

ALEXANDER KULISCHER

ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC FUTURE OF RUSSIA *

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In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Alexander Kulischer published three demographic articles in the most authoritative and widely read newspaper of the Russian post-revolutionary emigration – “Poslednie novosti” [The Latest News] (Paris). These articles were devoted to problems of population dynamics in some countries around the world. They were the first where the general scheme of demographic changes – now known as the concept of a “demographic transition” or “demographic revolution” – was used in predicting the demographic future of Russia. This publication provides these articles, which are now almost inaccessible to contemporary readers. A preface and helpful explanations have been added to the articles. The preface explains Kulischer’s articles in the context of the development of demography of that period and his interest in the demographic future of Russia.

Key words: *history of demography, demographic transition, demographic revolution, demographic dynamics, fertility, mortality, population of Russia, Alexander Kulischer [Alexandre Koulicher] (1890-1942).*

In the course of studying the contribution of the Kulischer family to the theory of demography, three forgotten articles by its youngest member, Alexander Kulischer, devoted to the problems of demographic dynamics, were discovered. They had been published in the late 1920s and early 1930s in the most authoritative and widely read newspaper of Russian post-revolutionary emigration, *Poslednie novosti* [The Latest News] (Paris), of which the author was one of the leading staff members. In them was used, for the first time ever in the forecasting of Russia’s demographic future, the general scheme of demographic changes now known as "demographic transition" or "demographic revolution."

Today we know that Kulischer was one of the pioneers of the theory of demographic transition, the concept of which he presented in publications of the first half of the 1930s in German and French [Vishnevsky, Tolts, 2015]. The newspaper articles written before that were a necessary stage on the path that led him to the successful formulation of these theoretical positions. They undoubtedly deserve to be republished, a task we have therefore undertaken (see below). Before proceeding to an analysis of these long-forgotten articles, it is necessary to make a few preliminary remarks in order to better understand the reasons for their implicit focus on predicting Russia’s demographic future, as well as some circumstances that contributed to the formation of Kulischer’s views on demographic processes.

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(PREFACE, PREPARATION OF THE TEXT FOR PUBLICATION AND COMMENTS).

ALEXANDER KULISCHER [ALEXANDRE KOULICHER] (1890-1942).

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Alexander Kulischer, 1927

The post-revolutionary Russian emigration, to which Kulischer belonged, was able to maintain a high level of intellectual activity in exile (see, for example, [Raeff 1990]). Naturally, the former citizens of Russia, who now found themselves outside its borders, were keenly interested in the situation in the homeland they had left behind and in the prospects for its development. At the same time, the ideas of the proponents of a special path of development of Russia – above all, Eurasianism – had become quite popular. However, it is known that Alexander Kulischer's father, Michael Kulischer, a prominent scholar, as far back as the late 1870s had been the first to come out against the adherents of Russian "national uniqueness" [Tolts 2015]. He believed that "the general scheme of development is the same for all peoples" [Kulischer 1887: X]. Of course, Russian post-revolutionary émigrés were interested not only in the overall prospects for the development of their country, but also in its demographic future, on which much depended. Here Alexander Kulischer showed himself to be a loyal follower of his father. In published articles he, unlike many eminent contemporaries (see below), relied on the universality of general scheme of demographic development in predicting the future dynamics of the population of Russia.

While Kulischer's focus on the search for a general scheme of population development undoubtedly came from his father, I do not yet have a definite answer concerning the origins of his specific demographic ideas. In this regard, one can only point to his direct connection with the first American scholar to note some general patterns of population development, which later became part of the concept of the demographic transition. This was the well-known sociologist Edward Ross, who persistently, but unsuccessfully – he sent recommendations to eighteen different places – tried to find an academic position for Kulischer in one of the US universities at the beginning of his emigration [Doykov 2009: 124]. It is known that they exchanged letters in 1922 [Scifres 1964: 52]. Ross is rightly called one of the pioneers in the history of the formation of the theory of demographic transition [Hodgson 1993: 7]. In a book published as early as the beginning of the last century, he noted that the drop in mortality preceded the decline in fertility, leading to a period of accelerated population growth [Ross 1909: 36]. Later, Kulischer would constantly emphasize this stage of demographic transition in his publications. However, confirmation that he was acquainted with Ross's book, where this was first noted, has not yet been found, although Alexander Kulischer repeatedly cites other works of his in a monograph published in co-authorship with his brother Eugene Kulischer [Kulischer, Kulischer 1932].

After these necessary preliminary remarks, we can go directly to the analysis of the content of the articles published below. The first of them is largely a continuation of the story about the World Population Conference, held in Geneva in 1927, to which Kulischer had previously dedicated a special article in the same newspaper [Junius (Kulischer) 1927; see also Tolts 2017]. An informational reason for this article was the appearance of data on the sharp decline in fertility and natural increase in England [Junius (Kulischer) 1928]. Kulischer writes: "[D]evelopment shows that the population of England, as well as of a number of other countries – Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and, in all probability, the United States of America – is clearly transitioning to that stable state in which, until the World War, only the population of France found itself. <...> The issue is one of a stability based on low fertility and low mortality: it is this which constitutes the novelty of the phenomenon in the history of the humankind."

