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DIVISION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Sept. 24. OCT 9 - 1945  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

General Douglas MacArthur,  
Tokyo, Japan.

Dear General MacArthur:

Birth control in Japan is the only certain way to ~~stop~~ <sup>prevent</sup> against another war. Militarists and politicians think wars can be stopped by military means or laws, but economists, sociologists and psychologists and HISTORY prove that wars are usually due ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> some actual need for expansion due to population pressure.

As much as we abhor the Jap psychology, we know from ethnologists and anthropologists that if a Jap baby were taken the second it was born and reared as our babies are, it would be no different from any other baby. Japan has too many people for its economy. WHY DON'T YOU TEACH BIRTH CONTROL IN JAPAN?

You may pass all the laws, wreck the Jap industry, and keep a permanent army in Japan, but whether a man is a Jap, or an American, when he gets hungry he fights or dies. The real cause of Japan's going to war was not hereditary meanness, but to get more food. Now, if there had been 50,000,000 Japs on the home islands instead of 100,000,000, all would have had plenty of food.

Look at pre-war Holland, no poverty, no great wealth, but a happy nation. Holland, no bigger than a Texas county, had 60 birth control stations. Look at the millions who starve in China and India--do you suppose a kind God approves the religious bigots who oppose birth control, while the ignorant, vicious bring unwanted children into the world to go through life hungry and ignorant? The upper strata of society ~~practise~~ <sup>practise</sup> birth control, while lower strata don't have the knowledge, nor the money, therefore, civilization is attacked from above and below--too few are born to the better classes; too many to the lower classes. Birth control information is the answer. Teach the Japs birth control and make them regulate the size of their families, and the threat of war can be much better controlled than by politics and armies. You are a hero, General, and doing a great job--do a brave, scholarly job, by teaching the Japs to regulate the size of their families.

Yours truly,

Paul T. Vickers, M.C.,  
McAllen, Texas Chamber of  
Commerce.

OCR NE Unit  
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May 17, 1949

Dear Bob:

Mr. Butterworth has asked me to thank you for sending, with your letter of May 10, 1949, a copy of "A Population Policy for Japan", submitted by Mr. Warren S. Thompson.

We have also found this paper of considerable interest and are preparing comments on the paper for Mr. Butterworth.

Sincerely yours,

Max W. Bishop  
Chief  
Division of Northeast Asian Affairs

Mr. Robert R. West,  
Deputy to Assistant Secretary  
of the Army,  
Washington, D. C.

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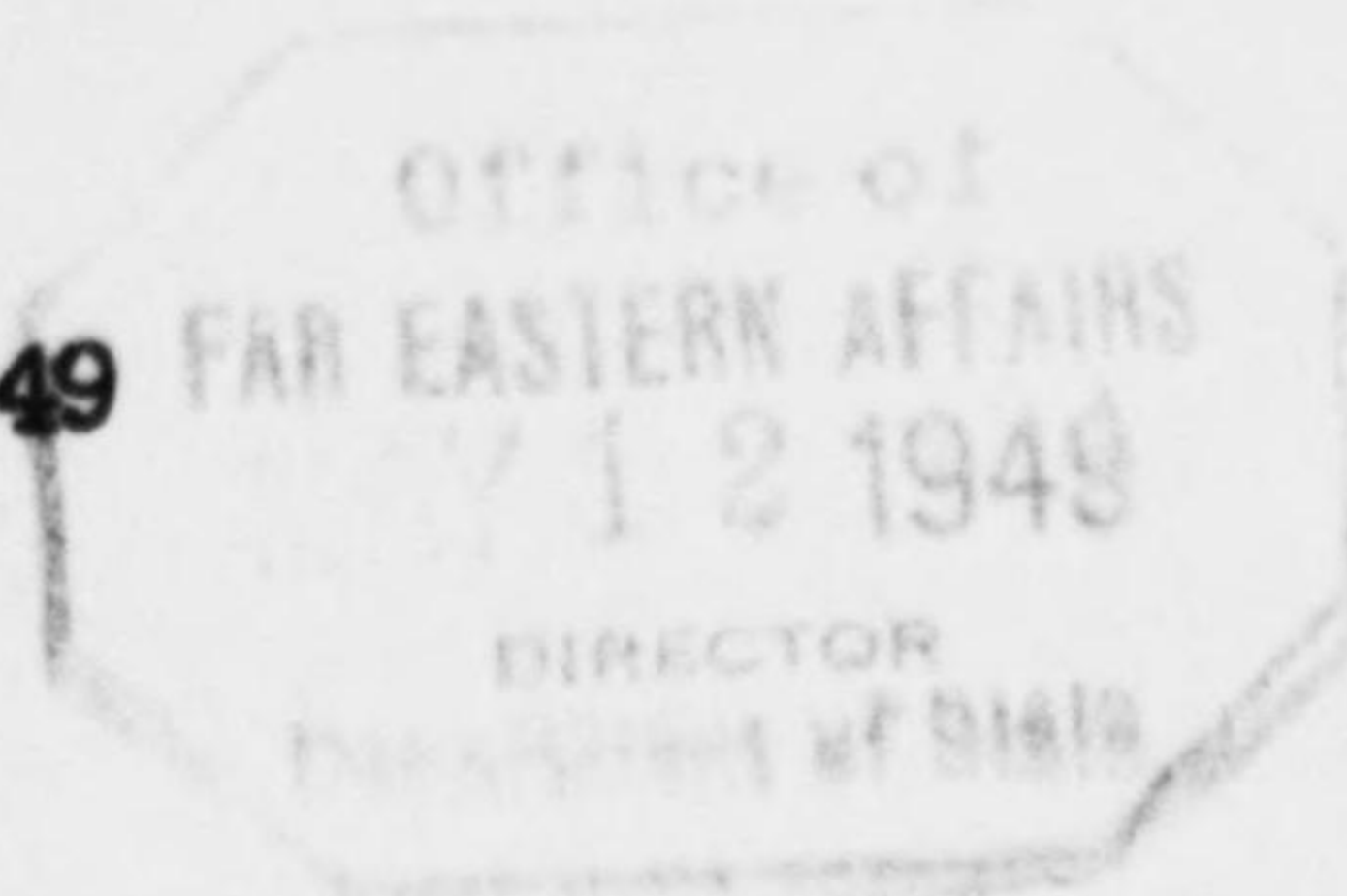
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

10 May 1949



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DIVISION OF  
NORTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. W. Walton Butterworth  
Director for Far Eastern Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington 25, D. C.

MAY 13 1949

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Dear Mr. Butterworth:

Enclosed is a copy of the report, "A Population Policy for Japan", submitted to us by Mr. Warren S. Thompson, the population expert of Miami University. I was quite interested in it and felt that you might also like to read it.

Sincerely,

ROBERT R. WEST  
Deputy to  
Assistant Secretary of the Army

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740.00119 Control (Japan)*

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Report

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Dear Bob:

You may remember a study entitled "A Population Policy for Japan", prepared by Mr. Warren S. Thompson of Miami University, of which you were kind enough to send us a copy last May. A member of my staff later wrote to Mr. Thompson informing him of the interest with which he had read the study and requesting his further views on certain points. Mr. Thompson's reply seems to me of considerable interest and I think you will find the enclosed copy worth reading.

Sincerely yours,

W. Walton Butterworth  
Director for Far Eastern Affairs

Enclosure:

Copy of letter from  
Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Robert West,  
Deputy to Assistant Secretary  
of the Army,  
Department of the Army.

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7/22/49

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MIAMI UNIVERSITY  
OXFORD, OHIO

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July 1, 1949

Mr. Robert A. Fearey  
Division of Northeast Asian Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Fearey:

There can, of course, be no assurance that the great majority of the Japanese will practice birth control effectively even if the knowledge of birth control is spread rapidly and the appliances for its practice are made freely available. The history of the development of birth control in the West would quite naturally lead one to conclude that it is likely to be several decades, perhaps three to five, before birth control would be practiced on a scale sufficiently broad to reduce the absolute increase significantly below that which prevailed before the war. I was inclined to this view and so expressed myself in my book Population and Peace in the Pacific (published in 1946, but completed before VJ Day). At the present time, however, I am disposed to modify that view somewhat. The reasons which have led me to modify it are as follows:

1. In the West when people began to learn about the possibilities of birth control their death rates were still fairly high. For example, in 1900, even after birth control had made considerable progress in the United States, our death rate was in the neighborhood of 17 or 18. It is now about 10-11 as you know. A decline of 6-8 points in the birth rate accompanied by a like decline in the death rate would make no difference in the natural increase. In fact, this is substantially what happened in most Western lands when birth control began to have an effect on the birth rate.

