MOTHERS IN THE MOTHERLAND: STALINIST PRONATALISM IN ITS PAN-EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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The October Revolution of 1917 brought to power a radical socialist government that denounced the family as a bourgeois institution, undermined the institution of marriage, and promised the liberation of women. Aleksandra Kollontai, the leading Bolshevik feminist, declared in 1923 that the Soviet state would "lift the burdens of motherhood from women's shoulders and transfer them to the state." She added that "the family, in its bourgeois sense, will die out."[1] Yet by the 1930s, official Soviet culture endorsed strong families, glorified motherhood, and strove to raise the birthrate. The Soviet government also made divorce more difficult and outlawed abortion. The country that had embarked upon the great socialist experiment, reverted to a very traditional family model and an essentialized notion of women's "natural role" as mothers.

Several scholars have explored the causes of this shift in Soviet policy. Gail Lapidus demonstrated that the Stalinist leadership abandoned women's liberation from the family in order to utilize female industrial and reproductive labor.[2] Richard Stites, while stressing the thermidorian character of Stalinist family policy, noted that many of the original Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, held conservative views regarding morality and the family.[3] More recently Wendy Goldman analyzed in depth the debates and factors behind the shift in Soviet policy toward women. Her work revealed that many peasants and workers opposed policies that facilitated divorce or in other ways weakened the family. She also described the social and material realities (millions of homeless children, a badly underfunded orphanage system, rising juvenile crime, and widespread male irresponsibility) that prompted Soviet leaders to promote a more traditional model of family and motherhood.[4] This scholarship has explained not only the evolution of Soviet family policy but the fate of the women's liberation movement in the Soviet Union as well.

The topic of Soviet family policy also provides important insight into new state ambitions to control reproduction and shape society in the twentieth century. While Soviet policies are often assumed to be unique, when placed in comparative perspective Stalinist pronatalism appears strikingly similar to strategies pursued in many European countries during the interwar period. Beginning in the nineteenth century and with increasing urgency following the First World War, European governments sought to increase their populations by stressing motherhood and family. In an age of industrial labor and mass warfare, a large and disciplined population was seen as essential for national power. And in an age when the scientific management of society seemed not only possible but imperative, governments increasingly intervened to raise the birthrate and ensure the healthy upbringing of citizens. Ironically, political leaders championed the traditional, high-fertility (peasant) family only after industrialization had largely eroded it. They did so not to defend the integrity of traditional family structures but rather to serve their own mobilizational purposes of population growth and

social discipline. These attempts, and the essentialized gender roles that resulted, were the product of new ambitions of government to manage reproduction.

It is the thesis of this article that Stalinist pronatalism and efforts to buttress the family reflected a new type of population politics practiced in the modern era. To demonstrate this thesis, I will compare Stalinist pronatalist policies with those of western European countries.[5] This approach is not to deny unique features of Soviet society and ideology; indeed these features are crucial to explain why particular policies were adopted. My purpose is rather to demonstrate that Stalinist pronatalism was part of a broader trend toward state management of reproduction. By including the Soviet case as part of European history, it is possible to distinguish developments common to socialist, liberal democratic, and fascist states from those particular to specific countries and ideologies.

Birthrates and National Power

Reproduction had long been considered a natural phenomenon—something that lay beyond state control or scientific management. Even seventeenth-century cameralist thinkers who viewed a large population as a source of cheap labor and national wealth had no ambition or even conception of managing reproduction to control the quantity and quality of children born. But when social scientists and government officials began to think of society as an object to be studied, sculpted, and improved, reproduction emerged as an important realm for intervention. Throughout the eighteenth century, demography and associated fields emerged as disciplines, and their practitioners began to study birthrates.[6] In eighteenth-century Russia, both Peter the Great and Catherine the Great conceived of the population as a resource and showed concern with its size and productive capacity.[7]

In the nineteenth century officials began to compile censuses, which made it possible to study long-term population trends and to aspire to influence them. In France, the first country to experience a decline in fertility, a census in 1854–55 revealed that the total number of deaths exceeded the total number of births. Worries about depopulation proliferated following defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, when French leaders began to fear that their population was too small to compete militarily with Germany. By 1900 an extra-parliamentary commission on depopulation was created; it reported that the "development, prosperity and grandeur of France" depended upon raising the birthrate.[8] In other European countries falling fertility by the end of the nineteenth century also prompted warnings of national decline, demographic extinction, and race suicide. In Germany, economists began to calculate the economic value of each life, and presented infant mortality as a drain on the national economy.[9]

