

MALTHUSIANISM AND NATIONALISM
IN REPUBLICAN CHINA

by

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Abstract

This study deals with the debate over Malthusianism and population control in China within the context of the growing sense of national awareness which characterized the May Fourth period. Beginning with Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, this controversy was closely linked to the issues of national strength and Social Darwinism by both the opponents and proponents of population control.

The proponents of population control tended to be Western-educated intellectuals who believed in the tenets of classical Western liberalism. To them, population control was a means of achieving a better environment for individual development and economic laissez faire. In their opinion, population pressures had more to do with China's woes than exploitation by any nation or economic class. They attempted to justify their views on nationalist grounds by pointing out that the emancipation of the individual was the key to the strength of the Western powers.

The opposition to population control viewed population growth as proof of a race's fitness for survival and felt that China faced the threat of eventual national extinction if the rate of population growth in Western countries and Japan continued to be much higher than that in China. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Sun Yat-sen shared this appraisal of population growth in China.

By studying the books and magazine articles that were written on this question during the period following the May Fourth Incident, it becomes evident that the opponents of population control enjoyed the advantage in harnessing the nationalist sentiments of the Chinese public against population control. This was not the result of any overpowering logic in their arguments. Events in China and around the world tended to confirm the original fears of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, and more Chinese grew convinced that China needed to match the population growth of other countries in order to survive in a world

of nation-states that they envisioned to be governed by the forces of natural selection as outlined by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. The advocates of population control grew more defensive in their appeals as their ideas were increasingly portrayed as defeatist and unprogressive. Also, many Chinese nationalists firmly believed in the contradictory nature of individualism and nationalism. To them, Malthusianism was one of the most harmful manifestations of excessive individualism.

Although early Marxists such as Li Ta-chao did not oppose Malthusianism on nationalist grounds, later Marxists were able to tap some of the nationalist resentment toward imperialism by arguing that Malthusianism was a great lie promoted by the imperialist powers to avoid responsibility for the economic disruptions that they created in China.

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I. Introduction

Malthusianism has achieved the dubious distinction of being vehemently attacked by both Marxist intellectuals and KMT nationalists. Nonetheless, the lively and protracted debate over Malthusianism and the need for population control in China during the May Fourth period demonstrated that this issue was never resolved from the start. By examining the historical origins and development of the controversy over Malthusianism, this study intends to shed some light on the reasons why population control became unpalatable to many Chinese of diverse political persuasions.

It must be remembered that the initial concern over Malthusianism and its relevance to the population situation in China was contemporaneous with the increasing inability of the Chinese to reconcile Confucianism, in its decaying form, with the growing nationalism of the time. The intellectual ferment of the May Fourth period took place in the midst of a search for the fundamental changes needed to achieve modernization and national strength. As in the case of other ideological issues, the goal of national strength was the criterion by which Malthusianism was either promoted or condemned.

As has been pointed out by Chow Tse-tsung in his work on the May Fourth period, Chinese intellectuals who promoted the tenets of Western liberalism were distinctly less able to convince the growing nationalist public of their dedication to the achievement of national strength than those who promoted some sort of collectivism, be it genuine socialism or some vague kind of national socialism.¹ In dealing with the relationship of the Malthusian controversy with Chinese nationalism and the conflict between the ideological preferences of the May Fourth period, this study intends to demonstrate that Malthusianism tended to conflict with the nationalist sentiments of the time in spite of the nervous efforts by the promoters of population control

to combine the two. Furthermore, an examination of the debate over population control indicates that the difficulties of Malthusianism in China can be linked to the failure of Chinese liberalism as a whole to gain acceptance as an ideology consistent with nationalist goals.

With respect to Western history, the term 'liberal' is often used with a great deal of imprecision, but in the context of modern Chinese intellectual history the concept of liberalism is a great deal more distinct and tangible. Often educated in Western countries, the Chinese liberals were a clearly identifiable body of intellectuals who stressed the importance of individual liberty and economic laissez-faire as the vital elements lacking in traditional China which were the key to the success of the powerful Western nations. In doing so, they put themselves at odds with many of their nationalist contemporaries as well as China's Confucian tradition.

In arguing the validity of Malthusianism in China's case, Chinese liberals did not tend to perceive China's social problems to be a matter of exploitation by either economic classes or imperialist nations, but instead the result of a harmful set of social and economic conditions which prevented the individual from developing the capability successfully to protect his own interests. To be sure, many Chinese liberals went to great pains in order to demonstrate that individual liberty and economic laissez-faire, when unharnessed, were great sources of national wealth and power. However, in examining the debate over Malthusianism, the seemingly contradictory nature of private freedom and modern nationalism looms as one of the greatest barriers to the acceptance of classical liberalism and, in turn, the acceptance of population control. Both Malthusianism and liberalism remained tainted with this image of individual selfishness.

Notes to Chapter I

1. Chow Tse-tsung, The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China (Cambridge, 1960), p. 361.

II. Malthusianism's Introduction to China via Social Darwinism: The Link between the Malthusian Controversy and National Strength

Nothing better underscored the connection between nationalism and the population issue than Chinese intellectuals' initial perception of Malthusianism as an intimate component of Social Darwinism. Liang C'hi-ch'ao was an early example of such an intellectual. It was not difficult to understand why much of the discussion over the population issue was generated by the interest of many Chinese intellectuals in Social Darwinism. The utilization of Darwin's biological theory of natural selection to portray various societies as biological species struggling to survive and constantly developing traits which best served them in this struggle had a powerful logic at the time. Liang and later nationalists believed that such logic explained the nature of both Western social progress and international conflict. In this respect, Thomas Malthus' theory of population growth was initially utilized as an explanation of the imperatives behind this struggle to survive rather than a solid rationale for population control. Liang, for instance, perceived population growth as primarily being the reason for which various nationalities had mutual contact resulting in conflict.¹ Furthermore, he perceived imperialism to be an attempt by the stronger Western countries to prepare for future population growth.²

In an essay entitled "On the Great Trend of Competition between Nations", Liang most clearly stated this relationship between Malthusianism and Social Darwinism:

Among the theories of the modern scholars, there is no single (theory of any one) scholar that has nourished national imperialism, but (the theories of) Malthus and Darwin have been the two most forceful.³

It is important to understand that in using the term "national imperialism" Liang wished to distinguish modern imperialism from the imperialism of

the traditional empires, both Eastern and Western. The expansionism of the traditional empires aimed at creating a political state that encompassed a variety of nationalities and races. To Liang, the inability of such states to harness the force of nationalism explained their failure to survive in the modern world of nation-states. However, in Liang's eyes, the modern nation-state that practiced "national imperialism" sought to maintain national homogeneity with territorial expansion either by the cultural assimilation of weaker peoples or by their displacement from their homelands.⁴

With this concept of Social Darwinism in mind, Liang viewed population trends as a barometer of the social progress achieved by the various nations of the world. According to Liang,

... how can it be necessary to discuss anything else other than population alone (to see that) Western history has consisted of progress while our own country's history has consisted of cycles. This is how it is. Otherwise, how could a country have ... a population of 130, 000, 000 to 140, 000, 000 nine hundred years ago and today be known for (a population of) merely 400, 000, 000.⁵

It was the trend of population growth rather than the absolute numbers to which Liang attached the most significance. The steady social progress which Liang attributed to the West was supposedly marked by a ~~stead~~ steady rise in population, while, concomitantly, China's cyclical and unprogressive history was reflected in mere cyclical variations in population.

Ironically enough, this particular use of Malthusianism discouraged the promotion of population control. Although population control could have some conceivable advantages, it would be a disastrous policy for a nation to follow unilaterally because the expanding populations of other countries would constantly threaten one's own people with displacement or assimilation. Liang paid little attention to Malthus' point that overpopulation was a constant cause of poverty within a nation regardless of its productivity, but instead perceived his theory as a cogent explanation of the fundamental cause of conflicts between nations.⁶

Hence, in Liang's view, a growing population signified success in the struggle to survive, while a stagnant population, no matter how large, could only imply the opposite.

Liang's appraisal of the significance of population trends was to be echoed by other nationalists including Sun Yat-sen. However, Liang did not seem to be concerned with promoting population growth in itself. As Liang pointed out, the desirability of a large population was nothing new in Chinese history. In The Mencius, King Hui of Liang expressed great vexation over the small size of his kingdom's population when compared with neighbouring states.⁷ In declaring that China's lack of population growth reflected the absence of a progressive history, Liang, no doubt, felt the promotion of population growth to be a vain hope if not accompanied by a method. He believed that a sense of nationalism among the Chinese people was the one most fundamental factor that would enable China to expand its population.⁸

With respect to the limit of China's agricultural potential to support population growth, Liang had already stated at the close of the nineteenth century that by using Western agricultural techniques and opening new lands China's population could increase several fold without fear of famine. In Liang's view, China was no more densely populated than most European countries but far behind in agricultural science because education and farming had become "two separate paths" in traditional Chinese society.⁹ The limit of China's potential for increases in agricultural production was also to become an issue hotly disputed and more carefully examined as the debate over population control unfolded in later years.

Yen Fu, who more deeply explored the various theories of Social Darwinism and their application to China's difficulties as a nation, did not see a large population as being proof of or an asset for a nation's success in the struggle to progress and survive in a world of competing nation-states:

Ever since human spirits have been made the (object of worship in) religion, there has been no greater sin than not offering sacrifices (to one's ancestors). Therefore, our people take marriage to be a natural duty, and China's overpopulation arises from this. Although the population is extensive, the teachings of wealth have not been extended. Therefore, their large numbers are precisely the reason for suffering. . . . As for the rapid propagation (of people) in China, only the labouring society and propertyless people have increased in number. Certainly, if the uneducated and inferior people are gathered together in a world of competition, it is obvious that they will not be able to survive by virtue of their fitness.¹⁰

Unlike Liang, Yen Fu perceived China's population as indeed growing, but it was the wealth of the country and the quality of the people that he felt determined a nation's fitness, and a large population was certainly no proof of this. To him, it was quite possible for a well populated country to be eliminated in the process of natural selection if the teachings of wealth (fu chiao) were lacking. Yen Fu probably envisioned a process of cultural assimilation by a stronger nation such as what many Chinese believed to be occurring in British-ruled India rather than outright annihilation. However, in Yen Fu's eyes, the source of China's problems was a combination of the lack of material progress and a large population. From this perspective, Yen Fu did not clearly delineate the extent to which the lack of material progress could be attributed to China's large population.

In spite of a completely different appraisal of Chinese population trends and the different significance which Yen Fu attributed to a large population, both he and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao were primarily motivated to consider the population question by a nationalist concern over China's fate in a world that they felt was governed by the forces of natural selection as outlined by Social Darwinism. The implicit belief in Social Darwinism was to continue to be a common denominator among both the proponents and opponents of population control throughout the May Fourth period.

Although the population issue did not receive a great deal of attention in the years prior to the May Fourth Movement, most impressions of China's

population situation seemed roughly similar to Liang's view. In one article which appeared in a Chinese reformist periodical in 1901, population increases and the resulting competition for the necessities of life were cited as major reasons for the imperialist expansion of Western nations.¹¹ Eleven years later, a Chinese writer translated the articles of an American diplomat and a Japanese scholar in which the estimates of China's population were only 270,000,000 and 260,000,000 respectively. The writer, Ch'en Yü-ching, feared that the often cited figure of 400,000,000 was a collectively held myth created by Ch'ing officials who used inflated census figures in order to bring credit to themselves. With this in mind, he saw more than coincidence in the similar estimates of two unconnected sources. In entitling his article "The Chinese Population Problem", Ch'en Yü-ching seemed assured that the literate Chinese public would understand any 'population problem' in China to be one of sparseness.¹²

Notes to Chapter II

1. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "Chung-kuo shih-shang jen-k'ou chih t'ung-chi" (Historical statistics of China's population), Hsin-min ts'ung-pao (The new people's miscellany), vols. 46-48 (January 1904), reprinted in Yin-ping shih wen-chi (Collected essays of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao), ed. Liang T'ing-ch'an (Shanghai, 1926), chüan 35, p. 54.
2. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "Lun min-tsu ching-cheng chih ta shih" (1902), reprinted in Yin-ping shih ho-chi (Collected Works of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao), ed. Lin Chih-chün (Shanghai, 1936), vol. 4, chap. 10, p. 13.
3. Ibid., p. 11.
4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Liang, "Chung-kuo shih-shang jen-k'ou chih t'ung-chi", p. 61.
6. Although Malthus certainly made the point that overpopulation was one of the causes of war, it was far from being the main thrust of his work.
7. Liang, "Chung-kuo shih-shang jen-k'ou chih t'ung-chi", p. 54.
8. Liang, "Lun min-tsu ching-cheng chih ta shih", p. 35.
9. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "Nung-hui pao-hsü" (Preface to the report on agricultural organizations) (1896), reprinted in Yin-ping shih ho-chi, vol. 4, pp. 130-131.
10. As quoted by Yang Hsiao-ch'un, "Tui-yü shih-lun 'Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i' te ta-pien" (A rebuttal to the currently discussed 'population problem'), Tung-fang tsa-chih (The Eastern miscellany), vol. 24, no. 22 (November 25, 1927), p. 12.
11. "Lun ti-kuo chu-i chih fa-ta chi erh-shih shih-chi shih-chieh chih ch'ien-t'u" (On the development of imperialism and the future of the world in the twentieth century), K'ai-chih lu (The enlightenment record), reprinted in Hsin-hai ko-ming ch'ien shih nien lun hsuan-chi (Selected essays of ten years before the 1911 Revolution), ed. Chang Nan (Hong Kong, 1962), vol. 1, book 1, p. 54. The author and the precise date were not given.
12. Ch'en Yü-ching, "Chung-kuo hu-k'ou wen-t'i", Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 1, no. 4, (October 10, 1912), pp. 7-14.

III. The May Fourth Malthusians: The Promotion of Population Control Takes Shape

By the time of the May Fourth period the debate over the population question had become a great deal more specialized, and there was a greater awareness of the ideological implications involved in the issue. The scholars of the May Fourth generation did not merely make general references to China's population situation, but authored lengthy books dealing with it exclusively. It was during this period that a definable group of intellectuals who promoted population control took shape. With great regularity, these intellectuals tended to be Western-educated scholars with economics or sociology as their academic discipline. On the whole, they may be accurately described as Neo-Malthusians in that they generally understood Malthus' population theory as a rationale for population control and supported it as such without necessarily adhering to the portions of Malthus' analysis that were parochial to eighteenth century England. For example, many of the Chinese who promoted population control, unlike Malthus, did not view 'moral restraint' as the sole acceptable method of birth control.

Another difference which was more of emphasis than of substance was that the Chinese supporters of population control did not emphasize the pessimistic character of Malthusianism as a theory which belittled human efforts at improving society. Instead, they promoted population control in positive terms as part of an entire package of needed social reforms, some of which would be the direct result of a lower birth rate. This difference had less substance than first met the eye, because one could easily argue that Malthus, by promoting a form of population control, demonstrated an implicitly optimistic view of mankind's ability to overcome barriers to efficacious social reform.

Harvard-educated Ch'en Ch'ang-heng was perhaps the most widely published author who promoted the Malthusian population theory and a national policy of population control. His articles on the population question appeared regularly in various newspapers and journals, and seven different editions of his major work, On the Population of China, were published between 1918 and 1926. To Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, Malthus was a "benevolent economist and social reformer" who tried to show people how they could avoid the tragedies inflicted by the natural controls on excessive population growth.¹

In linking the poverty of China directly to overpopulation, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng cited it as proof in itself that China's birth rate was too high. He attacked the parents of children who were sold to serve as slaves and prostitutes for being irresponsible and for merely viewing their children as disposable items of temporary utility. Like Malthus, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng felt that the solution to the poverty in China rested in encouraging people to calculate their means of making a living before having children.²

In examining the development of Western nations, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng disputed the notion that the increase in both their prosperity and their population could be solely attributed to scientific and technical progress. He did this by specifically examining the birth rate figures of Western countries. In his book, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng produced a table illustrating the rather dramatic drop in the birth rate of various Western nations from 1870 to 1910. The birth rate in England, for example, dropped from 35.4 per thousand during the decade beginning in 1870 to 25.9 per thousand by 1910.³ The people of the West, he argued, had indeed followed the tenets of Malthusianism in planning for the prosperity of their posterity.⁴ The aggregate increase in the population of Western countries was attributed to the low death rate and longer life span of the average person which accompanied it. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng argued that this was largely brought about by the decreasing birth rate.⁵ Hence, in his

view the rate of increase in population alone was insufficient to determine the nature of the relationship between population trends and social progress in the West.

