

Third World hit hardest

# Economic woe grips world

United Press International  
One of the most profound upheavals of the century is shaking the world's economy and virtually no one has been left unscathed.

From Detroit's auto factories to the Philippines' coconut plantations, uncomfortably large numbers of people are out of jobs and entire industries are threatened with failure.

Everywhere, the working man painfully aware that dollars, pesos or marks are being drained from his pocket, a worldwide survey by United Press International member, local showed.

"Life is harder than it used to be," said Costa Rican housewife Carmen Maldonado, who contributes to the difficulty of sending her two children to school amid 100 percent inflation. "We're doing all we can to get out of this mess."

Recession is, strictly speaking, a capitalist affair, but the Soviet bloc also is languishing, proving their economic hardship does not recognize ideological boundaries.

Outside of Moscow, food shortages are acute and items such as ever fine meat and butter are rationed. "You should visit the food knowledge," one housewife told a Western visitor to the Crimean resort of Yalta. "It's like visiting a museum — nothing to buy except the dusty jars on the shelves."

Although Americans are suffering, they are not in a life-and-death struggle just yet. Elsewhere, the recession has not translated into coups, forced devaluations or aggravated tribal conflicts, all phenomena the United States has escaped.

Once-prosperous West Europeans are now locked in the depths of what is an outright depression for many industries. Britain, racked by the highest unemployment in its history, is torn by riots in the slums of Liverpool.

Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens warns that European democracy itself is threatened by massive unemployment and economic dislocation.

"We risk losing an entire generation," said Martens, whose country has the highest per capita unemployment in Western Europe. "This is a real threat for our democratic institutions."

Brazilians, Mexicans, Filipinos, Koreans and other peoples who once rode high on "economic miracles" are finding their dreams of prosperity dashed by protectionism, depressed commodity prices and staggering foreign debts. Altogether, developing nations labor beneath a billion mountain of debt.

The dream of big holidays and a new car has ended," Brazilian executive Elena Moritz said in Sao Paulo.

The shattered economies of other countries have laid a breed-

ing ground for political turbulence, terrorism and disease. The ranks of what Henry Kissinger once called the "basket cases" are expanding.

Nepal, Bangladesh, black Africa, the Caribbean and Central America are caught up in an inexorable squeeze worsened by a sharp decline in international aid, high interest rates, a fall-off in international tourism, burgeoning populations and persistent inflation.

Many of these countries' economic woes are deeper than the Great Depression of the 1930s. President Reagan's "magic of the marketplace" offered in place of U.S. aid has yet to perform its wonders.

"The poorer countries are still trying to get roads, running water and latrines," a U.N. analyst in New York said. "When the coffee crops don't do well or whatever, it is not a question of doing without a big car or living less well. These people are dying."

Black Africa faces the world's most critical food shortages and its plight will not improve for the remainder of this century, said Frank Wisner, deputy assistant U.S. secretary of state. He cited the Sudan, Nigeria, Liberia, Zaire and Zambia as worst hit.

"The combined impact of rising oil prices, global recession and declining per capita food production has brought many

African countries to the brink of financial and political chaos," Wisner told a congressional panel.

The OPEC oil cartel, whose price hikes beginning in 1973 helped precipitate the current crisis, also is not immune. The tentacles of recession have clutched Venezuela, Nigeria and several other OPEC members hit by softening oil prices.

Even the Persian Gulf oil sheikhs find their immense reserves of petrodollars shrinking. Israeli economist Elyahu Kanovsky predicts both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will incur deficits in coming years because of the strain of aiding Iraq in its war against Iran at the same time that oil prices are declining.

A few hard-driving economies of Asia, most notably Singapore and Taiwan, have been able to avoid the full impact of recession, but Japan is worried.

Although still healthier than many of its Western trading partners, Japan suffers from its highest unemployment in 26 years and its much vaunted exports are contracting.

"With both inflation and unemployment among the lowest in the world, the Japanese should be a happy lot," UPI correspondent Antonio Kamiya writes from Tokyo. "But they are worried. There are palpable signs that all is not well in the mighty Japanese economy."

Although Japan's jobless rate is not high, it has worked real hardship in a land accustomed to full employment. In one southern province, jobless people have begun chopping off their fingers to collect insurance money.

"There just aren't enough jobs to go around anymore," a local official in Fukuoko Prefecture lamented.

The relative success of the Persian Gulf and East Asia are not enough to alter the conclusion that a sense of crisis and loss of confidence are deepening worldwide despite U.S. government

predictions that the recession is ending. "No one" has escaped unaffected, Morgan Guaranty economist Rimmer deVries says. "No one."

"The Soviet bloc certainly hasn't escaped," deVries told

refugees — and prospering by their standards. "All I want to do is to save up and try to move to the United States," Mexican bank executive Alejandro Ordaz said in Mexico City.

Perhaps the most dramatic stories are the countries, like Mexico, that once boasted "economic miracles."

Mexico, which only recently considered itself on the verge of becoming a modern industrial power, now is in a tailspin. The government has been forced to virtually double the cost of gasoline, electricity, cooking gas, tortillas and bread and devalue the peso yet again.

The price increases are certain to fuel the country's inflation, already at an annual rate of 64 percent, the highest level since Mexico's 1910-1917 revolution. Mexico also is saddled with the developing world's largest debt, expected to hit a colossal \$80 billion by year's end.

Malaysia, once among the world's strongest economies, is being punished by deteriorating prices for tin, rubber and other commodities. Now the world's largest tin producer is closing mines and laying off workers.

UPI in New York. "Even the oil exporters. Look at Nigeria and Mexico. They're all cutting. Everyone is impacted to some degree. I almost feel the United States is the least-hurting."

Mexicans, Haitians, Ethiopians, Indians, Vietnamese and others all still think of the United States as the land of milk and honey. They are arriving by the thousands in a historic wave of

cycles, etc. . . .

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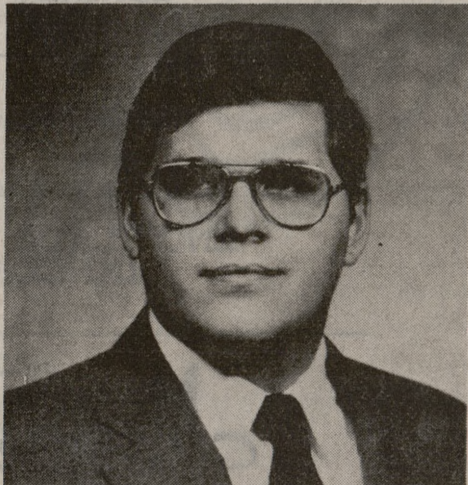
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