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Struggling for new lives: Family and fertility policies in the Soviet Union and modern Russia

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Abstract

During the 20th century, Russian women were assigned the triple role of social and political activists, workers, caregivers and mothers. This paper makes an overview of the main steps undertaken first by the Soviet and later by the modern Russian governments to influence family formation models and fertility levels, in order to improve the demographic situation over the period from 1917 until 2015. The overview pays close attention to such measures of demographic policy as marriage and divorce regulation, support of families through family benefits and the tax system, reconciliation of family and work spheres (maternity/paternity leaves, workplace flexibility measures), fertility promotion, childbearing and childcare support, as well as rare reproductive health protection initiatives.

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1. Introduction

The roots of the modern demographic situation in Russia go back deeper in history than the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the 20th century, often overlapping periods of revolution, civil and world wars, famines and purges have induced a permanent lack of population resources as well as the existence of pronounced demographic waves. These waves were often amplified by policies targeting family life and fertility.

From the very foundation of the Soviet states, significant efforts were made to promote the autonomy of women as individuals, and their ability to support themselves economically, while never leaving out of focus their reproductive function. Soviet ideology brought about revolutionary change to models of family formation and the upbringing of children. During the 20th century, Russian women were assigned the triple role of social and political activists, workers, caregivers and mothers. While the relative significance of these different roles changed through the century the identity of men as defenders of the Motherland and of being the main breadwinners remained rather more stable.

By the end of the 1960s, a masculinity crisis had hit the country and the motto “Take care of men!” (“*Beregite muzhchin!*”) was promoted. Contemporaneously, women continued elaborating strategies to cope with the burden of multiple responsibilities (worker/mother-caregiver), thus either asking for help among relatives, or giving birth to a smaller number of children. It was also in the mid-1960s, when – as Vishnevsky (2009) notes – a process of depopulation began. According to Vishnevsky, a *latent depopulation* stage continued up to the moment of the dissolution of the Soviet Union (a sub-period characterized by the decrease of the total fertility rate below the replacement fertility level of 2.15), then through an *evident depopulation* stage up until the mid-2000s (a sub-period characterized by the total number of deaths outnumbering the total amount of births), and then developed into *the depopulation aggravation* stage (characterized by a decrease in the number of women in a reproductive age since 2004, and a decrease of the working age population since 2007; apart from some short-term reversals of the trends due to favourable dynamics linked to demographic waves).

Under this context, we will make an overview of the main steps undertaken first by the Soviet and later by the modern Russian governments to influence family formation models and fertility levels, in order to improve the demographic situation over the period from 1917 until 2015. While up-to-the-date literature contains a handful of studies of historical and modern fertility trends, only scattered facts on the underlying governmental policies can be found, especially in English. The current text provides the first long-term systematic overview of the legislation acts regulating fertility and the family sphere in the Soviet Union and modern Russia. The state(s) struggled with comparatively low fertility and high mortality throughout the last century. However the difference

in the state's attitude (ideology) and its financial capacity in addressing the demographic issues has changed dramatically. Thus we address the Soviet Union and the modern periods in two separate sections. After tracing the course of the demographic policy, we further group the evidence into politically and ideologically more homogeneous sub-periods.

The overview also pays close attention to such measures of demographic policy as marriage and divorce regulation, support of families through family benefits and the tax system, reconciliation of family and work spheres (maternity/paternity leaves, workplace flexibility measures), fertility promotion, childbearing and childcare support, as well as rare reproductive health protection initiatives¹. The current text provides evidence on the demographic policies chronologically, from the October revolution of 1917 up until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 in Section 2, and from the creation of the modern Russia in 1991 to 2015, in Section 3. The last section briefly summarizes the main characteristics of the demographic policies of the two periods. It concludes with a list of weaknesses of the current policies that should be addressed in the future.

¹ Other targets of population policies, such as general health and mortality constitute a separate topic in themselves, while intra-country migration rather reflects labor redistribution rather than demographic processes. These processes are only marginally mentioned in the text when closely related to family and fertility policies.

2. 1917 – 1991: Soviet period

2.1 1917 – beginning of the 1930s: political mobilization of women

The revolution of 1917 brought about wide social change including new ideas on gender roles and relations between spouses. A range of experiments in the sphere of sexual and family/marriage relations had begun (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2004).

