

## How reliable are the U.N.'s population figures?

The wildest population growth projections are based on figures compiled and generated by the United Nations Population Division. In more than one case, these reported or projected figures are shown to be very questionable. The U.N. reports its population projection in three "variants": low, medium, and high. These are three possible population levels, based on different fertility and mortality rates. Needless to say, when one reads in U.N. publications such sentences as "Some specialists foresee a world population of 20 billion in the next century," these projections are based on the U.N.'s "high" variant, which projects over 9 billion people by 2025. The "low" variant projects many fewer, at 7.8 billion. But this figure is questionable, if the following cases are representative:

- From April 1974 until December 1978, the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia and murdered at least 1 million of its people. But what does the U.N. say? The official U.N. figures show a drop of only 600,000 people between 1975 and 1980, probably half the number actually murdered. In percentages, the difference is enormous, since Cambodia had only a little over 7 million people at the time. By 1985, the U.N. claims, the Cambodian population had

miraculously re-grown from 6.5 million in 1980 to 7.3 million—despite the devastation of its young adults.

- In Nigeria, the U.N. had projected that the population would be 110-120 million people by 1992, based on the 1973 census. But the government census in 1992 counted only 88 million people. To date, the U.N. has failed to correct its projections; the "official" reported population for Nigeria for 1990 in the U.N. *World Population Prospects: The 1992 Revision* is 108,542,000 people—20 million more than the government actually counted.

- In November 1982, Prof. Youssef Corbage of the French National Institute for Demographic Studies said in a speech in Brussels that the U.N. had seriously overestimated the number of children who would be born in the Maghreb nations of North Africa, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. The difference between the U.N.-projected fertility and the actual fertility represents a "very tangible" difference from what the populations of these countries will be in the medium term, "particularly by the end of the first quarter of the 21st century," he stated. Fertility has fallen at least 50%, from very high levels in all three countries over 30 years. Corbage estimates that by 2025, the population of Algeria will actually be 44.8 million, and not the 52 million estimated by the U.N. Morocco will have 40 million, and not the estimated 45.6 million, while Tunisia will have 12.7 million, and not the estimated 13.6 million.

childbearing age. A report published by the European Commission in 1986 on the causes of the demographic disaster in Europe observed that despite the devastation of all of western Europe in World War II, in the period immediately after the war, in the midst of great economic hardship, "yet couples were fired by the ideal of rebuilding their countries materially and decided to have more children." The current world economic crisis certainly is a factor in low births, "but it should not be forgotten that the demographic crisis appeared well before the economic crisis, and while the latter may have aggravated it, it was certainly not its primary cause."

### Enter the zero-growthers

All these trends toward the destruction of developing, productive, industrialized societies were fostered by the neomalthusians, whose "blueprint," the Club of Rome-sponsored *Limits to Growth*, was published in 1972. The malthusians set out to create panic about "overpopulation" destroying the Earth, with such propaganda as Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, published in the early 1970s, which demanded that world population be actively reduced, not just "controlled." In the 1980s, a new argument was introduced,

that population growth was a threat to the "ecosphere." This ecological argument is promoted now, in the much-publicized book *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, by the Thomas Malthus of the 1990s, Yale Prof. Paul Kennedy. Kennedy writes:

"The population explosion in the Southern Hemisphere threatens to affect more developed countries of the North. Yet even if that is true, developed Northern regions place much greater stress per capita upon the Earth's resources than do developing countries, simply because the former consume so much more. Thus, the consumption of oil in the United States—with only 4% of the world's population—equals one-quarter of total annual production. . . . The same imbalance in consumption is true of a range of other items, from paper to beef. According to one calculation, the average American baby represents twice the environmental damage of a Swedish child . . . thirteen times that of a Brazilian, thirty-five times that of an Indian, and 280 times that of a Chadian or Haitian because its level of consumption throughout its life will be so much greater." Kennedy's source is none other than Paul Ehrlich.

The policy is not just to reduce the populations of dark-