

Optimal Withering: A Theory of Autocratic Family Policy in the Soviet Union

Clara Jace *

July 24, 2020

Abstract

The family is distinguished from other social organizations by its high degree of cooperation and at-will reproduction. While social organizations are generally problematic for a power-maximizing autocrat because they compete for resources and loyalty, families are especially dangerous in that they hold power over the future labor force. However, families also can benefit the autocrat because of their economies of scale and biological (and other) ties. This paper presents a model of autocratic family policy in which the autocrat chooses policies that will balance the benefits of families against their costs. I apply this theory to Soviet family policy (1917-1944), arguing that its “contradictory” succession of policies was the response to this trade-off under different constraints. Soviet family policy was consistently aimed at manipulating familial cooperation to the point of “optimal withering.”

Keywords: Family Economics, Sovietology, Public Choice

JEL Codes: D10, J12, P26

*George Mason University, claraelizabethjace@gmail.com. I would like to thank...

The family is withering away not because it is being forcibly destroyed by the state,
but because the family is ceasing to be a necessity.

– Alexandra Kollontai

1 Introduction

In her 1920 essay, the Bolshevik leader and popular lecturer on family policy, Alexandra Kollontai, outlined her vision for the role that the Russian family would play in the new Soviet Union:

[T]he family distracts the worker from more useful and productive labour. The members of the family do not need the family either, because the task of bringing up the children which was formerly theirs is passing more and more into the hands of the collective (1977, p. 258).

Kollontai (1872-1952) served as the Commissar of Social Welfare, the People’s Commissar of Propaganda and Agitation in the Ukraine, and as a diplomat to Norway and Sweden. She played an active role in Soviet family policy debates – sparring publicly with Lenin on a few occasions – until she fell silent in 1929 while the policies she had fervently supported were renounced by the Stalinist regime and replaced with their “pro-family” counterparts. Kollontai spoke up one last time in 1948 to congratulate the Party on its latest policies which enabled each woman to “fulfill her natural duty – to be a mother, educator of her children and the mistress of her home” (1977, p. 351).¹ Such a reversal of thought was not unique amongst participants in the Soviet family policy debates; it was the milder alternative.²

Why did the Party change its mind, reversing its own family policy in less than 40 years? This paper proposes a theory of autocratic family policy to answer that question. In particular, I argue that:

1. The family, as the most cooperative organization in society, was inherently a threat to Soviet power;
2. Only after World War II and the Stalinist purges did its risk become manageable enough, and the need for population great enough, that Soviet family policy could shift to focus on the benefits provided by families;

¹“The failure to write sufficient quantities of sufficiently effusive prose could be seen as political protest on Kollontai’s part, and Stalin undoubtedly saw it as such as was suspicious” (Holt, 1977, p. 298).

²Goldman (1993) lists some of the casualties: “Alexander Goikhbarg, the idealistic author of the 1918 Family Code, and Aron Sol’ts, an active participant in the VTsIK debates...were both committed to mental institutions. Many other participants in the debate over the Family Code, like Alexander Beloborodov, Aleksei Kiselev, and Pyotr Krasikov were murdered in prison between 1936 and 1939” (p. 340). Leading legal theorists of the 1920s, including Yevgeny Pashukanis and Nikolai Krylenko, were arrested and eventually shot.

3. The inner logic of Soviet family policy was that it consistently manipulated familial cooperation to the point where – as Kollontai jested in one of her speeches – “women themselves do not believe that the fathers of their children can be found” (1977, p. 305).

I refer to this process of influencing family life to maximize autocratic power as the “optimal withering” of the family.

The logic of Soviet autocratic family policy is sharpened by a similar pattern of family policy in other autocratic regimes. China is perhaps the clearest recent case of autocratic family policy: imposing the One Child Policy in 1979, enforcing it in waves, and then abolishing the policy in 2015 (Zhang, 2017). Singapore is another example, as its “Stop-at-Two” policy from 1966 was soon replaced with “Have-Three-or-More (if you can afford it)” in 1987. Other modern states like the United States have also exhibited a growing proclivity to lift the marital veil (Brinig, 2000).³

From the perspective of an autocrat, the family poses serious problems – much like those presented by cooperative social organizations in general (such as firms, religious organizations, political factions). Because familial cooperation diverts resources and loyalty away from the state and can reproduce itself, an autocrat has an incentive to stifle family life. However, unlike other social organizations, families feature characteristics that can benefit the autocrat. Because families feature economies of scale and can facilitate low-cost monitoring and identification of members, autocrats have an incentive to strengthen family life. I argue that the power-maximizing autocrat’s ideal family is one that is *just* cooperative enough to provide the services he demands without cooperating to an extent that could undermine the regime’s security.⁴ In practice, this will be policies that encourage family members to depend on the state instead of on each other. The specific conditions that determine an autocrat’s margin of choice continually change, so the specific policy that will ensure “optimal withering” may look different depending on its context.

The case of Soviet family policy (1917-1991) provides an excellent testing ground for the theory’s predictions. It began in 1918 with unilateral divorce, followed by legalized abortion (1920), inheritance bans, and the proclamation of the full legal equality of women. Yet, come 1944, nearly all revolutionary-era policies had been revoked and replaced. This reversal has spurred a substantial conversation in history, sociology, and law (Berman, 1946; Wolff, 1949; Coser, 1951; Sverdlov, 1956; Petersen, 1956; Quigley, 1979; Nakachi, 2006), but has yet to be analyzed within economic. A leading explanation for the policy shifts is the one supplied by the Soviet regime itself: they were pragmatic allowances for the widespread destitution of women and children,

³Juviler (1985) even makes the case that “the underlying causes of such [familial] breakdown found in the modern urban life and economy of the USSR are similar to those causes apparently contributing to divorce and declining birthrates in the West” (p. 385).

⁴Interestingly, this familial organization will look similar to noncooperative marriages or the “separate spheres” model in family economics (Lundberg and Pollak, 1993).

which, in turn, was laid at the feet of economic disturbances caused by the New Economic Policy (NEP) (Goldman, 1993). A second explanation focuses on parenting, positing a trade-off between the cost-effectiveness of parenting for raising a labor force against its potential security threats. Thus, the regime can be expected to enact rules granting more autonomy to parents when they are expected to raise children supportive of the regime but undermine parental rights otherwise.

Both straightforward theories encounter at least three problems: 1) an explanation for the initial set of policies, 2) the possibility of preference falsification, and 3) historical timing.⁵ However, my theory is able to avoid those pitfalls – while still retaining the truth from these theories about the role of economic disturbances and parenting – by shifting the analytical focus to the costs and benefits of familial cooperation *from the autocrat’s perspective*. The theory of autocratic family policy boils down to the fact that the autocrat takes a risk by allowing families to function, since he is threatened by their cooperative nature but relies on their ability to raise children for his economic, political, and militaristic goals. As the circumstances change the risk associated with these two key features of family life, so too does autocratic family policy. The optimally withered family from his perspective is as uncooperative as possible while still producing people.

Understanding how autocratic regimes relate to family life is of perennial importance. It hardly bears repeating changes to family life have implications for a large set of outcomes of interest to social scientists, such as economic mobility (Chetty et al., 2014) or political affiliation (Lesthaeghe and Neidert, 2009). It’s intimate complexity is also still little understood – policies that seem obviously welfare-enhancing may carry unforeseen consequences for familial cooperation, especially when family members face few choices (Leeson and Suarez, 2017). Family policy is increasingly contentious in today’s demographic and political climate, but the debate over we can understand the family, its societal role, and it’s relationship to the flourishing of individuals is well worth having. By focusing on the case of a single political interest, an autocratic state, this paper offers a start.

