

# Chapter 5

## POPULATION EXPLOSIONS

We have seen, in Chapter 4, that the pathologically selfish First World elites currently controlling humanity consistently ignore unmistakable warnings of total environmental collapse around one quarter way into the twenty-first century. By insisting on debt repayments, and failing to provide economic support to Third World peoples, those same ruthless attitudes have perpetuated the population explosions, which have been proven to result from the pressures on poorer groups to have large families. And in turn, population explosions exacerbate the various environmental crises. Population increases are naturally high in poor countries where children are seen as the most obvious insurance for parents as they grow older, particularly in the context of infant mortality approaching 4m pa, and where literacy levels are so low as to drastically hinder introduction of birth control programmes. Although average numbers of children born to each mother are falling, this is offset by the surge in fertility caused by nearly 40 percent of world population being under 15; the median age for all Africa is just 17 years. China's one child-per-family programme has failed, thus 120m more children than desired are expected by 2000.

That birth rates are inextricably related to living standards is illustrated by the World Bank's Table of Demographic Indicators, which shows a remarkable correlation between statistics for Deaths and Births. In country after country, a fall in the death rate has been followed by a fall in birth rates, on average to double the extent of the former. World population increased from 2.5bn in 1950 to 5.3bn in 1990, and is, at present rates of increases of around 100m pa, expected to reach over 6bn by 2000 and 8bn by 2025. However, even these totals would be exceeded unless the current birth rate of 3.9 children per mother is reduced to 2.1 by 2010.

### The bloated mega-cities

Over half the world's population is already urban; by 2000, 75% of First World, and nearly 50% of Third World citizens will be living in cities. Impelled by deteriorating rural conditions, and slender hopes of better prospects, urban populations tripled from 700m to 2,100m between 1950 and 1990. City numbers rose, on average, by 2.5% pa, over 3% in poorer countries and by 4.8% pa in Africa. In Latin America, for example, only a bare 20% of people remain in the country areas; Lima's population of 175,000 in 1920 is now 3m and rising by 1,000 daily. By 2000, it is forecast there will be one hundred cities having over 2m inhabitants, sixty with over 4m, and twenty with over 10m, including Mexico City with over 25m.

Particularly in Third World cities, this human stampede has, not surprisingly, overwhelmed such essential urban infrastructures as water supply, drainage, communications and social services as may have already existed. Millions have shown incredible courage, initiative and ingenuity in creating their new living areas out of nothing: makeshift appendages to the parent cities, which can offer little except possibilities of scraping a living in increasingly polluted, often earthquake-prone zones. In the context of the huge numbers flooding in, it has even been forecast, if circumstances do not improve, that in some cities, particularly because of water supply and drainage problems, the inhabitants could die as fast as they are replaced from without.

An indication of how realistic that terrible prognosis may be, is provided by this report from Victoria Brittain, describing Kebelle 41, a district of Addis Ababa where 30,000 people share living space averaging 1 sq metre per person:

The children walk in shit, play in shit and wash in shit; the pathways are tiny and

crowded with children paddling in shit; the communal lavatories are open holes in the ground which flood during the rainy season shifting tons of shit through the tiny wooden shacks surrounding them. I met one lady who lives in a 10 foot square hut, which had fallen to an angle of 45 degrees; she has no bed, just a box on which she sleeps, sitting up, at night.

There is a latrine on the hill above her which tips its waste daily into her home, and a latrine in front of her which stinks; she has lived there for ten years. Another house had an indoor toilet; it was in the kitchen. The house is 15 square metres in size and three families live in its two rooms, sharing the same facilities. The people living at the back of the toilet in the wet season get the leakage and seepage, so for four months of the year they are living in the middle of shit.<sup>1</sup>

The terrible public health dangers are not the only hazard facing the teeming millions cramming into the mega-cities, where extremes of poverty and wealth co-exist in ever closer proximity. Arnold Toynbee has spoken of the danger that *'the whole of the world's additional population is going to silt up in urban slums of one kind or another, with the risk of a consequent cold war between rich and poor easily becoming a shooting and killing war.'*

## Birth control

We have seen in Chapter 4 that humanity faces terminal collapse during the first half of the 21st century unless essential steps are taken to avert it. If forecasting population growth is not to be academic, it is necessary to assume that these steps will indeed be taken, because even assuming universal, unrestricted availability of birth control, world population will inexorably continue growing beyond 2025, before steadying at approximately 10bn around 2050. The world's long-term, critical need for family planning is self-evident. Immediately, particularly in the Third World, contraception is desperately needed to reduce the suffering of women, who not only have to bear the children but also take most of the responsibility for raising them. Also, it is estimated that, besides some 300,000 live births, well over 100,000 abortions take place daily, resulting in the deaths, or maiming, of some quarter of a million women annually. We have seen also, in Chapter 1, the continuing horrific practice of infanticide, which can only prove unbearably traumatic for the mothers involved.

Happily, there have already been some birth control successes in the Third World which prove how eminently achievable they could be world-wide. Particularly over the last 25 years, dramatic reductions in family sizes have been made in several countries in each of the continents, including Colombia, China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Sri Lanka and Tunisia. For example, in 1969 in Thailand, women had, on average, 6.5 children, and only one in six used any form of contraception.

