

Research-data
Extra-No. 1

Population Problem
of Japan

by

Ayanori Okazaki D. Eco.

Institute of Population Problems,
Welfare Ministry

Tokyo, Japan

JAPAN'S POPULATION PROBLEM OF JAPAN

I

Even in prewar days, Japan was already suffering from her overflowing population. The food-stuff raised in the country was quite short of feeding them enough, but she, constantly endeavouring to seek the means of exporting her textile and other products, filled up the deficit with the food import. The farm labourers and other manual workers were taking 3,000 calories and even the general public was supplied with 2,400 calories, on the average, (poor figures though they seem comparing with that of the more civilized nations) without any need of exercising food control.

Now after the war, the daily life of the Japanese, as is only natural, is so stricken with the shortage of food, and the people are relying, for the great part, on a huge amount of food-stuff released through the goodwill of the Allied Powers, only to keep up the bare existence. This miserable situation is mainly due to the rapid increase in population since the end of the war on one hand, and the complete failure of economic power on the other hand.

<As for the increase of population, the figures mentioned below will help us to realize the fact. The population as on October 1, 1945, was 72,400,000 and it grew up to 76,150,000 on October 1, 1946, increasing 3,750,000. This number is made up with the natural increase reaching to 190,000, and the social increase (i.e., the balance between the repatriates from Japan and the repatriates to Japan) 3,560,000. The population as on October 1, 1947 shows 78,620,000, and the increase within a year numbers 2,470,000, and of these 1,470,000 is the natural increase and 1,000,000 the social increase. A mere glance at these figures reveals that the increase within two years, 1945-1947, is a tremendous amount of 5,860,000. Though of these, as is shown above, 4,560,000 is social increase which is only a passing phenomenon and such a inordinate rate will not last very long, so the question left over for Japan is how to feed the 78,000,000 inhabitants with her poor granary.

It

It is true of all the key industries that every facilities is utterly shattered down as the result of overuse and air raids in the war-time, and productive power is paralysed with disastrous shortage of raw materials, but the live question of the day, before anything, is to take some measure to restore the productivity in the line of food supplies. Labour power in agricultural field is more than enough today, but the output is very low partly because chemical fertilizer is wanting in Japan. But even if fertilizer would be amply supplied to the rural districts, it is, probably, beyond her capability to support all the nation without the help from foreign sources.

The daily ration for the adult in general (with the exception of manual labourers who have additional ration), at present, is 355 grammes of staple food (i.e., rice, barley, potato, sweet potato and the released food by the good will of Allied Forces) and small quantity of subsidiary food. The rationed food, however, will not come to anything more than 1,400 calories. Accordingly, many hungry people recklessly go on food-hunting slipping from the grip of strict law somehow or other.

The shortage of shelter and clothing may not always unbearable, but food shortage will sometimes aggravate the feeling of unrest of life, both individual and social. The Japanese must not long remain dependent on the Allied Powers, but should make utmost effort toward remedying the grave situation for themselves. For the purpose, several suggestions are now going on.

II

The aim of birth control is not single, but manifold. It is closely connected with the maintenance of mothers' health and the policies of racial eugenics. Since the close of the war, "birth control" has been one of the most popular themes of discussion in Japan. 'Birth Control Popularization League' (President, Mrs. Shizue Kato), 'Birth Control Union' (chairman, Dr. Kan Majima) and similar other institutions have been coming

to

appear in order to forward the movement. It may be understood that at its root lies the ambitious intention to be the champion to solve the problem of overflowing population.

Japan, without an inch of overseas colonies or a single channel of emigration, now contains a huge population of something more than 78,000,000, the density climbing to 213 to a square kilometre. This fact demands us to consider most seriously the necessity of curtailment of population. At what point should Japan set down her birth-limit? The question is not very easy to answer, for the limit should be settled in the light of the living standard of people. Yet it goes without saying that, if the population still gains, the solution of population problem will become all the more difficult.

Should the birth control movement be carried on for the purpose of properly controlling the population pressure as well as the protection of mothers' health, and of contributing to the racial eugenics, it would certainly be recommendable. But, I daresay, the present movement is utterly powerless to solve the population problem of today. As for the result, I regret to declare, you can not know it now, but "thou shalt know it hereafter."

Altogether apart from the changes caused from the incoming and outgoing of people, the absolute number of population will never diminish until the birth-rate falls far short of death-rate. When this idea is realized, the movement of birth regulation shall be crowned with glory. For the time being, we can by no means expect from the movement any immediate effect of reducing the number.

The number of birth and death in and after 1946 follows.

	Number of birth	Number of death	Natural increase
1946	1,905,809	1,326,592	579,217
1947	2,729,755	1,157,084	1,572,671
1948 Jan.	316,665	94,074	222,591
			<u>Feb.</u>

Feb.	262,283	89,628	172,655
Mar.	259,314	92,863	166,451
Apr.	224,293	79,756	144,537

From the table above we learn that the number of birth in 1946 drops below the two million level but it still surpasses the number of death, and results in showing 570,000 of natural increase. In 1947, the number of birth records a startling increase, while that of death lowers, so that the natural growth swells to no less than 1,500,000. The first four months of this year (1948), too, shows the same figures. The statistical fact is, it seems, making fool of the fruitless effort of the advocates of birth control, who can do nothing but fanning the sun with a peacock's feather.