Kulischer also notes that "[t]he tremendous growth of the population of European countries in the 19th century was due not to an increase in fertility, but solely to a decrease in mortality." At the same time, he demonstrates a fairly clear understanding of the demographic transition when, based on the conclusions of a report presented at the Geneva conference by the famous Dutch demographer Henry Methorst, he writes: "[L]arge population growth should be regarded, in essence, as a *transitional period* (italics mine – M.T.), when the successes of hygiene and general culture have already led to a significant reduction in mortality, but there has not yet begun the decrease in fertility which, as the experience of other countries shows, follows on the heels of these successes." Kulischer also knew well the features of the preceding, pre-transition phase, characterized, in his words, by "a steady state of population size" which "was an ordinary, one might think normal state of humankind throughout vast epochs of history." Thus, already in his first article on demographic dynamics, he demonstrates an understanding of the overall pattern of population development: the transition from a state of relative equilibrium with high fertility and mortality to a new state of relative equilibrium with low fertility and mortality, with a period of accelerated demographic growth between them.

Kulischer explains that with the high fertility and mortality prevalent throughout most of human history, the number of surviving children in a family was usually very low. Note that this feature of the traditional reproduction regime had been described quite clearly by his elder brother, the outstanding historian and economist Joseph Kulischer, in *History of Economic Life in Western Europe* [Kulischer 2004: 225, 227]. Of course, Alexander Kulischer was familiar with the classic study of his brother, and hence inherited from a member of his famous family his understanding of the demographic realities of the past. However, his own vast erudition allowed him to find in Adam Smith an example to illustrate the concept not presented in the works of his older brother. Unfortunately, even after the works of the Kulischer brothers, erroneous ideas denying the widespread existence in the past of families with few children at high fertility still needed to be fought against for a very long time [Vishnevsky 2005: 185].

Alexander Kulischer in this article also touches on the problem of the motivation for procreative behavior, emphasizing its dependence on the stage of development of human society. He notes the distinctive attitude to the value of a child's life in traditional society when he mentions "Russian peasant women of old, always pregnant and always dreaming that 'God would take' [to Haven] some of their children." In this he anticipates the conclusions of contemporary researchers [Vishnevsky 2005: 257-281]. Continuing the theme of motivating procreative behavior, Kulischer

writes: "Strengthening the 'maternal instinct' in the sense of caring for the welfare of children – above all for the preservation of their lives – is precisely a phenomenon of modern times: it leads to a reduction of child mortality, but the same 'maternal' and even 'parental' instinct is one of the incentives to reduce fertility."

Observing the demographic changes that have already taken place does not mean seeing in them a universal scheme for the development of the population. Thus, the already mentioned Methorst, who in his report reviewed the indicators for 55 countries, including Russia, did not say anything about its demographic prospects. In Methorst's interpretation, the demographic transition scheme did not play the role of an instrument that could be used to foresee the future of countries that had not yet made the demographic transition, meaning the scheme was not yet complete, or more precisely, had not yet been given the necessary universality. This would be done by Kulischer, who, having given the theory of demographic transition the universality required for its completion, then used it to predict the demographic future of Russia.

In describing the contemporary demographic situation in his abandoned homeland, Kulischer wrote already in 1928: "Russia is still at a rather early stage of this [transitional] process. The acceleration of the growth of the Russian population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is ... explained entirely by a decrease in the mortality, which fell in the second half of the 19th century." However, on the basis of a universal understanding of the direction of demographic changes, Kulischer confidently predicted: "Undoubtedly, Russia will see a further reduction in mortality, but there is no reason to expect that it will also be spared a decrease in fertility."

To appreciate the significance of Kulischer's conclusion, it is useful to compare it with the vision of Russia's population prospects put forth in an article by Warren Thompson, the leading American demographer of those years and a recognized pioneer of the theory of demographic transition [Szreter 1993: 661]. In this article, which appeared a year after Kulischer's, Thompson [1929] suggested that Russia, thanks to its vast size, could maintain a high population growth rate for a long time. Thompson's generalization was less universal and, applied to Russia, turned out to be wrong.

The news prompting the publication of Kulischer's second article, devoted to the problems of demographic dynamics, was the appearance of the first results of the new census of the population of Great Britain. These results reflected a clear slowdown in population growth rates, characteristic of the advanced phase of the demographic transition that it had already reached [Junius (Kulischer) 1931]. Much later, a staff member of the *Poslednie novosti* recalled Kulischer's unusual ability to find the material he needed for his work: "Not a single line in a single newspaper in many languages of the world, if it could be useful to him, escaped his attention. When he found the time to read all this, no one knew. Knowledge and information ranging from issues of current politics to the social sciences and its teachings – all this was absorbed like a sponge by A.M. Kulischer"[Meisner 1966: 201].

For this particular article of Kulischer's, one essential source was a newspaper publication by the leading English demographer of the time, Alexander Carr-Saunders, in which he discussed the results of the new census in his country [Carr-Saunders, 1931]. Analyzing these results against the background of the demographic situation in different parts of the world, he devoted a special section to the population of Russia. The article of Carr-Saunders told Kulischer quite a lot, yet he

was far from fully agreeing with his venerable English counterpart. And on the main point of interest to Kulischer, the demography of Russia, he was definitely at odds with Carr-Saunders.

