

CHAPTER XIII

BATTALIONS OF UNWANTED BABIES THE CAUSE OF WAR

IN every nation of militaristic tendencies we find the reactionaries demanding a higher and still higher birth rate. Their plea is first, that great armies are needed to *defend* the country from its possible enemies; second, that a huge population is required to assure the country its proper place among the powers of the world. At bottom the two pleas are the same.

As soon as the country becomes overpopulated, these reactionaries proclaim loudly its moral right to expand. They point to the huge population, which in the name of patriotism they have previously demanded should be brought into being. Again pleading patriotism, they declare that it is the moral right of the nation to take by force such room as it needs. Then comes war — usually against

152 WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE

some nation supposed to be less well prepared than the aggressor

Diplomats make it their business to conceal the facts, and politicians violently denounce the politicians of other countries. There is a long beating of tom toms by the press and all other agencies for influencing public opinion. Facts are distorted and lies invented until the common people cannot get at the truth. Yet, when the war is over if not before, we always find that 'a place in the sun', 'a path to the sea,' 'a route to India' or something of the sort is at the bottom of the trouble. These are merely other names for expansion.

The 'need of expansion' is only another name for overpopulation. One supreme example is sufficient to drive home this truth. That the Great War from the horror of which we are just beginning to emerge had its source in overpopulation is too evident to be denied by any serious student of current history.

For the past one hundred years most of the nations of Europe have been piling up terrific debts to humanity by the encouragement of unlimited numbers. The rulers of these na

tions and their militarists have constantly called upon the people to breed, breed breed! Large populations meant more people to produce wealth, more people to pay taxes more trade for the merchants more soldiers to protect the wealth But more people also meant need of greater food supplies an urgent and natural need for expansion

As shown by C V Drysdale's famous War Map of Europe, the great conflict began among the high birth rate countries — Germany, with its rate of 31.7, Austria Hungary with 33.7 and 36.7 respectively Russia with 45.4 Serbia with 38.6 Italy with her 38.7 came in as the world is now well informed through the publication of secret treaties by the Soviet government of Russia upon the promise of territory held by Austria England, owing to her small home area, is cramped with her comparatively low birth rate of 26.3 France among the belligerents, is conspicuous for her low birth rate of 19.9 but stood in the way of expansion of high birth rate Germany Nearly all of the persistently neutral countries — Holland Denmark Norway Sweden and Switzerland have low birth

154 WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE

rates, the average being a little over 26

Owing to the part Germany played in the war, a survey of her birth statistics is decidedly illuminating. The increase in the German birth rate up to 1876 was great. Though it began to decline then the decline was not sufficient to offset the tremendous increase of the previous years. There were more millions to produce children so while the average number of births per thousand was somewhat smaller the net increase in population was still huge. From 41 000 000 in 1871 the year the Empire was founded the German population grew to approximately 67 000,000 in 1918. Meanwhile her food supply increased only a very small per cent. In 1910, Russia had a birth rate even higher than Germany's had ever been — a little less than 48 per thousand. When czarist Russia wanted an outlet to the Mediterranean by way of Constantinople, she was thinking of her increasing population. Germany was thinking of her increasing population when she spoke as with one voice of a place in the sun.

For some decades said the Royal Prussian Journal in an article quoted by the Mal

thusian (London) of April 15 1911, ' the great growth of German population has been almost entirely forced into the towns, since of the four millions of increase in five years, only a few can find places in agriculture as most properties are too small to permit of letting off a portion And as regards the larger farms, the tendency of modern, cheaper machine methods is rather to produce a saving of the more costly manual labor

For some time past Germany has no longer been in the position of feeding her own population and large quantities of food as raw materials have to be imported, for which exports have to be exchanged It is doubtful whether even this can for long keep pace with the present rate of increase of population'

There were other utterances which just as frankly acknowledged that, having produced surplus population Germany proposed to procure by means of war the expansion necessary to care for it Adelyne More, in Uncontrolled Breeding a study of the birth rate in its relation to war, quoted the Berliner Post

Can a great and rapidly growing nation like Germany always renounce all claims to further

development or to the expansion of its political power? The final settlement with France and England, the expansion of our colonial possessions, in order to create new German homes for the overflow of our population — these are problems which must be faced in the near future. This was published in 1913.

