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Birth control: a history's outline

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Resumen

Este artículo reseña las luchas por la legalización del aborto y el acceso a los anticonceptivos en varios países, desde la demanda de acceso a los anticonceptivos aparecida en Gran Bretaña a partir de la década de 1820, misma que pasó a fines del siglo XIX a Estados Unidos, Canadá y varios países europeos. Se destacan los casos del Partido Comunista de Alemania en el periodo previo al ascenso del fascismo —porque desarrolló un movimiento de control de la natalidad como movimiento de masas— y las razones ideológicas por las cuales Estados Unidos promovió la exportación del control de la natalidad después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Palabras clave: control de la natalidad, feminismo, anticonceptivos.

Abstract

Birth control: a history's outline

This article reviews the struggles to legalize abortion and access to contraceptives in several countries, from the demand to contraceptive access as from 1820 in Great Britain, this very access appeared by the end of the XIX century into the United States, Canada and other European countries. Noteworthy are the cases of the Communist Party in Germany in the period prior to the ascension of Fascism —for it developed a movement of birth control as movement of masses— and the ideological reasons which made the United States promote the exportation of birth control after WWII.

Key words: birth control, feminism, contraceptives.

Location of the problem

Birth control's history is inscribed into a lengthy political and ideological struggle, still unfinished, on sexuality's problems, which began in England in 1822 with the publication of the pamphlet by Francis Place in favor of it. It has been the subject of debate in the field of politics, science, technology, entrepreneurial history, and even in literature and cinematography, as the struggle for the availability of contraceptives and abortion's decriminalization was parallel to another for the freedom of expression on sexual topics, which included the fight against censorship, for instance, in novels such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, by David H. Lawrence, and *Ulysses*, by James Joyce; as

well as the fight against repressive regulations in cinematographic productions. This issue is, besides, closely linked to gender domination and the link between sexuality and politics.

This history is inscribed into Anthropology and a theory of needs. Additionally, it is part of political history; this is to say, a class struggle, as there were both social forces which were in favor and against, and that these forces were located in the ruling or subordinate strata.

There are at least four books which refer the history in three countries: Germany, Canada and the United States (Grossmann, 1995; McLaren, 1997; Gordon, 1990; Mc Cann, 1994) and a book chapter in Rumania (Teitelbaum, 1998). There is also an article which refers to the French socialist authors' positions in the XIX century (Mc Laren, 1976). Thus far, there is not an attempt to write a history of contraception at worldwide level. I will try an outline of this history from the publication of the first diffusion text on contraception by the aforementioned Place. I try to center it on the political history; nonetheless I will also deal with aspects referred to the history of science and pseudoscientific practices, such as eugenics.

I start from the hypothesis that the introduction of efficacious and accessible contraceptive methods represented great progress, as for the separation between sexuality and procreation, indispensable progress for the full enjoyment of the former, as well as for millions of people can plan their life rationally and develop as human beings in multiple dimensions, which includes bringing up and educate better their offspring.

I suggest that the issue of the struggle for birth control should be seen fundamentally within the framework of class struggle, as such control was a fundamental demand from the most politicized and conscious sector of the proletariat, and in particular of the feminine proletariat. The parties which tried to represent it were the social-democrats and communists, in the second case after the foundation of the Comintern (*Third international*), in 1919. I support that they failed in the most deplorable manner in correctly placing and playing a leader role in this struggle, with the notable exception of the Communist Party of Germany in the immediately previous years to fascist domination. It can be supposed that said failure was due to both the ideological influence from bourgeoisie and the scarce clarity as for this sort of claims, i.e., neither economic nor political in a direct sense, but relative to the quality of life. In the case of social-democratic parties, despite fragmentary information, it shows that they were even in the wrong side of the class line, particularly the German Social-

democratic Party, in said period, as it followed the policy of opportunism, which took them to seek an alliance with the clerics as a lesser evil in relation to the possible Fascists' ascension to power. In the case of the Communist Party of Germany, it cannot be said that its correct positioning had been the product of a deep theoretical discussion, but it is possible to think that it pragmatically responded to what its bases in the health and assistance sectors saw in an immediate manner as a proletariat's claim.

The motives for which bourgeoisie was opposed to birth control would have been essentially those previously stated by the parliamentarian George Rose against Malthus; Rose stated that a large population was necessary both because of economic reasons, e.g., having a larger industrial army as a reservoir to preserve low salaries, and political-military reasons, as there were available recruits for the armed forces. It is also possible to suppose that bourgeoisie's reasons to be opposed to the control of fertility were related to the alliance of this stratum with religious and armed bureaucracies. In this aspect it is necessary to mention the opposition of the press organs of English bourgeoisie against the evolution by natural selection (Ellegard, 1990). On their own, armed bureaucracies would have evaluated that their social weight depended on the size of the armed forces, so it is logical to suppose that because of that, they were opposed to birth control. It is worth mentioning that, at least in France, by the end of the XIX, the infamous process against the Jew captain Alfred Dreyfus, where the chauvinist and racist trends of large part of the bourgeoisie were displayed, also showed tight affinity between catholic hierarchy and the military heads.

A contradiction could be thought of between the adscription to the bourgeoisie of a tendency opposed to birth control and the aforementioned eugenic campaign. It is an apparent contradiction, for the terror campaign against marginal sectors, including the castration of dozens of thousands of common delinquents along several decades in the United States and the assassination of hundreds of thousands of mentally diseased people by the fascism in Germany, were compatible with the promotion of birth for most of the population.

Beginnings

There was birth control in several cultures as from immemorial epochs. Ancient Egyptians invented the condom; in the XVIII, it was used for the prevention of venereal diseases. A roman medic had already invented an effective diaphragm. The notorious Italian adventurer Giovanni Casanova, in his Memoirs published in 1798, suggested using it as a contraceptive.

In the Jew-Christian tradition the use of contraception was condemned. The Fathers of Church supported an ascetic and anti-sexual ideal. For instance, Saint Augustine saw sexual intercourse as intrinsically immoral and only justified by procreation, a stance which was reaffirmed by Pope Pius XI in 1930 in the *Casti Conubii* encyclical. Saint Augustine also stated that procreation was the only justification for the existence of women; it was until Renaissance that a valuing of other feminine aspects independent from procreation appears, since in this time the vindication of feminine beauty begins (Gordon, 1973: 5-12).

Although contemporary authors to Malthus proposed birth control in a scantily clear manner, surely due to adverse social pressure, the first to do so openly was Place, one of the founders of the alluded *Correspondence Society* of London. It is worthy mentioning that other contraceptive methods of the time, such as the vaginal sponge, not only were unreliable but also dangerous. The first public expression in favor of abortion was published by the writer Mary Wollestonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, in 1792.

The economist and philosopher John Stuart Mill proposed a limit for population's growth, however, not because of the malthusian argumentation of subsistence means scarcity, but in terms of what we nowadays call quality of life, and which suggested the use of contraceptives. It is known that Marx and Engels were extremely opposed to Malthus' proposal, nevertheless, undefined on birth control. Notwithstanding Engels expressed birth prejudices in 1844. He wrote "children are like trees, which return expenditures on them in abundance... a large family would be a very desirable gift for the community" (cited by Furuhashi, 2003).

The fact that neither Marx nor Engels expressed on the topic, with the exception of the aforementioned prejudiced expression by Engels, suggests that they never reached a positioning. This is also coherent with the fact that they seemingly never approached the issue of the trial in 1877 against the promoters of birth control Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, which I refer to further on the text.

Place published his work in the context of a lengthy democratic struggle in his country, against a bourgeoisie which denied heads of family the right to universal suffrage. Later, anarchist and socialist movements would appear, and the later would separate as social-democratic and revolutionary or communist. These had a considerable support on the working class in several countries. The demand to access to contraceptives can be considered universal, in the sense of satisfying a need of all social strata, therefore, it should also be supported by those parties and movements which presented themselves as defenders of laborers and mankind's interests, and not only for them, but also, even for those who, defending the permanence of capitalism, believed that it could satisfy the needs of the population. Nevertheless, the demand to access contraceptives was seriously resisted in the world, mainly by the most conservative sectors of bourgeoisie, as well as authors and groups or anarchist, social-democratic and communist parties. It was supported by some authors, parties and groups of these very movements, such as the already mentioned Communist Party of Germany, and by feminist groups.

The common characteristic of this resistance was the sexist prejudices, in most of the cases connected with religious ideologies. As for the Marxists, the founders of this trend remained undefined on the subject, yet they did on the theory of population by Malthus, on which they utter the aforementioned adverse opinions. Several Marxist leaders in an improper manner subsumed the issue of birth with that of the Malthusianism, without perceiving the important role of the former as for woman's liberation.

In Germany, the Communist Party led a mass campaign in favor of the decriminalization of abortion. Historic research shows that proletariat and in particular proletarian women had a central role in the struggle for the availability of contraceptives and the mentioned decriminalization of abortion. There was also support from a minor, yet important, sector of medics and social workers. It was a culturally advanced country, where said party had a heavy influence on large part of the proletariat. In the case of German society, in addition to its alluded opportunism, which probably served the conservatism of the most delayed groups inside and outside it, its policy on this sphere was congruent with their incapacity to confront the greatest hazard for the proletariat and the country, which finally led it to war and ruin.

In Russia, after the Bolshevik ascension to power there was a contradictory policy, as on the one side, abortion was legalized, and on the other, although the information is fragmentary, seemingly there was no contraceptive availability.

To the extent that the Stalin regime became solid and increasingly repressive policies were settled, the legalization of abortion was reverted and a policy of birth promotion was applied, within a state-worship ideology, which primarily saw population as a resource at the service of the State.

During the Cold War, the United States' government promoted the alluded exportation of birth control to less developed countries, within the Malthusian ideology, while the prohibitions on contraceptives were maintained in the country.

The fact that that in many a countries both social-democratic and communist the parties not only did not head the struggle for birth control, but also in some they were opposed, and even implemented measures to promote birth and against abortion, most be seen as one the socialism's failures, of its incapacity to locate these demands in a theory of society and politics, as a product of the political and ideological influence of its enemies, of its theoretical incapacity to difference the issue of the Malthusianism and that of birth control, and to perceive that its role could not be limited to promote political and economic demands, as well those related to the quality of life. Because of this, the central role in the struggles in favor of these demands was judged by marginal sectors in bourgeoisie, or what we can call the petit-bourgeoisie radical democracy.

