

Review Article

Population Control

KAROL J. KROTKI*

*"We cannot be optimistic and honest at the same time"*¹

The Duke University School of Law following its practice of devoting whole issues of its quarterly to a single topic has turned its attention to population problems.² The two hundred and fifty pages are loaded with factual information—some of it new—, and also some controversy. What follows is an attempt to review what seem to be to the present writer some of the more salient features of the material assembled. The following discussion does not claim to be a balanced presentation of the problem, because the issues raised in the quarterly are too uncertain and the information presented too selective. It is not clear to this reviewer how far this uncertainty and selectivity are intentional and how far the function of the ready availability to Durham of scholars with the necessary knowledge.

Judging from the editorial Foreword (Shimm), the purpose of this number of the quarterly is all-embracing. The issue is not even prejudiced by the sub-title *Population Control* on the cover, because much of the discussion is delving into the very basic question of whether population control is at all necessary and desirable. The titles of the articles comprising the number are listed at the end of this review. A perusal of this list will show that the subjects covered are many and it would be difficult to improve on the selection of scholars invited to contribute. It is, therefore, somewhat ungrateful to complain that the treatment is not exhaustive, but the complaint must be raised in view of the professed, but in this reviewer's opinion unsuccessful, attempt to present the matter in its world-wide context.

There are three large areas of omissions: one in the field of religion; the second geographical; the third in high-lighting conclusions. The Catholic view-point is presented (John-Stevas), the various Protestant attitudes are discussed (Fagley) and the varying communist policies are described (Mauldin). The large populations, who follow the Islamic doctrines, the Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian teachings, as well as those of various animistic persuasions, are ignored. The Hindu position may be too indeterminate and the animistic positions too diffuse for definitive treatment, but it is precisely this indetermination and diffusion, which may be of paramount importance for the success or failure of any population policy.

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¹ Meier, Richard L., *Modern Science and the Human Fertility Problem*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1959, p. 63.

² *Law and Contemporary Problems*. A quarterly published by the Duke University School of Law, Durham, North Carolina. Editor: Melvin G. Shimm. Associate Editor: Robinson O. Everett. *Population Control*, Vol. 25, Summer, 1960. No. 3, Pp. 377-629.

The geographical omission is equally serious. The long-belaboured and often-quoted cases of Japan (Bronfenbrenner and Buttrick) and Puerto Rico (Bark, Hill and Stycos) are almost unavoidably given once more and described with great skill. What is not brought out is that Japan was different for a long time and in many respects, and cannot be used as a pointer of possible developments elsewhere. Puerto Rico, exposed to the United States through proximity and intimate ties, is also no pointer, except in the rather depressing sense, namely that foreign aid would have to be thought of in entirely different dimensions (say, \$400 billion instead of \$4 billion per annum) to create conditions and to achieve results around the world comparable to Puerto Rican. True, India is dealt with in the expertly way one has come to expect from the writer (Agarwala), but the lesson that all the publicity and all the expenditure has had no apparent results in India so far is not driven home.

Thirdly, the symposium does not bring out the rather obvious fact that so far abortion has been the only effective and rapid means of implementing a population policy in non-Western type of countries. It was always, of course, an important form of population control in Western countries, but was never the exclusive form. The view about abortion having been so far the only effective form of population control in non-Western countries may be disproved any year now, but until it is, it is incumbent upon those who open still more clinics of the orthodox type, to ask themselves whether they are on the right track or whether they follow a blind alley. Some real hard thinking may be necessary, starting from first principles. Anthropologists need to tell us whether all populations have the necessary degree of perseverance, the regularity of habits and the manual dexterity, which alone can be substitutes for surgical means. This is not to advocate those grim alternatives. But straight thinking is required. "The pill", if and when operative, may, of course, take some of the grimmer edges off this conclusion.

Having disposed of these three—in the eyes of the present reviewer—serious omissions, for which the editor must bear the main responsibility, one can make one generalization. The individual, with qualifications noted later, contributions are almost invariably little gems.

