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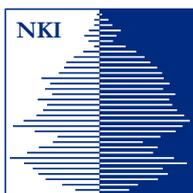
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**WORKING PAPERS ON POPULATION,
FAMILY AND WELFARE**

No. 3.

**EAST/WEST EXCLUSIONS AND DISCOURSES
ON POPULATION IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

By
Attila Melegh

2002

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1. Introduction¹

The 20th century can rightly be thought of as the century of institutionalized population policy and a more and more institutionalized intervention into human reproduction. The institutionalization and intervention could not have proceeded without powerful discourses on population development appearing around the Enlightenment period and completed during the 19th century. By linking different spheres of social and intellectual life (politics, medicine, natural and social sciences) these discourses created the basis for “biopolitics” (Foucault 1990, 1992). Through this they determined concrete population policy measures besides getting into a web of other discourses dominating the mental mapping of the world. They were more than just ideas on population development. They were general interpretative frameworks, structures and webs of statements, which guided the thoughts of politicians, demographers and activists.

In the light of the tragic events of the past century and the rapidly advancing genetic revolution nowadays, it is not surprising that since the end of the 1980s, there have been serious multidisciplinary endeavours to study the political, social and intellectual background of population policy. Demographers, sociologists and anthropologists have analysed the “ethnography of the state” (Kligman 1998), “population politics” (Quine 1996), the “national forms” population debate (Teitelbaum–Winter 1998) or the sociogenetics of vision (Muel–Dreyfus 2001) In other words they all moved beyond the analysis of direct population policy measures and concentrated on changes and special twists of debates via revealing underlying “structures”. This ‘post-structuralist’ move is important not only from a heuristic point of view, but it also reformulates our views on the responsibility of social scientists in the unfortunate development of the 20th century.

This paper contributes to the comparative studies of population policies and discourses with the intention of finding such teleologically not biased interpretative frameworks in which both “Western” and “Eastern” histories can be linked to each other without setting up Eurocentric or West centric comparative structures. In other words we look for such interpretative grounds, which do not fix “Western” arrangements as norms to be followed by other regions of the world or as ones having superior characteristics.

The first part of the paper builds on the concept of ‘biopolitics’ and involved “disciplining” discourses of the 18th and 19th centuries. The term and the related ideas have been introduced by Foucault, whose analysis establishes a natural connection between racism and modern political

¹ This is a slightly shortened and modified version of the second chapter of the manuscript “*East in the East. Globalization, nationalism, racism and discourses on Eastern Europe.*” The writing of the whole book and the underlying research has been supported by the RSS grant no. 651/1999. This book has also been supported by the Improving Human Research Potential Programme of the European Commission. The basic framework of this paper was prepared in Hungarian for the Ad Hoc Committee on Population Policy (led by László Cseh-Szombathy) and it has been first published in the periodical *Replika* (Melegh, 2000). I would particularly like to thank Mária Adamik, József Böröcz, Elwood Carlsson, Gyula Benda, Judit Bodnár, Balázs Krémer, and Péter Őri for their comments on lecture materials and the draft of this paper. I would also like to thank Zoltán Tóth, Dezső Dányi, László Hablicsek and Pál Péter Tóth for their questions and remarks.

systems (Foucault 1990, 1992). Then we focus on the direction and the method of “stigmatising” the demographic behaviour of certain social groups and the role of the powerful East-West dichotomy (the discourse of a descending civilizational achievements from West to the East) in these mechanisms. In our interpretation the idea of a civilizational or East-West slope provides one of the main cognitive mechanism of discourses on population development. According to such geopolitical and geocultural maps actors identify themselves on a descending scale from “civilization to barbarism”, from “developed to non developed” status (Böröcz 2000; Melegh 1999a; Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994; Wallerstein 1997). This “sliding scale of merit” (Glenny 1992, 236) can also be interpreted as a form of “liberal humanitarian utopia” as introduced by Karl Mannheim (Mannheim 1991). Combining the idea of biopolitics and the East/West slope and using new archival material we will demonstrate that the pre-second world war Malthusian stigmatisation of the lower classes in America is later projected upon the Third World in the framework of global family planning programs by the help of the East-West dichotomy and the related discourses on demographic transition. Within these cognitive structures the creation of “Eastern” and “East European” otherness is also analysed with a special attention to historical demography and the idea of the second demographic.

In the second part East European and mainly Hungarian discourses – guiding the writings of ‘populist’ writers and the creation of “socialist” population policy documents after the second world war – are reflected upon the ‘Western’ discourses and the involved ordering of societies according to an East/West civilizational slope. The Hungarian discourses, which represent another method of stigmatising the demographic behaviour of certain groups, are not independent of the Anglo-Saxon Western discourses and especially not from the East-West dichotomy, or East/West slope. The paper will end up by showing how these different Western and East European discourses come together in Hungary from the 1970s and what implications they might have on our understanding of future developments especially with regard to the Roma groups. But before we start our analysis it is important to clarify the term biopolitics and the links to the texts of Malthus.

2. American Anti-natalist Discourses in the First Half of the 20th Century

Discipline and Demography in the 18th Century

Although the history of demography reaches back into the 17th century, the processes of mass population growth only gained the attention of authorities in the middle of the 18th century exactly in the period when East/West discourses became dominant in constructing global maps. This is well illustrated by the fact that the census became common in Europe from the 1740s. The increase of political interest in society’s demographic situation signalled the arrival of a new discourse. The new discourse not only focused on the number of men available for conscription, but also the age structure, the mortality rate, life expectancy, fertility, measurement possibilities, and the issues of migration. The ideas of measurement, care, and intervention in the interest of possible ‘balance’ all came to the fore at once. Beside the issue of epidemics, which had had earlier political

implications due to the related uprisings, related problems such as the general health of the population, or the form, nature, spread, period and intensity of diseases within the population (endemics) were also put on the agenda (Andorka 1985). This can be well demonstrated by the process of the development of public health, for example through regular public health reports and studies. Thus, the caring and managing ‘rational’ problem-solving state invaded more and more areas of social life.

The link between political control and demography is apparent even in the construction of statistical sources. For example in the late 18th century in the form *Conscriptio Animarum* (Conscription of the Souls) the Habsburg Monarchy tried to collect data not only on the population development, and also on the ‘doubtful elements’ within the population like tramps, beggars, and wanderers. (See for example Dányi 1993 pp. 111–112, 154; Óri 1999.) These connections cannot be interpreted as merely political coincidences. They were more likely interests with common roots, or parts of a binding discourse through which the target and the effectiveness of power changed.²

The above interpretation of historical processes is in line with Foucault’s analysis of the shift in political power around the 18th century. In his terms power gave up the practice of rights ‘over death’ and moved into the sphere of rights ‘over life’. This transformation can be seen in the way forms of punishment changed (Foucault 1991). Public execution rituals ceased mainly in the first half of the 19th century, and non-public incarceration became the main form of punishment. The brutal forms of execution, which targeted the body, also disappeared. They were replaced by refined ‘spiritual’ care and the methods of ‘punishment for “improving” the behaviour of the “criminal”’. What is important for us is that power did not try to present itself through death and the severing of the body, but chose instead power over life as a goal, which task was performed more and more effectively. As part of power over life, it dealt ever increasingly with mass population processes (e.g. fertility, mortality and balances of demographic processes which Foucault called biopolitics), or tried to train individual bodies, for example in military institutions.

Dealing with life, e.g., following, supervising, and influencing the main demographic processes, brings up the question of who, or which groups, are worthy of having their lives supported, and who ought to be neglected, or *ad absurdum*, left to die. Left to die, given that the acceptance of power over death was in rapid decline. Foucault’s first response is that this choice is essentially based on racial hatred, as he writes: “What is racism? A tool for dividing the areas of life controlled by authorities into separate spheres: those who are worthy of life and those who are unworthy” (Foucault 1992, p. 51). In writing about this linkage between different racism, demography and political power Foucault does not deal with the social directions of this inherent selection process, and only identifies racism as a method and ignores other forms of exclusion. However, as we will see below, the direction and the method of the identification of “strangers, unworthy” varies substantially in an East-West framework and proves to be an extremely fertile basis for comparing “Eastern” and “Western” stories.

Malthus is certainly the key figure in formulating one type of biopolitical discourse based on the idea of a balance between demographic and

² On the relation of statistics to political authority among others see Kertzer–Arel 2002; Óri, 1998.

economic processes and designating one direction of exclusion at a global point, which imagines itself as a top point of civilizational achievements. He is the author who, debating the arguments of Godwin and Condorcet, formulated one of the fundamental hypotheses of population dynamics: the competition between population growth, global resources and the development of economic growth (Malthus 1798, 1966, especially pp. 71–101; Malthus et al. 1960; Simon 1998, pp. 53–57; Sen 1994). This well known set of statements can be interpreted as a survival theory, as it examines whether we can survive as a group without having to limit our tendency to expand. Malthus' answer is yes, given that positive brakes (wars and epidemics occurring in periods of overpopulation) and negative brakes based on self-restraint (late marriage, control of desire within marriage) can successfully keep the final catastrophe from occurring. Malthus naturally did not welcome and did not propagate the positive brakes. He promoted instead the 'morally correct' negative brakes such as delaying marriage and via fertility, which technique according to him developed on the basis of property, and property rights being the most important 'positive rights'. As opposed to Smith and Ricardo according to Malthus this brake could not function in the propertyless classes (being necessarily present in all societies, even in the future), and on this basis he opposed the English state's social help in the form of the Poor Law (Malthus 1798, 1966, pp. 71–101; Malthus et al. 1960; Simon 1998, pp. 53–57). As he wrote, support would only increase the already high rate of population growth, and thus decrease the chances of attaining balance.

