

non-Communists are well aware of the problem of maintaining the right blend of co-operation, goodwill and mutual respect for independence. Working together has its special pitfalls in the political field, although these pitfalls do not mean that we should *a priori* dismiss the possibility of such co-operation. Perhaps a specially valuable contribution to the dialogue can be made when Marxists and Christians join in some task involving manual labour for the benefit of the community. A sense of co-operative involvement in the "work camp" type of assignment can help create the right atmosphere for the dialogue. The kind of work-study project which includes participants from Eastern Europe, and in which

Quakers have taken a lively interest, should provide useful experience and stimulus for further initiatives in this type of communication.

We can only respond creatively to the tensions of the dialogue if we face realistically the frustrations and thorns of ideological encounter. We must reckon not only with encouraging bridges but also with daunting gulfs. In patience and humility we need to acknowledge that ignorance and unimaginative rigidity are not confined to any particular group. But the time seems propitious for bold initiatives as we reach out to our partners in the dialogue. Loyal to the best in ourselves, may we also seek and enrich the best in each other.

No Room for Homo sapiens?

A. Chater

IVOR MONTAGU'S article "No Room for Homo sapiens" in the June *Marxism Today*, raises many questions which need studying on the basis of scientific analyses of concrete situations, and especially interesting, if not so urgent for most of the world, are those which deal with the long-term relationship between population size and quality of life. However, I know of no evidence to suggest that there are or are likely to be any problems which can be categorised as the *inescapable* results of population growth. When such problems *appear* to exist, the real cause is found to be failure to carry out the necessary social and political changes to deal with population growth.

Feeding the World's Population

In my article in *Comment* (April 16th), I dealt with the most urgent problem, next to preventing nuclear war, which faces the population of the world today, namely food supply. This problem would remain, incidentally, even if birth control measures were so effective that population growth were arrested altogether. That is why it is right and proper to place the emphasis on the political and technical measures required to raise the supply of food. But the manner of Ivor Montagu's reaction to what I wrote would suggest that either he misunderstood it completely or else he only glanced at it with the preconceived intention of bashing what he calls "dogmatic Marxists", "nervous Marxists" and "lack of confidence Marxists", whoever they may be in this field of work.

Apparently Ivor Montagu's "Tony Chater" simply pooh-poohs the danger of population outstripping food supply in the short term (as if it has not already done so!) and contents himself with the beautiful dream (true of course!) that *in the end* all will be well "if the revolution comes". Rather than face today's problems, "he" hides behind the long-term prospects and puts "his" faith in world socialism. Maybe such people do exist, just as there are those who are so overawed that they are stricken by paralysis and see no hope at all. But Ivor's "Tony Chater" is an imposter. Contrary to the views attributed to "him", I sought to establish in my article three basic propositions:

- (1) That the question of feeding the world's growing population is an urgent one, leaving very little time for its solution before it gets completely out of hand,
- (2) that the technical means are available *now* for feeding the population we are likely to have in the year 2,000 at present rates of growth (involving more intensive cultivation of existing agricultural land through irrigation, drainage, mechanisation and chemisation; plus extension of the cultivated area, since it is estimated that with present techniques this could actually be doubled); and that even after that, present scientific progress permits us to glimpse possible advances in the future, involving cultivation of the deserts, the rain forests and the sea, use of waste products, breeding of improved varieties of plants

capable of replacing meat, microbiological and chemical food production, which would provide an adequate diet for many millions more,

- (3) but that the application of existing scientific knowledge to the immediate problem of feeding today's population, let alone that of the next decade, only becomes possible to the extent that progressive opinion succeeds in its struggle to cut arms expenditure, and imperialist robbery, and reorganise the social relations of production in the underdeveloped countries so that the peasants can be liberated as a prelude to gathering them together in large-scale state and co-operative farms, and so that the necessary industrialisation can take place. (Naturally each step forward in this struggle helps the fight against hunger—it is not necessary to await complete victory.)

Is This Academic?