The symposium opens with an introduction by the editor and three general articles. With broad and masterly sweeps on the widest possible canvass the history of the human race over the last two thousand years is drawn by the editor (Shimm) on two pages. The substantive information is provided in the first article (Cook), the resources and technology background is painted in the second (Stamp) and an unusual and not entirely successful attempt to provide a philosophical and ekistical theory space—not quite frame—for the consideration of the population problem concludes the introductory articles (van Loon). The names of all the big thinkers in the field are quoted (Carr-Saunders, Leakey, Notestein, Pearl, Russel, *etc.*) and the findings of the life-long researchers are given (Kiser, Spengler, *etc.*) Most of the reasoning is largely based on the transition theory,³ but the possibility that the theory may not be generally applicable to all the human

³*E.g.*, Notestein, Frank W., *Economic Problems of Population Change, Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Agricultural Economists*. London: Oxford University Press, 1953.

populations is stated with insufficient vigour. After all, the small-family pattern, according to Bertrand Russell the only unique contribution of Western Christian civilization (Cook, p. 382), need not spread beyond the confines of this civilization. The awareness in the world at large of the gravity of the population problem is smaller than suggested in the three articles. Half the public men do not yet see it and no economist has yet introduced it effectively as a variable in economic analysis.

There is also a lot of good sense in smaller matters. *e.g.*, "Current efforts . . . centering around village studies . . . are wholly out of scale in terms of the magnitude and urgency of the crisis" (Cook, pp. 387 and 388). Next to it are the majestic sweeps (not a single footnote) of L. Dudley Stamp's brush. The world can feed four times its present population if the business of food production is taken out of the hands of farmers and put into the hands of specialist (chemicalisation—his word; hydroponics, fungicides, insecticides, herbicides, *etc.*, *etc.*). "The world's greatest problem may soon be not the difficulty of feeding the increasing population, but what to do with the hundreds of millions displaced by an efficient agriculture" (Stamp, p. 396).

The carelessness of some of the approaches and the unreliability of some of the material presented is underlined by Stamp's suggestion that agricultural production increased between 1950 and 1958 by 17 per cent while population followed slower by 12 per cent (p. 393), a suggestion made only six pages away from the statement that agricultural production increased slower than population (van Loon, p. 399).

Next to these smaller irritations one runs into bigger "thinks". Our confused attitude toward population is only another side of our attitude toward space. Von Liebig is quoted to the effect that when the ratio of men to resources becomes too high, the intellectual properties tend to disappear. How will our cultural evolution fare in the shadow of this increasing ratio? This reviewer tends to adopt the less sophisticated possibility that many people do not like too many people at once and the thought of increasing crowds is to them an increasingly unpleasant one.

Frederick Osborn draws attention to an unintended by-product of population controls. "Since children tend to be like their parents, any difference in the number of children born to parents of different types will correspondingly change the proportion of people having those qualities in the next generation" (p. 416). To the extent, therefore, that less endowed families are less responsive to population control, the control is—at least to that extent—impervious to quality. But he also quotes the finding of the Indianapolis study (p. 421) that some of the "quality" differentials have either narrowed or disappeared altogether, as did those of income, education and place of residence. This may well be a consideration either irrelevant in countries without population controls, like Pakistan, or the differentials may actually be of opposite directions to those in Western-type countries. In fact, one could become quite eloquent in suggesting that with population controls the differentials will continue in the opposite direction and that, therefore, policies injurious to quality in the West, may be beneficial to quality in the East.

Once more the rather optimistic and unjustified⁴ view is expressed that while in some territories controls of deaths and births are not yet interdependent, the awareness of the impossibility of having for long one without the other is growing. The injuries to population quality of population policies are highlighted. However, the hope is expressed that it is within the powers of the sciences of eugenics and eutenics to ensure that comprehensive population policies are not injurious to population quality. The direction of the emerging practical applications "may ultimately determine the future of the (human) race" (Osborn, p. 425).

The paper by Tietze is as usually for this writer closely argued and reports a number of interesting facts on the mechanics of fertility control. Fifty three per cent Catholics in the United States use occasionally contraceptive methods disapproved by their church, though a higher proportion of followers of other religions use them to a greater extent. Almost half of British contraceptors use coitus interruptus against only two per cent in the United States.⁵ In Japan simultaneously with the very large increase in abortions the proportion of contraceptors more than doubled in the nine years beginning with 1950. (Which other non-Western country could conceivably think in terms of that kind of developments?). The incidence of sterilization is probably the same in Japan and the United States, but it was probably dropping in both over the recent years. May this not be a lesson to planners who rely in their programmes more and more on sterilization?