“But whatever steps may be taken on this subject, it will be allowed that with any prospect of legislating for the poor with success, it is necessary to be fully aware of the natural tendency of the labouring classes of society to increase beyond the demand for their labour or the means of their adequate support, and the effect of this tendency to throw the greatest difficulties in the way of permanently improving their conditions.” (Malthus 1960, p. 58).

By connecting the above two factors, namely the situation of global competition and the tendency of the population of the lower classes to expand, Malthus defined the basic structure of a population discourse, which, as we will see, essentially defined 20th century international population policy statements in the Anglo-Saxon part of “Western civilisation.” This biopolitical discourse introduced the hysteria that the well-being or even the ‘lives’ of social groups already limiting their fertility depend on the reproduction tendencies of others, if this later group does not fall victim to the positive brakes. In concrete the high fertility of the poor is a danger not only for the fellow members of the lower classes but also to the ‘disciplined’ life of those in the middle or higher classes.

American Discourses at the Beginning of the 20th Century

In a seminal article on the establishment of the Population Association of America Hodgson identified four groups as founders: the representatives of immigration restriction, the still quite strong eugenicists, the birth control activists, and scholarly statisticians being interested in the issue of population development (for the analysis of the early developments see: Hodgson 1991; Greenhalgh 1996). At first glance these varied groups seem to be far away from one another, and according to Hodgson their connection came about along values which would not be seen as acceptable by today's

population policy makers and demographers. Nonetheless it seems that this “awkward” intellectual coalition was formed on the basis of the above described discursive web. ‘Racially subordinate’ groups were understood as posing a threat to ‘native’ and ‘birth controlling’ middle classes and the otherwise diverging groups came together over the issue of designating lives thought as not having great value (‘quality’). There was an ‘inherent’ need for cutting up the “human continuum” (Foucault 1990, 1992) and historical developments determined that choice of the target: ‘racially different’ immigrants and lower classes.

The immigration-control group was first of all afraid of the East and Southern Europeans and Asians who were arriving on American shores in mass waves since the end of the previous century. They first argued against the presence of cheap labour which would lead to a reduction in wages. This position was soon supplemented by fear of not only immigrants, but of their children as well, given that the immigrants were more fertile than the ‘natives’. This argument did not stop here, but went on to base the entire issue on race. The prominence of the racial question, in a strange way, did not lead to a position whereby the fertility of immigrants should have been limited (this would have been the logical step in a Malthusian framework), but instead it led to a position, whereby the control of immigration would increase American fertility by providing space for already settled peoples. This control effort, which was assisted by urban unions, led to the law on national quotas, which limited the acceptance of ‘failed races’ (e.g., East Europeans, Hodgson 1991, p. 8). Only following this success did the representatives of this direction accept the question of the importance of the fertility of the lower classes regarding the ‘racial’ composition of the future. This led them to pay attention to the ‘quality’ aspects of the development of population growth.

This was the point shared by the eugenicists, who attempted to interpret social questions on the basis of ‘biology’. They were clearly interested in ‘racial’ composition. (See also Hannaford 1996, pp. 325–348; Quine 1996, pp. 116–123.) There were two kinds of eugenicism, one which was positive, which hoped to increase the fertility of the ‘superiors’ (i.e., middle and upper classes) and one which was negative, which sought to control the fertility of ‘subordinates’ and the ‘sick’. In the latter case this did not exclude using legal force in the interest of achieving the desired composition, and sometimes this actually took place. Such measures were implemented by certain states and courts heavily biased against the “feeble minded” the “criminals” and the uneducated coming from the lower classes (Quine 1996, pp. 116–123). This group, which by the 1930s was on the defensive, used the issue of population growth as the last resort to discuss “quality” questions.

The coalition of the groups was even odder in the case of birth controllers, who, in the early 20th century under the leadership of Margaret Sanger, hoped to ‘liberate’ middle and lower class women entirely from the burden of the reproductive cycle and child bearing as a whole, as well as from the accompanying domestic control. (On this movement see also McLaren 1999, pp. 215–251.) Further, they stressed the importance of sexual pleasures and emotional satisfaction. The first enemy was legal regulation which, from the 1870s, banned birth control devices and the distribution of ‘obscene’ literature. This liberal-minded movement changed its political direction after the First World War. To that point it had opposed the eugenic movement, after eugenicist activists stressed the child-bearing

responsibility of middle class women toward the society and the control of the state in the interest of better racial composition. Sanger may have changed her policy for personal reasons, and she found allies among the eugenicists. From this point she approached the above-mentioned law claiming that it prevented the realisation of the desired goal. According to her not only the better informed women of the middle class should limit their fertility, but the 'ignorant' and 'subordinate' strata should also follow their example. With this they found a solution, as the eugenicists were relieved to think that the lower classes would decrease their reproduction (and this actually became evident in the 1930s), while at the same time the birth controllers could continue their 'liberation' activities. It should be noted that the coming to the fore of questions on differential demography led Sanger to raise funds for the inaugural meeting of the Population Association and the better representation of population studies.

Looking at not yet scrutinised archival material of F. W. Notestein, a senior figure of early American demography it turns out that the link between open or hidden eugenic agendas and the birth control movement was so strong that even during the fight with the Nazis some people envisaged a "Vital Revolution" for controlling the quantity and the quality of the population. On October 10, 1941 in an unpublished letter to Notestein, Guy Irving Burch (director of Population Reference Bureau, and a founder of the Population Association of America) described the idea of the revolution of 'voluntary selection' in an enthusiastic letter in the following manner (underlining as in the letter):

You will see by my mimeographed manuscript that in have introduced the term "Vital Revolution". (Of course you know, that this term was coined by Norman Himes. At least, that is how I understand it.) However, I think a great deal more can be done with this term than Himes had an idea of. Why can't we all get together and make the "Vital Revolution" this coming historical epoch. As a matter of fact, we are already half in it now. We have reduced the birth and deaths rate greatly and prolonged the length of life in a revolutionary manner. But in saving those who would have died in former times we have done little selecting, the selecting nature would have done if left to herself. Hitler says we can't do it as well as nature and then turns around and loses a great part of his "superior Nortics" in war.

And why does society need a "Vital Revolution"? Well, present national and international conditions have demonstrated that the discovery and exploitation of a rich "New World"; vastly expanded international trade and commerce, and the Industrial Revolution have not been able to solve the major problems of mankind. Furthermore, it seems that the scientific evidence available indicates that about the only thing that can solve the major problems of mankind, is a revolution in mankind itself – a vital revolution. A vital revolution based upon the conscious and voluntary control of the quantity and quality of population growth with due attention to both hereditary and environmental forces.

(Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton Box no. FW. N. 1)

Researchers, scholars thinking in terms of parallel changes of population and social progress were only partially related to the above described pro-selection strands, and on some points they took to arguing with the positions of the above groups. This fight and the caution toward the so called 'ideologues' is apparent in the also unpublished letter written to

Diego Suarez (the chairman of the Citizens Committee for Planned Parenthood) by Notestein mentioned above on March 13, 1939. :

„It is precisely because I believe the birth control movement a powerful agency for social betterment that I am alarmed by certain passages in this brochure. It seems to me to have too much the atmosphere of an appeal to the wealthy to save themselves from the burden of taxation. It gives too much the impression that uncontrolled prolificacy of the unworthy is the root of our current economic difficulties. ... Certainly the vast number of unemployed are much more than human waste. ...

As a matter of fact I doubt the accuracy of the prediction that birth control will lower taxes....

You can be sure that such material will be used against you. I have already heard a thoughtful Catholic Priest tell laboring men that the birth control group is a wealthy one desiring to escape just taxation by infringing on the working man's right to a family, that the group is attempting to avoid a sound reconstruction of the economic order, which would penalize the rich by denying human rights to the poor. To my mind his case is nonsense but this pamphlet lays itself open to being utilized as evidence of it.

(Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton Box no. FW. N. 1)

Regardless of this caution and resentment, demographers could not escape from the discursive structure dividing up the human race and social communities. This appears not only in the fact that Notestein later joined the sponsoring committee of the above activist group (due to news of some changes in the criticised text), but, as we will see below, also in the way demographic transition theory was formulated and reformulated at the end of the second World War and the early Cold War period. Due to the “need” of hierarchic categorisation of the world population the demographic transition theory carried some of the structural elements of the above ideals and was prone to go through a revision according to these discourses. This later turn was not just a result of political influence and some shifts in interest as argued in the recent literature of the theory, but it also showed the power of the above discourses and of the global positioning on the East-West civilizational slope.