One may ask, what is the use of showing that it is technically feasible to feed a population many times that which is filling many people today with fear and panic? Is this not academic, worthy only of scholastics, fiddling whilst Rome burns? The need arises from the fact that the view is widespread that at a certain point there comes into operation a fundamental obstacle to achieving a balance between a growing population and its food supply. Hence the emphasis on birth control. Naturally this view is close to the hearts of the spokesmen for imperialism, because it changes the discussion into an argument about technical possibilities instead of about the political issues surrounding the use of those techniques for raising food production which already exist. Many well-meaning, sincere and humane people are affected by this view, and to that extent there is lack of clarity and understanding of the political changes needed to wipe out hunger and poverty. To that extent the fight against hunger today is diverted away from its real target.

Indeed the fiddling whilst Rome burns is really being done by those who are searching for solutions to the problem of hunger outside the context of the struggle against war and imperialism (see Idris Cox's article, July *Marxism Today*). Ivor Montagu seems to dismiss my propositions by the irrelevant assertion that world socialism is "not on today's agenda". Presumably he means by this that world socialism is not likely to be a fact within the next decade or so, and therefore we cannot avail ourselves of its undoubted advantages in dealing with the problem of hunger. But that is not the point. What *is* on today's agenda and *is* very relevant to the problem of hunger is the slow, uneven, halting, highly complex transition on a world scale from

capitalism to socialism, with at its very heart the broad mass movement to end war and defeat imperialism.

I hope it will be understood that I am not equating here the struggle for peace, the struggle against imperialism and the struggle for socialism, although *objectively*, whether the people involved appreciate it or not, they are all connected intimately with one another. For example, the more imperialist intrigue is countered, the greater the possibility that the balance will tip in favour of the all-round non-capitalist economic development of the underdeveloped nations, leading on in time to socialism. And in the developed countries, the more the people succeed in imposing a policy of peace and the more they succeed in combating imperialism, forcing their Governments to extend genuine economic aid to the underdeveloped countries, the nearer they move towards controlling and taking over the giant monopolies—an essential step on the road to socialism. It is in this way that the struggles for peace, for ending imperialism and for socialism are interwoven, but it would be sectarian and muddled thinking to equate them one to another.

What Sort of Revolution?

If I am guilty of saying that the problem of hunger will be solved "when the revolution comes", let us be clear what "revolution" I am talking about. I quote from Lord Boyd Orr's contribution to the book *Our Crowded Planet* (1963). After referring to the increase in food production required in the next forty years or so, he asks:

"Could that amount of food be produced? On that there are different views. My own is that with modern engineering and agricultural science, it is physically possible to increase the food supply more than eight times. But that could be done only under two conditions. The first is that all governments would be willing to co-operate on a world scale for its increase and equitable distribution. The second is that all governments would contribute in proportion to their resources, estimated by the amount of money devoted to military budgets, to an international fund to provide for the vast amount of industrial goods needed mainly by the underdeveloped countries for the rapid increase of their food production. It would take at least 12,000 million dollars a year to provide sufficient food for all people within about ten years. That is about 10 per cent of what the world is spending on military budgets."

Here the fight for disarmament is stated explicitly as a component part of the fight against hunger. But also implied in his two conditions is the abandonment by the Western Powers of their imperialist policies. Boyd Orr is referring in fact to the World Food Plan he pioneered as Director General of FAO. This was shot to pieces before it got off the ground by the USA and Britain precisely because,

- (1) it would have helped to stabilise prices for primary producers,
- (2) it would have strengthened the bargaining position of the underdeveloped countries when they were in the market for industrial goods,
- (3) it would have helped them to industrialise,
- (4) it would have provided loans free of interest and repayment of capital until abject poverty had been abolished.

In short, it was sabotaged because it would have made the underdeveloped countries economically more independent, threatening to free them from the grip of imperialist domination.

What, then, is the character of the "revolution" I am talking about? It is essentially a progressive struggle against the giant industrial and trading monopolies and the rich financiers. It involves imposing disarmament upon them. It involves forcing them to grant full political and economic independence to the underdeveloped nations. It entails pressing home the twin demands:

- (1) more equitable prices on the world market, so that the underdeveloped can earn enough to finance industrialisation and increased food production,
- (2) outright grants and interest-free loans to enable them to overcome the bottlenecks in their economic growth quickly.