Women were targeted by the state as a distinct population group that was lagging behind men in terms of literacy, political education and participation in political life, as well as being too traditional and concentrated on the private sphere; not yet ready for the Soviet transformation. Women were supposed to be introduced to social and political life with help of state policies. The so-called *women question* was formulated above all as a political question though the reproductive function of women was never set aside by the state. For example, the Decree ‘On an eight-hour working day’² in 1917 besides introducing a minimum wage and limiting working hours for both sexes, stated that it was impermissible for women and adolescents below the age of 18 to be exploited for work in underground conditions and occupations. Furthermore, a truly revolutionary step was made by the Decree ‘On parental leave’ and Decree ‘On insurance in case of illness’³. The first established an allowance at the rate of 100 percent of a woman’s salary for the period of 8 weeks preceding and 8 weeks following the birth of a child. The employer was prohibited from admitting/forcing women into work during this 16 weeks period. For the first nine months after delivery, breast-feeding mothers became eligible for an allowance at the rate of 25–50 percent of their salary. Their working day was legally limited to 6 hours and 30-minute breaks every three hours were prescribed for feeding the babies.

Article 18 of the Constitution of 1918, gave Soviet citizens of both sexes the right but also the obligation to work. In order to facilitate the introduction of women to their role of workers, in 1920 a number of quotas were established in political and economic spheres; the so-called *Zhenotdel* (Women’s Department in the Party) was created to facilitate women’s liberation (Hutton, 1996). Working women were becoming increasingly more economically independent from men.

The increasing economic independence of women was accompanied by the process of desacralization of marriage and enhancement of freedom of private relations. The process was begun by two Decrees introduced as early as December 1917: ‘On civil marriage, children, and

² *Dekret o vvedenii vos’michasovogo rabochego dnia*, issued by Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) on 29.10 (11.11.)1917.

³ *Dekret o posobii po beremennosti i rodam*, issued by Sovnarkom on 14(27).11.1917 and *Dekret o strakhovanii na sluchai bolezni*, issued by All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) on 22.12.1917 (04.01.1918).

keeping the registry books'⁴ and 'On terminating marriage'⁵. The former, while recognizing pre-revolutionary Church-conducted marriages, introduced the institution of civil marriage registered by state as the only legitimate union of two spouses. The decision to marry may be taken independent of parental agreement from the age of 16 for women and 18 for men. As a symbol of gender equality, wives were not expected to abandon their own surnames in favor of those of their husbands. Children received equal rights irrespective of whether they were born within or outside of wedlock. The paternity of illegitimate children could be recognized and enforced through the courts, based only on a request of the mother.

The second Decree 'On terminating the marriage' was similarly revolutionary, introducing not only the right of spouses to decide on the necessity of divorce but also to do so with no explanation of their reasons to the authorities. The divorce could be signed through a registrant authority, and was considered in a court only in case of dispute concerning custody over children or division of property. However, the Decree still contained some gender-biased rules, such as the entitlement of women, who had no means to support themselves after divorce, to alimony payments from ex-husbands. Divorced men had no mirroring/respective right.

The first Code of Laws 'On marriage, family life, and foster care rights and obligations'⁶ was based on the two above-mentioned Decrees and appeared less than one year later in 1918. The Code upheld equal rights between spouses, such as when deciding on where the family was to reside, and on the common surname taken by the spouses and by their children (Art. 100). A novelty of the code was that spouses acquired rights over their own property; the "common wealth" concept was abolished (Art. 105). Thus a spouse (usually woman) without a wage income, who was only taking care of a house and a plot while not holding ownership of them, was denied the property rights over the fruits of her work. In order to get rights on any possessions, women were forced to start working for a wage (Denisova, 2010).

Children born out of wedlock were reconfirmed in their rights *au par* with legitimate children (Art. 133). Fathers of illegitimate children were obliged to participate financially in provision for their children; paternity continued to be recognized by the courts on the word of the mother without any additional proof. Child-support could be assigned to several potential fathers (Art. 140-144).

In order to combat widespread illegal abortions, bringing harmful if not lethal consequences, the Decree 'On artificial interruption of pregnancy'⁷ legalized abortion in the Russian Soviet

⁴ *Dekret o grazhdanskom brake, o detiakh i o vedenii knig aktov sostoiianiia*, issued by VTsIK and Sovnarkom on 18(31).12.1917.

⁵ *Dekret o rastorzhenii braka*, issued by VTsIK and Sovnarkom on 16(29).12.1917.

⁶ *Kodeks zakonov ob aktakh grazhdanskogo sostoiianiia, brachnom, semeinom i opekunskom prave*, Code of Laws approved by VTsIK on 16.09.1918.

⁷ *Ob iskusstvennom preryvanii beremennosti*, Decree adopted by Sovnarkom on 18.11.1920.

Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) in 1920, for the first time in Europe. After the legalization, the operation was performed at no costs for women. The initiative brought women to a relatively safe environment of hospitals in urban areas, while illegal abortion procedures were still widespread in rural areas. As it was widely announced, the abortion legalization was a forced measure to deal with a previously soaring number of illegal abortions. With legalization, abortion became a widespread contraceptive measure. This led to an overloading of hospitals with abortion operations by the 1930s. By 1924, a special commission was considering every abortion request; the priority right was given to women in bad health and poor socio-economic conditions. In case of a negative decision by the commission, the abortion operation could still have been executed for payment. In order to mitigate the rapidly increased number of abortions, some restrictions were introduced in 1926: no abortion was allowed for the first pregnancy and for those who underwent the operation within the six preceding months. Abortion became an operation for payment for virtually all procedures from 1930. As Gross Solomon (1992) notes, possibly due to historically high fertility rate, “the demographic (as indeed the moral) consequence of legalizing abortion remained a minor theme until the early 1930s” (p. 60). Quite the opposite as no contradiction was seen between the legality of abortion and a general commitment of the state to pro-natalist policies.

In the Labor Code⁸ of 1922, delivery and maternity leave of eight weeks before and after the birth of a child, introduced by the 1917 decrees, were reconfirmed. Additionally, there was a possibility of maternal leave for breast-feeding mothers as well as for mothers of children below the age of 8 in case of the unavailability of childcare. Additionally, pregnant women were given the right to decline business trips and job-related relocations from the 5th month of pregnancy; they should have also been allocated to less difficult/heavy work on the same salary as the past six months. Quotas protecting women against firing in the process of rationalization were established, in particular for pregnant women and single mothers with children below the age of one.

The Labor Code of 1922 elaborated a number of restrictions on the working conditions of women. Women (as well as adolescent men below age of 18) were prohibited from employment during night shifts. Exceptions were allowed only in those industries where there was an urgent production necessity, but pregnant or breast-feeding mothers remained excluded from jobs potentially harmful to health, and from occupations performed in underground conditions. Article XIII of the Code proclaimed that women (and men under 18) were banned from especially hard jobs and those potentially hazardous for health. The People’s Commissariat for Labor (VTsIK) was tasked with overseeing the list of banned occupations.

⁸ *Kodeks zakonov o trude RSFSR*, Code of Laws approved by VTsIK on 30.10.1922.

The Code of Laws ‘On marriage, family life, and foster care rights and obligations’⁹ of 1926 further weakened the value of marriage. Its definition of marriage included cohabitation, joint housekeeping and upbringing of children (Art. 12). The Code of Laws equalized the rights of those in registered and *de facto* (a testimony could confirm that a man and a woman cohabited) marriages. The registration of marriage remained, however, the main proof of the fact of the marriage; the rights and obligations of the spouses, especially those related to property and child raising were recognized only in case of a proven marriage. This inconsistency in the Code on the definition and consequence of marriage is noted by some researchers (e.g. Dementieva, 2009). The Code also reintroduced the mutual (joint) ownership of possessions of a couple, abolished in 1918, while keeping the individual rights for the private property acquired before marriage (Art. 10). Marriage age for women was raised up to 18 and hence equated to that of men. Divorces were now confirmed by the Registry of Civil Deeds (ZAGS), reducing the role of courts. A divorce could be declared without the mutual consent of both spouses, and even with one or both spouses absent during the proceedings, in its turn initiated by a note of divorce sent to the court by one of the spouses (the so-called system of a postcard divorce).

Zdravomyslova and Temkina (2004) argue that in the 1920s the model/image of new Soviet people was under construction. The New Soviet woman was seen as a citizen whose responsibility was to produce (economic goods and services) and reproduce (population); children were supposed to become first and above all a part of the Soviet family of people. New Soviet man was seen as a citizen whose responsibility was the martial (defense of the Soviet country) and labor mobilization (working for the Soviet country).

The institution of motherhood began its transformation into the “mother-state” combo (women were expected to use public childcare facilities provided by state or workplace from the moment of return to work), while fatherhood was represented via economic/financial support of a family. The tradition of non-participation of fathers in child rearing was repeatedly enhanced by state policies (e.g. Rotkirch, 2000; Ashwin and Lytkina, 2004; Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2004).

2.2 The 1930s – mid-1950s: development of the ‘Soviet family’ concept

Implementation of the First Five-Year Plan began in 1929. The Plan aimed at both producing rapid industrialization, with an emphasis on heavy industry, as well as the transformation of individual farms into state collective farms. Collective farms, as supposedly more efficient agriculture organizations, would create a surplus labor force in rural areas that was intended to be used in urban areas for industrial work. Extensive internal migration took place: peasants

⁹ *Kodeks zakonov ob aktakh grazhdanskogo sostoianiia, brachnom, semeinom i opekunskom prave*, Code of Laws approved by VTsIK on 19.11.1926.

moving to cities, workers moving to big construction projects. The latter especially often lived in a nomadic manner, leaving families behind them. In the literature, authors often emphasize the continuation of the purposeful (through socio-economic policies) weakening of family ties (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2004; Dementieva, 2009).