Last year the death rate in Japan had been brought down to approximately 12 from 17-18 the preceding year (an unparalleled achievement), and I should not be the least surprised if it dropped to about 11 during the current year. This means that a comparatively small reduction in the crude death rate is to be expected in Japan in the future. Consequently, any significant decline in



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the birth rate from now on is likely to be accompanied by an equally significant decline in the rate of natural increase. The increase in absolute numbers will, of course, remain large for some time unless there is a very precipitous decline in the birth rate. Is this likely to happen?

2. So far as I know, no other country while it still had a relatively high birth rate (the birth rate in Japan was approximately 34 in 1948), also had a well developed public health service with centers from which the knowledge of birth control might be spread quite rapidly to practically all parts of its population. At the time I left Japan there were over 700 so-called model health centers in operation, and there were in addition a number of smaller centers which were actually coming into contact with many thousands of Japanese day by day. The establishment of family clinics (birth control clinics) in these health centers might very well spread the knowledge of effective birth control practices throughout Japan far more rapidly than ever happened in any Western country.
3. About 85 percent of all the births in Japan are attended in the home by midwives. No one knows what the attitude of these midwives towards birth control will be, but the very few I happened to talk to not only seemed in favor of it themselves, but were very positive in their opinion that the Japanese farm women and laborer's wives did not want the large number of births they are now having. I regret very much that I was so late catching on to the significance of these midwives in the population situation in Japan that I could not follow up this lead as I should have liked to.
4. There is a very lively public interest in Japan in all matters regarding population and its relation to the economy. It appears to be present in all classes of the population and all types of newspapers, weeklies, and journals are participating in this discussion. As an example, the last week I was in Japan I was asked to write brief introductory articles for three women's magazines which were said to have a combined circulation of 2,000,000 and to be read in at least twice that many homes. The articles which I was asked to write were to appear in editions which were devoted primarily, one I believe exclusively, to the discussion of Japanese population problems with special emphasis upon birth control.



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Since my return I have received a number of press clippings which lead me to think that the whole matter of population control is being discussed more openly in Japan today than has ever happened elsewhere. In addition, I understand that the radio and moving pictures are beginning to be used to inform the Japanese people not only regarding birth control, but also regarding the economic difficulties certain to arise from a too rapid increase in numbers. Finally, the Premier and his cabinet have publicly expressed themselves in favor of birth control as one of the important means by which Japan's population growth can be reduced. Because of the ready acceptance of authority by the Japanese even in very personal matters this seems to me a very important sign.

I am fully aware that what I have said here does not constitute proof that the Japanese will adopt birth control fast enough and practice it effectively enough to reduce the birth rate rapidly within the next few years, nor am I predicting that this will happen. I will go so far, however, as to say that I would not be surprised if the birth rate in Japan were to fall more rapidly within the next several years than it did at any time in any Western country. There are, of course, many provisos to be made. For example, is Premier Yoshida entirely honest in his acceptance of birth control as a vital factor in Japanese population policy? Are the newspapers and radio giving Japanese population problems the attention they are merely because they think it will please the Americans or are they truly convinced of the basic position of population numbers in all their economic problems? Have the "Expansionists" honestly seen the error of their way and are they ready to undertake the adjustment of population to resources rather than to rely upon the expansion of resources (conquest) to care for a rapidly growing population? I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions and I certainly do not know the many practical and personal difficulties which may be encountered in the efforts to bring down the average size of the Japanese family. But I still think it possible that the decline in the Japanese birth rate may be so rapid that it will surprise nearly all of us who have been thinking of Western experience as a guide to what might happen in Japan. This would be even more probable if some very simple and effective method of birth control were discovered. For example, recently two Japanese doctors were quoted in one of the leading newspapers as having injected a sex hormone into the blood of a woman which rendered her incapable of conception for three or four months. I tried to find out more about this matter, but thus far have been unable to do so.



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In connection with your statement that the poorer classes do not practice birth control to the extent of the more fortunate classes, I would like to make the observation that the facilities for the spread of birth control knowledge in Japan are now such that if they are used effectively this knowledge will reach the Japanese poor in relatively much shorter time than it reached the poorer classes in our own population. I would also observe that in the West the acquisition of birth control knowledge seems to be reducing the difference between the size of the family among the well-to-do and the poor.

It is to be hoped that some of the agencies in the Occupation, probably the public opinion group in CI and W, will study the attitudes of different classes of Japanese towards the limitation of their own families. Such studies should give us a much better basis for judging how rapidly the limitation of families will spread among different parts of the population.

Lest I leave an impression with you which I do not want to leave, I will say that in my judgment Japan already has a population almost twice as large as she can provide a good living for in her own islands and that I think they are bound to suffer far more than at present because of this over-population even if there were to be no further increase whatever, and there will be further increase. In my judgment, Japan will face a very severe crisis--one which may lead to much internal disorder and severe hardship if, and when, our subsidy to her economy is rather suddenly withdrawn and she is forced to rely more largely on her own resources. Just what the political consequences of great hardship (hunger, cold, epidemics, etc.) will be, no one can tell, but I have long been convinced that war is not generally regarded as a worse evil than suffering within the family and neighborhood when there is abundance abroad which it appears can be taken if the proper military preparations are made at home and the leaders are sufficiently in control of the avenues of publicity. I do not mean to be either cynical or pessimistic, but I can see no good coming from a refusal to face facts.

Sincerely,

/s/ Warren S. Thompson

Warren S. Thompson



Dear Bob:

You may remember a study entitled "A Population Policy for Japan", prepared by Mr. Warren S. Thompson of Miami University, of which you were kind enough to send us a copy last May. A member of my staff later wrote to Mr. Thompson informing him of the interest with which he had read the study and requesting his further views on certain points. Mr. Thompson's reply seems to me of considerable interest and I think you will find the enclosed copy worth reading.

Sincerely yours,

W. Walton Butterworth  
Director for Far Eastern Affairs

Enclosure:

Copy of letter from  
Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Robert West,  
Deputy to Assistant Secretary  
of the Army,  
Department of the Army.

FE:NA:RAFearey:db  
7/22/49



MIAMI UNIVERSITY  
OXFORD, OHIO

July 1, 1949

Mr. Robert A. Fearney  
Division of Northeast Asian Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Fearney:

There can, of course, be no assurance that the great majority of the Japanese will practice birth control effectively even if the knowledge of birth control is spread rapidly and the appliances for its practice are made freely available. The history of the development of birth control in the West would quite naturally lead one to conclude that it is likely to be several decades, perhaps three to five, before birth control would be practiced on a scale sufficiently broad to reduce the absolute increase significantly below that which prevailed before the war. I was inclined to this view and so expressed myself in my book Population and Peace in the Pacific (published in 1946, but completed before VJ Day). At the present time, however, I am disposed to modify that view somewhat. The reasons which have led me to modify it are as follows:

1. In the West when people began to learn about the possibilities of birth control their death rates were still fairly high. For example, in 1900, even after birth control had made considerable progress in the United States, our death rate was in the neighborhood of 17 or 18. It is now about 10-11 as you know. A decline of 6-8 points in the birth rate accompanied by a like decline in the death rate would make no difference in the natural increase. In fact, this is substantially what happened in most Western lands when birth control began to have an effect on the birth rate.

Last year the death rate in Japan had been brought down to approximately 12 from 17-18 the preceding year (an unparalleled achievement), and I should not be the least surprised if it dropped to about 11 during the current year. This means that a comparatively small reduction in the crude death rate is to be expected in Japan in the future. Consequently, any significant decline in



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2. So far as I know, no other country while it still had a relatively high birth rate (the birth rate in Japan was approximately 34 in 1948), also had a well developed public health service with centers from which the knowledge of birth control might be spread quite rapidly to practically all parts of its population. At the time I left Japan there were over 700 so-called model health centers in operation, and there were in addition a number of smaller centers which were actually coming into contact with many thousands of Japanese day by day. The establishment of family clinics (birth control clinics) in these health centers might very well spread the knowledge of effective birth control practices throughout Japan far more rapidly than ever happened in any Western country.
3. About 85 percent of all the births in Japan are attended in the home by midwives. No one knows what the attitude of these midwives towards birth control will be, but the very few I happened to talk to not only seemed in favor of it themselves, but were very positive in their opinion that the Japanese farm women and laborer's wives did not want the large number of births they are now having. I regret very much that I was so late catching on to the significance of these midwives in the population situation in Japan that I could not follow up this lead as I should have liked to.
4. There is a very lively public interest in Japan in all matters regarding population and its relation to the economy. It appears to be present in all classes of the population and all types of newspapers, weeklies, and journals are participating in this discussion. As an example, the last week I was in Japan I was asked to write brief introductory articles for three women's magazines which were said to have a combined circulation of 2,000,000 and to be read in at least twice that many homes. The articles which I was asked to write were to appear in editions which were devoted primarily, one I believe exclusively, to the discussion of Japanese population problems with special emphasis upon birth control.