It is well known that every nation experiences the temporary increase of birth after the wars. Such may also be the case with Japan. But even after the wave would pass away, the birth control would not do much for bringing down the number of birth below that of death within a few years to come.

III

As discussed above, birth control might be expected to bear fruit in some remote future, but just at present it is rather helpless to deal with the pressing problem of the day. The only measure left, then, to relieve the restlessness prevailing among people, which has come from the unbalance between the limited quantity of food-stuff or other daily provisions and the unlimited increase of population, -- the only measure left is to strengthen the food-producing power of this country.

For that purpose, the first thing to be hinted at must be to enlarge the field of agricultural production, and it has often be discussed to cultivate the land hitherto neglected. About three million acres of virgin soil is said to have been left untouched in Japan. If the Japanese make the best use of it,

it will certainly help much to raise food and to liberate the capability of feeding the nation. But, with this desk-plan two difficulties attend.

First:- Waste land of this kind, generally, is either much inferior in fertility or lies quite out-of-the-way, so that even if cultivated, its productive power would be lower than is generally imagined, or need much carriage expenses to take out the crop. So much so that such newly-cultivated land, under unfavourable condition, will soon meet difficulties of maintenance, or, even though they would survive all hardships, for the time being, under the protection of the government, it would probably face grave crisis, if not utterly fail, when foreign trade reopens and the low-priced commodities flood into the country.

Secondly:- The actual expansion of the farming activity will necessarily be followed by the increase of farming population, so far as some special measure of saving man-power might not be taken. Here lies another problem. The increase of farming population means the increase of food production. So far, so good. But we must remember the fact that when farming population becomes large, procreative power, in question, becomes multiplied. As everyone knows, Japan's birth rate is said to be high, and it really is, but it does not mean that the birth rate is high in the same degree through towns and country. The rate is remarkably high in the country, while incomparably low in towns. The following table will explain it.

Standardized birth-rate

	Of the cities whose population is 100,000 and upwards	Of the villages whose population is 5,000 and downwards
1930	22.96	38.55
1935	22.56	38.16

It is quite clear from this table that the birth-rate among the country folk is by far higher. Little do they realize the heavy pressure of growing population. They are "fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." Heavily burdened with the off spring they did not, and would not, grasp the opportunity of improving their meaneast conditions of living. And the superfluous members of rural community, not finding rooms to live at home, flooded into the towns and cities, where they formed the source of labour supply.

The drift of population to the agricultural districts seems to careless observers to be favourable for the food production. This is only a superficial and erroneous view of the matter. The reality is that it rather heightens the genitive power and tends to make the difficult solution of population problem still more difficult.

IV

Next to agriculture, let us turn our eyes to the manufacturing industry. What part will it play towards the population problem of today and tomorrow. That the manufacturing industry holds the power to support more people than agricultural industry does, is an established fact. It does not directly yield food, as agriculture does, but if you invest the capital of one billion yen to manufacturing industry, you can get much more valuable product which will be changed into farm products by means of foreign trade, than you can earn from the firm itself, invested with the same sum of money. This is self-evident.

Does Japan have the technical capacity to build up such an advanced industrial country? Japan's industry is crippled now, but should it be restored to the prewar level and all the facilities, used for war industry, be turned for peace industry and set into full play, the productivity would not only suffice for home demand but finance the food imports to feed the more months than agriculture can. Here is the only way to solve the over-population problem, so we should take every effort to carry it to fruition.

Next

Next comes the question, "How does the industrial development affect the future of population problem?" And some may argue, "By way of development of industry, Japan will add much to the feeding power. It will certainly answer the present question. But when industry attains its full development, does it not bring about the more population?" My answer to this question is this: The high development of industry will at once do good to lighten the difficulty of population problem and to regulate the trend of multiplication.

In 1940, Population Problem Research Institute in the Welfare Ministry of Japanese Government made an investigation of the number of offspring with the married people who had passed the generative period. The result follows.

Occupation	Offspring per one couple
Townsfolk	Office-workers 4.10
	Labourers 4.10
Countryfolk	Farm-labourers 4.98.

From this table we know that urbanites, irrespective of their occupations, have far less children than countryfolk. It leads to the conclusion that the development of industry attracts people to towns and cities, resulting the decrease of general birth-rate. Townsfolk, in Japan, are at present suffering from food shortage, it is true, but generally speaking, they are blessed with the living necessities than countryfolk. But in spite of the better condition of living they do not show higher birth-rather,

they

they prefer the betterment of living standard and look to the enjoyment of higher cultural lives.

The best and the healthiest way towards the solution of overpopulation problem of today and tomorrow will be found only along the line to seek to establish a new and large industrial country.