The English demographer did not find common patterns in the demographic development of Western Europe and Russia, considering the Russian conditions as "Asian." He did not see in Russia's demographic situation of the 1920s a stage of demographic development similar to the one Western Europe was in.

Kulischer, on the contrary, in his article continues to hold fast to the universal scheme of demographic development, firmly rejecting the English demographer's distinction: "The opposition of 'Europe' and 'Asia' here is hardly more correct than in all such cases." Speaking about the demographic prospects of Russia, Kulischer presciently writes: "This stage [of rapid growth in Russia] should continue until the moment when the fall in fertility begins to catch up with the drop in mortality. The whole point is to reach this moment without catastrophic extermination of human lives. Left to itself, this moment should come sooner or later." Unfortunately, a year later the demographic catastrophe would arrive. In 1932-1933, famine would hit all the grain-producing regions of the USSR, and disaster would strike Kazakhstan even sooner.

At the same time, Kulischer shares Carr-Saunders' negative assessment of the statements by Moscow propagandists about the rapid population growth inherent in the Soviet system. According to their interpretation of the works of Karl Marx, decreasing fertility is the destiny of only capitalist societies, whereas under socialism the population must grow rapidly. It is well known that this "socialist population law" would continue to hinder the development of Soviet demography for many decades (see, for example, [Volkov, 2014: 521]). Kulischer, however, with his great ability to foresee the ideological turns in Bolshevik Russia, showed readers of *Poslednie novosti* the failure of this pseudo-scientific dogma even at the time when it had started to be a part of the canon of Soviet propagandists.

Kulischer's view of Russia's demography provoked a sharp rejection by opponents of *Poslednie novosti*, who were competing with the newspaper for influence over the minds of Russian post-revolutionary émigrés. Thus, when attacking him, another Paris newspaper, *Vozrozhdenie* [The Revival], mockingly mentioned the demographic views of the scholar: "It was said that Kulischer is a former professor of wartime who, instead of the five-year program, completed accelerated scientific courses in two years. Biographers argued, in addition, that Kulischer is a former friend of Spengler, the grandson of Feuerbach and adopted son of Nietzsche. They also talked about him as if his scientific works on childbearing in Russia were extremely well known in the large university centers of [Ukrainian provincial towns] Konotop, Vinnitsa, and Belaya Tserkov" [Psevdonimy ... 2016: 309].

Pavel Milyukov, a well-known Russian historian and politician who denied as a matter of principle any "special paths" of Russia's development [Doykov 2004: 211], seems to have sympathized with Kulischer's demographic views. This is confirmed by the appearance in *Poslednie novosti*, whose content was completely controlled by Milyukov, less than a year after his second article, of a new publication by Kulischer devoted to the same topic [Junius (Kulischer) 1932]. This article is of particular interest in that it reflects the period of rapidly developing views on population and the tools of demographic research in use in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

"It seems that demographic science is entering a new stage," Kulischer wrote in the new article. At the same time, he mentions the studies of two German demographers, Robert Kuczynski and Ernst Kahn. Here, of course, the contemporary reader will ask: why, alongside Kuczynski, the author of well-known classical works, does there appear the name of Kahn, a name which even today is unfamiliar to most specialists? Recall that in 1928 Kuczynski published in English the first volume of his fundamental work *The Balance of Births and Deaths*, devoted to the countries of Western and Northern Europe [Kuczynski 1928]. It was this volume that Kulischer had in mind when he first mentioned Kuczynski in his previous article. However, the second volume of the Kuczynski study, devoted to the countries of Eastern and Southern Europe [Kuczynski 1931], was published in the US only a few months before the writing of Kulischer's third article, and quite probably had not yet reached him in Paris. Hence, Kulischer did not have the opportunity to use the indicators calculated by Kuczynski (the total fertility rate and the net reproduction rate) to compare the situation in Russia with other countries of the world using this system of indicators.

At the same time, between the appearance of the first and second volumes of Kuczynski's study, in 1930 Kahn's book, *The International Birth Strike* [Kahn 1930], was published. Its author was a socially oriented economist. This was reflected in the subtitle of his book on fertility: *Extent, Causes, Effects, Countermeasures*. Many years later, the leading Polish demographer Edward Rosset wrote that in this book Kahn "though not a demographer, made several statements whose aptness can be fully appreciated only now" [Rosset 1964: 282].

In his book, Kahn gave his estimates of a fertility indicator for many countries in the world, including Russia, which attracted the attention of contemporaries (see, for example, [Correspondent 1931]). With these Kulischer would acquaint his readers. However, Kahn, in his book, based his calculations on the number of births per one marriage for a given calendar period. The fact that this indicator underestimates fertility, as it does not take into account the factor of marriage dissolution, would be proved by Kuczynski only five years after the publication of Kahn's book [Kuczynski 1935: 38].

However, Kulischer in his article shows some caution, noting at the end that the aforementioned "methods of calculating ... raise objections, also not without foundation." It is worthwhile to quote Kahn himself: "At the moment it seems that everything indicates a decrease in the population. However, no one can know how big this decrease will get and how long it will last, because the habits and views of people are as difficult to foresee as the influence of the development of medicine, which is so crucial for the prospects of human longevity; this must always be emphasized"[Kahn 1930: 208]. Indeed, the baby boom in Western countries, as well as the consequences of the discovery of antibiotics for all countries of the world, turned out to be unforeseen.

