

In only a few centuries our globe will be hopelessly and irretrievably overpopulated. Statistics already calculate a world population of 8.7 billion for the year 2050. Barely 200 years later it will be 50 billion, and then 335 men will have to live on one square kilometer. It doesn't bear thinking about! The tranquilizerlike theories of food from the sea or even cities on the floor of the sea will prove inefficient remedies against the population explosion sooner than their optimistic supporters would like to think. In the first six months of 1966 more than 10,000 people, who had tried in desperation to keep themselves alive by eating snails and plants, starved to death on the Indonesian island of Lombok. U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, estimates the number of children in danger of dying of hunger in India at 20,000,000, a figure which backs up Dr. Hermann Mohler of Zurich's claim that hunger is reaching for world domination.

It has been proved that world food production does not keep pace with the growth of population, in spite of the most modern technical aids and the large-scale use of chemical fertilizers. Thanks to chemistry, the present age also has birth control products at its disposal. But what use are they if the women in underdeveloped countries do not use them? For food production could draw level with the population increase only if it were possible to halve the birth rate in ten years, *i.e.*, by 1980. Unfortunately I cannot believe in this rational solution, because the "sound barrier" of prejudice, ostensibly due to ethical motives and religious laws, cannot be broken through as quickly as the calamity of overpopulation grows. Is it more human or even divine to let millions of people die of hunger year after year than to save the poor creatures from being born?

Yet even if birth control were to win through one fine day, even if cultivatable areas were enlarged and harvests multiplied by aids as yet unknown, even if fishing supplied much more food and fields of algae on the ocean bed provided nourishment, if all this and a lot more were to happen, it would all be only a postponement, a putting off of the evil day for about 100 years.

—from *Chariots of the Gods?*, Erich von Däniken, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, © 1968