3. Population Discourses and Regional Otherness

The theory of demographic transition can rightly be considered to be the 20th century's most successful demographic theory, as, according to D. J. van de Kaa, a leading European demographer, to this day it is the most important ‘narrative’ in Western demography and historical demography (van de Kaa 1996; Szreter 1993). This theory has been successful not only in scientific thought, but has had an appeal outside the social sciences as well, i.e., it became an organic part of wider public knowledge and political thinking.³ This cannot be said of other theories of demography.

The reason for the success is clearly the theory's simplicity and plausibility. Nonetheless this popularity was also due to the fact that regardless of some anti-Malthusian elements it fits into the 18th century

The Theory of Demographic Transition

³ On the professional aspects of the theory, see Saito (1996); Valkovics, 1982; Szentgáli, 1991; Dányi, 2001.

discursive web of biopolitics, and into the discourse of East-West slope, as global imaginary. It seems that it became dominant due to this discursive web and not its professional explanatory power.⁴

The date of birth of the theory is considered to be 1944–45, and it is attributed to Notestein, who presented it in the second part of his lecture at the United Nations food supply conference (Notestein 1945). In very simplified “modernizationist” terms the theory states that as a consequence of urbanisation, industrialisation, rising levels of popular aspiration, education, and the spread of democracy and individualism, mortality and fertility irreversibly decline, and these two processes, after a period of transition, stabilises at low levels. The theory defined the size of population as a dependent variable in relation to social processes, and interpreted these processes regionally. It defined three grand regions in which development had attained different levels. The first was the West (mainly Northern Europe and the German areas of Central Europe), which had completed the transition. In the second region, which was Eastern and Southern Europe, the transition was in an advanced stage, but had not been completed. In the post-colonial Third World the transition had just begun, and at maximum the beginning of a decline in the death rate could be observed. The key element in the theory is a linear modernisation and its regional translation.

Although the theory of demographic modernisation definitely did not argue on the basis of unchanging, “inborn” traits of different social groups or societies it did allow itself to be rewritten at several points by the above described biopolitical discourses aiming at the control of lower groups of societies.

The first point of contact is that the theory had existed previously, as shown by Szreter, Hodgson and Greenhalgh. Warren F. Thompson outlined the elements and published them as early as in 1929 (Hodgson 1983; Thompson 1929; Szreter 1993; Greenhalgh 1996). This was precisely the time when the above described debates were being conducted. In this way we rightly suspect that this theory was under the shadow of the discursive framework of the day, or, to be more precise, it adapted elements from that discourse.

The second point of contact is that the theory seems to be linked to the ideas of anti-immigration activist, as precisely those areas were described as lagging behind in the development, which at the beginning of the century had been seen as sources of “dangerous” immigration waves (threatening ‘northern’ races): mainly Eastern and Southern Europe and some Asian areas. Thus the regional translation of the linear modernisation could be guided by the internal, qualitative hierarchies propagated by the political group arguing for the control of immigration.

The possibility of an interventionist or racist turn can be seen also in the fact that the main problem of the theory is the rising reproduction rate of underdeveloped regions, in contrast with the decreasing, and already quite low rate of the developed region. To simplify, we can argue that while in the domestic debates in America the desired target state was that of the middle class, in the theory this role is given to the West (demarcated by a

⁴ Although this study does not deal with the professional questions of the theory of demographic transition, it does not aim to argue against the strength of the theory, which has been shown in the case of some early long term population projections. (Hablicsek 1996, pp. 375–80) On the other hand it is important to draw attention to the significant professional and historical demographic critique of the theory (see Szreter 1993; van de Kaa 1996; Burch 1996) and to the fact we cannot exclude ‘self-fulfilling’ elements.

letter 'A' in Thompson's scheme).⁵ In other words the theory of demographic transition with certain changes could project the elements of the former domestic debates on biopolitical concerns onto a global scale: i.e., it could replace the worry over the reproduction rate of the lower classes (whose reproduction rate was already visibly decreasing) with that of Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. It is important to note that this projection was completed at the end of the second World War and its immediate aftermath when the United States clearly prepared for a role of dominating world power both in terms of institutions, committees and the related data gathering activity.

The East/West teleological perspective and the Malthusian "interventionist" tensions of the "transition" discourses are very clear in the unpublished minute of the forty-third meeting of the Territorial Group Council on Foreign Relations prepared on January 18, 1944. The debate over the issue of overpopulation with regard to territorially separated "colonial" or "non-European" people went like this:

"Improvement in this situation is slow to develop, because it has so happened that the advanced nations have tended to transfer to dependent peoples that part of their culture which reduces mortality, but they have not disseminated the complementary cultural developments, which tend to bring about a rational control of fertility. ...

The dissemination of birth-control information, while of undoubted use in reducing population growth, would not meet the needs of these colonial populations. Therefore, the only lasting solution is one, which would bring about a reduction of growth potential.

Continuing, Mr. Notestein pointed out that in all probability a reduction of growth potential can only be brought about by education, urbanisation, and a gradual increase in the standard of living."

(Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton Box no. FW. 1)

In the above text which is based on the idea what the West does with these regions Notestein's remark clearly show the tense marriage between clear cut modernizationist discourses stressing behavioural changes due to the unstoppable social and economic progress and overtly interventionist frameworks for reducing "the growth potential". It seems that despite links between progress, civilisation and racism the original demographic transition theory had to change substantially in order to replace progress with an anti-natalist intervention as a factor reducing fertility. Due to the changes of power relations it did not take long time till the role of progress could be decreased.

⁵ On the issue of Western perspectives see also Greenhalgh 1996, 36–39. The linkage between the lower classes and the third world can also been found in the texts of Malthus himself as Caldwell points this out referring to the historian S. Ambirajan. See Caldwell 1998, 680–81, 683.

Demographic Transition Theory Rewritten

At the end of the 1940s, after returning from a trip to the Far East Notestein radically changed his position on the fundamental relationships within the theory of demographic transition. In the theory he repositioned fertility as an independent variable and argued that it was reasonable not to wait for social progress alone in order to decrease fertility in the East (Szreter 1993):

„The East, unlike the West, cannot afford to await the automatic processes of social change, incident of urbanisation and industrialisation, in order to complete its transition to an efficient system of population replacement...”
(quoted by: Szreter 1993, p. 674)

In an unpublished lecture given in 1949 at a military academy and revealingly (biopolitically) entitled “Demographic Sources of Power” Notestein goes even further and hints that beyond the time constraint the relationship between demographic and social processes are substantially different in the continental ‘East’. Due to an alternative development, in China and India there is a need for immediate intervention:

“I think one can only come to the conclusion that ...[fertility decline]. [in the case of China and India because of the size of the population] will not come about the by the normal automatic processes of urbanisation, industrialisation, education and so on which have been rather effective in the case of Japan; that if this area is to get out, some means, as yet unknown, must be found for speeding up the process, and by speeding the process I mean dropping the fertility of the rural population in the hinterlands.”
(Notestein 1949, Office of Population Research, Princeton, Library, manuscript p. 17)

As Szreter has shown, the political environment is important in the above shift in argument, given that at the time of the statement Soviet atomic weapon capacity had just become a fact, and Mao had just taken the Chinese communists to victory and had established a communist political order (Szreter 1993). This set of circumstances was interpreted by the demographers and the Rockefeller Foundation, which funded them, as meaning that ‘overpopulation’ could easily lead to social discontent, which could prepare the ground for communist takeover. In this way not only did neo-Malthusian push for fertility-decrease receive an ideological support, but as the texts quoted above show, the population growth debate was clearly (re)formulated in an East-West framework.

But in this neo-Malthusian turn there was more than just pure politics of the Cold War. It was a logical withdrawal into the shells of the “globalized” pre-war discourses even maintaining some of the previously despised elements. In the above quoted lecture on demography and power, and in a Foucaultian manner, Notestein for instance aims at getting into the deeper reality of the societies “inherited” for control from the previous colonisers. In his words, instead of just the fight for better mortality he is seeking

control over fertility (i.e. Life), or as he puts it, the “intimate details” of social life:⁶

“We have given these societies elements of complexity....” (Notestein 1949, p. 21)

and

“We have touched these societies at their exterior, but the intimate details of their existence remain pretty unchanged.” (Notestein 1949, p. 22)

This discursive victory over the liberation elements of the modernizationist transition theory (overpopulation is “solved” by unavoidable social progress) created the intellectual (and social and financial) basis for what Paul Demény calls the ‘family planning industry’ (Demény 1988). The reconnection to the pre-war discourses gave new chances for the population activists and some business groups to start a new campaign institutionalising the inner Malthusian, biopolitical control over the lower social groups on a global, West-Third World scale. This network was extremely influential in the American-led global population policy, and up to the early 1980s it was not seriously challenged. Till that period the “family planning” discourse was able to bridge the liberal-conservative turns in domestic American population policy (See Demény 1988; Teitelbaum–Winter 1998, Chapter. 7; Greenhalgh 1996).