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Since my return I have received a number of press clippings which lead me to think that the whole matter of population control is being discussed more openly in Japan today than has ever happened elsewhere. In addition, I understand that the radio and moving pictures are beginning to be used to inform the Japanese people not only regarding birth control, but also regarding the economic difficulties certain to arise from a too rapid increase in numbers. Finally, the Premier and his cabinet have publicly expressed themselves in favor of birth control as one of the important means by which Japan's population growth can be reduced. Because of the ready acceptance of authority by the Japanese even in very personal matters this seems to me a very important event.

I am fully aware that what I have said here does not constitute proof that the Japanese will adopt birth control fast enough and practice it effectively enough to reduce the birth rate rapidly within the next few years, nor am I predicting that this will happen. I will go so far, however, as to say that I would not be surprised if the birth rate in Japan were to fall more rapidly within the next several years than it did at any time in any Western country. There are, of course, many provisos to be made. For example, is Premier Yoshida entirely honest in his acceptance of birth control as a vital factor in Japanese population policy? Are the newspapers and radio giving Japanese population problems the attention they are merely because they think it will please the Americans or are they truly convinced of the basic position of population numbers in all their economic problems? Have the "Expansionists" honestly seen the error of their way and are they ready to undertake the adjustment of population to resources rather than to rely upon the expansion of resources (conquest) to care for a rapidly growing population? I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions and I certainly do not know the many practical and personal difficulties which may be encountered in the efforts to bring down the average size of the Japanese family. But I still think it possible that the decline in the Japanese birth rate may be so rapid that it will surprise nearly all of us who have been thinking of Western experience as a guide to what might happen in Japan. This would be even more probable if some very simple and effective method of birth control were discovered. For example, recently two Japanese doctors were quoted in one of the leading newspapers as having injected a sex hormone into the blood of a woman which rendered her incapable of conception for three or four months. I tried to find out more about this matter, but thus far have been unable to do so.



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In connection with your statement that the poorer classes do not practice birth control to the extent of the more fortunate classes, I would like to make the observation that the facilities for the spread of birth control knowledge in Japan are now such that if they are used effectively this knowledge will reach the Japanese poor in relatively much shorter time than it reached the poorer classes in our own population. I would also observe that in the West the acquisition of birth control knowledge seems to be reducing the difference between the size of the family among the well-to-do and the poor.

It is to be hoped that some of the agencies in the Occupation, probably the public opinion group in CI and E, will study the attitudes of different classes of Japanese towards the limitation of their own families. Such studies should give us a much better basis for judging how rapidly the limitation of families will spread among different parts of the population.

Lest I leave an impression with you which I do not want to leave, I will say that in my judgment Japan already has a population almost twice as large as she can provide a good living for in her own islands and that I think they are bound to suffer far more than at present because of this over-population even if there were to be no further increase whatever, and there will be further increase. In my judgment, Japan will face a very severe crisis--one which may lead to such internal disorder and severe hardship if, and when, our subsidy to her economy is rather suddenly withdrawn and she is forced to rely more largely on her own resources. Just what the political consequences of great hardship (hunger, cold, epidemics, etc.) will be, no one can tell, but I have long been convinced that war is not generally regarded as a worse evil than suffering within the family and neighborhood when there is abundance abroad which it appears can be taken if the proper military preparations are made at home and the leaders are sufficiently in control of the avenues of publicity. I do not mean to be either cynical or pessimistic, but I can see no good coming from a refusal to face facts.

Sincerely,

/s/ Warren S. Thompson

Warren S. Thompson



A Population Policy for Japan

1. The facts on which I base my judgment that Japan should have a definite and avowed population policy are so well known by Occupation officials that it may seem presumptuous in me even to sketch them out briefly. I shall do so, however, in order to give unity to the entire statement I wish to leave with the Chief of the Section to which I am attached. The most important facts as I see them are:

a. Japan has a very dense population in terms of persons per square mile of cultivated land—about 2,840 per square mile, counting the area of double-cropped land twice. This is almost 4 1/2 persons per acre. The tilled area cannot be greatly extended and such extension as there may be will be largely at the expense of the forest area on land which is subject to serious erosion and is of relatively low fertility.

(1) The increase of food production through the use of more fertilizer, better tillage, better disease and insect control, and the development of better plant varieties will almost certainly be considerable but much of it will be in crops like potatoes (Irish and sweet) subject to somewhat greater variation in production than the staple grains and which also create storage and utilization problems far more difficult than for the grains. Their greater use also creates certain important dietary problems. As far as can now be seen, Japan must continue to import a significant proportion of her food—the proportion at any given time depending largely upon the population growth and the size of the crop at that time.

b. Japan has only a few of the essential minerals in sufficient abundance to permit of unhindered industrial production. Coal, zinc and sulphur are the chief minerals belonging in this category and even with regard to them certain qualifications must be made because of the poor quality of some of the

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ores and the difficulties of mining thin and lean seams. Most other minerals are in short supply and generally of inferior quality. This means that Japan must rely heavily on imports of many minerals, the most important of which is probably iron ore, if she is to develop an efficient and varied industrial production. As in the case of food the size of the essential imports at any given time will depend chiefly on the population growth although any rise in the level of living would also increase the need for mineral imports and for imports of other raw materials like cotton, jute, wool, rubber and a large variety of lesser importance but still quite essential which Japan does not produce or produces only in small amounts and often at exorbitant expenditure of labor.

c. A considerable proportion of Japanese industry was destroyed during the war and even where it escaped destruction much of its equipment is now in bad condition so that large capital expenditures will be required merely to restore them to their prewar status. But this is not enough as there has been much technological progress in the United States and Europe during and since the war which must be incorporated into Japanese plants if they are to compete with those of other countries in world markets. The major part of this capital must come from abroad, chiefly from the United States, if recovery is to be fairly rapid. Foreign loans for the restoration of Japanese industry, and the same holds for Japanese shipping, will not be forthcoming in adequate amounts until it is reasonably certain that a profitable market can be found for the products. There is little evidence as yet that such a market is developing rapidly either at home or abroad. The rehabilitation of Japanese industry and shipping is likely to be slow and subject to many setbacks. Furthermore, the fact that Japanese industry must develop in such a way as to render her militarily impotent for years to come has made it necessary to change in a very fundamental way the industrial structure



of Japan. The problem of developing a national industrial structure which cannot be quickly converted to war production and yet one which is capable of increasing the production of the things the people need to be assured of a better level of living and to export large quantities of many types of goods is new in human experience. It is certain to involve much trial and error and, therefore, to cause serious delays in getting Japan again on a sound economic footing.

d. Since the growth of population at any given time depends upon the relation between the birth rate and the death rate it is a matter of much importance for the Japanese economy to estimate as carefully as possible the movements of these two rates over the next few years. Long experience with the study of population data leads me to make the following general statements regarding the probable movement of birth rates and death rates in Japan during the next decade. One cannot, of course, state positively what will happen in the future, especially regarding the birth rate, but we do know enough to forecast the general character of their changes.

(1) The birth rate of Japan in consequence of the repatriation of the soldiers, and to a lesser extent of the Japanese living abroad, moved to a high level in 1947 and fell off only a little during 1948. It is almost certain to fall off considerably more in the next two or three years. Thereafter, it is likely to decline more slowly for some years unless positive measures are undertaken which are calculated to hasten its reduction. Since there is no precedent in experience to indicate how rapidly active education in the need to reduce the size of the family can be expected to show results one cannot be positive of exactly what to expect. The opinion of the writer is that the normal spread of the practice of family limitation can be greatly hastened by active effort to this end and that Japan is ready to move rapidly in this direction.



(2) In 1948 the birth rate was approximately 33.8 per 1,000 of the population. If no effort were made to hasten its decline, it would be very surprising if it fell as much as 10 points—to 24 per 1,000—in the course of the next eight years. The writer does not know of any precedent which would make it reasonable to assume such a decline under a laissez faire policy. It is quite possible, however, that such a decline or an even greater one might take place if active efforts were made in this direction. But even assuming that the birth rate were to decline 10 points in eight years the population would have grown to between 91 and 92 million by the end of 1956 and would still be increasing by about 1.1 million per year at that time.