Just as frank was the recognition of the true cause of international conflicts by a number of British authorities.

In 'Uncontrolled Breeding' the author quotes the British National Commission's report on 'The Declining Birth Rate'. The pressure of population in any country brings as a chief historic consequence overflows and migrations not only for peaceful settlement but for conquest and for the subjugation and exploitation of weaker peoples. This always remains a chief cause of international disputes.

The militaristic claim for Germany's right to new territory was simply a claim to the right of life and food for the German babies — the same right that a chick claims to burst its shell. If there had not been other millions of people claiming the same right, there would

have been no war. But there *were* other millions

The German rulers and leaders pointed out the fact that expansion meant more business for German merchants, more work for German workmen at better wages, and more opportunities for Germans abroad. They also pointed out that lack of expansion meant crowding and crushing at home, hard times, heavy burdens, lack of opportunity for Germans and what not. In this way they gave the people of the Empire a startling and true picture of what would happen from over crowding. Once they realized the facts, the majority of Germans naturally welcomed the so called war of defense.

The argument was sound. Once the German mothers had submitted to the plea for overbreeding it was inevitable that imperialistic Germany should make war. Once the battalions of unwanted babies came into existence — babies whom the mothers did not want but which they bore as a patriotic duty — it was too late to avoid international conflict. The great crime of imperialistic Germany was its high birth rate.

158 WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE

It has always been so Behind all war has been the pressure of population Historians says Huxley point to the greed and ambition of rulers the reckless turbulence of the ruled, to the debasing effects of wealth and luxury, and to the devastating wars which have formed a great part of the occupation of mankind, as the causes of the decay of states and the foundering of old civilizations and thereby point their story with a moral But beneath all this superficial turmoil lay the deep seated impulse given by unlimited multiplication ”

Robert Thomas Malthus formulator of the doctrine which bears his name pointed out in the closing years of the eighteenth century the relation of overpopulation to war He showed that mankind tends to increase faster than the food supply He demonstrated that were it not for the more common diseases for—plague—famine floods and wars, human beings would crowd each other to such an extent that the misery would be even greater than it now is These he described as natural checks pointing out that as long as no other checks are employed, such disasters are unavoidable

If we do not exercise sufficient judgment to regulate the birth rate, we encounter disease, starvation and war

Both Darwin and John Stuart Mill recognized by inference at least, the fact that so called natural checks — and among them war — will operate if some sort of limitation is not employed In his *Origin of Species* Darwin says There is no exception to the rule that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate if not destroyed that the earth would soon be covered by the progeny of a single pair Elsewhere he observes that we do not permit helpless human beings to die off but we create philanthropies and charities build asylums and hospitals and keep the medical profession busy preserving those who could not otherwise survive John Stuart Mill, supporting the views of Malthus, speaks to exactly the same effect in regard to the multiplying power of organic beings, among them humanity In other words, let countries become overpopulated and war is inevitable It follows as daylight follows the sunrise

When Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs Annie Besant were on trial in England in 1877 for

160 WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE

publishing information concerning contraceptives Mrs Besant put the case bluntly to the court and the jury

I have no doubt that if natural checks were allowed to operate right through the human as they do in the animal world, a better result would follow. Among the brutes the weaker are driven to the wall the diseased fall out in the race of life. The old brutes, when feeble or sickly are killed. If men insisted that those who were sickly should be allowed to die without help of medicine or science if those who are weak were put upon one side and crushed if those who were old and useless were killed if those who were not capable of providing food for themselves were allowed to starve, if all this were done, the struggle for existence among men would be as real as it is among brutes and would doubtless result in the production of a higher race of men.

But are you willing to do that or to allow it to be done?