Based on the opinions of several foreign doctors stationed in China, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng estimated the birth rate in China to be over fifty per thousand people, twice the birth rate of the West.⁶ He viewed this difference as the cause of China's poverty and the West's prosperity. According to him, there existed an inverse ratio between individual development, to which he attributed the vitality of the Western people, and the birth rate. To prove this point, he produced statistics which showed that college-educated women in the United States more often than not had two or less children after marriage. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng attributed this to their greater intelligence and desire to secure the proper educational opportunities for their children.⁷ In China, by contrast, he portrayed the prospects for individual development as bleak because people often gave birth to more children than they had means to care for or educate.⁸ In addition to this, he pointed out, it was more difficult for individuals to obtain the years of training needed to develop various skills because the combined effect of the high birth rate and high death rate made life spans shorter. Because he believed the ignorant and useless elements of society were precisely the ones most likely irresponsibly to give birth to many children, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng felt that the seriousness of this problem was compounded by its cyclical nature.⁹

Ch'en Ch'ang-heng was not oblivious to sources of poverty other than over-population, but he characterized all such phenomenon as merely manifestations of the more basic problem. For example, he did not deny that warlordism and corrupt government created many of the problems both for individual welfare and national strength. However, according to him institutional reform alone could never bring competent government and enlightened leadership to

China unless the quality of the electors, the people, could be raised. He considered it axiomatic that the government could be no good if the people were no good and, in turn, traced this problem of quality back to the population issue.¹⁰ To him, the problems that a high birth rate and overpopulation entailed for individual development also directly affected the quality of China's population as a whole. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng portrayed the quality of a nation's population as the most crucial factor that influenced national strength. According to this view, recent advances in civilization and the refinement of military techniques enabled small countries with enlightened peoples to gain control over large backward countries. England's ability to conquer India, a nation of 300,000,000, with ease was proof of this in his opinion.¹¹

In the modern world of nation-states, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng felt that the advantage in power formerly enjoyed by the populous empires was no longer assured. He argued that a population of 400,000,000 was of no advantage to China's struggle for national existence if the vast majority of people lacked strength, morality, and knowledge.¹² Although the Chinese government ruled over a vast population, he pointed out that it experienced much more difficulty than any of the small Western nations in taxing people to support an army. In raising the issue of taxation, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, like Yen Fu, stressed the important connection between individual wealth and national strength.¹³

In this manner Ch'en Ch'ang-heng made the case that China's quest for national power hinged on improving the opportunity for individual development by decreasing the birth rate and relieving the pressures of overpopulation. To strengthen this argument, he was able to cite none other than Herbert Spencer, one of the major architects of the theory of Social Darwinism. Spencer's theory, as outlined by Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, stated that a lower birth rate and a lower population density existed among higher forms of biological

species and more sophisticated civilizations. Spencer attributed this to the evolution of more complex traits which required notably more time for individual members of a society or species to develop. In the struggle to progress and survive, a high rate of reproduction was less vital than the development of these traits. Hence, in Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's eyes, a programme of population control was completely consistent with scientific nationalism based on Social Darwinism.¹⁴

The major point repeatedly stressed by Ch'en Ch'ang-heng in promoting Malthusianism as a means of achieving individual prosperity and national strength was that there was a fundamental harmony, between the government's efforts to enrich the nation and the individual's efforts to enrich himself.¹⁴ Like Yen Fu, he felt that the strength of the Western nations was due to their wealth, and their wealth was due to the freedom with which each pursued his own interests. The aggregate effect of this freedom was not the chaos that a Confucian might expect, but a coordination of activity similar to the arrangement of spokes around the centre of a wheel.¹⁵ Both he and Yen Fu felt that there was little advantage in numbers if people lacked the capabilities needed to achieve material progress. However, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng was explicit in stating that this lack of capabilities was directly related to population pressures.

However, there were a number of instances in which Ch'en Ch'ang-heng perceived a basic conflict between individual freedom and national interests, and in such cases his primary concern was with the latter. Ironically enough, he pictured such a conflict over the issue of artificial birth control. He opposed artificial birth control as a "passively destructive" measure that could cause a nation's people to be lost in their own bodily desires and convenience to the extent that the survival of the race could be endangered, and cited the French as an example of such national decadence.¹⁶ Also, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's dedication to the emancipation of the individual did not prevent him from

supporting a government sponsored policy of eugenics which would improve the quality of the people by eliminating the opportunities to propagate of those who were weak and deficient.¹⁷

Although Ch'en Ch'ang-heng constantly stressed the importance of the quality of the population over the quantity, he still hastened to point out that a lower birth rate would not have the effect of reducing China's aggregate population or even the effect of halting future increases if longer life spans could be achieved. The Western countries, with the exception of France, were proof of this. In fact, a secondary argument that Ch'en Ch'ang-heng utilized against a high birth rate was that it could not even achieve the narrow goal of population growth. This suggested that he was aware of the attractiveness that a large population held for many Chinese nationalists.

In opposing artificial birth control, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng argued that the Confucian values and institutions rooted in Chinese tradition were the basic cause of the unacceptably high birth rate. Hence, in his view the most appropriate means of achieving a lower birth rate was to eliminate precisely those backward aspects of China's traditional social system which nearly all May Fourth intellectuals opposed. These social institutions had already been characterized as great barriers to both economic progress and individual development in themselves. The clan system of China, for example, was labelled a cause of China's high birth rate because marriages took place at a much earlier age than would be the case if most couples waited until they could establish independent households.¹⁸ Ch'en Ch'ang-heng also declared that the extended family with its complex system of collective property made the material advantages of fewer children less obvious to individual couples and generally discouraged the independence, mobility, and individual incentive which he felt were vital for social progress. He cited the individual's dependence on and obligations toward the extended family as one of the major barriers to

Chinese colonization of the sparsely populated border regions.

By breaking with Confucian tradition and supporting equality for women as well as marriages based on free choice, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng believed that the late marriage and the nuclear family would become the norm throughout China and, in turn, lead to the lower birth rate which he felt was characteristic of a more advanced society.²⁰ In addition, he portrayed the broader social contacts made possible by the emancipation of the individual from the tyranny of the clan as a means by which a national sense of identity among Chinese could be forged.²¹

To a great extent, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's arguments effectively utilized the widely held vision of a discredited Confucian tradition as a foil for his own vision of an enlightened liberal society that was free from the pressures of uncontrolled population growth. By portraying the question of social progress in China in terms of a simple dichotomy between Confucianism and liberalism, he no doubt, was aiming at harnessing the abundance of hostility toward traditional social values in order to gain support for some form of population control. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng probably believed that any initial nationalist apprehensions concerning population control could be overcome if he could successfully demonstrate that the path to a lower birth rate coincided with the efforts to destroy the backward Confucian social institutions that numbed the national consciousness of the Chinese. Artificial birth control, a far more controversial method, received his unequivocal condemnation. However, the initial advantages of linking population control entirely to an attack on Confucian traditions were to be shortlived as later research on the population situation in China was to make many of Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's original arguments obsolete. The difficulties entailed in modifying his arguments favouring population control were to contribute to the growing defensiveness on the part of those who expressed a belief in Malthusianism.

Ku Meng-yü was another professional scholar of the May Fourth generation who voiced support for some form of population control, although he did not become involved in the debate over the issue to the same extent as other scholars. Educated in Germany from 1906 to 1911, Ku later headed the economics department at the University of Peking. In 1924, he joined the KMT and became an associate of Wang Ching-wei. By the time of the civil war, Ku Meng-yü had become an informal spokesman for a shortlived "third force" political movement which was backed by an ineffectual group of Chinese liberals based in Hong Kong who opposed the authoritarianism of both the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party.²²

In 1920, four years before he became involved in political affairs, Ku authored an article which echoed many of the observations expressed by Ch'en Ch'ang-heng. Ku felt that Malthus' theory, although often misrepresented, demonstrated a humane concern for people's livelihood which was absent in the political elites of the past who were constantly promoting population growth in order to increase their supply of draft labour.²³

In explaining the link between overpopulation and poverty, Ku Meng-yü refuted the argument that poverty in China was the result of exploitation. According to Ku, China's poverty resulted from a highly unfavourable ratio of capital to population. Because of this lack of capital, the opportunities to work were limited, the competition for available jobs was fierce, and per capita productivity was low because there was little economic incentive for capital intensive production techniques.²⁴ This situation, Ku argued, was not the work of any group of capitalists because even those willing to work for the most meager remuneration could not find employment. Hence, even if one were to view the poverty of China in terms of exploitation, in Ku's opinion the only effective remedy still involved solving the population problem which created the appallingly excessive supply of labour in relation to the

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demand for it.¹

Naturally, Ku did not limit his concern to the issue of poverty. He further stated that overpopulation and the poverty that accompanied it adversely affected the quality of society as a whole both physically and morally. According to Ku, education could not become widespread because of the lack of capital in relation to the size of the population, and, hence, the uncontrolled increases in the population would consist of ignorant scoundrels without moral or physical value. Moreover, he argued that the 'good' elements of society who make the sacrifices necessary for social progress could not develop or survive amid the fierce struggle for survival in an overpopulated country. Using an interesting metaphor, Ku compared an overpopulated society to an unfair official who rewards the evil and punishes the good.²⁶ According to Ku's analysis, survival was so paramount in an overpopulated society that those who robbed and cheated were respected as standards so long as they provided for their families. This kind of competition resulting from population pressure, in Ku's eyes, destroyed all motives for mutual love and cooperation. Instead of identifying with the nation, people developed a perverse conception of self-interest which Ku characterized by the phrase, "whatever is of benefit to the people, most likely entails a loss for me".²⁷

It is important to understand that Ku did not object to competition or the pursuit of self-interest per se. He simply wanted to point out how their character changed in an overpopulated country like China where the province of Shantung alone was more densely populated than any European country including industrialized England. According to Ku, the competition in less populated countries was less fierce and of a more healthy nature. Because life was easier, the 'good' elements had a chance to develop and exist independently.²⁸

In Ku's estimation, no attempt to improve the moral or material quality

of Chinese society would be of any use unless it addressed the basic problem of disequilibrium between population and capital. Like Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, Ku felt that efforts to bring good honest government to China could not, by themselves, accomplish much, because poor government itself was one of the symptoms of an overpopulated nation. Neither, according to this view, could industry develop so long as population pressures inhibited capital formation and the economic incentives for capital intensive techniques. In this respect, Ku ~~even~~²⁹ hinted that aid to the poor accomplished more harm than good, because a greater share of a certain sum of money would be devoted to social development if it were concentrated in the hands of a single person instead of many.

Throughout Ku Meng-yu's discussion of the population problem in China, the topic of artificial birth control was conspicuously avoided. Like Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, he portrayed the traditional cultural values and social institutions that were already under attack from nearly all intellectual circles as the source of China's population problem. Although he did not expressly condemn artificial contraception, Ku's proposals for population control were limited to the destruction of already discredited social practices. These included early marriage, concubinage, and 'the religious customs and morality which cause overpopulation'.³⁰ Hence, Ku's position on the appropriate means of population control was roughly similar to that of Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, and probably for the same reasons.

Hsü Shih-lien was another promoter of population control whose educational background was characteristic of most Chinese liberals of the May Fourth era. Hsu attended Stanford University and afterwards successfully studied for a Ph.D. at the University of Iowa. In 1923, he began teaching at Wuchang Normal University and later taught at the University of Peking and Tsinghua University where he lectured on sociology.³¹

In an article written in 1926, Hsü stated that the overall population problem in China was one which involved concentration, quality, the distribution of wealth, and the birth rate as well as aggregate numbers. Using a line of argument similar to that of Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and Ku Meng-yü, Hsü declared that the quality of a society was, to a great extent, determined by population pressures. In Hsü's eyes, the unemployment, sickness, poverty, prostitution, inflation, and warlordism which characterized China's sorry state could all be traced to overpopulation.³² Production was hampered, according to Hsü, by the fact that relatively few people reached the optimum productive age of between thirty and forty years because of population pressures. In underscoring the cyclical nature of the population problem, Hsü also argued that the material and intellectual backwardness of the population as a whole hampered the opportunity of children fully to develop. Even if they physically survived childhood, Hsü felt that most were likely to become listless zombies.³³ In comparing the quality of the Chinese people with the Westerners, Hsü perceived the greatest disparity to exist among what he termed 'people of middle intelligence'. The advantage that China supposedly enjoyed among 'the people of highest intelligence' was, to Hsü, of little advantage in terms of national vitality.

Because the quality of the Chinese people was the most vital factor that affected national strength, Hsü exhorted his countrymen to fulfill their responsibility to the nation by having fewer children and avoiding the conditions which created the social dregs that plagued China. Hsü did not elaborate on the means by which a lower birth rate could be achieved. He rather weakly expressed disagreement with Margaret Sanger who had earlier visited China, but he did not explicitly condemn artificial contraception in unequivocal terms as had Ch'en Ch'ang-heng.³⁴ Nor did he argue that a lower birth rate would result from an all-out attack on the Confucian social system aside from a

brief comment on the ability of Western women successfully to secure a productive occupation without marrying.

Although Hsü did not dwell on the role of social reform in reducing China's birth rate, he did devote a considerable amount of attention to problems which aggravated the population situation. Basically, these were the unbalanced distribution of China's population, an archaic mode of agriculture, and the existence of too many consuming elements in society. Hsü admitted that the population density of China's twenty-one provinces, 238 people per square mile, was not particularly high when compared with certain European countries. This figure, Hsu pointed out, would be even be lower if Tibet and other border regions that were nominally under Chinese sovereignty were included.³⁵ By promoting migration from the densely populated areas to the sparsely populated regions, Hsü felt that this aggravating factor to China's population situation could be ameliorated. However, Hsü scoffed at any suggestion that the aggregate population density of China was too low by pointing out that many of the relatively densely populated countries in Europe were industrial powers that could trade manufactured products for agricultural goods. Aside from that, Hsü noted that China's population was still greater than that of all the white imperialist nations combined.

Hsü also stressed the need to reform agriculture, but did not propose anything concrete. The other factor which intensified population pressure, according to Hsü, was the large proportion of China's potential workforce which was not productively utilized. These included what Hsü termed the 'concentration of unproductive people in the cities'.³⁶ However, labouring under the impression that the upper-class ideal of womenfolk who were restricted to the home held true for Chinese society as a whole, Hsü felt that women were the largest single source of unproductive consumers of the country's resources. The 'surplus' women who could not become members

of any household were, in Hsü's view, forced by social circumstances to become prostitutes and the like who only contributed to a 'poisonous consuming element' in the cities. Obviously, women's rights held a high priority for Hsü in easing China's population crisis.

In raising a number of social and political issues while addressing the population question, Hsü did not differ from Ch'en Ch'ang-heng or Ku Meng-yü. However, Ku and Ch'en always linked such issues directly to the population question. For example, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, like Hsü, favoured migration to the border regions, but he also argued that most individuals were unlikely to become self-reliant pioneers if they developed in an environment characterized by material deprivation and clan tyranny. Hsü, on the other hand, dealt with such issues as entirely extraneous factors which aggravated the basic problem of overpopulation. By doing so, Hsü became prone to the charge that he arbitrarily focused on overpopulation as the major problem in China while failing to consider the possibility that these 'aggravating' factors alone were the cause of China's sorry condition. As shall be demonstrated later, many of the Chinese opponents of Malthusianism cited these same aggravating factors mentioned by Hsü to argue that no problem of overpopulation ever really existed in the first place.

