

monthly magazine *Amerika*, a slick, picture publication, something in the format of *Life*, which was to be permitted a distribution of 50,000 in the Soviet Union in return for the same circulation here of a similar Soviet magazine, *USSR*. Both are sold through newsstands and subscriptions, and the observation of American officials has been that *Amerika* is immensely sought after by the Soviet people. In this country, however, slick magazine articles on the Soviet Union are not a novelty. *USSR* has encountered sales difficulties, and each month there has been a remainder of several thousand unsold copies. In retaliation for the return of the unsold copies, the Soviets have taken to sending back several thousand copies of *Amerika* as unsalable.

Advocates of a harsh line toward the Soviet Union have berated the exchange program as a form of espionage in which we knowingly permit the Soviets to tap our superior skills. They point to the fact that much of our traffic to the Soviet Union is pretty much on an unorganized basis and is largely determined by the professional interests and personal curiosities of the Americans who are involved; in contrast, there are indications that there is little hit or miss in Soviet interest in what is going on here. "Their efforts," an American official noted, "generally seem to be centrally directed to gaining specific information about fields in which we surpass them."

The counter argument is that the Soviets have learned virtually nothing about American science and technology that was not available to them from freely circulating publications. On the other hand, the exchanges, despite the impediments created by the Soviets, have for the first time given American specialists an opportunity to look at many previously hidden-away aspects of Soviet society. Moreover, it is naive to assume that the U.S. is bypassing opportunities to relate the fruits of the exchange program to the national security.—D.S.G.

Fish Flour: FDA Collects Comments on Protein Supplement

The fish flour controversy (*Science*, 29 Sept.) will soon arrive at the next stage on what promises to be a long and contentious route.

The 60-day period set by the Food

and Drug Administration for public comment on the high-protein food supplement expires Wednesday. FDA, which has informally indicated opposition to approving the product for sale in this country, will then study the comments before it issues an order in the case.

The product for which FDA approval is sought is made from whole fish, and is considered to be of great potential for ending protein deficiencies in many of the developing nations. Although the market in this country is regarded to be insignificant, the applicant, the VioBin Co., of Monticello, Ill., feels it would be at a psychological disadvantage in promoting the product abroad if it were not first certified for sale here. FDA approval, formally known as a "standard of identity," is not required for export. FDA has objected to whole fish flour on the ground that it contains parts of the fish not normally eaten in this country. The process reduces the fish to an odorless, tasteless powder, which blends easily with various foods.

The courses open to FDA are to approve VioBin's application as submitted, approve it with modifications, or reject it outright. In any case, parties that feel adversely affected by the decision have the right to a public hearing and eventually an appeal through the federal courts.

FDA reported last week that it had received more than 500 individual comments, including a considerable number from state public health authorities who share FDA's aversion to the product. Several fisheries organizations submitted letters of support.

Fish flour has received considerable attention in the Food for Peace agency, and its director, George McGovern, has expressed dismay at the FDA decision to subject the application to the long and uncertain review process.

There are indications, according to Food for Peace officials, that the agency will be placing emphasis on encouraging manufacture abroad, an awkward thing to do as long as another federal agency refuses to certify it as fit for human consumption at home.

The controversy has aroused the interest of several members of Congress, including Senators Douglas and Saltonstall. For the present they are content to let the FDA review run its course, but a number of members of the House have introduced a bill to exempt the product from FDA jurisdiction.

Birth Control: No Reaction to Revelation of NIH Role

Federal financing of research that bears directly on birth control was publicly disclosed last week for the first time. What was most remarkable, perhaps, was not the revelation, but the lack of any apparent adverse reaction to the disclosure of U.S. involvement in this politically sensitive area. The silence to date has encouraged advocates of population control in their view that a favorable climate of opinion is developing on the subject of the need for this country to seek solutions to the population problems of the developing nations.

The disclosure, contained in a brief article in *Newsweek*, outlined the conclusions of a confidential "Survey of Research on Birth and Population," which was produced by the National Institutes of Health. The survey found that NIH is currently spending the relatively modest sum of \$1.3 million on studies related to birth control. The expenditures of private organizations, foundations, and industry bring the annual total to an estimated \$5.7 million.

NIH, which has one of the most wide-open information policies of any government agency, has adamantly maintained in the past that none of its expenditures are for birth control activities. As recently as last July, the *New York Times*, on the basis of information from NIH, reported that NIH has "a budget this year of \$560,000,000 but not a cent is earmarked for what many consider one of the most serious public health problems in the world—the population crisis."

The NIH survey notes that "any basic research on the process of reproduction is at the same time research in birth control." Since 1955, it reports, the Human Embryology and Development Study Section has made 748 grants. Of the projects current last year, 146 "were found to be relevant, more or less closely, to birth and population control. Sixty-six of the 146 were rated as distinctly relevant." Their funding totaled \$976,386.

A statement accompanying the survey concludes that "The climate for research toward birth and population control appears to be undergoing definite change. Those who most keenly sense this change are hopeful that a research area that they feel has enormous public health importance will now receive its due attention."