The First World War had an enormous impact on thinking about population in Europe. Mass warfare required huge numbers of troops, and made clear the link between population size and military power. Moreover, the horrendous casualties of the war prompted fears in many countries about their populations' capacities to sustain military action in the future. Political leaders came to see the size of the population as a critical resource, necessary for national defense, and they focused on reproduction to maintain the population. As a member of the British government declared in 1915:

> In the competition and conflict of civilizations it is the mass of the nations that tells ... The ideals for which Britain stands can only prevail as long as they are backed by sufficient numbers ... Under existing conditions we waste before birth and in infancy a large part of our population.[10]

When fighting ceased, the major combatants were faced not only with the frightful human cost of the war, but with a demographic catastrophe. Of all men between the ages of eighteen and 35 in France in 1914, half were dead by the end of the war. France lost 1,393,515 soldiers in the war, Britain 765,400, and Italy 680,070.[11]

In Russia, unlike in some countries of western Europe, fertility had remained high throughout the nineteenth century.[12] But Russian casualties in the First World War proved even more severe than those in western Europe, and when added to deaths during the Civil War and ensuing famine, totalled sixteen million.[13] This demographic cataclysm provoked concern among Soviet leaders and scholars, and prompted a number of demographic studies in the early 1920s. A special commission on the consequences of the war produced statistics on losses, the decline in fertility during the war years, and the impact of war on the labor force.[14]

World War I casualties, though they cried out for more births to replenish the population, actually accelerated the decline in fertility after the war. The loss of young men reduced the number of potential fathers so sharply that Britain's birthrate fell by roughly 40 percent between 1914 and 1930.[15] The birthrate in France, already low, continued to fall, and many French leaders concluded that a victorious France had emerged from the war weaker than a vanquished Germany. While Germany's population remained larger than that of France, it too suffered a decline in fertility. One German demographer warned that Germany in 1924 had a birthrate of only 20.4 per thousand people, barely high enough to maintain the population at current levels, and that the birthrate was almost certain to continue its downward trend. Arguing that "the quality of the population is wont to suffer by fall in quantity," he concluded, "we must beware and, in spite of the tremendous burdens which the war has laid upon us, make possible to every married couple by means of economic insurance of parenthood that they shall fulfil their reproductive duties."[16]

Fears of depopulation were somewhat less acute in the Soviet Union, because its birthrate recovered to near pre-war levels by the mid-1920s. Nonetheless, Soviet officials and demographers continued to monitor population trends closely, and were alarmed by the precipitous drop in fertility that accompanied collectivization and industrialization. An extensive demographic study in 1934 revealed that the birthrate had fallen from 42.2 births per thousand people in 1928 to 31.0 in 1932. Moreover, S. G. Strumilin, the author of the study and one of the country's leading statisticians, demonstrated that the drop in fertility correlated with urbanization and the entrance of women into the industrial workforce—trends that had to continue if industrialization were to move ahead.[17]

Strumilin's other major finding was that social groups with higher wages had lower fertility. Not only did workers have lower fertility than peasants, but urbanized workers had lower fertility than peasant in-migrants to the city, and

white-collar employees had the lowest fertility of all.[18] This discovery contradicted previous research that had identified economic hardship as the primary cause of low fertility.[19] Soviet officials now had to revise their assumption that the birthrate would rise as material conditions improved. Increasingly they saw low fertility as the result of women's choices to have abortions—choices made by women who, in their view, could afford to have children but chose not to out of personal preference.

In addition to its demographic repercussions, World War I also reinforced Social Darwinist ideas about the competition of nations, and the struggle of peoples to survive and propagate. Mussolini articulated these ideas most explicitly when he declared, "Fertile people have a right to an Empire, those with the will to propagate their race on the face of the earth."[20] In his 1927 Ascension Day speech, Mussolini declared that the Italian population of 40 million compared unfavorably with 90 million Germans and 200 million Slavs. And the following year, in his essay, "Numbers as Force," he argued that the fall of past civilizations had been preceded by a decline in the birthrate.[21] Mussolini concluded that Italy needed to increase its population to assert superiority over inferior races, and to establish an empire.[22]

In Spain, politicians and demographers also equated a people's influence with its rate of reproduction. Given the low Spanish birthrate in the 1930s, one prominent demographer declared,

> Families with many children are the ones that carry Spain on their shoulders. Through these she is conserved and grows and can hold hope to be a world power of the first order. Without them, Spain will be reduced, she will shrink, the national economy will be without producers and consumers; the State, without soldiers; the Nation, without blood."[23]

Franco had the goal of increasing the Spanish population to 40 million within a few decades, and saw this as a means to recapture Spain's faded glory and world prominence.[24]

While Soviet authorities never adopted explicit social Darwinist thought, they did make comparisons between Soviet fertility and that of other European countries. They published, for example, articles not only on the Soviet birthrate, but also on "Fascist Population Policy," and the birthrate in Germany.[25] I. A. Kraval', the head of the statistics division of Gosplan, heralded the Soviet Union's fertility rate as higher than that of most western European countries, and he argued that this fact proved the superiority of socialism over capitalism.[26] Such thinking interpreted high fertility as a sign of superiority, though in the Soviet case the competition was conceived as between political systems rather than between races.