In 1970 the Thai government launched a nation-wide family planning programme, making contraception freely available, even in remote rural areas. Non-specialists were trained to supply contraceptives and the programme was supported by a mass media campaign. Within just 20 years, the proportion of Thai people using contraception jumped from 14% to 68%, the number of children per woman fell from 6.5 to 2.2, and population growth fell from 3% pa to 1.4% pa.<sup>2</sup>

There are three main - readily surmountable - obstacles to universal birth control. These are: poverty - involving a need for children to support parents and replace those dying in infancy; illiteracy - preventing the assimilation of knowledge regarding contraception; and bigoted religious opposition - chiefly Roman Catholic. The latter has been described by Brenda Maddox as follows:

Around the globe the Catholic church's ban on artificial contraception is a virulent force for ignorance, repression and suffering. The Church's conservative hierarchy, bolstered

by the equally conservative Catholic medical profession and the right-wing political organisation Opus Dei, are hard at work to stop the spread of family planning and sex education. By their efforts they are hampering attempts to control soaring population growths. By their opposition to condoms, they are contributing to the spread of Aids. Hundreds of millions of women lack even the basic information to space and limit their children; they want contraception and, where they can get it, they use it. Contraceptive ignorance goes hand in hand with a high incidence of maternal mortality. In the Congo, with practically no contraceptive practice, the rate is 1,000 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, while in the UK the rate is 1.8 per 100,000. This Catholic doctrine causes more misery, in total, than [did] apartheid; there are only 21 million black South Africans but nearly 1 billion Catholics.<sup>3</sup>

## Migrations of the uprooted millions

In recent years, world-wide, at least 40 million people have been forced to abandon and leave such homes as they had, because of either environmental problems, or hostilities, or both.

Whatever the cause, their predicament is invariably exacerbated by the local population explosion. Environmental disasters such as crop failures or water shortages may be compounded by harsh topographical or climatic conditions. For example, many of Nepal's people, numbering around 35m by 2000 in a small, mountainous country with their forests gone and most land exhausted, will inevitably be driven to emigrate, but to where?

Neighbouring India and Bangladesh are already overcrowded and have a plethora of problems of their own, some of them, ironically, resulting from being downstream from Nepal.

The concept of environmental refugees, who leave because of various disasters or because the land can no longer support them, is growing, particularly throughout Africa. As demands for energy, water and land expand with population, so the numbers of such refugees will swell, up to 100m according to one UN estimate.

In various parts of the world, life has been made impossible for significant populations who have been forced by hostilities to become refugees. A particularly tragic example is that of Mozambique, which 'had its heart torn out by Renamo, a legion of killers conceived by Rhodesia to destabilise the Frelimo revolution; when Rhodesia lost its own war, Renamo was inherited, tutored and strengthened by the South African regime.

The result is a country in total ruin, with maimed and starving people walking through the game reserves only to be eaten by lions.'<sup>4</sup>

This report, from *World Media* describes well the tragic scenario of today's migrations of the uprooted millions:

*The waves of refugees now criss-crossing Africa, often journeying from a place where there is little food to a place where there is none, best show the modern human drama of displacement, impoverishment and marginalisation. No political resolutions, changes of government or boundaries, no stroke of the pen can alter these massive movements of the dispossessed. They pose a global challenge to the affluent world. Africa's refugees number 6m, or 15m including those displaced internally. Yet no one knows how accurate these figures are, since great swathes of Africa are cut off by war and social breakdown. Hundreds of thousands of these desperate people are permanently malnourished. Most have little hope of returning home and live in utter degradation on the outskirts of cities.*

Most are peasants who, uprooted from their land, have lost their way of life, their past, and their children's future.<sup>4</sup>

Before long, population explosions are going to face the world with the unprecedented

dilemma of how to cope with perhaps a billion or more completely rootless people. The question of the ultimate destinations of all these millions on the move is never seriously addressed. Like so many other Third World issues, it is simply ignored by First World elites as if it were in no way their responsibility. Now that First World countries have, in the main, absorbed all the cheap labour they need, barriers against any further immigration are well and truly in place.

And, in keeping with today's trend towards, and acceptance of violence, it is certain that those manning the barriers will be well armed, in the event of attempted major incursions by desperate people. Already, 150 men, women and children attempt to enter the US from Mexico every night, risking severe reactions from the 'watch on the Rio Grande'. An estimated surplus before long of 100m people in North Africa alone, together, very possibly, with many from parts of Eastern Europe, would face storming 'Fortress West Europe' if, as is likely, they were desperate enough to attempt entry. World-wide, all the wealthy countries, large or small are jealously guarding their frontiers.<sup>5</sup>

When considering possible future destinations for the world's refugees, one of the most important factors is the existing disposition of populations, to enable those regions having the most vacant space to be distinguished. Very broadly, Asia is already 'full', and Africa is rapidly filling up. China's 20% of global population exists on only 5% of the world's agricultural land. The last 30 year's increase alone in the population density of Southern Asia is nearly double the population density of Europe. On the other hand, Latin America as a whole is far less densely populated than Asia: Brazil alone has an area 2.5 times greater than India's. However, North America has by far the greatest amount of 'spare room'; every Canadian and US citizen enjoys around 100 times more space than the average Third World citizen today.

1 *Guardian* 11/4/92

2 Ditto 10/9/91

3 *Observer* 3/3/91

4 *Guardian* 14/6/91

5 Ditto 10/6/91