Great Britain, France and Holland: 1854-1975

In spite information is not quite reliable, Angus McLaren states that as from the mid XIX century there was a very considerable increment in the number of abortions in several countries, such as the United States and France; the latter mentions estimations that located the annual number between a hundred thousand and half a million (McLaren, 1997: 189-190). The repressive legislation approved by some governments against this practice and against contraceptives, as well as the clerical vehemence, and even hysteria, which accompanied these measures must be, then, seen as a reaction of the dominant class against a cultural change that was undergoing among the population. I already mentioned the abundant eugenic literature that was spread by the end of the XIX century, which stated the alleged necessity to limit the reproduction, supposedly excessive, of those supposedly *unfit* by means of sterilization, whereas it lamented the low reproduction of those presumably better, this is to say, the bourgeoisie. Data that I further refer to have as an object Germany and clearly reflect this trend of lower

reproduction rates of the high-income strata. This means that probably women used contraceptives and abortions were practiced, however the political organizations which represented them were against these practices.

Political conservative parties and groups as well as churches started the opposition to birth control, even sexual education and divorce. McLaren supports that the churches' growing opposition to contraceptives and abortion, which included the excommunication decreed in 1869 by Pope Pius IX for those who practiced it, reflected their perception that they were the consequence and not the cause of those which were considered modern evils, such as the diffusion of socialism and feminism (McLaren, 1997: 195). The ideal woman of catholic pontiffs was that who had many children, which is not too much trouble if they can afford some to look after them, but it is suicide when they are supported by an insufficient salary or social security. It was only until the 1930's decade that some churches began to accept contraceptives and eventually the National Council of Churches in the United States stated its position in the same sense in 1961. Catholic Church was the exception, as it maintains its position, condemning the practice of sexual intercourses without reproductive ends, although it permitted the so called rhythm method in the *Casti Connubii* encyclical of Pope Pius XI, which goes against the biblical mandate "grow and reproduce".

In England in 1854, a book by George Drysdale in favor of contraceptives use was published, it had numerous editions and was translated to several languages. A newspaper was also published, *The Neo Reformer*, which included in 1860 a text by the American medic Charles Knowlton, who provided information on practical aspects of contraception. In 1857, the government approved measures to limit contraceptives' propaganda. The newspaper manager was sentenced to prison. The aforementioned Besant and Bradlaugh made an organization (*National Secular Society*) in order to promote birth control, which reached thirty thousand members (Petersen, 1964). In 1876, a bookseller was sentenced to two years in prison for selling an illustrated version of Knowlton's book. The first clinic of birth control in Great Britain was founded by Marie Stopes in 1921; in 1936, an association for the reform of the law on abortion, which was legalized in 1967, was formed.

In Australia there was a trial because of the diffusion of literature on contraceptives in 1888, and in Norway the diffusion of books on the subjects was banned in 1891. A Belgian medic was sentenced in 1908 for distributing contraceptives (Carr, 1922).

The diffusion of literature on the subject was part of a process of cultural change which produced an enormous descent of the birth rate in England, from an average of 6 children per family circa 1860 to 2.4 in 1915 (Hardin, 1973). The prohibition of the literature on contraceptives had minute effects; between 1877 and 1890, 175000 exemplars of the book *The law of population* by Annie Besant, as well as thousands of the book by Knowlton were sold.

In France, in the XIX century and up to the early XX, utopian socialists and anarchists, such as Proudhon, Louis Blanc and Georges Sorel, demonstrated against, with the exception of Charles Fourier (McLaren, 1997). It is worth mentioning that in a text by him on the subject remained unpublished until the 1960's decade; however the cultural change was more stressed in this case.

French medical organizations had a repressive role, using the range of venereal diseases as the manifestation of a threat of working class and dangerous for society. Between 1890 and 1910 two international conferences on the subject were convoked, which created an organization whose end was to diffuse among public opinion the idea of this danger, besides linking it to low birth rate, within a militarist conception which stressed the scarce number of recruits for the army. An Association of Prophylaxis held a campaign of sexual education which was a real attempt to dissuade youths' love-related activities. In the frame of this plot, the promotion of sport activities as a way to release 'energies' which otherwise would be channeled towards the sexual sphere, were proposed. It was attempted to somehow exploit the terror of venereal diseases to substitute religious preachers with medics as promoters of the bourgeoisie moral (Robert, 1992).

In the time the First World War started, France had the lowest rate of population growth in Europe; however there was never an organized movement in favor of birth control, whereas political parties were against it. The great change which caused the generalized use of contraceptives is coherent with other aspects of French culture; for instance, the French invented the *menage a trios*; they sang *La Madelon*, a carefree apology of prostitution or promiscuity; the American soldiers in France during the war learnt the disposition of French female prostitutes for oral intercourse; nonetheless, this liberty of customs was not reflected at political level. A "society against depopulation" was created by a man called Jacques Bertillon, and in 1920 laws against contraceptives and abortion were issued; this ban lasted until 1975.

These measures had no effect on the birth rate, and it can be supposed that they only were useful to make poor people's life more difficult (McLaren, 1997: 206).

The French communists agreed with the Stalin-like reversion of liberalization which followed the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, which we will see further. In 1935, an article published in *L'Humanité* accused capitalism of destroying the family and promoting clandestine abortions, standing for the defense of the family, for a 'strong country' and a 'fertile race', allegedly according to the soviet model (cited by Millet, 1970: 176).

In 1956 there was a controversy between medics and other intellectuals of the French Communist Party who supported birth control against its direction. Its leader Maurice Thorez stated that "a country without children is a country without a future" (Sauvy, 1961); however, the party supported a restricted decriminalization of abortion. Still in the 1970's decade, a pamphlet on the subject published by the party which supported that the aspect of family size was a private issue, nevertheless it manifested a preoccupation for the low birth rate.

In Belgium a total prohibition to abortion was approved in 1867. In Holland, the first clinic of birth control was opened in 1878. The government approved severe punishments for abortion in 1886. Some socialists defended birth control, yet by the 1920's this country's social-democrat party opposed to it, using for its ends the rhetoric of the anti-Malthusian Marxist orthodoxy.

In 1911, the first world conference on birth control was held in Dresden. In 1928, the first reunion of a World League for the Reform of Sex was held in Copenhagen, this included Alexandra Kolontai, first woman who was part of the Central Committee of the Russian Bolshevik party, and the German communist sexologist Wilhelm Reich.

Germany

Germany is probably the most interesting case because of several motives. In the first place it seems to be the country that experienced the most accelerated cultural change as for birth diminution, under circumstances where abortion was banned and there were limitations to spread contraceptives; probably, it had a relation with the intensity of social, political and economic crisis under the Republic of Weimar, in the period from 1919 to 1933. This period can be considered as that of a revolutionary crisis, where the bourgeoisie domination was in grave danger of being dethroned by a proletarian revolution which did not break out. As from 1929, the great worldwide economic crisis deeply affected the country.

Secondly, it was apparently the only country where the decriminalization of abortion caused a considerable mass mobilization, led by a party, the communist one, against the rest. This had a stance different from most of the communist parties, which in general did not show greater interest in the problem; not to mention the social-democrats whose stance was already mentioned.

The birth rate had begun to decrease in the XIX century, and in the postwar it was the lowest in Europe, with the exception of Australia, and it can be supposed that it could have been very well the lowest in the world. The 1925 census showed that on average, the family size had fallen to a child per family, this is to say, population was decreasing, which was probably the only case or almost only case at worldwide level. Berlin was the city in Europe with the lowest birthrate in Europe, having decreased from 43.1 per thousand, in the 1871-1880 period, to 9.9 in 1923, in spite of the increment of the women's marriage rate.

The Civil Code banned abortions since 1871, with punishments up to fifteen years in prison for the abortionists; likewise it banned propaganda or public exhibition of contraceptives. In 1900 repressive changes were introduced, following the British model; homosexuality was banned in 1897. In 1927, a law against venereal disease forbidden those people with no medical education examining or treating reproductive organs, although it permitted abortions because of therapeutic reasons.

Before the First World War, the main leaders of the Social-Democratic Party, such as Liebknecht father, Lasalle and Bebel, opposed to birth control. Karl Kautsky admitted birth control in 1880 as a lesser evil. The case of August Bebel is very notorious, as he published a pamphlet titled *Women and Socialism*, which

had great diffusion. An English language translation was broadly distributed in the United States. He invented a fantasy on the possibility to control birth through diet, based on a conjecture on the relation between alimentation and fertility. In 1922, a survey showed that most of the German socialists were opposed to birth control (Petersen, 1984: 334-335; Petersen, 1964: 91, 115).

By 1915, birth control clinics were opened; differently from the United States' case, where the movement was led by professionals, in Germany it had a proletarian base that boosted their participation. In 1913, an organization of socialist medics was formed, then other of female medics and another of 'sexual reform'; later, several other organizations with the same end were formed, some at local level.

After WWI in the mentioned environment of great instability and social apprehension, which lasted until the Fascist took the power in 1933, there was a dramatic increment in the number of abortions, from some 300 000 before the war to a million (Mc Laren, 1997: 227); in 1922 there were mass trials on women and abortionists in southern Germany and the following year women's demonstrations in favor of its decriminalization.

In 1928 several groups assembled a National League for the Control of Birth and Sexual Hygiene, with 12 000 members, which in 1930 already had 200 local organizations and a newspaper with 15 000 subscribers. In 1929 a League for the Protection of Motherhood was formed, this can be considered socialist, and that reached a considerable influence, particularly in proletarian spheres. In 1928 there were already several birth control clinics, and by 1933, when the republic fell, Berlin had 24, whereas hundreds of the aforementioned local groups provided contraceptives, almost totally without the participation of medics (Grossmann, 1995: 134).

The Constitution was very advanced, as it established the State's obligation to promote social medicine; despite there was not socialized medicine, the system of social security and public health was considerably broadened. By 1928, it covered 22 million people out of a population of 66. The system and some municipalities settled several clinics of marital counseling. It was the first experiment with public funds to manage sexuality and procreation, with the support from a militant Communist Party and in spite of the unwillingness of the social-democracy, whereas the movements of birth control pressured upon both the parties and medical profession. The conservative and nationalist right criticized these initiatives as a waste of public funds by the bureaucracy. In 1926 two contradictory actions occurred; on the one side social-democracy handed in

the Ministry of Social Welfare to the Catholic Party, which imposed the rejection of birth control in the organisms of marital counseling; yet, a diminution in the punishment for abortion was also approved, which makes it lower than in any other Occidental European country, which can be considered as a concession to a social pressure in favor of decriminalization. The concessions to the Catholic Party, which led the government as from 1930, were linked to the policy of the social-democracy, which saw it as an alternative to prevent the Fascists from taking the power. Abortion's criminalization was applied with certain benevolent discretion, apparently total for the medics, with the pinpointed exception of the 1922 trials, not so for women. By 1933, there were thirty thousand registered cases of women incarcerated because of illegal abortions, mostly for short periods (Grossmann, 1995: 262).

