

IN THIS ISSUE

Population statistics and related demographic data are being utilized to an increasing extent in the interpretation of the social and economic history of a country. Indeed, projections of recent demographic trends afford background information essential to forecasters of social and economic problems of a country. In the article "A Reconstruction of the Demographic History of Greece," Dr. Vasilios G. Valaoras has described a century of population growth and the effects of wars, migration, and other national crises on the demographic history of Greece. In spite of many deficiencies in the censuses of population and in the registration of births and deaths, Dr. Valaoras has been able to present reasonable estimates of the major population changes and has demonstrated the application of methods for overcoming the limitations in the data. It is of interest that both the death rate and the birth rate have decreased sharply since World War II and the indicated population growth of about one per cent per year does not suggest a population explosion in that country.

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FOR the past 25 years a conventional measure of the effectiveness of various types of contraceptive methods has been the number of pregnancies experienced per 100 years of contraceptive exposure to the risk of pregnancy. An implicit assumption of this method is that length of exposure *per se* is not relevant; more specifically there is the assumption that the sum of one-year exposures for 10 couples is equivalent to a 10-year exposure for one couple. In an article in this issue "Length of Observation Period As a Factor Affecting the Contraceptive Failure Rate," Dr. R. G. Potter, Jr., adduces both mathemati-

cal and empirical evidence that failure rates tend to be relatively high in short observation periods and relatively low in long observational periods. The variable "deserves high priority as a control in any comparative work." The implications of this study are not restricted to contraceptive data.



Japan has attracted the attention of the world in her postwar economic recovery and also in her success at reducing both birth and death rates. This issue contains two research papers by Japanese authors whose names are well known in public health and demographic circles throughout the world. One of these is "Effect of Induced Abortion on the Reduction of Births in Japan," by Dr. Minoru Muramatsu. It is commonly known that induced abortions have been an outstanding means of reducing birth rates in Japan. Dr. Muramatsu has attempted to estimate the quantitative impact of induced abortion by a method described in the article. He finds that "the number of live births in 1955 in Japan would have amounted to twice (or more) the number actually registered if there had been no induced abortion at all."

Despite the major role of abortion and the relatively minor role of contraception in Japan, appreciable use of the latter type of family limitation has been made. Dr. Yosio Koya, formerly Director of the Institute of Public Health, and currently at the Nippon Medical School, has been a leader in his country in promoting demonstration clinics in family planning and measuring their effectiveness. In this issue he and his son, Dr. Tomohiko Koya, present a paper "The Prevention of Unwanted Pregnancies in a Japanese Village by Contraceptive Foam Tablets." Their report relates to the experience of 82 couples in a Japanese village who used contraceptive foam tablets at least one month during the four-year period of study, 1955-1958. The pregnancy rate during periods of use was less than one-fourth as high as the pregnancy rate during periods of non-use.