No biographical information is available on Lo Hung-shun who also expressed strong support for population control in his 1926 article.⁹ In terms of logic alone, Lo's reasoning was roughly similar to that of Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and Ku Meng-yü. However, Lo's appeal for population control had already assumed some of the defensiveness which was to become more characteristic of China's supporters of population control in the late twenties and thirties.

Despite the multiplicity of problems that plagued China, Lo felt that their common root was overpopulation. After commenting on how numerous Chinese social reformers and intellectuals had wasted a great deal of time and effort

in attempting to formulate solutions to China's numerous social, economic, and political problems, Lo stated:

In researching social problems, from each cause one can find another cause, and from each root can be traced another root. (By using such means of research) one can discover the population problem to be what affects society as the basic problem and what forms the social and livelihood situations.³⁷

This remark dramatically illustrated the extent to which the debate over Malthusianism involved a fundamental disagreement concerning the causal relationships of China's various difficulties.

Like Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, Lo focused on the adverse effect of a high birth rate on individual development which, in turn, adversely affected the quality of the country's people. In making this argument, Lo quoted English population expert Harold Cox. According to Cox, a high birth rate was the cause of poor health standards in backward countries, and because of this their people were often deficient in physical and mental development. Naturally, Lo pointed out the detrimental effects that this entailed for society in terms of low individual efficiency and social disorders rooted in poverty. However, Lo also drew attention to another harmful result of a high birth rate hitherto unmentioned by his contemporaries. This was the great squandering of what he termed 'social energy' that was used to give birth to and raise vast numbers of children whom Lo felt had no chance of survival. According to Lo, this constituted a great loss to society of energy that could have been channeled
38
elsewhere.

Lo referred to Cox's analysis as a scientific explanation of the relationship between the quality of a people and a high birth rate. Lo had a specific purpose in mind when he used the term 'scientific', because immediately thereafter he attacked those who opposed population control on the grounds that science and social progress could overcome the natural obstacles to unlimited population growth that were cited by Malthus. To Lo, the ultimate irony of such optimistic

faith in the power of science to solve all problems was that it, itself, was unscientific. Moreover, social progress, Lo argued, could not be viewed as an extraneous factor that was not related to the cycle of causes and effects which involved the birth rate. To portray a concrete image of this relationship, Lo used a diagram in which "the necessary conditions for social progress" were traced to a "low rate of propagation". Concomitantly, the "causes of a lack of social progress" were all traced to a "high rate of propagation" in a companion diagram.³⁹ Hence, in Lo's view, a high birth rate was an obstacle to social progress and, at the same time, a result of the lack of it.

Like Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and Ku Meng-yü, Lo singled out China's backward social and cultural traditions as the major factors in China which contributed to a high birth rate and avoided mention of artificial birth control as a potential solution to the population problem. These backward traditions were all connected with the Confucian virtue of filial piety. Lo's argument concerning the harmful effects of the extended family and early marriage on individual incentive was remarkably similar to that articulated by Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and was without any noteworthy differences.⁴⁰

The issue of national strength was the ultimate concern of Lo in promoting population control. Lo acknowledged that, "Since ancient times, before science and today's types of weapons, the rise and fall, and survival and annihilation of a people were determined by their numbers (vis-a-vis other nations)." However, according to Lo, to persist in such an anachronistic attitude toward national strength was to remain "unenlightened of world trends".⁴¹ By letting a high birth rate remain unchecked, Lo feared that China would lose international footing and risk "being trampled upon by other races".⁴²

However, Lo's appeal for population control on nationalist grounds was marked by a rather defensive tone that suggested he was cognizant of a hostile attitude toward Malthusianism on the part of a nationalist readership. Lo

literally pleaded with his readers not to misunderstand his position by believing that he was opposed to the increase of good elements in the population that were beneficial to society. Also, Lo flatly declared that he did not promote individualism in promoting population control. His only goal was to seek good fortune for society through the individual on up. Although this was roughly similar to Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's position, Ch'en attempted to establish a much stronger link between individualism and nationalism so that such a disclaimer was unnecessary. The inability to reconcile individualism, however qualified, and nationalism was to prove to be a major difficulty for the promoters of population control in later years.

Although most of the promoters of population control went to great pains in order to demonstrate that their views, in the long run, were consistent with China's national interests, there were exceptions to this pattern such as P'eng I-hu. In a 1920 article, P'eng attacked the arguments against Malthusianism posed by various European socialists, many of which were later utilized by the Chinese opponents of population control. P'eng challenged the commonly held assumption in socialist circles that any increase in population could be offset by the increase in production due to an expanded supply of labour. Agricultural products, argued P'eng, were the most obvious example of a basic necessity that could not be manufactured in ever increasing amounts by industrial factories no matter how progressive the society.⁴³ This argument, of course, was nothing more than a paraphrase of the principle of the diminishing returns on land as outlined by Malthus in his essay.

P'eng never became a major figure in the debate over population control in later years. He was untypical of most of the advocates of population control in that he addressed the question of population growth in theoretical terms without referring to conditions particular to China or any nationalist aspirations for his country. The universal nature of population growth was the only

concern of P'eng, and he made no attempt to make his views more palatable to a nationalist readership beyond presenting a logically consistent argument. Hence, P'eng had no qualms about supporting artificial contraception as a solution to the Malthusian dilemma of population growth. P'eng was more typical of the cosmopolitan intellectual than the majority of Chinese thinkers who found themselves deeply moved by the nationalist issues of the May Fourth period.

The educational background of T'ao Meng-ho was roughly similar to that of the broad class of intellectuals who tended to be China's liberals. After attending Tokyo Normal University, T'ao studied economics at London University and later taught at National Peking Normal University and the University of Peking where he was an instructor of political science. However, T'ao's position on the population question differed greatly from that of most supporters of population control in both logic and emphasis. It was only unwillingly that he was lumped with the Chinese Malthusians and Neo-Malthusians by later opponents of population control.⁴⁴

In a 1920 article, T'ao declared that the problem of poverty in China and most places on the globe was the result of an unequal distribution of wealth. To T'ao, Malthusianism merely utilized the theoretically possible capability of reproduction to rationalize the existence of poverty. He attributed the existence of poverty in even wealthy nations to the 'disease' of Malthusianism and cited figures that illustrated the unequal distribution of wealth in two of the world's most powerful industrial countries, the United States and the United Kingdom. According to T'ao, the tendency of wealth to concentrate into the hands of a few was becoming more pronounced in the modern world. Hence, T'ao felt that poverty had little connection with overpopulation and, instead, linked it with the exploitation and unequal distribution which characterized a country's political and economic system.⁴⁵

However, while attacking Malthusianism, T'ao envisioned an eventual drop in the birth rate as inevitable if China were effectively to deal with the problem of poverty. He concentrated on the distribution of wealth as the cause of poverty because he strongly opposed Malthus' assumption that poor people, if given a greater share of society's wealth, would simply propagate in greater numbers until the same degree of poverty existed among a larger population. On the contrary, T'ao portrayed a rise in living standards as an effective means of achieving a lower birth rate. He argued that as a society becomes more developed its birth rate declines, and that within the society the upper-classes experience an even sharper decline in the birth rate. A lower birth rate, according to T'ao, was the natural 'impulse' of a more enlightened society and of more enlightened individuals. Hence, in concentrating exclusively on the unequal distribution of wealth, T'ao argued that overpopulation among the poor was, itself, a byproduct of unequal distribution, exploitation, and poverty.⁴⁵

T'ao differed from the promoters of population control in that he felt poverty was the product of overpopulation and not the other way around.⁴⁶ He did not advocate population control at the time he wrote this article only because he felt that the population situation would correct itself without any special effort once economic justice was achieved. However, like the proclaimed supporters of population control, T'ao certainly had no illusions about China's ability to achieve social progress and, at the same time, accommodate an ever growing population. In this sense, he had more in common with the advocates of population control than most of the Chinese opponents of Malthusianism. Also, later research on population trends in China was to destroy his overly sanguine hopes that the population problem required no other solution beyond raising the living standards.

The majority of the Chinese proponents of Malthusianism tended to demonstrate

a belief in the tenets of classical liberalism and viewed China's problems in terms of the individual's inability to develop or care for his own needs. To them, exploitation constituted only a secondary cause of poverty and social disorder. The basic solution to China's problems, in their view, involved the creation of an environment in which individuals could develop the ability to protect and further their own interests. In this respect, a national programme of population control played a major role in China's progress along the path of economic *laissez faire* as envisioned by Chinese liberals. Ku Meng-yü, for instance, saw population control as vital to correct the glut in the labour market which, more than any profit-minded capitalists, drove wages down and discouraged investment in capital intensive enterprises.

Obviously, the advocates of population control were not unconcerned with the collective interests of China as a nation. If anything, that was their ultimate concern. It was the fundamental position of Chinese liberals that the lack of individual emancipation harmed the nation's collective interests above all else, and their greatest challenge was to convince the Chinese public of the complementary nature of individual freedom and national strength.

Because their devotion to nationalism was the ultimate justification for their ideological preferences, the Chinese promoters of population control were quite capable of selectively supporting certain kinds of state power that many of the defenders of individual liberty in Western countries found to be anathemas. In spite of the issue of individual choice and his own liberal inclinations, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, for example, opposed artificial contraception as an evil practice which could bring about the general moral decline of the nation. An even more poignant example of the subordinate role that their support of individual liberty assumed in relation to nationalism was their interest in the study of eugenics as a means of improving the quality of China's population. However, such authors as Lo Hung-shun and Ch'en Ch'ang-heng

believed that under the circumstances of the time, a policy of eugenics was much less vital for developing national strength than population control. Lo, for instance, felt that artificial selection was an impossibility in China at that time because the high rate of births allowed so few to reach their natural potential that there was no way of determining who were genetically superior.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, their interest in eugenics alone illustrated the qualified nature of their belief in the emancipation of the individual.

The nationalism of those who advocated population control, like those who felt that China's population was not growing fast enough, was based on a firm belief in Social Darwinism. To them, the quality of China's people was more vital in the struggle for national survival than their quantity. However, this notion of struggle and competition was confined to the level of the nation-state. Unlike Herbert Spencer, these Chinese Social Darwinists did not apply the doctrine of the survival of the fittest to individuals or social classes within the nation. Their conception of individual development and self-interest did not include anything so inconsistent with the collective interests of the nation as competitive struggle between compatriots. In their eyes, the fierce struggle to survive within the nation was part of the unhealthy syndrome which characterized China's condition at the time. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, for instance, virtually dichotomized the social objectives of the country into the categories of international (kuo-wai) and intranational (kuo-nei). In his view, the goal of the country in international relations was to avenge disgraces at the hands of foreigners and to be fully prepared to engage in the ruthless struggle that would entail extinction for the 'inferior' nations. In stark contrast to this, he portrayed the internal duties of the nation to include 'restraining the strong' and 'supporting the weak'.⁴⁸

Although the Chinese supporters of population control promoted the emancipation of the individual and the pursuit of self-interest as cultural traits

consistent with the achievement of national strength, they felt obliged to modify these principles in cases where the seeming contradiction with nationalist goals was hard to dispute. Lo Hung-shun even felt compelled to apologize for the overtones of individualism in his argument. Clearly, their belief in certain tenets of classical liberalism was not based upon a belief in any transcendental or natural origin of the individual's conscience or rights within the group.

In understanding the Chinese liberals' rather pragmatic attitude toward the emancipation of the individual, one must remember that some of the intellectuals whose works formed the foundation of classical liberalism in the West were also aware of the advantages that greater human freedom entailed for national strength. Adam Smith, for instance, argued that a country whose economy flourished from unfettered commerce would be materially capable of waging prolonged wars and emerging victorious.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the limitations that the Chinese advocates of population control felt compelled to place on excessive individualism foreshadowed the defensive stance that they were forced to take in later years as the debate over the population issue unfolded. The opponents of population control were to focus on the contradictory nature of any sort of individualism and dedication to the nation in the eyes of the Chinese public as a vulnerable area in the arguments of the adherents of Malthusianism.

Up through the mid-twenties, reliable population figures for China were conspicuously lacking in the various works on the population issue, and the lack of accurate methods for taking censuses was decried by nearly all the promoters of population control. Their theories on birth rate trends were all based on figures for Western countries, and they had to spend no little effort in trying to convince their readership that China's population was increasing. Only in later years were they able to cite extensive surveys and accurately

adjusted census figures more conclusively to demonstrate that China's population was indeed growing.

Notes to Chapter III

1. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, Chung-kuo jen-k'ou lun (On the population of China) (Shanghai, 1926), pp. 7-10.
2. Ibid., p. 55.
3. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
4. Ibid., p. 6.
5. Ibid., p. 42.
6. Ibid., p. 55.
7. Ibid., pp. 40-42.
8. Ibid., pp. 107-110.
9. Ibid., pp. 74-76.
10. Ibid., pp. 139-140.
11. Ibid., p. 72.
12. Ibid., pp. 73-74.
13. Ibid., p. 80.
14. Ibid., p. 137.
15. Ibid., p. 4.
16. Ibid., pp. 22, 68.
17. Although he used the term 'eugenics', Ch'en Ch'ang-heng did not expressly promote any attempt at selective breeding. Ibid., p. 143.
18. Ibid., p. 54.
19. Ibid., pp. 118-119, 218.
20. Ibid., pp. 86-106.
21. Ibid., pp. 127-133.
22. Howard L. Boorman, Biographical Dictionary of Republican China (New York, 1971), vol. II, pp. 251-255.
23. Ku Meng-yü, "Jen-k'ou wen-t'i, she-hui wen-t'i te so-yao" (The population problem, the key to the social problem), Hsin ch'ing-nien (New youth), vol. 7, no. 4 (April, 1920), p. 7.
24. This particular point was demonstrated by the coal mining industry in Shantung. The traditional labour intensive methods used by the Chinese produced coal more cheaply than the capital intensive mines operated by the Germans. John E. Schrecker, Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism (Cambridge, 1971), p. 188.
25. Ku, "Jen-k'ou wen-t'i, she-hui wen-t'i te so-yao", p. 10.
26. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
27. Ibid., p. 13.
28. Ibid., pp. 8, 14.
29. Ku felt that "benefiting society" was an appropriate euphemism for investing capital. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
30. Ibid., p. 15.
31. Hashikawa Tokio, Chugoku bunkakai jimbutsu sōran (A guide to cultural figures in China) (Peking, 1940), p. 524.
32. Hsü Shih-lien, "Min-tsu chu-i hsia te jen-k'ou wen-t'i" (The population problem under nationalism), Tung-fang tsa-chih (The Eastern miscellany), vol. 23, no. 16 (August 25, 1926), pp. 31, 33.
33. Ibid., p. 34.
34. Ibid., p. 35.
35. Ibid., p. 31.
36. Ibid., p. 35.
37. Lo Hung-shun, "Kao sheng-chih lü de Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i yü min-tsu ch'ien-t'u" (The Chinese population problem of a high birth rate and the nation's future), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 23, no. 23 (December 10, 1926), p. 40.