A rather considerable proportion of medics and social workers of the organisms of public health was influenced by the social-democratic and communist parties, they had a high proportion of female medics for the epoch, circa 10 percent, in the city of Berlin in 1932, out of them also a high proportion were Jew. An index of the influence of the minority of medics is exemplified by the considerable number of therapeutic abortions, a category with a considerable elasticity, which surpassed forty thousand annually, by the end of the Republic. Although most of the medics were conservative and, additionally, ignorant in respect to contraceptives, manifested their alarm by the boom of birth control, mainly because it took place outside private medicine. They lamented this practice's relation with the alleged decline of the family and State, and some even believed that it led to the decadence of Occident, nothing less! In spite of their ignorance, they expressed their preoccupation by their supposed potential dangers, above things if unqualified people carried them out. It is worth mentioning that the diffusion of birth control was always polluted by the aforementioned eugenic propaganda, and the fact that the organizations which stated the fight for the access to contraceptives and the legalization of abortion never detached from eugenicists; in the public sector there was a considerable number of medics influenced by them, who promoted sterilizations, nonetheless, under Weimar Republic were not forcefully applied.

German Communist Party had considered the decriminalization of abortion as an important political assertion ever since its foundation, in 1919. Until 1932, the left introduced in the Parliament 19 initiatives to legalize abortion. After a relative stabilization as from 1924, the 1929 great depression caused in Germany a situation of economic and social crisis never seen before.

The number of unemployed people surpassed four million, and in 1931 this number changed to six, an amount that included the third part of the syndicated laborers. The crisis beat badly the members of organizations in favor of birth control, which confirms their proletarian character. By 1931, 70 percent of the members of the National League pro-Birth Control were unemployed (Grossmann, 1995: 80-81). It is necessary to notice the insensibility of the Catholic Church as it reiterated its traditional stances on the already cited *Casti Connubii* encyclical, under circumstances where millions of workers in the entire world lived an utterly difficult situation.

Because of the crisis there was a diminution of the resources for social security and public health. In 1930, an official commission expressed its alarm by a low birth rate, calling 'degenerated nation' that which decreased in number. In the early 1931, the government, which as it was previously mentioned, was in hands of the Catholic Party, launched a provocation against the left, arresting two medics, Friedrich Wolf and Elsa Kienle, the former communist militant and birth-control active propagandists, accusing them of practicing abortion to make money, which implied the possibility of a punishment of up to fifteen years in prison. On March 8th, 1931, International Women's Day, there were 1 500 meetings in the country, demanding the release of the prisoners, the legalization of abortion and the assignation of public funds to pay for them and to provide contraceptives to those who were in the need of. Later, two more meetings took place in Berlin, one of professional women, where four thousand participated and in another fifteen thousand. There were considerable mobilizations at national level, with the support from distinguished personalities, such as Einstein and the film director Fritz Lang, which challenged a governmental prohibition. The representative Emil Höllein, spokesman of the Communist Party stated that the struggle to decriminalize abortion was in the center of the proletariat's struggle. By the end of March, the prisoners were released.

It is worth pinpointing that even if the party promoted this large mobilization, its leaders saw it with suspicion, as they considered, and indubitably with reason, that it was more important in those times mobilize the proletariat in order to prevent the Fascism from ascending to power, which was not achieved, probably because of the fact that there was generalized unemployment, and also because of the despondency which followed the frustration of the revolutionary possibilities. Even though it led this mobilization, it never clearly concreted a stance that integrated the subject into its policy and ideology.

In 1932, the circulation of the publications of the three most important organizations of sexual reform surpassed a hundred thousand of exemplars. In 1931, the Unitary Committee for the Proletarian Sexual Reform, which defended sexual enjoyment as a right of the oppressed, asked for the elimination of persecution to prostitutes, yet to persecute ruffians, it asked to eliminate every punishment for 'sexual deviations', and sexual education in the media and at schools. It correctly predicted that it was expected in the case of a triumph of Fascism, as for sexual repression and compulsion for procreation.

The ascension of Fascism to power unleashed a purge in the institutions of public health, from which the politically undesirable, Jew and non-Aryan people were eliminated, and anyone in relation with them. The clinics of marital advising and birth control were closed. The supposedly excessive attention to the supposedly inferior and antisocial was eliminated. Municipal day care centers were handed to private institutions of charity, the associations of sexual reform became illegal and their leaders were incarcerated or exiled. The ten thousand volumes of a library of an Institute of Sexual Science were burnt down. An example of the persecutory extremes was the prohibition of the publication of the works of a person such as Alfred Grotjahn, a professor of the University of Berlin who died in 1932, who supported eugenics and was opposed to abortion, because he had had contacts with the social-democrats (Grossmann, 1995: 162). There was a dramatic fall in the number of therapeutic abortions, from more than forty thousand in 1932 to the fifth part five years later. The regime used the police registration of women incarcerated for abortion in order to persecute implied medics and imposed compulsory sterilizations for diverse categories, for instance, mentally challenged, which had reached four hundred thousand (Grossmann, 1995: 149); not only were there sterilizations, but also many of them were assassinated. The regime also applied compulsory abortion in the case of the possibility of birth defects. Later this practice was applied to two million of foreign women from the occupied counties, forced to move to Germany as slaved workforce.

The Nazis' program included the elimination of the women's right to vote; Nazi propaganda was centered on reestablishing the traditional role of women as procreator inside the family and as the educator of children disposed to die for the fatherland, in spite of which there was a considerable increment in the number of women in workforce, it is not difficult to explain if we consider that the military character of the State caused the enrollment of a growing number of men in the armed forces. Anti-feminist measures were also applied, for

instance the elimination of women in public functions, and the establishment of a share of ten percent as higher education students, in addition to statements from procurators of the system disapproving of their studying higher education. Police persecuted female smokers. There were delirious accusations against Jews as responsible for a loathsome 'sexual revolution', and statement by Hitler that the objective of women's education should be motherhood. The pro-birth campaign was successful, as in only three years the number of births increased 25 percent. On this, an improvement in the economic situation, the difficulty to find contraceptives and the punishment of abortion could have influenced (Millet, 1970: 157-168).

In 1935, there was in Berlin a World Congress on Population, which in said circumstances was a gift for the regime from the elements of the right climbed on many of the governmental and private organizations related with population policies.

During WWII the regime extended the measures against abortion of German women to the occupied territories, whereas it took steps to limit the reproduction of these countries' population. In Poland, the abortionists were not persecuted as long as they were limited to Pole women, however, the authorities of the occupation decreed capital punishment for those who practiced it onto German women. They increased the marital age of the former to 25 years of age and 28 for men. The puppet Vichy regime, in France, executed an abortionist in the first case of capital punishment to a 60-year-old woman (David, 1988).

After the war, the conflicts between the Occidental Powers and Soviet Union led to the division of Germany. The prohibition of abortion remained valid in the Federal Republic, under the demo-Christian governments, continuation of the Catholic Party, and with the support of the occupation authorities; the organizations in favor of its decriminalization were founded again, but with a notoriously decreased strength. Only after the 1970's decade did a new mass movement start toward said objective; a parliamentary initiative was frustrated in 1974 by the heist of tribunals, nonetheless reiterated and frustrated again in 1993. Finally, a *de facto* legalization was reached, this in, abortion is authorized once the woman hears a sermon in which she is reiterated that it is an illegal deed.

In the German Democratic Republic, abortion was legalized in 1947, to be re-criminalized in 1951, in spite of the protests, with the same argumentations as those used in the Soviet Union in 1936, which I later refer to. Obviously decriminalization followed the tradition of the German Communist Party, whereas re-criminalization reflected the Soviet influence. There was liberalization

in the 1960's decade and it was once again decriminalized in 1972 (Grossmann, 1995). After the reunification there was a prolonged conflict, since the legislation of the Democratic Republic permitted it unrestrictedly, whereas in the Federal Republic it was subject to some restrictions.

The United States and Canada

Two studies published in 1973 suggest that the birth rate of with women started to decrease in the United States as early as in the first decades of the XIX century, and that it had substantially decreased, from 7.04 children per women in 1800 to 3.56 in 1900, i.e., before there was an organized movement of birth control, as a result of a cultural change that started in an epoch when there was not contraceptives (Gordon, cites Smith and Michael Gordon). By 1880 it began spreading among black people, and by 1940, their rate was almost the same as the white people.

Before the appearance of the movement in favor of birth control, several feminist militants, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, fostered since 1871 the idea of voluntary motherhood, which was a deeply destabilizing idea in relation with the traditional vision of the woman role, promoting separate meetings of women to discuss the proposal, which was a novelty in that moment.

The first local State that prohibited abortion was Connecticut, in 1821. Several local States followed it in the first half of the XIX century. The American Medical Association, AMA, proposed the prohibition in 1857. It was illegal nonetheless widely practiced. It was completely illegalized in 1860, but it continued despite the prohibition. Ten years later *The New York Times* estimated that in the city there were 200 professional abortionists. Condom was widely used as from the 1840's decade, when the rubber ones appeared. A law in Connecticut, approved at the end of the XIX century, prohibited the use of contraceptives, even to marriages.

As from 1866, Anthony Comstock, a man of humble social background, had formed a commission of suppression of vice in the Young Men's Christian Association, which proposed to the Legislature of the State of New York a law against obscenity, which was approved in 1868. In the two following years the Comstock Commission collaborated in the apprehension of a hundred people. Later it became an independent society, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (SSV), which worked as a sort of voluntary helper of police.

Comstock made the Congress approve the Law by his name, which prohibited the transport of contraceptives between local States and contemplated the seizing and destruction of obscene literature. In this law, any information on contraceptives was considered as such, almost half of the local States approved similar laws. Comstock was appointed by the president Ulysses S. Grant as special agent of the United States Postal Service, vested with power to seize literature and works of art, as well as carry out apprehensions. SSV was responsible for 1200 detentions during the first fifteen years of validity of the law, and the seizure and destruction of 200 tonnes of literature and plastic arts, among them classical literary works by Aristophanes, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Balzac, Wild, etc. SSV tried to prevent the representation of works by Bernard Shaw, and after Comstock's death, in 1915, confiscated works by contemporary authors, such as Dos Passos and Hemingway; under the influence of Comstock similar societies in Pennsilvani and New England.