At the same time, Kulischer's forecast, made in his third article, came true. After all, in essence, the main dispute was with the opinion that there is "unlimited human material" in Russia, which Stalin "throws into the furnaces of his 'socialist' factories: of such stuff, the Russian people, there will always be enough." Objecting to those committing this error, an error shared by the Bolshevik leader himself, Kulischer wrote: "[T]he huge amount of 'labor' that is – or rather, was – at Stalin's disposal is a purely temporary phenomenon." And again he was right!

Acquaintance with the three articles published by Alexander Kulischer shows that he was almost the first to clearly understand and consistently apply the general scheme known today as the theory of "demographic transition" or "demographic revolution" to interpret both contemporary and future trends in the reproduction of the population. It was precisely on the basis of this concept that he was able to accurately predict the demographic future of Russia. The development of its population in the twentieth century did indeed follow the path of modernization foreseen in the late 1920s and early 1930s by this remarkable scholar (see, for example, [Demographic Modernization ... 2006]).

In the articles republished below, all notes, including thoses within texts, have been prepared by me. Copies of the articles were made available through the efforts of my friend Professor Shaul Stampfer, for which I am very grateful. The photo of Alexander Kulischer was provided by the archive of the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, to whose staff members I am also deeply grateful.

EXTINCTION

Junius [Alexander Kulischer]

Poslednie novosti [The Latest News] (Paris). 1928. 8 February: 2.

I have had occasion to write about the Geneva Population Conference (see [Junius (Kulischer) 1927]), at which were presented exhaustive factual data on the development of this "question of all question" in recent years, and a sharp dispute arose between advocates of a further decline in fertility, fearful of global overpopulation, and advocates of an increase in fertility, who feared the extinction of the most cultivated races and peoples. The expression "advocates" of one or the other position needs to be understood, of course, very conditionally. The task of the scholars arguing in Geneva was primarily to put the question correctly and to determine the direction of actually occurring natural processes that are very little amenable to change through the influence of a particular propaganda or policy. But, of course, arguments about the "desirability" of such complex and profound phenomena can only be made after first clearly understanding what they actually are. Unfortunately, on precisely this question the enormous scientific work done in particular of late remains almost completely unknown even to the educated public.

A recent sensation in this regard took place last year in England, where fertility fell to a "record" low of 16 per thousand population. It should be noted that such a figure for a single year, and any conclusions about an impending population decrease based on it, are in fact of very little interest. Statistics of fertility and mortality have their own "tricks". Until recently, in England there was a significant excess of fertility over mortality with a very low level of both: 18 and 12 per thousand population. Knowledgeable people pointed out that the extremely low mortality rate was not only due to the tremendous successes of hygiene, especially in the area of childcare, but was to some extent fictitious, since when fertility falls, the percentage in the population of young children subject to high mortality decreases; when the current generation of young adults and middle-aged adults becomes old and dies, the overall mortality rate will increase and, probably, the number of English people will be almost unchanging, as happened long ago with the French population. But the opposite is also possible: an actual decrease in mortality among persons who

have not yet reached puberty or who have already gone through it sometimes leads to a fictitiously low fertility rate.

Thus, all the arguments that the English population in some particular year "will begin to decrease" and so forth do not have much value. It is not the sensational figure of one year that is important, but the development over a number of years. And this development shows that the population of England, as well as of a number of other countries – Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and, in all probability, the United States of America – is clearly transitioning to that stable state in which, until the World War, only the population of France found itself.

Here it is necessary to make an important caveat. The issue is one of a stability based on low fertility and low mortality: it is this which constitutes the novelty of the phenomenon in the history of humankind. Generally speaking, a steady state of population size was an ordinary, one might think normal state of humankind throughout vast epochs of history. Peoples did not increase numerically, just as normally the total number of animals of one kind or another does not increase – and for the same reasons. At the end of the 18th century, Adam Smith talked about his observations of the Scottish Highlanders of the time, who normally had ten children in their family, of whom just as normally only two survived [Smith 1981: 97]. Later, a similar "normal" situation could be observed in Russia, and now many parts of India, China, etc. have not gone far from it. In India, a girl who does not marry after reaching puberty brings general contempt for her family and violent religious punishments to her ancestors in the other world. In some provinces, a quarter of the children formally marry at the age of 5-10 years. And, indeed, fertility in India is reaching 40 per thousand population, but mortality too is now reaching 36 per thousand: 1/4 of the children die before reaching the age of one year. Until 1890, the population of India did not increase at all: infant mortality, epidemics and famine maintained an "equilibrium." In such an "equilibrium", interrupted only from time to time by epochs of exceptional economic progress and population growth, or, it must be added, by epochs of cruel population reduction through famines and wars, such as the era of the Thirty Years' War, etc., humanity too existed, in those blissful times when no one was afraid of "extinction" and "a weakening of the maternal instinct."

