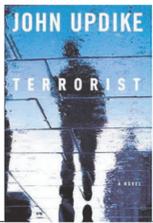


INTERNATIONAL Herald Tribune

THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER • PUBLISHED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES EDITED IN PARIS AND HONG KONG • PRINTED IN PARIS

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2006



By JOHN VINOCCUR
Sex and a civilization clash

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The return of knitwear

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of a master portraitist

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In Genoa, Europe gets vision of future

Plunging birthrates leave city 'a place for old people'

By Elisabeth Rosenthal

GENOA: There are hundreds of stores in the Fiumara Mall — Sephora, Elan, Lavazza Café. But in a nation long known for its hordes of children, there is not one toy store in the sprawling mix, and a shiny merry-go-round stands dormant.

"This is a place for old people," said Francesco Lotti, 24, strolling with his fiancée in Genoa's medieval old town. "Just look around. You don't see young people." Even for people their age, "there are not many places — no clubs, for example." Playgrounds? He looks quizzically at his fiancée. They can count them on a few fingers.

While all of Europe has suffered from declining birthrates, nowhere has the drop been as profound and pro-

EMPTY NESTS

Europe without children

Second of three articles

longed as in this once gorgeous Mediterranean city, the capital of Italy's graying Liguria region. Genoa provides a vision of Europe's aging future, displaying the challenges that face a society with more old than young, and suggesting how hard it will be to reverse the downward population spiral.

There are no longer children playing in the streets here, nor many family-friendly restaurants. Schools have closed for lack of students. Hospitals are overworked with the elderly. Medical costs are bankrupting the government. And the fewer the children in a society, the harder it becomes to have them.

"This is a society that was based on family ties and now there are few families," said Daniela Del Boca, a professor of economics at the University of Turin. "It's easy to bemoan low birthrates, but it's hard to have good ideas to solve the problem."

Most Genovese today have only one child or none and are unapologetic about the choice. The birthrate (7.7 births per 1,000 people) was about half the death rate (13.7 per 1,000) in Liguria last year, a frightening ratio even by European standards.

Government efforts to reverse the trend are not working. Cash payments for births, for example, have failed to inspire a leap in fertility rates, and immigration, which might help counteract the population decline, is generating new problems.

Here, as in much of Europe, immigrants are having more children than others and they have kept Genoa's population from imploding. But many Genovese are beginning to feel that the city

BIRTHRATES, Continued on Page 6

Afghanistan's 'Little America' unravels

A violent siege is tightened in Helmand

By David Rohde

LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan It began last summer. On a July morning, Taliban gunmen shot and killed this province's most powerful cleric as he walked to morning prayers. Five months later, they executed a teacher as students watched. The next month, they gunned down an Afghan engineer working for a foreign aid group, as he prayed in a mosque.

This spring and summer, the slow siege of this provincial capital intensified. All told, in surrounding Helmand Province, five teachers, one judge and scores of police officers have been killed.

"Our government is weak," said Fowza Olomi, a women's rights activist whose driver was shot and killed in May and who fears she is next. "Anarchy has come."

When the Taliban regime was ousted by American forces nearly five years ago, this southern city seemed like fertile ground for the U.S.-led effort to stabilize the country.

For 30 years during the Cold War, Americans carried out the largest development project in Afghanistan's history, building a modern capital with suburban-style track homes, two giant earthen dams and 480 kilometers, or 300 miles, of canals that made 100,000 hectares, or 250,000 acres, of desert bloom. Afghans called this city "Little America."

Today, Little America is at the epicenter of a Taliban resurgence and explosion in drug cultivation that has claimed the lives of 85 American and NATO soldiers this year and doubled U.S. casualty rates countrywide.

Across Afghanistan, roadside bomb attacks are up by 30 percent and suicide bombings have doubled. Statistically it is now nearly as dangerous to serve as a U.S. soldier in Afghanistan as it is in Iraq.

Helmand's descent symbolizes how Afghanistan has evolved since the initial victory over the Taliban into one of the most troubled fronts in the fight against terrorism.

The roots of the problem go back to 2002, former Bush administration, United Nations and Afghan officials said, when the United States and its allies failed to take advantage of a sweeping desire among Afghans for help from foreign countries.

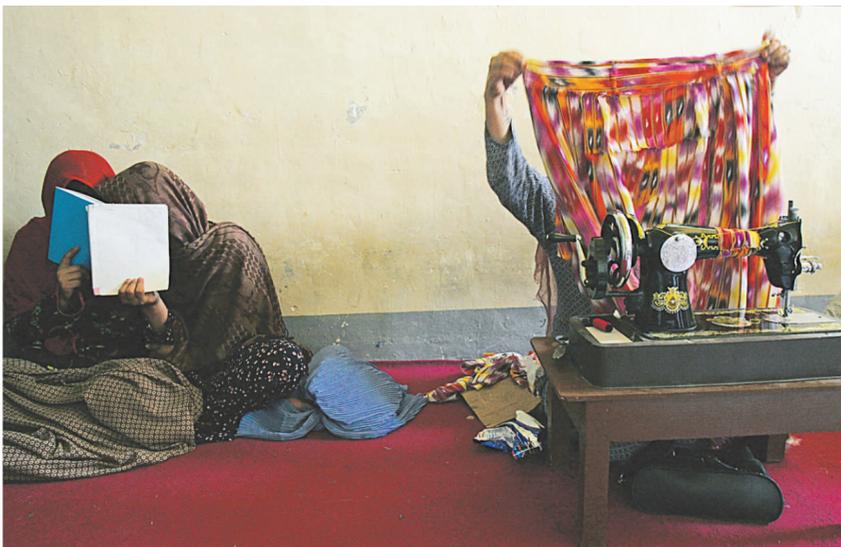
The Defense Department initially opposed a request by then-Secretary of State Colin Powell and Afghanistan's new leaders for a sizable peacekeeping force. It deployed only 8,000 troops, but purely in a combat role, officials said. The security of provinces like Helmand was left to local Afghans.