2 A Theory of Autocratic Family Policy

Since Tullock (1987), economists have been interested in modeling autocratic decision-making from the economic point of view. Many have applied an autocratic model to the Soviet context: Boettke

⁵Geiger (1968) points out the shortcomings of the parenting theory in particular: “...it disregards the fact that the time of the inception of the new family policy corresponds quite closely with the point of maximum political disaffection among the population. Forced collectivization had just been completed, the living standard in the cities had dropped to a point much below that of 1928, and the purges and terror were about to reach a high peak. At such a time Stalin could hardly expect that Soviet parents were making special efforts to rear loyal young communists” (p. 101).

(1990, 1993); Anderson and Boettke (1997); Gregory et al. (2011); Wintrobe (2012); and Gehlbach and Keefer (2011), amongst others. Thematically, the analysis of Petersen (1956), Geiger (1968), and Nakachi (2006) come closest to my argument. We share in common the recognition that there was a consistent logic behind the unstable, inconsistent Soviet family policy, aimed at harnessing the family organization for the Party's interests under different conditions. Economists have also provided theories of family policy (Becker and Murphy, 1988), though none have fully connected the two to analyze how autocratic regimes wield family policy as means to their ends. I build from scholarship in family economics, public choice, and comparative economic systems to present a theory in which the autocrat tailors his family policy to mitigate his costs and maximize his benefits with regard to families. I refer to this set of policies, which aims to increase or decrease cooperation between family members, as the "optimal withering" of the family. I will be using "the family" and "families" interchangeably in this paper, cognizant of the fact that the family (similar to "the firm" and "firms") can take many forms in society. The family is distinguished from other societal organizations by both degree and type; I define families as the most cooperative organizations in society as well as the only one that produces people who then populate the other organizations. The autocrat is threatened by the first feature of families, namely their likeness to other privately cooperating organizations, but cannot help but rely on the second.

2.1 The Autocratic Approach to Family Policy

In his work on the Soviet Union, Boettke (1993) emphasizes a central fact about autocratic regimes:

The sole point of the system was to concentrate benefits on those in power and disperse the costs on the citizens...endogenous reform would violate the maxims of rational choice because it would require that members of the dominant interest group move in a Pareto inferior manner (emphasis in original, p. 8).

My theory begins from the observation that to the extent that autocratic family policy is in the interests of families, it also must be in the interest of the autocrat. Gregory et al. (2011) provide an economic justification for this approach:

If holocausts, ethnic cleansing, cultural revolutions, or Great Terrors did not repeat themselves, attempts to model them (such as in this paper) would be hollow. However, the fact that such tragedies do repeat themselves and appear to be specific to certain types of economic and political systems gives economists license to delve into these matters (p. 41).

The patterns of autocratic family policy repeat themselves as well, and I follow the standard in the literature by taking the autocrat’s objective function – the maximization of power – as given.

What qualifies as “family policy”? Since economists (and autocrats for that matter) are interested in how de facto families behave over time, many kinds of policies and their intended or unintended effects come into play. I narrow this set by emphasizing those which deal explicitly with cooperation: exchanges between spouses (e.g., divorce) and between parents and children (e.g., inheritance). Specifically, the autocrat could decrease familial cooperation by artificially increasing transaction costs between spouses (and vice versa). For instance, by removing the legal status of the parish clergy with regard to marriage, the autocrat increases transaction costs between spouses by restricting access to enforcers of marital agreements, reducing the set of credible commitment strategies.⁶

2.2 Familial Costs

Cooperating families are largely a threat to autocratic power. Individuals will not “trade” with any political system if they can receive those goods at a lower price at home (Breton 1989). The autocrat can use coercion to extend his control, but this is costly and runs the risk of increasing familial cooperation even further. Supplying public goods to his citizens may be a lower-cost alternative for making them dependent on him and increasing their stake in the regime. The way that cooperating family members impede this strategy can be defined by at least three “costs” to the autocrat: 1) the threat of interest group formation; 2) the limit, posed by household production, to wealth extraction and policy incentives; and 3) the danger of powerful informal norms beyond his control.

First, the family organization presents the same problems to a ruler as do all private organizations, because they allow a group of individuals to coordinate their actions more effectively—the “interest group” threat. Second, household production within the family (e.g., housing services or daily meals) is relatively costly for the autocrat to tax or even to observe. Furthermore, the redistribution of resources that occurs within the family (feeding and clothing the “poor,” children or unemployed members) interferes with policy incentives the autocrat prefers. This fact has been well-recognized by the family economics literature.⁷ Third, the greater the cooperation between family members, the greater the influence that informal norms will have over individuals. Generally speaking, parents and siblings monitor, punish, and reward behavior, e.g., doing the

⁶Contrast this with what various economists e.g., [Becker and Murphy \(1988\)](#); [Allen \(1990\)](#) have argued about the role family policy plays in democratic systems by lowering the transaction costs of contracting across generations and between spouses.

⁷[Lundberg and Pollak \(1993\)](#) write: “With binding marital agreements, therefore, targeted policies that have redistributive effects in existing marriages may be ‘undone’ by subsequent generations in the marriage market à a pure Ricardian equivalence result” (p. 153).

dishes, using informal incentives, e.g., refusing access to dessert until the job is done (Posner and Rasmusen, 1999).⁸

2.3 Familial Benefits

On the other hand, the family organization can present valuable services to the autocrat. Familial cooperation could benefit him in at least three ways: 1) revenue-expanding economies of scale from household production; 2) biological ties which lower the cost of identification of his population; and 3) low-cost social monitoring and information generated by family relationships.

First, families economize on societal resources since certain goods and services (apartments, kitchen appliances, and entertainment, for instance) exhibit economies of scale when produced or consumed within the household. The family also provides a focal way by which to allocate and organize the consumption of publicly provided goods.⁹ Second, the biological (and typically) geographic ties of the family allow the autocrat to better identify and track his population. This feature is crucial because individuals coming from identifiable family units can all be linked to shared histories, ethnicities, sympathies, and other data of interest to the autocrat.¹⁰ Finally, familial relationships lower the cost of monitoring and gathering information. Though the natural loyalties that bind family members make member-to-member monitoring costly (though not as expensive historically as one might wish to think!), familial relationships generate valuable data that reveals the true preferences of the population. By reading husband-wife or brother-sister correspondence, for instance, the autocrat is able to solve one of his major security issues: preference falsification (Kuran, 1989). Note that most of these benefits flow from the joint consumption activities of families; in the terms of family economics, they correspond to the marital surplus of modern companionate marriage.¹¹

⁸Other scholars (Geiger, 1968) have pointed out that totalitarian regimes are suspicious of parenthood for this reason; the lifelong influence of parents over children weakens autocratic power where incentives oppose. Shipler (1983) writing about the Soviet regime, captures the opposite scenario: “‘The collective is more influential than the parents,’ said a law student. ‘We are more concerned with what the collective thinks of us than what our parents think’” (p. 79).

⁹See Olson (1993) on why an autocrat has an incentive to provide public goods at all.

¹⁰Scott (1998) shows that greater “legibility” of the population, gives more options to a ruler to exercise his power.