(3) The death rate in Japan had been declining slowly for some years before 1935 but there was little change in it during the years 1935-40 when it averaged about 17 per 1,000. Since the war the success of the Public Health and Welfare Section in SCAP in reducing the death rate has been phenomenal. The preliminary figure for the death rate in 1948 is 12.0 per 1,000 which is considerably lower than would have been expected by a demographer studying trends in Japan before the war on the assumption that healthwork would proceed in much the same manner here as it did in the United States, 1900-1930. Moreover, the death rate will probably decline even a little further within the next two or three years.

(4) The difference between the birth rate and the death rate in 1948 (preliminary figures) indicates a probable natural growth of about 21.8 per 1,000—the highest rate ever attained in Japan—and a numerical increase of about 1 3/4 millions. The total population of Japan at the beginning of 1949 was slightly over 81 million. The rate of increase in Japan like the postwar rate in the United States and a number of European countries has been unusually high because of conditions arising out of the war and almost certainly will fall rather



rapidly for two or three years, possibly beginning in 1949, as the birth rate declines (see above). But as already noted, Japan's population growth during the next few years will be large and may well be even larger than given above if the death rate goes still lower as it well may.

e. We now come to the consideration of matters which contain a larger <sup>of</sup> element/uncertainty than do the movements of births and deaths. The part which foreign trade must play in the economic life of Japan is so critical that it must be discussed here very briefly. Otherwise, the general picture as regards the likelihood of Japan's ability to support her growing population, to say nothing of raising the general level of living, will remain incomplete.

(1) When foreign trade as a basis for the support of population comes up for discussion, and it always does, most people, but particularly the Japanese, usually say that they can see no reason why Japan should not become the manufacturing center for Asia in the future in much the same manner as the United Kingdom was the "workshop" of the world in the 19th Century. I wish to set forth briefly the reasons which seem to me to cast serious doubt on the ability of Japan to support her growing population at an improving level of living by foreign trade.

(2) When the United Kingdom embarked on her great career as world manufacturer and trader she had no serious competitor in most fields of manufactured goods. If one wanted to build railways, or to establish textile mills, or to buy cottons and woollens, or to enjoy the natural products of other lands, or to ship goods abroad, or to secure many types of insurance, or to transfer funds from country to country, or to carry on many other business transactions abroad, one had little choice but to deal with the United Kingdom and to use her facilities for foreign trade. This condition lasted throughout much of the 19th Century.



(3) This high degree of monopoly in providing many types of manufactures and in carrying on trade made it possible for the United Kingdom to sell manufactured goods and business services at a price very high as compared with the prices of the foodstuffs and raw materials which the United Kingdom needed both for home consumption and for her industries. Because of the large profits thus obtained, there was a rapid accumulation of capital in the hands of the large manufacturers, traders and bankers. A significant proportion of this capital was available for investment in foreign countries and was thus instrumental in creating a larger demand for exports of machinery, railway equipment and many other kinds of capital goods. All this was in addition to the exports of consumption goods such as textiles, hardware, and many other types of goods in daily use. However, this high ratio of the price of manufactured goods and business services compared to that of food and raw materials could not be maintained indefinitely in the face of growing competition for foreign trade and at present all countries have to pay relatively more for food and raw materials than the United Kingdom did during most of the 19th Century.

(4) Today Japan must try to reestablish herself in a world market in which competition will be fiercer than ever before and in which there is a marked prejudice against many things Japanese. Thus Japan's position as a foreign trader is far more difficult and, therefore, far more precarious than that of the United Kingdom from 1835 to 1900, let us say. This fundamental difference between Japan as a foreign trader in the middle of the 20th Century from the United Kingdom in the 19th Century emphasizes the need for Japan to concentrate on goods which contain a large portion of the type of labor at which the Japanese are most proficient and which is relatively cheap.

(5) The real question is: Can Japan export enough goods of the



kinds in whose production she can compete with other countries to provide herself with the food and raw materials she must import in order to live? Certainly this question cannot be answered categorically but it may be helpful to evaluate the prospects for a few of the items which might enter largely into Japanese exports.

(a) Silk was the most important of all exports in prewar years. But because it is generally recognized that silk has lost its largest prewar market—silk for stockings and socks in the United States—and does not seem likely to regain this market, and since no other country or group of countries seems likely to take the place of the United States as importer, it may be ruled out as a factor of much importance in Japan's future foreign trade.

(b) Certain types of ceramics may find foreign markets in a number of countries but they are, unfortunately, the luxury types of goods which are not used largely by the common people of Asia, or of any country, hence, they are not likely to be exported in quantities sufficient to buy any large amount of food and raw materials.

(c) Cotton and rayon yarns and goods may again become important. But here it must be remembered that there is keen competition already and as far as India and China develop their own cotton industries, which India is already doing and China is anxious to do, Japan will have still keener competition in selling cheap textiles to Asia. Both India and China can and do raise most of their own cotton while Japan must import all she uses. These countries both have even cheaper labor than Japan. Furthermore, for some years it is highly improbable that China, and quite possibly India also, will have such they can trade for the considerable quantities of cottons and the other types of consumption goods which Japan might supply. The whole Asiatic market is badly disrupted and is recovering but slowly.

(d) If Japan undertakes to export the better grades of cotton



goods and rayons and silks, then she faces keen competition from other experienced exporters and can tap but a limited market. The market for all manner of luxury goods will remain small as compared with that for staples. In rayon the field would seem to be more promising since it is quite probable that Japan could provide most of the raw materials needed for its production. But at present the progress in manufacturing rayon in the United States and some European countries has so far outstripped work in Japan that the prewar Japanese rayon cannot compete with these newer fabrics. Japanese mills will have to be largely reorganized and better control methods applied before they can become serious competitors in the world rayon market. No doubt Japan can come back in rayon to a large extent, but it will take both time and money.

(e) Many types of goods such as light hardware, bicycles, rubber goods, toys, lacquer, and many other kinds of light goods requiring a high proportion of hand labor can be exported by Japan, but the very enumeration of these goods makes one wonder whether the amounts of them will, in the near future, enable Japan to meet her needs for food and raw materials.

(f) Another line of products on which the Japanese appear to be counting heavily is machinery and other capital goods. In this connection it must not be forgotten that if the countries of Asia do get to the point, within a decade or two, where they are in a position to buy relatively large quantities of capital goods to build railways and ships and factories, it will only be because they have been able to borrow largely from abroad since they cannot produce it at home. There is only one large source of capital in sight at present--the United States. If we do make large loans to India, or China, or the Philippines, or to any other country, will we leave the borrowers free to buy capital goods wherever they wish? Personally I doubt it. The same will be true of other lenders.



They will demand that the loans they make be spent in their countries. It has always been so to a considerable extent, and there is no good reason to expect any sudden and significant change in this attitude.

2. Finally, we should not overlook the fact that the strong trend towards autarchy which set in during the inter-war period shows no signs of having abated. Everywhere, all industrially backward countries are making plans to industrialize as rapidly as possible so that they will not be dependent on the vagaries of foreign trade. This movement will certainly make the life of the "workshop" nation steadily more precarious. More and more the economy of such a nation becomes the prey of every political shift as well as every economic shift which takes place in the world. Thus even if Japan were for a time to achieve a foreign trade large enough to enable her to buy her needed food and raw materials, it is by no means certain that she could long continue to do so.

3. I believe that although the above considerations do not prove that Japan cannot export enough goods to buy food and raw materials for a growing population, they nevertheless are of such weight that they throw the burden of proof on those who assume that this can be done.

4. Since the support of any given size of population depends ultimately on the resources available to it as noted above and since I believe it is generally agreed that Japan's resources, both agricultural (including forests and fisheries) and mineral are limited and that even full development of water power will not provide an abundance of power, the nub of the population question in Japan becomes her ability to increase her resources. The place of foreign trade in any program has been discussed briefly, but it will be well also to review the other ways in which the relation of population to resources might be changed if we would get a clear view of the actual situation which the Japanese face.



5. There are other ways in which a more favorable relation between population and resources may be brought about and until and unless this is done, the level of living is bound to decline in a growing population already pressing heavily on its resources.

a. The Increase of Available Resources

(1) A general improvement in technology which is generally thought of as increased efficiency in production, not only affects manufacturing and agricultural techniques, but also affects the efficiency of the production of raw materials and the preparation of these materials for manufacturing. Thus raw materials which were economically unusable under the techniques available at one time may become usable if techniques improve sufficiently. As techniques improve and it takes less labor to produce these materials than it formerly did, they can be used where formerly they could not, or they can be produced with less labor.

