

Population Control in China

China's misguided effort to control its population has cost the Chinese people dearly. Each year since 1980, 30 million women have been made to have abortions, sterilizations, or IUD insertions. Women pregnant with "illegal" second children are commonly bullied into abortions, sometimes even physically dragged off to clinics against their will. The homes of those who flee forced abortion or sterilization are often torn down. Large numbers of "Illegal" newborns have been put to death by lethal injection.

During my stay in a Chinese village in 1980, I was an eyewitness to such abuses of human rights. I have since written extensively about China's coercive population-control program, and have interviewed many Chinese about their experiences. No story was more dramatic or vivid than that of a woman I shall call Chi An, which I recount in *A Mother's Ordeal: One Woman's Fight Against China's One-Child Policy* (Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993).

In 1988 I helped Chi An, who was then pregnant, win political asylum in the U.S. on the then-novel grounds that she was fleeing a forced abortion. The Immigration and Naturalization Service bitterly opposed her application from the beginning. Those who resisted China's one-child policy, INS attorneys argued, were merely social malcontents, not true political dissidents. Besides, they said, granting asylum to Chi An would "open up the floodgates" to a torrent of illegal Chinese immigrants.

I regarded the INS position as naive and troubling. In China *any* dissent from *any* government policy – be it the prohibition on underground publications or the ban on second children – is an act of political rebellion. As far as "opening up the floodgates" was concerned how could Chinese in any number escape from that closed society much less cross the vast

Pacific to our shores? To me, the INS arguments sounded like an attempt to exploit old, irrational fears of a "yellow peril."

Chi An's victory on August 5, 1988, established a precedent: Those Chinese arriving on our shores who could demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution in connection with the one-child policy would henceforth be granted asylum.

In the meantime, I was shocked to discover that, before leaving China, Chi An herself had been a member of the population control police. Charged with enforcing the one-child policy on the women of her factory, she browbeat women into submitting to abortions and sterilizations they did not want. She even assisted in performing late-term abortions on women who desperately wanted to bear the children they were carrying,

The turning point for Chi An came when a close friend became pregnant. Given a choice between informing on her friend who was already in labor and having to report the birth of an "illegal" child to the authorities, she informed. The baby was put to death at birth by lethal injection, and her friend never spoke to her again. Chi An resigned her post and joined her husband in the U.S.

It would have been easy to condemn Chi An for what she had done, but by then I knew too much about her circumstances. Some years before, she herself had been coerced into a mid-term abortion by grim-faced officials who broke her will to keep her baby. She had been forced to sign a one-child agreement and pressured into accepting an IUD. Her conscience had never really recovered from the loss of her child, and was further numbed by her fear of reprisal. The victim had become the victimizer.

Today Chi An and her husband live in the Southwest with their son and daughter. Grateful to the pro-lifers who helped them

win asylum, they were drawn to the Catholic church and have now been baptized and confirmed in the faith.

It is ironic that those on the other side of the abortion question – who bill themselves as pro-choice – did not take up Chi An's cause as well. After all, the government of China not only sponsors abortions by the millions, it takes away a woman's right to choose.

The silence of pro-choice leaders does not come as a complete surprise to me, however. Most have bought into the population bomb myth, and not a few have openly supported radical population control measures. Eleanor Smeal, for instance, several years ago praised the Chinese policy. Such pro-aborts are willing to overlook the obvious evils of China's one-child policy for the imagined benefits that the resulting birth dearth will bring. Their sympathies lie with those who choose death, not with those like Chi An, who would choose life.

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