state through programs which stress the need for education (especially political education) before starting a family. Men do not often marry before they are in their late 20's, and the researchers report that in Chinese maternity wards there are rarely any women under 23 and few over 33. Thus child bearing is strictly circumscribed to a 10-year period in a woman's life, and two children (sometimes three in rural areas) are regarded as the ideal number. To achieve this goal, the whole range of techniques common in Western nations is used: abortion, intra-uterine devices (IUD's), tubal ligation, steroid pills and injections, condoms, and, occasionally, vasectomy.

Just as important, all of these techniques have been made freely and safely available through medical programs that extend down to the most remote rural commune. The barefoot doctor program, which gives promising young high school graduates six months of intensive medical training before sending them into rural areas to operate dispensaries, appears to be one of the most successful aspects of the new Chinese medical system initiated by the Cultural Revolution. At slightly higher levels of the system, registered nurses, practical nurses and midwives perform many of the procedures—including abortions and tubal ligations—performed only by doctors in Western nations. "It was stated in Canton, Wuhan and Peking," say the two researchers, "that an abortion performed by nurses is much safer than one by doctors because nurses tend to be more careful." Abortion is usually by aspiration in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, and, due to careful aseptic techniques, "mortality . . . seems to be nonexistent or extremely low." Likewise, a simplified transabdominal tubal ligation is regarded as a minor operation and it is done with local or acupuncture anesthesia. Complications are rare.

To secure precise national data on the effects of the programs is virtually impossible, report the two obstetricians. But local statistics tend to bear out the claim of fewer than 20 births per thousand. Perhaps just as striking are the local figures on infant mortality. The authors visited the International Peace Infant and Maternity Hospital in Shanghai where authorities told them the 1971 infant mortality rate was 19 per thousand. Equally striking was the report that during 46,000 deliveries in the hospital between 1962 and 1971, only five mothers were lost. These figures compare favorably with those for the United States—where capital and material resources are immensely greater. □

## Jumping jumping jacks before they jump

Skyjacking, once an exciting spectator sport, is quickly becoming a drag. The self-styled Robin Hood of the sky has degenerated into nothing more than a common criminal with a penchant for the bizarre and a desire to get publicity by aping the aerial antics of previous attempts. By now skyjackers have intruded upon the lives of so many people (more than 450 passengers and crew members have been murdered during skyjackings) that more vigorous attempts are being made to ground them.

When the crime was new and novel it presented a unique opportunity for psychiatrists to study the mental make-up of this particular type of criminal, and to suggest ways of preventing the crime. Dallas psychiatrist David G. Hubbard was able to interview many captured skyjackers and draw a composite picture of their personality. From this knowledge he was able to predict the present explosion of skyjackings (SN: 2/12/72, p. 108). In 1971 there were 27 such attempts. There have already been that many in 1972.

Hubbard's suggestions for preventing air piracy were also based on his knowledge of the skyjackers' personality type. The first thing he suggested was to keep from triggering the idea of skyjacking in a predisposed mind. This could be done by deemphasizing media coverage. Another method would be the use of diplomacy and negotiation to eliminate safe havens. The skyjacker should be prosecuted at his destination or returned immediately to the scene of the piracy for prosecution.

The new type of skyjacker, the jumping jack, Hubbard says, must be handled differently. He has interviewed nine of these parachuting extortionists and says they are similar to the original skyjacker but closely related (psychologically) to the bank robber. Technical means, he says, should be used to prevent them from jumping from the plane. Four airlines announced last week that the door usually used by jumpers will be sealed during flight.

This may be effective but all previous methods have failed to stop the game. For this reason the airline pilots got into the act and tried to force the United Nations to set up international rules for the return of all skyjackers. The pilots used a one-day, worldwide walk-out to force this action. They failed for lack of support but they may have done some good. Hubbard explains that the skyjacker sees himself as Robin Hood and the authorities as the wicked Sheriff of Nottingham. The Robin Hood does not mind frustrating the authorities but he usually does not want to perturb the

people or the pilots. The strike showed that the pilots are anything but calm.

The strike and the recent rash of skyjackings have spurred further action. President Nixon, last week, called for a mandatory search of all passengers and carry-on baggage on east and west coast shuttle flights. The Federal Aviation Administration wants this for all flights and if the airlines do not cooperate the FAA might try to enforce it by legal means. The FAA is presently shopping for magnetometers to be placed at every airport boarding gate. Congress is preparing to authorize up to \$3.5 million for this. The FAA is also emphasizing tighter airport security and plans to set up a school this fall in Oklahoma City to instruct local law officials and airport personnel in skyjacking prevention.

For the safety of pilots, some airlines may install bulletproof cockpits. For the safety of passengers and crews, John J. O'Donnell, president of the Air Line Pilots Association, is on a committee to find a nonlethal weapon to use aboard planes.

All of this security, it is hoped, will foil future attempts. But if attempts are made ALPA wants to be sure the skyjacker has no place to go. A plan is being worked out to boycott all airlines serving countries that harbor skyjackers. In this attempt ALPA has the backing of AFL-CIO President George Meany who says, "there must be an end to this dastardly threat to life in civilized human relations." His union members will refuse to service the aircraft of those nations and air lines not honoring the boycott. Congress may also act on this matter. Senators Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash.) and James B. Pearson (R-Kan.) have asked for legislation requiring the President to deny domestic landing rights to carriers from nations that harbor skyjackers. Their legislation also calls for a minimum 20-year sentence for the crime of skyjacking.

Hubbard's suggestion about limiting media coverage, however, is not getting much support. Bob Schulman at ALPA says some of the wire services and other media representatives are cooperating by limiting coverage of tactics and details on skyjackings. But a complete blackout is unlikely.

Philip L. Geyelin, editorial page editor of the Washington Post, says, the publicity is on the side of the pilots and the public. "The more we know about tactics," he explains, "the more we may be able to persuade the airlines to do something about security." When these things become humdrum, he says, they may be put on the back pages. Until then, it is the page-one headlines that are forcing Congress and the airlines to act on the necessary security measures. □