

Population Policy Options

John Bongaarts notes (Article, 11 Feb., p. 771) that one reason for excess fertility in the developing world is the desire for children as an insurance against adversity in old age. One reason for this anxiety is the common lack of social provision for old age in developing countries. Such countries often do not have the resources to offer this benefit universally.

A social measure that would help to reduce the desire for large families, and that would be within the resources of many states, would be the provision of state support for a limited category of the old, namely, those who have not given birth to or fathered more than two children in their lifetimes. This would offer citizens a choice to be made in their fertile years. They could choose to rely on a larger number of children for support in their old age, or they could limit their families to ensure their access to the state safety net, should their children fail them or die. In some countries, such as China, this might be an effective way to alter attitudes toward family size.

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Corrections and Clarifications

In the review by Kristie Macrakis of *Beyond the Wall: Memoirs of an East and West German Spy* by Werner Stiller, with Jefferson Adams (editor and translator) [Brassey's (US), McLean, VA, 1992; Maxwell Macmillan, London, UK, 1992] (17 Dec., p. 1908), it is stated that physicist Rolf Dobbertin, who denies any spying, was "sent to Paris in 1956 to study at the expense of the Stasi," was "sentenced to 12 years in prison," and "sat in a French jail for five years before he was released in 1991." Legal documents show that Dobbertin, who was arrested in January 1979 for acts of "communication with agents of a foreign power, dealings that could be harmful [intelligence de nature à nuire] to the military or diplomatic situation of France or to its essential economic interest," was jailed until May 1983. He was subsequently tried in 1990 and sentenced to 12 years in prison, but was acquitted of the above charge by a special Assize Court in a second trial in November 1991. According to Dobbertin, he studied continuously at the University of Rostock from 1952 until 1958, and then taught at the University of Berlin for one year before beginning his work in 1959 at the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique in France, where he continues to be employed.

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