If there is currently strong population growth in India – causing talk about "overpopulation" – it is occurring not at all due to even greater gains in the fertility of Hindus, but solely to a certain reduction in mortality, at least to the cessation of famine as a "normal" periodic phenomenon. The tremendous growth of the population of European countries in the 19th century was due not to an increase in fertility, but solely to a decrease in mortality. According to the conclusions of a speaker at the Geneva conference, the Dutch professor Methorst, who studied the statistics of 50 countries¹, large population growth should be regarded, in essence, as a transitional period, when the successes of hygiene and general culture have already led to a significant reduction in mortality, but there has not yet begun the decrease in fertility which, as the experience of other countries shows, follows on the heels of these successes. This, in particular, was true precisely in England, where the history of the population was particularly well studied: the growth of its population at the end

¹The publication of the preliminary version of this report details data for 1919-1923 for 55 countries of the world [Methorst 1927b: 123-125]. However, in the text of the report, which later appeared in the volume of the Geneva conference proceedings, the main attention was paid to the Netherlands, and it only talks about data from 35 countries during the same period [Methorst 1927a: 172], which is probably a typo.

of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the result of a consistent reduction in mortality, despite the decline in fertility which had already begun in the 1880s. In Germany, the same process began later. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it experienced a period of rapid growth, and the Germans boasted of their "vital" strength in comparison with the already "degenerate" French and "degenerating" Englishmen and on this basis demanded world hegemony, as a "fresh and strong" people. But after the war², German fertility too quickly descended to the level of the French, "stabilization" figure. Russia is still at a rather early stage of this process. The acceleration of the growth of the Russian population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is also explained entirely by a decrease in the mortality, which fell in the second half of the 19th century from 37 to 31 per thousand population. And this last figure is still terrible from the Western European point of view. But the decrease also resulted in huge record growths in the population (17, and in some years 22 per thousand population) due to the still very high fertility rate. Undoubtedly, Russia will see a further reduction in mortality, but there is no reason to expect that it will also be spared a decrease in fertility.

The fact is that the maternal instinct, which according to Sutherland's theory (mentioned in the article of Mr. Dioneo in *Poslednie novosti* on this question; see [Dioneo (Shklovsky), 1928] and [Sutherland 1898]) is the source of all morality – this maternal instinct must by no means be confused with the instinct of procreation, and even less with the instinct of maximum procreation. Otherwise we would have to regard the rabbit as a model of maternal love and every kind of morality, and as part of humankind – the above-mentioned Indian mothers or Russian peasant women of old, always pregnant and always dreaming that "God would take" [to Haven] some of their children. Strengthening the "maternal instinct" in the sense of caring for the welfare of children – above all for the preservation of their lives – is precisely a phenomenon of modern times: it leads to a reduction of child mortality, but the same "maternal" and even "parental" instinct is one of the incentives to reduce fertility. Among French peasants, the "two children" system is motivated directly by the desire to leave undivided land to the son – but in general one of the reasons for reducing childbearing is the desire to provide the means for raising the existing children. Along with this, of course, there are purely selfish motives that lead to an increase in the number of people not getting married or having children – not because of an increase in selfishness in the population as such, but because of greater prudence and caution in assuming certain obligations.

Whether this phenomenon is "for better or for worse", I will not decide. In France, the lack of population growth is treated as a danger mainly from the point of view of the country's military defense. This motif naturally plays a lesser role in England, where supporters of the stabilizing or shrinking of the population perceive it as the only way out of the economic difficulties resulting from the fact that Britain has lost its commercial monopoly and can no longer be continuously conquering new markets to feed a large number of its people by means of industrial production for export.

Generally, proponents of "birth control" usually argue that after plowing the best fields in all parts of the world, population growth should slow down: if this is not done by a reduction in

² Here and below, the First World War and, accordingly, the period preceding it when referring to pre-war time are meant.

fertility, it will be done by famine, wars, etc. Representatives of the opposite view object that, for now, stabilization of the population by a reduction in fertility is occurring only among some peoples, and, what is more, among the richest and most socially and culturally advanced of them. If these "bourgeois" peoples really managed to achieve "equilibrium" on the basis of a high level of well-being, then they would only cause greater envy among the rapidly multiplying and miserable "proletarians". These latter peoples will increasingly seek to enter the protected paradise of rich countries, and prohibitions of immigration, such as those adopted by America³, will lead only to violent and bloody conflicts.

As can be seen, it is indeed a very complex issue, in which one must above all beware of simplistic solutions.

THE POPULATION CYCLE

Junius [Alexander Kulischer]

Poslednie novosti [The Latest News] (Paris). 1931. 17 July: 2.

The just-published data of the population census in England fully confirm the projections that follow from the cycle of population evolution about which I have repeatedly had to speak in these columns. Over ten years, starting in 1921, the population of England and Wales has increased from 37,886,699 to 39,947,931. It should be noted that this increase is entirely thanks to England, since in Wales, on the contrary, there has been a slight decrease due to resettlement in England. The same decrease over this period took place in Scotland and Ireland. Of the entire territory of the British Isles, the population is growing only in England, in the true sense, that is of course in English cities. According to Harold Cox⁴, this growth has now reached such proportions that further continuation would mean the transformation of the whole country into some kind of a very unaesthetic urban suburb. The all-powerful growth of the city continues steadily, despite industrial stagnation, despite unemployment. It continues, from a certain point of view, even more intensively than before, when both a significant part of the population growth of the country was going overseas and when the mining towns of South Wales were also attracting people. Now it all has ended. People are heading only to the city and, moreover, to ever larger centers, which grow by occupying the surrounding area, simply physically liquidating villages and towns. There is no need to expect a change in this trend. It can be weakened only by a decrease in population growth as a whole. This, in part, has already begun.

