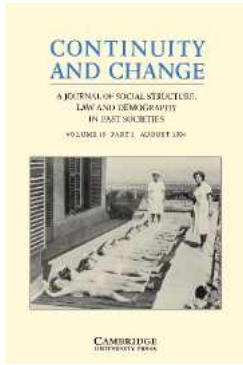

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ULF BRUNNBAUER and KARIN TAYLOR

Continuity and Change / Volume 19 / Issue 02 / August 2004, pp 283 - 312
DOI: 10.1017/S0268416004005004, Published online: 12 October 2004

Continuity and Change **19** (*2*), *2004*, *283–312*. © *2004 Cambridge University Press*
DOI: 10.1017/S0268416004005004 *Printed in the United Kingdom*

Creating a 'socialist way of life': family and reproduction policies in Bulgaria, 1944–1989

ULF BRUNNBAUER* AND KARIN TAYLOR†

ABSTRACT. *This article explores the policies of the Bulgarian socialist regime (1944–1989) towards the family. Initially, the Bulgarian Communist Party focussed on the abolition of the patriarchal family, the emancipation of women and the struggle against 'bourgeois residues' in family life. However, the dramatic decline of the birth rate – a result of rapid urbanization and increasing female employment – led to a re-direction of official discourse. Reproduction became heavily politicized, as the 1968 ban on abortion makes evident. Despite pro-natalist measures, the government was unable to stop the fertility decline. This article demonstrates how socialist family policy was gradually modified through negotiation between the Party and the population.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In May 1985, the National Assembly of the People's Republic of Bulgaria passed a new Family Code, which replaced the previous one of 1968. The preamble to the law defined the functions of the family:

> The basic function of the socialist family is to bring up and educate children as honest, diligent, ideo-politically mature citizens of the new society, with infinite faith in our fatherland – the People's Republic of Bulgaria.
>
> The contemporary Bulgarian family is the basic cell of socialist society, in which the vital needs of its members, as well as of society, are satisfied. The well-being, the spiritual warmth and wealth of the family hearth, the cares and joys of birth, the rearing and education of the new generations of Bulgarians are fundamental requirements for the further flourishing of the Bulgarian nation. The concern and the protection provided by society and state, their

* Institute for East European Studies, Free University of Berlin.
† Department of Southeast European History, University of Graz.

material, moral and legal guarantees and support are fundamental conditions for the stability and well-being of the contemporary family.

Under the guidance of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the policy of the April Plenum[1] to secure increasingly favourable conditions for a happy family life is being realized in our country. This is the policy of encouraging motherhood, birth, the raising and education of more children.[2]

As this excerpt demonstrates, the Bulgarian socialist model of the family in the 1980s was a far cry from the disparaging stance on the family articulated by many socialists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, it was consistent with practices in other socialist countries. As Laura Gotkowitz and Richard Turits pointed out in their discussion of the family and sexuality in post-revolutionary Cuba, 'Rather than offering an alternative to the traditional family, most socialists have claimed instead to be its best defenders.'[3] The Bulgarian communists did not expect the family to 'wither away' as anticipated by the early Soviet Bolsheviks, but rather charged the family – 'society's basic cell' – with crucial tasks for the reproduction of the socialist system. The many functions attached to the family reflected the fact that, as a form of social organization vital for serving basic emotional and economic needs, the family preserved its importance despite the radical political, social and economic changes in Bulgaria during more than four decades of communist rule.

This article discusses the fluctuating approaches of the Bulgarian socialist government towards the family, and how its policies related to social practice. The family was an important object in the ambitious drive to create a 'socialist way of life' launched after the Bulgarian communists took power in September 1944. On the one hand, families were to be transformed into 'socialist' ones and liberated from so-called 'capitalist distortions' and 'bourgeois remnants'. On the other, the Party charged families with fulfilling certain duties to the state and society that it considered natural functions of the family. The most important of these were the communist education of children, and procreation.[4] The instrumentalization of families served the government as a pretext to interfere in the private and family lives of citizens when they appeared not to meet their prescribed responsibilities. As a result, issues linked to the family and reproduction were highly politicized and transformed into fields of permanent negotiation between the Party-state and the population.

Our analysis rejects the notion of the 'totalitarian' character of socialist regimes but rather looks at relations between the policies and ideological assumptions of the Party-state, on the one hand, and the everyday practices of the population on the other. Both transformed one another. Socialist regimes were 'totalizing' in their attempt to control all walks of

life, but in fact they were unable to achieve this goal and were pushed to develop increasingly flexible strategies. These included the official sanction of persistent social practices that had originally been seen to contradict Party ideology. The focus of this article is on changes over time in government responses to developments in the sphere of the family. The political agenda of the Bulgarian communist leadership with respect to the family was modified according to what policy-makers perceived as the principal current challenges. In this regard, it is possible to identify two trajectories of family policy in socialist Bulgaria. Both co-existed but were of varying significance. The first can be seen as the emancipation of women, the democratization of family relations and the 'socialist' remodelling of families. This agenda stood at the centre of government attention, as illustrated by progressive legislation and concerns about 'pre-socialist remnants' in families in the 1940s and 50s. But, from the mid-1960s, family policies increasingly focussed on issues of reproduction, defining procreation as the primary function of families and women. These changes in policy resulted from the tremendous social transformations triggered by the modernizing policies of the socialist regime, the consequences of which often contradicted the Party's original notion of a 'socialist way of life'. This article confirms recent research on the Bulgarian socialist system that has focussed on its flexible nature and the modification of Party policies and ideology 'from below', and points to chronological variations in the very nature of the socialist system.[5]

II. REMODELLING THE FAMILY IN SOCIALIST BULGARIA

Like Russia in 1917, Bulgaria in 1944 seemed an odd place for a successful socialist revolution. At this time, some 75 per cent of the population lived in villages as small-holders. The working class was very small in size, educational levels were low and infrastructure generally underdeveloped. But the Bulgarian Communist Party, with firm support from the Soviet Union, established full control within a few years after 1944 and embarked on an ambitious programme of industrial expansion and social transformation, which also addressed the family.

While nuclear household structures had already predominated across most of the country,[6] relations within families remained strongly patriarchal despite some tendencies in the inter-war period towards weakened patriarchal power.[7] The male head of the household was responsible for the external affairs of the domestic group, wielded superior authority over its members and owned its property. Women were rarely employed and poorly educated. Especially in the countryside, their primary responsibilities were to tend the household and raise children. The majority of the

population shared a common set of conservative values with respect to the family and the situation of women. Popular perceptions were also strongly exposed to religious influences, since the churches (and in the case of Muslims, the local Muslim clerics) had preserved powers over important aspects of the family life cycle such as marriage and birth until the communist takeover. The church was not only responsible for the registration of marriages, but also imposed certain restrictions (e.g. for people who had already married three times), banned the marriage of partners of different faiths, made divorce very difficult to obtain and determined the degrees of kinship within which one could not marry.[8] Conservative and patriarchal family relations were considered a major obstacle by the Party in its drive to modernize Bulgarian society and establish socialism. It therefore set out to remodel the family in order to transform it into a 'socialist' unit, but at the same time it did not aim to destroy the family as a social institution.