Even though Comstock was nothing but a marginal brute, undoubtedly his campaign and role in repression had support from the great bourgeoisie. The historian Nicola Beisel has showed that the fellowship of the Society included 28 millionaires and 83 percent of their members could be classified as upper class. This author also demonstrated that Comstock had total support from bourgeoisie from Boston and New York, but much lesser in Philadelphia. Beisel attributes this to the fact that the large immigration to the first two cities had decreased the local power of this Anglo-Saxon traditional and protestant bourgeoisie, which had encouraged the fear that their children lose their classist values, so they would not be able to maintain their class position in the cities that they considered had become culturally dangerous (Sigel, 1998).¹

In the second half of the XIX century some medics attacked the practice of *coitus interruptus*, suggesting that it would be the cause of impotence (Mc Cann, 1994: 63), whereas others invented nonsense on injuries and other harms supposedly caused by contraceptives, degradation of love, etc. in the 1870's decade there were numerous attacks from medics on abortion, as later there would be against contraceptives. Notwithstanding, there were exceptions, for instance, that of Edward Bliss Foote, medic from New York, judged and forced to pay a great sum of money on the ground of providing information on contraceptives (Gordon, 1973: 168-175). Medics' opposition to birth control included the diffusion of false information, not only did they repeat the

¹ Jeff Elliott, at www.monitor.net/monitor/abortion/; Eric Gapp, at <http://home.sandiego.edu/egapp/comstock/>.

aforementioned information, but also supporting that in a date as late as 1925, there were no reliable methods, and disqualified literature on birth control as unscientific and allegedly influenced by anarchism and quackery (Gordon, 1973: 259-261). This occurred despite medics started to have a dominant role in the organizations in favor of birth control as from the 1920's decade. The counterpart of literature on birth control was a repressive one, which was diffused between 1890 and 1920, supposedly as sexual education for young men that alerted on the dangers of venereal diseases and preached for abstinence.

It is necessary to mention that the bloom of the repressive trends in this sphere coincided with the alluded right twist in American politics, which started in 1877, year when the federal troops withdrew from the Southern States when the American Civil War finished.

In 1905, the president Theodore Roosevelt attacked birth control as immoral, and 'racial suicide', which was a form of the eugenic rhetoric, by means of which it was stated that the lowest birth rate of those allegedly superior allowed the unfit or racially inferior to rapidly reproduce, as the former adopted birth control.

The movement of birth control appeared in the context of an accelerated industrialization that doubled the number of workers between 1870 and 1890, and which also included the incorporation of a large number of women into the workforce, under circumstances of blooming proletarian struggles in the political and syndical spheres. Between 1909 and 1913 there were several important strikes in the textile industry, with the distinguishable participation of female workers.

The Socialist Party of America had started to grow as from the 1890's decade, reaching six percent of the votes by 1912. It had elected more than a thousand candidates to elective charges; it had numerous publications, nevertheless, a considerable ideological confusion as well; in said publications unreal points of view on the problem of birth control were expressed, for instance, that the socialism would make it possible for the proletarian families to have any number of children without a problem, or that it would make divorce unnecessary. Kate O'Hare, a leader, criticized Margaret Sanger, who was the most visible leader of the movement in favor of birth control, accusing capitalism of preventing workers from the possibility of early marriages (Petersen, 1964: 99). In 1914, the party purged its most radical militants, who were supporters of the anarchist organization Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Most of it continued supporting the so-called principles of social purity, developed in the hysteria on the traffic of white female slaves (McCann, 1994: 41).

The struggle on birth control inside the party was related to other divergent points, and it was reflected on the crucial point of the positioning on WWI; on these conflicts the right succeeded. Some anarchists played an important role in the struggle in favor of birth control, for instance Emma Goldman, who lectured in more than a hundred conferences on the subject, for which she was incarcerated for two months. Other socialist militants were incarcerated for up to six months because they had distributed pamphlets on the subject. An anarchist militant stated in 1907 that persecution against those who aimed to diffuse birth control was a form of discrimination from the wealthy to the poor, as the former acquired contraceptives with no problems (McCann, 1994: 69 and 212). The attacks from the right against birth control invoked the defense of moral, stating that it would be associated with free love.

Linda Gordon states that there was at least three different phases of the movement of birth control. We can call the first phase utopian or romantic; the second, radical; and the last, bourgeoisie. In the first phase, which started in the second half of the XIX century, birth control was not yet stated, but invoked voluntary motherhood by means of the unreal proposal of abstinence.

In the first phase, that started by 1915 and that we can call radical, there was participation of proletarian women. It appeared as an organized movement in favor of birth control, which was led by Margaret Sanger, a nurse who in 1916 opened a clinic in Brooklyn, with the participation of socialist and feminist militants; it was closed by the police, which imposed her a thirty-day arrest. She was also judged because of her publishing of the feminine magazine *Woman Rebel*, which the post system denied distributing. The persecution was supported by the catholic hierarchy, including the New York's archbishop, who called assassins Sanger's defenders.

In 1917, she formed the first national organization of birth control. Sanger had been a paid militant of the Socialist Party, although by then she could have also been considered a supporter of anarchism. Her aforementioned magazine, *Woman Rebel*, challenged the dominant shyness that even was considerably diffused inside Socialist Party, for instance, in that referred to feminine sexual passiveness, linking feminine liberation and birth control to class struggle. She had radical positions as for the right to be single mothers and abortion (McCann, 1994: 7 and 35-36).

Sanger was a central figure in the movement of birth control in the United States for several decades; she was a nurse at first in proletarian areas in New York. And she was utterly clear on her motivation. She wrote that her experience

had showed her that the excessive number of pregnancies of proletarian women put not only their wellbeing in risk, but also that of their families.

Her publications were initially sold in the newsstands of the party and the mentioned anarchist syndical organization IWW. Nevertheless, the Socialist Party, under pressure from leaders conciliating with bourgeoisie, disavow the demand of birth control legalization. Sanger defended the position that birth control would improve health and familial economy. Against contraceptives' availability, there was a wave of hysteria on white slave traffic, a problem deliberately exaggerated in order to state that young women had to be protected from the dangers their sexuality exposed them to. In a similar position to that of Sanger, the black militant Lucien Brown supported in 1932 that birth control would improve the situation of black population.

The American participation in the World War favored the use of contraceptives, as the army, for fears of being infected with venereal diseases, distributed condoms among the troops massively. A research carried out in Baltimore before and after the war showed that the sale of condoms had been doubled (McCann, 1994: 206).

As from the twist to the right in the United States' politics, stressed by the participation in the World War in 1917 and the repressive wave of the First Red Scare against internationalist socialists and anarchists in 1920, which caused the incarceration of four thousand, product of the American bourgeoisie hysteria due to the Bolshevik ascension to power in Russia, there was also a displacement in the same direction in the movement of birth control, which we can define as the third phase, when it became a movement of Anglo-Saxon, wealthy, conservative and protestant white women.

Inside the movement of birth control some conciliating organization appeared, such as the National Birth Control League and the Voluntary Parenthood League, founded in 1915 and 1919, respectively, which declined to defend Sanger, the latter with the argument that it was an organization to work in the framework of legality, therefore it could not support someone who broke the law. Conversely, she was defended by Emma Goldman, the well-known anarchist militant and by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, which later would become leader of the Communist Party. It is worth mentioning that in 1920 what we can call an association of women in favor of political participation was formed, the National League of Voter Women, where catholic women were represented, which prevented the organization from taking a positioning on the issue of birth control (Mc Cann, 1994: 42-45).

An element that gave an account of the political orientation of the aforementioned organization is a survey carried out in 1927 among the fellowship of the American Birth Control League, which showed it was more republican, i.e., more conservative than the average population (Gordon, 1973: 295). This could be the consequence of the approach between birth control and eugenics.

The Sanger's twist to the right, which started in the time of the repression's bloom, included not only the participation, but also the important role of the medics in the movement, eugenic influence and a general conservative rhetoric, for instance, around the supposed beneficial effects on public policies that presumably allowed a diminution in taxes.

This twist must be seen in the context of a weakening of both the feminism and socialism induced by the repression of the Red Scare, as several socialists and feminists had demonstrated against the participation in war. The Catholic Church and the anti-communist hysteria came together to attack birth control. Sanger pleaded to the spencerian and eugenic propaganda, collaborating with notorious racists, although it was never known if she or her organization had manifested racial positions, she adhered to a racists positioning in the sense of "race betterment". She never totally accepted eugenics; for example, she criticized the arrogance of the eugenicists as they supposed they were able to say who was 'fit' and who was not, she never accepted the anti-black racism of most of the eugenicists, and refused to support the proposals of a positive eugenics, for a greater reproduction of the supposedly fit, this is to say, she resisted the conceptions that stated control of reproduction as a State's policy (McCann, 1994: 121-132). In some aspects, her positions were contradictory, as she defended immigrants in times when a restrictive and racist legislation on immigration was approved.

In 1918, a judicial decision backed up the exclusive right of the medics to prescribe contraceptives. The American Medical Association refused to deal with the subject until 1935, when based on the boom of some devices it considered potentially harmful, such as vaginal sprinklers, condemned all of the contraceptives. Meanwhile, Sanger organization's clinics accepted in a formal manner the control from the medics on contraceptives, but did not comply with it in practice; the association changed its positioning in 1937 (McCann, 1994: 63-96).

Against the role it had previously played, Sanger's organization asked in 1917 that only medics were able to provide information on contraceptives; the movement was initially composed by aficionados, largely women. The appearance

of professionals helped the twist to the right; there were medics willing to prescribe contraceptives to individual patients, whereas they were opposed to the legalization of birth control, in a position which was functional for their corporative ends for sure. Social workers entered into the movement as a group in the 1920's decade; to the extent the professionals, reached dominant positions, while the aficionados were limited to the role of ordinary members (Gordon, 1973: 250-259). The participation of medics determined the evolution toward more conservative positions on abortion, publicity and the participation of non-medical people.

A token that shows the activity of the supporters of birth control had major resonance, for it reflected a social need, lays on the fact that the leaders, such as the cited Sanger and Marie Stopes, received thousands of letters from women who asked them for information; before the impossibility of answering them, Sanger sent them a printed form where she apologized for being unable to answer on concrete aspects. Due to the repression, some contraceptives were imported from Germany to Canada then they were smuggled into the United States.

Notwithstanding, as from the 1920's decade there was a change in public opinion, which, for instance, was reflected on the increment of birth control clinics, which changed from 55 in 1930 to 800 in 1942 (Grossmann, 1995: 175), and a parallel liberalization of the positions of several religious denominations and the medical profession on contraceptives. The creation of non-profit clinics for birth control implied a rupture with the ideology of private medicine which prevailed in medical profession.

