

# Memorial

## **Professor Jean Bourgeois-Pichat (1912-1990)**

Easter Day (15 April 1990) took away Alfred Sauvy's successor as Director of INED, Jean Bourgeois-Pichat. Everyone who knew him, who admired his sparkling intelligence and who loved him is saddened over the passing away of such a learned man who was as eminent as he was modest.

Born on 21 June 1912, and after a career as an officer in active service who was broken by the defeat of 1940, he became part of a brilliant trio of multi-disciplinarians, shining as a demographer. Ever since INED was founded, Alfred Sauvy made sure of the cooperation of these three men who, each in his own way, went on to write some of the most outstanding papers on French demography: Jean Bourgeois-Pichat, Louis Henry and Paul Vincent.

Very rapidly, after many analyses of the evolution of fertility at the end of the war, Jean Bourgeois-Pichat recognised the new character of the tendencies which, beyond the conjunctural fluctuations connected with the return of prisoners and deportees and the general activity, characterised fertility in post-war France. His scientific curiosity led him to study infant mortality—and thence to leave his name with great distinction on endogenous and exogenous mortality—the general problems of old age, the dynamics of stable populations—and quasi-stable, a term that he coined—perspectives of population. His expertise widened unceasingly, and when John Durand, Director of the Population Division of the United Nations, was looking for an assistant, the choice naturally fell on Jean Bourgeois-Pichat. The remarkable work that the Division did from 1953 to 1962 had Jean Bourgeois-Pichat's imprint on it.

In 1962 Alfred Sauvy gave up the directorship of INED to take up a professorship in the College of France. He asked Jean Bourgeois-Pichat to succeed him. During close to ten years, BP, as he was fondly called, led the Institute in the pursuit of intense research activity and in giving brilliant conferences the world over.

His departure from INED, following an unfortunate misunderstanding with the Home Ministry, was for him a bitter experience. But for all that, he was not discouraged. With the international prestige that he commanded he founded CICRED, the International Committee of Cooperation in National Demographic Research, in collaboration with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. From 1971, under the stewardship of Jean Bourgeois-Pichat a series of international seminars were held, where top experts exchanged their

latest findings. In December, he enlivened the last of them, devoted to the social differences of mortality, held in Paris.

While with us Jean Bourgeois-Pichat was a well known scholar. Some things are unknown, but are not surprising. He was a poet, often finding in the Muse the antidote to the monotony of daily life. The delicate sensibility that he evinced in his scientific activity gave him free passage in his travels to the land of poesy.

A brave man, ever open to scientific exchange, ever ready with a hearty welcome and to open up the field of reflection, ever benevolent to the youth and extremely courteous to the younger set, exquisitely jovial, and above all with an astonishing amount of scientific creativity, Jean Bourgeois-Pichat sometimes had the style of a visionary. He leaves behind a remarkable amount of work, a souvenir highly esteemed among demographers the world over.

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