The discourse of global Western population policy, which had been based on the above described mixture of modernizationist and biopolitical-interventionist discourses, unambiguously presented fertility decrease as a virtue in itself. On the one hand, the possibility of the exhaustion of global resources as a result of ‘overpopulation’ was repeated again and again, while on the other hand prejudice toward the lower classes was projected onto the Third World. This transfer of targets can be well illustrated by a sentence in Notestein’s introduction to the new edition of Malthus’ work in 1960:

“These populations [of technologically underdeveloped nations] have grown rather slowly since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and often present a picture of disease, illiteracy and poverty for the masses with which Malthus was wholly familiar”. (Malthus et al. 1960, p. vii)

The same pattern appears in another essay of the book written by Frederick Osborn. The author harboured eugenic views in the 1930s and was a founding member of the Population Association of America and the second president of the Population Council and in this essay he summarises the findings and the reports of the Population Council at the end of the 1950s. The essay maps the world, its regions, religions and cultures on the basis of propensity toward fertility control and the reduction of large families being an obstacle of improving “the quality of family life”. Beside the mapping it also provides elaborate instructions on intervention, who should be considered as a local leader, how to take into account

Family Planning Industry and Global Biopolitics between the 1950s and 1970s

⁶ It is important to note the overtly sexual connotations here. For the link between sexuality, racism and colonization see: (Williams–Chrisman 1994, p. 1; Stoler 1995).

nationalistic spirit or in general how we can overcome “cultural and political barriers” (Osborn 1960). The claim is that the high fertility in certain social groups or in certain areas of the world is the main cause of the “qualitative” problems and the “extra” children should not get born.

“But as a general rule it must be recognised that for most people in areas where birth rates are high and incomes are low, large families make it difficult to improve the care and education of children, and handicap all efforts to improve the quality of family life.” (Osborn 1960, p. 93)

Despite the anti-natalist argument held to be valid universally, it is to be noted, that the author in the case of members of the “us” group in the East/West dichotomy (“advanced countries”) allows for indirect improvement via social conditions.

In advanced countries:

“Excessive fertility by families with meager resources must be recognised as one of the potent forces in the perpetuation of slums, ill health, inadequate education, and even delinquency. A greater acceptance of the idea that parents should be responsible not to have more children than they can care for should go a long way toward improving the situation ... More attention should, therefore, be given to the economic and social conditions which influence reproductive trends on human life in its qualitative aspects” (Osborn 1960, p. 94)

This intervention on the social side was secured only for the American lower class, while in the other territories (Latin-America, Asia, Arab states etc.) high fertility was considered to be the prime cause of social ills and there is no elaborate discussion of the possibilities of economic progress in the Third World.

The rate of population growth in many underdeveloped areas is now much greater than was ever experienced in European countries. In most of the others it will be so in the foreseeable future. And the population base is far larger than it ever was in Europe. Unless an effort equal to that made for the control of death is made for the control of fertility, and unless a reduction of births is achieved within a few decades, the hopes of great but underdeveloped nations for better conditions of life may prove futile, while the present standard of economically advanced nations will decline (Osborn 1960, p. 95)

It is important to note that this neo-Malthusian or interventionist move was coupled with cultural essentialism legitimising the above described perspective. According to this Orientalist arguments European social and cultural structures have always lowered fertility and promoted “responsible” parenthood, while in the case of other regions, mainly in some Latin-American, Asian and Arabic countries procreation is “prescribed” (Osborn 1960, 115–138). Interestingly In Osborn’s essay, despite being discussed completely separated from the region called Europe, the Soviet Union (no mention of Eastern Europe) is counted as a modern industrial area which together with the United States had a special responsibility in handling their own population growth. As Osborn argues their population problem is

“important not only to their own people, but also to the well-being and even to the peace of the world as a whole” (Osborn 1960, p. 127).

To make the fertility control campaign efficient the neo-Malthusian global population policy discourse took on a war vocabulary (Bandarage 1998, p. 65). To achieve precisely stated goals of various programs, there was to be a ‘war’ on ‘dangerous’ elements using the new ‘arsenal’ of scientific results. The activated vocabulary often included concepts like ‘catastrophic situation’ which was in need of constant crisis management. The possibility of the exhaustion of resources came up, as did the scare of significant famines, and these provided background for the formulation of a apocalyptic picture of population growth.

As can be seen from the above, this period was clearly for ‘overriding’ (Sen’s term, Sen, 1994), and ‘intervention’, and American governmental organisations, population policy organisations and foundations tried to sell such “balancing” programs to the governments of the countries of the Third World. Intervention occurred not only at the level of international politics, but these organisations accepted the thought of violating human rights. They presented birth control and sterilisation programs as economic aid programs (e.g., 25 dollars for a complete sterilisation), and in a covered manner they supported the direct use of violence (Bandarage 1998, pp. 70–78; Sen 1994, p. 3. Also see Andorka’s description of the 1980s. Andorka 1990, pp. 133–41).

The most famous examples of such intervention programs are policies followed in India and Bangladesh. In the former country, there was a population ‘emergency’ declared in 1975, and the government assisted in making 8 million abortions. This program did not avoid using violence, and such cases contributed to the collapse of the first Indira Gandhi government (Andorka 1990, p. 136; Bandarage 1998, pp. 72–78). Steps similar to those taken in India were suggested by foreign organisations in Bangladesh as part of the five-year plan from 1973 to 1978.

Although it was not a result of direct international pressure, the Chinese intervention into population growth can be listed among those programs which wished to limit population growth violently (Andorka 1990, pp. 135–36; Bandarage 1998, pp. 78–80). China introduced its fertility control program containing eugenic elements, in 1979, and within this framework it used social aid and the withholding of such to spread ‘one-child’ families. But beyond the social control, there were instances of coerced abortions and sterilisation, and the population itself was pushed to execute these acts of violence (e.g., the “disappearance” of undesired, usually female babies). The ‘one-child’ program was Chinese, but this does not mean that it did not receive international aid and support. To this day in debates on population it is mentioned as a ‘successful’ example of intervention. In the golden age of the ‘family planning industry’ in the name of development, there was hardly a counterbalance to such efforts. On the international level the countries of the Third World partly depended on material aid, and partly, being influenced by the dominant discourse, voluntarily subordinated themselves to the above-mentioned attempts and programs.

As we will see later only the cold war antagonism limited the spread and effective execution of such programs. For example, at the 1974 Population World Conference in Bucharest, the ‘Eastern’ block, in concert with the countries of the Third World, stressed the importance of social progress and planning. This was a modernizationist rhetoric, stressing the ‘development’ side against the intervention. In a characteristic way it also covered up the

pro-natalist intervention attempts of the host government (Kligman 1998, pp. 90–92).

Population Discourses from the 1980s

From the late 1970s the combined pro-intervention and modernisation approach within a directly or “functionally” racist discursive framework has been attacked in several points. It came under serious criticism from Third World activists and American feminist writers. The UN, through special conferences and publications, studied the human rights problems (United Nations 1990) and wrote recommendations for the program planners. In another aspect, criticism drew attention to the entirety of reproduction and the unique position of women, i.e., the view that discrimination against women should be decreased, and that they should be defended from the consequences of their disadvantageous situations. Among other views, this was the basis of the late international rejection of the Chinese population policy.

On the other hand American pro-life activists built tremendous pressure on the US government to withdraw from programs actively promoting abortion (Teitelbaum–Winter 1998; Greenhalgh 1996; Bandarage 1998). Further, unambiguous change occurred in the question of integrating population growth and development strategy as their inseparability was declared, and on this level the argument was refused that environmental degradation is merely a Third World and population growth problem:

But beside the political challenges there were changes on the discursive level also during the 1980s. On the one hand the modernisation approach with its stress on measurable progress was replaced by discourses focusing on “qualitative” “civilisation” issues. Thus it seems that after an interlude of modernisation discourse we have arrived into a new era in which the belief in large-scale quantitative progress disappeared. Instead of stressing numerical targets (e.g. in fertility decline) more and more emphasis was put on issues like gender inequalities, the well-being of women etc. (United Nations 1994, World Bank 1994). The question of quantitative overpopulation was less important and long term ecological issues took the function of indicating “imbalance”. Furthermore the simplified and generalised idea of population as dependent or independent variable (on the side of which intervention just speeds up the work of progress) disappeared and instead the interrelationship of cultural, social, technological and demographic processes was emphasised. This also meant the formulation of different “non-Western” regions, in which process Eastern Europe as a region also got on the map of distinct areas. Thus it seems that after rewriting the demographic transition theory and forming a global biopolitical framework the pre second world war patterns focusing on “qualitative” differences reappeared rather vividly in a “politically correct manner”. These changes clearly appeared also in the theory of the so called second demographic transition. But before analysing this later theory it is worthwhile following the shift in discourses in historical demography and especially family history which was among the first to establish the ideas of qualitatively different regions within Europe.

Eastern Europe and Southern Europe as distinct regions have never been fully integrated into the first “transition” discourse. These regions have been basically put into a middling category of an almost developed world not indicating any danger of overpopulation. In terms of Western discourses, Eastern Europe first received considerable attention only in historical demography and mainly in Britain. It was John Hajnal, an English statistician of Hungarian origin, and the researchers of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure who made an attempt to overcome the “fallacies” of modernisation theory. Their main aim was to demonstrate that at least in the West there was no development from “large families” or complex households to “modern nuclear family”, while some other regions of Europe belonged to a different household and family system (among other writings see: Hajnal 1965, 1983; Wrigley–Schofield 1981; Laslett–Wall 1972; Laslett 1983; Saito 1996; Faragó 1997; Todorova 1993; Schneider 1996; Macfarlane 1978, 1986, 1987).