The judicial apparatus played an important role in favor of liberalization. For example, in Chicago in 1924, the denial of the municipal authorities to open a clinic was reverted by a judicial order.

In 1942, the movement of birth control changed its label for that of planned parenthood, which meant the abandonment of its character of social movement, replacing it with a project of economic and social planning directed by experts. This change was parallel to the acceptance and diffusion of a neo-Malthusianism within the rhetoric of stability, which saw the control of population as an essential variable for it.

There are several testimonials on an enthusiastic response from the workers in favor of birth control; it was also supported by social workers in the 1930's decade, while the authorities were reluctant. In 1937, the State of North Carolina included birth control in its health services, an initiative later followed by other southern States, in the frame of a racist policy, since contraceptives were only

provided to indigents; obviously, in order to decrease black population. By the end of the decade, some federal organisms followed the example undercover (Gordon, 1973: 312-334).

In 1936, a decision in the Supreme Court determined that information on birth control ceased to be considered obscene, even though there was still a fierce resistance to derogate the Comstock Law. Between 1941 and 1959, there were 17 frustrated attempts to eliminate it; it was until the 1960's decade that the situation began to revert (Marks, 1997). In 1965, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the aforementioned law in the State of Connecticut, arguing that despite it was in the legislation, there was a right to privacy, which protected against the State's intervention that which took place in the couple's sphere. With this, in all of the States, married couples gained access to contraceptives. All the local States had valid law against abortion, which only allowed a few exceptions, however, the Supreme Court in 1973 declared most of them unconstitutional. Notwithstanding, this decision did not imply that the States which had not been included in this declaration were able to approve new laws against abortion, and indeed, nineteen States did so. It is worth mentioning that in American policies a very contradictory aspect occurred, since, as it was mentioned, as from the second half of the 1950's decade, the exportation of birth control to less developed countries became the official policy, whilst the cited Comstock law was preserved. In 1940, birth rate had decreased to 2.1, yet in 1960 it again increased to 3.52.

In Canada, abortion was banned in 1869 and so were contraceptives in 1892. After the 1920's decade, Canadian literature favorable to birth control appeared; it had the support of socialists and anarchists. The Communist Party was opposed, with the same positioning as Lenin in 1913, arguing that it was sought to present birth control as a social panacea, which tried to divert the workers from the struggle for their claims. This positioning changed in 1936, in a simultaneous manner with the appearance of the policy that favored the formation of popular fronts against the Fascist threat (McLaren, 1997). In 1969, a law on abortion liberalization and access to contraceptives was approved.

Soviet Union and Oriental Europe

In 1913, the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Ilich Lenin published an article where he disavowed the propaganda in favor of birth control, stating that it was aimed to divert the workers from their struggle for improving their situation, arguing that they were living better off than their parents were and their children would achieve ever more, which implied that it was not necessary to reduce family in size. It is necessary to mention that Lenin was perhaps the socialist leader who promoted feminine participation the most, nonetheless, he seemingly never realized there was a relation between woman's political participation and family size.

Once Bolsheviks seized power, in December 1917 and in October 1918, the right of women to economic, social and sexual self-determination, the equity of illegitimate children were established and the crimes of incest, adultery and homosexuality were eliminated from the Civil code. In 1927 *de facto* unions were recognized. The governments proposed the creation of daycare centers and the collectivization of housework so as to facilitate women's access to education and labor force. The difficult conditions wherein the country was due to the destruction caused by the civil war and the imperialist siege made this policies be applied in a limited manner. Russia was the first country that legalized abortion in 1920, which only had effects in urban areas, because of the lack of health services in the rural sphere. It was allowed in the case of medical or economic reasons, although the authorities tried to discourage it. We have to distinguish that in spite of being allowed, from the scarce available information, it can be supposed that the population did not have contraceptives. When a delegation of German women asked for contraceptives, they were suggested becoming involved in the revolution (Grossmann, 1995: 97).

In 1934, it was reestablished the crime of homosexuality, with massive apprehension and generalized persecution of homosexuals; in 1936 abortion became illegal, except for the cases that it was explicitly advised by the medics. It is necessary to mention that in this moment there was still certain margin of democratic liberties, because of this the prohibition was followed by a wide debate in the press, in which millions of women who demonstrated in favor of preserving the decriminalization (Grossmann, 1995: 182-183), despite this Stalin imposed the prohibition. The leader, whom no one was able to debate with, supposed that for the ongoing industrialization a greater workforce was necessary.

The argumentation which was utilized was that socialism had already created the conditions for women would not have problems to be mothers. Sexual education became an instrument to dishearten youths' sexuality. In 1943 coeducation was suppressed. The role of marriage was emphasized as a permanent union for procreation, "sex and procreation were once again coupled". Discrimination against illegitimate children was reintroduced and the recognition of *de facto* unions was suppressed (*idem* Millet, 1970: 168-176).

In the Soviet Union, in 1936, a phenomenon parallel to that of the United States in the 1870's decade took place; the prohibition of abortion coincided with the beginning of the large Stalin's purges, i.e., this measure was totally coherent with the bloom of repression, within a general political regress.

A decree from July 8th 1944, under circumstances where WWII was still in course, which shows the importance the government gave the topic, continued with this line of regressive reforms, making divorce more difficult and onerous, which had been easy and gratuitous before. The decree was focused against couples who lived in free union; eliminated the right of single mothers to ask for the recognition of paternity by legal action and it established the category of 'Heroin Mother' for women who had ten or more children. The fundament of the decree, which surely could have been approved by Francisco Franco or any Pope, expressed the unrestrained regimes' statolatry. It stated that families with many children would be a solid foundation of the State, so it, being the family strong, strengthens itself (Clarkson, 1969: 709-710). One must take into account that material conditions of Soviet society were far from being adequate for families with many children, for, indeed, before the war, accelerated industrialization, which implied an important internal migration, without enough investment on housing, had created a sharp scarcity of places to live, which surely Nazi aggression had to worsen even more.

After Stalin's death, in 1953, Khrushchev allowed abortion again in 1955; nonetheless, he stated the Soviet Union was able to double its population without a problem. All of the countries that were part of the 'actually existent socialism' bloc in Eastern Europe followed this pattern, with the exception of Albania. In Poland, the abortion-birth proportions reached 17 percent in the mid 1980's decade. In Bulgaria, abortion was legalized in 1956, but in 1968 and 1973 the legislation was modified in a restrictive manner with the same argumentation used in Romania, that of the low population growth.

Several American conservative ideologists saw this reversion in the Soviet Union, from an initial sexual and familial liberalization to traditional positions, as a way of recognition of the impossibility to dispense with the traditional family, since the initial policy had been an instability factor (Nicholas Timasheff and other authors published between 1946 and 1968, cited by Millet, 1970: 169).

In Romania, abortion was allowed as from 1957, yet this policy was brusquely reverted by Nicolae Ceaucescu in 1966, with virtually no prior public discussion. Ever since the prohibition, 90 percent of the mother's deaths were caused by misperformed abortions (Kajsa Sundstrom, 1996).² It was probably the only case of a fairly developed country whose government maintained for more than twenty years a policy of strict contraceptive ban, which was notoriously unpopular, and which ended with Ceacescu's overthrow in 1989. It was based on a similar belief as that of Stalin, the need for a larger workforce (Teitelbaum, 1998).

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the related regimes in Eastern Europe, between 1989 and 1991 contradictory tendencies appeared in several of these countries. In Poland, a country where there is a heavy influence from the Catholic Church, a law which severely restricted abortion was approved, so the aforementioned proportion of abortions-births fell to 0.04 percent (at least legal abortions). Margaret Moore, spokeswoman of the Foundation Women on Waves, which promotes abortion, declared that the Pole law is the strictest in Europe (Anonymous, 2003). In 1996, the Parliament tried to liberalize the law, but the Constitutional Tribunal blocked it the following year. In Hungary, a more restrictive law was also approved in 1992. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia gratuity on abortion was suppressed, and substantial fees were imposed. In the latter there was an attempt to modify the law in a more restrictive manner. Conversely, in countries where this ban was associated to repressive policies, such as Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, the laws were liberalized. The liberalization of the law caused in the former a dramatic fall in maternal mortality.

Other countries

In Sweden abortion was restrictedly permitted as from 1938, being totally legalized in 1974. In Japan where the number of children per woman was four in 1940, abortion was decriminalized a after the end of WWII, which caused a very fast transition, as the number of children fell to slightly more than two by 1950. Currently, the average number of abortions is the same as births, it is, two per woman.

²At www.qweb/vinnoforum.se/papers/.

I already mentioned that in India the diffusion of contraceptives, particularly in the rural environment, was associated to the so called Green Revolution.

In all of the Islamic countries abortion is prohibited, with the exception of Tunis. In Israel it was liberalized in 1977, however, the pressure of the ultra-orthodox religious reverted it two years later.

Nevertheless, the cultural change tending to decrease the number of children took place in an accelerated manner in the last two decades of the XX century in several Islamic countries, such as those of northern Africa and Iran. It is known that, in 1979, in this last country the Islamic Revolution occurred, which can be considered as a counterrevolution, for it imposed a clerical regime, obviously pro-birth; notwithstanding, in 1989 birth control programs were settled, and there was an accelerated descent, so the average number of children per woman fell from seven to three by 2001 (Brown, 2002: 190-194). In 2005, a law that permits abortions in several cases was approved.³

In Mexico, the crime of abortion was included in the Civil Code in 1871. Cuba is the only Latin American country that allows abortion. In Brazil, contraceptives were legalized as from 1988. In Chile, one of the last actions of Pinochet's government, in 1989, was to ratify the prohibition of contraceptives. In Argentina, the president Carlos Menem unsuccessfully tried to give it constitutional status in 1994.⁴ Although the president Néstor Kirchner has spoken against legalization, the government announced that in hospitals a manual would be distributed that implies liberalization as for better attention to women who practice abortion and provide them with information on contraceptives as well.⁵ Within a policy of help for unemployed people, the government of the city of Buenos Aires distributes preservatives through some political organisms that include unemployed sectors, such as the Popular Assemblies.

Birth control and Green Revolution

The promotion of the limitation of population of several governments in the framework of Green Revolution represented a drastic change respect to the previous situation, as traditionally they have been opposed to birth control.

³ *Reforma* newspaper, International section; April 13th, 2005; p 1.

⁴ Information from www.cbctrust.com/abortion.html#27, and other internet web sites.

⁵ «Reperte Argentina manual abortista», in *Reforma* newspaper May 10th, 2005 p. 30-A.

