

Self-serving statistics

Returning to the experts' analyses, the majority of them agree that the unemployment problem is massive, and nationwide, that the government's statistics are ridiculous, and that Mexico has no reliable unemployment figures.

What none of them indicate, however, is the true reason why the government of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari maintains the demented position that unemployment affects only 2.9% of the economically active population. In the National Development Plan 1989-94, signed by Salinas de Gortari, it says: "Due to the high birth rates that prevailed before 1975, and to the high rate of population growth which resulted from the divergence between falling death rates and high birth rates, never in the demographic history of the country has the working-age population grown so rapidly as in the decade of the 1980s."

The message here is clear: The crisis is due to the "divergence" between birth and death rates, or—what amounts to the same thing—the crisis is due to the existence of Mexicans; therefore, the solution is that some Mexicans must cease to exist.

The government of previous President Miguel de la Madrid (1983-88) had already established the *necessity* of im-

posing a *process of gradual aging of the population*, in keeping with the malthusian policies of the international financier circles around the International Monetary Fund. Reflecting this process, figures from Conapo for 1989 show a population pyramid with 33 million people under age 15 (38%), 50 million between 15 and 64 (58%), and 3.4 million over 65 (4%). This reflects the success of the De la Madrid government, as it was described then, in having reduced the traditional Mexican figure of 50% of its population under the age of 15, down to 38%, as a result of decreased birth rates.

The result is that from 1980 to 2000, the number of children will actually decline in absolute numbers, despite the continued rise of the overall population, so that by 2000, this age group will be under 30% of the total. The working-age population will soar, and by 2000, the over-65 age bracket will also begin to increase rapidly.

This latter fact means, of course, a large increase in the number of retired persons. According to the Unified Movement of Retirees and Pensioners (MUJP), there are at present 2 million old people, nearly two-thirds of the total, who have insufficient income to live in dignity. By the beginning of the next decade, the growth of this sector will be rapid, and

GATT woos Russia as food production plummets

As if Russia did not already have enough problems feeding its people, the international financiers are now trying to draw it into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), a move which would require eliminating subsidies to agriculture.

Arthur Dunkel, the director of GATT, was in Russia the week of Feb. 1. At a press conference in Moscow, he played his negotiating cards close to his chest; but he did warn Russia that "the real world itself makes things more difficult than you think at the start," and that reform was "not a very easy process." He emphasized the "denationalizing" effect of GATT, a one-world institution linked to the United Nations.

Since a meeting of the Davos World Economic Forum in Switzerland at the end of January, which was attended by a hefty Russian delegation, there has been a marked push to bring Russia into GATT.

But recent decisions by Russian economic officials would come into conflict with such a policy.

On Feb. 4, Agriculture Minister Viktor Khlystun announced an emergency decree for the agro-industrial sec-

tor, which includes protectionist measures to guard against the decrease in livestock which came about last year, partially as a result of the enforced export of meat under the International Monetary Fund's "export-earning" conditions.

At a press conference, Khlystun described the desperate situation the nation now faces: "There was a substantial slump in livestock output. Meat and dairy production fell by 18%." He enumerated some of the causes for this slump: "A chronic shortage of fodder, the price disparity, making livestock breeding an unprofitable business—it is easier to sell grain than to feed it to cattle and produce livestock. Costs involved in livestock production considerably outweigh the benefits. . . . Generally, meat production in Russia proved to be loss-making. . . . Poultry production has also been money-losing. The profitability of milk production is very low, approximately 26%. Egg and wool production profitability margins are also very low. A situation emerged at the end of the year when the overall debt amounted to 50 billion rubles. . . . In order to conduct this year's spring planting campaign, at least 600 billion rubles is needed."

Khlystun said that the Russian government was going to continue to subsidize agriculture, through the introduction of "mechanisms of guaranteed protectionist prices, with gradual scaling down of subsidies."

—Denise M. Henderson