

THE SHAPE OF THINGS HAS COME

(Written for "The Listener" by A.M.R.)

THIS title may sound foolhardy. For, as I write, the European war is only just over, while the San Francisco Conference has held only one session. But Conferences and Peace Settlements cannot do a great deal more (though unfortunately they often try) than officially register facts that have already arrived. While the armies have fought, other factors also have been shaping the future. It is of these, largely overlooked in our concentration upon the military struggle, that I write.

The first and most important is the changing size and changing "shape" of populations. Just 150 years ago the envoy of George III. of England, sent to China to beg for trade facilities, received this reply from the Emperor:

"Swaying the wide world, I am not interested in the manufactures of outside barbarians. . . . (Though) your reverence for our Celestial Dynasty fills you with a desire to acquire our civilisation, even your Envoy could not acquire the rudiments of our civilisation, much less transport them to alien soil. (Nevertheless), the earnest terms in which your Memorial is cast reveal a respectful humility on your part which is highly praiseworthy. It behoves you, O King, to respect my sentiments and to display even greater devotion in future so that, by perpetual submission to our throne, you may secure peace and prosperity for your country hereafter. . . . Tremblingly obey and show no negligence."

Do not smile. Chien Lung ruled 400 million people and an immense territory. George III. held practically nothing beyond two Atlantic islands with some ten million inhabitants.

Effects of Industrialisation

It was the Industrial Revolution (as we call it, looking back) that changed the relevant positions of Britain and

China. For, whereas it has scarcely touched China even yet, it multiplied by seven the number of Britons, increased their average standard of living several times over, and—by providing both industry and empire—extended their economic and political power many scores of times over.

Industrialisation appears always to have this effect. It has, for example, quadrupled Europe's population despite last century's overflow into North and South America. The causes of this upthrust are still being argued. But the increase seems partly to come from lowered infant (and general) mortality through improved sanitation and food, and partly because the new opportunities that an expanding community offers encourage people to have more children.

The only Eastern land so far to be industrialised is Japan. There, despite poor national resources, the population has tripled in one long lifetime. Improved health services and trade have come to two other Asiatic areas, though without local industry, and accordingly India has increased by 51 millions in one decade and Java doubled in 40 years. But both India and China are now on the point of enormous industrial expansion. Already India has the largest steel works in the British Empire and well over £1,000,000,000 sterling to invest after the war. The Chinese have cut-and-dried plans for outstripping Japan industrially in one generation, and United States industry is preparing to deluge capital machinery upon them. Whatever peace treaties are made we may see in 50 years 650 million Indians and perhaps even more Chinese.

THIS GRAPH shows the pattern of mankind's growth. It illustrates the increase of population in four of the world's major countries up to 1840, and projected changes of growth or decline from 1840 to 1970 (as shown in the shaded portion of the graph). These projections were worked out by the Office of Population Research, Princeton University. The figures on the right are millions.

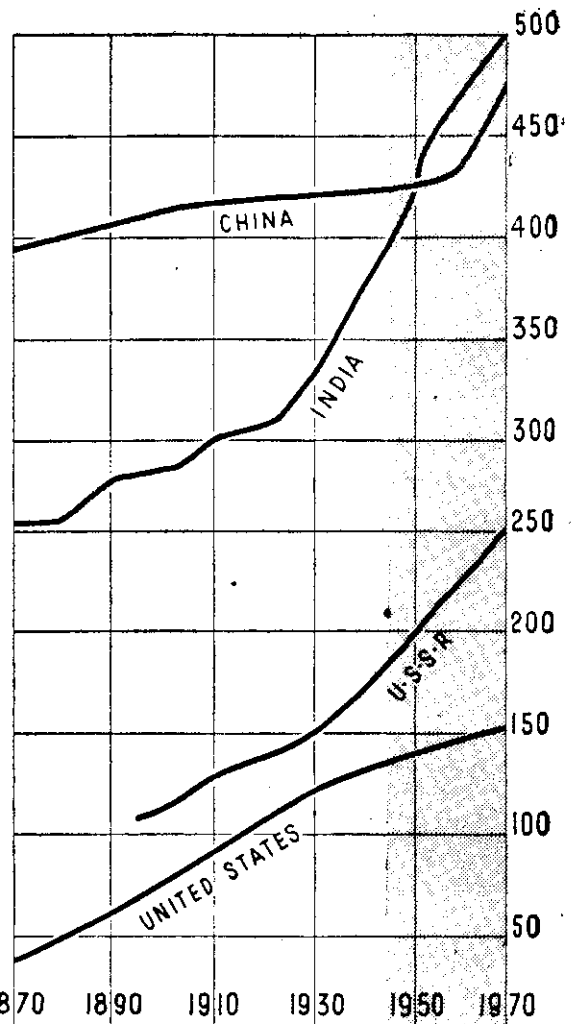
Meanwhile in Europe population is set for decline. What effect the war will have had with its gigantic shifts of soldiers and workers, and its slaughters and privations it is impossible to predict. But in any case there are not sufficient potential mothers to do more than maintain population even if they produce considerably more offspring apiece than heretofore.