Early government policies on the family and women in communist Bulgaria were consistent with the contemporary Soviet position on these issues.[9] This stance was shared by other post-war governments in Eastern Europe who embraced the Soviet canon. Although socialist governments viewed the family with a certain degree of reservation – as a bearer of tradition and of loyalties beyond the influence of the Communist parties – they did not seek to abolish it. Rather, they pursued the parallel goals of fostering the emancipation of women, democratizing relations between members of the family, protecting children and strengthening family stability. Since the Communist governments regarded the family as a fundamental site for socializing men and women into the new order, they sought to diminish patriarchal authority, connecting the family more directly to the state and the vision of a classless society. In the case of Hungary, Lynne Haney pointed out that 'Instead of trying to destroy the family, the early socialist state relied quite heavily on it. Rather than viewing the family as an impediment to socialist development, the Communist government used it to facilitate state building.'[10] For this task, it was necessary to relieve the family of its pre-socialist traits and to liberate it from the economic functions that had led to its 'exploitation' under capitalism.

The Soviet policies on which the new communist regime in Bulgaria patterned its family law underwent far-reaching modification in the 1930s. The Soviet Civil Code of 1936 represented a reversal of progressive legislation on marriage and the family from the immediate post-revolutionary years, making divorce more difficult to obtain and prohibiting the right to abortion on request that had been granted in 1920. Radical ideas on women's liberation were also pushed aside. The new Code was backed by pro-family propaganda and expressions of concern by Soviet scholars

about family instability, while the idea of the withering away of the family was discarded.[11] The family was reinstated as the 'primary cell of Soviet society'.[12] In 1944, the new Soviet Family Edict reintroduced the idea of illegitimacy, withdrew the recognition of *de facto* marriages introduced in 1926 and transferred divorce back to the courts.[13] According to the 1918 Family Code, citizens had only been required to register uncontested divorces with the statistical offices for birth, marriage, death and divorce.[14] These revised policies were linked to a vision of 'new' men and women that emphasized education, material security, social advancement, family stability and courteous personal conduct, summarized in the concept of being 'cultured'.[15] In a related policy shift, efforts to facilitate communal housing projects in the Soviet Union were soon 'relegated to the dustbin of history'.[16] New residential buildings centred on the self-contained nuclear family in an architectural manifestation of the re-privatization of domestic life. But, despite the resurgence of domesticity under Stalin, Soviet employment policy continued to encourage women to enter the workforce and women's emancipation remained at the core of communist ideology.

In Bulgaria, the native socialist tradition took much the same course. Dimitŭr Blagoev (1856–1924), the founder of Bulgarian social democracy, was a strong advocate of women's equality and emancipation. He regarded the employment and education of women as essential to their liberation from the 'bonds of slavery'.[17] Blagoev also believed that socialism, in contrast to capitalism, would oversee the emergence of a genuinely democratic family based on mutual love, respect and the equality of men and women. After the communist takeover, Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949), the most prominent Bulgarian communist of the inter-war period and the first communist prime minister in Bulgaria (1946–1949), hailed women as crucial activists of the socialist cause and urged men to overcome conservatism in the way they treated women.[18] At the same time, Dimitrov vehemently opposed those socialists who considered the family a capitalist remnant that would disappear under the conditions of socialism. This assumption was, in the words of Dimitrov, 'not a scientific assessment, not a Marxist position on the question of the family'.[19] In his view, the family would remain the basic cell of society. On the other hand, Dimitrov emphasized the role of women as mothers, a discursive trajectory that would become dominant in the 1960s. In an article in the Party newspaper *Rabotnichesko delo*, Dimitrov wrote in April 1948: 'The mother is the pillar of the progressive Fatherland Front family. The mother is the first and most responsible educator of her children.'[20] He evidently assumed a residual natural division of labour in the family, despite his conviction that women should enter the workforce. In his opinion, mothers would

enjoy the comprehensive support of society, in which motherhood would be raised to a 'cult'. Dimitrov hoped to engage women in the construction of a new society via their maternal qualifications: 'Despite everything, motherhood is a wonderful thing – to give birth to healthy children and, from the first drop of milk with which the mother nurses her child, to instil in it love for the motherland, devotion to its people, faith in socialism and belief in its triumph.'[21] Dimitrov urged women to fully carry out their tasks as 'mothers, wives, workers, Bulgarian patriots, social activists, citizens of our People's Republic'.[22] As a Marxist, he believed in the possibility of revolutionizing the social order but, as a man raised in a country in which family and kinship were the dominant modes of social organization, he appeared to accept the family as a natural and essential institution, although mutable in content. Dimitrov saw the necessary role of the Party in the liberation of family relations from the 'distortions' of capitalism, and in the creation of a 'socialist family'.

Once firmly in power, the Bulgarian communists actively propagated the conviction that family relations must change, but that marriage and the family should continue to play a vital role in the process of building socialist society.[23] The foremost task of the socialist state in the area of the family and marriage, therefore, was to create lasting and stable families, while at the same time transforming them into the appropriate socialist model. The revolutionary programme thus included the goals of levelling the legal status of men and women, increasing female employment and establishing the family as the primary educator of the new socialist generation. The 'socialist family' was to consist of the spouses and their children. It was to be characterized by the independence of the spouses from the older generation, economic and legal equality between husband and wife, the employment of both spouses, an atmosphere of mutual respect and solidarity, life-long devotion (as opposed to mere sexual attraction), the participation of the husband in the domestic sphere and dedication to socialism.[24] New laws were enacted to realize these goals. Only one month into communist rule, in October 1944, the government issued a decree that declared men and women equal before the law 'in all domains of economic, government, cultural and socio-political life'.[25] In May 1945, family life was put on a new legal footing by the 'Decree on Marriage',[26] which declared only civil marriage a legal union. It gave both spouses full liberty to choose their profession, and obliged them to contribute to family income according to their possibilities. Women were permitted to keep their maiden name after marriage, or to add the name to their husband's patronymic. Spouses could divorce either by common consent or if one of the spouses sought to dissolve the marriage on the basis of the new law. In the following years, further laws were passed with

the intention of erasing the (legal) inequalities between men and women, such as the widespread practice of unequal inheritance by sons and daughters. The 1949 'Law on Persons and Families' reiterated earlier regulations on gender equality and also expressed the government's desire to protect children, that is, the future builders of communism. Women would be liberated by the transfer of household work to public services. Day-care centres for children, public laundries and canteens were to take over domestic tasks from the family. The elevation of the status of women was an integral part of the project to re-create the family as a loyal social unit that would carry out certain tasks on behalf of the social collective.

However, the Party was soon forced to recognize that the patriarchal attitudes that had determined social life over centuries could not simply be abolished by administrative fiat. For this reason, family discourse and policies initially focussed on the struggle to dislodge traditional elements in the family, just as society as a whole had yet to be 'cleansed' of pre-socialist features.

III. A SOCIETY TRANSFORMED

The insistence of communist leaders on family stability and their struggle against 'capitalist remnants' in the family were conditioned by the consequences of the dramatic social changes that occurred in Bulgaria in the 1950s and 1960s. Like other socialist countries, Bulgaria underwent a rapid process of industrialization and urbanization. In this context, the family was viewed as a means of ensuring stability and the smooth integration of migrants from the countryside into their new environment.