Now in England the population of 37 million has increased over ten years by two million people; in the 1870s, the population of 26 million increased over the same period by three million. In other words, not only has there been a significant decrease in the population's reproduction – and in relative growth – but this decrease has led to the fact that absolute growth has also decreased. What's more, such growth too could continue for another ten years, but then, according to the calculations of the statistical office, there should be a real reduction in the population. The current fertility rate is only 16 per thousand, instead of the pre-war 26. True, mortality has also decreased,

³ The restrictive US immigration laws of 1921 and 1924.

⁴ His sharp criticism of the process of urbanization is most fully given in: [Cox 1922: 46-66].

and this explains the continuing growth. But this reduction in mortality is partly artificial, due to the relatively large percentage of adults in the population compared to young children and the elderly. When the present generation of English adults begins to die out, it will not be replaced by the current children, since there are not enough of the latter for this. These predictions cannot claim full accuracy, since it is not known how much medical progress might further increase average human life expectancy. But based on the current trend, it is obviously leading to a steady and even slightly diminishing population in England, as in other countries of northwestern Europe. In the opinion of the American statistician Kuczynski, who recently published a major study on this issue (see [Kuczynski 1928])⁵, the tendency to "extinction" is particularly strong in England and Germany, in contrast to France, where population growth stopped long before the war, but where there is no such "downward" trend as in the two countries mentioned, where this growth is still continuing. By the same calculations, this trend can also be seen in the United States, although the trend is not to "extinction", but to stabilization. Significant growth is still occurring in Italy, which remains on the "crest" of the cycle: fertility and mortality are there decreasing in parallel, without changing the result in terms of growth. As is known, Mussolini never ceases to declare that Italy should "expand or explode", which does not prevent him from pursuing a policy of further population increase⁶, declaring war on the trend to decreasing fertility, obviously with the goal of accumulating forces for the planned "explosion."

The situation is quite different in the east of Europe: in Poland, in Romania and, in particular, in Russia. As noted by Prof. Carr-Saunders, in an article on the results of the English census (see [Carr-Saunders, 1931]), the Soviet authorities have their own way of following the data of world statistics and drawing conclusions from them. Recently an English professor had occasion to listen to a radio lecture from Moscow in the area of his own field of science. "Marxist" sociologists explained that the "magnificent" growth of the population in Russia, the "magnificent" fertility of Russian women, testifies to the contentment of the population, while the fall in the fertility rate in the capitalist countries testifies to the disappearance of the vital impulse in the population, due to the bleakness of the bourgeois system.

According to Carr-Saunders, the "life force" of the Soviet population means nothing other than Asian, in contrast to European, conditions for the existence and reproduction of the population. Asian fertility does not mean, of course, a rapid increase, since it is accompanied by "Asian" mortality, as chronic as it is "catastrophic". But, with the slightest decrease in this mortality, a tremendous increase is obtained.

The opposition of "Europe" and "Asia" here is hardly more correct than in all such cases. There was a time when the most "real" Europe also had a generally stable population size, with both high fertility and high mortality. So, in France the population was, on average, stationary from the 14th to the 17th century, although there were then "normal" families with not ten, but two children. Those who were not carried away by diseases were eliminated from time to time by famine, plague and war, more or less as still occurs in China. The decrease in mortality starting in the second half of the 18th century created large population growth in one country after another.

⁵ Robert Kuczynski was a German scholar, but the majority of his demographic works are published in English, including the one, printed in the USA, to which Alexander Kulischer refers.

⁶ On pro-natalist politics in fascist Italy, see, for example, [Ipsen 1996].

The pioneer country in this respect, as well as with respect to all sorts of "modernization" in general, was the same – England, whose population growth was considered record-breaking. Marx, whom the Moscow demographers seem to have poorly read, even argued that this "life force" is the creation of capitalism, one of the capitalist "atrocities." Through child labor etc. capitalism encourages fertility and purposely creates for itself the proletariat which it, capitalism, needs. Capitalism itself sees to it that there is always an excess of human material, so that it can exploit it as much as it likes. By analogy, an orthodox Marxist, in essence, would have to accuse the Soviet authorities of creating the ruthlessly exploited human material they need for "industrialization."

However, there is no objective basis for such an accusation, since Marx's theory on this question was generally mistaken. In fact, strong population growth in the era of "burgeoning capitalism" is a consequence not of high fertility as such, but of a drop in mortality alongside fertility that is no higher than before and even beginning to fall slightly. That's exactly what is happening now in the "modernizing" Eastern European, South American, some Asian and African countries. The combination of medical care and hygiene, already beginning to show its effects, with a very fresh and naïve population, overwhelmingly rural in its customs and psychology, is creating such an increase in the population as to inspire feelings of ridiculous "national pride" and cause fears among its neighbors. The peculiarity of Russia lies in the fact that its significant population growth has been going on continuously since the first half of the 18th century, mainly due to the colonization of Russian spaces, which, for the most part, has replaced catastrophic extermination of the population or emigration.