¹¹The benefits listed have also been explicitly recognized by U.S. courts. For example, in *Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health*: “Simply put, the government creates civil marriage...Civil marriage anchors an ordered society by encouraging stable relationships over transient ones. It is central to the way the Commonwealth identifies individuals, provides for the orderly distribution of property, ensures that children and adults are cared for and supported whenever possible from private rather than public funds, and tracks important epidemiological and demographic data” (emphasis added, 440 Mass. 309 1993). See Lundberg and Pollak (2007) for more.

2.4 A Model of Autocratic Family Policy

My model builds upon Wintrobe's 1990 classic analysis of totalitarian choice. He defines the two instruments at the ruler's disposal as 1) political repression, increased by restrictions on speech, for example, and 2) political loyalty, increased by the distribution of political rents. I formalize the autocratic objective function in the same way:

$$P = P(R, L) \tag{1}$$

However, it is important to focus the definitions of these variables with regard to families. Repression (R), encompasses the methods by which an autocrat tracks, reorganizes, and punishes his population. It takes the form:

$$R = R(F_C) \tag{2}$$

where the autocrat's ability to repress is increasing in the amount of familial cooperation present in the regime: extended economies of scale, lower-cost identification (legibility), and more effective monitoring.

The next argument in the autocratic objective function is loyalty (L), which is decreasing in the amount of repression (R) imposed by the autocrat but increasing in the amount of social disorder (D) in the population. The supply of loyalty from the population takes the form:

$$S_L = S_L(R, D) \tag{3}$$

Individuals are less likely invest in loyalty toward the autocratic regime if the probability that they will suffer repression increases, but the experience of social disorder – famines, wars, and other disasters – pushes citizens to cling more tightly to the regime.

The constraint on the autocratic objective function is a backward-bending supply of loyalty curve (Wintrobe, 1990). At low levels of repression, the substitution effect exceeds the income effect, and citizens allocate their loyalty toward the regime as attractive policies make loyalty to the regime more beneficial than alternate loyalties to other groups. But as repression continues to increase, citizens begin to reduce all investments of loyalty, as the likelihood that they will be punished increases. Increases in repression mean that the autocrat is increasing his reliance on the three beneficial aspects of familial cooperation, effectively disfiguring the family organization.¹² Finally, I assume that the level of loyalty is fixed in the short but not the long run, with repression

¹²This comports with a study done by Geiger (1955) in which he shows, using records from the Harvard Project on the Soviet Socialist System (HPSSS), that families who experienced greater political pressure (repression) reported that the typical Soviet family was more stable, while families who underwent the most deprivation (social disorder) reported that the typical family had become more alienated (lowering investments in loyalty).

variable in both.

Figure 1 depicts the point of “optimal withering” (O), found at the tangency between his highest feasible isopower line (P) and the constraint of a backward-bending supply curve of loyalty (S_L).

[FIGURE 1 HERE]

By selecting his family policies, the autocrat chooses a level of familial cooperation (F_C) that balances its repression-enhancing benefits against its loyalty-reducing costs. This is the point of optimal withering (O). If his loyalty constraint shifts outward due to an exogenous increase in social disorder (D) then a higher level of repression can be sustained (O').

2.5 Predictions

Due to the nature of the question, the “data” I need to explain are the specific family policies chosen by an autocrat over time. In other words, autocratic policy is the left hand side variable (Besley and Case, 2002). If it is true that the autocrat allows familial cooperation only insofar as it increases his power through repression, the model generates a set of predictions:

1. The autocrat will first gain control over the marital contract. This monopoly allows him to manipulate the rules governing familial cooperation (F_C) with minimal distortion from competing third parties.
2. When the marginal benefit from decreasing familial cooperation exceeds its marginal cost, as when loyalty is a major concern, the autocrat “withers” the family. In terms of the model, $\frac{\delta P}{\delta R} < \frac{\delta P}{\delta L}$, so the autocrat optimizes by allocating more resources to loyalty until marginal benefits are equal.
3. When social disorder increases, the autocrat uses more familial cooperation (F_C) to produce higher repression, which is sustained under the new, higher level of loyalty. His family policies will simultaneously increase repression while increasing payments for loyalty. In terms of the model, $\frac{\delta P}{\delta D} > 0$.
4. When the marginal cost from decreasing familial cooperation exceeds its marginal benefit, as when the labor force is a major concern, the autocrat “strengthens” the family. In terms of the model, $\frac{\delta P}{\delta R} < \frac{\delta P}{\delta L}$, so the autocrat optimizes by allocating more resources to repression until marginal benefits are equal.

3 The Case of Soviet Family Policy

On the heels of the 1917 Russian Revolution, led by Alexander Goikhbarg, the Bolsheviks issued a series of decrees that immediately banned religious marriages and permitted “no-grounds” divorce. This was soon followed by the abolition of the legal concept of legitimacy, a ban on inheritance, and a statement of full legal equality of men and women. In 1921, the Soviet Union would become the first country in the world to legalize abortion. Yet, less than 20 years later with the Family Code of 1936, these policies were reversed and “pro-family” propaganda began to engulf the Russian people. Goikhbarg himself was shut in a mental institution.

How were these rapid shifts in family policy justified by the Soviet regime? The first codes (1917-1930s) were defended by their coherence with Marxist conceptions of the family. The second half of the policies (1930s-1944) were defended with reference to the de facto realities the regime had to grapple with: the negative effects of NEP and the “backwardness” of rural villages. At the end of the day, though, the Soviet Union was not a democracy; the changes happened because the Party wanted them.

To understand the overarching ideological constraints of the Party, it is necessary to visit its roots in communist thought. For Marx and Engels, the family was an economic unit masquerading as a bastion of bourgeois virtue. They likened the relationship between husband and wife to that of the bourgeois and proletariat, or an unpaid prostitute and her exploiter, and despised its connections to religion and tradition. The key to liberating family members would be to remove “the dependence, rooted in private property, of woman on the man and of the children on the parents” (Engels, 1847). Once private property was abolished, other aspects of bourgeois family life – specialized work, shared living spaces, the inequality from inheritance, and the rearing of children – could be taken over by the community and thus transformed. Marxist thought served as a focal point for the Party’s debates over family policy (Geiger, 1968; Boettke, 1990). While early Soviet family policy was undeniably an experimentation with Marxist ideas, it still does not explain the specific way in which these ideas were embraced in the first place and then quietly put away when they were.

3.1 Early Soviet Family Policy (1917-1926)

Before the advent of the Revolution, the representative Russian family was the *dvor*, a multigenerational household with an average of 6.3 members per household (Frierson, 1987, p. 44). The first wave of Soviet policy targeted two distinctive features of the *dvor*: its multigenerational structure and its foundation – the Russian Orthodox Church – which had governed marriage and family disputes for hundreds of years. The ban on inheritance and communal property destabilized cen-

turies of intergenerational support, and unilateral divorce was a complete shift from the Russian Orthodox rules on divorce that had been even stricter than the Catholic Church of the West. The initial architects of Soviet family policy saw this as a crucial step: “The complete break of the state power with canonical, religious, ecclesiastical views on marriage makes it possible to free the masses in this respect from the oppression of the priesthood” (Goikhbarg, “Marital, Family Guardianship Law,” 1920).