A few figures must suffice in order to illustrate the dramatic size of social and economic change. At the end of World War Two, 1.7 million of a total 7 million Bulgarians lived in towns, but by 1975, 5 million (58 per cent) of 8.73 million inhabitants were urban citizens.[27] Between 1947 and 1965, about 1.5 million people left the countryside and moved into the urban centres.[28] Most migrants were under 30 years of age.[29] The mass exodus from the countryside, triggered by collectivization and industrialization, ended the long tradition of peasant small-holders and brought elements of a rural way of life into the towns. A statistical survey conducted in 1967 revealed that almost 80 per cent of industrial workers who had joined the industry after 1944 had a peasant background.[30]

Employment opportunities in village industries and services, as well as the large collective farms, eased the migration flow from the countryside during the 1970s. At the same time, a good part of the urban population continued to depend on informal exchange with the villages since the state-administered food stores did not satisfy consumer demand.[31] Informal

exchange developed along family and kinship lines, and many families maintained links between relatives in town and those, usually the elderly, who had stayed behind in the village. Bulgarian anthropologist Yuljan Konstantinov termed this kind of family structure an 'urban-rural extended household'.[32] Rural-based relatives often supplied their urban kin with self-produced food, while the latter provided visitors from the country with accommodation and access to urban services, and supported rural relatives who decided to move to town for good. According to an extensive sociological survey from the early 1970s, more than half of all the polled families possessed either their own small farmstead or at least a garden plot.[33] Many town dwellers had access to plots since they owned small dachas in the country, usually in their native villages, where they spent a good deal of their spare time growing vegetables and distilling home-made brandy.

These well-preserved relations between the 'old' and the 'new' family in Bulgaria deformed the communist modernization project.[34] The family remained a vital social organization in ways rather different to those initially envisaged by communist leaders: instead of shaping a new generation fully integrated into an industrialized socialist economy, families retained important economic functions, alleviating the permanent shortages of the command economy by redistributing income and other resources within the family and so reducing dependency on the state. The government criticized citizens' 'petty-bourgeois' and consumerist attitudes, but also tacitly supported family self-reliance because it was unable to provide sufficient goods and services. The downside of this development was that young families remained reliant on the parent generation, whether in terms of material support or services, such as childcare, provided by older relatives. In the mid-1980s, around 70 per cent of young couples relied on the considerable material help of their parents for up to five years into marriage.[35] Aid consisted of providing housing, furniture, home-grown foodstuffs and sometimes also financial support. The practice of permanent support prevented the constitution of young families as independent units and reproduced patriarchal as well as family-centred forms of life. Given the fact that men were usually considered the head of the household, married men continued to act on the behalf of the family vis-à-vis relatives and institutions, while most routine domestic work was done by their wives.

The persistence of patriarchal relations was noted by contemporary Bulgarian scholars. Sociologist Nadja Velcheva pointed out in the 1980s that, although families from the countryside experienced a process of adaptation to town life, the mentality and way of life (*bit*) of the new worker was best described as a mixture of urban and rural elements. This

TABLE 1
Household typology in Bulgaria, in percentages (1975)

Type	*Overall*	*Towns*	*Villages*
Spouses without children	20.89	16.43	26.42
Spouses with unmarried children	37.12	46.73	24.99
One parent with unmarried children	3.45	4.22	2.46
Other simple families	0.11	0.16	0.05
Simple families (total)	***61.57***	***67.54***	***53.92***
Simple family with additional relatives	11.24	10.1	12.69
Other extended families	0.03	0.04	0.01
Extended families (total)	***11.27***	***10.14***	***12.7***
Two-family households	22.52	18.56	27.52
Two-family households with additional relatives	2.6	2.03	3.31
Three-family households	1.82	1.47	2.26
Other multiple families	0.24	0.21	0.28
Multiple families (total)	***27.18***	***20.27***	***30.37***
Total	100	100	100

Source: L. Spasovska, *Semeistvoto. Sotsiologicheski ocherk* (Sofia, 1980), 40–1.

was evident in the conservation of traditional gender stereotypes, especially in the villages, which resulted in women's being burdened with the bulk of domestic labour.[36] The widespread maintenance of traditional attitudes also resulted from the fact that, in many cases, strong links between the generations were preserved where both age-groups lived together. The strategy of pooling resources within the household, as well as the chronic lack of housing, led to an increase in the number of three-generational households, also made possible by increased life expectancy. In addition, the link between the generations remained close since many children cared for their elderly parents at home. Retirees could usually live on their pensions, but places in institutions were scarce and assigning elderly parents to state care was highly unpopular since it contradicted social norms. Hence the share of extended and multiple households was significant (see Table 1). According to a survey from the mid-1970s, about 17 per cent of households were three-generational.[37] Moreover, the boundaries between the households of parents and their married children were by no means distinct, as they often lived next door or in the same building.

In urban centres, the high rate of households with two or more families mainly resulted from the extreme scarcity of living space, which forced many newly-weds to share an apartment with their parents, a solution

that often turned out to be permanent. According to a 1975 study in Sofia, some 41 per cent of newly-weds lived with relatives.[38] Given the acute lack of accommodation in the mushrooming towns, particularly in the capital, Sofia, relatives seeking to establish themselves in the city would sometimes join the urban family, so that it was common for three generations to share two small rooms, with a temporary bed set up in the kitchen. Those families of workers who had migrated from villages together with the parent generation also showed a tendency to form three-generational households in their new homes.[39] Finding appropriate housing could take many years, depending on the family's leverage with local council authorities. The housing situation was somewhat alleviated in the 1980s, when new apartments were finally completed in the cities.

In villages, households consisting of two families even constituted the single largest category in 1975 (27.52 per cent). This reflected the usefulness of arrangements in rural areas where families pooled their labour in order to utilize a wide range of resources, focussing their energy on the small private plots that the collectivized peasantry were permitted to retain. Gerald Creed observed in the Bulgarian village Zamfirovo that by the late 1980s nearly half of all the village households comprised three-generational stem families sharing a single household economy.[40]

IV. FIGHTING 'CAPITALIST RESIDUES' IN FAMILY LIFE

Changes in social structures and family arrangements did not result in the emergence of the precise type of socialist family the Party had envisioned. The mechanistic belief that the mass integration of women into the workforce would automatically transform gender and family relations proved overly optimistic. On the contrary, authors on the family identified a number of 'bourgeois residues' and 'capitalist remnants' in family life. With their eyes firmly fixed on the future, theorists attributed obstinate religious beliefs and life-cycle ceremonies, patriarchal notions on family relations and all sorts of 'negative phenomena' – from drinking to domestic violence – firmly to 'the past', whether to traditional village society or the context of urban capitalism.[41]

An illuminating attack on conservative features was launched by Raina Pesheva, a leading ethnographer during socialism and theorist of the socialist way of life. Pesheva maintained that people's thinking remained imbued with 'capitalist residues' since mentalities altered much more slowly than the economy. Most men, the author continued, harboured old-fashioned attitudes towards women and neglected to help with household chores.[42] Pesheva also criticized the female double burden of employment and household work, which was not sufficiently alleviated by

public services. Hence the author's appeal to the government to intensify efforts to encourage the fair distribution of household tasks and to strengthen the struggle against 'bourgeois' notions concerning the role of women in public and in the home. Reconstructing women as independent waged workers, Pesheva attacked ideas of docile femininity, yet also women's preoccupation with trivia such as cosmetics and fashion, allegedly typical of capitalist societies.[43] 'Capitalist residues' were also often targeted in the print media, especially in magazines directed at female readers. The most widely circulated women's magazine, *Zhenata dnes* (*Woman Today*, published from 1945) advocated female employment as a way of overcoming the bourgeois marriage of convenience in which women married for comfort and money and were dependent on men. The new socialist marriage of equal partners promoted by *Zhenata dnes* stood for a higher order of domestic life, which would also be expressed in lasting male commitment to the family.