38. Lo, "Kao sheng-chih lü te Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i yü min-tsu ch'ien-t'u", pp. 42-43.
39. Ibid., p. 44.
40. Ibid., p. 40.
41. Ibid., p. 41.
42. Ibid., p. 46.
43. P'eng I-hu, "Lun jen-k'ou yu tseng-chia yü sheng-huo tsu-liao i-shang te heng-ch'ang ch'ing-hsiang" (On the constant tendency of population growth to outstrip the necessities of life), Hsin ch'ing-nien, vol. 7, no. 4 (April 1920), pp. 6-7.
44. Hashikawa, Chugoku bunkakai jimbutsu sōran, p. 492.
45. T'ao Meng-ho, "P'in-ch'ung yü jen-k'ou wen-t'i" (Poverty and the population problem), Hsin ch'ing-nien, vol. 7, no. 4 (April 1920), pp. 10-14.
46. A recent American writer virtually recreated T'ao's argument on this point. Barry Commoner, "How poverty breeds overpopulation (and not the other way around)", Ramparts, September 1975.
47. Lo, "Kao sheng-chih lü te Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i yü min-tsu ch'ien-t'u", p. 42.
48. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, Chung-kuo jen-k'ou lun, p. 139.
49. Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, 2nd ed. (1778; rpt. New York: Random House, 1937), pp. 659-669.

IV. The Marxist Response to Malthusianism

Marxist ideology has long provided intellectuals with grounds for opposing Malthusianism or any programme of population control. However, at the time of the May Fourth period and afterwards, Marxists such as Li Ta-chao and Ch'en Tu-hsiu formed only a small portion of the bulk of Chinese critical of Malthusianism. Although some of their arguments were shared by non-Marxists opposed to Malthusianism, Marxists formed an independent group of intellectuals who rejected the notion of overpopulation on non-nationalist grounds. There were also significant differences among the Marxists on this issue which deserve attention.

In a sense, the Chinese Marxist response to Malthusianism antedates Chinese Marxism. Neither Ch'en Tu-hsiu nor Li Ta-chao were declared Marxists at the time they first spoke out against Malthusianism. Nevertheless, their rationales for opposing Malthusianism were entirely consistent with the ideology that they adopted later and are still used by Peking today.

In spite of completely different appraisals of Chinese population trends and the different significance which they attached to a large population, both opponents and proponents of population control in China were primarily motivated to consider the population question by a nationalist concern over China's fate in a world that they felt was governed by the forces of natural selection as outlined by Social Darwinism. In 1917 Li Ta-chao felt compelled by his revulsion toward the horrors of the First World War to refute Malthus' theory of population growth. His primary goal in doing so was to debunk Social Darwinism which he felt was merely providing a pretext for needless aggression. When reconstructing the logic used by the political leaders of various nations to justify aggression, Li portrayed a kind of reasoning very similar to that of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao in which the link between Malthusianism

and Social Darwinism was quite clear:

In arousing their fellow countrymen, they constantly raise two things of which to be alert. They say, "The surface of the earth is limited, and population's (capacity of) increasing is inexhaustible. If our people intend to plan for survival, it is impossible not to rely on military strength in order to expand outwards. The survival of the fittest and the perishing of the unfit, the weak becoming food for the strong, the principle of evolution, (these are realities which) cannot be escaped by any means." This (kind of logic) is based completely upon 'Malthus' theory of population and Darwin's theory of evolution.¹

In challenging the validity of Malthusianism, Li first asserted that most European countries were more concerned about their population decreasing rather than increasing. According to Li, statistics from countries such as England, France, and the United States all showed this trend, but none were cited in his article. It was probably more likely that the political leadership of various countries was concerned about the slowness of the population growth within their respective countries when compared with that of other nations, and expressed the same fears as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao about the future of their countries.

This particular point, however, did not play a central role in Li's argument. He further claimed that even if the population of the world as a whole was growing, mankind had an unlimited natural capacity with which to exploit the resources of the 'universe' in order to survive and develop. The level of civilization itself, Li argued, was determined by the extent to which mankind was able to harness its natural talents to resist the forces of nature. It was the constant progress of civilization which Li felt could overcome the law of diminishing returns of land, the cornerstone of Malthus' theory:

The forces of mankind's ability are daily increasing while the forces of nature are daily diminishing. This is simply the advance in the level of civilization. The transmission of sound, light, electricity, and steam are all the captured products obtained by mankind's relying on its own ability to develop (things) in order to defeat the forces of nature. If there were no progress in civilization, then how would the unchallengeable forces involved in the inability to transmit sound, the inability

to transmit illumination, the inability to utilize electricity to condense time and space be any different from the law of diminishing returns of land? ²

In other words, the law of diminishing returns of land was, to Li, simply another 'natural' obstacle which could be overcome by man's increasing capacity to control his environment (not merely to adapt to it) just as other natural obstacles had been overcome with the material innovations of the twentieth century.

Although Li's portrayal of human progress in terms of 'conquering nature' was of questionable validity in disproving the law of diminishing returns, he perceived the harmful influence of Social Darwinism in causing people to take on an overly pragmatic attitude toward war. Perhaps as a result of the world war, Li clearly saw the danger in promoting national interests at the expense of international ethics and refused to view the population question from a nationalist perspective. He attributed an international character to progress, and this set him apart from most of his notable contemporaries. To Li, the real struggle for survival consisted of the whole of mankind's struggle against nature, not of nations struggling against one another. According to Li, if nations persisted in justifying war on the grounds of national survival, then there was nothing to distinguish mankind from the animal kingdom.

In Li's eyes, then, Malthusianism and Social Darwinism encouraged the development of the greedy and lazy nature of mankind, causing it to substitute amoral warfare for the development of its civilization, the true solution to any population problem. Actually, Li spent little effort disputing Malthus' promotion of population control. Instead, he focused most of his attention on this relationship between Malthusianism, Social Darwinism, and war.

In an article that appeared in 1920, Ch'en Tu-hsiu pointed out that the populations of other countries with much higher living standards were growing even faster than China's population. He cited this seeming paradox as proof

that the real cause of poverty in China was the unequal distribution of wealth and the lack of scientific and technical progress in production techniques. To him, the fact that European countries were devising ways to increase their populations one hundred years after Malthus' essay was proof enough that the increase in food production could outstrip the real (not theoretically possible) increase in population.

From Ch'en Tu-hsiu's point of view, Malthus' theory had an essentially negative character in that it sought to explain the reasons for poverty instead of the reasons for wealth. In this respect, he found the doctrines of Adam Smith to be far less objectionable. Because of its negative character, argued Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Malthusianism neglected the lack of scientific advances, refinement in production techniques, full utilization of the work force, equitable distribution of wealth, and adequate transportation systems as a cause of poverty.³

Hence, according to Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the real source of poverty in China was to be found in those cultural traits which inhibited scientific and technical progress, not in a large population:

With the present methods of increasing the supply of materials necessary for life and a social system that honours idleness, if there is no reform, then half of the present population can be eliminated and we will still be unable to avoid the phenomenon of poverty.⁴

He acknowledged that overpopulation could be a source of difficulties in the remote future, but to be concerned about it before making any attempt to reform society was, in his opinion, like worrying about how to prepare for the eventual destruction of the planet.

Although both Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Li Ta-chao demonstrated the same technological and materialist optimism common among Chinese Marxists, Ch'en Tu-hsiu was specifically concerned with refuting the notion that population control was the key to China's problems. His arguments also revealed a

much stronger emphasis on a Marxist class analysis. He saw Malthusianism as merely a biased theory used by capitalists to conceal the evils of an unequal distribution of wealth which was created by the system of private property. He placed great importance on the equal distribution of wealth, because he felt that the First World War was the result of industrial countries attempting to protect markets for an artificial surplus of goods. Hence, an increase in productivity without an increase in the labourer's purchasing power was worse than useless in alleviating human suffering. The crowning injustice of Malthusianism, in the eyes of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, was its special emphasis on limiting the birth rate of the poor. To him, it was the increase among the idle rich which posed a greater problem for society.⁵

In 1931, an author named Feng Ho-fa made the Marxist case against Malthusianism in which he debated the significance of the population figures that were increasingly becoming available by that time. Feng's appeal also demonstrated a greater tendency to incorporate nationalist themes with the traditional Marxist arguments against Malthusianism and population control.

According to Feng, the census figures concerning population density that were gathered by local officials could not be trusted because of the extensive corruption in all levels of the bureaucracy. In order to conceal the embezzlement of tax revenues, government officials, argued Feng, tended to underestimate the amount of land under cultivation in reports to higher authorities. He also pointed out the peasants' own inclination to conceal the actual amount of land under cultivation for fear of exploitation at the hands of these same officials, which even further compounded this problem. According to Feng, there were great inconsistencies in the figures of various government bureaus from year to year.⁶

Feng conceded that surveys of population density in representative areas which were conducted by private groups and universities tended to be more

consistent, but he still doubted their accuracy. To him, the areas surveyed were not truly representative of the entire country, and the researchers overlooked a variety of factors which influenced the reliability of their findings. One such factor, according to Feng, was the lack of popular acceptance of a national standard for the basic unit of land measurement, the Chinese mou.⁷ In the eyes of Feng, such weaknesses in government censuses and private surveys all contributed to the tendency of population experts to overestimate the population density on cultivated land.

Feng also challenged the notion that China's population was increasing as fast as calculated by some population experts at the time. One such expert was Ch'iao Ch'i-ming, a professor at Nanking University. According to a survey conducted by Ch'iao, China's population was increasing at a rate of 1.43 percent a year with a birth rate of 42.2 per thousand and a death rate of 27.9 per thousand. However, Feng claimed that the areas which Ch'iao surveyed were relatively free of catastrophes, both natural and human. Although he did not attempt to argue that China's population was decreasing, Feng declared that the rate of increase calculated by Ch'iao could not possibly be accurate for the aggregate population.⁸

Oddly enough, Feng seemed oblivious to the arguments of the proponents of population control, including Malthus himself, that the calamities to which he referred were directly related to the tendency of population to grow quickly under ideal conditions. It was as though Feng thought that the inability of a population to grow in spite of a high birth rate was a phenomenon inconsistent with Malthusian logic.

Although Feng's logic was not particularly strong on a number of points, he cited some figures produced by Ch'iao Ch'i-ming which severely weakened the theory that the extended family as idealized by Confucian tradition was responsible for the high birth rate and poverty among peasants. According

to Feng, Ch'iao's research indicated that the average Chinese family consisted of 5.7 members. Although this was somewhat higher than in Western countries, it was well within the range of the nuclear family. Ch'iao's figures also showed that the wealthier landlord families tended to be the largest. In Feng's view, this vindicated the Marxist position that the advocates of population control and the doctrine of Malthusianism itself merely used the poor as a scapegoat for the injustices of the social system. Instead of breeding more poverty by increasing in size, Feng argued that the average poor family was collapsing in size due to the destruction of the rural economy brought on by commercial capital and the greater concentration of landlord ownership.⁹

In focusing on what he felt were the real sources of China's problems which created the phenomenon of 'relative overpopulation', Feng's position was roughly consistent with that of Ch'en Tu-hsiu. Feng, however, devoted a great deal more attention to specific examples of peasant exploitation by landlords and usurers. He viewed imperialism and warlordism as great burdens for the Chinese peasantry as well. Instead of the opponents of a corrupt Confucian tradition which sanctioned the extended family, Feng portrayed the promoters of population control as apologists for the traditional exploitive social system as well as foreign imperialism.¹⁰

When Feng Ho-fa's critique of Malthusianism is compared with that of Li Ta-chao fourteen years earlier, the most noticeable change in the Marxist position was a greater utilization of nationalist sentiments against population control. One aspect of this was evidenced in the criticism directed at Malthusianism for its role in de-emphasizing the harmful effects of foreign imperialism on China. Li Ta-chao had viewed imperialism as an international force that was detrimental to all nations and did not dwell on its harmful presence in China in particular. Also, Feng felt that the promotion of population control obscured the issue of populating China's border regions, an issue of

great nationalist significance at the time. According to him, the system of private property as it existed in China not only represented economic exploitation in an extreme form, it also constituted a major barrier to the establishment of well populated and secure frontiers.¹¹

The incorporation of nationalist themes in the Marxist case against Malthusianism was entirely consistent with the development of Marxist doctrine as a whole after Lenin's theory on imperialism. To Marxists around the world, nationalism in exploited colonial countries became a progressive force that had to be distinguished from the nationalism of industrial countries which only served to numb the class consciousness of the proletariat. Hence, although the Marxists constituted a distinct source of opposition to population control, in later years they did not entirely neglect the nationalist resentment toward Malthusianism in their arguments. In terms of putting the promotion of population control on the defensive in the eyes of the public, the association of Malthusianism with the success of imperialism in China played a far more important role than the issue of class exploitation as envisioned by Marxists.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. Li Ta-chao, "Chan-cheng yü jen-k'ou wen-t'i" (War and the population problem), Chia-yin jih-k'an (Tiger daily), March 29, 1917, reprinted in Li Ta-chao hsuan-chi (Selected works of Li Ta-chao) (Peking, 1959), p. 83.
2. Ibid., p. 84.
3. Ch'en Tu-hsiu, "Ma-erh-sai-ssu jen-k'ou lun yü Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i" (Malthus' population theory and China's population problem), Hsin ch'ing-nien, vol. 7, no. 4 (April 1920), pp. 5, 11-12.
4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Ibid., pp. 8, 12-13.
6. Feng Ho-fa, "Chung-kuo nung-ts'un te jen-k'ou wen-t'i" (The population problem in Chinese peasant villages), Chung-hua nung-hsüeh-hui pao (The journal of the Chinese agricultural association), nos. 89-90 (June-July 1931), no. 89, pp. 34-35.
7. Feng attributed this lack of a nationally accepted standard of land measurement to the fact that China had not yet entered the period of industrial capitalism. Ibid., pp. 35-37.
8. Ibid., no. 90, pp. 71-74.
9. Ibid., no. 90, pp. 55-61.
10. Ibid., no. 90, pp. 61-62.
11. Ibid., no. 90, p. 65.

V. The Nationalist Response to Malthusianism

The bulk of the debate over Malthusianism as it unfolded in the popular press took place within the ranks of the nationalist believers in Social Darwinism. Most of the opponents of Malthusianism objected to population control for the same reasons that Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and others supported it. They perceived population control to be harmful to China's national interests and survival in a world of expanding nation-states. In denouncing Malthusianism, their arguments tended not to be of an academic nature. Their opinions were usually expressed in short articles that appeared in popularly circulated periodicals such as The Eastern Miscellany. Some of the arguments posed against Malthus' population theory had already been anticipated in his original essay, and one is tempted to conclude that many of these authors had only a vague understanding of Malthusianism without ever having read the original work.

Early in the May Fourth period, Yen Chih-chung, a graduate of the Medical Division of the Japanese Imperial University with a background in hereditary diseases, expressed the view that the size of China's population did not affect its quality.¹ To him, the tendency of a population to propagate beyond the number that can be supported by the environment was merely a biological procedure by which the survival of any species is guaranteed. Beyond this biological observation, Yen Chih-chung did not seem to perceive any social significance in the tendency of the population to outstrip food supplies. Like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, he viewed the ability of a race to propagate steadily as biological proof of its fitness. Like Li Ta-chao, he could not envision any limit to the capability of technical innovations to increase food production.²

Yen Chih-chung's main concern was the improvement of the quality of the Chinese people, and this, he felt, could not be achieved by a programme of population control. Probably due to the nature of his academic training, he

argued that the development of a eugenics policy could best remedy the qualitative deficiencies of the population. Although Yen Chih-chung did not detail the specific measures he desired to see implemented, he felt that the main thrust of such a policy should be to protect and encourage the good elements to multiply while decreasing the number of those who constituted burdens to society by somehow preventing their propagation. The almost exclusively biological emphasis of Yen Chih-chung's arguments was somewhat untypical of most of the nationalist opposition to population control. However, his views dramatically illustrated the importance that Social Darwinism often assumed in the debate over Malthusianism.

Perhaps the most influential opponent to population control was the uncontested leader of China's nationalist movement, Sun Yat-sen. His personal opposition to Malthusianism alone created many difficulties for the promoters of population control who were determined to reconcile their views with the nationalist cause in the eyes of the Chinese public.