"Where the world, including the United States, came up short was on the security side," said Richard Haass, former director of policy planning at the State Department. "That was the

PROVINCE, Continued on Page 2



Photographs by Danfung Dennis for The New York Times
An officer resting at the national police station in Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan, where the deteriorating security situation is sharply slowing reconstruction efforts. Below, women hid their faces at a center in Helmand Province, fearful of Taliban reprisals.



Syed Jan Sabawoon/European Pressphoto Agency
An Afghan policeman in Kabul inspecting the scene Monday where four Afghan civilians and a British soldier were killed when a suicide bomber hit a NATO convoy. A total of 15 British servicemen have been killed in the last three days in Afghanistan.

Hezbollah and Israel to discuss prisoners

UN will mediate; Qatar offers troops for Lebanon force

By Warren Hoge

JIDDA: Secretary General Kofi Annan said Monday that the United Nations would mediate talks on the exchange of Israeli and Hezbollah prisoners.

Annan disclosed the news in an interview on his flight to Saudi Arabia from Doha, where the government of Qatar announced it would contribute 200 to 300 troops to the UN force set up to keep the peace between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon.

Annan also said he had received a telephone call Sunday from the Syrian foreign minister, Walid al-Moellem, who said his country would send a battalion of troops to guard the border with Lebanon. In Damascus last week, Annan had asked President Bashar al-Assad to help enforce the arms embargo called for in the Security Council resolution that ended the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel.

On the possible prisoner exchange, Annan said that he had already chosen his representative to the negotiations, that Israel had chosen its envoy and that what he called "Lebanon-Hezbollah" was in the process of selecting one.

The choice of envoys will be critical because Israel insists that it will not talk directly with Hezbollah. And even though Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel has been under increasing domestic pressure to win the release of two soldiers captured by Hezbollah — and one captured by militants in the Gaza Strip — there has been no official confirmation from the government that it would engage in such talks.

Annan said the names of the three negotiators would be kept secret. Their job would be to set up the "mechanism" to bring about the release of prisoners from both sides, which he said he hoped would be the first step toward further talks between Israel and Lebanon. He also said that he would insist on control of the negotiations and no interference from outside.

"Everywhere you go, you hear ru-

MIDEAST, Continued on Page 6

Darfur peacekeepers given an ultimatum

The Sudanese government delivered an ultimatum on Monday to the African Union peacekeeping force trying to enforce a shaky peace deal in Darfur: extend its mandate without turning over its command to the United Nations or pack up and leave by the end of the month. The move appeared designed to stymie a UN Security Council resolution passed last week. Page 6

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EU sharply criticizes Turkey on reform pace

EU lawmakers on Monday sharply criticized Turkey for its slow pace of reform and warned that failure to make progress in its dispute with Greece over Cyprus risked bringing entry negotiations to a halt. Page 3

In Business

■ Airbus replaces the head of the A380 program and the plane makes its maiden passenger flight. Page 10

■ Takafumi Horie, Japanese Internet entrepreneur, pleads not guilty to violating securities law. Page 10

■ Crude oil prices fall to a 15-week low as the U.S. summer travel season draws to a close. Page 14

CURRENCIES | New York

	Monday 2 P.M.	Previous
€1 =	\$1.2866	\$1.2839
£1 =	\$1.9059	\$1.9064
\$1 =	¥116.05	¥117.15
\$1 =	SF1.2287	SF1.2304

Full currency rates | Page 15

OIL | New York

Monday 2 P.M.

Light sweet crude \$68.02 ↓ \$1.17

STOCK INDEXES

Monday

The Dow Closed ..

FTSE 100 close 5,986.60 ↑ 0.63%

Nikkei 225 close 16,358.07 ↑ 1.39%

In Russia, imperiled health (and profits)

By Andrew E. Kramer

MOSCOW: Time and again, Dr. Boris Merkeskin pricked his patient's arms with a needle and injected a drug intended to alleviate high blood pressure. He did it for six months this year and his patients recovered smoothly.

They may not be so lucky next time. Merkeskin, the chief physician at a large research hospital in Siberia, and his colleagues had been unknowingly administering roughly 3,000 doses of fake Cavinton. The drug, made in its genuine form by Gedeon Richter of Hungary, is one of the more common counterfeit pharmaceuticals circling in Russia, the police said.

"Thank God it was substituted with a

medicine with no real effect on vital functions," Merkeskin said via telephone. "If that were not the case we would have a tragedy."

But counterfeit prescription drugs are proliferating in Russia, and indeed, in many countries, according to industry experts and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Russians already adept at burning pirated DVDs, rolling their own Marlboro cigarettes and printing knockoff Nike T-shirts have turned to the more delicate art of making fake prescription medicine. And they are doing a very good job, experts say, cutting into the profits of pharmaceutical companies that are trying to tap growing demand inside Russia.

Experts say fake drugs are being smuggled to Europe and the United States, the world's most lucrative prescription drug market. Drug counterfeiting is different from the production of low-cost medicines. Some developing countries, as part of a principled stance in a broader public health debate, will allow their manufacturers to make certain generic medicines, for example, for AIDS patients, without paying license holders. Counterfeiters, in contrast, operate illegally for profit.

The variety of fakes range from a crude mix of glue, chalk and sugar to nearly exact chemical replicas of complex pharmaceuticals, like Pfizer's Lipit-

FAKES, Continued on Page 12

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