

Publication of L. S. Stavrianos' book, "Global Rift: The Third World Comes of Age"

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Ask the typical American what he knows of the countries which make up the Third World and he will probably reply with terms like "underdeveloped," "poverty," "dictatorship," and "disease."

But the Third World is home to most of the world's people and taken together these African, Asian and Latin American countries may hold the key to the future for the other two giant power blocs, the United States and its European partners, and the Soviet Union and its allies.

Heretofore, little has been understood about the Third World and how it came to be but the picture may become clearer with the publication of the first comprehensive history of the Third World by L. S. Stavrianos, an adjunct professor of history at the University of California, San Diego.

In his new book, "Global Rift: The Third World Comes of Age," Stavrianos traces the evolution of Third World countries back to the Middle Ages. Defining the Third World as "those countries or regions that are economically dependent upon and subordinate to, the developed First World," he locates the initial appearance of the Third World in Eastern Europe in the 15th century. Stavrianos then describes how successive overseas regions were enveloped into the Third World, which became a global system during the 19th century. With the 20th century the Third World began its ongoing struggle for independence, which accounts for the "rift" in the title.

In his concluding chapter, Stavrianos contends that problems such as malnourishment, disease, and high unemployment, once thought confined to the Third World, are beginning to play a significant role in the more developed countries.

"Because of the unprecedented impact of modern science and technology," writes Stavrianos, "peoples of both the developed and underdeveloped countries find themselves today in the same boat, plagued by similar problems, and confronted with the grim and very real possibility of drowning together.

"If this seems preposterous," he continues, "consider the effect of the Vietnam War on American society, which has still not fully recovered from the political, economic and psychological trauma of that tragedy.

"Consider also our growing dependence on the Third World as a market for our products and as a source of raw materials, which are increasingly essential as we deplete our own resources."

Despite examples of such problems as increasing poverty and high unemployment in the United States, Stavrianos does not claim that America is becoming a Third World country.

But he does note that "...the traditional differentiation between affluent developed countries and impoverished underdeveloped countries no longer is clear cut and mutually exclusive." A new industrial revolution incorporating new developments in science and technology is taking place "blurring old distinctions between the hitherto privileged peoples of the First World and the subject peoples of the Third," according to Stavrianos. "The inhabitants of all regions now are becoming subject peoples--that is, peoples subject to the imperatives of the global market economy."

The 870-page volume is published in both paperback and hardback by William Morrow & Co. of New York.

The Canadian-born Stavrianos was a professor of history at Northwestern University from 1946 until 1973 when he came to UC San Diego as an adjunct professor. During his lengthy career he has earned a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Ford Faculty Fellowship, several grants from the Carnegie Corporation and a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship.

His list of books includes: "The Promise of the Coming Dark Age," "The World Since 1500," "The World to 1500," and several books on Balkan history.

(October 20, 1981) For more information contact: Paul Lowenberg, 452-3120