The elaboration of policies tending to limit population in the less developed countries was considered by some critics from the historic perspective of a racist ideology which spread the fear of the 'misfit' or socially inferior reproduction; these policies had an aspect which seemed to make them right, where the practice of birth control in some countries was applied as the result of the influence from the United States was a continuation of eugenics, as it had repressive aspects. Nonetheless, the same policy was likewise applied in China, in a more coercive manner, although we have to remember it was a more egalitarian society. Yet, on the other side, these policies were supported on a reinvention of the argumentation formulated by Kautsky circa 1880, that the advances that a socialist regime could eventually achieve could be wiped by an excessive population growth. Where Kautsky referred to the proletariat and socialist revolution, the American ideologists substituted less developed countries and progress, in the sense that any improvement in these countries' conditions achieved by means of economic development would be annulled by population's growth.

As from 1954, several world conferences on population were held; the participation of Soviet people and representatives of various countries of the 'really existent socialism' was characterized by invectives against the promoters of birth control, where its promotion was qualified as a policy of the imperialism, and a form of racism, for it aimed to limit the development of the less developed countries, mostly populated by non-white population. For instance, they tagged them as 'fascists', which was totally ridiculous, since fascists were always against it; it was already mentioned that one of the first Hitler's measures when he ascended to power was to shut down the clinics which offered advice on this subject in Germany. The ideologists in Stalin's time expressed accusation that the promotion of birth control constituted a sort of ideological preparation for war.

The mentioned British Marxist Ronald Meek, in his introduction to the alluded compilation of texts by Marx and Engels on Malthus, published in 1953, followed a similar line (Meek, op.cit.). He attacked the birth control promoted by several American foundations in less developed countries, tagging it with the already mentioned of 'ideological instrument of the war field', this is to say of the international bloc of the capitalist countries led by the United States in the cold war, trying to show that it was intrinsically reactionary and, it can be supposed that, implying that the supporters of imperialism were against the incement of population because they hated mankind. Stated in such terms, not only does the thesis seem primitive and unrealistic, but also as something *quaint antique* of the

Stalin's rhetoric of that time. This rhetoric continued until the end of the 1960's decade, as the title of a book published in Buenos Aires in 1969: *Birth control as a weapon of the imperialism (El control de la natalidad como arma del imperialism)* shows so (Consuegra, 1969).

The review by Lawrence Busch of a book by John H. Perkins on the Green Revolution (Busch, 1997; Perkins, 1997) shows that the latter elaborated a correct answer to an issue of the greatest theoretical and political importance, stated and unresolved by Ronald Meek and restated again by Steven Weissman in an article published in 1970 (Weissman).

Green revolution basically helped rich farmers. The agronomists advisers of Ford Foundation in India rationalized this policy stating that it was easier to help a small number of large agriculturists that dozens of millions of farming families. In Philippines only the seeds of new rice varieties were distributed to those who had more than 10 hectares, they were neither directly sold to mid sized land holders nor leasers. In Tunis, the government only gave credit to those who possessed more than 50 hectares (Moore, 1982). Poor farmers did not have access to their benefits as they could not buy improved seeds, supplies, watering pipes, et cetera; however they were victims of the coercive policies such as forced sterilizations.

In the first place, the original proposal by Malthus was purely conservative, in the sense that all things should remain the same as they were from the social point of view, whereas the ideologists that boosted the proposal in the mid XX century were neo-conservatives, in the sense American progressives earlier in the same century were, i.e., activist conservatives who inserted population limits into a developing proposal.

Given Meek's Marxist formation, it was clear that he could not take the good intentions claimed in the neo-Malthusians' proposal for granted; this is, it was not possible to admit they did it because of humanitarian reasons or also perhaps because of an authentic preoccupation by the situation of the millions of poor people in those countries. It was logical to mistrust the ideologists and politicians of capitalism, and thinking that the key to understand the real function of the policies they applied was in the class struggle. Nonetheless, despite Meek was in the right track, it did not go beyond a general and abstract formulation; that of stating that neo-Malthusianism was part of the policy of imperialist bourgeoisie, leader of the bourgeoisie at worldwide level, disregarding its concrete meaning as part of a counterrevolutionary policy.

This made Perkins when he stated that they were integrated into which he calls "the theory of population and national security". According to it, population's growth leads to an increment in hunger, which at the time propitiates the conditions for *social unrest*, which "promoted opportunities for the growth of communism". Nevertheless, the other central point stated by Perkins is that birth control policy was coupled with that of Green Revolution, fostered altogether with technical assistance and implantation of institutional forms tending to increment agricultural productivity, which "would free" more farmers to work in the growing industrial economy and at the time would improve the level of life of those who remained in the countryside, even though it indeed turned out in the strengthening of a layer of agrarian bourgeoisie and the growing marginalization of poor and average farmers, because of the aforementioned motives. I will try to reformulate and complete Perkins' proposal; it is not explicit, however it can be supposed that, besides, this policy was a response to the victory of 1949 Chinese Revolution. It is a fact scarcely known that in India in 1946 there were two important farmers' rebellions which were suffocated in a cutthroat manner (Ross, 1998, op.cit.). If by then, both the communist and capitalists had perceived the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, which the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico in 1994 displays as valid for the case of the indigenous farmers from southeastern Mexico, the problem for American bourgeoisie was to elaborate and apply a policy that tended to eliminate said potential. The combination of birth control with Green Revolution, since the second tended to eliminate independent and self-sufficient producers, meant to broaden capitalist relations in the countryside, creating an agrarian bourgeoisie at the time that it decreased farming population, according to the model of expulsion from the countryside masses of farmers in order to make them available workforce for the development of capitalism, which took place during British Industrial Revolution in the VXIII century, in this case with the peripheral bourgeoisies of countries such as India, Pakistan and Philippines. If the combination of birth control and Green Revolution was a success in a narrow meaning, it is, increase the productivity of the wheat and rice cultivations, it was a failure as for the elimination of hunger and poverty, from the moment that the distribution issue was not stated, this is to say, of an egalitarian access to the technical means or the benefits. According to Perkins, such as Busch reproduces it, Green Revolution would have indeed fostered the 'national security' of the peripheral bourgeoisies. i.e., the stability of the capitalist regimes in these countries, not securing social stability, which we can interpret in the sense of stability founded on a more equitable income distribution.

In the case of Philippines, several-million emigration suggests that, even if there could have been a temporary improvement, there was not a sustained growth. Finally, Perkins suggests that it is not clear that the results would have been better if these policies had not been applied. It is necessary to add that, according to what the Indian researchers Kalpana and Pranab Bardhan report, in the district of Haryana, heart of the Green Revolution in said country, the real salaries of the agricultural workers did not increased, and 60 percent of the households were below the poverty line. Conversely, they did in the State of Kerala and other districts where there was a successful union to syndicates of these workers (Bardhan, 1973).

I suggest that livestock-becoming ongoing in Mexico, in several States as those of Veracruz and Chiapas, in the former accompanied by the despoiling of land of indigenous communities, fulfills the same role as the explained policies, as for the elimination of farming population and extending the capitalist relations in the countryside.

In none of the aforementioned countries there were triumphant farming revolutions as in China; in India there were the alluded farming rebellions and another in the 1970's decade, which was promptly drowned in blood. In Philippines, there have been guerrilla movements with a farming base for years, which have not been able to reach power. In Mexico, the guerrilla movements that started in the 1960's decade, and which achieved certain support in indigenous farming areas, such as the State of Guerrero, were defeated; we can suppose that, in the first place, Mexico is no longer a fundamentally farming country, in spite of having considerable areas with said character, besides the release valve of migration to the United States had a role in dismantling the potential for revolutionaty outbursts.

I suggest that the antecedent of the Green Revolution policies is to be found in those applied in Russia after the defeat of the first Russian revolution in 1905 by the tsarist Minister of the Interior, Piotr Arkadievich Stolypin (1862-1911), which led the repression where a lot of revolutionaries died; he was also an audacious social reformer. He perceived that the concentration of poverty in certain areas created favorable conditions for the outburst of farming rebellions. Indeed, there were numerous rebellions of this kind in the country's history, and considerable unrest in the countryside before the 1905 revolution. As from 1906, the government applied measures destined for eliminating the preexistent forms of collective property in the countryside and helping the most prosperous farmers to buy the land of the poorest farmers, this is to say, to produce a differentiation

of strata in the countryside in order to strengthen a nascent agrarian bourgeoisie. It also supported the emigration of millions of farmers toward Siberia, which by then was a sort of agricultural border (Clarkson, 1969: 395-400; *Soviet Encyclopedia*, Macmillan, 1973).

The policy of counterrevolution incarnated in Green Revolution sought the same objectives as those of Stolypin half a century earlier; however in the case of Russia it did not include the technical innovations and birth control. Which would have been the revolutionary alternative? Opposing neither to the introduction of greater performance seeds nor other complementary means to increase agricultural production, nor birth control, yet to its forceful application, which was one of the pernicious social effects, which were produced to the extent it was a process fostered and managed by the ruling strata. The birth control, freely accepted by an informed population, it is still necessary, not only because of the excess of population is indeed, at least in some countries, a real problem in relation to their alimentary capacity, but also because there can be female farmers' liberalization without them being able to have the means to limit their procreation capacity, in other words, without being free from the ancestral burden of an imposed and unwanted motherhood; this is to say, a policy that stated using the same technical media was needed, nevertheless, boosted from below, within a dynamics which looked for a change in the correlation of forces between peasantry and bourgeoisie.

Scientific research

There were very important advances in relation to new contraceptives, such as diaphragm, invented or reinvented in Germany by the end of the XIX century by the medic W. Mensinger, and the intrauterine device, in the same country, by Ernst Gräfenburg, by the end of the 1920's decade, none of them was product of scientific research; conversely, indeed one of the most used products nowadays was so: the contraceptive pill.

In the United States, the aforementioned American Medical Association was always very conservative and was opposed to any tendency to socialize the medicine. I already mentioned that the question of contraceptives was likewise aligned with the right. It has also been said that although there was individual cases of medics who supported the use of contraceptives, the organization was opposed to the diffuse information on them. The medic William A. Cary invented

in 1918 one of the first contraceptive jellies, nonetheless he did not manage to publish his formula in any medical journal, and even many of their colleagues boycotted him.

Also in Great Britain the conservatism of the medical profession, since for instance the Medical Defence Union, a medical guild organization, was still opposed to place intrauterine devices without the husbands' consent well into the 1970's.