Hopes for creating the 'socialist family' were especially pinned on the young generation that had no or only a short memory of pre-war – that is, 'bourgeois' – Bulgaria. For communist leaders, young people represented a key social dynamic with the force and will to transform society.[44] For family relations, this meant a challenge to the seniority principle by which the oldest man wielded authority over other family members: 'In socialist society, the family will cease to be a miniature "monarchy of the father" in which he is the sovereign master, to whom wife and children are obliged to unquestioningly submit.'[45] Another author stated that 'there are no obstacles in the path of young people towards the free choice of their marriage partner and towards the free expression of their will to conclude a marriage only on the basis of genuine agreement and mutual love, far removed from any material profit, from the veto of parents and guardians, from religious, caste or race differences'.[46] Young couples were called on to rear a new generation of model citizens. However, changes in established patterns of upbringing did not come about fast enough for the proponents of the new family model. Writing on 'capitalist anachronisms' in the consciousness and way of life of working people, Asen Kiselinchev deplored the family's lagging behind in socialist development and that it was not living up to the educational tasks that were among the primary functions of the family in the eyes of the Party. Kiselinchev even discerned a 'criminal ignorance towards the tasks of education in the family'. As a result, children and youngsters developed only a weak sense of responsibility and enjoyed rights but no duties.[47] Accusations that families were not disciplining their children in a proper socialist way became a major topic in discourse on domestic life. In his book on 'Communist morality and the family', legal expert Nisim Mevorjah demanded

that parents should not pamper their children but inculcate them with a sense of tidiness, cleanliness and accuracy in work.[48] Parents were also charged with developing devotion to socialist heroes and the fatherland, respect of public property, proper language and a sense of aesthetics in their offspring. At the same time, the enlightened socialist child would contribute to dissuade the older generation from outmoded habits. A primer on the family's role in 'communist education' summarized the tasks of parents: it urged them to familiarize children with the principles of communist morality, and to encourage a scientific worldview and a positive attitude towards labour.[49] However, the broad literature on the problem of communist education and the young family that was published in the 1970s and 1980s indicates that parents did not satisfy the demands of the Party, which increasingly fretted about 'spoilt' children.[50]

The discussion on pampered youth proves that theorists were not only concerned about pre-socialist 'bourgeois' values, but also by newly emerging 'petty-bourgeois' attitudes (*esnafshtina*) that developed as a side-effect of growing prosperity in the early 1960s. While the government made efforts to boost the family through political and propaganda initiatives, it was at the same time troubled by growing 'familialism' as families appeared to show more enthusiasm for their own well-being than readiness for personal sacrifice in the name of socialist construction. Ethnographer Raina Pesheva thought that people invested too much interest in their personal well-being, defined in a narrowly material sense, rather than engaging in social and political organizations.[51] The tension between officially sponsored consumer behaviour and concerns about consumerism was also apparent in the activities of the Fatherland Front ('*Otechtestven front*'), the primary mass organization involved in the mediation and promotion of ideas and requirements in the creation of a 'socialist way of life'. The Front was devoid of any political significance from the late 1940s, but developed into an organized mass of busybodies concerned with distributing propaganda to the population and monitoring daily life. The Front aimed at making families aware of the higher goals of socialist construction and preventing them from focussing all their energies on consumption. Self-restriction was the order of the day. On the other hand, the Front was also concerned with improving the quality and quantity of production, as well as the level of services in the retail network. Its efforts show how difficult it was for the communist government to manage the Pandora's box of consumerism that it was forced to open in order to avoid a severe crisis of legitimacy. After the unrest in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1953 and in Hungary and Poland in 1956, the Bulgarian Communists became aware of the frailty of their rule. Consequently, they tried to engender support by promising the population

a continuous rise in living standards and improvements in the supply of consumer goods. However, the centrally planned economy was unable to keep up with rising consumer expectations. The government also sought to control consumerism, for example by branding materialistic inclinations 'petty-bourgeois'. Articles in the women's magazine *Zhenata dnes* in the 1960s illustrate the contradictory character of official messages that fluctuated between warnings about the moral hazards of consumerism and selfishness (*esnafshtina*), and the propagation of a modern lifestyle.

Tensions arose from the processes of negotiation between the government and citizens that forced the Party not only to accept many popular arrangements but sometimes even to integrate them into official ideology. An excellent case in point is the transformation of the official position on the participation of grandmothers in childcare, a problem studied by Bulgarian anthropologist Ilija Iliev.[52] Grandmothers acquired a prominent role in the care of young children as most mothers were employed and many parents were not inclined to place toddlers in state nurseries (for children up to three years of age) due to their poor quality. This practice ran contrary to the initial intention of the Party that had appointed young parents to reduce the influence of the older generation, suspected of adherence to religion and of harbouring 'backward' inclinations. But since state efforts to replace grandmothers as child-minders proved futile, authorities in the 1980s not only accepted the management of childcare by grandmothers as a fact, but began to re-evaluate their role on a positive note. Theorists referred to an alleged 'beautiful' Bulgarian tradition of child-minding by grandmothers and argued that grandparents played an important role in transferring national traditions to the younger generation. The three-generational family unit, created out of necessity as a result of the chronic lack of housing, was now hailed as an embodiment of the collective way of life in socialism. The Party even officially recognized the family as a vital welfare agency. In an amendment to the Labour Code in 1985, grandparents received the right to take maternity leave in place of the mother,[53] and the Family Code of 1985 granted grandparents the right to personal relations with their grandchildren in the case of the divorce of the parents, as well as the right to adopt their grandchildren in the case of the death of both parents.[54] The persistent social practice of entrusting childcare to grandmothers ultimately tamed the family policies of the regime.