Birth Control

To the extent that this "revolution" progresses, to that extent is it possible to deal with the problem of balancing population and food supply, but the first is the pre-condition of the second. Is this Utopian? On the contrary, the struggle for the demands I refer to is at the head of the political agenda of the world today. It has already *been* the "agenda" at one Conference held by the UN on Trade, Aid and Development. It will again be the "agenda" at the second Conference *next year*. In fact it is Utopian to imagine that the problem can be dealt with in any other way. We have to face it. Failure to achieve significant cuts in armaments within the next few years, failure at the same time to combat imperialism effectively, *perhaps* this might mean nuclear war, but *certainly* it would mean continuing and increasing starvation for many millions more.

What then of birth control? Ivor Montagu is pushing at an open door if he is saying that attempts must be made in the next 34 years to control population growth. No-one is maintaining that population cannot grow faster than food supply. The logic of my case is that this is precisely what will happen unless significant advances are made in the struggle

against imperialism and war. But it is wrong to present birth control as the answer, or even to give more weight to it than to the need to boost food production. Birth control will certainly be necessary, but it can only help to overcome poverty and hunger within the framework of determined efforts to raise food production quickly. It will be up to each individual country to decide upon the balance it deems reasonable between measures to control population growth and measures to promote the food supply. But in all cases the emphasis will have to be on increasing the food supply. No-one says that this is an easy task from the technical point of view, even though we have the necessary knowledge. We know the experience of Russia and China, we know the difficulties, but we are also conscious of the tremendous achievements. No-one denies that technical developments, even under ideal conditions, take time to bear fruit. That is a fact of life. And of course, no-one is going to appeal for maximum reproduction in this period just because Marx showed that wealth is enlarged by the labour of human beings. Quite the contrary. But if raising food supply is not an easy task, neither is the introduction of birth control. As Masood Ali Khan says in his article "Who is responsible for hunger in India?", *World Marxist Review*, April 1966:

"Western and bourgeois propaganda tries to concentrate all attention on rapidity of population growth and not on slowness of increase in production and the extremely low yield of crops in India. Measures of birth control and family planning propagated in the country do not affect the illiterate and the poor. Experience shows that only where illiteracy and cultural backwardness have been removed can population growth be checked. And economic progress is the basis for cultural progress. So hoping for a reduction in population growth to ease the problem is really putting the cart before the horse."

Please note that I am not maintaining that population growth slows down automatically with economic progress. What I am stressing is that, religious difficulties apart (and they are formidable), any major birth control campaign in the underdeveloped countries will encounter terrific obstacles unless prior and concurrent economic measures are already leading to significant improvements in the living standards of the people.

Long-Term Questions

I would like to come now to some of the long-term questions which Ivor Montagu raises although space prevents me from expanding at length. In the long term, food supply will cease to be a problem. Ivor Montagu quotes Kolganov maintaining that today 7.4 acres are needed to support one person. This will be reduced gradually by improvements in

traditional agricultural techniques, and cut drastically to the extent that microbiological and chemical food production techniques are introduced. The latter could permit the release of large tracts of former agricultural land for habitation, sport, etc., etc. Maybe we would not relish the products of these new industries, but this is really a question of deeply ingrained habit and of new culinary methods, and in any case they would probably be used alongside traditional foods, at least at first. The real point I am making is that if future generations so desired, they would have the means of putting off the problem of sheer overcrowding, of space, without recourse to draconian birth control measures, even if the colonisation of other planets were not technically feasible at that stage. Bearing that in mind, and considering the present rate of scientific advance, is it so fantastic to foresee that the problem of space on Earth would be solved by the colonisation of planets rather than by strict birth control? Of course, future generations may decide to stop population growth altogether, or cut it drastically, by a programme of birth control accepted by consent within the sort of self-reliant society which will then exist. This would be an alternative to becoming accustomed to the products of microbiology and chemistry or to the effort to conquer space. A combination of measures would seem to me the most sensible. But that is not *our* problem. Our problem is raising the traditional food supply during the next 30 to 50 years. Unless that is done, future generations may never have the chance to make their decisions.

To the extent that the food supply problem is solved in any part of the world, the other population problems touched upon by Ivor Montagu force their way to the top of the list. How to provide the goods, social services, cultural and sporting facilities, all the things needed for a decent, happy life in a well-integrated society. In fact, these are the problems we have today in Britain (although the latest National Food Survey would suggest that we are not out of the wood even with the food supply and distribution). But these problems are caused less by population itself than by lack of the appropriate social and political measures to deal with them before they became so acute. They are no more the inescapable results of population growth than is hunger. In all cases, it is a question of discovering the right technological, social and political measures needed to restore or maintain the proper balance.