Contraception and Abortion

Political leaders' fears of population decline led them to contemplate ways to increase the birthrate. Once population could be represented statistically, and fertility trends explained based on demographic studies, it became possible to conceive of fertility management. Contraception and abortion became a natural focus for state intervention. In Germany abortion had been in the penal

code since 1872; abortion providers and women receiving an abortion could be sentenced to five years in prison.[27] During the First World War, the advertisement of contraceptives was banned on the German homefront, and legislation to tighten abortion laws was introduced.[28] While the Weimar government relaxed penalties for abortion, the Nazi government in 1933 enacted even harsher laws against abortion and contraception, and during the Second World War decreed the death penalty for those who continuously carried out abortions.[29]

The French government also took steps against contraception and abortion. A law passed in 1920 that outlawed the advertisement and sale of contraception stated, "In the aftermath of the war where almost one and a half million Frenchmen sacrificed their lives so that France could have the right to live in independence and honor, it cannot be tolerated that other French have the right to make a livelihood from the spread of abortion and Malthusian propaganda."[30] A 1923 French law increased penalties for abortion to imprisonment for abortionists and their clients.[31] Likewise, the Italian penal code of 1931 mandated prison terms of two to five years for anyone procuring or performing an abortion. A 1929 British law also outlawed abortion, and Swedish and Danish laws passed in the 1930s restricted but did not ban abortion outright.[32]

In November 1920 the Soviet government had legalized abortion. The decree noted the growing number of illegal abortions (due to extreme economic hardship following the Civil War), and in the interest of women's health allowed free abortions in hospitals provided that they were performed by doctors.[33] The Soviet government, however, did not recognize abortion as a woman's right. Indeed Nikolai Semashko, the Commissar of Health, explicitly stated at the time that abortion was not an individual right, that it could depress the birthrate and hurt the interests of the state, and that it should be practiced only in extreme cases.[34]

Birth control was legalized in the Soviet Union in 1923, and two years later the Central Scientific Commission for the Study of Contraceptives was established. Debates divided physicians between those who supported contraception as a means to reduce the number of abortions and prevent the spread of venereal disease, and those who argued that it would depress the birthrate and threaten the nation's welfare, and perhaps even its survival.[35] By the 1930s, the debate over contraception was rendered largely moot, when all sectors of economic production were taken over by the state, and no resources were allotted to the manufacture of contraceptives. A secret directive of the Commissariat of Health in 1936 ordered the withdrawal from sale of any remaining contraceptive devices.[36]

Consternation about abortion, however, grew ever more intense. Even before the sharp drop in fertility after 1928, some doctors called abortion "a great antisocial factor" and "a threat to the steady growth of the population."[37] In an agitational mock trial published in 1925, the prosecutor asks a young woman who had an abortion, "Do you understand ... that you have killed a future person, a citizen who might have been useful for society?"[38] The Soviet press highlighted the growing number of abortions in large cities, which by the early 1930s had far surpassed the number of live births.[39]

The legislative centerpiece of the Soviet government's campaign to raise the birthrate was the decree of June 27, 1936, which outlawed abortion except for

medical reasons.[40] Politbiuro discussion of the decree prior to its promulgation emphasized the importance of achieving the maximum possible birthrate.[41] In September, the Politbiuro decided "to limit as much as possible the list of medical reasons" for permitting an abortion. This decision was promulgated two months later in a decree that limited permissions for abortions to cases in which hereditary diseases were likely or in which a woman's life was endangered. The decree stated, "abortion is not only harmful for a woman's health, but is also a serious social evil, the battle with which is the duty of every conscious citizen, most of all medical personnel."[42]

The ban on abortion was preceded by a huge publicity campaign and public discussion of a draft of the decree, and it was followed by further propaganda on the new law's validity and importance. Numerous articles stressed the harm that abortions did to women's physical and mental health.[43] (No mention was made of the extreme danger posed to the health of women who in the wake of this law sought illegal abortions.) One article asserted that the "single goal" of the decree was "the protection of the health of the Soviet mother."[44] Commissar of Health Semashko echoed this idea when he warned that abortion could cause infertility, and that it could have an adverse effect on a woman's organs and nervous system. But he also justified the ban on abortion as crucial to "the state task of increasing the population of the Soviet Union." He went on to compare Soviet fertility with that of other industrialized countries, and argued that the abortion ban would allow the Soviet Union to maintain or even increase its superior birthrate.[45] Another Soviet official wrote that more people were needed for economic growth and socialist construction, and that "abortion—the destruction of emerging life—is impermissible in our state."[46]