In 1965 Hajnal divided Europe at the turn of the 19th and 20th century into two halves at the line of St. Petersburg–Trieste. The division was based on the age at first marriage and the proportion of never married, that is on the indicators of “moral” self-restraint (“negative check” on population growth) promoted by Malthus. According to Hajnal as opposed to the West Eastern Europe could be characterized by a relatively early age at marriage (for women under 20, for men under 24) and an almost complete absence of never married singles. Later this model was further pushed back in history at least till the 16th century and elaborated as a system of household formation. In the meantime the region of Eastern Europe was linked to India, that is the Third World (Hajnal 1965, 1983).

The Hajnal pattern based on statistical averages was interpreted by the members and collaborators of the Cambridge Group as a cornerstone of a general household structure model (Laslett–Wall 1972; Wall 1983; Macfarlane, 1978, 1986). In the later social historical and demographic literature this model assumed a primary role in historical explanation. As opposed to the original statement of Hajnal it was relegated further into the past, beyond the point of the “great transformation” from “peasant economy” to capitalism (Macfarlane, 1978; Smith, 1984). It was presented as a significant factor in the “unique” development of Europe (Jones 1987; Laslett–Melegh 2001). In this way the Malthusian discursive system got additional historical “evidence” and it could be applied and repeated within Europe, creating qualitatively different regions.

This Malthusian discourse could be seen not only in the historical analysis of marriage patterns and household formation. It was integrated into the historical interpretation of European population processes prior to the 20th century, that is to say prior to the demographic transition. This could be seen mainly in the highly influential work of Wrigley and Schofield on the population history of England based on the data of a large number of English parishes and the method of retrospective population projection. between the early 16th and mid 19th centuries (Wrigley–Schofield 1981). The authors openly relied on the Malthusian idea of a relationship between population and economic growth formulated as relationship between the development of prices and marriage formation, fertility and mortality. According to them between the 16th and 19th century, mortality figures (average life expectancy at birth) and prices were

correlating in early modern England, while some relationship could be found between price waves and changes in the age at first marriage. This rationality of not getting married in times of economic hardship was interpreted as a basis of the “low pressure” Malthusian system as opposed to “high pressure” ones. These “civilizational” findings then further extended the neo-Malthusian revision of the population history of England and together with the Hajnal line served as a basis for setting up separate regions in Europe, which regional identities have been used as explanations of the differential well-being of the different countries. In other words in the 1970s and 1980s the demarcation line of Malthus between propertyless and propertied classes was reformulated as a regional border between Eastern-Central and North Western Europe in historical demography .

The Theory of the Second Demographic Transition

The anti-modernizationist criticism of the above mentioned historical sociologists and historical demographers was a great impetus for the further revision of the demographic transition theory, which, as we could see, was rewritten as early as the late 1940s.⁷ In the mid 1980s a new attempt was made to revitalise the idea of transition in the form of a “second demographic transition theory.” This new theory was mainly cherished by European demographers and Anglo-Saxon scholars have not been in the fore front (van de Kaa 1987, 1988, 1996, 1999a, b; Lesthaeghe 1991; Cliquet 1991; Hablicsek 1995; Dányi 2001; Kamarás 2002).

The theory consciously refers back to the first one, but it seems that they are only similar in the idea of the West being the pioneer of historical development. In all other aspects the differences are so big, that it is rather misleading to use the same term for them. Even it seems that the second demographic transition theory is a substantial rewriting of the first theory on a qualitative, civilizational grounds in which revision the original idea of social progress leading automatically to changes in demographic behaviour is almost completely forgotten. Let us now sum up the differences and the way biopolitical discourses are reformulated from a Western perspective.

The first great difference is that while the first transition theory was a self-confident modernizationist credo with the hope of solving long term problems of imbalance between resources and population, the second transition theory is certainly much less “victorious” and much more “defensive.” This change is certainly related to some changes in actual demographic behaviour. As opposed to the originally assumed stagnation of population growth after the transition since the 1980s and excluding migration there is a population decline in many European countries. Fertility figures have reached all time low levels, divorce rates have increased to extreme highs. The new generations are not willing to get married and they prefer cohabitation instead of legally binding arrangements, and therefore the ratio of birth out of wedlock increases.

Thus there is a clear sense of crisis which revokes or which is expressed by pre-war ideas about the civilizational catastrophe due to the decline of fertility among the more “civilised” groups. Here the “flooding” danger is not coming from to the lower classes, but from immigrants coming from other regions of the world. One of the most prominent theoretician of this transition and a leading European demographer van de Kaa clearly speaks about such dangers, explicitly calls for the “management of decline” and

⁷ This analysis is based on the study written together with my colleague Péter Óri. see: Melegh-Óri 2002.

considers the fate of the European civilisation from a demographic point of view in the following way:

Interpreting Europe's current demographic condition in terms of a process stretching over several centuries evidently casts new light on the way the relative, and soon probably absolute decline in numbers, should be managed. Samuel Huntington's view of the future, for example, is one in which civilisations will clash. These views are not universally applauded. Even so, the thought that future armed conflicts will be fought not between nation states, but between groups of kindred nations is, from a European perspective, quite compelling. Should such considerations influence the thinking about European population issues? Yes. to some extent they probably should. However, in my view, it is a matter of degree rather than fundamentals. (van de Kaa 1999a, p. 39)

This sense of gloom over the fate of “kindred” nations is obviously linked the problem of immigration pressure. The theoreticians argue that due to all time low fertility rates the population growth of Western Europe can only come from migration. Here the prime consideration is once again not the number of people but their “quality”. A little later in his text, after the argument above van de Kaa writes in line with the pre-war ideas:

Long term considerations lead to the conclusion that the quality of immigrants and their willingness and ability to integrate are important for the viability and continuity of European civilisation. This suggests that a policy aimed at accepting only those who cannot reasonably refused entry, is not optimal. (van de Kaa 1999, p. 40)

The clear promotion of active selection on the basis of quality and “viability” and “continuity” certainly reminds us of pre second world war cognitive structures. Here it seems that instead of controlling highly fertile lower class groups and related immigrants like in the United States in the early 20th century, the main idea is filtering immigrants via a definite positive selection process for securing a more cohesive Western society. It is to be noted that here the fear is not only from people coming from previous non-European colonies, but also from East European and especially Russian and Ukrainian migrants beyond the “cordon sanitaire” Central European region (see Okólski in the same volume Okólski 1999). They are also from a “non-kindred” area.

This defensive spirit. casts shadow on other aspects of the second transition also. As compared to quantitative narrative of figures and progress in the theory of the first transition, here there is much emphasis on the interaction of values and the efficient. contraceptive techniques. The “selfish” idea of self-fulfilment takes over the idea of serving the family, while marriage is postponed or refused totally (Baumann 1996; Lesthaege 1991). Some authors welcome this “liberation” as a new achievement of European individualism or “bourgeois postmodernity”, while others despise it or regard it at least as problematic (Lesthaege 1991 versus van de Kaa 1987; Pongrácz 1998).

Consciously relying on the above discussed results of historical demography values and the related idea of varying marriage patterns the discourse on the second demographic transition divides up Europe into regions (Macura–Sternberg–Garcia 1998). The important thing to note is

that, as opposed to the first theory where the Third World was on the other end of the developmental scale, here the constitutive Other of Western Europe is Eastern Europe just like in the case of the above Hajnal line of historical demography. This appears clearly in the comment of van de Kaa in which he praises the new theory of the second demographic transition as being able to give a very good overview about the differences between “East European countries and the other parts of Europe” (van de Kaa 1988, p. 19).

The discovered regional differences are seen as partly temporal ones, namely Eastern Europe has only started the movement toward the new “European” scenarios. These characteristics are stressed for instance by another leading demographer David Coleman, who argues that after 50 years of “aberration” (sic!) Eastern and Central Europe are “able to resume the modernising trajectories”:

While the collapse of the iron curtain has removed a major obstacle to convergence between East and West, it has also provoked severe but (it is assumed) short-time crisis responses in sharply lowered birth rates, sharply raised death rates and heightened internal and external migration. These are likely to take several years to iron out, although vital rates in some countries (Poland, Czech republic) are already showing signs of returning to more 'normal' level or at least Western European level. What 'normal' levels actually are in an Eastern Europe which is modern, prosperous and free remains to be seen. Populations of that region have not previously enjoyed such a combination of circumstances. If their future could be predicted as return to some 'normal' trajectory or logical continuation of earlier interrupted trends, then our work would be mostly done. (Coleman 1997, p. 27)

But in addition to the “Eurocentric” understanding of the Western norms and the total exclusion of some European regions from “main stream” European history he hints that historical patterns might win over the possibility of convergence and temporal levelling:

Whether Hajnal's line will continue to divide Europe in any important ways remains to be seen, although some of the differences in marriage formation and in the timing of births have been remarkably resilient to change up to 1995.” (Coleman 1997, pp. 27–28)