Like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Sun could take little solace in the size of China's vast population while population trends around the world indicated faster rates of growth in Western countries and Japan. In his lecture on nationalism, Sun was quite explicit in viewing these population trends as a great threat to China's future as a nation:

Let us now compare the rates of increase among the populations around the world. In the last century, America has increased tenfold, England has increased threefold as has Japan, Russia (has increased) by four times, Germany by two and a half times, and France by one fourth. The numerous reasons for these increases are due to the yearly improvements in scientific advances, the development of medicine, and the establishment of health facilities. Hence, deaths have been decreased and births increased.

What relationship does this kind of speed in the increase of their populations have with China? When comparing their increase in numbers to China's population, I am quite horror-stricken! For example, one hundred years ago America's population was no more than nine million, and now it is over one hundred million. In another hundred years, at the same rate of increase, (the U.S.) will have a population of over a

billion. China often prides herself on having so many people that it would be difficult for anyone else to annihilate her. After the Yüan dynasty seized control of China, not only could not the Mongolian race annihilate the Chinese, but instead they were assimilated by the Chinese. . . . The Manchu race also failed to annihilate the Chinese. Instead they were assimilated by the Han race. . . . In the past, the reason why the Manchus could not conquer the Chinese race was because they numbered only one million and several hundred thousand and were too few when compared with the Chinese population. So naturally they were absorbed by the Chinese. Now if the Americans come to conquer China and after one hundred years there are only four Chinese to be mixed among ten Americans, then China will be assimilated by the Americans.

. . . (F)rom the time of Ch'ien Lung, it has been nearly two hundred years and (the population of China) is still four hundred million. (The population of China) was four hundred million one hundred years ago, and, naturally, it will be four hundred million another hundred years from now.³

Sun's views were strikingly similar to those of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao. He viewed population growth as proof of social progress and held the same Social Darwinist conception of the modern international order into which China had been thrust. However, Sun recognized Malthusianism as a doctrine which justified population control, and he condemned it as such.

Sun's impressions of population trends in the West were confined to the increase in aggregate numbers. He made no effort to study the birth rate trends and even wrongly assumed that the number of births in Western countries was increasing. Sun was also concerned with the individual cases of Western countries. Specifically, he was interested in their respective strength vis-a-vis their neighbours and the relationship of this with population trends. Naturally, the United States and Germany, two of the fastest growing countries, were prime examples of this relationship in the eyes of Sun.

He viewed France, on the other hand, as an example of national decadence resulting from inadequate population growth:

Although France's population is certainly not decreasing, the rate of increase is not nearly as great as the other countries. Moreover, France is an agricultural country that is prosperous and whose people are affluent and particular about pleasure. A hundred years ago there was a scholar named Malthus who . . . established the theory that 'the increase in population is

geometric while the increase in the production of necessities is arithmetic'. Because the French were so concerned with pleasure, (this theory) was quite fitting for their mentality. Thereupon, they welcomed Malthus' theory with great enthusiasm and advocated that men not assume the responsibility of a family and that women need not give birth to children. Their methods of decreasing the population not only included natural means but also artificial means. A century ago, France's population was larger than all the other (European) countries. However, because Malthus' theory was widely welcomed after being transmitted to France, all the people took measures to decrease the population. Therefore, the reasons that France today suffers from having too few people is entirely due to the poisonous effect of Malthus' theory. ... Now they have implemented a new government policy to encourage population growth and preserve their race.⁴

Sun quite clearly connected any form of artificial birth control with an immoral and selfish individualism which, in France, had run wild at the expense of national interests. Unlike Chinese liberals, Sun did not view individual self-interest as a positive force that could enhance a country's national strength. His views also contrasted quite markedly with those of the advocates of population control who attempted to link a high birth rate with a lack of moral commitment to the good of the nation.

The concern over the lack of population growth in certain European countries had provided Li Ta-chao with ammunition against Malthusianism as early as the First World War. By the mid-twenties, a great deal of attention was being directed to the population race in Europe. The number and nature of the articles in the popular Chinese press which dealt with this subject suggested that it must have been very difficult for Chinese to picture their nation outside of this worldwide struggle to achieve national strength by means of greater population growth.

One such article by a writer named Chou Kuang-chao depicted the predicament of modern France in Europe, and to the Chinese readership France's problems must have strongly resembled China's situation in Asia. According to Chou, France was once a powerful nation due to a high birth rate and a population that kept increasing in spite of famines and plagues. France's

huge proportion of the entire population of Europe was, in his eyes, the main reason for her domination of that continent at the time of Napoleon. Also, Chou felt that it was not coincidental that France's birth rate was the highest in Europe precisely at that period.⁵

However, since 1886 France's birth rate had been steadily decreasing. Chou cited figures showing that the number of births in 1922 was 760,000 compared with over a million in 1880 and that in 1911 deaths exceeded births by thirty thousand. Hence, Chou believed that France was in danger of becoming a 'small and insignificant nation'. He felt that the most significant source of danger for France was the rapid increase in the population of her rival nations, particularly Germany whose population had tripled in the years between 1846 and 1914.⁶ In discussing the population situation in Europe, Chou was pre-occupied with the effects on the relative military strength of various nations. He even used drawings of soldiers to represent the sizes of various countries' population in a diagram.⁷

Although Chou did not deny that the birth rates of all European countries were declining, he was primarily concerned with explaining why the decline in France's birth rate was particularly fast. Echoing the sentiments of Sun Yat-sen, Chou blamed what he imagined to be the excessive individualism that was running rampant in France. The French people were portrayed as so concerned with their individual self-interest that even the rich avoided the responsibility of raising a family so that they would not have to share the enjoyment of their wealth. According to Chou, the more mountainous farmland in France was largely populated by foreign immigrants because French peasants did not want to support more children than needed to take over the family holdings.

It was no accident that the population situation in France attracted the attention of many Chinese. Many striking parallels existed between the decline of France as the major power in Europe and the decline of China as the centre

of Asia. In the past, both countries had based their power on a rich and extensive agricultural economy, but became relatively stagnant in the last hundred years as their neighbours became industrialized nations with expanding populations.

In the eyes of many Chinese nationalists, Japan posed the same threat to China that Germany posed to France. Although China's numerical superiority over Japan was unquestioned, many nationalists perceived the much higher rate of increase in Japan's population as an immediate threat to China. In an article entitled "Overpopulation in Japan and their Policy toward China", the author, Tang I-k'ang, declared that the Japanese looked toward China like a "fine piece of meat" in considering the need for colonies to absorb their excess population.⁹ Later events were to strengthen this conviction among Chinese opponents of population control.

As the foreign threats to China's border regions increased, migration to the unsettled frontiers became a major nationalist issue in the debate over population control. In 1925, an agricultural expert named P'eng Chia-yüan emphasized both the potential of the border areas to absorb more people and their vulnerability to foreign encroachments to argue that migration was the fundamental solution to the poverty in the densely settled portions of China. According to P'eng, much of China's poverty resulted from ninety-six percent of the population being concentrated in the eighteen main provinces while only four percent inhabited two-thirds of China's total area. P'eng argued that such an unequal distribution of population was unprecedented for any country, and he attributed it to China's Confucian social customs and the Ch'ing government's historical neglect of the need to populate the border regions.¹⁰

P'eng was highly critical of those who held that these areas were 'deserts' unsuitable for agriculture and pointed out that one hundred years ago many people thought that all of western North America was one such vast 'desert'.

He felt that much of the border territories could either be irrigated or used for raising livestock, and that much of land already used for livestock, such as in Sinkiang, could be cultivated as farmland if Han peasants occupied such regions instead of the natives who were exclusively shepherds. Many of these areas, according to P'eng, had great industrial potential as well.¹¹

P'eng deemed it extremely important that China develop these border areas as soon as possible before any foreign power could preempt such efforts. Russia had already seized the mining rights in Outer Mongolia, and P'eng was alarmed that many of the people in Sinkiang used Russian currency as their medium of exchange. He was also very much concerned with the inroads that the English were making in Tibet.¹²

P'eng quite clearly viewed the development of the border areas as a major goal that would determine China's national survival and not merely as a means to solve overpopulation in the heart of China. He also felt that the source of the problem was a lack of will on the part of the Chinese: "I am not worried about the tiger(like) looks of strong neighbours, overpopulation in the interior, or the handicaps of livelihood, but am worried about the lack of determination to salvage these areas."¹³ Although P'eng did not comment on Malthusianism, his arguments contained an implicit hostility toward population control which was to be articulated by many other Chinese nationalists. To them, the promotion of population control was an example of precisely the same lack of determination among Chinese ~~what~~ was so caustically criticized by P'eng.

In 1927, a writer named Yang Hsiao-ch'un very effectively utilized the emotional strength of nationalism to express his opposition to population control. According to Yang, Malthusianism was only appropriate for a nonprogressive society. Echoing the arguments of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Yang declared that the population of Europe had more than doubled since the time of Malthus, and yet no one there claimed that people's lives were more miserable or that some

sort of birth control programme was necessary.¹⁴ Also like Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Yang expressed an impatience with people who would promote population control before making any attempt to reform society in order to increase production and equalize distribution.¹⁵ However, Yang did not mention private property as a source of the social evils that kept people mired in poverty.

To Yang, a large population was still the ultimate source of national strength. With a large population, he argued, a country could raise a powerful army, the people could shoulder a heavy tax burden, and overseas colonies could more easily be established. After making this case, he further argued that even if a well-populated country was conquered, there was always the hope of recovering its independence and its lost territories. Such would not be the case, Yang felt, if the population were too sparse.¹⁶

Yang also realized that the quality of a nation's people was important for national strength, but like Yen Chih-chung he felt that this was not related to the population question and that measures to improve the quality of the Chinese people need not include any population policy. In this respect, Yang's promotion of the study of eugenics as a means of improving the Chinese population most clearly demonstrated the influence of Social Darwinism.¹⁷

Yang's ability to tailor his appeal to the nationalist sentiments of a popular readership is worthy of attention, because in many ways it characterized the upper hand enjoyed by the nationalist opponents of population control in gaining public support for their position. After introducing the topic, Yang quoted several foreigners who felt that China was overpopulated. Among Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, Yang included some less renowned individuals who, while pointing out the population problem, demonstrated a cultural arrogance by painting a less than flattering picture of the Chinese people. Among these were a Roman Catholic priest who said that China actually needed a famine to reach a more reasonable ratio of land to population, a Japanese

scholar who declared that the Chinese had a poor people's mentality, and another person who commented that the Chinese were a lazy people accustomed to living on very little.¹⁸ This, no doubt, failed to give the readers a favourable disposition toward the Chinese promoters of population control whom he mentioned next.

Throughout Yang's article the resort to population control was equated with defeatism. One proposal that was often put forward by the opponents of population control was the development of industry so that China could trade manufactured goods for agricultural goods whose production was limited by the amount of arable land. To Yang, the suggestion that industry alone could not alleviate China's poverty was an admission of inferiority to Europe, and the promotion of population control was tantamount to writing off the possibility of China becoming a manufacturing nation.¹⁹ Yang associated population control with defeatism in the area of national defense as well, and poignantly criticized the advocates of population control for ignoring the need to resist foreign imperialism in all its facets as an important factor in the solution to China's difficulties.²⁰ Yang attributed the encroachment upon Chinese territory by the Soviet Union and Japan to the sparseness of the Chinese population in the border areas. With the populations of Japan and Russia rapidly growing and both countries demonstrating a keen interest in China's frontier regions, Yang argued that population control was diametrically opposed to the interests of Chinese territorial integrity.²¹

In opposing population control, Yang still supported certain kinds of social reform that he admitted would result in a lower birth rate. Like Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, Yang supported the nuclear family based on free marriage and opposed both polygamy and early marriage. However, he presented his proposals for social reform as direct measures to improve the quality of the Chinese people and strictly viewed their effect on population trends as incidental.²² To Yang,

the overt promotion of population control was so distasteful that such a distinction in motives was important.

In 1931, Fan Shih-jen, another foe of population control, focused on the same nationalist themes as Yang Hsiao-ch'un. Fan cited a number of reasons why the statistics on the population of China could not be trusted, and also argued that the possible annual rates of population growth that could be deduced from these figures, .13 percent to .6 percent, were still quite low when²³ compared with the world average of 1.2 percent. Fan, of course, viewed this as a dangerous trend for China's national survival. As for the argument that China's population had already reached a saturation point, Fan pointed out that Japan, a country with a population density far greater than China's, was increasing at 1.08 percent a year and was consequently threatening China's northeastern provinces. Fan attributed this to Japan's enjoyment of political stability, the absence of which, in his view, brought about the high death rate²⁴ in China.

According to Fan, the confusion among scholars as to the total area under cultivation in China indicated that there was great potential for the development of new agricultural lands, particularly in the border regions where a greater population was needed for reasons of national security anyway. He envisioned 'science' as the key to realizing this potential which he felt the advocates of population control ignored.²⁵

The most serious charge that Fan leveled against Malthusianism was that the imperialists used it as an 'amulet' to protect themselves from accepting responsibility for the harm they brought to China. Constructing an argument similar to that of Feng Ho-fa, Fan contended that imperialist encroachments destroyed the handicraft industries, disrupted the agrarian economy, and contributed to the general political disorder. As a result, large numbers of people who would otherwise live in the countryside or have productive roles

in China's 'old' cities drifted into the 'new' cities that were created by foreign imperialism. In these cities, Fan argued, they became a lawless and non-productive burden to the nation as a whole or even became a destructive force upon joining warlord armies.²⁶ To further tarnish the image of Malthusianism, Fan quoted a warlord who utilized overpopulation as a crude justification for the widespread killings that resulted from China's internal warfare.²⁷

Unlike most of the opponents of population control, Fan Shih-jen seemed to acknowledge the distinction between actual population growth and a high birth rate. He even echoed T'ao Meng-ho's belief that the combination of a high birth rate and a high death rate was the result and not the cause of China's social backwardness.²⁸ However, unlike T'ao, Fan did not believe that China would eventually depend on achieving a balance of a low birth rate and a low death rate once the social system was reformed. Fan believed that China should strive to achieve both a high birth rate and a low death rate.²⁹ He declared that history had amply demonstrated that population does not increase geometrically, otherwise mankind would have died from hunger long ago. According to him, Malthus had ignored the more hopeful possibility that increases in food production were the result of increases in the population and not the other way around.³⁰

In 1936, Hsiao Cheng, a contributor to the Eastern Miscellany and several major Chinese newspapers, became involved in a public debate with Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and others over the issue of population and agricultural productivity. Challenging the relationship that Ch'en Ch'ang-heng portrayed between low living standards and high population density, Hsiao pointed out that many sparsely populated countries such as Spain suffered greater degrees of poverty and backwardness than densely populated countries such as Great Britain.³¹

Hsiao's most basic objection to the promotion of population control, however, was its seemingly pessimistic nature. In stating the essential points

of disagreement, Hsiao attempted to recreate Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's arguments in their most negative nuance. According to Hsiao, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng believed that the productive capability of man was limited and that the supply of the essentials of life had already reached their highest limit. To Hsiao, the advocacy of population control implied a belief that agriculture could not be reformed and that land utilization had already reached its most concentrated form.³²

Hsiao was also annoyed that the promoters of population control implicitly assigned a secondary role to imperialism, foreign economic penetration, and China's own internal corruption as causes of the nation's social chaos. To him, this was tantamount to ignoring them altogether. In response to the argument of many of the Chinese believers in Malthusianism that efforts at social reform could not succeed without a limit to population growth, Hsiao ridiculed the notion that population control alone could solve China's difficulties.³³ If one ignored the importance of social and scientific progress in this way, he argued, then one would have to admit that the human race suffered from over-population the very moment it came into existence.³⁴

Although Hsiao's faith in the ability of human progress to accommodate an increasing population mirrored the technological optimism of Li Ta-chao, he did not utilize it as an appeal for internationalism. Hsiao, no doubt, did not envision himself a Marxist when he declared that the pessimistic doctrine of Malthusianism was a form of materialism which he could not accept. He, like most of the opponents of population control, was very much preoccupied with the population question as a nationalist issue. Hsiao expressed agreement with a fellow opponent of Malthusianism that the Chinese promoters of population control implicitly belittled their own race. To Hsiao, the native inhabitants of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand were practicing Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's population policy as they were gradually heading for extinction

in the struggle to survive.³⁵

The distinction between the nationalist opposition to population control and that of their Marxist contemporaries was by no means absolute. Both voiced some of the same objections to Malthusianism. Since Lenin's theory of imperialism in underdeveloped countries had gained popularity among many of the nationalists in colonial countries around the world including China's Sun Yat-sen, Marxists could easily harness the nationalist resentment toward imperialist exploitation to denounce the validity of Malthusianism as an explanation for China's woes. However, class analysis was distinctly absent in the arguments of the nationalists who were determined to debunk Malthusianism. In this respect, it was ironic that among the Marxists Li Ta-chao stood apart most distinctly from the nationalist foes of Malthusianism. Although Li, like the nationalists, did not focus attention on a class analysis of the population issue, he explicitly attacked nationalism based on Social Darwinism as one of the evils that, in his eyes, developed from the doctrine of Malthusianism.