Promoting Motherhood

Once reproduction came to be seen as a state and societal (rather than individual) concern, governments not only intervened to regulate reproduction, they also began to provide material support for mothers. A wide range of people, from state officials and health experts, to members of women's organizations and religious groups, agitated for increased government aid to mothers. While the politics of maternalist welfare, and the policies adopted, varied from one country to another, the overall trend was toward extensive state aid and propaganda designed to promote motherhood.[47]

Western European politicians and activists began to organize maternal welfare assistance well before World War I. In Germany, the League for the Protection of Mothers was founded in 1904, and included both eugenicists and feminists. The League agitated for maternity insurance and a system of childcare facilities.[48] The French government in the same year enacted a law that required each administrative district to have a maternity home.[49] The 1907 Notification of Births Act in Britain facilitated registration of births and home visits by infant-care specialists.[50] The First World War provided additional impetus for maternalist welfare policies, and by the early 1920s, extensive family allowance schemes had been established by state decree or employer initiatives in France and Belgium, and through collective bargaining in Germany and Austria.[51] The British government resisted pressure for family allowances and maintained a more laissez

faire approach toward the question of material benefits for mothers. Nonetheless it expressed alarm about population decline, especially when the birthrate fell to record lows in the 1930s, and funded maternity and child welfare centers.[52]

In addition to family assistance programs, governments awarded birth bonuses to encourage people to have children. In France, the 1932 Family Allowance Act provided material aid for mothers, and the 1939 Family Code introduced a birth premium of several thousand francs for the first child born within two years of marriage.[53] In 1935, Mussolini decreed aid to large families in Italy and bonuses to the families of soldiers and civil servants for the birth of each new child.[54] Likewise, the Nazi government in 1935 instituted annual (and later monthly) grants to "hereditarily healthy" German families with four or more children.[55]

To attempt a typology of western European countries, we see the strongest pronatalist programs in the Catholic countries—France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. These countries stressed reproduction of all members of society without distinction (and also practiced positive eugenics in contrast to the negative eugenics of Germany, Britain, and Scandinavian countries.)[56] They utilized a variety of means—assistance, tax incentives, and birth bonuses—to achieve pronatalist objectives. By contrast, Germany alongside its pronatalist policies applied antinatalism (including sterilization) to the physically and racially 'unfit.'[57] The Nazi regime provided maternity assistance only to the racially pure (a practice not replicated in Italy despite its fascist ideology). Scandinavian countries also focused on 'quality' over 'quantity' and instead of birth bonuses emphasized childcare to enable women to have children. Britain, its acute population concerns notwithstanding, refrained from the adoption of extensive government programs to raise the birthrate.

Soviet policies resembled most closely those of the Catholic countries of western Europe, both in terms of their means and objectives. The Soviet government offered financial inducements similar to those in Catholic countries. The same Soviet decree that outlawed abortion granted women a 2,000 ruble annual bonus for each child they had over six children, and a 5,000 ruble bonus for each child over ten children.[58] These bonuses drew an immediate response from women with seven or more children. Local officials were deluged by requests from (primarily peasant) women who qualified for these bonuses.[59] Moreover, the Soviet government encouraged reproduction among all members of the population, without distinction by ethnicity or class. A government report in November 1936 clarified that mothers with seven or more children should receive bonuses regardless of their social origins, and even regardless of whether their husbands had been arrested for counterrevolutionary activity.[60] Thus the Soviet government promoted reproduction even among those it considered class or ideological enemies, in contrast to the Nazi government which limited reproduction of those it considered racial enemies.

In addition to bonuses paid to individuals, the Soviet government dispersed money for facilities required by mothers generally. Within months of coming to power, the Soviet government founded the Department of Maternal and Infant Welfare. This department created a large number of maternity homes, nurseries, milk kitchens, and pediatric clinics.[61] With the pronatalist push of the mid-1930s, funding for maternity wards and nurseries increased even more, though

not nearly enough to meet the needs of the millions of women in workforce.[62] Given that the Soviet government channelled virtually all resources into rapid industrialization, it lacked the money for adequate childcare facilities. But in principle, the Soviet government committed itself to complete care for mothers and children.[63]

