

# HUMAN LIFE INTERNATIONAL

## Population and economic systems

BY FR. ROBERT A. SIRICO

The relationship between “population control” and economic systems can be illustrated clearly by China. During the Cold War, China was regarded as an ally of the United States. In the workings of international politics, it was seen as anti-Soviet and hence, no matter how socialistic China’s policies, it was an important wedge country in dividing the communist world against itself.

It was not until late in the Cold War that the full truth about the repression and brutality of China’s regime came into clearer focus, particularly with revelations about China’s coercive “one-child per family” rule, the full consequence of which is being felt in a conspicuous shortage of women. The brutal fact is that at least two generations of infant girls were slaughtered under state pressure to control the growth of the population.

But the truth is that population control and brutal measures to bring it about are implied in the very notion of socialism, which requires a dictatorial central planner. If one concedes that the state should allocate economic resources like land and other natural resources, and be the primary owner and manager of all other means of production, how can one deny it the right to determine family size? Restrictions or regulations on family size follow from the presumption that the state can plan society to everyone’s benefit.

It’s true that other socialist states—Nazi Germany and Romania in particular—made large families a matter of national (and racial) policy. But neither economy experienced the level of material deprivation that China or the Soviet Union (where abortion reached epi-

demically proportions) did. Moreover, both the Romanian and Nazi regimes accepted the premise that the state and not parents are the ultimate decision makers with regard to procreation—a premise that, under the right conditions, will always lead to forced abortion.

### Socialism and abortion

Thus, socialism and forced abortion are natural allies because children come to

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be treated as any other consumption goods: fine if “society” can afford them but dispensable if not. The abortion rate in Russia, for example, has fallen since the fall of the Soviet Union. According to the United Nations, the abortion rate in the Russian Federation was 119.6 per 1,000 women in 1990, while by 1995 the rate was 68.5 per 1,000 women. While Russia continues to struggle, and the abortion rate is one of the highest in the world, there is hope that it will continue to decline as economic freedom increases.

Thus we see a concrete case of how increased freedom works to loosen a government’s grip on the family. So long as the government planned production, dictated lines of work, told

people where to live, it also told people how many children they must have. It is a logical part of the socialist dogma.

The glorious truth about the market economy is that it treats every individual as a resource—not just land and raw materials. It is the human person who is the ultimate productive resource because it is from the human mind, made in the image and likeness of God, that gives rise to entrepreneurial activity, creative work and the service to others that characterizes the prosperous business economy (see *Centesimus Annus* # 32).

It is certainly true that the market economy can be based on a materialism that disregards human life. But let’s be clear where the major impetus for euthanasia and abortion comes from today: Government subsidized industries, sectors and groups in which fears of overconsumption of resources give rise to an anti-life frame of mind.

There are two steps we can take that will curb abortion today. First, as a society, we must embrace the ethic of life and denounce in no uncertain terms any medical practices that are contrary to the ethic of life. Second, we can work to create systems of economic development that treat people as having infinite value to society.

I have not yet encountered a system besides a market economy, operating within a sound juridical setting, which make cultural transformation and the infinite valuing of human life a real possibility.

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