We are not willing to let it be done. Mother hearts cling to children no matter how diseased misshapen and miserable. Sons and daughters hold fast to parents no matter how

helpless We do not allow the weak to depart neither do we cease to bring more weak and helpless beings into the world Among the dire results is war, which kills off not the weak and the helpless but the strong and the fit

What shall be done? We have our choice of one of three policies We may abandon our science and leave the weak and diseased to die, or kill them as the brutes do Or we may go on overpopulating the earth and have our famines and our wars while the earth exists Or we can accept the third, sane, sensible moral and practicable plan of birth control We can refuse to bring weak, the helpless and the unwanted children into the world We can refuse to overcrowd families, nations and the earth There are these ways to meet the situation and only these three ways

The world will never abandon its preventive and curative science it may be expected to elevate and extend it beyond our present imagination The efforts to do away with famine and the opposition to war are growing by leaps and bounds Upon these efforts are largely based our modern social revolutions

There remains only the third expedient —

birth control, the real cure for war This fact was called to the attention of the Peace Conference in Paris, in 1919 by the Malthusian League which adopted the following resolution at its annual general meeting in London in June of that year

The Malthusian League desires to point out that the proposed scheme for the League of Nations has neglected to take account of the important questions of *the pressure of population which causes the great international economic competition* and rivalry and of the *increase of population* which is put forward as a justification for *claiming increase of territory* It, therefore wishes to put on record its belief that the League of Nations will only be able to fulfill its aim *when it adds a clause* to the following effect

That each Nation desiring to enter into the League of Nations shall pledge itself *so to restrict its birth rate* that its people shall be able to live in comfort *in their own dominions without need* for territorial expansion and that it shall recognize that *increase of population shall not justify* a demand either for increase of territory or for the compulsion of other

Nations to admit its emigrants so that when all Nations in the League have shown their ability to live on their own resources without international rivalry they will be in a position to fuse into an international federation, and territorial boundaries will then have little significance

As a matter of course the Peace Conference paid no attention to the resolution for, as pointed out by Frank A Vanderlip, the American financier that conference not only ignored the economic factors of the world situation, but seemed unaware that Europe had produced more people than its fields could feed So the resolution amounted to so much propaganda and nothing more

This remedy can be applied only by woman and she will apply it She must and will see past the call of pretended patriotism and of glory of empire and perceive what is true and what is false in these things She will discover what base uses the militarist and the exploiter make of the idealism of peoples Under the clamor of the press permeating the ravings of the jingoes she will hear the voice of Napoleon

the archtype of the militarists of all nations calling for fodder for cannon

Woman is given to us that she may bear children said he Woman is our property we are not hers because she produces children for us — we do not yield any to her She is therefore our possession as the fruit tree is that of the gardener

That is what the imperialist is *thinking* when he speaks of the glory of the empire and the prestige of the nation Every country has its appeal — its shibboleth — ready for the lips of the imperialist German rulers pointed to the comfort of the workers to old age pensions, maternal benefits and minimum wage regulations and other material benefits when they wished to inspire soldiers for the Fatherland England's strongest argument, perhaps was a certain phase of liberty which she guarantees her subjects and the protection afforded them wherever they may go France and the United States too have their appeals to the idealism of democracy — appeals which the politicians of both countries know well how to use though the peoples of both lands are

beginning to awake to the fact that their countries have been living on the glories of their revolutions and traditions, rather than the substance of freedom. Behind the boast of old age pensions material benefits and wage regulations behind the bombast concerning liberty in this country and tyranny in that, behind all the slogans and shibboleths coined out of the ideals of the peoples for the uses of imperialism woman must and will see the iron hand of that same imperialism condemning women to breed and men to die for the will of the rulers.

Upon woman the burden and the horrors of war are heaviest. Her heart is the hardest wrung when the husband or the son comes home to be buried or to live a shattered wreck. Upon her devolve the extra tasks of filling out the ranks of workers in the war industries in addition to caring for the children and replenishing the war diminished population. Hers is the crushing weight and the sickening of soul. And it is out of her womb that those things proceed. When she sees what lies behind the glory and the horror the boasting and

166 WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE

the burden, and gets the vision the human perspective she will end war She will kill war by the simple process of starving it to death For she will refuse longer to produce the human food upon which the monster feeds