(2) Resources may be increased by the acquisition of new lands. In the world of today this almost certainly means war and probably World War. In time this may change, but there is no immediate prospect of change in this regard.

b. Emigration

(1) The relation between population and resources might be changed favorably by large--very large--emigration. If more people were moved out of a country than were added to its population by the excess of births over deaths, this could happen, providing there were no immigration.

(2) This relation of resources and population may also be changed by reducing or raising the birth rates and death rates. Obviously, as long as the birth rate exceeds the death rate population will grow and, other



conditions remaining unchanged, the relation of resources to population will become less favorable in all countries in which population is already dense. A death rate higher than the birth rate which has by no means been an uncommon event in human history would produce the opposite effect.

(a) The policies intended to increase the efficiency of production, those referred to in (1a) above, are not generally thought of as population policies and in fact are seldom intended to affect the relation of resources and population, but in fact they often do have very significant effects on population growth and hence change the relations between numbers of people and the resources available for their use. In actual practice the general policy of increasing production is almost certain to encourage population growth among a people where the birth rate is under little control because the first successes of such a policy (increasing production) encourage a reduction in the death rate (Malthus). It is well established in the West, and there is evidence that it was beginning in Japan, that the birth rate only begins to decline as the level of living begins to rise and people come to feel that they can live better and give their children better opportunities only if they have smaller families. It is probably the desire to live better and have more opportunities for one's children rather than merely a high level of living that leads to the limitation of families. Until people become aware of the possibility of family limitation and actually begin to reduce their birth rate, any increase in productivity is largely absorbed in supporting more people rather than in supporting those living at a higher level. In this way what appears to be a laissez faire policy often becomes in effect a policy for increasing population. This would not be the case, however, where the level of living was already relatively high and the birth rate was largely controlled.



12

(b) I will say nothing here regarding the acquirement of additional resources through war (b(1) above). This is the situation everyone hopes can be avoided. But we should not close our eyes to the fact that the scarcity of resources has been used and probably will again be used by the political military leaders of expanding populations as a potent argument for aggression. It is true that aggression has not paid off in recent decades, but this does not mean that it will not again be tried and certainly the more aware a people is of its poverty in resources while other peoples enjoy more, the easier it can be aroused to support aggression.

(c) What is true of increased production as an encouragement of population increase in groups with low levels of living which are largely traditional, seems to be true also of emigration (item b(1) above). It is in general <sup>a</sup> policy encouraging population growth. Obviously in a large population like that of Japan with an increase of over million and one-half annually, emigration must take place on a truly vast scale and for a number of years in order merely to maintain population at a stationary level. Actually there have been very few cases in modern times in which emigration seems to have provided any perceptible improvement in the level of living in the country of origin, and even where this seems to have happened it cannot be proved.

(d) In the country of destination the immigrants generally have much the same birth rate or even a higher birth rate than they have been accustomed to at home. Since economic conditions are generally easier there (the belief that this will be so is the reason for emigration), the death rate is reduced and population grows more rapidly than in the home country. This is probably not a serious matter for some years in most areas of emigration because of the low ratio of population to resources, but it might become serious very soon



if such a movement were to take place on a large scale, e.g., a movement of millions of Indians to Madagascar or the East Coast of Africa, or of Japanese to Borneo, or of Chinese to New Guinea.

(e) Thus the two measures (increased production and emigration) which are most commonly advocated to care for increased numbers are quite likely to encourage population growth under the conditions which prevail in Japan at present and their net effect over several years may be to prolong and possibly even to intensify the very hardships they were expected to relieve. This is particularly likely to be the case where population pressure is already great, where the numbers involved are large and where the level of living is relatively low as in Japan, China, and India.

(f) The third method of reducing population pressure noted above, viz., the encouragement of slower population growth is generally recognized as a population policy and its advocacy has not yet attained the status of entire respectability in many quarters, probably because it runs counter to so many of the economic, social and religious attitudes and traditions which have prevailed hitherto. But it is, in cases where population pressure is severe, the only policy which is calculated to insure a permanent decent and rising level of living to an entire people.

(g) Slower growth of population, no growth, or even a decline in numbers, whichever may be the end desired, can be brought about in two ways: (1) by raising the death rate until it equals or exceeds the birth rate, and (2) by reducing the birth rate.

(h) The writer knows of no one who today advocates the raising of the death rate as a means of population control. It may well come to pass, however, that the failure to reduce the birth rate where population pressure



is already considerable will automatically lead to an increase in the death rate. Nature has kept man's numbers within the limits of his subsistence from time immemorial by a high death rate, and it is the means which actually operates today in a large part of the world's population. But because raising the death rate will not be seriously considered as a deliberate population policy no further attention will be paid it here.

(1) In the light of the facts given above and with the probability of reducing population pressure in lands where it is severe by increasing production, open to serious question, it seems to the writer that the most reasonable policy to advocate in over-populated lands is one calculated to reduce the birth rate until the numbers of the population concerned become manageable within the limits of the resources available to them.

6. This brief exposition of how certain policies might affect population growth seemed necessary to support the conclusion that in the case of Japan it is not sufficient to do all that can be done to raise production since population pressure is already great and numbers are increasing so fast that the larger part, if not all, of the increase in production is likely to be absorbed merely in the support of more people. It was also necessary to show that it is not practicable to look to emigration for the relief of Japan's population pressure in the near future since the numbers involved are too large, the areas to which emigrants might go are relatively small, the political obstacles to emigrants are great if not insurmountable, and the means to carry out mass migration are lacking.

7. Many people will no doubt ask why it is of concern to the United States and to the world that population pressure in Japan should be reduced, or to put it in another form, the level of living in Japan should be raised. There are two answers to this question. One looks solely to the interest created by our victory



over Japan and the subsequent occupation of the country to insure that she will not soon again engage in aggression. If Japan can soon become self-sufficient while lacking the means for rearmament, this end is served. There is, however, no reasonable doubt in the mind of anyone who has given it thought that even this immediate aim would be more easily and quickly attained if Japan's population were to cease to grow tomorrow. With an annual growth which will probably average a million and one-quarter, perhaps more, per year for the next eight or ten years, even this immediate aim is jeopardized. In a nutshell, that is the burden of the preceding argument.

a. A second answer looking to a longer future is that the pressure of population when felt very strongly becomes a powerful motive for the expansion of the political and economic power of a nation by military means and thus makes for aggressive war. We are all interested in this aspect of population growth; in reducing the pressure of population to a point where it cannot be used by expansionists as a talking point to whip up warlike sentiment because of the growing feeling that the nation is being made to suffer unjust hardships as compared with more fortunate peoples.

8. The policy of encouraging the reduction of the birth rate is the only one which in the long run can be classed as a cure for population pressure. This does not mean, however, that an increase in production and an expansion of foreign trade should not be encouraged in all possible ways. It merely means that as long as population growth keeps pace with or exceeds the increase in resources and production the basic economic situation either is not fundamentally altered or may even be worsened.

9. Of course, one can never prove now that the economic situation in any country which will arise in the future will remain essentially unchanged or become



worse. All one can do is to study the facts carefully and inform himself as fully as possible, and then apply common sense in trying to envisage future developments and the effects of population growth on these developments. It is true that in the West since 1800 increased production and a better level of living have accompanied large population increase, but for the last half century and longer the restriction of the size of the family has contributed largely to the reduction of the death rate and the rise in the level of living even in those countries having large resources and relatively small resources.

10. In the West the pressure of population on resources has for a long time been mild in comparison with that in Japan and other parts of South and East Asia. There has never been any serious doubt until quite recently that we in the West could both raise the level of living and at the same time could provide for a large increase in numbers. However, such doubts are now arising even there. In Japan conditions are so serious and the difficulties of caring for her population seem to the writer to be so well grounded in fact as to amount almost to certainty that population increase not only now stands in the way of improvement in the level of living, but may well lead to a deterioration in this level even if outside help continues to flow in as large a stream as it has since the Occupation. It is highly distressing to state to a whole people that after careful study of the facts the outlook for improvement is gloomy because of the size of their families. But it is no kindness to them or to the world to gloss over the facts or to interpret them more favorably than seems justified in the light of our experience. It is not surprising that the Japanese Government hesitates to act positively in encouraging birth control. It is easier to do nothing and thus tacitly sanction the various economic and social policies already in operation even though some of them actually do encourage further population



17

increase and thus make decent living more precarious. But it is also a heavy responsibility to leave matters as they are when that negative policy seems very likely, in the light of known facts, to increase the economic hardship of the population in the not distant future.

