

Antonina Noskova, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO
University), Moscow, Russia

avnoskova@mail.ru, +74954349426

Demographic Changes and Evolution of Family Policy in Russia During the Last Century

The aim of the paper is to shed light on the peculiarities of demographic transformations, which have caused the evolution of the family policy in Russia. The paper has two key issues. The first one explores some factors that have determined the demographic situation in different stages of Soviet and modern Russian history during last century. The second one analyses the family policy measures as the state reactions to different demographic challenges. The impact of these measures on the family and demography transformations in Russia are considered.

We have analyzed five stages of demographic changes and corresponding five main models of the family policy in Russia. They are the post-revolutionary model (1917-1926), the “Stalin” model (1927-1954), the Soviet “welfare” model (1955-1990), the post-Soviet model (1991-2005), and the current model (since 2006).

On the first stage (1917-1927), the family has become an object of the political struggle. The first Soviet political leaders saw in the traditional family relations a source of renewal of previous (bourgeois) patterns of social ties. Therefore, in the first post-revolutionary decade, the politics concerned family was aimed at the destruction of the patriarchal family patterns, which were deeply rooted in Russian people life. At the same time, the first Soviet leaders tried to implant the new «socialistic» models of family, marital ties and gender relations. To promote «socialistic» models of family life, a new marriage legislation was created. «New» models of family, marital ties and gender relations were based on some main principles: a freedom from a church regulation and pressure; sexual rights and freedoms; free divorce; gender equality; state support for childhood and motherhood. The ensuring of women’s rights and gender equality was declared as one of the main advantages of the socialist society. So, the state feminism was established as the mainstream of soviet social policy. In this context, a creation of social conditions for gender equality became one of the key social targets for Soviet Russia. Soviet women got reproductive rights as well as an access to education and employment. In that time, the public childcare began to appear in Soviet Russia. The first

measures of social and economic support for motherhood were introduced in 1917 (Decree of December 22, 1917). This decree ensured a maternity leave of 16 weeks (to be taken 8 weeks before and 8 after giving birth) for a working woman. By the same decree, a special allowance from 1/4 to 1/2 of woman earnings must be given out to mothers within 9 months after a child birth by so called «hospital cash desks». It was done at the first time in the Russia history.

For the future demographic trends, a right of abortion, which Soviet women received in 1920, had the significant meaning. Moreover, it was made for the first time in the world. The intervention of the state in family life during the first post-revolution decade had an important impact on family and gender relations in Russia, and led to transitions in family and demographic behavior.

The decline of fertility in 1930s caused the necessity in a new state family ideology and special measures for families. Between the census of 1926 and census of 1959 the number of children per woman (TFR) was reduced by more than 4 children. So, during the second stage (1927-1954), a turn to another kind of family politics and policies was done. Two main laws concerning family (the law of 1936 and the law of 1944) were a good illustration of the transition to new model of Soviet family politics. According to the law of 1936, a ban on abortion and restriction of divorces were introduced. Strengthening of the state protection of motherhood and childhood was declared, too. For the first time, cash transfers for families with few children were accepted. Regular allowance was granted for families after 6 children. In 1944 these regular cash transfers for families were increased. Now the allowance was granted for mothers with four children and more. It was paid in correspondence with the number of children during four years: after achievement by a child of 1 year old and up to 5-year age. It is important to stress that these measures were mainly designed in demographic concern. Transition from the agricultural economics to the industrial one increased the social need of women participation in working market. The problem of a reconciliation between family and work became the second main discourse of family policy. The law of 1936 also announced the extension of the childcare system and services (relative to nurses and kindergartens, in particular). So, in the Soviet Union, an extended system of early childhood education with full-day pre-schools was actively developed from the 1930s.

The third stage (1955-1990) was marked by liberalization of family legislation and the final institutionalization of the Soviet family policy pattern. The focuses of the Soviet family policy became gender and demographic issues. Mix of different measures resulted in a creation of a rather substantial and diversified system for family, motherhood and childhood protection.

Different laws concerning a family support were introduced in 1955-1990. For example, a law «On the statement of bases of the legislation of USSR and Federal republics about marriage and a family» was accepted in 1968. This law fixed equality of the man and the woman in various aspects of the family relations, and also proclaimed protection of a family and motherhood as a state duty. Some other laws covered financial and social support for families with children. It can be noted that the Soviet family politics and policies were an attempt to do the symbiosis of two groups of the measures. The first one was aimed at facilitating the work–family reconciliation; the second one was the supporting of the “traditional” family model. The paper shows that one of the most important direction of the first group has been the creation of the childcare public system. The organizing of this system for babies and pre-school children became one of the social achievements of the Soviet Union.

The first post-Soviet period of time (1990-2006) was marked by deep economic and social crises, moral deformations, starting after the Soviet Union dissolution. This led to a huge amount of problems in family and demographic spheres. It is possible to give following points of early post-Soviet family policy: - creation of «Concept of the state family policy of Russian Federation» (1993); - acceptance of the Family Code for the Russian Federation (1996); - creation of a new system of benefits for families (1995); - a transition from universal to mean-tested allowance (1999). The main dimension for family policy became a social one. In spite of deep demographic crisis (a sharp decline of birth rate and simultaneously mortality growth), a social problem of families poverty became a priority one. Post-Soviet family policy was focused on reducing the poverty of families. But, transition from universal to mean-tested allowance system led to reduction on 7 million number of children (from 25 million to 18 million) whom this allowance was granted. Moreover, a mean-tested allowance system contradicts to usual representations of Russians that all parents with children must have the allowance for children. According to sociological All-Russian survey data (2007), 82 % of respondents

agree with the statement that all parents must get the child allowance during the child's 16 years. The deformation of this system in 1990s led to new social challenges for families and demographic risks for Russian society.

A turn to a new family agenda was done in 2006, when the President of Russia suggested a set of measures to correct the demographic situation in Russia. In his Annual speech for Federal Assembly he has declared the following measures for family policy: the increasing of the amount of the childcare allowance during the child's first 1,5 years; introduction of the benefits for families to compensate their expenses for children's preschool education; and introduction of a «maternal capital». Among these measures, the most resonance one was «the maternal (parental) capital». The maternal capital is a certificate for the sum of approximately 9000 euros. This capital is not mean tested, it is provided for parents starting with the second child. This virtual sum may be used only for some definite purposes: as a contribution in purchase of dwelling, as a contribution in payment for a high school children education, and as a contribution in future pension insurance. These measures were aimed on stimulation a birth of the second child. So, the main object of the current stage of Russian family policy is a supporting of fertility.

According to demographic calculations, new measures had some positive demographic effect and led to increasing the birth rate in the last years from 2007 to 2012. Moreover, according to the survey data, the majority of Russians have a need in the different kinds of public financial support. Besides these universal measures for all Russians, every region has its own family policies with its own object and a set of measures. For example, the social dimension is priority one for the regions with a high birth rate (e.g., the North Caucasus). The demographic dimension is a priority one for the regions with the low birth rate.

To sum up, it is important to stress that the family policy in Russia during the last century like the history of Russia was complicated and – some times - discrepant. In addition, this policy had a great influence to a family and demographic behavior of Russians.