The nationalist opponents of population control of the May Fourth period continued to voice the same apprehensions as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao had earlier. In addition to their loyalty to the national entity, they expressed a belief in Social Darwinism as the natural force that determined the fate of individual countries in a world of competing nation-states. Like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, they felt that population growth was a barometer of both social progress and the fitness of the race to survive. In their eyes, population control was as harmful to a nation's interests as unilateral military disarmament. The growing threats to China's border regions in the late twenties confirmed fears concerning the expanding populations of other countries. To most nationalists opposed to Malthusianism, the populating of the border regions was not merely a solution to overpopulation in the interior. They viewed it as an immediate

goal vital to China's national security, and any programme of population control, in their opinion, would retard its realization.

Although both the opponents and proponents of population control agreed on many specific measures needed to strengthen China, such as educational and agrarian reform, this was overshadowed by the profound disagreement over the cause and effect relationship of China's various difficulties. According to the enemies of Malthusianism, both Marxist and nationalist, scientific and social progress would end any need to limit population growth. Because the supporters of Malthusianism viewed overpopulation as the basic problem that was at the root of all others, the foes of population control declared that their dedication to reforming China was superficial and ingenuine. Some, like Yang Hsiao-ch'un, even denounced Malthusianism as a defeatist ideology of self-doubt.

The individualism that the Chinese liberals tried to portray as a complementary ingredient to national strength was rejected by the nationalist opponents of population control as precisely the opposite. Both Sun Yat-sen and Chou Kuang-chao cited the French experience in Europe as an example of individualism's tendency to subvert national interests. Yang Hsiao-ch'un also declared that individualism was self-defeating in the end, because the individual depended on a strong nation to avoid the miseries of foreign domination.³⁶ Malthusianism's nationalist foes imagined the harmful effects of individualism to be two-fold. In their eyes, it caused people to avoid raising the children needed to secure the nation's future in the world, and it encouraged a nation's people to become morally decadent in their own behaviour as they pursued sexual gratification for its own sake.

Although many May Fourth nationalists who desired to reform China into a progressive nation found Malthusianism's seemingly negative nature a powerful motive to oppose it, their arguments often fell quite short of refuting

the logic behind Malthus' essay on population growth. For example, both Marxists and nationalists cited the history of actual population growth in the world as proof that population does not increase geometrically while food production increases arithmetically. However, Malthus had originally stated that population tends to increase geometrically and that such increases are restricted to unusual circumstances for limited periods of time such as in North America after the initial period of colonization. According to Malthus, the failure of actual increases to reach geometric levels for a sustained period was simply indicative of the natural forces that limited population growth taking effect. In attacking Malthusianism as a doctrine which threatened to diminish China's population, most of the opponents of population control never even acknowledged the distinction between the birth rate and the actual rate of population increase which was pointed out time and again by people such as Ch'en Ch'ang-heng in discussing the population trends in Western countries.

In their use of statistics, the Chinese foes of Malthusianism selectively utilized the available figures to suit their arguments. Sometimes their use of statistics was nothing short of sloppy. Fan Shih-jen, for example, made the following remark in his article:

These figures represent the (population) density of farmland, not all land put together. Naturally, they are higher than the (population) density calculated for the aggregate amount of land (in China). But the researchers did not include the (population) density of the cities. These two factors should balance one another.³⁷

In another instance, Hsiao Cheng admitted that while arguing that the population density of several other countries was much higher than China's, he had confused square miles with square kilometers. Nonetheless, in Hsiao's opinion the indefinite potential for progress to bring about production increases left his basic argument intact despite such an error.³⁸ To understand the defensiveness on the part of the supporters of Malthusianism in China in spite

of such errors on the part of their opposition, it is important to realize that the self-confident and progressive tone of such arguments more than compensated for their logical inadequacies in the eyes of the nationalist Chinese public.

Notes to Chapter V

1. Hashikawa, Chugoku bunkakai jimbutsu sōran, p.
2. Yen Chih-chung, "Shū yao to chih yao hao" (The quantity must be great, the quality must be good), Hsin ch'ing-nien, vol. 7, no. 4 (April 1920), pp. 2, 5, 10.
3. Sun Yat-sen, San min chu-i (The three people's principles) (1924; rpt. Taipei: Wen-hua t'u-shu kung-szu, 1974), pp. 9-10.
4. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
5. Chou Kuang-chao, "Fa-lan-hsi jen-k'ou wen-t'i chih hsien-tsai yü chiang-lai" (The present and future of the French population problem), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 21, no. 11 (June 10, 1924), pp. 35, 46.
6. Ibid., p. 45.
7. Ibid., p. 44.
8. Ibid., p. 40.
9. Tang I-k'ang, "Jih-pen jen-k'ou kuo-ch'eng yü tui Hua cheng-ts'e", Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 21, no. 15 (August 28, 1924), p. 157.
10. P'eng Chia-yüan, "Chung-kuo pien-ti chih hsien-k'uang yü i-min" (Migration and the present situation of China's border territories), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 22, no. 6 (March 25, 1925), pp. 40-41.
11. Ibid., p. 43.
12. Ibid., p. 44.
13. Ibid., p. 45.
14. Yang, "Tui-yü shih-lun 'Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i' te ta-pien", pp. 14-15.
15. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
16. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
17. Ibid., p. 30.
18. Ibid., pp. 9-12.
19. Ibid., pp. 14-15, 23.
20. Ibid., p. 25.
21. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
22. Ibid., pp. 27-28.
23. Fan referred to estimates made by Ch'en Ch'ang-heng. Fan Shih-jen, "Tsui-chin erh-shih nien-lai Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i chih yen-chiu" (The research on the Chinese population problem in the last twenty years), Kuang-ming chih lu (The road of sincerity), vol. 1, no. 7/8 (June 16, 1931), p. 11.
24. Ibid., pp. 12-13, 17.
25. Ibid., pp. 28, 38.
26. Ibid., pp. 32-33, 37.
27. Ibid., p. 22.
28. Ibid., pp. 13, 37.
29. Ibid., p. 39.
30. Ibid., p. 37.
31. Hsiao Cheng, "Chung-kuo t'u-ti yü jen-k'ou wen-t'i tsai chien-t'ao" (Another review of the Chinese land and population problem), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 33, no. 21 (January 1936), reprinted in Chung-kuo li-tai jen-k'ou wen-t'i lun-chi (Collected essays on China's historical population problem) (Hong Kong, 1965), p. 162.
32. Ibid., pp. 168-169.
33. Ibid., pp. 167-168.
34. Ibid., p. 165.
35. Ibid., pp. 162-163.
36. Yang, "Tui-yü shih-lun 'Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i' te ta-pien", pp. 17-18.
37. Fan, "Tsui-chin erh-shih nien-lai Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i chih yen-chiu", p. 29.

38. Hsiao, "Chung-kuo t'u-ti yü jen-k'ou wen-t'i tsai chien-t'ao", pp. 165-166.

VI. The Attempt to Reconcile Population Control with Nationalism: Malthusianism on the Defensive in the Late Twenties and Thirties

In the twenties, many of the supporters of population control such as Ch'en Ch'ang-heng were engaged in an effort to combine their own qualified version of individualism and liberalism with nationalist goals. Others, like Lo Hung-shun, denied the involvement of individualism with Malthusianism altogether and portrayed giving birth to fewer children as a national duty. To them, having large families was an example of individual selfishness at the expense of the nation. As demonstrated by the articles authored by the opponents of population control, both of these positions were becoming harder to maintain in the face of events which tended to confirm Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's original appraisal of the significance of population growth. More significantly, the advocates of population control demonstrated a growing defensiveness as they made greater efforts to prove that their theories were neither defeatist nor in conflict with China's national interests.

The difficulties of those who defended population control were not confined to answering the charges of their antagonists. Quite a few of the original arguments for population control became obsolete as a result of the research on population trends in China by demographers within the ranks of those who advocated some form of programme to limit population growth. This was particularly crippling to the efforts to popularize population control, because many of these arguments were designed to link attempts to lower the birth rate with other causes that were popular among the May Fourth generation of Chinese nationalists.

One such demographic expert was Yale-educated Ch'iao Ch'i-ming. Ch'iao was determined to lay to rest the notion that China's population was shrinking. Based upon changes between 1924 and 1925 in various areas of

four provinces that were surveyed by him, Ch'iao calculated an annual rate of increase of 1.43 percent.¹ Seven years later in 1935, Ch'iao used a number of surveys of rural villages throughout China conducted by himself and several other researchers between 1929 and 1931 to calculate an annual rate of increase of 1.07 percent for China's agrarian population.² However, Ch'iao viewed the high birth rate and high death rate as more significant than the actual rate of growth. Like most of the supporters of population control, Ch'iao believed that they were mutually supportive and that the various disasters that plagued China were indirect manifestations of the population problem.

While conducting this research, Ch'iao found early marriages to be a widespread phenomenon in China, but his studies indicated that the extended family was not nearly as common in China as many had thought. The average size of the families in most of the areas surveyed was somewhat greater than five.³ Nonetheless, Ch'iao still seemed somewhat reluctant to rule out the extended family as one of the contributing factors to China's high birth rate. He stated that the size of the average family in China was still larger than its American counterpart and that smaller Chinese families were the result of only recent trends. Even with these qualifications, however, the nuclear family was clearly the predominant form of family organization throughout China, and it was impossible for Ch'iao to portray population control simply in terms of discouraging the Confucian ideal of the extended family.

Ch'iao Ch'i-ming also expressed the need to encourage migration into barren areas, to develop industry, and to reform agriculture. Unlike the opponents of population control, he viewed these goals as solutions to the population problem. Moreover, he characterized them as measures which dealt only with the 'symptoms' of the basic problem, overpopulation, over

the short run. The loss of Manchuria to Japan also gave him doubts about the efficacy of a large-scale colonization policy. The 'basic' solution, in his eyes, involved lowering the birth rate by promoting late marriages and birth control. Like the earlier proponents of population control, Ch'iao felt that this, more than anything else, would contribute to a better environment for individual development and result in a population of a higher quality.⁴

In 1937, Ch'iao authored a lengthy book entitled China's Population and Food Problems in which he discussed in greater detail the potential for a variety of reforms in agrarian technology and land tenure to increase China's food output. Ostensibly, Ch'iao seemed to concentrate a great deal more attention on what the foes of Malthusianism termed 'positive' measures to increase production than the 'passive' measures to control population growth.

Ch'iao carefully calculated the nutritional needs of each province by determining the minimum number of calories required by various age groups among both sexes and the percentage of the aggregate population that they constituted. He then calculated the total number of calories in all the major crops harvested in the various provinces to determine the deficiency or surplus of food output in each province. According to Ch'iao, only three provinces in China enjoyed a surplus in food production, and the country as a whole produced seven percent less than the minimum amount of calories required by its population. This meant that China lacked food for roughly thirty-three million people. To achieve self-sufficiency, Ch'iao estimated that China needed to harvest at least seventy percent of her crop potential at a time when sixty-five percent was considered a very remarkable achievement.⁵

In spite of this, however, Ch'iao believed that China was in easy reach of self-sufficiency, which he viewed as crucial for national survival in the event of war. In his opinion, many of the nation's economic problems arose

from the historical tendency of Chinese governments to adopt inappropriate policies toward agriculture which lacked effective coordination.⁶ As an example of this, he cited government price controls on rice and other grains in the cities while allowing foreign imports. Because no cheap rail transportation existed, Ch'iao argued that there was little economic incentive for peasants in the interior to produce for the market when grain could be imported from North America, which was undergoing an agricultural depression, at a fraction of the cost. And yet, he noted, the government was spending a great deal on building roads for trucks and automobiles. Ch'iao also cited examples of local governments preventing internal free trade and the movement of grain to other counties in need.⁷ In his eyes, it was pointless for the KMT government to attempt to revive morality through the New Life Movement while neglecting the problems that vexed China's agrarian economy.⁸

By giving true encouragement to the opening of new territories alone, Ch'iao believed that China could increase agricultural productivity by ten percent and achieve self-sufficiency.⁹ Further increases were possible, according to him, if Chinese peasants more carefully selected the most appropriate crop for their area, used better seeds and fertilizer, and employed a modicum of mechanization.¹⁰ Ch'iao also pointed out the waste of 2.1 percent of China's arable land which was used for opium and grave sites.¹¹ Ch'iao attempted to present some concrete figures on how much of an increase in production could be expected from implementing these measures. In discussing the use of better seed, for instance, he cited experiments by agricultural experts which indicated that wet rice production could be increased thirty-four to forty-six percent and the production of wheat by twenty percent or more. Ch'iao declared that China was fully capable of achieving Sun Yat-sen's goal of a population of eight hundred million if technological improvements were implemented and waste eliminated. Naturally, he felt that much

of this progress could take place only if the government pursued efforts to return ownership of farmland to the cultivator and to encourage the formation of agricultural cooperatives. It was the government's national responsibility, in Ch'iao's view, to make capital available to these cooperatives and to contribute to an economic environment that provided incentives for peasants to implement these improvements.¹²

Although by 1937 Ch'iao had become a great deal more articulate in outlining the 'positive' measures which could increase China's agricultural production, he did not view the potential for progress as unlimited at a steady pace. In the case of fertilizers, for instance, he noted that their extended use could cause soil acidity and that the greatest increases in yields would occur upon their initial application. In spite of the relatively few pages devoted to population control at the end of the book, Ch'iao still portrayed it as the 'fundamental' solution to the food problem in China. Like the early promoters of Malthusianism in China, Ch'iao declared that a nation's strength was not related to yearly increases in population. He viewed the quality of a nation's people as much more crucial, and population control was the means of achieving this end. To further defend a policy of population control in terms of Social Darwinism, Ch'iao, like Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, cited Herbert Spencer's theory on the declining birth rate among higher and more successful orders of biological species and social groups.¹³

Ch'iao's affirmation of Sun Yat-sen's goal of doubling the Chinese population and the relatively little attention he devoted to population control even though he portrayed it as the fundamental solution to China's difficulties suggested that he was aware of a nationalist sentiment among the Chinese public that was hostile to population control. Concomitantly, his concentration on the 'positive' methods of increasing production while avoiding an open rejection of Sun's views on population growth was likely designed to present

an optimistic plan of action that would counteract any negative impressions of his call for population control.