Another population justification for early Soviet family policy was that it liberated women from the shackles of their husbands and homes. The Family Code of 1918 instituted legal equality between men and women, and women’s participation in the formal workforce began to increase substantially. Beyond the legalization of abortion in 1921 (which remains Russia’s primary form of birth control today), the category of “illegitimate” was eliminated, and alimony duties were redefined such that a woman unsure about the paternity of her child could insist that all possible partners make her payments as a “commune of fathers.” Expansions in childcare and communal kitchens also marked Party efforts to provide public substitutes for household production. As the Commissar of Education, Anatoly Lunacharsky, wrote in the late 1920s:

Our problem now is to do away with the household and to free women from the care of children. It would be idiotic to separate children from their parents by force. But when, in our communal houses, we have well-organized quarters for children... there is no doubt the parents will, of their own free will, send their children to those quarters, where they will be supervised by trained pedagogical and medical personnel (Shipler, 1983, p. 89).

It was not long, however, until the Soviet communal kitchens became infamous for forcing families to cook, eat, and share pots and pans in claustrophobic quarters.¹³

By 1922, there was a new social group on the scene: the *besprizorniki* (homeless orphans). This group of some 7.5 million starving children roamed the countryside in search of food and a family (Goldman, 1993, p. 59). Women also increasingly found themselves in disastrous financial condition, bearing the burden of providing for children alone since their “commune of fathers” frequently disappeared or could not pay. The rapidly growing industry of prostitution “made a mockery of the idea that women were free, independent individuals who could enter a union on the basis of personal choice” (Goldman, 1993, p. 122). The Party responded by introducing legislation in 1926 that held only one man responsible for alimony payments and increased the number of communal kitchens.

¹³See, for example, articles from npr.org: “How Soviet Kitchens Became Hotbeds Of Dissent And Culture” and “How Russia’s Shared Kitchens Helped Shape Soviet Politics.”

3.2 Intervening Demographic and Social Trends (1920s - 1930s)

As the years of civil war, famines, purges, and rapid industrialization added up, the USSR began to experience two demographic shocks: declining birthrates and an unbalanced sex ratio. These trends, in addition to Stalin's obsession with mass terror and foreign conquest, brought into focus the benefits that families could provide to the Soviet regime. The conditions also were such that households were increasingly smaller and headed by a single woman, instead of generations of cooperating couples as the *dvor* had been.

Though not admitted in the external propaganda, the Soviet demographic challenges were scrupulously discussed within the Party's internal communications (Nakachi, 2006). The main concern was that slowing population growth would cause the labor force to soon dwindle. Since official Soviet censuses (1920, 1926, 1937) and statistics are untrustworthy, demographers have only recently (with new techniques and new archives) reconstructed the population trends. From 1895 to the 21st century, 58% of Russia's potential population growth was lost due to socio-political disturbances, constituting 113 million "lost" people, or over 75% of the present-day Russian population Ediev (2001). Results are displayed in Figure 2.

[FIGURE 2 HERE]

Furthermore, the male-female ratio had become drastically skewed through the decades of purges, wars, famines, and other catastrophes. The terror and foreign campaigns of Stalin had brought an unprecedented degree of social dysfunction. Gregory (2009) concludes that during the 1930-1933 deportations, "the unit of repression was not the individual but the *household*" (emphasis added, p. 124). Sparse demographic data confirms that the unrest had a disproportionate effect on men, and the ratio of all males to all females declined from parity at the turn of the century to a "low point of 74.3 in 1946" (Geiger, 1968, p. 175). The male-female ratio of those at reproductive age was reduced to 19:100 in some rural areas (Nakachi, 2006, p. 40). These demographic shifts were so significant that:

The 1959 census shows twenty million more women than men in the Soviet Union and in the age group thirty-two and older almost twice as many women as men...[a stereotype] sees the Soviet Union as a land of free love, though in reality it is much more a land of broken families. These two realities indicate the significant fact that a very great proportion of Soviet families are headed by women (Geiger, 1968, p. 120).

As is evident by divergence of internal Party communication and external messages, the Family Law of 1944 was intended to replenish the labor force, while euphemistically focusing protection for women and children (Nakachi, 2006).

3.3 Late Soviet Family Policy (1936-1944)

The first abrupt change to the Party's position on family policy came with the code of 1936. After decades of protest from the villages and legal mayhem as mothers fought for their alimony, divorce became heavily restricted, childbearing encouraged, and the Soviet Union regime seemed to suddenly devote itself to "strengthening" the family. Just as the first wave of family policies was justified by its liberation of women from their prisons, the Party now liberated women from their destitution by taking over an increasingly protective, fatherly role. It publicly recognized its "Heroine Mothers" who had given birth to large numbers of children, paid them large monthly allowances, and built out facilities for single mothers. The "NEPmen" were indicted for the social conditions, and propaganda took a turn, becoming "even more notable for being anti-men than for being anti-revolutionary" (Fitzpatrick, 1999, p. 143).

Policy changes are not costless for an autocrat. Interference with the traditional Russian family required whole new departments, training, enforcement, and the silencing of dissenters. As one peasant put it during the 1926 debates over new family policy ideas: "The village demands standard laws that are stable. The village demands that wives and brides register. We do not want a situation where today they are tied to one and tomorrow to another, and the court recognizes all this as marriage" (Goldman, 1993, p. 224-5). Table 1 presents a stylized timeline of Soviet family policy.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

In practice, the regime was handing back some of the costly services it had attempted to monopolize, such as child care or meal preparation, to families and the balance of economies of scale and local knowledge that they enjoy. The sole policy that remained unchanged in this period was the ban on religious marriage. Effectively, the Party had secured family life only in the formal sense with minimal cooperation and loyalty, such that in marriage, "only the common residence of a man and a woman remains, without love, without respect, without common interests and regard for each other" (Geiger, 1968, p. 260). Soviet policy would remain this way for many years, until abortion and divorce became legalized again in the 1960s.

4 Testing the Theory

The Russian family did not wither on its own. Purposefully chosen family policies shaped families according to the interests of the Party. The model of autocratic family policy featured several predictions, each of which I now address in the Soviet context.

1. The autocrat will first gain control over the marital contract. This monopoly allows him to manipulate the rules governing familial cooperation (F_C) with minimal distortion from competing third parties.

For effective family policy, the Soviet regime needed to eliminate competition from the two foremost authorities in Russian family life: the Russian Orthodox Church and extended family members (especially the patriarch). The first series of decrees – the 1917 Decree and 1918 Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship – did just that.

In December of 1917, the Bolsheviks promulgated their first major decree: 1) civil marriage must replace religious marriages, and 2) either spouse can request a divorce. The new code was explicitly intended to erase, “centuries of patriarchal and ecclesiastical power and established a new doctrine based on individual rights and gender equality” (Goldman, 1993, p. 49). Interested third parties, such as the Russian Orthodox parish clergy or family patriarch, had helped to facilitate familial exchange by acting as specialized enforcers of marital contracts, which allowed the set of credible marital commitments to be larger. In addition to very low rates of annulment, records show that the Synod rejected around 70% of all divorce cases (Freeze, 1990, p. 738). The main sympathy toward divorce requests was revealed in cases where spouses had confessional differences, evidence that the clergy realized their small enforcement power outside the Russian Orthodox creed (though extended family could then play a role in stabilizing these marriages). By allowing unilateral divorce, the Soviet regime differentiated its marital contract, encouraged a weakening of familial ties, and attempted to establish a monopoly. With reference to family economics, marriage became a bargaining game with the threat point of divorce (Manser and Brown, 1980), as well as higher outside utility available to women as they joined the workforce.