The Roman Catholic point of view is represented by Norman St. John-Stevas. He brings out the fact that the Roman Catholic attitude has undergone a change since the stark Augustinian-Thomist approach and that it is now subject to considerable—for the Roman Church—controversy within the Church itself. The rhythm method condemned by St. Augustine is now approved. With the approval of one method the earlier arguments pointing to the danger of underpopulation or promiscuity lose their logical basis. St. John-Stevas wrote his chapter before the recent appearance of an important book⁶ which appears to be a very long and decisive step in the evolution of the Catholic attitude. This author's recognition of the possibility of obligatory abstinence imposed by secular authority forcing the church to re-interpret the natural law drew a whole page review in *Time Magazine*.⁷ In the field of controversy, St. John-Stevas comes out against making the acceptance of a birth control programme a condition for expanding foreign aid. He also thinks that many Catholics in Protestant countries would show enough recognition of the susceptibilities of the decreasing majorities not to come out unequivocally against requests from individual states for foreign

⁴This reviewer knows at least one Cabinet of Ministers in an overcrowded country with one of the lowest standards of living and lowest capital investments, half of whose members, either do not see the population problem or pay mere lip-service to it.

⁵The failure rate of those British samples who relied on coitus interruptus was only slightly higher than those relying on modern devices.

⁶Zimmerman, Rev. Anthony, S.V.D., *Catholic Viewpoint on Overpopulation*. New York: Doubleday, 1961.

⁷Religion: Birth Control and the Catholic, *The Time Newsmagazine*, September 15, 1961, p. 38.

aid in birth control programmes, though in his conclusions on page 469 he contradicts himself and says that such advice should not be given even at the request of the designated state.

This controversy is somewhat unreal. Any country which really puts its mind to it can have a non-foreign aid directed birth control programme. Foreign agencies in *quid pro quo* would just take over a larger chunk of responsibilities in other fields. The real limiting factor is lack of knowledge of disseminating an effective birth-control plan. Methods effective in Western-type countries proved, except for abortion, ineffective elsewhere. Here research agencies are guilty and the quoting of Japan and Puerto Rico, in which the journal under review indulges as well, is of not much relevance.

In the controversy around Catholic hospitals St. John-Stevas suggests compromise. Protestant doctors in Roman Catholic hospitals should not give birth-control advice in the course of their duties, but hospital managements should not interfere with their private practice. He calls the latter grave infringement of individual liberty. Having taken this courageous step he leans over backwards to suggest that the "pill" produces bad side effects, though a few pages earlier, Tietze reported no proof either way.

St. John-Stevas puts insufficient emphasis on two points of great importance. A pill regularising female periodicity is acceptable to the church. Another pill or chemical device to determine the presence of a fertile ovum is also acceptable. Such two inventions would bridge the gaps between the various attitudes. Secondly, there is much in the Roman Catholic attitudes which is positive with its reliance on responsibility brought out so forcibly in the recent encyclical letter.⁸ Finally and most seriously, he does not appreciate that much of the discussion is a red herring. In some of the countries where Roman Catholicism is important the continued growth of population is only to the good of humanity (e.g., the United States), in some others economic development is definitely past the "take off" point so that

⁸Text of Encyclical by Pope John XXIII on Social Problems of the Modern World. *The New York Times International Edition*, Monday, July 17, 1961 Pp. 6-9. At the Congress of the Union for the Scientific Study of Population in New York in September, 1961 there was considerable gloom among Catholic demographers because of the uncompromising attitude taken by the Pope in the field of family planning. Hints were dropped in unofficial discussions that the *New York Times*' translation unnecessarily sharpens the attitude, that in some vital respects it is actually a mistranslation and that a new version is being prepared at Fordham University. This new version has been ordered, but had not yet arrived at the time of writing this review. Instead, four available versions were consulted: (1) The social question in the light of Christian teaching. Encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII "Mater et Magistra", 1961. St. Paul Publications, Allahabad 2 and Bombay 50; (2) Encyclical letter "Mater et Magistra". On recent developments of the social question in the light of Christian teaching. Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1961; (3) Die Sozialenzyklika Papst Johannes' XXIII. "Mater et Magistra" in der neuen, auf Anregung des deutschen Episkopats hergestellten Uebersetzung. *Herder-Korrespondenz. Orbis Catholicus*. September 1961, Vol. XV, No. 12, Pp. 536-559; (4) *Litterae Encyclicae de Reventioribus Rerum Socialium processibus ad christiana praecpta componendis Joannes Pp. XXIII. L'Osservatore Romano*, Second Edition, Vol. 101, No. 162 (30,734) Saturday, 15 July 1961, Pp. 1-6. The two English versions are identical with the *New York Times* version. The German and Latin versions appear to be essentially similar. However, it is not irrelevant to point out that this latest pronouncement is not one made *ex cathedra*, when it has the force of a dogma, but rather as a spiritual guide, though there is no gainsaying the strength of its influence.

the population growth does not really matter (e.g., Italy), in others more effective and earlier means were apparently employed (France and Ireland) than anywhere else, in still others where it is important there is still considerable elbow room (e.g., Latin America), while where the population problem is really pressing (e.g., Pakistan) the Roman Catholics are not influential. So, why pick on them?