Although a supporter of population control himself, Ch'en Cheng-mo, a Chicago-educated student of T'ao Meng-ho who taught at the philosophy department of Amoy University, felt compelled to challenge some of the assumptions of the earlier supporters of population control.¹⁴ According to him, various studies by Chinese and Western sociologists and economists indicated that in China the relationship between family size and social status was the opposite of that in Western countries. In applying Herbert Spencer's theory to China, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and others simply assumed that the Western pattern was ubiquitous because of the close relationship that they envisioned between a low birth rate and individual development. However, Ch'en Cheng-mo noted that a study by a Westerner named Griffings, for instance, indicated that female graduates of Nanking University tended to have more children than peasant women. According to Ch'en Cheng-mo, academicians in China tended to have the largest families, followed by business managers and entrepreneurs, self-employed professionals, and public servants. He also noted that even overseas Chinese, who were exposed to what Ch'en Ch'ang-heng viewed as the progressive culture of the West, tended to have very large families.¹⁵

Hence, contrary to earlier expectations, those successful and productive members of society who were supposed to be the product of a reduced birth rate seemed to be more committed to the Confucian ideal of an extensive posterity than the ignorant and poverty-stricken masses. If Herbert Spencer's theory that those who used their minds had a lower birth rate were true, Ch'en Cheng-mo rather facetiously added, then those in China who were supposed to utilize their intelligence did not actually do so.

In spite of this, Ch'en Cheng-mo still maintained that overpopulation was the cause of backward production methods and low living standards which

contributed to the inadequacies of the Chinese people. Westerners, he observed, were more skilled and of a higher physical calibre than Chinese, and this, in turn, contributed to the higher living standards of the West. Far from being concerned about China losing her advantage in numbers, he expressed alarm that a mere handful of Japanese soldiers could routinely rout Chinese troops that were already vastly superior in numbers. To Ch'en Cheng-mo, it was futile to be concerned about inadequate population growth while the quality of the Chinese people remained so low.¹⁶

In advocating population control, Ch'en Cheng-mo did not single out the poor for causing China's difficulties. He also criticized the affluent members of Chinese society for their wasteful extravagance and did not ignore their contribution to the population problem.¹⁷ He also hastened to demonstrate that he did not take foreign imperialism lightly as a cause of China's woes. In addition to hurting the economy, Ch'en Cheng-mo declared that imperialism brought about the large ratio of males to females in China's population. According to him, the ratio of male births increased as people shifted to foodstuffs of a lower quality.¹⁸ Clearly, Ch'en Cheng-mo did not want his fellow Chinese to interpret his position on the population question as hostile toward the poor or as tolerant of imperialism.

In 1932, Weng Wen-hao, an expert in soil science and geography who later became head of the Social Science Research Centre at the Peking Research Institute, questioned the optimism of the opponents of Malthusianism concerning the potential of the border regions to absorb any significant increase in population.¹⁹ While acknowledging that the bulk of China's population was located on less than twenty percent of the land, Weng criticized the popular notion that all land was the same and only required new immigrants to develop it.²⁰

However, Weng recognized the strategic need to settle China's border

regions. He examined the the geographical characteristics of the various areas of China's vast unpopulated territories, and made an appraisal of each area's potential for agricultural development within the scope of existing technology. From this, he roughly calculated the number of people that could be absorbed in each region.

According to Weng, all of the northwestern regions could only accommodate eight million more people because of the scarcity of rainfall, high altitude, and poor soil. He felt that the areas in north central China that had some agricultural potential were merely isolated valleys with a very limited capacity to absorb new immigrants. In Weng's opinion, the northeast contained the richest farmland of all the frontier regions. Although the northeast was long closed to settlement by order of the Manchu rulers, Weng pointed out that the population there had already increased from fifteen million to thirty million since the overthrow of the Ch'ing dynasty. The population density there was still only eighty persons per square mile, but Weng noted that most of the immigrants were flowing into certain fertile valleys where the population density had already reached three hundred per square mile. In his opinion, the population density of these areas could increase by two hundred people per square mile without becoming a serious problem on the scale of what existed in the old agricultural regions of China. Hence, he estimated that the northeast could absorb twenty million more people. Although many of the opponents of population control based their hopes for densely populating the frontier regions on future technological progress, Weng declared that goals such as moving ninety million Chinese into the northeast were pitifully unrealistic.²¹

A few years earlier, Cornell-educated Tung Shih-chin expressed some different reasons why the border regions could not become densely populated.²² Like the opponents of population control, Tung was optimistic about the

agricultural potential of the sparsely populated border regions. However, according to Tung it was important that any new agricultural areas be developed without allowing the population density to reach the same level as that of the interior. Tung wanted to see a form of planned agriculture in the border regions with North American style farms of several thousand mou on which capital intensive methods could be utilized. In his view, there would be no agricultural surplus from the border regions if virgin territories were gradually settled by traditional small scale producers who would only increase in numbers until their needs passed the capacity of the new lands to produce.²³ Tung did not want to see population growth in the frontier areas preclude the possibility of developing a capital intensive form of agriculture which would enable cultivators to achieve high per capita yields that were already impossible for peasants in China's well settled regions. Although optimistic that China was far from reaching her production potential, Tung believed in the principle of diminishing returns on land, and, like Ku Meng-yü, realized that labour intensive methods and capital intensive methods tended to be mutually exclusive. Hence, he viewed overpopulation as the basic cause of China's troubles and population control as a requisite for planned economic progress.²⁴

Tung also argued that industrial growth could not compensate for a lack of self-sufficiency in agriculture. He noted that the first industrial powers were able to trade manufactured goods for farm products on favourable terms because of the relative scarcity of such commodities in a world that was overwhelmingly agrarian. However, according to Tung this trade advantage was progressively diminishing as industry was becoming more widespread even among agrarian countries. Tung thought that self-sufficiency in food would eventually become the most important element of a nation's strength in the not too distant future. He even declared that imperialism was a policy

of desperation on the part of the early industrial countries whose populations had expanded far beyond the bounds of their agricultural production. Because countries with agricultural surpluses were going to have an industrial work-force of their own to support, Tung pictured a bleak future for countries like Great Britain. With this in mind, he thought it foolish to think that China could avoid the need for population control by becoming an industrial nation.²⁵

As a holder of an M.A. degree from the University of California and a member of both the Chinese Sociological Society and the Chinese Statistical Society, Yen Hsin-che was another proponent of population control whose background matched that of most Chinese liberal intellectuals.²⁶ In 1934, he attempted to rebut many of the Marxist and nationalist challenges to Malthusianism. Although his arguments were often roughly similar to those of his Chinese colleagues, Yen Hsin-che attempted to disassociate himself from many of the Western scholars who promoted population control as an appropriate policy for China.

Yen Hsin-che argued that a comparison of Chinese population density with that of isolated European countries was meaningless because eighty percent of China's people lived in rural villages while the countries most often cited by the opponents of Malthusianism were predominantly industrial or commercial nations.²⁷ This kind of reasoning must have seemed somewhat defeatist to the popular readership because he implicitly assumed that China could not become an industrial nation without explaining why industrial growth could not be expected to ameliorate population pressure as had Tung Shih-chin.

Citing research by Ch'iao Ch'i-ming and another scholar, Li Ching-han, Yen Hsin-che acknowledged that the extended family was nonexistent as a common phenomenon in rural China. However, like many others who argued for population control, he refused to dismiss this despised symbol of China's Confucian tradition as a cause of the high birth rate. According to him, the

widespread existence of the nuclear family throughout rural China merely reflected the inability of most households to achieve the economic position needed to support more than a few members. In addition, he noted that wealthy families tended to be a great deal larger. Hence, in Yen Hsin-che's view, the large extended family remained as an ideal to most Chinese peasants, and as such it still contributed to the high birth rate.²⁸

Yen Hsin-che criticized Westerners who, while arguing for population control, tended to exaggerate the backwardness of Chinese society. Although he opposed early marriages as a harmful custom which increased the birth rate and lowered the quality of the population, he viewed as slanderous the claims of some Westerners that marriage at the age of twelve or fourteen was common. He indicated that it was necessary to defend China from foreign insults in the case of such excessive claims. Although he was probably genuinely concerned with the inaccuracies of such claims, Yen Hsin-che, no doubt, also realized that the tactless arguments for population control by many Westerners were offensive to the national pride of the Chinese public and that this hampered the efforts of Chinese scholars to demonstrate that population control was not a defeatist admission of inferiority to the West.²⁹

In 1936, Liu Jan-chang seemed to take the offensive in attacking the opponents of population control by comparing the policy of promoting more births to develop national strength with the efforts of the legendary foolish farmer to speed the growth of his seedlings by pulling them up. In making this case, he repeated the arguments of other supporters of population control on the rapid cycle of births and deaths and its harmful effects on the quality of the people. Liu also called for Chinese to realize that birth control and eugenics were two interdependent measures needed to raise the quality of the nation's population.³⁰ Obviously, Social Darwinism was still a powerful force in the debate over Malthusianism.

However, in discounting migration to the border regions as a real solution to the population problem, Liu's tone became a great deal more defensive. Although Manchuria could absorb at least twenty million more Chinese, Liu questioned China's ability to retake this territory from Japan. Population increases, Liu argued, would eat away at any increases in cultivated land anyway. Typical of many of the advocates of population control, Liu lamely denied that he was opposed to the settlement of the border regions or scientific progress in expressing agreement with Malthus' population theory.³¹

In the early stages of the debate over Malthusianism, the support of population control by no means entailed approval of artificial contraception. Moreover, some promoters of population control such as Ch'en Ch'ang-heng even felt it necessary to vehemently denounce artificial birth control in order to allay public apprehension of their views. By the thirties it became increasingly impractical for scholars to call for a national programme of population control without condoning artificial contraception. While most of these scholars simply ceased to condemn artificial birth control, Ch'en Ta, a sociologist who graduated from the University of Washington, spelled out the reasons why any meaningful efforts to control population growth had to include artificial contraception.³²

Ch'en Ta acknowledged the study of Herbert Lamson and other evidence which indicated that the relationship between family size and social status in China was the opposite of that in the West. To him, there was no doubt that wealthy Chinese families tended to be larger than poor ones. Although Ch'en Ta did not deny that there were many social reasons for a low birth rate among affluent families in the West such as late marriages and greater social mobility for women, he argued that the practice of artificial birth control was the most basic missing ingredient which accounted for the opposite pattern in China:³³

The birth rate in our country seems to be in a corresponding ratio with wealth and social prestige. The reason is this: our society has yet to use birth control methods. Whatever birth ratio that exists represents the natural high productivity of the people. The intellectual classes are relatively prosperous and have better health standards. Hence, their birth rate is rather high.³⁴

As a supporter of population control, Ch'en Ta, therefore, advocated the practice of artificial birth control as the means necessary to create a better social environment for individual development and social mobility.³⁵

Since the various works on population control by Ch'en Ch'ang-heng stretched from the time of the May Fourth Incident through the thirties, an examination of his later appeals for population control can best illustrate the areas in which Malthusianism became particularly vulnerable to critical popular opinion. Also, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng demonstrated a keen awareness of the need to tailor Malthusianism to the tastes of a nationalist public which was lacking in some of his colleagues. This adds to his works' value as a barometer of popular attitudes toward population control.

One of the most noticeable changes in Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's position was the acceptance of artificial birth control. As early as 1927, he declared that selecting an appropriate means of birth control was the joint responsibility of the individual and his or her doctor.³⁶ This shift in position, however, was due to the unanticipated discovery that the number of extended families in China was insignificant and not to any sudden popularity of artificial contraception. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng could no longer depict the destruction of the tyranny of the clan and the establishment of the nuclear family as means of population control. His assumption that a lower birth rate would coincide with a greater sense of individual incentive, which he attributed to nuclear families, was irreparably shattered when demographic research established that the nuclear family was already the norm throughout China.

In his book, On the Population of China, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng did not deal

at length with the issue of migration to the border regions. In his view, the settlement of the border regions was dependent on efforts to improve the quality of the Chinese people by controlling population growth. However, in his later works he devoted a great deal more attention to the need to populate the border regions and almost treated it as an equal of the population issue. Like many of the opponents of population control, he noted that ninety-three percent of the population lived in the eighteen main provinces and that emigration to the frontier regions would both ease population pressure in China and help the nation preserve its territorial integrity.³⁷ After Japan had seized Manchuria, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng strongly stressed the need for rousing the nationalist ~~with~~ ^{of} all Chinese in order to recover what he viewed as the most promising of China's border regions.³⁸ He also listed in detail the specific measures that the government could implement in order to give the needed support to those willing to pioneer new regions. These included the granting of government loans and tax exemptions, and the construction of water projects and new schools.

This change in Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's appeal was more of emphasis than of substance. Like Ch'iao Ch'i-ming, he still believed that population control was the fundamental solution to China's difficulties. He expressed some skepticism that any large scale emigration was possible and cited the study of Weng Wen-hao to argue that the development of China's frontiers could only slightly improve China's population predicament.³⁹ More significantly, in spite of the fact that Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, himself, had mentioned the uneven distribution of China's population in arguing for emigration to the frontier regions, he chided the opponents of population control for treating the concentration of people in the most fertile areas of China as though it were a coincidence or the result of some oversight on the part of the government.⁴⁰ As foreign encroachments increasingly became a paramount issue of national

significance, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng probably had felt it necessary explicitly to promote the development of the frontier regions in order to discourage any popular notion that the support of population control implied capitulation to foreign aggression.

However, it was Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's nervous attempts to reconcile his views with Sun Yat-sen's position on population growth that most clearly illustrated the difficulty involved in proving that there was no fundamental contradiction between population control and Chinese nationalism. In 1932, seven years after Sun's death, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng claimed that Sun's fear of displacement by the growing populations of foreign countries only applied to the remote future. According to him, the foreign encroachments that plagued China at the time were not the result of population pressures in the imperialist nations. Rather, he viewed them as attempts to establish hegemony for its own sake.⁴¹ Obviously, he wanted to discredit the belief that China was losing its territories because its population was not growing as fast as other nations' without openly rejecting Sun's views. He also extensively quoted Sun on the need to develop the quality of the Chinese people in order to increase national strength, and incorporated this with his own proposals for population control. As in his early works, Ch'en Ch'ang-heng portrayed population control as the fundamental means of achieving the goal of a more enlightened and healthier Chinese people.⁴²

Although he referred to the projected growth of various nations over a period of one hundred years, Sun Yat-sen never implied that the threat posed by their expanding population was not of immediate significance. In his article attacking population control, Fan Shih-jen had a comparatively easy task in demonstrating that Sun was indeed concerned about the lack of population growth in China and its immediate implications.⁴³ Ch'en Ch'ang-heng's efforts to reinterpret Sun's words were performed out of desperation and

could not have been very successful.

The research indicating that professional and middle class families tended to have more children than peasant families also discredited T'ao Meng-ho's theory that social reform and rising living standards alone were capable of decreasing the birth rate. As a result, T'ao expressed agreement with John Maynard Keynes that Malthus had revealed a dangerous demon to the day-dreamers of the scientific revolution in the eighteenth century.⁴⁴ To T'ao, overpopulation was no longer the manifestation of a more fundamental ailment, but a serious problem in its own right.

T'ao, unlike most of his colleagues, portrayed population growth as an international problem. He felt that the velocity of scientific progress and the development of new lands which characterized the industrial revolution was a unique phenomenon that could not continue indefinitely. In the same manner, he argued that the rapid growth of the world's population was also subject to the inevitable limitation of land. According to T'ao, most of the earth's surface was unsuitable for agriculture and most of the world's population was confined to the few areas where adverse conditions did not prevail. T'ao felt that the population density of any individual nation-state was of no significance in estimating the agricultural potential of another country. Responding to those who compared the population density of England or Holland with that of China, T'ao stated that Europe as a whole, with its 175, 000, 000 people, was a more meaningful object of comparison.⁴⁵

In spite of his concern over the world population situation, T'ao Meng-ho was still reticent about the need for a programme of population control in China. T'ao noted that the 'white nations' were responding to the future threat of a population crisis by seizing as colonies all the territories of the world that were not yet densely populated. He also underscored Japan's population's direct threat to China by rhetorically asking, "Aside from trading manufactured

goods for food, has not Japan, who has already expressed concern over over-population, also used other methods and looked toward other places to develop the new farmland she needs?"⁴⁶ Hence, T'ao sensed the same kind of international struggle over the world's resources as envisioned by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Sun Yat-sen. He found it difficult to call for population control in China while the nation was losing its territories to other nations bent on solving their population problems by means of aggression. In making a very grave assessment of the population problem, T'ao seemed uncertain that any real solution existed. His dilemma demonstrated how nationalist considerations based on Social Darwinism created difficulties for even a believer in Malthusianism to call for population control.