But should we take the trouble? Do we really need every hand and every brain to build the new, genuinely human, civilisation which science makes possible? I consider that we do, even with automation, on condition that we always plan to maintain a proper balance between the number of individuals and the supply of goods and services, in the broadest sense, required to guarantee each and all a happy, prosperous existence. The Universe is so vast and science is accelerating at such a pace. There will always be so much to discover and turn to Man's advantage. Automation cannot do this. Automation frees Man from the humdrum routine of day to day production; it does not replace Him (except, should we add, if the capitalists get their way).

Peter Latham

IVOR MONTAGU'S "contribution towards opening a discussion on the problem of population movement" (*Marxism Today*, June 1966), is refreshing as well as a long overdue theme for reappraisal by (British) Marxists. His censure of the apriorism of much Marxian demography asking: "Is it for any better reason than the subjective psychological one that, since they are on the side of the masses, to carp at numbers seems a sort of infidelity" he shows is realised in the Soviet Union where they "no longer disregard the works issued on population in the capitalist countries" (Pokrishevsky). However, although I accept Montagu's general thesis that Western Marxists have neglected the implications of a doubling of world population in one generation contenting themselves with the panacea of socialism to establish a "normal" population distribution, his dis-

cussion of the birth rate, in particular, it will be suggested in what follows, detracts from his challenging re-formulation of the "population problem". This contribution is an attempt at synthesis—on the one hand a plea not to throw the "baby out with the bath water" (how can Montagu seriously discuss the birth rate without mentioning demand-for-labour analysis?) and on the other hand, concrete analysis of Western fertility patterns, with reference to non-Marxist Studies.

Why the Birth Rate Changes

Montagu suggests (having noted the phenomena in recent years in the industrialised countries for birth rates to rise) that "not industrialisation and urbanisation of themselves but their increase in the standard of living may well be responsible for decrease in birth rates". Yet the existence, generally

speaking, of an inverse relation between standard of living and fertility, does not necessarily mean that standard of living is the causal mechanism determining fertility patterns. On the contrary, the association between low fertility and high standards of living may be considered as having no direct relation, that is, both phenomena may be common products of something else. Thus, differences in standard of living may reflect differences in the mode of obtaining a livelihood among the classes. Moreover, if it can be established that these differences are significant in determining fertility patterns, then this is an explanation that does not imply that standard of living is the significant factor determining fertility differentials.

The secular decline in the birth rate since the last quarter of the 19th Century, a feature of all the advanced capitalist countries, has been variously explained in terms of economic and non-economic factors. Twenty-eight years ago, Radhakamal Murkerjee in his *The Political Economy of Growth* illustrated the inter-war and early post-war non-Marxist approach to the fall in fertility rate—seen as due to biological, economic and social factors. Under the head *biology*, excessive density in cities of flats and tenements, and nervous wear and tear, were suggested as a cause of increased neurosis for both men and women, which lessens the desire for procreation. At the time of writing 17.1 per cent of marriages in the USA were cited as childless compared to 6 per cent 18 years before. Under the head *social*, Murkerjee, having observed that the “capitalistic structure of society promotes stratification”, maintains that, “if social opportunities be equalised”, then “family ambition will disappear and the birth rate would rise”. Dumont developed this theory of “social capillarity” studying the causes of family limitation in France. Under the head *economic*, it is pointed out that this motive of family limitation applied in Imperial Rome—care of a family hampered the struggle for wealth. The problem of verification of the various other psychological and cultural hypotheses that appear in the literature, because they are independent variables, has led Western demography to see the birth rate as “mainly the result of social and economic environmental conditions, rather than some underlying trend in family building behaviour, determined by internal or external forces of a non-economic character” (Ian Bowen, *Population*, 1960).

But Western investigators to date have failed to produce a workable population theory, that is, one capable of producing accurate predictions. This failure has led to a revival of interest in the application of Marxist tools of analysis to demography. Thus an American Sydney Coontz in *Population Theory and the Economic Interpretation*, 1957,

suggested that the failure has been due to demographers ignoring the qualitative and quantitative implications of long and short run changes in the demand for labour. Before examining the validity of demand for labour analysis in the context of the birth rate, differences in the economic functions of the family according to class will be sketched, to see if they account for fertility differences.