As a solution to the housing problem, *kommunalka* (communal flats) became widespread, with several families residing in the same flat and sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities. Researchers note that the experience of living in *kommunalka* was comparable to living with an extended family where women bore the traditional roles. Additionally, the deficit of consumption goods in the pre-war, war, and post-war periods promoted the traditional division of functions among genders: women sewed, cooked, and performed other traditional female functions (Denisova, 2010).

At the same time, women represented “a ‘reserve’ army to be drafted into the economy to sustain rapid economic growth” (Sakwa, 1998, p. 196). During the forced industrialization, the norms banning some occupations and working conditions as harmful for women’s reproductive health were relaxed; those working in potentially harsh and harmful conditions would be compensated for by additional days of vacations and other benefits. A movement of women learning typically men’s professions (tractor driver, airplane pilot) arose. In the 1930s, the concept of the ‘Soviet super-woman’ was elaborated, solidifying the ‘normality’ of the double burden for women. By the end of the first 5-year plan period in 1934 it was officially declared that the “woman question” – in its political part – was solved.

In the 1930s, the state turned to the valorization of the institute of registered marriage and of the role of women as mothers of big families. The pro-choice practice established after the introduction of abortion legalization was ended with the Abortion Ban¹⁰ of 1936. Abortion was legally allowed only in hospitals, and only in case of a danger to a mother’s health and life. In other cases abortion became both illegal and anti-patriotic. Mass media supported the law before and during the implementation. The creation of large families was encouraged; subsequently, a range of measures was introduced including new benefits for large families and single mothers and increased punishment for non-payment of alimony (child support), as well as some restrictions on the divorce procedure. Vishnevsky et al (2006) argued that the abortion ban was supposed to make a shift in people’s value orientation, displacing the focus from private interests to those of the country. Young constructors of communism, with a new collective mentality, were needed.

¹⁰ *O zapreshchenii abortov, uvelichenii material’noi pomoshchi pozhenitsam, ustanovlenii gosudarstvennoi pomoshchi mnogosemeinyim, rasshirenii seti rodil’nykh domov, detskikh iaslei i detskikh sadov, usilenii ugolovnoho nakazaniia za neplatezh alimentov i o nekotorykh izmeneniakh v zakonodatel’stve o razvodakh*, Resolution adopted by VTsIK and Sovnarkom on 27.06.1936.

In connection to the Abortion Ban, a criminal responsibility charge (1000 Rubles of fine or 6 month of corrective labor) was introduced in October 1936 for employers: criminal responsibility for decreasing the wages of expectant mothers (those with a work record of at least one year with a pause of employment of no longer than a month), and for refusal to hire a pregnant woman (if the rejection was based on the pregnancy).

The new edition of the Constitution in December 1936, besides guaranteeing equal rights for men and women in all spheres of life, also emphasized the protection of mothers and children's welfare through maternity leave and state allowances, especially to large families (Art. 122). Additionally, it highlighted an intention to expand the number of daycare centers for children of all ages, and to provide better medical provision for expectant mothers and infants. Though, as researchers note, the promises and reality did not always meet, especially in the rural areas (Denisova, 2010).

Among measures supporting the reestablishment of the image of the normality of a large family, one may note the Tax for childlessness¹¹ (*nalog na bezdetnost'*), introduced in November 1941. The 6 percent tax was applied to incomes of men aged 25– 50, and of married women aged 20 – 45, if their earnings were higher than 70 Rubles per month (the amount of minimum wage)¹². Tax exemption was given to parents whose children died during the – at that time ongoing – War, to war heroes, and the medically incapable.

The image of women as mothers (of large families) and as the primary caregiver was further promoted by the establishment of the honorary title of “Mother Heroine”¹³ (*Mat'-geroinia*) in 1944. New medals were introduced: the Motherhood medal (I degree: for 6 children; II degree: for 5 children); and the Order of Maternal Glory (I class: for 9 children; II class: for 8 children; III class: for 7 children). The honorary title of “Mother Heroine” (Order “Mother Heroine” and a certificate conferred by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union) was awarded to mothers who gave birth and raised 10 or more children. The award was made upon the fifth birthday of the last child provided that the other children (both natural or adopted) remained alive with the exception of those lost in the war. Mother Heroines were entitled to a number of privileges such as a retirement pension, the payment of public utility charges, and the supply of food and other goods.