The Protestant position is more difficult to describe because there is no one agreed attitude. It is, however, easy to discern the rapid, though of very recent origin, evolution of the Protestant group of points of view (Fagley). "Responsible parenthood" is the key word and "responsibility" was the key word in the latest Roman Catholic encyclical. However, all the significant pronouncements in support of family planning have been made in the last few years. Thus, it can be said that practice, both Protestant and Catholic, was long ahead of the leaders. How different the present underdeveloped countries are, where leaders or at least some of them preach, but nobody follows, while Protestants push their leaders and Catholics go actually against them. Fagley suggests a common meeting ground for the three main Christian branches in the elevation of the union of husband and wife to an act of God, which requires periodic nourishment of love and companionship in the form of coitus. He continues with the preoccupation of a Protestant of taking action against concupiscence, universal marrying being the main means. (Luther on occasion countenanced bigamy as lesser evil than fornication; in similar circumstance in the Moslem world losses of males after battle were used to justify polygamy).

The communist attitude is most difficult to describe because of its many variations and often diametrical changes. Your reviewer was told by a communist demographer at an international conference that the presentation (Mauldin) is all misleading and was promised the chapter and verse, but they did not materialize up to the time of writing. Next to Tietze's it is the most scholarly contribution of the journal under review. The parallels between the Soviet Union and the United States are brought out, the one big difference in the demographic field being the attitude towards migration, *i.e.*, restrictive in both cases, but in opposite directions. Abortions in the Soviet Union amount to about twenty per cent of all births. Muslim areas have an outstanding number of "Mother Heroines", the children of other wives of a polygamous husband being registered as issue of the legal or first wife. This is done to ensure their legitimacy. The suggestion that, in circumstances where Trade Unions are an arm of the state or of the union-party, family allowances were paid to relieve pressure for higher wages reveals a very basic misunderstanding of the background situation. Pronatalist and anti-natalist policies exist side by side.

In China, the extreme turns in policies defy an orderly description and leave Mauldin with the somewhat lame suggestion that increased production (while the population growth continues in an unabated fashion) will provide the respite, after which a fertility reduction programme can be approached more effectively. Mauldin does not consider the price of such a programme. He does not entertain the possibility that in Chinese circumstances and with the Chinese population size it may have to be several times the Russian price

of five and half million⁹ people dead in excess of ordinary mortality in the decade before the Second World War in the Soviet Union. There is, however, evidence that the processes summarized in the "transition theory",¹⁰ whose father was described more than once a lackey of imperialism,¹¹ are relied upon to bring about the reduction in birth rates and that the relationship between resources and population is treated more rationally.

The treatment of underdeveloped areas is least satisfactory (Jaffe). The income per head in the United States is once more uncritically compared with other countries. The belief is stated that demographic trends can be predicted, as if there were not still enough red faces among demographers active in the thirties. A discussion is conducted on what will happen when all parts of the world became equal, as if they were not drawing apart more and more. In his Table II the author shows 34 per cent of the world population in developed areas. In a sentence below the table it is 12 per cent. He accepts axiomatically that economic growth brings down the birth rate. He admits some inevitable delay, but the population need only double and no more in the process—a degree of optimism so far unheard of. In the same section he admits that so far economic growth was associated with higher, not lower, birth rates in the areas concerned. There is often a cart before the horses: e.g., economy grows, the school system can be financed, population growth slackens, standard of living rises. Conclusion: development difficult, but not impossible. On the author's evidence and in the context of the reasoning presented it appears impossible.