V. DECLINING BIRTH RATES

While family policies in the first two decades of communist rule were mainly shaped by the struggle against 'residues' of the old order, the

TABLE 2
Birth rates in Bulgaria, 1944–1989 (live births per 1,000 inhabitants)

Year	*Birth rate*	*Year*	*Birth rate*	*Year*	*Birth rate*
1944	21.9	1960	17.8	1975	16.6
1945	24.0	1961	17.4	1976	16.5
1946	25.6	1962	16.7	1977	16.1
1947	24.1	1963	16.4	1978	15.5
1948	24.6	1964	16.1	1979	15.3
1949	24.7	1965	15.3	1980	14.5
1950	25.2	1966	14.9	1981	14.0
1951	21.0	1967[b]	15.0	1982	13.9
1952	21.2	1968[c]	16.9	1983	13.8
1953	20.9	1969	17.0	1984	13.6
1954	20.2	1970	16.3	1985[f]	13.3
1955	20.1	1971	15.9	1986	13.4
1956[a]	19.5	1972	15.3	1987	13.0
1957	18.4	1973[d]	16.2	1988	13.1
1958	17.9	1974[e]	17.2	1989	12.5
1959	17.6				

[a] Legislation of abortion on request.
[b] Decree on the stimulation of fertility.
[c] Restriction of abortion on request.
[d] Further abortion restrictions.
[e] Slight relaxation of restrictions.
[f] New Family Code.
Source: *Statisticheski godishnik 1990* (Sofia, 1990), 27.

government's focus changed during the 1960s in the face of a challenge typical of modernizing societies: the dramatic decline of the birth rate (see Table 2). The process of demographic transition in Bulgaria came to an end in the post-war decades. The one- or two-child family became the dominant model in Bulgaria, and mean completed family size declined from 2.97 in 1946 to 2.02 in 1966 and finally 1.86 in 1989.[55] In the 1970s, most women stated that they wished to have two children. The number of desired children declined further in urban milieus in the 1980s, so that in Sofia the majority of polled young couples declared that they wanted to have only one child.[56] The overall share of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) in the total female population decreased from 54.09 per cent in 1950 to 46.99 per cent in 1984, but births for 1,000 women aged 15–45 years declined even more significantly, from 91.0 in 1950 to 57.7 in 1984, due to changes in reproductive behaviour.[57] Age-specific fertility dropped, especially in the older age-cohorts, pointing to

TABLE 3
Age-specific fertility of married women in Bulgaria, 1925–1966

	Live births per 1,000 married women				
Age cohort	*1925–1928*	*1933–1936*	*1945–1948*	*1955–1958*	*1965–1966*
15–19	291.4	277.7	310.6	251.2	263.9
20–24	331.9	295.9	282.6	236.0	228.6
25–29	264.8	214.9	200.8	136.8	110.2
30–34	200.8	134.6	107.1	61.0	44.7
35–39	142.7	82.3	56.2	29.1	15.9
40–44	72.6	39.1	17.5	8.9	4.1
45 and older	36.0	13.8	4.5	1.7	0.8
Total	198.8	148.3	124.3	87.8	70.1

Source: *Statisticheski godishnik 1968* (Sofia, 1968), 33.

the salient trend of ceasing reproduction earlier (see Table 3). Natural population growth declined from 1.5 per cent in 1950 to 0.72 per cent in 1970 and to 0.34 per cent in 1980 and reached almost zero at the end of Communist rule in Bulgaria.[58]

The decline in the birth rate in Bulgaria, which resembled the Eastern European pattern of a sharp drop after World War Two, was intensified by the changed status of women and the effects of urbanization and industrialization.[59] The share of women in the workforce increased from 33.5 per cent in 1960 to 50.2 per cent in 1989. Activity rates for women of productive age, defined as 16–55 years, rose from 41.2 in 1961 to 78.3 in 1979, surpassing the level of active men. For women aged between 24 and 45 years, activity rates were more than 90 per cent in 1975.[60] The educational level of women also tremendously improved. In 1975, 5 per cent of all women had a university degree, up from 2.4 per cent ten years earlier. In the mid-1970s, women were better educated than men in the age group 15 to 39 years.[61] Surveys in the 1970s and 1980s established a strongly negative correlation between the level of educational and professional achievement and that of fertility, as well as the desired number of children.[62] The reduced number of children that women wanted and actually gave birth to reflected the growing wish of women to make successful professional careers, which they saw as hampered by a larger number of offspring.

On the issue of demography, the government found it difficult to resolve the conflict between the goals of facilitating female education and employment, on the one hand, and fertility on the other. It was unable to

provide a satisfactory network for childcare: although childcare facilities were broadly expanded in the 1970s, nurseries for children up to three years of age remained unsatisfactory and were unpopular mainly due to lack of hygiene and poor services. Only some 18 per cent of children under the age of three were cared for in nurseries in the late 1970s, while about 75 per cent of children in the age-group three to six went to kindergarten.[63] Policies refrained from directly addressing the problem of the uneven distribution of housework, as the Party unsuccessfully focussed on transferring domestic chores to public services. As a result, women carried the double burden of employment and responsibility for the domestic sphere. According to a sociological survey in 1976–1977, women spent an average of 4 hours and 42 minutes a day on housework, while men spent only 2 hours and 20 minutes, that is half. Women were almost exclusively responsible for food preparation, washing, ironing and cleaning.[64] The 1970s time-budget survey also showed that on average men spent only 8 minutes daily on childcare and women 24 minutes.[65] Generally, the state failed to alleviate women's household obligations, entering into an easy compromise with established family relations as it recognized the impossibility of efficiently collectivizing domestic labour, among other reasons due to sheer cost. While the Party paid lip service to the unfair distribution of labour in households, economic exigencies prompted it to allocate scarce resources to industry rather than to expanding domestic services.

Reduced fertility furthermore reflected the rising costs of bringing up children, as schooling took longer and young adults frequently entered low-paid jobs, prompting parents to financially support their grown-up children.[66] Another reason for low fertility was inadequate housing, which was a significant determinant of intended family size. Residents of Sofia interviewed by the authors of this study said that cramped living conditions with no view to an immediate solution, combined with low income, had discouraged them from having more than one child although in other circumstances they might have had two. The ongoing housing crisis was occasionally commented on in the media, and in the context of reproduction the prominent sexologist Todor Bostandzhiev criticized conditions as inhibiting the sexual life of young couples who did not have enough time and space alone to develop satisfactory sexual relations.[67] The problem of housing – despite significant improvements – remained unresolved until the end of the socialist regime in 1989, as numerous requests to the authorities for accommodation demonstrate.[68] The lack of adequate housing proved to be a chief obstacle both to the autonomous nuclear family model propagated by the Party and to young people's desire to detach themselves from the parent generation.

VI. PRO-NATALIST POLICIES IN SOCIALIST BULGARIA

From the early 1960s, family policies focussed on the stimulation of the birth rate. The failure of families to reproduce at the pace put forward by the Party gave it, or so it thought, the right to intervene. Government concern over the declining birth rate and concomitant declining rates of natural population growth was motivated by a set of reasons. Firstly, the conviction that the population must increase was firmly grounded in the ideas of the generation of Bulgarian communists who came to power in 1944. A large population was perceived as synonymous with military and political strength.[69] Secondly, this urge was related to the assumption that the economy could only grow if the labour force continued to expand.[70] The declining birth rate and an aging population caused anxiety that the labour pool would diminish and it would be impossible to sustain high rates of economic growth. Finally, concerns about the birth rate had a nationalist background, as the minorities in the country maintained higher levels of fertility. In the 1980s, the provinces with a high share of Muslims were the only ones to show a natural population increase. In a 1967 discussion on the falling birth rate, Party leader Todor Zhivkov pointed to the alleged threat posed by the Turkish minority as one of the reasons for the need to stimulate the fertility of the Bulgarian majority population. According to Zhivkov, the growing demographic strength of the country's ethnic Turks would lead to the creation of autonomous districts and eventually pose the danger of secession.[71]