Two other core features of the 1918 Code would mitigate the influence on past generations upon the present: the ban on inheritance and the ban on adoption. As the 1918 Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship stated: “Children have no right to the property of their parents, nor parents to the property of their children” (Section 160). Children were to increasingly rely on the state for sustenance and education, in return for their lifelong loyalty.

The Party monopoly over familial cooperation extended to the social life of family members as well. Soviet youth programs, like the Young Pioneers and *Komsomol*, functioned somewhat as regulated marriage markets, replacing the traditional matchmaking of older generations. In addition to constant community events for the youth, the Soviet regime mobilized large communist adult groups and instituted whole schedules of new rituals to replace those from the religious tsarist days. One particularly fitting example of a Soviet ceremony were those for marriage:

“The bride and groom sit on a red-draped platform, attended by fellow union members

and representatives of the women’s organization...the pair pledge themselves to work mutually to raise the production of the factory” (Petersen, 1956, p. 31).

Control over the marital contract was necessary for the Party, because it could then leverage family policy to weaken or harness familial cooperation in accord with its own objectives, without the distortions of other third parties.

2. When the marginal benefit from decreasing familial cooperation exceeds its marginal cost, as when loyalty is a major concern, the autocrat “withers” the family. In terms of the model, $\frac{\delta P}{\delta R} < \frac{\delta P}{\delta L}$, so the autocrat optimizes by allocating more resources to loyalty until marginal benefits are equal.

The traditional Russian *dvor* required extensive cooperation from its members, not in the least for agricultural effectiveness. The Russian Orthodox Church had supported familial cooperation doctrinally, and their successful role in stabilizing family life can be seen in straightforward parish records. If the Soviet Union had supported the same degree of stability, repression would have been easier due to the fact that predictable families are easier to track, monitor, and identify. But this would have come at the cost of risking the centuries-old allegiance to the clergy and patriarch which competed with the regime (not to mention being blatantly out of line with Marxist thought). Hence, families were “withered” – a process which I estimate in three ways: 1) the divorce rate (a proxy for the family’s interest-group threat), 2) the household size (a proxy for the extent of household joint production), and 3) using qualitative data about parent-child relationships from that era. Furthermore, the decline of familial cooperation was simultaneously met with the Party’s investments in loyalty toward the regime, as shown by the extensive set of privileges and public goods projects put in place at this time. It was this mix of policies that aimed to strategically displace loyalty to one’s family with loyalty to the regime. In the words of Josef Stalin: “A true Bolshevik shouldn’t and couldn’t have a family, because he should give himself wholly to the Party” (Montefiore, 2003, p. 69)

First, the divorce rate provides a rough proxy for the reduction in the danger of cooperation and loyalty between the husband and wife. Table 2 gives rate of divorce, along with its changing “price.”

[TABLE 2 HERE]

This is also indicative of curbing the threat of interest group formation which is latent in the family, since a husband and wife may reinforce each other’s counter-cultural views and work together to gain support from the broader community. The Party especially feared the influence that women might wield over the other family members, as women tended to be more sympathetic

to religion than men and would be insulated from propaganda if they remained within their home. Lenin himself voiced this fear: “The backwardness of women, their lack of understanding for the revolutionary ideals of the man, decrease his joy and determination in fighting. They are like little worms which, unseen, slowly but surely rot and corrode” (Shipler, 1983, p. 89). Thus, early Soviet family policy sought to make the housewife – that is, the manager of the domestic economy – irrelevant. One economist zealously declared that the second Five Year Plan would “achieve 100% socialization of the basic aspects of daily life” (Goldman, 1993, p. 314). In other words, the Party sought to curb the influence of informal norms that might have been stronger when one spouse acts as the residual claimant of the household.

In addition to divorce rates, another proxy for the extent of familial cooperation in a society is the average size of a household. This is due to the simple fact that living under the same roof provides significant economies of scale for monitoring the contributions of other family members (Allen, 1992; Allen and Brinig, 1998). Prior to the Revolution, several generations had lived under the same roof, and the independence of a son was a major life event – the *razdel* – which included a series of meetings and rituals (Frierson, 1987). By 1927, there were 2.46 dependents per provider, and in 1935, there were 1.59 (Goldman, 1993, p. 313). Although household figures are sparse for early Soviet years, the 1959 census adds one more dimension these numbers: village households had a mean size of 3.9 while urban families were 3.5 (Geiger, 1968, p. 174). Correspondingly, there were no significant differences in family size across the socioeconomic groups of farmers, urban workers, and those in white collar jobs. Pointing to the fact that families had shrunk significantly from their pre-Revolution links, this also bolsters the claim that Soviet family policy was not aimed at one subset of the population but rather *all families*, especially the shared idea of one’s own family. Accounts of parent-child relationships from this time portray them as strained at best.¹⁴

Finally, the new Soviet regime introduced its characteristic privileges and public projects designed to win the loyalty of the young generation. Communal kitchens became common in the rapidly growing urban centers, and by 1921 in Moscow, “the city boasted over 2,000 food stations serving 956,000 people, or 93% of the population” (Goldman, 1993, p. 128-9). Women were urged not to rely on their husbands as the “breadwinner” but rather to “accustom herself to seek and find support in the collective and in society, and not from the individual man” (Kollontai, 1977, p. 250). At the cost of being able to repress more effectively, the early Soviet regime bolstered its power by making investments to decrease familial cooperation and correspondingly increase loyalty to the regime.

¹⁴Elena Bonner’s younger brother is said to have remarked upon the arrest of their father: ‘Look at what those enemies of the people are like, some of them even pretend to be fathers’ ” (Figes, 2007, p. 137). Figes (2007) features extensive documentation of other similar occasions.

3. When social disorder increases, the autocrat uses more familial cooperation (F_C) to produce higher repression, which is sustained under the new, higher level of loyalty. His family policies will simultaneously increase repression while increasing payments for loyalty. In terms of the model, $\frac{\delta P}{\delta D} > 0$.

The Party did not let the demographic shocks that rippled out from WWII, the purges, abrupt modernization, and decades of civil strife go to waste. As fertility declined, divorce increased, and women and children suffered financial instability, the general threat from cooperative social organizations was mitigated. Recognizing increased social disorder, the Soviet regime could now rely on a higher supply of loyalty from its population. These conditions fostered a simultaneous increase in the degree of familial cooperation allowed, an increase in the regime’s repressive activities, and an increase in loyalty payments.

First, the Family Code of 1926 reinstated adoption, an equal division of property in the event of divorce, and ended the “commune of fathers” experiment by assigning alimony responsibility to just one man. Parents were once again legally responsible for the activities of their children. Transcripts of the discussions over the 1925 draft make it clear that the obvious plight of vulnerable women and children in Soviet society drove much interest in the reform (Glass and Stolee, 1987) and Goldman). Interestingly, the recognition of *de facto* marriage and divorce protected women who were invested in casual relationships while also moved the Soviet family closer to the Marxist ideal of free love. Economically speaking, it raised the cost of engaging in romantic relationships, which is why I categorize the policy as “withering” the family in Table 1. As Glass and Stolee (1987) summarize, the reversals in the Family Code of 1926 “revealed a transition away from the concept of state support of children and toward the return of traditional family responsibility” (p. 897).