The dominant shyness also had effects on delaying the progress of science; the German medic Reni Begun, in an article published in 1929, criticized with all right the delay in birth control in relation to other fields of medicine (cited by Grossmann, 1995: 64). Despite there were conjectures on the fact that women could only conceive for a determinate period in the menstrual cycle, it was in 1930 that the Japanese gynecologist Kyusaka Ogino and the Czech or Austrian Hermann Knaus independently established that fertilization is only possible in a period of woman's ovulation between 12 and 16 days before menstruation. Thus far, the dominant idea was that woman could conceive at any time of the menstrual cycle. The fact that the aspect of physiology of reproduction was only clarified until a very late date is noteworthy, if one takes into account that, for instance, the ovule had already been discovered in 1827, i.e., a hundred years before. We must take into account that the physiology of breathing had been studied as from the end of the XVIII, and that other no less complicated physiologic processes, such as that of the liver and kidney, had already been clarified as from the XIX century. This delay is still more notorious if we take into account the fact that a book on sexual physiology published in 1881 by a Mr. Trall, the existence of a "safe period" was mentioned, although it was miscalculated; and that in 1880 a group French Catholics had addressed their ecclesial authorities, quoting opinions of medics and physiologists on the existence of this safe period, this is, the impossibility of conception during a part of the menstrual cycle, this is to say, fifty years had to lapse for the subject to be researched (Campbell, 1973).

Sanctimoniousness still has effects on the almost inexistent information on Knaus and Ogino, who do not appear in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, one of the most important sources in the field of the history of science, neither do they appear in the *Dictionary of the History of Science* (Bynum, op. cit.), nor in encyclopedias, or in the book by McLaren on the history of contraceptives, however this last mentions the book by Trall (McLaren, 1990: 187 and 209). Neither are to be found biographic data on the internet, save dates (Hermann

Knaus, 1892-1970; Kyusaki Ogino, 1882-1975), and the mention that the former was professor in the University of Graz; another aspect of this hiding, or scant valuing of this aspect of history, is in the very brief mention of Francis Place's role as promoter of birth control. For instance, in the 200-word article on him in the *Encyclopedia Americana*, his role in this field is not mentioned. There is a 3-page article on birth control, which includes him in four lines (1976 edition). He does not appear in the *Britannica*, however, there is a several-page article on birth control where he is mentioned in one line (1975 edition).

The discovery of hormones by E. H. Starling and W. M. Bayliss, in 1902, led to the identification of their role in reproduction, which was a fundamental element for the invention of the contraceptive pill; casually, there are not data on the researchers who made these discoveries in the cited texts either.

The weight of prevailing prejudices was such that it discouraged the research on the subject in the largest pharmaceutical companies, although they were aware of the existence of a humongous potential market for contraceptives.

Before WWII, in Germany the production of sexual hormones from raw materials from sacrificed animal had been achieved, nevertheless it was a complex and costly synthesis. The discovery —by Russel E. Marker, from the University of Pennsylvania— of the presence of a chemical compound from which these hormones could be obtained was a crucial fact for the elaboration of the contraceptive pill. Marker carried out studies on some plants of the *Discorea* genus, present in the forests in southern Mexico and Central America; he isolated the substance called Diosgenine, from which he obtained in 1934 the feminine sexual hormone: progesterone; this research was financed by a wealthy donor, Catherine McCormick, who did so because of the intervention of Margaret Sanger. It was carried out as from 1951 in the Mexican company Syntex, which had the participation of several European exiled scientists, such as Carl Djerassi, and other Mexicans such as Luis E. Miramontes; the American endocrinologist Gregory Pincus also contributed to this research; the pill reached the market in 1960 (Marks, 1997; Miramontes, 2002).

Another important advancement has been the emergency pill, i.e., to be used after an unprotected sexual intercourse. The first work on the subject was published by the Canadian Albert Yuzpe in 1974; it is produced in the United States since 1998.

In the cultural sphere there were important advancements in psychology, philosophy and social sciences, for instance, the works on sexual repression — carried out by Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse— had a

deep impact on the research team led by the American biologist Alfred C. Kinsey (1894-1956), who began to be interested in this issue in 1938, and who compiled a vast amount of information from surveys on sexual behavior, he published two books, on the masculine behavior, 1948, and another on the feminine, in 1954, both books had massive diffusion. Kinsey's researches brought many myths of the dominant discourse on sexuality to an end, which were originated in religious bureaucracies, showing the reality of sexual behavior of millions; these books, which appeared in the climate of the anti-communist hysteria during the cold war, created a ferocious campaign against them from politicians and conservative churches. Kinsey was accused of playing the game of communism, as he would be diminishing the population's morale. This campaign made Rockefeller Foundation, which had been funding his researches, withdraw its support. The campaign still continues fifty years later; books that try to discredit him have been published, and texts, which appear on the internet, label him as a "monster", criminal and falsifier.

Current situation

The cultural change toward a greater tolerance and visibility of sexual topics began to take impulse in the United States in the 1920's decade, and we have seen that it was fought back by the conservatives, who achieved imposing repressive measures, such the Hays Code to self-censorship in the filming industry, as well as preserving the validity of the aforementioned Comstock Law.

Early in 1971, 38 percent of the world's population lived in countries where a legal abortion was difficult to achieve, this percentage increased to 64 in 1976; few global changes have occurred at the same speed (Brown, 1976). In two UN conferences —Teheran, 1968, and Peking, 1995— resolutions in which the right of men and women to freely and responsibly decide the number of children they wanted and when to have them were approved.

Catholic Church continued on its closed stance against abortion and contraceptives, and has preserved the prohibition in the countries where it has major influence; for example in Ireland, some 6000 women travel to England a year to abort; another 2000, from Northern Ireland, the part of the island under British control, where the prohibition is still valid. The film *The Magdalene Sisters* shows how the Irish Catholic Church secluded for decades, in convents, single mothers who were detached from their children, in order to be exploited

as enslaved workforce. It is noteworthy that Muslim clerics seem to be more liberal in this field than Catholic Church, as it can be deduced from the aforementioned in respect to birth control in this country.

It is known that in the United States there is a lengthy tradition of violence; there has been opposition to abortion by means of legal devices, for instance, a demonstration in Washington in 1997 where thousands took part, and vigils, sometimes with the participation of nuns against clinics that practiced abortion. Nonetheless, as from 1977 a terrorist campaign was unleashed: although the press has informed about some of these cases, in general it has been excessively soft in relation to the size of violent actions, and the same can be said of federal organisms such as FBI. According to the National Abortion Federation, an organization which favors the liberty to abort in the United States, between 1984 and 2000 there were 12 000 attacks and harassment on abortion services' providers, with a substantial declination as from 1988-1989, years when the protests against abortion clinics reached a peak (Doylek, 2001). The thousands of harassing actions included threatening telephone calls, letters with anthrax, etc. There were 38 bomb attacks, including three in 1984 Christmas season, which caused 17 casualties, among them medics and nurses; as well 146 intentional fires and more than seven hundred vandal actions. Between 1982 and 1996, material damages were 13 million USD. The bomb attacks went on at least until 1997. In some of these actions elements of the Ku Klux Klan took part; an instance of the minimization and hiding in the press of this sort of terrorism was an article on *The New York Times* on April 20th, 1995, after the bomb attack by McVeigh in Oklahoma, where other cases of terrorism in the United States in recent years were reviewed, these attack of abortion clinics were not mentioned. Not only did *The New York Times* hide that information, it was also hidden by the *Washington Post* and several radio stations remained silent in this respect. It is worth mentioning that despite in the cases of some assassinations the attackers were identified and sentenced; in the case of fires most of the responsible people remained unpunished. In some State the authorities funded the anti-abortion campaign, for instance, in the case of North Carolina, they promoted or permitted driving plates with the motto *choose life*, which a tribunal declared unconstitutional as it was a way of putting public money into a political campaign.

Nowadays there is a contradictory situation, as on the one side, there is strong opposition from the right to limit the right to abortion, the diffusion of contraceptives and sexual education, particularly in the local legislatures of States and supported

by federal government; and on the other, on April 25th, there was in Washington a demonstration of more than a million people in favor of abortion legislation. Sexual abstinence before marriage has become the official doctrine, not only in the United States, but also for instance, in Uganda, country where the accelerated advancement of fundamentalism is displacing Catholicism and moderated Protestants. Existing data suggests that the campaign in favor of sexual abstinence has not had effects on sexual behavior, for instance, on the age at which women begin sexual activity (Epstein, 2005), yet it has had upon other aspects, such as AIDS contagion, unwanted pregnancies, guilty feelings. In Canada, there was a campaign of threats with some attacks with bombs which caused the death of a medic, as well as injured people and cases of vandalism.⁶

Conclusions

Ever since the publication of Place's text, the struggle for the diffusion of contraceptives and decriminalization of abortion was and still is a democratic struggle and the quality of life, against religious and classist prejudices. The issue concerns all mankind.

In a society freed from oppression and exploitation, to the extent that contraceptives continue being diffused, including those of emergency, it can be supposed that abortion will eventually be extinguished.

Those in favor of the access to contraceptives and abortion decriminalization of abortion included radical democrats and communists when they did not have the power; in the opposite position, there were always conservatives, clerics and fascists. It can be supposed that in the Soviet Union there was a relation between the bureaucratic degeneration of Stalin's regime and the re-criminalization of abortive practice; in the German Democratic Republic, conversely, its decriminalization continued the tradition of the German Communist Party before Fascism; the re-criminalization was surely product of Soviet influence. In this struggle, democratic and revolutionary forces have used mass mobilization, such as in the case of Germany in 1931; the conservatives have draw to terrorism, such as they have recently in the United States.

⁶ www.religioustolerance.com, <http://gynpages.com>, article by Laura Flanders at www.fair.org/extra/

The central issue lays on the fact that if socialism is supposed to free humankind from oppression and exploitation, in order to achieve the free and multidimensional development of human beings, then said liberation cannot be limited to the elimination of classist oppression, but it has also to free humanity from the tyranny imposed by its biological nature.

We have seen that ideologist and politicians, who called themselves socialists, from the utopian socialist from the first half of the XIX century to some post-Stalin bureaucrats in the late XX century, were opposed to birth control and abortion or ignored these issues. Obviously, Stalin supporters had sworn they were in favor of the political participation of women, which was indeed an essential aspect of feminine liberation, so they fell in a blatant contradiction, since this requires a material base, this is to say birth control.