The ensuing introduction of various pro-natalist measures in Bulgaria was by no way an exception in Eastern Europe. The measures were modelled on a set of policies introduced in the Soviet Union in 1935–1936.[72] The response of the Eastern European countries in the 1960s ranged from financial incentives to repressive abortion policies. With extensive social benefits including lump sums at childbirth, progressive child allowances and housing subsidies for parents with children, countries like Hungary and the GDR subsidized the cost of raising children, while Romania concentrated its energies on a complete ban on abortion on demand in 1966.[73]

Beginning in the early 1960s, Bulgarian ideological thinking on women and the family shifted to stress the role of women as mothers, as is illustrated by books with titles such as *More Children in Our Homes*.[74] Women were discussed as functionalized stereotypes, such as 'woman-mother' or 'mother-worker'. The Party officially declared procreation to be the primary function of women: 'Motherhood is the social and biological function of woman, and in its vital importance for society ranks first place in the complex of all her functions. Motherhood is an essential precondition

for her complete happiness.'[75] In its 1973 resolution, 'Enhancing the Role of Women in the Building of a Developed Socialist Society', the Politburo urged the Party and state to 'aid women in combining their chief functions and obligations in such a way as *to particularly stimulate and enhance their role as mothers*' (italics in the original).[76] A later overview of social and economic achievements in the sphere of women's policies included the chapter 'Motherhood – the Supreme and Most Important Social Role of Woman'.[77] The biological capacity of women to give birth was thus inscribed as a natural function in the complex of the social roles of the female population. Women were additionally furnished with a production target. Medals were awarded to mothers of three or more children. The award 'For Motherhood' was granted for three, the order 'Maternal Glory' for four to nine children, and 'Heroine Mother' was conferred on women who had borne and raised ten or more.[78]

For the family, the Politburo devised the slogan: '*More children in every Bulgarian family, more young forces for our country*' (italics in the original).[79] Central Committee member Pencho Kubadinski, the leading Party theoretician of the family, set out the task for families and future parents:

> [It is the] great patriotic duty of our socialist family to fulfil its indispensable role in reproducing the nation, in the raising and education of an honourable generation, in creating lively relations between all members of our society, in protecting the moral and cultural heritage of our people and in realizing the communist ideals.[80]

Society and the state reserved the right to interfere should parents not comply with their duties. The Fatherland Front pledged to morally and materially support large families and to 'develop a feeling of responsibility among those families who without reason remain with one child'.[81] The media were also appointed to promote the 'social prestige of motherhood' and prepare young people for parenthood.[82] In 1983, youth magazine *Mladezh* (*Youth*) introduced a special supplement entitled 'The Hearth' including articles on 'the vocation of being a mother' and the significance of this role for the 'future of the nation'.

In order to prepare state intervention into family life and bring reproductive behaviour in line with the 'plan', the government initiated extensive research on the family. Specialists substantiated Party views on the necessity of a higher birth rate and the significance of motherhood with the help of various 'scientific' facts. From the late 1960s, sociologists carried out a significant number of surveys on the family, and legal experts, psychologists and ethnographers also published widely on the issue. The largest research project, 'The Bulgarian Family', was conducted in 1974–1977 and resulted in several publications.[83] Demographic development also became the object of increased academic scrutiny, as the government encouraged demographers to find ways to reverse the falling

trend in the birth rate.[84] In 1985, approximately 180,000 persons were polled in an extensive survey on various aspects of demographic behaviour.[85] Just as Gail Kligman established for Romania, demography became deeply politicized and was ultimately implemented to engineer the social body. Disciplines such as demography, medicine and sociology contributed to constructing a core of specialized knowledge that brought forth the technology to impose scientific rationality directly on the anatomy of the state's citizens. The guise of 'science' functioned to legitimize the monitoring of the reproductive behaviour of the population and with it state intrusion into private life.[86]

Drawing on research results, the Bulgarian government designed a range of measures to stimulate fertility among the majority population. In December 1967, the Party and government approved the decision 'On the Stimulation of Fertility', which was sanctioned by parliament in February 1968.[87] Parents now received monthly allowances and lump sums at the birth of each child, which were progressive up to the third child and regressive from the fourth child. Monthly child allowances were 5 *leva* for the first child, 15 for the second, 35 for the third, and again 5 for the fourth and subsequent children. Maternity leave was also extended and was similarly progressive/regressive. After the end of the paid maternity leave, women had the right to non-paid leave. Families with two or three children received certain privileges, for example with respect to employment or access to housing and the repayment of housing loans.[88] The intention behind this scheme of progressive benefits up to the third child, but decreasing from the fourth, was to encourage births of a second and third child, while at the same time not providing an additional incentive for the Roma and Turkish minorities who already maintained a high birth rate. The size of the allowances was significant compared to the average monthly wage of 114 *leva* in 1968.[89] Unmarried people over 21, as well as married couples without children five years after marriage, were obliged to pay the so-called 'bachelor' tax on their income.[90] This legislation, together with the requirement of marriage in order to qualify for public housing, may have contributed to the continuing practice of almost universal marriage in Bulgaria. In 1973, the Central Committee and the Ministerial Council announced a new decree on the stimulation of fertility that introduced further material incentives, again focussing on the second and third child in line with the target norm. In 1975, 1979 and 1984, child allowances and lump sums at birth were adjusted upwards. Single mothers also enjoyed special support. Women now received the right to stay at home for up to two years to nurse their children, receiving a compensation the size of the minimum wage. Mothers had the right to return to their jobs and pregnant women could not be dismissed.[91]

All these social policies were embedded in a new family code passed in May 1968, which made the family the subject of a special law. It established the socialist family as a 'historically more advanced type' than the capitalist family and allocated certain functions to the family unit, among others biological reproduction and the communist education of children.[92] The state undertook to support the shaping of family relations in the desired direction, and to strengthen the family as the 'basic unit' of socialist society, facilitating harmonious and stable family relations. The family and the institution of marriage also enjoyed the protection of the constitution, which again obliged parents to provide their children with a communist upbringing.[93] In 1985, after extensive debate, a new family code was passed that regulated family relations in even more detail. Article four of the 1985 Family Code stipulated: '[t]he basic functions of the family are: procreation and the rearing and education of the child'.[94]

One of the reasons for the new family code and its insistence on family stability was concern about the rising rate of divorce. The divorce rate increased from 11.1 per 10,000 inhabitants in 1969 to 14.8 in 1980 and 16.0 in 1985.[95] Divorce and broken families were seen as contributing to the depressed birth rate.[96] Consequently, the new family code made divorce more difficult. Spouses could seek divorce when a marriage was 'deeply and irreversibly broken' and if this was confirmed by a judge. If both partners sought divorce, there was no need for a judge to establish the cause and identify guilt. However, such a divorce could not be granted earlier than three years after marriage. Judges were also permitted to inform the working collective or 'social organization' at the spouses' place of residence if divorce was granted on the grounds of improper behaviour.[97] Even stricter restrictions were removed from an earlier version of the motion after popular opposition.[98] In practice, only few applications for divorce were rejected. Judges appear to have used their discretionary power and did not insist on the continuation of obviously failed marriages.[99] Although the new Bulgarian family code resulted in an immediate decline in the number of divorces (from 14,361 in 1985 to 10,042 in 1986), from 1987 the divorce rate was again on the rise, from 13.0 per 10,000 inhabitants in 1987 to 14.1 in 1989.[100] However, the practical implications of divorce, especially for women, meant that it was not entered upon lightly. Social stigma attached to female divorcees persisted in rural areas and provincial towns into the 1980s, and low income and the lack of a free housing market forced many divorced women to return to their parents' home with their children. Female interviewees commented on the extremely stifling circumstances of such living arrangements, which frequently lasted until the death of the parents. In larger cities, where the housing problem was most acute, judges often included provisions for