¹¹ *O naloge na kholostiakov, odinokikh i maloseimeinykh grazhdan SSSR*, Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 21.11.1941 and amendments from 08.07.1944. The tax existed until 01.01.1992.

¹² According to the Resolution of the government of the USSR from 29.09.1967, minimum wage of 60 Rubles was fixed starting from 01.01.1968. At the 24th Communist party congress in 1971, the minimum wage was increased to 70 Rub per month (regardless of economic branch and the geographical location). After 01.07.1990, the income exemption was increased to 150 rubles and since 01.01.1991, married women without children were no longer taxed.

¹³ *Ob uvelichenii gosudarstvennoi pomoshchi beremennym zhanshchinam, mnogodetnym i odinokim materiam, usilenii okhrany materinstva i detstva, ob ustanovlenii pochetnogo zvaniia 'Mat'-geroinia' i uchrezhdenii ordena 'Materinskaia slava' i medali 'Medal' materinstva'*, Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 08.07.1944.

The length of the temporary disability leave for child delivery and care, which was reduced at the end of June of 1941 to 35 days before delivery and 28 days after, was increased up to 35 plus 42 (and 56 in case of complications or multiple birth) days scheme in 1944; while the total duration still remained shorter than in pre-war period.

Unlike in the previous regulations, the new state lump sum benefit at birth was to be given to mothers (with a husband or widowed) on the birth of their third child rather than seventh as before¹⁴. The monthly allowances were paid from the child's 2nd year until the age of 5. Unwed mothers received the right for monthly assistance amounting to 100 Rubles for one child, 150 Rubles for two children and 200 Rubles for three and more children.

The 1944 Decree confirmed the plans to extend the network of childcare institutions, consulting centers and milk kitchens, as well as the organization of evening groups in the kinder-gardens and crèche groups for breast-feeding children, crèches, kindergartens, rooms for breast-feeding, and women's personal hygiene rooms were required at factories and offices employing women.

The eligibility rules for the tax on bachelors, single and childless citizens of the USSR were also modified. Previously, the 6 percent tax was paid by men (between the age of 20–50 years) and married women (20–45 years) without children; this was extended so that citizens possessing one or two children also became taxable at 1 and 0.5 percent respectively. Tax contributions from farmers were supposed to be paid in the form of a lump sum assessed depending on their contribution to agricultural taxes. Exemption from taxation was allowed for the following categories of citizens: service men, serving officers of army units and military institutions and their wives; women receiving assistance or a pension from the state for the support of children; citizens whose children had perished or disappeared on the fronts of the Patriotic War; students of secondary or higher educational institutions under 25 years of age; invalids of the 1st and 2nd grades of disability.

The 1944 Decree also introduced, for the first time since 1918, a range of measures to strengthen the institution of the (registered) family. Only officially registered marriages were accepted as being legitimate; registration of *de facto* marriages with a note on the length of the latter was allowed. On the moment of registration, a compulsory entry was made in the internal passports of both spouses containing the details of their respective spouse. Additionally, the law abolished the right of a mother to appeal to the court with a demand for the establishment of paternity and obtaining alimony for the support of a child, when the mother was not cohabiting in a registered marriage. As Zakharov (2008) noted, this measure could be considered as the restoration of “illegitimate child” status, which was abolished soon after the revolution.

¹⁴ The lump sum and monthly allowances were: 400 Rubles at the birth of the 3rd child; 1300 Rubles at birth of the 4th child and 80 Rub monthly; 1700 and 120 Rubles, respectively, for the 5th child; 2000 and 140, respectively, for the 6th child; 2500 and 200, respectively, for the 7th and 8th child; 3500 and 250, respectively, for the 9th and 10th child; 5000 and 300, respectively, for the 11th and for further children.

The procedure of divorce returned to the public courts. The divorce application again required the motives for the dissolution rather than just the spouses' details. A 10 Rubles fee was paid upon presentation of the notice, and 100 to 200 Rubles after the verdict on the dissolution of the marriage (an amount that constituted roughly 8 to 16 percent of the wage of an engineer¹⁵ in 1944). Wife and husband, as well as witnesses could be summoned for court examination and the court had an obligation to attempt a reconciliation between the spouses. The decision of the court was then published in a local newspaper at expense of the spouse who initiated the divorce.

The post war 1947 Decree 'On the amount of state allowance to mothers of large families and to single mothers'¹⁶ stated that previously established benefits, introduced to mitigate the harsh war conditions, had become unfairly large and an excessive burden on the country's budget. This was despite a growing economy and the improving purchasing power of Ruble. The Decree halved the amounts of benefits and allowances from the 1944 Decree¹⁷.