And efforts to persuade parents to have more children have so far proved unavailing. Universal family allowances are an excellent thing in that they help to rear children as children should be reared. But they have not in practice greatly increased the number being born. Neither has propaganda, nor cash payments, nor the "honours" to mothers now being attempted in the U.S.S.R. The simple fact is that as living standards rise family life becomes no longer the only satisfying interest of the ordinary man and woman. They have other things with

which to fill their lives, and accordingly frequent families of two or less bring populations back to the nearly static state in which malnutrition, disease, hazard, and shortage of careers keep them in primitive communities.

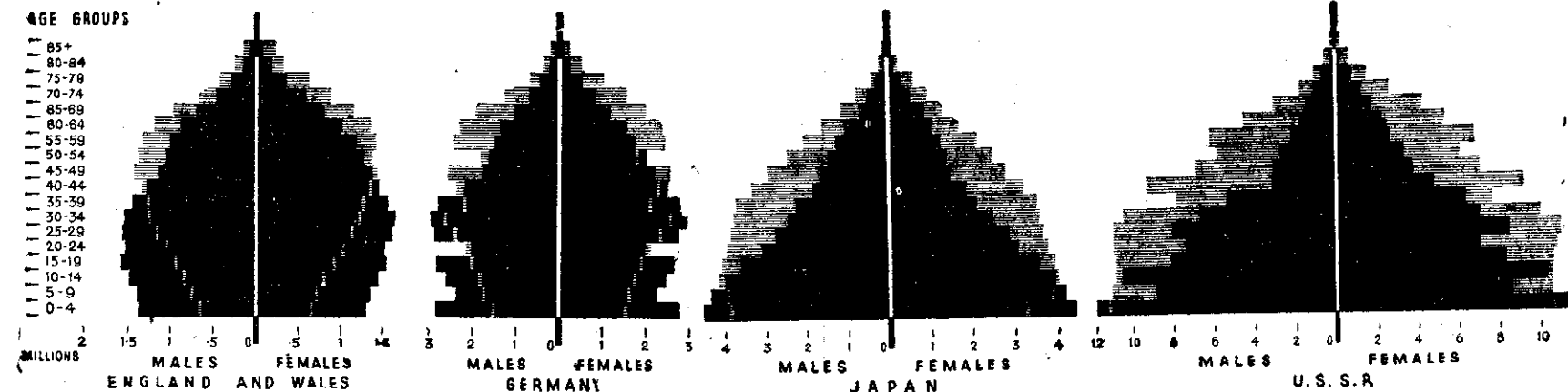
Germany, as definitely as France, is a declining community. Japan will probably never pass 90 millions. The United

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THE SHAPE OF POPULATIONS TO COME

1940 1970



THE shape of the population of a country can be drawn from census figures. A future shape can also be predicted in broad terms from these statistics and certain assumptions made of future trends of birth and death rates. The pyramids above show in solid black the actual populations of 1940 for four major countries, and in barred outline the estimated size and shape of the populations in 1970. These predictions are based on several assumptions; for instance, that war losses will not change the calculations. But the pyramids show that, even without war, England and Germany face a rapid ageing of their populations. In another

generation the bases of their pyramids will be eroded because the birth rates have declined and fewer children will have been born, and the age groups over 40 will swell as the present relatively large proportion of youth grows older. The war undoubtedly will hasten the ageing process. By 1970, the U.S.S.R. will be the only industrial nation in the world with a substantial base of youth. Forty-five per cent. of the population is now under 20 years old; only 32 per cent. of Germany's population is in the same group. Japan, by 1970, will have begun to follow the Western nations into old age, although she will still have heavy concentrations in the years from 15 to 45.