TABLE 4
Numbers of live births and abortions in Bulgaria, 1955–1989

Year	*Live births*	*Legally induced abortions*	*Total of registered abortions*
1955	151,000	2,200	19,100[a]
1956	147,900	2,000	40,000
1957	141,000	31,700	46,200
1960	140,100	51,000	74,900
1965	125,800	96,600	116,000
1967	124,600	108,500	129,900
1968	141,500	89,200	113,500
1969	143,100	106,900	129,700
1970	139,700	119,700	142,500
1973	139,700	112,300	137,400
1974	149,200	121,700	144,500
1975	144,700	120,400	143,500
1980	128,200	136,300	156,100
1985	119,000	112,200	132,300
1989	112,300	111,000	132,000

[a] Estimates of illegal abortions before 1955 are unfortunately not available. For this reason, the rise in 1956 may seem more spectacular than it actually was. On the other hand, many illegal abortions after 1968 also went unreported, as ethnographic evidence suggests.

Source: D. Vassilev, 'Bulgaria', in H. P. David ed., *From abortion to contraception: a resource to public policies and reproductive behavior in Central and Eastern Europe from 1917 to the present* (Westport, Conn. and London, 1999), 72–3.

the internal division of an apartment in their decisions, granting one room for the exclusive use of one spouse after divorce and another room to the second, and ensuring the common use of cooking and bathroom facilities.

Abortion policies

Next to the ideological campaign for motherhood and the introduction of financial incentives, the government moved to control abortion. In April 1956, abortion on demand had been legalized for 16 weeks into pregnancy. The operation was easily accessible and relatively cheap, and due to the widespread lack of contraceptives abortion became one of the main means of preventing undesired births (see Table 4). Modern contraceptives were not produced in Bulgaria, and although pills and IUDs were imported from other socialist countries and were freely and cheaply sold at pharmacies, supply was erratic.[101] Informants interviewed by the authors said that contraceptives from the Soviet Union were available but unreliable, so that many couples made their own efforts to acquire contraceptives

from other countries with higher-quality products, such as Poland and the GDR. *Coitus interruptus* was also widely practised.

The introduction of abortion on request in Bulgaria followed the example of the Soviet Union, which lifted its prohibition on abortion in 1955. Most other socialist countries followed suit, and within a few years they saw abortion rates soar.[102] So, when sliding birth rates began to alarm socialist governments in the 1960s, attitudes towards the practice of abortion changed. Romania took the most radical step in 1966, completely outlawing abortion unless delivery directly endangered the life of the mother. The ban was vigorously enforced.[103] When the total number of abortions surpassed that of live births in Bulgaria for the first time, in 1967, the Party Central Committee and the Ministerial Council also decided that abortion must be discouraged. In February 1968, abortion was restricted in cases not motivated on medical grounds or for reasons including pregnancy after incest or rape, despite the fact that female Central Committee members argued against the move. Abortion was prohibited for women without (living) children, and women with either one or two children could request an abortion only after having been heard by a commission, which was instructed to dissuade pregnant women from having the operation performed.[104] As a result, the number of legally induced abortions decreased by almost 20,000, but in the following years they reached levels even higher than before the restriction. Subsequently, the ban on abortion on request was extended to women with one child in April 1973.[105] The government later also ordered hospitals and gynaecologists to report all pregnancies to the authorities.

The instruction met with an extremely negative response from the public, prompting the government to slightly modify the ban in 1974.[106] Women who wanted an abortion were still required to present their case to a special commission. However, more than half of all applications were approved and at the same time medical indications were increasingly granted, so that the number of abortions was not greatly affected by the restrictions. Furthermore, the ban was resisted by the medical profession, who rejected the government's attempts to use it to police the female body and 'co-operated in ensuring that women were not deprived of their rights'.[107] The government was obviously ready to accept a compromise and refrained from taking extreme measures such as those imposed by the Romanian government to enforce the restriction of abortion. It feared the high cost of strict imposition in terms of public resistance and an increase in illegal abortions, with all their negative effects on the health of women. Women who had illegal abortions were usually not punished.[108] Thus, popular insistence on the right to abortion – in part dictated by the lack of contraceptives – managed to elicit concessions from the regime as long as

government policies were not openly discredited. Instead of rigorously enforcing the law, the government endeavoured to convince women and families of the risks of abortion. Leading family theoretician Pencho Kubadinski's assessment is indicative of such discourse: 'Pregnancy and normal birth are physiological acts which contribute to the development and strengthening of the female organism, and to the social and biological role of woman, while abortion destroys these unique values and her natural obligations.'[109]

VII. CONCLUSION

The measures to influence fertility had a short-lived effect, although the government invested a great deal of money, political will and ideological activity in achieving this goal. This fact was acknowledged by Bulgarian demographers, who demanded an intensification of the pro-natalist campaign in order to dismantle the 'psychological barriers' against more children.[110] After the extension of the system of family benefits and the restriction of abortion at the end of the 1960s, the birth rate rose significantly until 1969 (see Table 2). From then on, it declined again until after 1972, when the next package of pro-natalist measures was introduced. Subsequently, the birth rate rose for two years, only to return to its downward trend in 1975. The main impact of the measures described in this article was on the timing of births, rather than on general fertility levels.[111] Age-specific fertility for young women was considerably higher in the 1970s than in the 1960s and, although it declined again in the 1980s, it remained on a higher level than before the introduction of the pro-natalist policies (see Table 5). However, this could not compensate for the significantly lower fertility levels of the age cohorts over 25 years, which experienced only a brief rise in the early 1970s before returning to the secular trend of decreasing fertility. The figures for the number of children ever born according to the age of mothers confirm the conclusion that government policies mainly effected the timing of births but had less of an influence on the total number of children women gave birth to (see Table 6). Mean completed family size rose immediately after the introduction of the pro-natalist packages (from 2.02 in 1967 to 2.28 in 1968, and from 2.03 in 1972 to 2.16 in 1973 and 2.29 in 1974 respectively), but soon turned downwards again, falling to under 2.0 for the first time in 1984.[112] From 1979, net population replacement rates remained under 1.0.

