

## THE WORLD POPULATION GROWS FASTER THAN EVER \*

The world population reached a maximum of 2,652 million by the middle of 1954, with the population of all the major regions increasing faster than ever before, according to the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* 1955, published recently.

Of the 2,652 million persons living in mid-1954, 1,451 million or about 55 per cent were in Asia (excluding the USSR), 404 million in Europe, 357 million in the Americas, 214 million in the USSR, 210 million in Africa, and 14.4 million in Oceania.

The most populated countries in the world were the Chinese mainland with 583 million; India, 377 million; USSR, 214 million; the United States, 162 million; Japan, 88 million; Indonesia, 81 million; and Pakistan, 80 million.

During the period 1950-1954, the population of Asia increased by 21 million per year; Latin America by 4 million; North America, Africa, Europe and the USSR by 3 million each; and Oceania by 325,000.

The regions with the fastest population growth during 1950-54 were Oceania (2.6% per annum) and Latin America (2.4%). The continent with the slowest population growth was Europe. North America grew at the rate of 1.6% and the USSR by 1.5%.

The tendency toward a decreasing rate of population growth in Europe and North America during 1920-1940 was definitely reversed after 1945. The slowing down of the population growth suffered during the war-stricken period of 1940-1950 affected mainly Asia, Europe, and the USSR; growth in Latin America, Oceania, and Africa gained momentum during these years.

The conclusion to be drawn from the study of world population figures is that the rate of population growth has de-

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\* From the United Nations Information Office for the Philippines.

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finitely increased during the last five years. Such acceleration is related primarily to changes in the levels of fertility and mortality, since migration among the large regions of the world is at present playing a minor role in comparison with the natural increase.

Among the countries with fastest population growth in recent years are Venezuela (3%), Panama (2.9%), Ceylon (2.8%) and Mexico (2.7%). The countries with the slowest population growth are Ireland (.04%), Spain and Pakistan (0.8%), and Poland (0.9%).

The United Nations Demographic Yearbook dealing with population characteristics observes that typical rural countries are Thailand, Pakistan, Haiti, Ceylon, Yugoslavia, India and Korea, where less than one-fifth of the population lives in cities and towns.

At the other extreme, Iceland, England and Wales, and Scotland are the countries with the largest proportion living in urban communities, each having more than 70 per cent in cities.

If "metropolitan areas" are compared, the five largest cities in the world according to the Yearbook are New York (12,300,000), London (8,300,000), Tokyo (6,300,000), Shanghai (6,200,000), and Paris (4,800,000).

No recent information is available on Soviet cities.

There are more women than men in American and European cities, while in the Arab countries and Asia, the opposite seems to be true.

For example, in India and Ceylon, respectively, there are 127 and 173 men respectively, to 100 women in the cities of 100,000 or more.

In Denmark, Sweden, and England and Wales, there are about 89 men per 100 women and in the Americas, the ratio varies between 73 in Haiti and 97 in Argentina.

The mean length of life, as measured by the average number of years that a group of new-born babies would live if

subject to the mortality conditions of the area during a certain period, has varied in recent years between 32.5 years for males and 31.7 for females in India in 1941-50 and 70.6 and 72.9 years for males and females, respectively, in the Netherlands in 1950-52.

In northern and central European countries mortality is the lowest in the world and the average length of life the longest.

According to the life-table figures contained in the Demographic Yearbook, in all countries except Ceylon and India and among the Asian population of the Union of South Africa, women live between two and seven years longer than men.

The highest number of marriages per 1,000 population was registered in Europe (except Ireland), the United States, Canada, among the European populations of the Union of South Africa and South West Africa, and in Taiwan. Ireland and the Latin American countries registered the lowest rates.

The countries of Latin America, Egypt and India have consistently had the highest birth rates recorded in the world and the central and northern European countries the lowest rates.