In 1930, four years after his article appeared in The Eastern Miscellany, Hsü Shih-lien authored a fairly lengthy book dealing with the population situation in China. Strangely enough, Hsü began to devote more attention to the role of the extended family as a cause of China's high birth rate at a time when his colleagues were discovering that the nuclear family was already the norm. Hsü attempted to contrast the traditional tyranny of the clan with the freedoms of a liberal society in which each individual had the 'sacred right' of choice concerning parenthood.⁴⁷ Naturally, this argument was already becoming obsolete.

Hsü was primarily concerned with attracting a nationalist following for population control. In attempting to do so, Hsü frankly admitted that Chinese nationalism and support of population control seemed to constitute two mutually exclusive sentiments:

As far as the Chinese population problem is concerned, two general views prevail. The first promotes increasing the Chinese population in order to resist the encroachments of strong population pressures (abroad). The second promotes birth control as a fundamental solution to the various social and economic maladies that occur as the result of population pressures within the country.⁴⁸

Hsü even referred to the two groups which held these views as the 'school of overpopulationism' and the 'school of nationalism'. However, Hsü also argued:

Although the nationalists' and Malthusians' positions appear to conflict on the surface, they actually correspond in substance. . . . In order to resist foreign dangers some Chinese fear that they will not be able to overcome (the) large numbers (of foreigners), and consequently must encourage population increases. But if all things (population increases and production increases) do not correspond, a large population will be of no use; the many will not be capable of resisting the few. The nationalists emphasize collective strength while Malthusians emphasize individual value. But if individual value is low, then collective strength is insufficient. Conversely, if collective strength is incomplete, then the individual cannot exist. Therefore, in order to plan for social construction, the theories of the two schools must be harmoniously blended and grasped thoroughly.⁴⁹

Ch'en Ch'ang-heng and other Chinese liberals had expressed this argument many times before, and there is no reason to believe that Hsü was any more convincing. In fact, Hsü's candid admission that population control seemed injurious to the cause of Chinese nationalism in the eyes of the public was proof that this kind of argument had already failed to take hold.

Responding to the fears of the 'nationalist school', Hsü argued that, with the exception of France, the greatest increases in the population of the white race coincided with a decline in the birth rate. Still, he noted, many nineteenth century scholars such as Lathrop Stoddard had unfounded fears that the white race was headed for extinction because of Malthusianism. According to Hsü, Stoddard instinctively feared that a lower birth rate entailed a decrease in the white population, which was in danger of being displaced by the ever expanding 'coloured' races. Because Stoddard's fears were so remarkably similar to those of Sun Yat-sen, Hsü probably intended these observations to be a veiled criticism of Sun's views on population growth.⁵⁰

Hsü acknowledged that China would eventually have to limit the aggregate growth of its population as well as lower the birth rate. However, Hsü attempted to remove the defeatist connotations of such a proposal by portraying overpop-

ulation as an international problem. According to this view, it was a matter of enlightened self-interest for each nation to participate in multilateral efforts to reduce population growth:

After comparing today's population with the surface area of the earth, many of the world's famous economic experts claim that the phenomenon of overpopulation already exists. This overpopulation is the cause of the world's political and social disorder. However, what is more frightening is that although all the nations know about the overpopulation crisis, they constantly encourage increases in the rate of population growth in order to seek victory in the final war. If no method is developed (to combat overpopulation), world wars will never cease and mankind and its civilization will sink into total disintegration. For the sake of saving mankind and civilization from self-destruction, every country must cooperate to solve the world population problem. To solve this problem, birth control must be utilized.⁵¹

Hsü even declared that China should not commit itself to limiting population growth if it became clear that such efforts were merely unilateral:

...(T)he population problem is a world problem and has a direct relationship with world peace. If the Chinese (population) problem is solved and the other countries still suffer from overpopulation, they will promote imperialism... to encroach upon China and sacrifice our labour and agricultural wealth while seeking sources of food for their own people. (Under these circumstances) China would be forced to encourage births and population increases in order to prevent the destruction of the nation and the annihilation of the race just as Sun Yat-sen stated.⁵²

Unwittingly or not, Hsü virtually undermined his appeal for limiting population growth by arguing that China's efforts should be part of an international programme. Based on the events of the time, the Chinese public had no reason to believe that other nations were ready for any multilateral efforts to achieve world peace.

The way in which the Chinese believers in Malthusianism and Neo-Malthusianism responded to the charges of their opponents grew more defensive as support for population control increasingly became grounds for challenging a scholar's dedication to the nationalist cause. They seemed compelled consistently to argue that population control of any sort would not lead to

decreases in the aggregate population. Judging from this, the public's attachment to a large population as a source of national strength could not be diminished. Also, the number of times this argument was repeated suggested that the Chinese public was not convinced.

In later years, the promoters of population control also made greater efforts to demonstrate their support for populating the border regions and attempted to reconcile this with their proposals for population control. As in the case of Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, these attempts often seemed half-hearted and lacked the genuine sense of conviction that the opponents of Malthusianism conveyed in promoting migration to the frontier regions. The superficial logic that migration would occur faster under pressure gave the opponents of population control more assertiveness in their arguments.

Many of the difficulties that plagued the advocates of population control who tried to link their cause with Chinese nationalism resulted from their own research. Detailed studies indicated that the traditional extended family, if it ever was common in the first place, no longer existed to any significant extent. Thus, Chinese liberals who supported population control could no longer use China's jaded Confucian tradition as a straw man for their own vision of a liberal society in which greater individual responsibility would result in a lower birth rate. If anything, their research tended to vindicate the Marxists who held that the rich posed more problems for the nation than the poor.

Notes to Chapter VI

1. Ch'iao Ch'i-ming, "Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i chih yen-chiu" (Research on the Chinese population problem), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 25, no. 21 (October 1928), cited by Feng Ho-fa, "Chung-kuo nung-ts'un te jen-k'ou wen-t'i", p. 73.
2. Ch'iao Ch'i-ming, "Chung-kuo nung-ts'un jen-k'ou chih chieh-kou chi ch'i hsiao-chang" (The structure and fluctuations of the Chinese agrarian population), Tung-fang tsa-chih, Vol. 32, no. 1 (January 1935), reprinted in Chung-kuo li-tai jen-k'ou wen-t'i lun-chi, p. 202.
3. Ch'iao, "Chung-kuo nung-ts'un jen-k'ou chih chieh-kou chi ch'i hsiao-chang", p. 207.
4. Ibid., pp. 205-208.
5. Ch'iao Ch'i-ming, Chung-kuo jen-k'ou yü shih-liang wen-t'i (Shanghai, 1937), pp. 60-65, 93.
6. Ibid., pp. 5-6.
7. Ibid., pp. 111-117.
8. Ibid., p. 2.
9. Ibid., p. 61.
10. Ibid., pp. 94-104.
11. Ibid., p. 109.
12. Ibid., pp. 110, 132, 135.
13. Ibid., pp. 123-130.
14. Hashikawa, Chugoku bunkakai jimbutsu sōran, p. 441.
15. Much of Ch'en's information probably came from Herbert Lamson, "Population Studies: Size of Chinese Family in relation to Age, Occupation, and Education", Chinese Economic Journal, December 1932. Ch'en Cheng-mo, "Wo kuo jen-k'ou chih yen-chiu" (Research on our nation's population), T'ung-chi yüeh-k'an (Statistics monthly), December 1933, pp. 32-34.
16. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
17. Ibid., p. 41.
18. Ch'en Cheng-mo seemed to fear the economic disruptions of imperialism more than the actual occupation of Chinese territory. He believed that the Japanese presence in Manchuria was of no long term significance because the 'Japanese race' was unsuited to the climate of that region. Ibid., pp. 15, 23-25.
19. Hashikawa, Chugoku bunkakai jimbutsu sōran, p. 366. Boorman, Biographical Dictionary of Republican China, vol. 3, pp. 411-412.
20. Weng Wen-hao, "Chung-kuo jen-k'ou fen-pu yü t'u-ti li-yung" (Chinese population distribution and land utilization), Tu-li p'ing-lun (Independent commentary), nos. 3-4 (June-July 1932), pp. 9, 15.
21. Ibid., pp. 12-15.
22. Hashikawa, Chugoku bunkakai jimbutsu sōran, p. 624.
23. Tung Shih-chin, "Min shih k'un-nan chih chieh-shih yü chieh-ch'eh" (An explanation of and a solution to the people's food problem), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 23, no. 17 (September 10, 1926), pp. 8-11; Shih-liao yü jen-k'ou (Food and population) (Shanghai, 1929), pp. 137-138.
24. Tung, Shih-liao yü jen-k'ou, p. 142.
25. Ibid., pp. 162-174.
26. Hashikawa, Chugoku bunkakai jimbutsu sōran, p. 216.
27. Yen Hsin-che, Chung-kuo ts'un jen-k'ou wen-t'i chih fen-hsi (An analysis of the Chinese village population problem) (Shanghai, 1934), pp. 1-3.
28. Ibid., pp. 12-17.
29. Ibid., pp. 40-43.
30. Liu Jan-chang, "Chung-kuo jen-k'ou chih yen-chiu", Min-chung chi-k'an (The people's quarterly), vol. 2, no. 4 (January 1936), reprinted in Chung-kuo

li-tai jen-k'ou wen-t'i lun-chi, pp. 144-157.

31. Ibid., pp. 120-131.

32. Boorman, Biographical Dictionary of Republican China, vol. 1, pp. 235-239.

33. Ch'en Ta, "Jen-k'ou pien-ch'ien te yüan-su" (Elements behind population changes), Tsinghua hsüeh-pao (Tsinghua scholarly journal), December 1933, pp. 30-33.

34. Ch'en Ta, "Jen-k'ou wen-t'i" (The population problem) (Shanghai, 1934), p. 296, cited by Sun Pen-wen, Hsien-tai Chung-kuo she-hui wen-t'i: Jen-k'ou wen-t'i (Current Chinese social problems: The population problem) (Chung-king, 1943), p. 41.

35. Ch'en Ta, "Jen-k'ou pien-ch'ien te yüan-su", pp. 35-36.

36. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, "Chung-kuo chin pai-pa-shih-yü nien-lai jen-k'ou tseng-chia chih hsü-su chi chin-hou chih tiao-chi fang-fa" (The speed of population growth in China over the last one hundred and eighty years and future adaptive measures), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 24, no. 18 (1927), (rpt. Hong Kong: Chung Shan t'u-shu kung-szu, 1973), p. 54.

37. Ibid., pp. 36-40.

38. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, "Wo kuo jen-k'ou san chung ya-p'o yü chieh-chüeh fang-fa" (Three kinds of population pressure in our country and the means to relieve them), Shen-pao yüeh-k'an (The monthly report), vol. 1, no. 4 (October 15, 1932), p. 52.

39. Ibid., pp. 48-49; Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, "Chung-kuo chin pai-pa-shih-yü nien-lai jen-k'ou tseng-chia chih hsu-su chi chin-hou tiao-chi fang-fa", pp. 36, 41-42.

40. Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, "Wo kuo jen-k'ou san chung ya-p'o yü chieh-chueh fang-fa", pp. 49-50.

41. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

42. Ibid., pp. 52-55.

43. Fan, "Tsui-chin erh-shih nien-lai Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i chih yen-chiu", pp. 34-37.

44. T'ao Meng-ho, "Shih-chieh jen-k'ou yü chiang-lai" (World population and the future), reprinted in Jen-k'ou wen-t'i (The population problem), eds. Wang Yün-wu, Li Sheng-wu (Shanghai, 1933), p. 1. This was a collection of articles that had appeared in Tung-fang tsa-chih, but the editors did not give the date that each was originally published.

45. Ibid., pp. 2-5, 12-13.

46. Ibid., p. 18.

47. Hsü Shih-lien, Chung-kuo she-hui wen-t'i chih i: Chung-kuo jen-k'ou wen-t'i (One of China's social problems: The Chinese population problem) (Shanghai, 1930), pp. 78, 128.

48. Ibid., p. 1.

49. Ibid., p. 7.

50. Ibid., pp. 20-31.

51. Ibid., p. 129.

52. Ibid., p. 121.

VII. Conclusion

Because nationalism and Social Darwinism were so intimately involved in the Chinese debate over the population question after the turn of the century, the theories of earlier Chinese intellectuals on population growth received little attention. According to a Chinese writer named Chang Yin-lin, Hung Liang-chi, a Chinese contemporary of Malthus, was never mentioned by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao even though his observations on population growth were remarkably similar to those of the eighteenth century clergyman.¹ Chang treated Hung Liang-chi's writings as though they were a significant discovery, and found it characteristic of the difference between Chinese and Western civilization that Malthus' theory had such an impact on Western political and economic thought while Hung remained virtually unknown to later Chinese thinkers. Indeed, Chang's own interest in Hung's writings was primarily motivated by their similarity to Malthus' works on population growth.

When the discussion over Malthusianism began in earnest during the May Fourth period, Chinese writers initially responded to the arguments of various Westerners before they began debating among themselves. However, a figure from China's past who was quoted time and again by the advocates of population control was Han Fei, the Legalist from the ancient state of Ch'in. Han Fei's observation that a state with a people of low calibre is no better than a state without people seemed to express the sentiments of many of the Chinese who advocated population control.² To them, the struggle of the Warring States Period probably contained many parallels to the modern world of competing nation-states in which China was fighting for survival.

In the course of the debate over the population issue, the advocates of population control were never able to dispell the unprogressive image that many Chinese attached to Malthusianism. The theme of progress was com-

mon to both the Marxist and nationalist opposition to population control. The issue of progress had very strong nationalist implications because many Chinese felt that Malthusianism was a doctrine that foreign intellectuals selectively applied to China as a nation incapable of achieving the same kind of social progress that characterized Western civilization. Hence, many Chinese perceived in Malthusianism and population control an admission of China's inferiority in particular as well as a pessimistic outlook toward the human potential for progress in general. Yang Hsiao-ch'ün's appeal demonstrated how easily the tactless promotion of population control in China by a few foreigners could be used to make things difficult for the Chinese advocates of Malthusianism. The Marxist opposition also tapped some of this nationalist hostility to population control. Although the early Chinese Marxists expressly rejected the theory of Social Darwinism, the portrayal of Malthusianism as a smokescreen for the exploitation of the imperialist powers had a strong nationalist appeal which even non-Marxists utilized. Hence, to achieve an understanding of the Chinese Communist opposition to Malthusianism, one must not view the Marxist opposition to population control as entirely distinct from its nationalist counterpart.

In terms of logic alone, many of the arguments favouring population control were quite forceful and were never satisfactorily refuted by the opposition. However, using the metaphor of a formal debate, the promoters of population control were in the unenviable position of scoring debating points while, at the same time, losing the sympathy of their audience.

The debate over population control in China occurred at a time of growing national awareness and provides a useful model for understanding the third world resentment toward population control, particularly when promoted by major world powers. The continuing opposition to formal programmes of population control in the Peoples Republic of China today in spite of the wide-

spread practice of birth control for ideologically acceptable reasons only underscores the nature of this resentment toward Malthusianism.

Notes to Chapter VII

1. Chang Yin-lin, "Hung Liang-chi chi ch'i jen-k'ou lun" (Hung Liang-chi and his population theory), Tung-fang tsa-chih, vol. 23, no. 2 (January 25, 1926), pp. 69-73.
2. An example of this appears in Ch'en Ch'ang-heng, Chung-kuo jen-k'ou lun, p. 75.

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