One reason for the government's failure to exert a sustained influence on fertility was the contradictory nature of its policies, a feature typical of other aspects of life in socialism, too. The government strongly advocated motherhood yet persisted with its policy of the mass inclusion of women

TABLE 5
Age-specific fertility of all women in Bulgaria, 1955–1988 (live births per 1,000 women)[a]

	Age cohort				
Years	*20–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–44*
1955–1958	177.4	125.6	58.4	28.2	8.6
1965–1966	176.7	103.2	43.6	15.9	4.1
1967	176.9	101.2	40.3	14.6	3.8
1968	197.3	118.3	45.1	15.6	3.9
1969	194.3	120.3	47.2	15.8	3.4
1970	186.2	110.7	45.4	14.9	3.2
1971	187.9	104	42.7	13.5	3.1
1972	180.8	100.7	39.3	12.6	3
1973	194.7	106.7	39.6	13.1	3
1974	193.9	117.8	43.5	13.7	2.9
1975	198.1	119.1	42.3	12.6	2.8
1976	202.4	112.9	40.2	13.2	2.7
1977	204.5	105.5	38.6	12.2	2.5
1978	202.7	101.6	35.8	11.2	2.5
1979	203.5	99.3	34.6	10.5	2.2
1980	193.9	93.9	31.7	9.6	2.2
1985	184.9	93.8	33.6	9.2	2.1
1988	179.5	91.7	32.3	9.7	1.9

[a] Data for births to women under 20 years of age were not broken down according to age cohorts in the *Statistical Yearbook* and are therefore not included in the table.

Sources: Computed from data in *Statisticheski godishnik* (*Statistical Yearbook*), 1965–1989. Numbers for 1967–1969 are taken from M. Sugareva, 'Kohorten i godišen efekti v dinamikata na plodovitostta', in Bŭlgarska Akademija na Naukite ed., *Semeistvo i sotsialno-demografsko razvitie* (Sofia, 1982), 324.

into the labour force and the advancement of female education levels without seriously tackling the problem of the double burden for women. Rather than dealing with established gender relations within the family, the state sought to gain control over the bodies of its female citizens. Bulgarian socialist demographic policies were the outcome of a specific political disposition: the Communist Party aimed to create a new reality based on the far-reaching restructuring of everyday life and newly shaped social and personal relations. In order to realize these goals, the Party-state assumed the right to intervene in the family sphere. As in many other modern societies, reproduction policies became one of the main fields in which the socialist state blurred the boundaries between the public and the private. The performance of (mainly) women's bodies was to be

TABLE 6
Numbers of children ever born by age of mother in Bulgaria, 1965 and 1975

Age cohort	*1965*	*1975*
15–19	0.48	0.56
20–24	1.09	1.14
25–29	1.66	1.69
30–34	1.97	1.99
35–39	2.18	2.06
40–44	2.34	2.06
45–49	2.56	2.13
50–54	2.63	2.23
15–54	2.01	1.88

Source: M. Keremendchieva, 'Fertilnoto povedenie na semejstvo', in Bŭlgarskata Akademija na Naukite ed., *Semeistvo i sotsialno-demografsko razvitie* (Sofia, 1992), 229.

reconfigured according to targets set by the Party. As Gail Kligman observed in the context of reproduction policies in Ceausescu's Romania, '[t]he population, simultaneously the subject and object of social experimentation, was to be moulded with or without its consent into the socialist body politic.'[113] Reproduction policies rendered the family a particularly significant site for the realization of this plan. Moreover, the Party considered the remodelling of the family to be a major precondition for the radical reshaping of the population's way of life in the framework of rapid modernization.

However, ordinary Bulgarians endeavoured to keep family life as free as possible from ideological and political intrusion. The preservation of values other than official ones in the private sphere was evident in people's tendency to retreat into domestic life where they could sustain a high degree of autonomy, even if they publicly conformed to socialist norms. Faced with the non-compliance of the population with state attempts to reorganize the family, the government offered a number of material incentives designed to encourage the acceptance of demographic targets. But the incentives did not have the desired effect of boosting the birth rate. Generally, they merely reinforced features of established family patterns, such as universal and early marriage, while people tacitly resisted the further implications of family policies. In this way, citizens 'domesticated' party policies.[114] The inherent deficiencies of socialist planning as well as the often erratic and arbitrary enforcement of rules and official guidelines resulted in widespread informal socio-economic and cultural activities that were frequently at odds with core principles of socialist thinking. At the same time, specific cultural ideas about the family were embedded in

the doctrine of Bulgarian socialism and diminished its original 'revolutionary' vector, enabling the Party to accommodate social practice to a high degree.

Despite the partial modernization of family relations and the unwelcome attempts of the state to determine family life, the family retained its central value for Bulgarians. In fact, the majority of Bulgarians saw no alternative to the family.[115] In the troubled times of 'transition' and economic chaos after 1989, the legacy of distrust in politics and the very real problems of everyday life meant that Bulgarians continued to rely on family and kinship networks that provided a familiar and reliable source of support.[116]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for this article, including work in archives and biographical interviews, was carried out in Bulgaria between 2001 and 2003 and was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) research project 'Family and Women in Socialist Bulgaria: Ideology and Practice' (grant No. P-14833). We are grateful to Karl Kaser (Graz), Ilija Iliev (Sofia), Rositsa Gencheva (Sofia) and Daniela Koleva (Sofia) for their critical comments on earlier versions of this article.

ENDNOTES

1 The April Plenum of 1956 laid the tracks for a degree of half-hearted internal democratization, economic reform and cultural liberalization, and also introduced increasingly nationalist notions into Party policies. The Bulgarian Communist Party claimed to be guided by the 'April Line' until the dissolution of the regime in 1989.
2 *Semeen kodeks* (Sofia, 1985), 3.
3 L. Gotkowitz and R. Turtis, 'Socialist morality: preference, family, and state intervention in Cuba', *Socialism and Democracy* **6** (1988), 7–29.
4 See I. Iliev, 'Familie, Ideologie und Politik: Die Großmutter in der städtischen Familie seit 1945', in U. Brunnbauer and K. Kaser eds., *Vom Nutzen der Verwandten. Soziale Netzwerke in Bulgarien (19. und 20. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna, Cologne and Weimar, 2001), 89–112.
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7 L. Makaveeva, *Bŭlgarskoto semeistvo. Etno-sotsialni aspekti* (Sofia, 1991), 144–5.
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11 B. Kerblay, 'Sozialistische Familien', in A. Burguière et al. eds., *Geschichte der Familie*, vol. 4: *20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt and New York, 1998), 99; W. Goldman, *Women, the state and revolution: Soviet family policy and social life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 1993), 297, 331. See also E. Wood, *The baba and the comrade: gender and politics in revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1997).
12 P. Juviler, 'Cell mutation in Soviet society: the family', in T. Thompson and R. Sheldon eds., *Soviet society and culture: essays in honor of Vera S. Durham* (Boulder, Col. and London, 1988).
13 Goldman, *Women, the state and revolution*, 340; Kerblay, 'Sozialistische Familien', 99.
14 Goldman, *Women, the state and revolution*, 102.
15 S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: ordinary life in extraordinary times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford, 1999), 79–83; see further V. Buchli, *An archaeology of socialism* (Oxford and New York, 2000), 38.
16 Buchli, *An archaeology of socialism*, 76.
17 D. Blagoev and G. Dimitrov, *Za zhenata i semeistvoto* (Sofia, 1979), 14.
18 Blagoev and Dimitrov, *Za zhenata i semeistvoto*, 199.
19 G. Dimitrov, *Sŭchinenie*, vol. 14 (Sofia, 1955), 43.
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