The levels of monthly allowances were comparable to the monthly fees for a child's attendance at kinder-gardens and crèches¹⁸. The Decree of the Soviet of Ministers No. 3000 established a flat rate fee, varying according to the type of childcare institution and urbanization. A child received 60 Rubles in urban areas and 50 Rubles in rural areas for kinder-garden fees, and 45 and 30 Rubles as crèche fees, respectively. The Decree also obliged the relevant Ministries to develop a new pay scale related to salaries of parents. In addition, a special instruction¹⁹ was issued that in case of a place allocated to a child in a childcare facility was not being used for reasons other than the illness of the child, quarantine, and the vacation leave of parents, the parents were supposed to refund the fee in its entirety.

¹⁵ In 1945, the fees were adjusted to 100 Rubles at the time of application, and 500 to 1000 Rubles after the dissolution of the marriage. In order to make comparisons to post-war amounts of fees and allowances, take note of the money reform of 1947 when cash was exchanged at the rate of 10:1.

¹⁶ *O razmere gosudarstvennogo posobiia mnogodetnym i odinokim materiam*, Decree of the General Committee of the Supreme Council of USSR from 25.11.1947.

¹⁷ The new amounts became, respectively: 3rd child – 200 Rubles at birth and 0 Rubles monthly; 4th child – 650 and 40; 5th child – 850 and 60; 6th child – 1000 and 70; 7th and 8th child – 1250 and 100; 9th and 10th child – 1750 and 125; starting from the 11th child – 2500 and 150. The allowances for single mothers were adjusted accordingly, becoming 50 Rubles per month for one child; 75 for two children, and 100 Rubles for 3 and more children.

¹⁸ *O razmere platy roditeli za sodержanie detei v detskikh sadakh i detskikh iasliakh*, Decree of the Soviet of Ministers N 3000 from 09.08.1948.

¹⁹ Instruction developed by the Ministry of Finance of the USSR, by the Ministry of Health of the USSR, and by VTsSPS, and adopted by Resolution N 3290 of Sovmin on the 31.08.1948.

2.3 Mid-1950s – the mid-1960s: Khrushchev Thaw

At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party the cult of Stalin was abolished and a new intensive period of building Communism was proclaimed. Simultaneously, the welfare of citizens received some attention, and a massive house building program allowed the return of the private sphere. A number of measures towards the liberalization of family-related legislation were introduced.

One of the most important steps was the decriminalization of abortion²⁰ (if undertaken during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy) from 1 November 1955. Fertility, and abortion in particular, again became a woman's personal decision. However, the lack of sexual education and the general unavailability of contraception contributed to the re-establishment of the culture of abortion as one of the most used instruments of family planning (by the 1960s, abortion was the easiest/most accessible method of contraception, according to Perlman and McKee, 2009).

In February 1955, the length of temporary disability leave for birth and childcare returned to 56 days before delivery and 56 (to 70) days after delivery, the standard of 1917. The period of the leave was covered by a temporary disability benefit amounting to 2/3 of salary and the eligibility criteria were extended while the requirement of having had three uninterrupted months of employment at the current employer was abolished. In the case of poorer families, where the salary during the two months preceding delivery did not exceed 50 Rubles, a lump-sum benefit of 12 Rubles for newborn care goods and 18 Rubles for feeding the newborn were paid to a spouse whose employment record was longer than three months at his/her current employer. However, some work-family reconciliation measures were reduced, such as paid leave for taking care of a sick child which was cut to 3 days only²¹.

In the mid-1960s, further improvements to social protection for the most vulnerable families took place. Among the new measures was a monthly allowance of 35 Rubles per child for a family with men in obligatory military service²² (for the whole duration of service). The length of childcare leave due to delivery and childcare of agricultural workers was equalized to that of the other workers, regardless of the length of their employment record²³ from 1 January 1965.

²⁰ *Ob otmene zapreshcheniia abortov*, Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 23.11.1955 and detailed regulation of the issue by the instruction of the Ministry of Health of USSR (*O poriadke provedeniia operatsii iskusstvennogo prepyvaniia beremennosti (aborta)*) from 29.11.1956.

²¹ *Polozhenie o poriadke naznachenii i vyplaty posobii po gosudarstvennomu sotsial'nomu strakhovaniiu*, statute adopted by Presidium of All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) on 05.02.1955, and *Ob uvelichenii prodolzhitel'nosti otpuska po beremennosti i rodam*, Decree of Presidium of Supreme Soviet from 26.03.1956.

²² *O vyplate posobii na detei voennosluzhashchikh srochnoi sluzhby*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR N 1108 from 25.10.1963.

