

Disappearing Europe

A demographic calamity is about to overwhelm the Continental EU

Forget the euro. Forget Schengen. Forget *corpus juris*. Forget the European Army. Above all, forget enlargement. These are chaff that will soon be swept away by the hurricane that is about to overwhelm Europe. That hurricane is the demographic implosion of the continent.

The magnitude of the forthcoming implosion is so enormous, so colossal, that - for once - words like "catastrophe", or "disaster", or "calamity", as descriptions of what is in store for us, are nothing more than *mots justes*. Calamity is indeed staring all Europe, and the EU in particular, in the face.

Not that the citizens of the EU are being told anything about it. The governments of EU member states, and the Commission, prefer not to think, talk or hear of the approaching crisis - in public, anyway. This is because the social, political and economic consequences are almost too terrifying to contemplate.

But contemplate them we must. In the UK Anthony Scholefield has done just that, in *The Death of Europe*, (reviewed in *eurofacts* on 20th April 2001), and more recently in an article in the Summer 2001 issue of *The Salisbury Review*. Across the Channel, a French publication, *L'Europe va-t-elle disparaître?** ("*Will Europe disappear?*") is evidence that in Germany and France, in academic circles at least, if not yet in government, the crisis is being given the attention it deserves. *L'Europe va-t-elle disparaître?* contains twelve essays on the demography not just of Europe but also of the USA, China, India and the Middle East. Those essays' charts, diagrams and statistics, and their conclusions, are consistent with those of Anthony Scholefield.

| Europe's Decline Population in millions | | | |
|--|---------|-------|------------------|
| Year | Europe* | World | Europe/ World |
| 1900 | 390 | 1575 | 25% |
| 1940 | 525 | 2300 | 23% |
| 1950 | 549 | 2500 | 22% |
| 1975 | 676 | 4000 | 17% |
| 2000 | 728 | 6000 | 12% |
| 2025 | 713 | 8000 | 9% |

* including Russia-in-Europe

During the 20th Century, as the table shows, Europe's population grew in absolute terms but declined relative to the global population. Europeans accounted for a quarter of mankind in 1900 but less than half of that - twelve per cent - in 2000. Soon - starting in 2004 - the European population will decline absolutely. Moreover, it will age rapidly, with fewer and fewer people of working age supporting more and more over-65s. Just how calamitous this decline will be is shown by projections from the United Nations. These estimate that, just to maintain the support ratio (the ratio of workers to dependent children and pensioners) at present levels, Europe would need to take in 159 million immigrants (twice the current population of Germany!) between now and 2025, and no fewer than 700 million between now and 2050 - as many, almost, as the present entire population of Europe! By then - 2050 - if such immigration had happened, 75 per cent of the EU population would be post-1995 immigrants and their descendants. And since Eastern European countries, and Russia will suffer population loss on a scale similar to that of the EU, the bulk of those immigrants could only come from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Such a scenario seems today to be

unthinkable: but is there any alternative?

As the figures quoted in *eurofacts*' 20th April 2001 review and in *L'Europe va-t-elle disparaître?* show, in the absence of immigration, countries like Italy, Spain and Germany will lose up to a third of their populations by 2050. France, the UK and Ireland, in contrast, will more or less maintain their present population levels, even without immigration. One of the essays in *L'Europe va-t-elle disparaître*, by Alain Cotta, a university professor and demographer, points out that there are at least two super-posed demographic crises in the making that will blow the EU apart: first, the staggering EU-wide loss of population with the concomitant political and socio-economic enfeeblement of the "Union"; and second, the disparity in rate of population loss between EU member states, which will emasculate most attempts at EU-wide "harmonisation" and, more likely, engender disharmony. And since massive immigration into the EU seems inevitable, it is not unrealistic to foresee a third crisis arising from the stresses and strains of assimilating the newcomers. Furthermore, while the EU is about to suffer massive population loss, the US population is set to increase, making EU pretensions to rival the US as a world power even more laughable.

* "*L'Europe va-t-elle disparaître?*", June 2001, No 74, in "*Geopolitique*" the quarterly review of the "*Institut International de Geopolitique*", a prestigious French think-tank whose President is Mme Marie-France Garaud. Contains essays by MM Dupaquier, Laulan, Cotta, Grinblat, Schmid, Barreau, Tubiana, Heffer, Estienne, Etienne & Mme Bensimon. Edited by Presses Universitaires de France [www.puf.com]