Wilhelm was one of the first Marxists to engage with these issues, and stated that everything related to sexuality had not been perceived by the great social thinkers (in *The Sexual Revolution*, 1945, cited by Millet, 1970: 170). It is known that Karl Marx, unquestionably the most influential theoretician of socialism, denied conjecturing on the forms a socialist society could take, with the exception of some limited to the political sphere, on the need to destroy the apparatus of the bourgeoisie State. In order to do so he argued that it was idle to speculate on what the protagonists of history could do once the capitalist oppression ceased. Nevertheless, he had indeed proposed some general objectives for a socialist society, for instance, the free development of everyone would be the condition for the individual free development, which should lead to the existence of self-accomplished human beings in their multiple dimensions.

In the first place, it can be argued that the first stance was not totally fair, if the socialist society appears from the entrails of the capitalist one, in the latter the tendencies which would lead to its full development under socialism would have been already identified; to the extent that these pointed toward positive changes, they had to be fostered even under capitalism.

This void we find in Marx is not unique. The fact of stating a correct theory does not necessarily imply perceiving all of its consequences, and that is why John Stuart Mill was able to be ahead Marx in this respect.

What was the cause of Bebel and Lenin sensibility on the problems of women? If socialists did not see the demand of contraceptives' availability, surely it was not only due to meanness, narrow-mindedness, the weight of sexist ideologies, etc, but also they had not stated these problems in the field of the theory. A symptom of this is the aforementioned Marx and Engels' disregard for

the judgment of Bradlaugh and Besant. This radical incapacity of the socialists of the late XIX and early XX centuries to state the problem of the relation between family size and quality of life would be repeated in the case of Thorez forty years later. What was the difference between Engels', O'Hare's and Thorez's birth prejudices and those of the catholic hierarchs such as the cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo?

The incapacity of the communists to elaborate policies in this field —not to mention the deplorable positioning of the social-democrats— caused this movement's vanguard was taken by people who had more limited conceptions of society, contaminated by bourgeoisie ideologies. In the beginning, this place had been taken by radical democrats, such as Francis Place and John Stuart Mill. Later, it was the turn of feminist militants, such as Annie Besant, also a supporter of a form of religious mysticism; or Margaret Sanger, whose lack of political coherence was demonstrated.

This void there is in the revolutionary theory was, moreover, functional so as not to grasp the sense of contraceptives' promotion in the United States' policy toward less developed countries.

If the continuation of tyranny that biological nature imposes has religious roots, which were functional for the survival of the species in times when it survived in hazardous conditions, subject for instance to devastating epidemics or famines because of harvests loss, under capitalism it became functional both to increase the industrial reservoir army, which facilitated the exploitation of workers and to provide the State with abundant cannon fodder to secure its position as an international hierarchy of power, which included colonial expansion and imperialist wars. The aforementioned 1905 text by George Rose had been the first to state such policy.

Malthus' theory, despite having a rational core, was not applicable at the time it was formulated; it implied an attempt of greater oppression on the subordinated strata, as it reinforced sexual oppression. The policy of population that tried to maximize it against mass resistance was applied by the Fascist and actually existing socialism of Stalin and Ceaucescu, was also functional for the domination of a bureaucracy upon the subordinate strata, in a manner coincident with the ideology and policies of the bourgeoisie.

Birth control policy —that includes the diffusion of contraceptives and legalization of abortion— reflected, on the contrary, the demands for human development and quality of life of the subordinate strata. They were resisted by the hypocrisy of bourgeoisie, which had the economic means to have access to

contraceptives and abortion, even though they were illegal, their availability more limited and less safe than where they were legalized. Bourgeoisie had adopted the fact of birth control, although it was denied for the proletariat. It promoted repressive policies; nonetheless there were exceptions of wealthy donors who supported birth control, such as the mentioned Catherine McCormick. The probable reasons have to be sought in the facts that, on the one side, any form of oppression on the popular masses is functional for bourgeoisie domination; yet, to the extent that churches had always claimed the subordination of human beings to their biological nature and had sought to reinforce sexual oppression, the acceptance of birth control had necessarily to weaken their influence and so one of the pillars of the oppression of classes. The policy of bourgeoisie as a social class was always that of the Catholic Church and those of the most conservative sectors of other churches: sexual repression for those outside marriage, sex only for procreation within marriage.

Birth control is, then, a democratic demand, which limits the role of the State's role to that providing information and material means so that everyone can enjoy their sexuality and decide on their offspring, whereas the manipulation of birth by bourgeoisie conservatism, fascism and the 'actually existing socialism' is stated in function of the State's needs, this is, against its potentialities of human development as human beings. The essential point is to control population in function of the real or supposed needs of the State, either limiting or increasing population.

It is known that communist parties were self-proclaimed at the head of proletariat, and indeed, in several countries and different historical conjunctures had said role; furthermore, they always promoted women's political participation. Notwithstanding, the struggle to diffuse contraceptives was a democratic struggle, and its impact on society was probably the same or even greater than that of other measures of this kind, such as the separation of the State and Church or the suppression of monarchy.

In this struggle, the German Communist Party played a vanguard role, while most of the communist parties ignored the problem and the social-democrats were sometimes against it. The oscillations which took place in the Soviet Union and in the German Democratic Republic were already mentioned. In the 1950's decade, and in the unfortunate case of Romania until 1989, some of the parties of the so called international communist movement had a negative role in the diffusion of contraceptives and the limitation of family size. The lack of perception from the socialists of this struggle character was not casual. It was

product of the prejudices, narrow-mindedness, lack of analysis capacity of the social consequences of the ideologies inherited from millenniums of sexual and social oppression. But additionally, there was a void in the theory as for the relations between the individual and the State, particularly in the time of transition from a capitalist society to a communist one.

Regardless the German Communist Party lacked a theory of the problem of population and birth control, and although it seems as though the direction of the country was not convinced that the struggle against the legalization of abortion should be a central topic, it played a totally right role, for the struggle to decriminalize was part of the struggle against repression.

In Germany, in 1931, abortion was a semi-tolerated practice, with the characteristics that to the extent there was repression, it was unleashed on women and did not affect the medics, blatantly contradicting the spirit of laws, which stated a punishment three times greater for the latter. The 1926 reform is worth appearing in an anthology of juridical abominations, since it allowed the judges to have the option to apply a heavy real sanction or a merely symbolical one, yet it can be supposed that it was typical of a situation where the cultural change in the German society made the law difficult to be applied. The aforementioned imprisonment of the medics Wolf and Kienle was then a tentative of the Catholic Party, whose insensibility respect to the poor was parallel to that of the catholic hierarchy, of increasing repression, eliminating the tolerance to the abortionist medics, a measure that having been successful would have made the situations of the proletarian masses worse, for which abortion would have been more difficult.

In the Soviet Union, this void in theory —the contradiction between theory and practice— in the time of Stalin, had also a relation with the bureaucratic degeneration of the socialism in this society. For, indeed, if the demand of contraceptives was a fair demand, of millions, which did not find ways to express, to the extent that there was a single party that controlled all the social organizations, and which was the unidirectional transmission leash from the summit to the base, never the other way. It was impossible to articulate such demand and take it to a public debate. If Stalin thought, and it was the same case as that of his ill-fated late son Ceacescu, that it was necessary to have greater workforce availability, ergo the absence of contraceptives was logical. The State was concerned by the production of energy or steel, not the particular wishes, allegedly petit-bourgeoisie, of the individuals. Because of this that society was not socialist, since socialism is not an end but a means to secure the free

development of the individuals. Obviously the situation in the Soviet Union was difficult. But it would not have been impossible to propose a public discussion on how much the production should be decreased in some areas so that the population had contraceptives. Nothing more anti-socialist than a society where the State apparatus decides which the behavior of the individuals in their most personal aspects has to be, because thus determine its productive system's supposed necessities.

The most overwhelming refutation of the argumentation that a larger population was needed in order to secure a greater development of productive forces is to be found in the experience of Japan and Germany after WWII. Both the German economy's recovery and the impressive boom of the Japanese, which placed this country among the most important economic world powers, occurred in circumstances of low birth rate in the former and in the latter there was a dramatic fall in respect to the rates before WWII.

As long as some defenders of the 'actually existing socialism' supported a high birth rate in function of supposed national interests, they fell into a trap of the bourgeoisie ideology. It does not make much sense to talk about the 'strength' of a nation; however it does about the State's, which consists in its potential to organize human and material resources for determinate ends. In this sense, to the extent that a State is surrounded by other hostile States, such as in the case of the Soviet Union, it is totally legitimate that it states to strengthen its defenses. Nevertheless, a hierarchization of the importance of the means for this end is imposed. In the first place, it would not be the number of its inhabitants, but the solidity of their social relations, which in principle should be more solid in a fair society, whose more complete form is a classless society. Obviously, the quality of its armory, the correct evaluation of the political conjunctures and the military strength of the hostile States, etc, are also factors to be considered.

Some American black militants in the 1960's decade fell in a similar trap. Julius Lester exactly accuses them of believing *there is strength in numbers*, not that the strength is achieved through a correct policy. He supports that opposing to birth control is the same as preserving control on women which have to be completely free for their full participation in the political struggle. What black militants wanted was the same as the Pope, it is, confining women to their body enslavement, chaining them to their physiological being. Defending birth control is protecting the physical, mental and spiritual health of women. No one should be asked to relinquish to make a family, however it must be one that provides the woman the same opportunity to become a total revolutionary, a potential that man is supposed to have because of his gender (Lester, 1969).

And finally, it is worth mentioning some data on the relation of abortion and criminality. The enemies of abortion freedom usually wear the cloak of decency, and denounce abortion as a crime. Nonetheless, the prohibition of abortion could have the characteristic of increasing the number of potential delinquents. This point has been dealt with by Steven D. Levitt, who points out that the rate of homicides caused by people younger than 20 years of age dropped in the United States 50 percent in five years in the 1990's decade, and the total homicide rate in 2000 was the lowest in 35 years. He suggests that an important reason had to do with the legalization of abortion, approved by the Supreme Court in 1973, and the following year 750 000 women had legal abortions, which increased to 1.6 million in 1980. At the early 1990's decade the first cohort of those born after the Court's decision appeared, apparently less prone to criminality than those before it. Most of the women who aborted were under 20 years of age and poor. Levitt shows that criminality rates started to decrease first in those states where the abortion was legalized before the Court's decision (Levitt, 2005).

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Persuasive Speech Outline Name: *Topic: Birth Control and how it relates to business *General Purpose: Persuade *Specific Purpose: By the end of my speech, my audience will know more about birth control and why the employer should not be able to decline coverage because of their own personal beliefs. Spain's culture and how they operate businesses. Birth Control for Every Woman Introduction I. Attention Getter : Raise your hand if you are or have ever taken birth control pills. II. Thesis Statement : Women's health is currently in danger, and I am here to convince that letting the employer cho