On the other hand, repressive and loyalty-enhancing activities increased simultaneously—and sometimes under the same roof. The extensive public good provision of the Soviet regime can be seen from both as an investment in loyalty toward the regime, as well as an attempt to increase control over the population since it increased the “legibility” of the population. However, it is important to retain the distinction between investments in loyalty vs. repression, because it is theoretically possible for public goods to be provided without additional identification and tracking of the population.

First, the number of communal kitchens and other similar public good provision continued to expand throughout the 1920s. Between 1928 and 1934, the number of *creches* (centers for infants) had increased from 257,000 to 5,143,400 and daycares increased from 2,132 to 25,700 (Goldman, 1993). Housing had been problematic under the Tsars, but housing shortages worsened under the Soviet regime as they were centrally allocated. Even the most privileged circles in society “lived in one room sharing kitchen and toilet facilities with strangers” (Morton, 1980,

p. 235). Estimated living space per person in 1950 was less than 5 sq. meters (Morton, 1980). An example of expanded public good provision comes from a decree of the All-Union Soviet of Housing Cooperatives in April 1931:

Housing cooperatives were instructed to set up sixteen-hour-a-day childcare centers, to hire personnel, and to staff kitchens to prepare food for their residents. The cost of staffing daycare and dining facilities would be met by deductions of 10% from each person's rent payment and by long term loans from the Commissariat of Labor. Housewives were encouraged to enroll in special courses to prepare them for wage work in communal kitchens, daycare centers, and laundries (emphasis added, Goldman 1993, p. 314).

Meals and childcare were also not to be private affairs. The separation of the kitchen from marriage, as a Soviet scholar once proclaimed, is "a more significant historical event than the separation of church from state" (quoted by Geiger (1968, p. 55)). Fitzpatrick (1999) describes the noncooperative elements of communal living:

Private property, including the pots, pans, and plates that had to be stored in the kitchen, a public area, was jealously guarded by each individual family. Demarcation lines were strictly laid down. Envy and covetousness flourished in the closed world of the *kommunalka*...*Out of these resentments came many denunciations and lawsuits whose objective was to increase the denouncer's or plaintiff's living space at the expense of a neighbor* (emphasis added, p. 48).

Second, a growing literature investigates the measures used by the Soviet apparatus to identify and control its population. Passport and residency laws introduced in the early 1930s became the main way that the Party "defined identities and attempted to act upon the Soviet population" (Shearer, 2009, p. 844). He overviews the process:

A passport fixed an individual occupationally, ethnically, and socially through categories written into the passport document...If a person left a locale, he or she was required to "unregister" the current residence and to indicate the new address. Upon arrival at the new address, the passport holder was again required to register his or her passport and new residence at the new location (Shearer, 2009, p. 845).

The timing of these passport campaigns is telling. By the end of 1934, 27 million passports had been issued, making up 20 percent of the adult population (only counting the Russian republic). By the time of the last Family Code of 1944, which further "strengthened" the family, 50 million citizens (of a total population of 162 million) were passport holders.

4. When the marginal cost from decreasing familial cooperation exceeds its marginal benefit, as when the labor force is a major concern, the autocrat “strengthens” the family. In terms of the model, $\frac{\delta P}{\delta R} < \frac{\delta P}{\delta L}$, so the autocrat optimizes by allocating more resources to repression until marginal benefits are equal.

By the end of the 1930s, decreases to familial cooperation became marginally more costly in light of external threats to the Soviet regime. Increasing familial cooperation became the power-maximizing strategy. This “strengthening” of the family occurred through two main channels that would most augment autocratic repression: 1) monitoring the population and 2) boosting fertility.

The role of family policy cannot be understood in a vacuum without reference to the other objectives of the Party. In 1927, at the Fifteenth Congress, Stalin proclaimed:

If two years ago it was possible and necessary to speak of a period of a certain balance and of “peaceful coexistence” between the USSR and the capitalist countries, now we have every ground to assert that the period of “peaceful coexistence” is receding into the past...” The temporary stabilization of capitalism was becoming “more and more rotten and unstable,” and preparations for a new war were “going forward full steam” (emphasis in original, [Tucker, 1977](#), p. 567).

Family policy played a part in that preparation.

First, the Soviet secret police (OGPU and later the NKVD) relied heavily upon civilian monitoring as a tool to identify which individuals needed to be deported or eliminated. Soviet law had declared the failure to denounce treason or counterrevolutionary violations a criminal offense and made a point of celebrating denunciations all throughout society. Even when family members were loyal to one another and closely-knit, their correspondence and connections could still be utilized. [Weiner and Rahi-Tamm \(2012\)](#) record how this was done:

Between 15 January and 5 May 1941, some 3,551 letters from servicemen to their relatives and acquaintances were confiscated and used in investigations of politically suspicious personnel... Based on this information, the men of the 29th Corps were catalogued by “degrees of contamination” (p. 21).

Family members are desirable informers because they have low-cost access to the activities, beliefs, and whereabouts of one another. Soviet law had declared that the entire family of a criminal was responsible for his transgression; “In many cases, the families of persons arrested in the great purges of the 1930’s perished with the ‘criminals,’ presumably because it was feared that family resentment would generate new disloyalty to the regime” ([Petersen, 1956](#), p. 32). Stalin notoriously leveraged spousal denunciation as a loyalty test for top Party officials.

The 1944 Family Code, Stalin’s final change to Soviet family policy, fortified the barriers to divorce, impressively expanded government support for pregnant women, and honored mothers with titles like “Mother Heroine” accompanied by substantial monthly payments. Positioned as “strengthening” the family, it continued to increase the reliance of family members on the regime, only in a new way, under a new set of circumstances than before.

Though cloaked in language that broadcast its support of the family and women, Nakachi (2006) argues that the different language in the externally-circulated draft (*ukaz*) and internally-circulated note (*spravka*) reveals that the true purpose of the Code was to maximize the reproductive ability of the population at all costs. Since it would increase the long-run productivity of the regime, it is hardly a surprise that the efforts toward higher fertility were spearheaded by Khrushchev – the future autocrat himself. Nakachi (2006) illustrates that the “key step” of the Code was to provide state aid to single mothers:

Women would not have to be afraid of getting pregnant, and male partners would not have to be afraid of impregnating their sexual partners. Thus, the new project was designed to encourage both men and women to have nonconjugal sexual relationships that would result in procreation (p. 54).

She also calls attention to the fact that expansive aid to single mothers would need to be tempered by high barriers to divorce, lest the system be over-drawn. Table 3 reproduces the fertility rates that concerned the Party officials.

Finally, the administration’s reluctance to leave child-production in the hands of private citizens is evident by the facilities of state-sponsored motherhood. The main function of shared housing for single mothers was to monitor and prohibit abortion, infanticide, and/or abandonment. This is why the medical control commission, “rather than maternal request, would determine who should stay in these facilities and for how long” (Nakachi, 2006, p. 51). Table 4 summarizes the fertility rewards introduced by the 1944 Code.

[TABLE 4 HERE]

The creation of the class of Soviet single mothers allows the autocrat to harness the comparative advantage of female child-rearing while avoiding the costs of spousal cooperation in the raising of their own children. Geiger (1968) illustrates the effects of the final stage of “pro-family” legislation on spouses:

Though the new party line and legislation kept many estranged spouses from divorcing, it did not solve the basic problem. The wives of busy, politically co-opted husbands...becomes as wifely and motherly as possible, relinquishing any substantial direct

involvement in the outer society, leaves such activities to her husband, makes the best of her traditional sex role...and does not hold an outside job (p. 149).

