

Editorial

UN Should End Sanctions and Projections

The United Nations' widely reported "Projection" of the future human population, released on Feb. 26, is a complete falsification—worse than President Bush's fantasies about future budget surpluses, because the UN Population Division knows better. While the annual rate of increase of the human population has been dropping steadily since 1980, and more and more sharply since 1992, the UN has blithely *increased* its world population projection for 2050, attributing it all to the Third World.

The UN's own report shows that the human lifespan for the 48 "Least Developed Countries" *fell* between 1998 and 2000, by 3.5 years for men and 2.0 years for women. But the "Projection" baldly extrapolates a *continuous rise* in Third World life-expectancy over the next half-century, to 75 years by 2050. It claims that "particularly rapid [population] growth is expected among the 48 countries classified least developed. Their population is expected to nearly triple between 2000 and 2050. . . ." And it was *this* claim, counterposed to projections of falling populations in the advanced sector, which was played up in worldwide press coverage, with a tinge of "brown peril."

Is the UN ready to tell us how it is that the world population is growing at 77 million per year, when its own reports, from 1998 and 2000, show an increase of just over 130 million? (Twice 77 million does not equal 130 million!) Is the UN ready to tell us how, or when, the ongoing fall in life-expectancy in the developing nations is going to be reversed? Lifespans in many Sub-Saharan African countries have fallen well below 40 years; but it is not only there, and not only in Russia and Eastern Europe, that the devastating signs of a coming world population collapse are appearing. Not least is the news of the disastrous spread of livestock disease outbreaks in Asia, Africa, and now in Europe and South America. This recalls that in the terrible 14th Century of financial catastrophe and Black Plague, the wide spread of such livestock diseases, from about 1300 on-

wards, was a herald of the devastation of the human population, which was to follow the banking collapse of the 1340s.

And there are many other nations whose future population is very much in doubt, threatened by war, ongoing starvation, and oppressed by economic sanctions imposed through the UN. Among them are Iraq, North Korea, and Afghanistan. Can the UN, while projecting the future "rapid population growth" of Iraq, Afghanistan, and North Korea, tell us when these sanctions will be lifted?

The situation of the people of Afghanistan is as desperate as that of the people of Iraq, which is much better known, though equally ignored in London, Washington, and allied places. More than a million Afghan refugees have fled the fighting in the country; now, both among the refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and in Afghanistan itself, drought and bitter Winter have set off starvation and a wipeout of livestock. The Afghan population is, undoubtedly, one that is now falling, whatever projections the UN Population Division may make.

During the last week in February, that people's desperation suddenly became "world news," when the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan announced that it would start destroying ancient statues of Buddha, and other archeological treasures. By this hard and highly provocative means, they are demanding that the years-long sanctions on this starving and suffering country be lifted.

The Taliban leadership is playing a very dangerous game. With the new aggression being displayed by Bush, by Sharon, and by that disease epicenter known as Tony Blair's Britain, the result of this showdown over the ancient statues in Afghanistan is incalculable. It arises from the onrush of a biological holocaust, and marks that onrush for the world as a whole. Remove the grip of "sanctions," and replace it at once with development—the name for peace—before it is too late.