

The penetrating study which has been so briefly outlined above ought to be widely read, because it is a fine example of the scientific approach to social issues, and also because it points clearly to the dangers of our prevalent "benevolent prejudice" towards the stranger in our land. The report gives no cause for complacency, but rather demands a closer examination of our own attitudes in Britain. The comments in the press which followed the rioting were not enough, although they helped to create a better climate of opinion; there is a sense of urgency in the summing-up made by Mrs. Glass:

All the factors which contributed to the disturbances in Notting Dale still exist; and some have become more disturbing since. There has been neither physical nor ideological slum clearance: the housing shortage is as acute as before; fascist propaganda is more active; . . . evidence of senseless brutality is still seen each week . . .

But this is not the main risk. Far more important still is the fact that, while the status of the coloured minority is an uneasy one, especially in that part of London, there are signs of further deterioration. Although the problems of the migrants are still manageable, they are cumulative." (p. 226)

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## HISTORY OF FAMILY LIMITATION IN FRANCE<sup>1</sup>

THIS book, produced by a team of scholars associated with the *Institut national d'études démographiques* in Paris, is the first comprehensive investigation of the early history of family limitation in France. With the sole exception of the monumental *MEDICAL HISTORY OF CONTRACEPTION* by the late Norman E. Himes, published in 1936, it is the only such study ever made in any language. The period covered begins with

<sup>1</sup> Bergues, Hélène; Ariès, Philippe; Hélin, Étienne; Henry, Louis; Riquet, Michel; Sauvy, Alfred; and Sutter, Jean. *La prévention des naissances dans la famille: ses origines dans les temps modernes*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960. pp. 400, 12 NF.

classical antiquity and ends with the dawn of the 19th century. Three-fourths of the volume is devoted to a massive documentation from contemporary sources and to their critical analysis, mainly by Mme. Bergues. The remainder consists of four interpretative essays, representing the points of view, respectively, of the cultural historian (Ariès), the Catholic theologian (Riquet), the physician (Sutter), and the demographer (Henry); and an overview from the pen of Sauvy.

In spite of the authors' scholarship and obvious industry, the findings of the inquiry are disappointing in terms of factual data and well-supported inferences. This result was probably unavoidable owing to the personal and intimate nature of the information sought.

Sauvy summarizes his conclusions as follows: (a) in the 17th century a desire to prevent births existed in a certain number of families of the aristocracy and the middle classes; (b) in the 18th century birth-control practices had become sufficiently widespread to attract the attention of writers from 1750 onwards; (c) by about 1775 the national statistics show the effect of family limitation (pages 381-382).

Little new information about the means of fertility control used in France during the *ancien régime* has come to light. Withdrawal, euphemistically referred to as "cheating nature," was almost certainly the most popular method, later supplemented by condoms and ablutions (the *bidet* appears about 1710). There is no evidence that abortion was more widely practiced in the 17th and 18th centuries than previously.

The principal factor motivating family limitation, according to Sauvy, was a growing discrepancy between rising standards of consumption and the means of gratifying the new wants, including an increasing concern for the life, health, and proper raising of children. The adoption of contraceptive practices was facilitated by the waning influence of religion upon personal conduct. This last factor may have been of particular importance in France where the religious crisis of the 16th century had not resulted in a clear victory for either the Reformation or the Counterreformation, but in a precarious equilibrium.

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