Now, however, Russia too is in the midst of the process of increasing growth, due to a drop in mortality with a still high, although starting to fall, fertility rate: a fertility rate of 42 per thousand population (instead of the pre-war 45)⁷, together with mortality that has fallen to 18 per thousand population, is giving "record" growth rates.

This stage should continue until the moment when the fall in fertility begins to catch up with the drop in mortality. The whole point is to reach this moment without catastrophic extermination of human lives. Left to itself, this moment should come sooner or later – simply by virtue of the fact of resettlement in cities, where population growth heads and where it undergoes a certain "sterilization"; urban fertility is always below the rural level, and it is an almost normal situation when the usual development of the urban population by itself leads to a deficit, so that the increase in the urban population is obtained only because this deficit is more than compensated for by resettlement in cities. But the very fact of the urbanization of the population, i.e. an increase in the percentage of the urban population, should sooner or later lead to a reduction in the overall increase. For a long time the fall in relative growth does not mean a fall in absolute growth, but then the latter too begins to fall, and finally a new steady state will be reached based on low fertility and mortality. It can be assumed that in the future any prolongation of human life will cause a corresponding decrease in fertility. This process, however, is the process of "quality replacing quantity". And that is why the advanced peoples of Europe, who have reached the end of the cycle,

⁷ The figures given for the European part of the USSR for 1928 correspond to those reproduced later, when A.M. Kulischer was no longer alive, in the book of his brother E.M. Kulischer [Kulischer 1948: 80]. A.M. Kulischer was the actual co-author of this monograph, which is again confirmed by the appearance in his publication of these figures long before the publication of the mentioned book.

have no reason to fear the "vital force" of peoples, who, though more backward, are ultimately following the same path.

THE FUTURE OF HUMANKIND

Junius [Alexander Kulischer]

Poslednie novosti [The Latest News] (Paris). 1932. 2 April: 3.

It is necessary to return to the issue of population to which I have devoted so many articles. This issue, on which the future of modern culture ultimately depends, is undergoing tremendous changes before our very eyes. What was a hypothesis is becoming an established fact. On the other hand, "obvious" facts turn out to be the results of inaccurate statistical methods, and the use of more accurate methods opens up prospects of a completely different kind.

There was a time when the halt of population growth in France was considered an exception, indicating a special "degeneration" of the French people in view of the "stagnation" caused by the French petty-bourgeois spirit. The French reactionaries saw in this fact evidence of the harmful consequences of the revolution, which destroyed the "family" principle. They were echoed by reactionaries and militarists of all countries, including Trotsky. This educated writer and "revolutionary" figure never went beyond his "pre-war" knowledge on this issue, and continues to point to the halt to the growth of the population in France as the sort of fact after which this "stalled" people with its "stalled" regime is not even worth discussing.

As for the rest of humanity, it was taken as an irrefutable position that it was likely to become overpopulated. Military philosophers and philosophizing military men treated with great contempt those who pointed to the irrationality of war: what has reason got to do with it, since peoples are destined to "suffocate" due to the lack of space necessary for continuously emerging "surpluses"? And since these "surpluses" are formed everywhere, the stern representatives of war-mongering always have a choice: either to point out the existence of "surpluses" in a given country and to demand an "inevitable" war, or to warn against any urge of this people to reduce the production of their "surpluses", pointing to the fact that this people will be flooded with the "surpluses" continuously being produced by their neighbors.

After the war one began to notice that some other nations, besides the French, are beginning to show a tendency to the same "stagnation" and are more interested in ensuring the possibility of a decent existence for their offspring than in multiplying the number of this offspring. The British, the Swedes, the Swiss, even, surprisingly, the Germans, have begun "degenerating" with great rapidity. Then the nationally minded researchers came to the following conclusion. All northern Europeans, all the most "advanced" nations, are headed gradually towards "stagnation". These nations have clearly lost the biological "will to live." So much the worse for them. With newer nations, it is different. First, the Italians. Italy, according to Mussolini, must "either explode or expand." The following year, the figures for the falling birth rate began to indicate that the Italian people seemed to prefer some third way out. Do not dare, Mussolini ordered. How could you want to expand if you do not increase the overpopulation that I so eloquently complain about?

And, in any case, if the whole of Western Europe "degenerates," so much the worse for it. This means that it will be flooded by a terrible wave from the east. There, among the Slavic peoples, in Poland and already especially in Russia, there is a monstrous growth of the population. Europe, beware – Stalin has a surplus of human material! Stalin himself is sure of this; also sure are those who, having "reeducated themselves" in exile, have discovered the great wisdom of this leader who so "sternly" gives no second thought to the human material he throws into the furnaces of his "socialist" factories: of such stuff, the Russian people, there will always be enough.