11. The writer also wishes to repeat again his conviction that careful consideration should be given to the probability that if a laissez faire attitude continues to prevail and population continues to grow about as indicated above, the feeling of pressure of population will grow. Under those circumstances a resurgence of expansionism in Japan is not only possible but is probable--not tomorrow, not in five years, but perhaps in a generation, when, with a rehabilitated industry, the inability to maintain a fair level of living with the resources available becomes again clearly manifest. When people are hungry and when they see no hope of better days ahead and when they have some means to make war, it is easy for demagogues and jingoes to raise hopes regarding the advantages to be derived from conquest. It is thus that population pressure contributes to the heightening of international tension and may be considered a potent cause of war.

If the general view of the significance of Japan's population situation expressed above is justified, the immediate practical problem becomes one of convincing, first the Japanese leaders and then the people as a whole that only through the control of population can they hope to maintain their economic status to say nothing of improving it. This can probably be done best by providing information and advice which will help the Japanese Government and people to arrive at decisions on policy which will contribute to the general welfare and encouraging them to discuss these matters openly. Only through accurate knowledge and free discussion as provided for in the new Japanese Constitution can democratic decisions be arrived at in this very important matter. It is probable, however, that with the Japanese



18

even more than with those peoples who have had longer experience with the operation of democracy, decisive leadership is of the utmost importance in getting reasonably quick action on any urgent matter. For this reason American help to Japanese leaders in educating the people to the need of population control, and in providing the knowledge essential to this control seems to me imperative. But this does not mean that family limitation should be enforced upon unwilling people, even if this were possible, by the Occupation. Sympathetic assistance can be given without the exercise of either physical or moral compulsion.

Finally, it should be made clear to the Japanese that it is highly unlikely the people of the United States will continue to provide them indefinitely with the means of livelihood they have provided since 1945 if the Japanese themselves show no interest in adapting their numbers to their resources; besides, any indication that population increase is being encouraged by groups which are interested in political expansion at some future time will certainly result in the quick cessation of aid, will postpone the time when Japan will be free of the Occupation and will also tend to make it more severe in future years.



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THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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DIVISION OF  
NORTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS

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United States Political Adviser  
for Japan

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Tokyo, June 20, 1949.

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Subject: Japanese Population Problem.

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With reference to American Embassy Moscow's A-574 of June 3, 1949, concerning an article in the June 1, 1949, issue of Izvestiya commenting on a letter to the Nippon Times by Dr. Warren S. Thompson on the Japanese population problem, the Charge d'Affaires ad interim has the honor to transmit a copy of Dr. Thompson's letter from the May 7, 1949, issue of this newspaper.

Dr. Thompson formerly served as an adviser to the Supreme Commander on population problems. The letter appearing in the Nippon Times was written in answer to an article by Father William S. Kascmitter, editor of Tokai News, the Catholic news publication agency in Japan.

Enclosure: *att.*

Dr. Thompson's letter dated May 7, 1949.

Copy to: American Embassy, Moscow.

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Enclosure to Despatch no. 400  
dated June 20, 1949 from the  
Office of the Political Adviser  
for Japan, Tokyo, on the subject,  
"Japanese Population Problem".

(COPY)

Nippon Times, May 7, 1949.

RAPS BIRTH CONTROL CRITIC

Dr. Thompson Insists His Proposal Is the Only  
Answer to Overpopulation Here

By Dr. Warren S. Thompson

(The following letter by Dr. Thompson, former adviser to SCAP on population problems and now returned to the United States, refuting an article written by Father William S. Kaschmitter, editor of Tosei News, the Catholic News Agency in Japan, was forwarded to the Nippon Times through Denis Warner, chief correspondent of Reuters-AAP. Editor).

In an article in the Nippon Times of April 16 which has just reached me, Father Kaschmitter quotes me as being in favor of opening up the unused portion of the world to the peoples, like the Japanese, who really need more land and larger resources. The implication he leaves is that if this is done there is no need of birth control which I advocated as the only permanent solution of Japan's population problem while in Japan recently. I would like to make the record clear and set forth my own position on these points so that there can be no misunderstanding.

My book, "Danger Spots in World Population," to which Father Kaschmitter refers was written in 1928 and published in the United States in 1929. In that book I did urge that deep consideration be given to the settlement of some of the unused portions of the world by people needing more land and resources. I still believe this ought to be done, and I further believe if not done voluntarily, these unused lands will be taken by force as soon as the badly crowded peoples of the world feel that they have the strength to do so. I can see no justice in the holding of lands out of use by colonial powers, but even more weighty in the determination of national policies in my judgment is that there is no physical possibility of preventing the crowded people of the world from taking these lands sooner or later.

In this same book I repeatedly stated my belief, however, that emigration to these unused lands was no final solution to the population problems of the crowded lands of the earth, that the only permanent solution was the reduction of the birth rate through birth control

until



ENCLOSURE TO TOKYO'S  
Despatch No. 400,  
June 20, 1949.

-2-

until population was brought into balance with the resources available for its support. I believed then, and could multiply quotations from this same book to this effect, that no country could long support its population after it achieves the relatively low death rate which characterized all peoples until only a few decades ago. I also very definitely stated that the world figures showing population growth indicated beyond reasonable doubt that poverty and hardship would continue to be the lot of all men in the industrially backward areas of the world if man tampered with (reduced) his death rates and left his birth rate unaltered. I still believe this to be true.

As regards emigration being the solution of Japan's population problem now, I wish to make my position clear. Since 1929 we have had a world war. Japan took an aggressive role in that war. As a result, for the time being, many people regard all Japanese efforts to secure migration outlets with great suspicion. I am not asking here how far that suspicion is justified. I am only stating that it is a fact and that its existence constitutes a decisive obstacle in any large emigration for the next few years. But even if this were not a fact, I would still hold that Japan could expect no substantial relief of her over-crowding from emigration in the next several years.

The reason for this belief is very simple. The practical difficulties of moving the vast number of people that would have to be moved to prevent further growth in Japan's population could not be overcome for some years even if truly great resources for this purpose were to be placed at the disposal of the Japanese Government by the United States. The natural increase of population in Japan in 1948 was slightly in excess 1,750,000, or approximately 4,800 per day. Moving this number of people from Japan each day, preparing land which they could farm, building a village for them establishing health service, making sure that the crops they are accustomed to growing will thrive in the new region, and establishing the many social, economic, and political institutions they would need merely to be assured of reasonably decent living, is beyond Japanese human power. The history of immigration shows no movement of people remotely equal to this even at the height of modern immigration. All great migratory movements have started on a small scale and have grown slowly for some years while the migrants were learning how to adjust themselves to their new homes, to their new crops, to their new climate, and to meet the other manifold difficulties which inevitably accompany pioneering in a new land.

I may add at this point that even if the right to emigrate on as large a scale as could be achieved were immediately granted the Japanese, it would be of no

practical



Despatch No. 400,  
June 20, 1949.

-3-

practical use unless at the same time the birth rate were reduced. Moreover, I have had Japanese argue with me that if there were an emigration outlet, however small it might be, it would have the effect of making the Japanese less ready to consider the need for birth control. I do not know whether this would be the case, so I rest my opinion regarding the futility of emigration from Japan as supplying immediate relief for population pressure on the practical difficulties of truly large-scale immigration within two or three decades.

I return again then to the view that birth control offers far more hope for the reasonably rapid adjustment of population to resources than any other scheme which can be proposed. I say this fully realizing that the wide-spread practice of birth control developed slowly over several decades in the West. Even if it were to develop as slowly in Japan, it would, in my judgment, be much more effective than emigration although not be fast enough to prevent increasing hardship. However, Japan has achieved a decline in the death rate since the war which as a student of such matters for almost 40 years I did not think possible. If all the resources of the health organization of Japan are put to work to teach people how they can control the size of their families, and if all avenues of publicity are used to bring to the people the facts showing the need for population control, I am prepared to believe that equally great progress can be made in the adjustment of numbers to resources. As one who wishes the Japanese people a better future, I hope fervently that this adjustment will be rapid, and once achieved, I believe it will be permanent.