Beyond providing material support, governments throughout Europe also launched propaganda campaigns to promote motherhood. Many officials and social commentators blamed modern ideologies and trends (such as feminism and women's employment outside the home) for the weakening of traditional female roles and the decline in the birthrate. In the early 1920s, General Maitrot in France stated, "there are too many women typists and civil servants here and not enough *mères de famille*. With respect to natality, the German mothers have beaten the French mothers; this is Germany's first revenge against France."[64] Nazi leaders were even more opposed in principle to women in the workforce. Central to Nazi ideology was an anti-feminist emphasis on traditional gender roles, and from the time they came to power, they admonished women to stay at home and have children.[65]

In an attempt to promote motherhood and raise the birthrate, governments established special awards to honor mothers with many children. Beginning in 1920 the French government bestowed a bronze medal upon women with five or more living children, a silver medal upon those with eight or more, and a gold medal upon those with ten or more.[66] Mothers of many children in Nazi Germany received the Cross of Honor of the German Mother with an inscription, "the child ennobles the mother." These medals were awarded in bronze for having four children, silver for six, and gold for eight. Women who bore their fifth child could name a national leader as the godfather of their baby, but when Hindenburg proved more popular than Hitler in this category, the program was suspended.[67]

The Soviet government developed similar propaganda and portrayed having children as a natural and fulfilling part of a woman's life. Articles in the Soviet press stressed the happiness that children brought to women's lives.[68] One testimonial from a woman with five children described how much her children loved her, while another article claimed that children took care of each other, so that having many children was an advantage rather than a burden.[69] Propaganda also sought to allay women's fears about giving birth. One article discussed a new medical technique for reducing pain and making childbirth easier, and it was followed by the testimonial of a woman who found that giving birth was not at all painful and that she did "not once cry out" when having her child.[70]

The Family and Paternal Responsibility

In their efforts to raise the birthrate, many policymakers focused on the family as an institution that needed to be buttressed. There was a sense in European countries that the family had begun to disintegrate. Industrialization and urbanization in the nineteenth century undermined the traditional peasant family. Simultaneously, feminist ideas and new employment opportunities for women challenged existing gender roles. The enormous social disruption of the First

World War and the intense cultural ferment in its aftermath even further eroded traditional gender roles, morality, and family patterns.

Already in the nineteenth century, some social commentators had expressed alarm over the disintegration of traditional families. The influential French sociologist Frédéric LePlay warned that industrialization had subverted the family and had fostered the corrupting influences of individualism, socialism, and feminism. He held up as his ideal the patriarchal family of rural societies. He noted that peasant families offered not only social stability but very high fertility, and he proposed legal measures to strengthen the family. Particularly in France, where concerns about the birthrate and pro-family activism by Catholic organizations were both strong, his ideas resonated with many political leaders and social thinkers.[71]

In the interwar period, political leaders throughout Europe began to stress the importance of the family to social stability and national strength. Upon coming to power in 1932, the Salazar dictatorship launched a patriotic crusade for Portugal's national regeneration with the family as the pillar of society.[72] The Franco regime called for a new moral order, based on the restoration of the family as the primary social unit, that would revive Spain's greatness. Along with this call for moral regeneration came the denunciation of moral degeneracy and the changing status of women. Demographers, doctors, and politicians alike blamed moral decay and declining birthrates on the masculinization of women, women working outside the home, and women's economic independence.[73]

Nazi propaganda also focused heavily on strengthening the family. The traditional peasant family was heralded as a bulwark against the fragmentation and alienation of modernity.[74] As described above, the Nazis promoted an essentialized vision of women as mothers, and in conjunction with this they praised traditional families. While in many European countries, including Britain, Sweden, and Norway, family allowances were paid to mothers, in Germany they were paid to fathers. The Nazi Party applauded this arrangement stating, "a man will no longer be materially or morally worse off in competition with the so-called clever bachelor, merely because he has done his duty to the nation."[75] In this way, while Nazi propaganda focused on mothers, monetary incentives went to fathers.

The Soviet government also strengthened the family, though this involved the repudiation of Kollontai's vision of love freed from the confines of marriage and women spared the burden of childraising through collective responsibility and state-funded childcare. As noted above, many Soviet leaders including Lenin held rather Victorian notions about the family and regarded sexual liberation as a distraction from, if not a perversion of, socialism. In the 1920s Soviet officials began to criticize the sexual licentiousness of Soviet youth as something that diverted attention from the tasks of socialist construction.[76] The widespread rejection of traditional morality by urban youth also became associated with male irresponsibility. Following the Revolution, some men scorned marriage or married and divorced multiple times. As a result, many women were left raising children with no support from male partners. People began to complain of the large number of "unpleasant and unscrupulous divorces," and call for "decisive and concrete measures . . . to once and for all put a stop to this outrage."[77] Soviet

officials published exposés of "Red Don Juans" and condemned young men for reneging on promises to marry young women they had seduced, and for marrying and divorcing multiple times. One writer set forth as the Soviet ideal "a long marriage, based ... on mutual trust and respect."[78]