²³ *O pensiiakh i posobiiakh chlenam kolokhozov*, Law N 2688-VI from 15.07.1964.

In addition, families with disabled (I and II degree of disability) children, who had reached the age of 16, were recognized as a separate group eligible for benefits²⁴.

In the literature, the end of the 1950s and the 1960s is sometimes seen as a period when there was a crisis of masculinity, of poor men's health and a discussion on how to improve it, possibly making wives responsible for their husbands' health (e.g. Avdeeva, 2010). In the official discourse, the crisis of gender roles is seen through the prism of the demographic crisis. In the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union was among the first countries where total fertility rate decreased below replacement fertility (Vishnevsky, 2009).

The new Code of Laws on marriage and family life came into the force on 1 November 1969. It declared the necessity of further reinforcing the equal position of the spouses within the family, and to pursue the creation of a communist family free from material concerns. Some of the acts of the Stalinist period were canceled. Among others, the application for dissolution of marriage could again be proceeded either through ZAGSes or the courts. Some measures to defend the socially more vulnerable spouse after the divorce were re-introduced.

2.4 The 1970s: completion of the system of benefits to families

At the beginning of the 1970s, the necessity of developing a consistent demographic policy appeared in discussions. Demographic policy was ambitiously referred to as a 'system of measures directly aimed at shaping the conscious demographic behavior of members of society in a way that suits society' (Smith, 1983, p. 1). However, demographic and family policies were not among the main targets of the social policy in the period. Existing policies suffered from the absence of regional differentiation according to regional birth rates and the socio-ethnic composition of the population (Novikova et al., 1978).

During the 1970s, a debate on the working conditions of women (and especially pregnant women) contemporaneously with promotion of the ideology of motherhood as a natural predestination of women came back to the fore. By the end of the decade "saving the family", strengthening the institution of marriage, became a priority. As the number of marriages started to fall, the extent of divorces and births out of wedlock attracted particular attention.

The tradition of a low contraception culture persisted. Through the 1970s, the Ministry of Health took a conservative position regarding oral contraception and disseminated the idea that contraception pills were unsuitable for 80-90 percent of women due to their direct and indirect health effects. The opinion that abortion was less harmful to women's health than oral

²⁴ *O meropriiatiakh po dal'neishemu povysheniiu blagosostoianiiia sovetskogo naroda*, Resolution of Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet of Ministers of USSR from 26.09.1967.

contraception was promulgated. Some authors consider this an indication of the fears of the state for its decreasing control over fertility and the fall in the number of births if contraception was more available²⁵.

In 1973, eligibility for pregnancy and maternity benefits (already 100 percent of salary) was extended to all women regardless of their employment record and membership status in the trade unions²⁶. In addition, agriculture workers also became eligible for the same allowance as industrial workers. The length of a paid temporary disability leave due to the necessity of taking care of a sick child was increased from three to seven days.

Among the legislation adopted during the 1970s, the further introduction of subsidies for poor families should be mentioned²⁷. A family was considered poor if per capita family income was below 50 Rubles (or 75 Rubles in the Extreme North and Far East regions). In 1974, about 5% of population was considered poor according to this criteria. A subsidy of 12 Rubles²⁸ per month per child below the age of 8 was introduced from 1 November 1974. However, families with two working spouses (the average wage of worker was about 190 rubles per month) were generally ineligible for child allowances even if raising 4–5 children (Litvinova, 1989). Litvinova noted that allowances to large families were often seen as a tool of fertility stimulation, while their role was primarily social and not demographic.

As for the working conditions of women, a new edition of the list of prohibited jobs was issued in 1978.²⁹ The Labor Code banned women from occupations that implied the lifting and moving of heavy items, night shifts, and other potentially harmful (for reproductive functions) conditions. Requirements for productivity (the norms of production) for pregnant women and mothers with children under age of 1½ years were lowered or these women were required to be transferred to a job with lighter physical duties but with the same average salary until their child reached the age of 18 months. As before, breaks of at least 30 minutes for lactation were mandatory at least once every three hours and were counted as working time. If legal prescription were violated³⁰, compensation in the form of additional payments/days of vacations was to be provided. Working

²⁵ I. Kon. "Abortion or contraception?", *Demoscope*, N 123-124, 2003 at URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0123/analit02.php2> Accessed on: 14.10.2015.

²⁶ *Ob uluchshenii obespecheniia posobiiami po beremennosti i rodam i po ukhodu za bol'nyim rebenkom*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR N 530 from 26.07.1973.

²⁷ *O vvedenii posobii na detei maloobespechennym semiam*, Decree of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 25.09.1974.