It seems that demographic science is entering a new stage. The research of Kuczynski (of whom I have already had occasion to speak), Ernst Kahn (see [Kahn 1930]), et al. put the issue in a completely new perspective. If these scholars are to be believed, then in one or two decades, perhaps even earlier, it will be necessary to stop all talk about a surplus of human material, about a "stern" need to exploit this material, which stern rulers "use". It will be necessary to stop the "frightening" of some peoples with the "surpluses" of others and proceed to an extremely considerate treatment, devoid of all severity, of this human material, which, apparently, no longer intends to tolerate such sternness, to let itself be "used" by "strong-willed centers", and will respond to any outburst of "strong-willed impulses" with a rapid reduction of its own "reproduction".

The new school in demography points first of all to the extreme inaccuracy of methods that have been usual until recently, as if directly intended to create misconceptions about the actual development of the population.

Let's take a simple example. If we compare the number of births and the number of deaths in Germany, we get an excess of fertility – a "natural increase" of about 400,000 people per year, about 5 per thousand. This is less than before the war, when there were more than 800,000, – about 14 per thousand. And nationally minded circles are extremely unhappy with this, as the reproduction of the military force necessary to conquer new "space" is not going fast enough. But still the population increases – in a Germany already overpopulated as it is. And since other nations do not want to give the Germans the necessary "space," what solution remains other than Hitler?

But let's look at this question from a different point of view. If all the children born were to survive and, in turn, produce offspring, then two children per marriage would be enough to maintain the population at the same level, and with more than two children, there would have to be an increase in the population. In reality, of course, it is not so, for many die in childhood and many do not get married at all. So, for the reproduction of the same number of people – not to mention its increase – it is necessary that each married couple, on average, produce more than two children. This minimum for Germany – bearing in mind the figures of child mortality and singlehood – can be considered to be three children, on average, for each family. In reality, this number is now less than two (1.9)⁸. In other words, the German population is actually rapidly shrinking.

The riddle of the contradiction of these figures is that the German population grew quite rapidly up to the war (as a result of the rapid decline in mortality, despite a slight fall in fertility –

⁸ The figure given here is according to calculations by Ernst Kahn [1930: 12].

in the 20th century, before the war, the birth rate per married couple was 4). During and after the war, there was an extremely rapid fall in fertility. As a result, the number of young people of marital and "reproductive" age in the German population is disproportionately large, compared with children and the elderly. Thus, mortality has now been artificially decreased, and fertility (for the entire population) artificially increased, since the percentage of people marrying is very large. When today's young people grow old, and their place is occupied by today's far less numerous adolescents, then mortality will increase and fertility will fall, as has already occurred in England, where population growth has already "formally" stopped.

In France, since population growth stopped even before the war, the percentage of the elderly is much larger, and therefore French mortality seems higher than in Germany. This difference (18 per thousand deaths in France, instead of 14 in Germany) is explained, as even German statisticians now admit, only by the high percentage of the elderly in the French population, and not at all by allegedly backward sanitary conditions. In fact, the average life expectancy of a Frenchman is higher than that of a German, and infant mortality in France is lower than in Germany. The number of children per family in France is slightly higher. The fact is that the French population began long ago adapting to the conditions of a new culture, while Germany is only now scurrying to adapt. In France, one can expect a very slow decline in the population, slowed by migration; in Germany, this reduction will occur with great rapidity.

But what about the "Slavic flood" – in particular, the "unlimited human material" in Russia?

It is true that in Eastern European countries the decline in fertility before the war was almost imperceptible, although the drop in mortality was rather rapid. The "adaptation" is occurring that much faster today. Again, the general figures of fertility and mortality are misleading. If these figures are used, then the rate of population growth in Russia is now a record 24 per thousand (fertility: 42, against mortality: 18)⁹. But these figures are again explained by the huge percentage of young people of marriage and "reproductive" age. In view of this, fertility for the entire population in Russia dropped from just 45 per thousand before the war to 42. In reality, the decrease in the fertility of the population is incomparably more significant. The average number of children per marriage in Russia is now only three (instead of 5.5 pre-war)¹⁰, and this figure has been steadily falling from year to year. According to E. Kahn, referring to the higher child mortality figure in Russia than in Germany, one should raise the question of whether or not a population deficit in Russia too is effectively already beginning. In any case, the huge amount of "labor" that is – or rather, was – at Stalin's disposal is a purely temporary phenomenon.

Let us confine ourselves for now to presenting these data. The newest methods of estimating population development, by means of which these conclusions are obtained, also raise objections, also not without foundation. But not to reckon with these methods – with their great

⁹ See note 7.

¹⁰ Here the author proceeds from the figures in the book of Ernst Kahn [1930: 64-65], where, however, the figure for 1900 is 5.4. Later Robert Kuczynski [1935: 38], using the example of Ukraine, criticized these estimates and showed that the value of the indicator for 1929 should be evaluated higher if we take into account the marriage dissolution: 3.6 births per marriage, whereas Kahn's calculation gave only 3.1 births. Note that, in the absence of data at his disposal for 1929, Kahn took the indicator for the whole of the USSR to be equal to this underestimated value for Ukraine for this year – 3.1 births [Kahn 1930: 65].

clarity, strength and certainty of the results obtained – is obviously impossible. To an analysis of these results from a more general point of view, we will turn some other time¹¹.

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¹¹The continuation of this series of articles was not found in the available issues of *Poslednie novosti*; it may not exist.

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