The attempt at an economic conceptualization (Bronfenbrenner and Buttrick) is an elegant one, but there are some distressing statements. The declining white collar differential is the "major cause (my italics) of the declining marginal productivity of expenditures aimed at improving the quality of children in such a society." Cause? It is the decline. The two parts of figure IV illustrating six equilibrium populations are intended to be symmetrical. In fact, the right part shows six populations but the left one only three. Production functions do not start inevitably at zero income per capita. In the United States the "average" person would be long dead at levels of income where other populations could still be very active. Elsewhere they may start even at a negative income. A rising income is mentioned when a shifting one is meant (p. 542), though the same phenomenon is correctly described as a shift four pages later. Japan is the most densely populated country of the world only if one ignores East Pakistan and compounds it in the whole of Pakistan. Why boast that the crude death rate in Japan fell below Western levels and then admit in a footnote that the age-specific rates did not? The view, seldom correct, that increases in life expectations increase the proportion at older ages is restated. It is almost never true in underdeveloped countries. The futility of devoting so much space to Japan is admitted on p. 550: the recent developments were merely *minor* (my emphasis) accelerations of trends long in progress. Are there anywhere else such trends discernible?

⁹Lorimer, Frank, *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects*. Geneva: League of Nations. 1946, p. 133.

¹⁰Notestein, *op. cit.*

¹¹E.g., Popov, A. Ya, and Semenov, Yu. N., Malthusian "Theories" as a Tool of Anglo-American Imperialism, *Problems of Philosophy*, No. 1 (9), 1950 (in Russian).

Judging by the names of the authors (Back, Hill and Stycos) the description of the Puerto Rico situation must be an excellent one. However, I consider myself quite incompetent to judge it. I earlier admitted to the existence of a bias: Puerto Rico is no pointer to underdeveloped area. More importantly, I understood little of it. "When measures that decrease the death rate attain higher truth values, longer life spans become feasible." But the interesting finding that Roman Catholics are more prone to family planning than non-Roman Catholics did penetrate, though it must be qualified by the admission that a sizeable proportion are only nominal Catholics. It is also clear that men prefer smaller families, but their wives think that they prefer larger families. A long description of sterilization does not bring out the fact that it is ineffective as a tool of policy because it is only a measure of last resort. One finding is probably universal and probably particularly applicable to Pakistan: it is easy to start a programme; difficult to maintain it.

Agarwala's description of the Indian progress and prospects should be obligatory reading for anybody in Pakistan concerned with the field, though once more the ineffectiveness of the programme is not brought out. *E.g.*, the almost half a million (p. 587) of condoms imported into or produced in India are mentioned, but if the reader still remembers from p. 428 the six hundred million produced in the United States with less than half the number of males than in India, the Indian figures fall into proper perspective.

The legal position in the United States and the maze of differences between the states is described by Sulloway. "Contraception crept into the law as it has into modern life—by the back door" (p. 599). It makes fascinating reading to compare the inconsistent and unjust decisions in law over the decades and over the states. Roman Catholics appear frequently as the villain of the piece until one spots the puritan illogicalities admitted by the writer on the other side. We are entertained to demographic extracts from a Presidential electioneering campaign. The call is made for the right of every American citizen to be assured that sterilization will be introduced to countries to be foreign-aided as a prior condition of help (the actual language is somewhat less crude, p. 612).

The closing article starts on the wrong foot by quoting Lord Keynes to the effect that national policy must consider optimum population size: should it be larger or smaller. Except for Eastern Germany, there is of course, no question of anybody being able to reduce the present population size of any, or at least his own, country. The Spengler (too many people)—Clark (not enough consumers) controversy is discussed. The thought is brought forward that the mere numerical increase in human beings can have no virtue.¹² Abundance can have more meanings than one.¹³ The article concludes with an appeal for an optimum population policy. One is reminded of the echoes of an undergraduate common room discussion. In the end he comes out with a correct conclusion. Precise control of population can be

¹²Huxley, Julian, *Man's Challenge: the Use of the Earth*, *Horizon*, September 1958, Pp. 49 & 51.

¹³Notestein, Frank W., *Abundant Life, Population Growth and Economic Development with Special Reference to Pakistan*. Summary report of a seminar, September 8-13, 1959. Karachi: The Institute of Development Economics, 1960.

achieved only through the more repugnant means (abortion, infanticide, famine, disease, war, pestilence). The need for economic planning can no longer be denied¹⁴ and may partly obviate the need for drastic population planning the remaining means of contraception and postponed marriages being less repugnant. Economic planning being the lesser of the two evils, will have to cease being a word of opprobrium in the United States. It is preferable to forced population policy.

¹⁴Rostow, Eugene V., *Planning for Freedom: The Public Law of American Capitalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

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