Economic Functions of the Family

Looking first at the changed economic function of the family of the wealthy, it is significant that for the Romans with the full development of slavery, the large family ceased to be an economic asset. Similarly today, the wealthy family is divorced from production. Through the dowry, family fortunes are merged, while simultaneously through family limitation, integrity of the patrimony is preserved in subsequent generations. However, as Richard Titmuss has noted in *Income Distribution and Social Change*, the highest social classes have recently begun to have larger families—but even here toleration of this new pattern of fertility is related to the economic functions of the family. For the purpose of death duties and taxation ability to sub-divide a fortune among members of the family as “gifts” reduces tax paid.

Whatever its early history, following its constitution, the family of the poor was a joint economic enterprise united in production and consumption. Prior to the Industrial Revolution women were employed in agriculture and industry, but with industrialisation, increased demand for women and children in the factory combined with depreciation in the absolute value of male labour power. Enough has been said to show that differences in the economic function of the family furnish the explanation for the first great fertility difference. Demand for labour analysis explains the fertility differentials among the class divorced from ownership of the instruments of production, since it includes the new middle class.

The usefulness of demand for labour analysis may be illustrated by reference to birth rates during the Industrial Revolution, and the fertility decline as capitalism has evolved.

It is usual to see the population upsurge of the Industrial Revolution as wholly due to a decline in mortality, yet the great increase in the demand for labour suggests at least the possibility of an increase in fertility. In the absence of reliable statistics a definite answer is precluded. Even so, the approach of T. H. Marshall can be used in terms of whether a new fertility pattern is adopted or not. A society in population equilibrium is assumed (either a stationary population or one increasing at a moderately constant rate and without

emigration or immigration—that is, the size of the population is determined by mortality and fertility rates). Any change in one rate will affect a corresponding change in the other rate. If there is no compensatory change the previous population equilibrium is being supplanted. In England the number of children rose because of the decline in child mortality. Therefore, since the fall in mortality did not lead to a compensating fertility decline, the result is tantamount to the adoption of a new fertility pattern. So population growth in the Industrial Revolution must be analysed in terms of the changes which permitted toleration of this new pattern.

The spread of the factory system meant a great increase in the quantity and reduction in the quality of labour demanded, “by substituting the industry of women and children for that of men” (Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, 1835), and elimination of old skills and reduction of individual differences among workers, making “All men equal before the machine” (T. A. Hobson *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, 1916). The factory system lowered the cost of labour power in two ways:

1. Less demand for skill shortened the time and expense required to prepare a worker for productive labour.
2. The employment of women and children further lowered the cost of a man's labour power—as Marx himself said “Machinery by throwing every member of the family on the labour market spreads the value of the man's labour power over his whole family”, *Capital* Vol. I.

Demand for Labour

Thus the economic explanation of the population upsurge in this period is found in the growth of aggregate demand for labour plus reduction in the quality demanded. In France, there was a concomitant fall in fertility and mortality at this time, for France lagged behind Britain's industrial development and had a system of peasant proprietorship established prior to the French Revolution. Thus slow growth in demand for labour permitted in France an absolute increase in population, but insufficient to maintain the previous fertility level following the decline in mortality.

By the last quarter of the 19th century, in contrast, mature capitalism required higher quality labour due to foreign competition. Marshall in testimony to the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor 1893, emphasised the increased efficiency associated with a rise in labour's standard of living. Increased intensity of labour (“speed-up”) also occurred: “factory labour is more intense than formerly . . . in the growing strain it imposes upon the nervous system of the operatives”. And the increased cost of labour also arose from the need

for a literate labour force, e.g. a lorry driver must be able to read to qualify. In the USA, the median number of years education for an unskilled labourer is now about 8.