To conclude, a key purpose of later autocratic family policy in the Soviet Union was to incentivize familial cooperation to the extent that it could produce the next generation of laborers.

5 Conclusion

From this relationship [between man and woman] one can therefore judge man's whole level of development.

– Marx¹⁵

Families have a complicated relationship with the state. They necessarily draw some amount of resources and loyalty away from public use, but at the same time, private investments in human capital, population growth, savings, and specialization serve the common good. Reflecting upon the case of an autocrat simplifies some of the complexity: an autocrat seeks power, so autocratic family policy will consistently maximize the benefits of familial cooperation while minimizing its costs from this perspective. Familial costs are mainly present in the cooperative household activities of family members, which threaten the security of the autocrat by fostering competing claims to resources, loyalty, and handing down informal norms that will guide future generations. Familial benefits include economies of scale, low-cost identification, monitoring the population, and increasing the labor force.

I use this theory to understand the family policy of the Soviet Union from 1917-1944 and find that it illuminates the historical puzzle of such a costly reversal: 1) the early Soviet family policy was designed to reduce familial cooperation at a time when it was largely threatening to the stability of the autocratic regime, and 2) the later Soviet family policy was designed to increase familial cooperation insofar as it could increase the birthrates and facilitate identification and monitoring of citizens. I argue that Soviet family policy was consistent in its aim, adjusting to different conditions as it moved the Russian family toward the point of “optimal withering.” Still, with an eye toward intellectual humility, I echo the point made by Gregory (2009) that “with relatively few historical examples, it is difficult to ‘prove’ any model of repression; rather we can only show it to be consistent with the most important historical facts” (p. 15).

Political regimes all over the world today can use family policy as a tool for political

¹⁵From the online version of “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844: Private Property and Communism” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/comm.htm>).

ends.¹⁶ As is well-established in the social sciences, the “representative family” (in developed nations especially) is undergoing serious change (Doepke and Tertilt, 2016). To conclude, I point to (Geiger, 1968, p. 331) as he reflects on the legacy of the Soviet family: “In the long view of history this special mission – to afford to the individual some privacy and protection against totalitarian encroachment – may prove to have been the Soviet family’s most important function.”

¹⁶For example, “In 2006, then President Vladimir Putin unveiled a program that promised up to \$10,000 in credits and subsidies for mothers who had a second or third child” (Eberstadt, 2011).

Tables and Figures

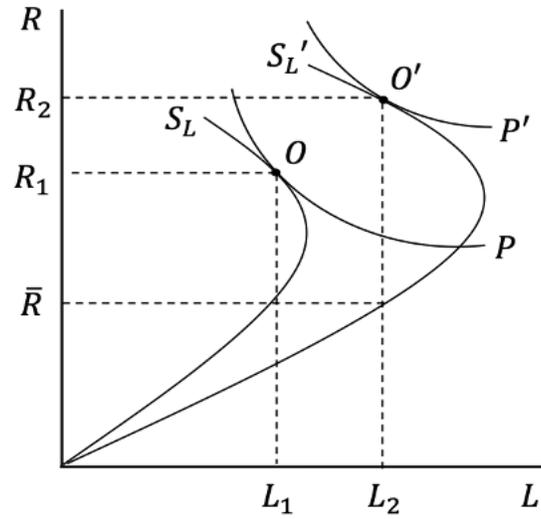


Figure 1: The Autocrat's Choice

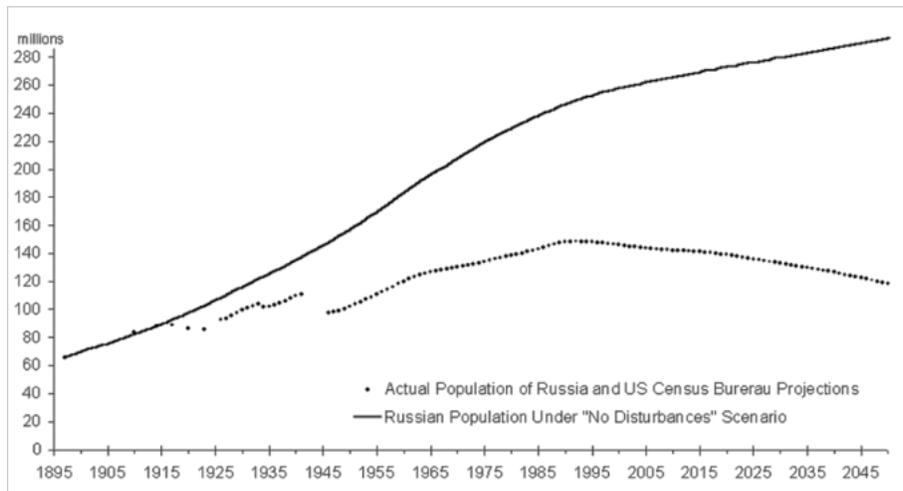


Figure 2: Russian population vs. potential from a “no disturbances” scenario

Source: Figure 6 in Ediev (2006)

Table 1: The Timeline of Soviet Family Policy

Policy	“Withering” the Family	“Strengthening” the Family
Family Code of 1918	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-fault divorce • Only civil marriages are recognized • Legalized abortion (1920) • Abolished adoption • Individual property retained in event of divorce • Full legal equality for women • Eliminated inheritance • Abolished distinctions between legitimate/illegitimate children • All alleged fathers responsible for splitting alimony (“commune of fathers”) 	
Family Code of 1926	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of marriage and divorce made optional • Increased the number of communal kitchens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstated adoption • Equal division of property acquired during marriage • Single father assigned alimony payments by courts
Family Code of 1934		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents responsible for criminal behavior of children • Largely restricted abortion • Increased insurance, pregnancy leave, childcare, payments for large families • Fines for divorce
Family Code of 1944		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended maternity leave • Increased allowances to unmarried mothers • Restricted alimony rights • Increased divorce fines, divorcees required to appear in court and publish in paper

Table 2: Fertility Trends for Select Years from 1913-1943

Year	Births (millions)	Yearly Increase/Decrease (millions)
1913	6.49	-
1926	6.47	-0.02
1936	5.35	-1.12
1937	6.41	+1.06
1938	6.32	-0.09
1939	6.29	-0.03
1940	5.75	-0.54
1941	4.63	-1.12
1942	2.09	-2.54
1943	1.36	-1.73

Note: Gathered from Table 2.6 of Nakachi (2006).

Table 3: The Price of Divorce (SUR) and the Quantity “Purchased”

Year	1st Divorce	2+ Divorces	Divorce Rate
1918‡	0	0	-
1924	0	0	11.3%
1926‡‡	0	0	14.5%
1934	0	0	34.0%
1936	50	150-300	-
1940	50	150-300	20%
1941	50	150-300	12.2%
1942	50	150-300	18.3%
1943	50	150-300	20.5%
1944‡‡‡	600-2100	600-2100	10.7%

Note: All information taken from Berman (1946) unless otherwise noted. Data on divorce rates from 1924-1934 taken from Goldman (1993), and divorce rates from 1940-1944 taken from Nakachi (2006).

‡Under the Family Code of 1918, a divorce could be obtained by the application of one or both parties to the Civil Registry Bureau.

