

1973's crises and suffering can have value

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December 1973



Photo date and location unknown

For many people, 1973 will be remembered as a year of mixed hope and fears. Cease-fires in Vietnam and the Middle East promised less fighting and hope for solutions to other pressing world issues. However, as time goes by, it is clear that the cease-fire in Vietnam is mostly a farce, and the carnage continues on both sides.

As the year closed, peace in the Middle East remained insecure, with Golda Meir's government facing criticism because of its handling of the war and Arab countries divided in their goals. However, the historic Geneva conference brought Israelis and Arabs face to face for their first talks, and hope remains that the Arabs will acknowledge Israel's sovereignty in return for captured Arab lands.

The United States shook by the Watergate investigations and accusations, succumbed to the worldwide energy crunch, as the Arab nations used their overwhelming portion of the world's oil supplies as a political lever against Israel and her allies.

Questions of morality in government, which captured so many headlines throughout the year, took second place to the satisfaction of personal needs for warmth, transportation, light, and a host of oil derivatives.

The United States, with about six percent of the world's population, uses about 40 percent of the world's energy, and is comparatively self-sufficient in energy needs.

Other countries have fared far poorer, with prospects of losing all their foreign currency reserves to skyrocketing oil prices. The United States and other aid-giving countries are reconsidering their commitment to help other nations.

In times of crisis, where does one turn? To the fulfillment of his own physical needs or to work for the benefit of the entire nation or the world? It is unfortunate that the clearest trends seem to seek isolationism and individualism. Each man for himself, each man for his own gas tank. Oil shortage and rising inflation may mean 10 gallons instead of a full tank in the car of the fortunate American, while it means only half the necessary daily ration of sorghum for the farmer in famine-struck central Africa.

Perhaps such a time of limited mobility and security may cause men of our age to look inward and upward for deeper answers to life's questions. Perhaps we may discover common bonds of brotherhood and selfless concern for our neighbor in the process. If we use this opportunity to evaluate ourselves as men and women and to find our purpose as nations and as a world community, then crises and suffering can have value. Then we can find new hope.