Van de Kaa, the father of this new “transition” theory goes even further and actually starts speaking about *Europa major* (including non-Muslim Soviet territories), *Europa minor* (including European Union plus Central European states) and *Europa unita* (European Union plus soon to be member Central European states) According to him these regional differences might explain long term population trends. Thus in his view we cannot assume the disappearance of the cold war division:

The current differences between the two sides of the Iron Curtain are easily understandable in this perspective. they should in due course diminish, but to the extent that Iron Curtain coincided with earlier fault lines, they are unlikely to disappear entirely. (van de Kaa 1999a, p. 32)

Thus it seems that there is a direct discursive link between the early 20th century American patterns and the second demographic transition theory, which as opposed to the first one totally ignores the idea of general progress promoted by the first transition theory. The Western model here is not only a numerical target which can be reached by different policies, but a qualitatively different structural model which can be followed only by some kind of “integration” and “civilizational” processes. In other words it seems that by essentializing regional-cultural categories and stressing the qualitative aspects of demographic change, in its “subconsciousness” the new theory invokes a new/old racism separating normal from abnormal and promotes the idea of selection. Van de Kaa for instance finishes his vision on Europe and its population with the following comments promoting “new Europeans” instead of multicultural heterogeneity:

Will Europe again become a melting pot of different peoples from which a new 'Europeans' will emerge, or will we witness the emergence of a multiplicity of 'adjective' Europeans? I'm happy to conclude by stating that I do not have the answer. However, I prefer the first outcome to the second, even though it implies that the classical discussion in literature about the positive selection for tall, blond and blue-eyed people amongst those following the retreating glaciers north to Scandinavia (completed 6 500 BC), will ultimately only meet dark eyes full of incomprehension.

With this statement Van de Kaa clearly stands for the openness of Europe in terms of immigration. But his intention is formulated in a racist language, which invokes long forgotten patterns. We might say looking at the development of Anglo-Saxon or Western population discourses in the 20th century that the basic discourse and the political constellations within it have been reproduced again and again. The discourse did not change with the “oblivion” of the demographic and civilizational dangers of the lower classes. The Western discourse told from a top position on the East/West civilizational slope did not change with the shift in the object of exclusion from the domestic lower class to non-Western regions of the world. It just reproduced itself. Even more it seems that during the 1970s there was a major shift from modernisation discourses, to a discourse which stresses a link between qualitative differences on a territorial basis and thus repeats and materialises the basic elements of pre-war structures described in the first part of this paper. And on this recent “Western” map of qualitative differences Eastern Europe has become of crucial importance. But for a better understanding of the link between biopolitical discursive mechanisms and the East/West slope we should move to the Eastern side of the discursive walls and lines.

4. Further Down the East/West Slope: Hungarian and East European Discourses

In the late 1920s and early 1930s Hungary’s agrarian sector sunk into a deep crisis. It had great difficulties due to the lack of proper machinery, the extremely low agrarian wages and the rigid product structure of small scale peasant units. Due the combined effect of such imbalances and the unfavourable ownership structure Hungarian agriculture relied on either big

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estates exploiting extremely cheap labour or on inward looking, not market oriented peasant economies. This made the fate of peasantry a central issue especially for some young radical populist writers and social scientists, who found the ‘underclass’ status of peasantry appalling.⁸ Among them the most important authors are Imre Kovács (Kovács 1989), Lajos Fülep (Fülep 1984), János Kodolányi (Kodolányi 1963), Ferenc Erdei, László Német, Péter Veres (for analysis see: Andorka 1969, 1975; Monigl 1990b, pp. 20–45; Melegh 1999c; Némédi 1985; Kovács–Melegh 1997).

In the eyes of the above mentioned radical intellectuals the most relevant symptom of the crisis was the falling fertility rate of the peasants, especially in the ‘cursed’ ‘single child’ areas. It was stressed that in certain regions of the country “barbaric” birth control devices were used by peasant women in order to stop having more children, or ideally just to have one. This ‘lack of vitality’ was understood as the sign of a social crisis. The ‘self-destructive’ behaviour of these groups were morally rejected by these radical intellectuals (See Fülep 1984). They called the analysed phenomena collective ‘suicide’ or ‘silent revolution’ against the ‘aristocratic’, ‘lordly’ Hungarian agrarian system. (Kovács 1989). Kovács for instance argues that crisis is an immediate consequence of demographic events like “abortion”:

The abortion, the biological implementation of fertility control ...leads to the spiritual, intellectual and moral defeatism of the society. (Kovács 1989, p. 91.)

Erdei also stresses the same the same negatively evaluated links between fertility control and society:

The single child system is only one phenomenon in the peasant society forced into strike. It is accompanied by the special distortion of the whole life...In contrast [to normal peasant life] the life of peasants with one child is totally decadent, exhausted and alienated. Here not the husband is the leader, but the woman, being young is of no value and it is not respected, it is ruled by the cynical generation of the elderly, here there is no vitality, there is no fight for the girl, the lads, the young husband does not kill the mother in law, even does not bang the table if he is not allowed to his wife for the night. (Erdei 1942, pp. 67–68.)

The root of this populist (plebeian) biopolitical anxiety was discourse on losing the “national character” due to low fertility rates in the lower social groups. In this pattern the reproduction of the middle classes or the “embourgeoisement” of the lower classes was seen as a danger. Middle classes were seen as groups of non-Hungarian (Jewish, German) character “exploiting” the lower classes. The ‘true Hungarianness’ of the not “corrupted” peasants put the value of their children high, while the “selfish” demographic patterns of the ‘aristocratic’ or ethnically different middle classes were not to be supported. The worry about the increase of ethnically different groups (mainly Germans) is clear in the remarks related to the “sunk” villages by Imre Kovács:

⁸ The use of the term ‘populist’ is rather controversial in the case of ‘népi’ (“from the people”, “of the people”) writers and intellectuals. It is partially misleading as it invokes demagogy and short term political interests. Here it is used as a descriptive category for a movement for a movement, which wanted to ‘discover’ the Hungarian countryside and wanted to mobilize the population for the cause of the ‘peasants’ and those in the lower groups of the nation. In character they have links to the Russian ‘narodnik’ movement. Unfortunately no exact term can be found.

The life and death struggle of the Transdanubian region was first recognised three years ago when in HIDAS [a Transdanubian village] the Hungarian church was transferred officially to the Germans. The Hungarians have dispersed in the storms of the centuries and they have been replaced by the Germans. The statisticians have not ignored the problem and they have shown that the Hungarians of Hidas exist: in the cemetery, in neighbouring villages and in America! (Kovács 1989, p. 97.)

This type of discourse largely differs from the American debates of the 1930s and explains partly the rejection of Malthusian anti-natalism. The differences stem from, first, the spread of historical discourses on progress, second the different methods for defining ‘aliens’, third, the different form of connecting ‘stylistic’ elements. But these differences should not divert our attention from basic similarities.

The sharpest difference is in the interpretation of modern development. The American and Western discourses are based on the idea of civilizational progress led by the West, which initiates and pioneers the fall of fertility and demographic transition. The discourse followed by the populists does not welcome these changes and even they make an odd twist in the relationship between progress and demographic changes. These people argue that Hungary or certain Hungarian social groups have been part of an unbalanced progress of civilisation and this make the peasants decrease their fertility. Here progress is not a “liberating” or “glorious” process, but an ambiguous social advancement, which takes away certain values while does not provide new ones. So as opposed to the American and Western transition discourses it looks at “civilisation” and its consequences with some suspicion. It is to be noted that just like in the original transition theory in the texts of the populist writers most of the times population development is not seen as an independent variable, but mainly as an aspect or intermediary factor of social. structure and power (Erdei 1942, Kovács 1989).

Beside the interpretation of progress there is also a sharp a contrast in the definition of ‘aliens’. Both discourses start from a biopolitical foundation to differentiate between groups with high or low quality. While in the Anglo-Saxon case the discourse tends to identify the lower classes as a source of danger and constructs social groups to be regulated on a racial or class basis, the Hungarian populists used an ethno-status system in the 1930s to identify a ‘status-oriented middle class’ and the Jewish-German middle classes as “aliens”. As we could see above this later category included the better-off German (Swabian) peasantry also. In the words of Erdei peasants were not only subordinated to the traditional, conservative middle classes in the form of a lord-serf relationship, or to better of German peasants but also to the “Westernized” and “alien” new bourgeoisie:

The real bourgeois society satisfying the criteria of capitalism was not only a form without history, but also an isolated separate piece beside the historical status system of the "natives". ..Thus it became a colonial formation and an "alien body" within the general social system. (Erdei 1976, p. 23.)

Significant differences are also to be found in the connection of linguistic elements. In the Anglo-Saxon, American discourse critical

elements serve as an apology and they are ordered in the interest of strengthening the constellation of power. In the Hungarian discourses “total” criticism serves the interest of radical and comprehensive change.