One other factor in the Soviet government's promotion of the family as a model for reproduction was the enormous problem of homeless children. The First World War and Civil War had left millions of children orphaned and homeless. While Soviet commentators initially hailed childraising in orphanages as an opportunity to instill socialist principles (rather than the potentially reactionary teachings of parents), the government lacked adequate resources even to begin to house and care for the millions of orphans in need. Under such conditions, the idea that the state could take on all the burdens of childraising proved untenable.[79] The problem of homeless and unsupervised children seemed to grow worse in the early 1930s, with the upheavals of collectivization and rapid industrialization. Soviet officials voiced alarm at the thousands of homeless or neglected children who formed gangs and engaged in petty theft.[80] Jurists and criminologists concluded that family disintegration was the primary source of juvenile crime.[81]

The Soviet government therefore utilized legislation and propaganda similar to those of western European countries to buttress the family. The 1936 decree that outlawed abortion also made divorce much more difficult. It largely reversed the 1918 decree that had deliberately weakened the institution of marriage by facilitating a quick and easy divorce at the demand of either spouse.[82] The new law required that both spouses appear in court to file for divorce. It also raised the fee for divorce from three to fifty rubles (with a fee of 150 rubles for a person's second divorce and 300 rubles for their third).[83]

Once the new legislation was announced, propaganda drove home the message that marriage was an important institution. One article justified the tightening of divorce as necessary given "the many people who don't give a damn about the family, looking on marriage as a means to satisfy their own personal whims."[84] Another article criticized young people for failing to take marriage seriously. It cited cases of couples who got married based solely on physical attraction and who divorced a short time later.[85] A third article stated, "The right to divorce is not a right to sexual laxity. A poor husband and father cannot be a good citizen. People who abuse the freedom of divorce should be punished."[86]

In tandem with its drive to strengthen the family and promote motherhood, the Soviet government sought to enforce paternal obligations. A 1933 decree that required all births to be registered within one month included provisions for a mother to name the father of her child regardless of whether they were married or even whether he was present. A man who did not acknowledge paternity of a child would still be registered as the father if a mother named him as such and provided any evidence of cohabitation.[87] In 1936 the same law that outlawed abortion and made divorce more difficult also tightened regulations on child support. It set minimum levels of child support as one fourth of the unmarried or divorced father's salary for one child, one third for two children, and one half for three or more children. It also increased the penalty for nonpayment of child support to two years in prison.[88]

It was no coincidence that the Soviet government guaranteed paternal responsibility at the same moment that it outlawed abortion. Soviet policymakers were aware of sentiment, particularly strong among peasant women, against the weakening of marriage. They therefore sought to buttress the family as a positive incentive for women to have more children, at the same time that they instituted coercive measures to prevent abortions. In subsequent years the Soviet government proved serious about paternal responsibility, and made every effort to track down delinquent fathers.[89]

The Soviet government, like western European governments, did not champion the family as a private commitment or as a means to personal fulfillment. Instead it explicitly promoted the maintenance of one's family as an obligation to society and to the state. The head of the Komsomol, Aleksandr Kosarev, stated in 1934, "The stronger and more harmonious a family is, the better it serves the common cause.... We are for serious, stable marriages and large families. In short, we need a new generation that is healthy both physically and morally."[90] A Soviet jurist added that "marriage receives its full value for the state only if there is progeny."[91] Soviet propaganda also stressed that the parents were to raise their children for the sake of the Soviet state. As one commentator wrote in 1936, "Hand in hand with the state's establishments, the parents must rear the children into conscious and active workers for socialist society.... Parents must instill in their children ... readiness to lay down their life at any moment for their socialist country."[92]

The corollary to the state function played by the family was of course the state's prerogative to intervene in family matters. One article criticized a local Komsomol organization for concluding that a husband's behavior toward his wife was a personal matter. It told the story of how an unfaithful husband ultimately abandoned his wife and child, and it stated that the Komsomol had neglected its obligation to oversee the marital behavior of its members.[93] The Soviet state also interceded in families to take children away from parents who did not raise them properly.[94]

State intervention in family matters necessitates one qualification to our characterization of Soviet policies as strengthening the family. While the Soviet government encouraged marriage, discouraged divorce, and emphasized familial responsibility, it did not fortify the family's control or autonomy. On the contrary, it reaffirmed the civic role of the family, and weakened the family as a bulwark against state intervention in private life. The family model promoted by the Soviet state heightened familial obligations but undercut familial rights and autonomy. Governments of other countries also utilized the family to serve state rather than private interests.[95] For all the Nazis' rhetoric about restoring traditional families, the model that they promoted directly violated the conservative ideal of limited state intrusion into private life. Nazi policy strove to create a family unit that facilitated rather than guarded against state intervention, and one that served state goals of population growth and racial purity, rather than individual liberties concerning reproduction and childrearing.[96] Government officials, then, while they heralded the importance of the family, actually violated its autonomy and employed it to facilitate state intervention.

