

No jobs or food — let's riot

NEW YORK — This week at least 400 rioters were killed by army troops in the streets of Algiers and Oran. Thousands more were wounded in the gravest outburst of violence since Algeria gained independence in 1962.

Interestingly, the riots in North Africa's largest nation were the direct result of two major issues now being debated in the Canadian election: Birth control and job creation.

The rioters who burned, looted and wrecked were mostly young, unemployed Algerians under the age of 18. Long regarded as the Third World's most generous welfare state, Algeria's economy has floundered as the price of its main export, oil, has plummeted. The socialist government's policies of collectivizing farming and creating heavy industry have turned Algeria from a prosperous exporter of food into a debt-ridden importer. Heavy industries are idle as foreign markets for steel and chemicals have dried up.

But Algeria's worst problem has been its high birth rate. Algeria's population has virtually doubled to 23 million since 1962 when it won its bitter war for independence from France — in which one million Algerians died. Having large, extended families living together is an essential part of Arab culture. Algeria's Moslems reject birth control and abortion, as does the majority of the Third World from Rio to Shanghai. The result has been a crushing tidal wave of people.

In Algeria, some 60% of the population is under 18. In South Africa, 50% of the black population is under 18. The major cause of rioting in Algiers and Soweto — just as much as in Manila or Lima — is that there are no jobs for the huge mass of teenagers now moving into the labor force.

This acute problem has been worsened by education and ideology. Algerian youth have been reasonably well educated and told to expect a decent life by their government. Instead, they now face unemployment and poverty.

Egypt produces more university graduates than Britain, but cannot find jobs for them. The lucky ones find work as tourist guides or clerks, the

unlucky often turn to Moslem fundamentalism or other forms of radicalism.

ERIC MARGOLIS



And who can blame them?

Egypt, which is bankrupt and up to the top of the Great Pyramid in debt, has to import 50% of its food. In 12 years, Egypt will have 62 million people trying to live in an area the size of Maryland. For Egypt, India, Algeria, South Africa — in fact for most of Asia, Africa and Latin America, birth control and easy access to abortion are not questions of moral debate but matters of critically urgent priority.

It's by now clear that the Third World's population explosion is also destroying Earth's ecological balance. Forests are being levelled in the Amazon, China, Africa and the Himalayas to make room for new people. Burning of the Amazon rain forest is producing 10% of the world's carbon dioxide pollution. Recent floods that inundated 70% of Bangladesh were caused by deforestation in Nepal and India.

The point: Some way must be found to implement birth control in the Third World, voluntarily or even forcibly, as China is trying to do. Opponents of birth control and abortion ought to take a trip to Calcutta or Cairo.

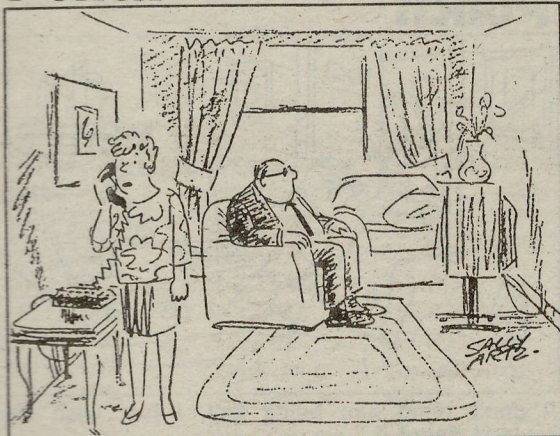
Paradoxically, the birth rate in Western Europe and the Russian part of the Soviet Union is falling sharply. In a few years the West German Army will have to undergo severe cuts because of shortfalls in manpower.

For Russians and Western Europeans, birth control has been too effective — at least in terms of national security, an issue totally overlooked in the North American abortion debate. Soon the majority of Soviet land forces will be Central Asian Moslems. In a decade, the largest portion of the U.S. Army will be blacks and Hispanics.

As for job creation, every socialist regime that has tried to fabricate jobs has failed. Algeria's promise of full employment has turned out to be a farce. Private industry and free markets create jobs, not governments. What governments do create is phony employment, usually at two or three times the cost of real jobs, inflation, favoritism and corruption. This holds true as much for St. John's, Nfld., as it does for Sidi-Bel-Abbes, Algeria. Algeria's socialist economy simply cannot create wealth, jobs or an efficient system to supply consumer goods — no more so than can that of the Soviet Union, China, Tanzania or Burma.

Rioting Algerian youths are telling their regime it's time to change. So are angry consumers in the communist world. Why, then, do Canadian voters still listen and applaud when our politicians promise to create new jobs out of thin air? Can't we see what is painfully obvious to the rest of mankind?

Punch



"I'm worried doctor — his self-winding watch has run down."