The “strategic fields of opportunities” of the two discourses are similar to a large extent. Just like in the case Anglo-Saxon and Western discourses social development can be forgotten in order to pursue direct control over demographic processes (as we saw when analysing the theory of demographic transition). The Hungarian ‘populist’ discourse can also forget the program of social improvement and look for direct measures to exclude bourgeois Jews or Germans. During the war with regard to populist discourses the racist turn could be seen partly in the destruction of the solidarity for the ‘alienated’ group, partly in promoting a complete “change of guard” and partly in the active antisemitism of some populist intellectuals. Furthermore after the war this discourse created a basis for the forced expulsion of several thousand Swabian-Germans due to their alleged collective collaboration with the Nazis and the lack of ‘loyalty’ toward the Hungarian nation.

As it can be seen from the above said, discourses concerning Hungarian population development cannot be interpreted without the strong East-West dichotomy, as this link explains the ‘odd twists’ noted earlier. The discourse of Western superiority and its civilizational achievements seen in the case of American and Western discourses appear also here but it is seen from a different angle. Actually the use of the Western mirror as a measure of qualifying the Hungarian development and the different angle or position in the discourse makes the Hungarian discourse meaningful (Böröcz 2000, pp. 76–89; Melegh 1994; Mignolo 2000, pp. 49–90). Being on the “sideline” means that the experienced civilizational progress is seen as just following somebody else’s achievement, thus it cannot be completely appropriated and it is seen as some kind of aversion. In the field of population it is also linked to a frustration of not being in the focus point and thus the decrease of fertility is a further erosion of a “global” position. This tension is overtly clear in the case of Erdei, who in a longer essay on the Hungarian social structure uses a Western mirror to understand the above quoted “colonial”, “distorted” type of social development.

In the original capitalist society the technology of production, the capitalist social relations and the bourgeois structure of the class society developed jointly on the basis of medieval formations....As a contrast modern development did not proceed in the same manner in the East-European societies. (Erdei 1976, p. 23.)

The same negative interpretation of development conflict, and even the denial of the “non-Western” reality also appears in the writings of István Bibó another prominent social thinker of the period closely linked to populist figures. He writes about the national development

This means that nations living in this region lacked what was naturally, clearly, precisely and concretely present in both the everyday life and community consciousness of nations in Western Europe. A reality in their own national and state framework...(Bibó 1991)

This is the mirror in which Hungarian modernity appears to be half made, distorted, not authentic, even not real. Furthermore it leads to a clear

inferiority complex without which the discourses on population cannot be understood. Here the fertility decline is not a sign of modernity, but of “weakness”, here fertility control is not immoral on religious grounds, but it is seen as a sign of the total corruption of the whole community.

Nonetheless the villages practising a single child system are the best demonstrations of the distorted development of the peasantry. Because the single child system is not the same phenomenon as the fertility control in the bourgeois society. The bourgeois fertility control – as all the phenomena of this society – is not a structure crystallised into frozen and objectified forms, but an intermediate phenomenon of the life channelled by interests, which immediately changes and transforms if interests change. ...In contrast the single child system of peasants is not such a direct and case by case consequence. This fertility control is the alleviation of an unmanageable situation by the creation of social forms. (Erdei 1942, p. 86.)

Or with a clear nationalist overtone and a direct reference to the loss of territories after the first world war Kovács argues:

We are a disappearing nation. ...The cool laws of sociology indicate a devastated and cruel future: after the ageing truncated country comes the weakened and depopulated truncated country. (Kovács 1989, pp. 137–138.)

This social form originating from the distorted, “colonial” non-Western development corrupts the behaviour of the peasants. From this positioning follows the specification of the “unworthy” (“corrupt” conservative Hungarian ruling class plus the “alien” bourgeoisie) and the idea of pronatalism. Thus the epistemological locus of the speaker in the East-West discourse delegating this region into a semi-developed or border position explains the differences finding in specifying aliens and the content of the population policy (Mignolo 2000; Böröcz 2000). In the “West” the alien is the one, who lags behind in the civilizational process, while in the “East” (“following the West in a distorted manner”) the anxiety is about the middle classes, a part of which “badly” represents the Western model in the region. This type of discursive positioning, which might explain much of the tragedy of the second world war throughout “half-Western” Europe, is also the one which guides the statements of the communist, who overtly fought against or competed with the West on a scale of historical progress.

Eastern and Central Europeans have never been good students of Malthus. We even can say that there was overt hostility against his theory, especially after the second world war (See Petersen 1988). Communist ideologues openly rejected the idea of ‘overpopulation’ referring to a few statements of Marx who in the cited texts argued that there is not an eternal law of population development but only specific ones linked to different social systems. This animosity and the reversal of the original civilizational argument is evidently clear in the comments of the Ukrainian and the Yugoslav delegate to the United Nations Population Commission, who in 1947 described the Malthusian system as ‘barbaric’:

I would consider it barbaric for the Commission to contemplate a limitation of marriages or of legitimate births, and this for any country whatsoever, at

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any period whatsoever. With an adequate social organisation it is possible to face any increase in population [quoted by Petersen 1988, p 93.]

“Cruelly, you [Western demographers} intend to adjust the population to the economy, while we Communists want to adjust the economy to the population” [quoted by Petersen 1988, p. 93.]

But behind this sharp reaction there was more than just the willingness to show the faithfulness to Marx’s ideas. We could see above that in the 1930s Eastern and Central European discourses were formulated in the same manner even before the communist influence. The similarity between the “populist” and “communist” discourses is probably due not to the same ideological inclinations, but the East-West dichotomy and the thus designated locus on the civilizational slope. Communist and populist actors both imagined themselves in a frustrated, non-Western position in which the jubilant Malthusianism and civilizational self-celebration of the West did not make sense or was counterbalanced by counterdiscourses. The development of the above “communist” post war discourses further reveal this East/West positioning mechanism and interaction within a biopolitical discursive framework.

Pro-natalism in State-socialist Hungary

Most analysts writing on the population policy of Eastern European socialist countries invoke the issue of ideological radicalism and even totalitarian warfare against the people (Kligman 1998; Melegh 1999a; Petersen 1988; Teitelbaum–Winter 1998). The development of Hungarian socialist population policy only partially satisfies these images. A gradual movement can be narrated from intolerant pronatalism, toward a tolerant version also incorporating some elements of neo-Malthusian family planning, preparing the ground for a mixed population discourse in the 1990s. In other words there was a movement from active anti-Western position into such a discursive space in which anti-natalism of the “West” was combined with “Eastern” “frustrated” pronatalism, which discursive positioning explains much of the emerging racism in Hungary.

After the communist takeover in 1948 the radical communist party ideologues immediately started a program of rapid ‘progress’ on all levels of socio-demographic life including mortality, especially child mortality, fertility, medical care and the incorporation of women into the planned economy. The basic discourse was that of a modernisation and a search of results with regard to the past and the ‘capitalist’ countries of the West. Most reports started with such ‘inferiority – superiority’ games:

“Although infant mortality decreased from 13,1% of 1938 to 7.4% in 1952, it is still high as compared to certain developed capitalist countries.” (Monigl 1992a, p. 39.)

In this competitive discourse on the achievements of modernisation generally they concluded with some proposals for extra propaganda and work efforts for the sake of greater progress. The central agitation and propaganda department of the Hungarian Workers’ Party for instance gave the following suggestions in order to increase fertility:

The propaganda should be organised around the following main questions:...

2. The superiority of the communist morale as compared to the bourgeois one with regard to family life and the gender relationship.

3. To show the protection of pregnant women, mothers and children by the state. The prestige of the working mothers contrasting this with the situation in the capitalist countries and the propaganda against propagation. (Monigl 1992a, p. 63.)

The above idea of progress could not be demonstrated on the level of the number of marriages and live births which did not show any kind of improvement or even there was a decline. This issue was tackled in two ways. The first one was a kind of a 'positive' social progress utopia, according to which the planned economy 'must' provide all the necessary supporting social and household facilities (24 hour kindergarten etc.) for the women performing their 'national duty'. The second was a 'negative' approach, which penalised those who did not fulfil their obligations toward the community. Childless couples were obliged to pay a special tax as they did not take their share in the 'collective efforts' to build a non-western socialist society. In 1953 abortion was banned and those asking or performing illegal abortion had to face criminal procedure. This one year was frighteningly similar to the late period of Ceausescu's rule in Romania (Kligman 1998).

The stigmatisation of social groups followed a special logic: any social group, which decreased fertility, was stigmatised. Especially peasants were publicly ridiculed. In the communist propaganda they were not only against socialism, opposing collectivisation (that could be enough for deportation), but also refused to take part in 'producing' enough worker for the growing socialist industry and despite of the 'rising' living standard.

With regard to the pre-war discourses the communist radicals thus followed the line of discussing the too low fertility of the peasantry, but they rejected its social empowerment and even they looked for its dissolution in the longer run. They stigmatised not only the middle classes but also the "heretic" lower classes. As opposed to the populist categorisation this type of biopolitical discourse relied exclusively on social composition and in most cases totally ignored the ethnic one. Characteristically the idea that social progress would lead to higher fertility also reappeared. That was based on the assumption that the "pioneering" workers had higher fertility and that the state 'taking care' of pregnant women, children and mothers would eventually provide enough facilities for the obeying families.