Though the Soviet government utilized the family in a way similar to that of

other governments in the interwar period, Soviet family policy was distinguished by a very different societal role for women. The Soviet government had recruited women into the industrial workforce in large numbers during the First Five-Year Plan, and for the rest of the Soviet era it relied upon their labor outside the home. At no time during the campaign to bolster the family did Soviet officials suggest that a woman's place was in the home. To insure that pregnant women could continue working, the Politbiuro approved a decree in October 1936 that made it a criminal offense to refuse to hire or to lower the pay of women during pregnancy.[97] Soviet propaganda constructed gender in a way that stressed both women's economic contribution and their role in raising the next generation.

While women's employment seemed to grant a measure of equality, Soviet leaders' primary aim was the mobilization of female labor. The industrialization drive had created an insatiable demand for factory workers, and the recruitment of women was necessary to meet this demand. As a result, Soviet women did have more opportunities than women in western Europe, where political leaders discouraged women's work outside the home in order to reduce unemployment among men. But job opportunities did not translate into economic equality. Employment patterns relegated women to lower status and lower paid positions within Soviet industry, and Stalinist policies in many ways intensified the sexual division of labor and women's subordination in the workplace and at home.[98]

Effectiveness of Pronatalist Policies

Despite prohibitions on abortion and contraception, and despite extensive pronatalist incentives and propaganda, campaigns to raise the birthrate failed to have a marked effect in any country. The birthrate in Spain remained low throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and only rose (and then very slightly) when the economy improved in the 1950s and 1960s. There is no evidence that Spanish women ever subscribed to government propaganda about their biological destiny as mothers.[99] In Nazi Germany, where the largest pronatalist campaign and the harshest repressive measures against abortion were implemented, fertility rose somewhat from 1933 to 1936, but then remained stagnant, never even reaching levels of the late 1920s. Even this slight increase in fertility was probably due more to the improved economy than to pronatalist policies. Despite Nazi glorification of and monetary rewards for large (*kinderreich*) families, the number of families with four or more children actually decreased during the Nazi era. Moreover, draconian laws against abortion did not prevent a large number of illegal abortions (up to one million annually).[100]

The Soviet pronatalist campaign provoked a range of responses. Some women wrote angry letters to protest the ban on abortion, and argued that it would limit women's participation in public life. Other women, those who received birth bonuses, wrote letters to thank Stalin and promised to continue having children.[101] Government reports stated that the population overall received the decree banning abortion "enthusiastically."[102] Yet in practice the response of most Soviet women was far from enthusiastic. The abortion ban led to a huge number of illegal abortions. Commissariat of Health reports in October and November of 1936 cited thousands of cases of women hospitalized after poorly performed illegal abortions.[103] Of the 356,200 abortions performed in the hos-

pitals in 1937 (and 417,600 in 1938), only ten percent had been authorized, and the rest were either incomplete miscarriages or incomplete illegal abortions.[104] In response the Soviet government stepped up efforts to identify and arrest those who performed illegal abortions.[105] As the law dictated, those found guilty of performing abortions were sentenced to a minimum of two years in prison. Those who had performed multiple abortions often received four years imprisonment or more.[106]

These repressive measures did result in a rise in the birthrate, but this rise was limited and temporary. The birthrate per thousand people rose from 30.1 in 1935, to 33.6 in 1936, to 39.6 in 1937. But in 1938 the birthrate began to decline again, and by 1940, marital fertility for European Russian was below the 1936 level.[107] The enormous societal disruption of the purges and mobilization for war in part accounted for the decline of the birthrate beginning in 1938. But the birthrate never recovered to pre-industrialization levels, and evidence on illegal abortions indicates that Soviet women as a whole did not abide by the government's abortion ban. As Soviet authorities had noted in 1920, but then chose to ignore in 1936, the outlawing of abortion only drove women to seek illegal options. Repression proved ineffective at raising the birthrate in the long term.

The glorification of motherhood and birth bonuses also failed to have much effect. The women who received the bonuses were primarily peasant women who already had many children prior to the introduction of monetary incentives. The resources allotted to expand maternity wards and childcare were insufficient to improve markedly the lives of mothers. Government priorities continued to focus on heavy industry, while childcare systems and communal dining facilities remained woefully underfunded. And given the equally underfunded consumer sector, women had enormous difficulty simply obtaining basic necessities for their children.