MIAMI UNIVERSITY  
OXFORD, OHIO

SCRIPPS FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH  
IN POPULATION PROBLEMS

Warren S. Thompson  
P. K. Whelpton  
D. J. Bogue

*File  
HW*

July 1, 1949

Mr. Robert A. Fearey  
Division of Northeast Asian Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Fearey:

There can, of course, be no assurance that the great majority of the Japanese will practice birth control effectively even if the knowledge of birth control is spread rapidly and the appliances for its practice are made freely available. The history of the development of birth control in the West would quite naturally lead one to conclude that it is likely to be several decades, perhaps three to five, before birth control would be practiced on a scale sufficiently broad to reduce the absolute increase significantly below that which prevailed before the war. I was inclined to this view and so expressed myself in my book Population and Peace in the Pacific (published in 1946, but completed before VJ Day). At the present time, however, I am disposed to modify that view somewhat. The reasons which have led me to modify it are as follows:

1. In the West when people began to learn about the possibilities of birth control their death rates were still fairly high. For example, in 1900, even after birth control had made considerable progress in the United States, our death rate was in the neighborhood of 17 or 18. It is now about 10-11 as you know. A decline of 6-8 points in the birth rate accompanied by a like decline in the death rate would make no difference in the natural increase. In fact, this is substantially what happened in most Western lands when birth control began to have an effect on the birth rate.

Last year the death rate in Japan had been brought down to approximately 12 from 17-18 the preceding year (an unparalleled achievement), and I should not be the least surprised if it dropped to about 11 during the current year. This means that a comparatively small reduction in the crude death rate is to be expected in Japan in the future. Consequently, any significant decline in the birth rate from now on is likely to be accompanied by an equally significant decline in the rate of natural increase. The increase in absolute numbers will, of course, remain large for some time unless there is a very precipitous decline in the birth rate. Is this likely to happen?

2. So far as I know, no other country while it still had a relatively high birth rate (the birth rate in Japan was approximately 34 in 1948), also had a well developed public health service with

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centers from which the knowledge of birth control might be spread quite rapidly to practically all parts of its population. At the time I left Japan there were over 700 so-called model health centers in operation, and there were in addition a number of smaller centers which were actually coming into contact with many thousands of Japanese day by day. The establishment of family clinics (birth control clinics) in these health centers might very well spread the knowledge of effective birth control practices throughout Japan far more rapidly than ever happened in any Western country.

3. About 85 percent of all the births in Japan are attended in the home by midwives. No one knows what the attitude of these midwives towards birth control will be, but the very few I happened to talk to not only seemed in favor of it themselves, but were very positive in their opinion that the Japanese farm women and laborer's wives did not want the large number of births they are now having. I regret very much that I was so late catching on to the significance of these midwives in the population situation in Japan that I could not follow up this lead as I should have liked to.
4. There is a very lively public interest in Japan in all matters regarding population and its relation to the economy. It appears to be present in all classes of the population and all types of newspapers, weeklies, and journals are participating in this discussion. As an example, the last week I was in Japan I was asked to write brief introductory articles for three women's magazines which were said to have a combined circulation of 2,000,000 and to be read in at least twice that many homes. The articles which I was asked to write were to appear in editions which were devoted primarily, one I believe exclusively, to the discussion of Japanese population problems with special emphasis upon birth control.

Since my return I have received a number of press clippings which lead me to think that the whole matter of population control is being discussed more openly in Japan today than has ever happened elsewhere. In addition, I understand that the radio and moving pictures are beginning to be used to inform the Japanese people not only regarding birth control, but also regarding the economic difficulties certain to arise from a too rapid increase in numbers. Finally, the Premier and his cabinet have publicly expressed themselves in favor of birth control as one of the important means by which Japan's population growth can be reduced. Because of the ready acceptance of authority by the Japanese even in very personal matters this seems to me a very important event.

I am fully aware that what I have said here does not constitute proof that the Japanese will adopt birth control fast enough and practice it effectively enough to reduce the birth rate rapidly within the next few years, nor am I predicting that this will happen. I will go so far,



however, as to say that I would not be surprised if the birth rate in Japan were to fall more rapidly within the next several years than it did at any time in any Western country. There are, of course, many provisos to be made. For example, is Premier Yoshida entirely honest in his acceptance of birth control as a vital factor in Japanese population policy? Are the newspapers and radio giving Japanese population problems the attention they are merely because they think it will please the Americans or are they truly convinced of the basic position of population numbers in all their economic problems? Have the "Expansionists" honestly seen the error of their way and are they ready to undertake the adjustment of population to resources rather than to rely upon the expansion of resources (conquest) to care for a rapidly growing population? I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions and I certainly do not know the many practical and personal difficulties which may be encountered in the efforts to bring down the average size of the Japanese family. But I still think it possible that the decline in the Japanese birth rate may be so rapid that it will surprise nearly all of us who have been thinking of Western experience as a guide to what might happen in Japan. This would be even more probable if some very simple and effective method of birth control were discovered. For example, recently two Japanese doctors were quoted in one of the leading newspapers as having injected a sex hormone into the blood of a woman which rendered her incapable of conception for three or four months. I tried to find out more about this matter, but thus far have been unable to do so.

In connection with your statement that the poorer classes do not practice birth control to the extent of the more fortunate classes, I would like to make the observation that the facilities for the spread of birth control knowledge in Japan are now such that if they are used effectively this knowledge will reach the Japanese poor in relatively much shorter time than it reached the poorer classes in our own population. I would also observe that in the West the acquisition of birth control knowledge seems to be reducing the difference between the size of the family among the well-to-do and the poor.

It is to be hoped that some of the agencies in the Occupation, probably the public opinion group in CI and E, will study the attitudes of different classes of Japanese towards the limitation of their own families. Such studies should give us a much better basis for judging how rapidly the limitation of families will spread among different parts of the population.

Lest I leave an impression with you which I do not want to leave, I will say that in my judgment Japan already has a population almost twice as large as she can provide a good living for in her own islands and that I think they are bound to suffer far more than at present because of this over-population even if there were to be no further increase whatever, and there will be further increase. In my judgment, Japan will face a very severe crisis--one which may lead to much internal disorder and severe hardship if, and when, our subsidy to her economy is rather suddenly withdrawn and she is forced to rely more largely on her own resources. Just what the political consequences of great hardship (hunger, cold, epidemics, etc.) will be, no one can tell, but I have long been convinced that war is not generally regarded as a worse evil than suffering within the family and neighborhood when there is abundance abroad which it appears can be taken if the proper military preparations are made at home and the leaders are



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sufficiently in control of the avenues of publicity. I do not mean to be either cynical or pessimistic, but I can see no good coming from a refusal to face facts.

Sincerely,

*Warren S. Thompson*

Warren S. Thompson

fs



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

May 23

E - Mr. Hamilton

May we have any comments on this paper or this subject which E wishes to send to Mr. Rusk?

Mr. Rusk has not yet read the FE memorandum.

BKS  
bks

G: Bromley Smith

1364

E- Mr. Thorp  
Assistant Secretary  
for Economic Affairs  
MAY 24 1949  
Department of State

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Allison,

DATE: July 8, 1949

em

DC/R  
file

"A Population Policy for Japan"  
by S. Thompson of Miami University,  
Ohio, which was forwarded by Mr. West  
In this study, which seems to me  
to be a very good analysis of  
Japan's population problem and economic  
situation, the author holds out considerable hope for  
dealing with the population problem.  
The study is in two parts: Part A  
Thompson (Tab B), with Mr. Bishop's  
conclusion that if there is "real basis for belief  
that the Japanese population would use birth control  
if it were possible to affect population growth  
without any knowledge and equipment were  
available at cost or free." Mr. Thompson's  
study is very interesting points and I think  
it is worth reading through.

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FILES

A most interesting letter - Dr.  
Thompson emphasizes at the end that  
"Japan already has a population almost  
twice as large as she can provide a  
good living for in her own islands -"

DO/R  
Anal. HW  
Rev.  
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JS  
Please drop a letter for  
right hand enclosing a copy  
of West's letter of

FE:NA:RAFearey:db

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894.1221/7-849  
CS/H



Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : FE - Mr. Butterworth, Mr. Allison,  
Mr. Hamilton  
FROM : NA - R. Fearey *NA*  
SUBJECT: Japanese Population Problem

DATE: July 8, 1949

*DC/R  
file*

You may recall the study "A Population Policy for Japan" (Tab C), prepared by Mr. Warren S. Thompson of Miami University, Ohio, following a survey in Japan, which was forwarded by Mr. West to Mr. Butterworth on May 13. In this study, which seems to me an excellent analysis of Japan's population problem and economic prospects and was used as a basis of the recent London Economist article on Japan, Mr. Thompson holds out considerable hope for birth control as a means of dealing with the population problem. On June 20 I wrote to Mr. Thompson (Tab B), with Mr. Bishop's approval, asking, essentially, if there is "real basis for belief that the masses of the Japanese population would use birth control methods to an extent sufficient to affect population growth materially even if the necessary knowledge and equipment were made available to them at low cost or free." Mr. Thompson's reply at Tab A contains several interesting points and I think you would find it worthwhile to read it through.