After 1953, due to the heavy internal criticism of the 'interventionist' pronatalism Hungarian communist leaders put greater and greater emphasis on social empowerment of families and the need to avoid any kind of direct control over the fertility of the families. Any ban on abortion for pronatalist purposes was ruled out immediately. This fear from too much intervention increased after the legalisation of abortion in other communist countries and after 1956, when the Hungarian revolution revealed the weaknesses of dictatorial rule. While there was a growing consensus over non-intervention within the governments and among the people giving advice to them, the political elite was more and more troubled with the "odd" idea that social progress had not increased but decreased fertility. By the early 1960s their

is a complete chaos around this question. In March 1960 the Ministry of Health gives the following account of population development:

“In a strange way the rise of the living standard had a negative impact on the number of births. This is proved by the fact that since the counterrevolution [the official term for the 1956 revolution] the number of births have declined, although since the counterrevolution the standard of living, the working conditions and the housing of the people improved. This is due to – according to the views of doctors and the abortion committees – the fact families do not undertake children as they are seen as an obstacle to raise the individual living standard (e.g. furniture, television, motorcycle)” (Monigl 1992b, p. 34).

The overall answer to this ‘strange’ relationship was to create a ‘public atmosphere’ in which the parenthood receives “prestige and honour”. Beside the regular campaign measures, population policy aiming at the “simple reproduction” of the population and “smoothing” the imbalances in Hungarian age-structure the government tried to compensate for the costs of having children. This overall aim has proved to be stable. Even today the main discourse on population development follows this line. But as compared to the 1960s, from the early 1970s when the universal family support system was established the solidarity with large families has been gradually given up and a selective policy appeared instead. The direction and the methods of stigmatisation have become much more complex by the mixture of different discourses.

Appearance of Anti-natalist Elements

Family planning discourse appeared in Hungary first in the context of “too many” abortions. Abortion figures in Hungary in the 1960s went above the number of live births. Among other discussions this “fact” motivated an internal note within the Planning Office. A head of department wrote the following:

“Fertility control should be based on contraception and not on the termination of pregnancy.” (Monigl 1992b, p. 86.)

Furthermore the note directly refers to a publication of the Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly on Japanese family planning.

“It is to be noted, that in certain states modern and efficient attempts are made for the organized campaign of contraceptives” (Monigl 1992b, p. 86.)

This anxiety over the consequences of abortion was only partly due to ideas of the ‘reproductive’ health’ of the women. Instead the main problem was that abortion increases the number of mentally retarded children. This “quality’ problem in the smaller and smaller group of newborns remained in the focus of discussions in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s.

But from the 1960s other elements of the ‘selection’ discourse also appear in the documents, most notably the declining progressivity of the child allowance after the third child in a family. In 1971 a report to the Economic Policy Committee argues, the ideal number of children is three and social groups with higher fertility should not be supported in

maintaining such a high fertility and in general differences in fertility should be decreased as:

“...in some families with great number of children the care for children is below the average social level due to objective (housing) and subjective reasons.”(Monigl 1989 p. 92.)

This is the first time when in a public document clearly the high fertility of a lower social group(the “Gypsies”) is stigmatised on the basis of “quality” issues. This emerging selection discourse during the 1970s receives the support of a human genetic arguments (Czeizel 1972, 1976). Endre Czeizel, a senior geneticist during the 1970s made several research programs on certain “deformities” and one of his findings were related to marriage between cousins. According to a report he found that:

“The rate of cousin marriage in the gypsy population is 6–8% as compared to the national figure of 0.3%. This partly explains the higher frequency of gypsies in certain deformation types.” (MTA 1982, p. 48.)

This ethnically based genetic research and the understanding of “Gypsy problems” as deviance completed the appearance of a selection discourse in a pro-natalist framework.

The increasing importance of cutting up the social and human continuum is also reflected in the new pro-natalist social and population policy measures of the 1980s (Adamik 2000, p. 200). At that time due to the ‘worsening’ situation, the government, the Demographic Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Central Statistical Office made repeated efforts to find a way out of the population crisis. Besides the actual demographic situation, there was also an urge as according to the party officials the “population issue” was more and more captured by the “populist” and the “new-left” opposition groups. The conclusion of the analysis was that there was a need for increasing the support for those families which took the responsibility of giving birth to children (Monigl 1990c, p. 72). Two alternatives were made: one which would have raised the fixed payment in the first three years of the children, and the other which would have extended the sick payment type support (a percentage of the salary) to women with newly born babies. The document acknowledged that the first one was more helpful toward the “less educated”, while the other preferred the better-educated and better-paid. The latter version was chosen for its “more beneficial impact on population development”. Thus by the mid 1980s, indirectly antinatalist discourses became institutionalized, while at the same time the solidarity with families having large numbers of children was still maintained.

In the 1990s Hungarian discourses went through dramatic changes. On the one hand, anti-nationalist, liberal ideas about fertility and reproduction control have appeared publicly, which have consciously referred to the ‘liberating’ elements of the Anglo-Saxon discourse, as the achievement of the ‘developed West’. These statements on the reproductive rights of women have become a part of a local, domestic, so-called ‘urban’ and ‘liberal’ discourse, which is intellectually opposed not to high fertility, but to pro-natalist intervention (Melegh 1999c). The second serious change was

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the appearance of ‘welfare exclusion’ which has been targeted against lower classes on an ethno-status or clearly racist base, while with regard to fertility it takes on antinatalist elements with regard to the unwanted groups.

These later attempts are quite visible in the discourse of “quality” population growth appearing in answers given to the general inquiry of the Demographic Research Institute (Melegh 1999d, pp. 206–07, 256, 288). Here there were arguments for controlling the number of “strategic” children allegedly being brought to life for additional family support and having much worse “quality”. Or even the fear of being overflowed by “alien” elements appears, which development clearly shows the change in the direction of stigmatisation. In pre-war Hungary the “danger” was not the flood of the low quality lower class, but the German “colonisation.” In the 1990s the direction changes completely. This shift clearly appears in the argument of an ex-minister of cultural affairs:

[If the trend] remains then in half a century the most thorough shift in ethnic structure will be completed in the Carpathian basin ever observed in the last 1100 years, and in the Carpathian basin the Magyar population is replaced by a frugal but Life adoring and life reproducing gypsy population today living in the greatest misery. (Melegh 1999d, p. 206.)

But this anti-lower class, anti-Roma feelings are apparent not only in the intellectual discourses. They are also visible in the changes in the family support system. For some years now the real value of universally available family allowance has decreased, while the middle classes have received relatively great tax exemptions on the basis of raising children. Public discourses generated in the decision making process is more and more about supporting those who “work in an orderly manner”. Or as the previous president of the ruling party declared in early 2001:

The greatest problem is that children are mainly born not where for bringing up them in a decent material, moral, cultural or intellectual manner the conditions are given or can be guaranteed with some help from the state, but in such families where these conditions are missing and even cannot be established due to the status of the family.⁹ Thus childbearing should be promoted in those families where the upbringing of such healthy personalities can be expected, who after twenty years will be able to carry burdens of the country. (quoted in Kovács , Zoltán: A vas és a cél országa. ÉS, 2001 no. 8.)

At the same time the support for the Roma population (being sharply distinguished from the “Hungarian” group) is questioned and concrete measure are made to link the social support to ‘schooling’ and other ‘integrative’ steps. These policies in the context of heavily “xenophobic” attitudes in the Hungarian population are clearly directed against the lower classes on an ethnic basis, and they aim at regulating such groups while supporting ‘quality’ reproduction (Fábián 1998).

Hungary thus witnesses the emergence of a mixture of “Eastern” and “Western” discourses. This new “double” discourse differentiates social groups in the name of ‘quality population growth’ and combines anti- and pro-natalist elements and via this biopolitical selections and controls. Such

⁹ In Hungarian the word “állapota” is used, which refers to historical status, social status and overall (mental, physical) conditions of the designated object.

a combination of discourses, one based on the idea of inferiority and the need to support “quality” reproduction, and the other aiming at the reduction of the size of ‘problematic’ groups is not only rigid and harsh, but it also has a special dynamic.

The main logic of this “middling” discourse is that Hungary is not on the top on the civilizational slope and there is a need to make great steps forward it, or it has to reclaim its Western status after being “forced out” from the “main road of History”. In this discursive framework such movement upwards on the slope can be achieved only by some kind of “self-colonisation” according to which non-Western Hungarians have to learn “proper Europeanness” or by finding further less civilised “Easterners”, who might be a basis of claiming a “Western” status. In either way the discursive identity structure is extremely fragile and leads the constant positioning on this East/West slope.

In terms of population control this means the continuity of pronatalism in which now there is no need for the numerical increase of the population but the raising of “quality” and the permanent support of local middle classes, which find it difficult to compete with the Western counterparts. On the other hand it also means the constant “othering” of those groups which somehow provide an obstacle on our way toward the West. Roma underclass is a perfect target in this Eastern frustrated Orientalism and with other non-Western elements provides a constitutive other in these identity structures. In other words Hungary shows a combination of “Eastern” and “Western” biopolitical controls in an atmosphere of frustrated attempts to gain a better geopolitical and discursive status, which combination is exactly that one which after the collapse of fragile domestic democratic political structures led to extremely repressive political systems in the mid 20th century exactly in such countries, which imagined themselves at the edge of the Western “cultural spheres.”

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