One other crucial factor was women's place in the workforce. As mentioned above, women had been recruited in large numbers into industry during the 1930s, and the official emphasis on motherhood was in no way intended to free women from their obligation to work outside the home. Soviet law did allow women up to two months maternity leave—a fact Stalin took care to stress publicly—but this was only another small inducement for women to have children.[108] The realities of Soviet life saddled women with the double burden of full-time work and uncompensated domestic chores. Soviet leaders wished to exploit both the labor and the childbearing capabilities of the female population, and they proved unwilling, official rhetoric notwithstanding, to assume state responsibility for domestic chores and childraising.

Conclusion

Beginning in the nineteenth century and coming to fruition after the First World War, there developed a new way of thinking about population resources and their importance to national power. Previously, management of reproduction had been unthinkable, because it had been regarded as a natural phenomenon. But with the rise of demography, statistics (censuses), sociology, and other social sciences, reproduction became a subject of rational study and scientific manage-

ment. At the 1927 World Population Conference in Geneva, delegates from a range of countries and political affiliations shared the common belief that populations could be scientifically studied and that governments should manage their populations.[109]

Stalinist pronatalism was part of this trend toward state and expert management of reproduction. Given the demands of industrial labor and mass warfare, the Soviet government and governments throughout Europe tried to increase their populations. In democracies and dictatorships alike, individual reproductive rights were subordinated to national demographic concerns. To varying degrees, governments employed propaganda, incentives, and authoritarian interventions to try to maximize their populations.[110] Emphasis on motherhood and the family served state goals of procreation and stability, and was central to the entire issue of social reproduction. Pro-family legislation and propaganda set norms of sexual behavior and social organization that determined the way that societies reproduced themselves. Governments utilized the traditional institution of the family, because stable marriages and large families seemed to serve the dual goals of social stability and population growth. They did not strengthen the family as an autonomous unit. Instead the Soviet Union and other states used the family as an instrument to advance their interests in population growth and social discipline.

Of course by the interwar period the traditional, high-fertility family championed by political leaders was already beginning to disappear. Industrialization had substantially eroded large peasant families, and political leaders did not seek a return to the pre-industrial order. Their use of the family model was instead a type of neotraditionalism—an appeal to a traditional image for modern mobilizational purposes. In this sense, promotion of the traditional family resembled the invention of nationalist traditions following the decline of village-based folk cultures.[111] In both cases states espoused images from a disappearing pre-industrial world to serve their mobilizational needs of population expansion and national unity.

The precise form pronatalism took in each country depended upon ideological, social, and religious factors. Soviet pronatalism resembled most closely the policies of Catholic countries in western Europe, which promoted reproduction among all segments of the population. Simultaneously, the Soviet family model was distinguished in its insistence that women retain positions in the workforce at the same time that they produced and raised children. But overall, Soviet family policy in the 1930s paralleled policies in western Europe very closely. In this sense, Stalinist pronatalism was part of a broader international trend toward state management of reproduction.

Placing Stalinist reproductive policy in its pan-European context demonstrates the value of comparative history. When examined in isolation, the widespread state intervention of Soviet socialism appears to be the product of Marxist ideology. But viewed comparatively, pronatalist interventions by the Soviet government can be seen as part of a broader trend toward state management of reproduction. Including the Soviet case as part of European history also enriches the perspective of historians of western Europe. Stalinist pronatalism's similarities with pronatalist policies across Europe illustrate the common efforts

at population management in liberal democratic, fascist, and socialist countries alike. At the same time, the Soviet Union's mobilization of women into the workforce, and its positive population measures (common to Catholic countries, but distinct from the negative measures of northern European countries) demonstrate that ideology and culture led governments to pursue population management in markedly different ways.

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ENDNOTES

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60. GARF f. 5446, op. 18a, d. 2754, l. 32.

61. Drobizhev, pp. 109, 122.

62. GARF f. 5446, op. 18a, d. 2754, l. 45.

63. See for example RTsKhIDNI f. 17, op. 120, d. 202, l. 11.

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65. Pine, p. 22.

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67. Pine, p. 96; Koonz, pp. 185–6.

68. See for example, *Martenovka* May 1, 1936, p. 5.

69. *Rabotnitsa i krest'ianka* 1936 #15, p. 5; #2, p. 20. See also *Gigiena i zdorov'e* 1938 #4, p. 6.

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84. *Rabotnitsa i krest'ianka* 1936 #12, p. 2. For pre-decree propaganda glorifying marriage, see *Pravda* June 26, 1935, p. 1; *Komsomol'skaia pravda* Jan. 1, 1936, p. 4.

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