The relative increase in the demand for higher quality labour is illustrated by the occupation statistics of the major capitalist countries—they show the absolute and relative growth of a “new middle class”, in the “same property/class position as the wage-workers” (C. Wright Mills, *White Collar*, 1951). What Colin Clark calls the morphology of economic growth, or historical changes in production, are relevant to an explanation of the growth of a new salaried class of employees. With industrialisation the number employed in primary production declines relatively; the proportion in secondary industry rises “to a maximum” and then declines relative to tertiary production—the associated occupational changes are the gradual elimination of the manual worker and rapid growth in the numbers of clerical and professional workers (C. Clark, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*, 1940).

1870	1940	Labour Force
33 %	24 %	Old Middle class (Farmers, Businessmen, Professionals)
6 %	25 %	New Middle class (Managers, Salaried Professionals, Sales People and Office Workers)
61 %	51 %	Wage Workers
100 %	100 %	(C. W. Mills, <i>White Collar</i>)

With reference to population growth, this historical shift in the demand for labour lengthened and increased the cost of the average period of production of labour power, e.g. in Britain the median number of years of education requisite for office workers and sales people is now about 11.

The rise in the cost of labour power is reflected in the absolute increase in labour's standard of living. The increased goods and services consumed by the modern labour force are necessary cost elements for the maintenance and reproduction of a higher quality of labour. This was recognised by Marshall, “in the Western World the earnings . . . are not much above the lowest that are needed to cover the expenses of rearing and training efficient workers and of sustaining and bringing into activity their full energies”. (*Principles of Economics*.)

Also there has been in the Western World a gradual decline in the relative earnings of non-manual labour, e.g. in the USA in 1890 the average income of the salaried worker was twice that of the average wage earner (Mills)—in 1952, wage earners' average weekly earnings were \$69.24 compared to \$66.63 for salaried workers (R. K. Burns,

Journal of Business, October 1954). This is not due to increased demand for unskilled labour, but to the proportionately greater increase in supply than in demand for labour of higher quality. From 1910-1947, demand for clerks and salesmen rose in the U.S. from 10.2 to 18.2 per cent of the occupied population, "yet supply of this labour was so abundant that its relative remuneration was heavily reduced" (Colin Clark, 2nd edition, 1951). Therefore the rate of increase in the total demand for labour in the U.S. must have fallen, since demand for non-manual labour did not increase proportionately to the decrease in the demand for manual labour. The symptom of this relative over-population is the fall in the remuneration of non-manual labour—leading to a fertility decline since the last quarter of the 19th century, expressing decline in the rate of growth of the long-term demand for labour. Superimposed on the long-term decline are short-run cyclical variations in demand for labour. It is sometimes difficult to demarcate the "short-run period" as e.g., in the U.S. where a prolonged war and post-war boom was accompanied by a great population upsurge.

Economic Interpretation

The economic interpretation of demography regards as the fundamental determinant of fertility patterns, demand for labour and not democratisation of the knowledge of effective means of contraception. Out of this discussion, certain definite exceptions to Ivor Montagu's suggestion that a falling birth rate accompanies a rising standard of living, emerge, which are short-term variations. The birth rate in France fell during the period of Britain's Industrial Revolution despite no rise in France's standard of living. There was a falling birth-rate in Britain during the 1930s depression—mass unemployment (or lack of demand for labour) and insecurity caused both family limitation and depression deferred marriages—when the standard of living was falling. Conversely, after the war, in Britain, there has been a population upsurge when living standards or the supply price of labour has been rising. Thus demand for labour analysis appears as a more effective method of examining fertility patterns than the index of standard of living. Only in the case of the highest social classes

did demand for labour analysis emerge as inappropriate, but even here, fertility patterns seemed to have an economic basis related to the economic functions of the family.

In conclusion, long-term projections for future population in Britain correlate with the long-term demand for labour and indicate continued long-term fertility decline is a function of a slowing down in the rate of economic growth. Although from mid 1961 (when people born around 1947 reached the late teens) to mid 1964, the 15-19 age groups increased over half a million, this is expected to fall back almost as much by 1971, or be 1 per cent above 1961 levels. (*The Age Structure and Regional Distribution of the UK population 1964-1981*, from "Economic Trends", November 1965.) Even so, the economic interpretation of demography emphasises the relativity of population laws. The conclusions reached in this discussion do not mean demand for labour will always continue to be the prime determinant of fertility patterns; on the contrary, as Coontz points out, "when man is emancipated from the exigencies arising from scarcity, then undoubtedly, a new law of population will come into existence".

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