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*A most interesting letter - Dr. Thompson emphasizes as the end that "Japan already has a population almost as large as she can provide a good living for in her own islands -"*

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Cat. \_\_\_\_\_

*js*  
*Please drop a letter for sign to West enclosing a copy of West's letter.*

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problems. I would be most grateful if you could find time to give me very briefly your views on the above question.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Fearey  
Division of Northeast Asian Affairs



STANDARD FORM NO. 64

*Office Memorandum* · UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

DATE: July 22, 1949

TO : FE - Mr. Butterworth  
FROM : NA - R. Fearey *RAF*  
SUBJECT: Attached Letter to Mr. West

Attached is the letter to Mr. West enclosing a copy of Mr. Warren S. Thompson's letter on the Japanese population problem which you asked that I prepare.

FE:NA:RAFearey:db



JUL 25 1949

Dear Bob:

You may remember a study entitled "A Population Policy for Japan", prepared by Mr. Warren S. Thompson of Miami University, of which you were kind enough to send us a copy last May. A member of my staff later wrote to Mr. Thompson informing him of the interest with which he had read the study and requesting his further views on certain points. Mr. Thompson's reply seems to me of considerable interest and I think you will find the enclosed copy worth reading.

Sincerely yours,

W. Walton Butterworth  
Director for Far Eastern Affairs

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894.5011

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894.1221 / 6-2049

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894.1221 / 7-2549

Enclosure:

Copy of letter from  
Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Robert West,  
Deputy to Assistant Secretary  
of the Army,  
Department of the Army.

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7/22/49

cc

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JUL 25 1949



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YMIAMI UNIVERSITY  
OXFORD, OHIO

July 1, 1949

Mr. Robert A. Fearey  
Division of Northeast Asian Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Fearey:

There can, of course, be no assurance that the great majority of the Japanese will practice birth control effectively even if the knowledge of birth control is spread rapidly and the appliances for its practice are made freely available. The history of the development of birth control in the West would quite naturally lead one to conclude that it is likely to be several decades, perhaps three to five, before birth control would be practiced on a scale sufficiently broad to reduce the absolute increase significantly below that which prevailed before the war. I was inclined to this view and so expressed myself in my book Population and Peace in the Pacific (published in 1946, but completed before VJ Day). At the present time, however, I am disposed to modify that view somewhat. The reasons which have led me to modify it are as follows:

1. In the West when people began to learn about the possibilities of birth control their death rates were still fairly high. For example, in 1900, even after birth control had made considerable progress in the United States, our death rate was in the neighborhood of 17 or 18. It is now about 10-11 as you know. A decline of 6-8 points in the birth rate accompanied by a like decline in the death rate would make no difference in the natural increase. In fact, this is substantially what happened in most Western lands when birth control began to have an effect on the birth rate.

Last year the death rate in Japan had been brought down to approximately 12 from 17-18 the preceding year (an unparalleled achievement), and I should not be the least surprised if it dropped to about 11 during the current year. This means that a comparatively small reduction in the crude death rate is to be expected in Japan in the future. Consequently, any significant decline in



-2-

the birth rate from now on is likely to be accompanied by an equally significant decline in the rate of natural increase. The increase in absolute numbers will, of course, remain large for some time unless there is a very precipitous decline in the birth rate. Is this likely to happen?

2. So far as I know, no other country while it still had a relatively high birth rate (the birth rate in Japan was approximately 34 in 1948), also had a well developed public health service with centers from which the knowledge of birth control might be spread quite rapidly to practically all parts of its population. At the time I left Japan there were over 700 so-called model health centers in operation, and there were in addition a number of smaller centers which were actually coming into contact with many thousands of Japanese day by day. The establishment of family clinics (birth control clinics) in these health centers might very well spread the knowledge of effective birth control practices throughout Japan far more rapidly than ever happened in any Western country.
3. About 85 percent of all the births in Japan are attended in the home by midwives. No one knows what the attitude of these midwives towards birth control will be, but the very few I happened to talk to not only seemed in favor of it themselves, but were very positive in their opinion that the Japanese farm women and laborer's wives did not want the large number of births they are now having. I regret very much that I was so late catching on to the significance of these midwives in the population situation in Japan that I could not follow up this lead as I should have liked to.
4. There is a very lively public interest in Japan in all matters regarding population and its relation to the economy. It appears to be present in all classes of the population and all types of newspapers, weeklies, and journals are participating in this discussion. As an example, the last week I was in Japan I was asked to write brief introductory articles for three women's magazines which were said to have a combined circulation of 2,000,000 and to be read in at least twice that many homes. The articles which I was asked to write were to appear in editions which were devoted primarily, one I believe exclusively, to the discussion of Japanese population problems with special emphasis upon birth control.



-3-

Since my return I have received a number of press clippings which lead me to think that the whole matter of population control is being discussed more openly in Japan today than has ever happened elsewhere. In addition, I understand that the radio and moving pictures are beginning to be used to inform the Japanese people not only regarding birth control, but also regarding the economic difficulties certain to arise from a too rapid increase in numbers. Finally, the Premier and his cabinet have publicly expressed themselves in favor of birth control as one of the important means by which Japan's population growth can be reduced. Because of the ready acceptance of authority by the Japanese even in very personal matters this seems to me a very important event.

I am fully aware that what I have said here does not constitute proof that the Japanese will adopt birth control fast enough and practice it effectively enough to reduce the birth rate rapidly within the next few years, nor am I predicting that this will happen. I will go so far, however, as to say that I would not be surprised if the birth rate in Japan were to fall more rapidly within the next several years than it did at any time in any Western country. There are, of course, many provisos to be made. For example, is Premier Yoshida entirely honest in his acceptance of birth control as a vital factor in Japanese population policy? Are the newspapers and radio giving Japanese population problems the attention they are merely because they think it will please the Americans or are they truly convinced of the basic position of population numbers in all their economic problems? Have the "Expansionists" honestly seen the error of their way and are they ready to undertake the adjustment of population to resources rather than to rely upon the expansion of resources (conquest) to care for a rapidly growing population? I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions and I certainly do not know the many practical and personal difficulties which may be encountered in the efforts to bring down the average size of the Japanese family. But I still think it possible that the decline in the Japanese birth rate may be so rapid that it will surprise nearly all of us who have been thinking of Western experience as a guide to what might happen in Japan. This would be even more probable if some very simple and effective method of birth control were discovered. For example, recently two Japanese doctors were quoted in one of the leading newspapers as having injected a sex hormone into the blood of a woman which rendered her incapable of conception for three or four months. I tried to find out more about this matter, but thus far have been unable to do so.



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In connection with your statement that the poorer classes do not practice birth control to the extent of the more fortunate classes, I would like to make the observation that the facilities for the spread of birth control knowledge in Japan are now such that if they are used effectively this knowledge will reach the Japanese poor in relatively much shorter time than it reached the poorer classes in our own population. I would also observe that in the West the acquisition of birth control knowledge seems to be reducing the difference between the size of the family among the well-to-do and the poor.

It is to be hoped that some of the agencies in the Occupation, probably the public opinion group in CI and E, will study the attitudes of different classes of Japanese towards the limitation of their own families. Such studies should give us a much better basis for judging how rapidly the limitation of families will spread among different parts of the population.

Lest I leave an impression with you which I do not want to leave, I will say that in my judgment Japan already has a population almost twice as large as she can provide a good living for in her own islands and that I think they are bound to suffer far more than at present because of this over-population even if there were to be no further increase whatever, and there will be further increase. In my judgment, Japan will face a very severe crisis--one which may lead to much internal disorder and severe hardship if, and when, our subsidy to her economy is rather suddenly withdrawn and she is forced to rely more largely on her own resources. Just what the political consequences of great hardship (hunger, cold, epidemics, etc.) will be, no one can tell, but I have long been convinced that war is not generally regarded as a worse evil than suffering within the family and neighborhood when there is abundance abroad which it appears can be taken if the proper military preparations are made at home and the leaders are sufficiently in control of the avenues of publicity. I do not mean to be either cynical or pessimistic, but I can see no good coming from a refusal to face facts.

Sincerely,

/s/ Warren S. Thompson

Warren S. Thompson