‡‡Registration became unnecessary, and *de facto* divorce and marriage were accepted.

‡‡‡Under the Family Code of 1944, a petition with reasons for divorce needed to be made with a payment of 100 rubles. If accepted, the couple would have the new status marked on their passport and pay a sum ranging from 500-2000 rubles (as directed by the court).

Table 4: The Soviet System of Fertility Rewards (SUR)

Children	Lump Sum	Monthly Subsidy	Honorary Title
0	-	-	-
1	-	-	-
2	-	-	-
3	400	-	-
4	1,300	80	-
5	1,700	120	Medal of Motherhood, II Degree
6	2,000	140	Medal of Motherhood, I Degree
7	2,500	200	Order of Motherhood, III Degree
8	2,500	200	Order of Motherhood, II Degree
9	2,500	250	Order of Motherhood, I Degree
10	3,500	250	Mother-Heroine
11+	5,000	300	Mother-Heroine

Note: Taken from Nakachi (2006, p. 227), Table 2.9. In addition to “carrots” for large families, the same code imposed taxes upon small families: 6% of their income if the couple had no children, 1% for just one child, and 0.5% when the couple had just two.

References

- Allen, D. and Brinig, M. (1998). Sex, property rights, and divorce. *European Journal of Law and Economics*, 5(3):211–233.
- Allen, D. W. (1990). An inquiry into the state’s role in marriage. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 13(2):171–191.
- Allen, D. W. (1992). What does she see in him?â: The effect of sharing on the choice of spouse. *Economic Inquiry*, 30(1):57–67.
- Anderson, G. and Boettke, P. (1997). Soviet venality: A rent-seeking model of the communist state. *Public Choice*.
- Becker, G. and Murphy, K. (1988). The family and the state. *Journal of Law and Economics*, pages 1–18.
- Berman, H. J. (1946). Soviet family law in the light of russian history and marxist theory. *Yale Law Journal*, 56(1):26–57.
- Besley, T. and Case, A. (2002). Unnatural experiments? estimating the incidence of endogenous policies. *The Economic Journal*, 110(467):672–694.
- Boettke, P. J. (1990). *The Political Economy of Soviet Socialism: The Formative Years, 1918-1928*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Norwell.
- Boettke, P. J. (1993). *Why Perestroika Failed: The Politics and Economics of Socialist Transformation*. Routledge, New York.
- Brinig, M. F. (2000). *From Contract to Covenant: Beyond the Law and Economics of the Family*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., Saez, E., and Turner, N. (2014). Is the united states still a land of opportunity? recent trends in intergenerational mobility. *American Economic Review*, 104 (5):141–47.
- Coser, L. (1951). Some aspects of soviet family policy. *American Journal of Sociology*.
- Doepke, M. and Tertilt, M. (2016). *Families in Macroeconomics, in Handbook of Macroeconomics, Volume 2B*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/bs.hesmac.2016.04.006>.

- Eberstadt, N. (2011). The dying bear: Russia's demographic disaster. *Foreign Affairs*, Nov/Dec:95–108.
- Ediev, D. (2001). Application of the demographic potential concept to understanding the russian population history and prospects: 1897-2100. *Demographic Research*, 4:289–336.
- Engels, F. (1847). *The principles of communism*.
- Figes, O. (2007). *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*. New York: Picador.
- Fitzpatrick, S. (1999). *Everyday Stalinism, Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Freeze, G. L. (1990). Bringing order to the russian family: Marriage and divorce in imperial russia, 1760-1860. *The Journal of Modern History*, 62 (4):709–746.
- Frierson, C. A. (1987). Razdel: The peasant family divided. *The Russian Review*, 46 (1):35–51.
- Gehlbach, S. and Keefer, P. (2011). Investment without democracy: Ruling-party institutionalization and credible commitment in autocracies. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 39:123–139.
- Geiger, H. K. (1955). Deprivation and solidarity in the soviet urban family. *American Sociological Review*, 20 (1):57–68.
- Geiger, H. K. (1968). *The Family in Soviet Russia*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Glass, B. L. and Stolee, M. K. (1987). Family law in soviet russia, 1917-1945. *Journal of Marriage and Family*.
- Goldman, W. Z. (1993). *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.
- Gregory, P. R. (2009). *Terror by Quota: State Security from Lenin to Stalin*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- Gregory, P. R., Schroder, P. J., and Sonin, K. (2011). Rational dictators and the killing of innocents: Data from stalin's archives. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 39:34–42.
- Holt, A. (1977). "Introduction," in *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*. Lawrence Hill and Company, Westport, CT.
- Juviler, P. H. (1985). Soviet marxism and family law. *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*.

- Kollontai, A. (1977). *Selected Writings of Alexandria Kollontai, translated by Alix Holt*. Lawrence Hill and Company, Westport, CT.
- Kuran, T. (1989). Sparks and prairie fires: A theory of unanticipated political revolution. *Public Choice*, 61:41–74.
- Leeson, P. T. and Suarez, P. A. (2017). Child brides. *Journal of Economic Behavior*, 144:40–61.
- Lesthaeghe, R. and Neidert, L. (2009). Us presidential elections and the spatial pattern of the american second demographic transition. *Data and Perspectives*, 35 (2):391–400.
- Lundberg, S. and Pollak, R. (2007). The american family and family economics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21 (1):3–26.
- Lundberg, S. and Pollak, R. A. (1993). Separate spheres bargaining and the marriage market. *Journal of political Economy*, 101(6):988–1010.
- Manser, M. and Brown, M. (1980). Marriage and household decision-making: A bargaining analysis. *International Economic Review*, pages 31–44.
- Montefiore, S. S. (2003). *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Morton, H. W. (1980). Who gets what, when and how? housing in the soviet union. *Soviet Studies*, 32 (2):235–259.
- Nakachi, M. (2006). N.s. khrushchev and the 1944 soviet family law: Politics, reproduction, and language. *East European Politics and Societies*, 20(1):40–68.
- Olson, M. (1993). Dictatorship, democracy, and development. *The American Political Science Review*, 87 (3):567–576.
- Petersen, W. (1956). The evolution of soviet family policy. *Problems of Communism*, 5 (5):29–35.
- Posner, R. A. and Rasmusen, E. B. (1999). Creating and enforcing norms, with special reference to sanctions. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 19:369–382.
- Quigley, J. (1979). The 1926 soviet family code: Retreat from free love. *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 6(1):166–174.
- Shearer, D. R. (2009). *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shipler, D. (1983). *Russia: Broken Idols, Solemn Dreams*. Penguin Books, New York.

- Sverdlov, G. (1956). *Marriage and the Family in the U.S.S.R.* Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow.
- Tucker, R. C. (1977). The emergence of stalin's foreign policy. *Slavic Review*, 36 (4):563–589.
- Tullock, G. (1987). *Autocracy*. Springer Science + Business Media, Dordrecht.
- Weiner, A. and Rahi-Tamm, A. (2012). Getting to know you: The soviet surveillance system, 1939–57. *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 1:5–45.
- Wintrobe, R. (1990). The tinpot and the totalitarian: An economic theory of dictatorship. *The American Political Science Review*, 84 (3):849–872.
- Wolff, M. M. (1949). Some aspects of marriage and divorce laws in soviet russia. *Modern Law Review*, 12(3):290–296.
- Zhang, J. (2017). The evolution of china's one-child policy and its effects on family outcomes. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31 (1):141–160.