²⁸ When comparing with the amounts cited in previous sections, make note of the monetary reform of 1961 which prescribed exchange of 10 "old" Rubles for 1 "new" Ruble.

²⁹ A list of production processes, professions and work with harmful and/or heavy working conditions, where the employment of women was prohibited in 1978 can be, for example, found at URL: <http://www.a-z.ru/women/texts/proftsrtd.htm> Accessed on: 14.10.2015.

³⁰ It is widely noted in the literature, that these norms were not always followed in practice. e.g. Marsh, 1996.

mothers received the right to request flexible working schedules in the form of a partial week and/or partial working day.

The XXVII Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in 1972 designated 1975 as International Women's Year and called for the end of discrimination against women in all spheres of activities all over the world. Following the UN challenge, the leadership of the USSR stated a need for more effective population policies at the 25th (1976) and 26th (1981) Party Congresses. Brezhnev called, in his speech to the 26th Party Congress, for the creation of favorable conditions for women in their (triple) role of workers, mothers and housekeepers. In this triad, the professional sphere became the sphere of creativity and self-realization of women (Novikova et al., 1978; Smith, 1983). As for fertility, the paid period of maternity leave was extended up to one year during the 1976–1980 Five Year Plan, putting the last cornerstone into the system of allowances and benefits to families with children summarized in the Constitution of 1977 (Korsanenkov, 2010).

2.5 1981 – 1983: fertility stimulation

The response to the calls of the Party leadership came in 1981–1983. A new set of measures for family, and especially large family, support, and for the creation of better conditions for population growth and youth education was adopted. The improvement of the working conditions of mothers, and development of a rational combination of state and family-based system for the upbringing and education of children was the basis of new legislation³¹. Measures introduced aimed at compensating for quality of life/welfare gaps between families with different numbers of children and the creation of favorable living conditions for young families. A lump sum benefit at birth was established at 50 Rubles for working women and women in out-of-service training on the birth of their first child, and 100 Rubles at birth of the second and further children (Art. 4). For non-working mothers, the amount of the state lump-sum benefit was fixed at 30 Rubles regardless; the benefit also was paid when the father of the child was in work or studies. For working mothers with an employment record above one year, and for women in out-of-service training, a one-year partially paid childcare leave was introduced. The payment was equal to 50 Rubles per month in the Extreme North and Far East regions and to 35 Rubles per month in other areas. The unpaid period of childcare leave became extendable up to 18 months while still being counted as a part of the employment record (for the purpose of pension and other benefits calculations). The same resolution introduced several

³¹ For example, see Amendments from 02.09.1981 and 26.01.1983 (N 8723-X) to the Decree from 1947; *O merakh po usileniiu gosudarstvennoi pomoshchi semiam, imeiushchim detei*, Decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR N 235 from 22.01.1981.

additional benefits for working mothers with two or more children under the age of 12 (Art. 3): an additional 3-days of paid leave with a up to a total of 28 calendar days; the priority right to take the vacations days during the summer or other requested time-periods; and an additional unpaid childcare leave up to two weeks (with 50 percent of salary paid starting from the 12th Five Year plan period, 1986). In addition, from 1981 all students of the higher, secondary and vocational training institutions, who had children and demonstrated a good academic record, were paid a scholarship (Art. 4).

Resolution No. 235 also contained a suggestion to introduce in the near future an exemption from the “Tax on bachelors, single and childless citizens of the USSR” for newly married couples for the first year of marriage.

In order to improve the living conditions of single mothers, an allowance of 20 Rubles was introduced from 1 December 1981 to mothers with children younger than 16, or 18, when they were studying without a scholarship, (Art. 4, Resolution 235) and an allowance to unmarried mothers with children whose fathers evaded alimony payment was established³². In 1986, eligibility for unmarried single mother benefits, introduced in 1981, was extended to widows with children that were not receiving a pension for the loss of a breadwinner.

Apart from money allowances, the length of childcare leave was also increased to 56 days before birth (with a proposal to extend this to 70 days starting from the 12th Five Year plan period in 1986) and 56 days after delivery or 70 days in case of two or more children. The plans for a further increase of the length of the leave coincided with the announcement of further plans for extensive construction of childcare institutions.

From 1 January 1984, poor families (with a monthly per capita income below 50 Rubles, or 75 Rubles in the Far East and Extreme North regions) became entitled to a monthly allowance of 12 Rubles per child aged below 8. The benefits and allowances for large families established by Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers from in 1947 remained in force³³.

Beginning in 1981, the privilege of a lower pension age for mothers, raising five or more children or a child born with disability, was introduced. The pension could be assigned in the case of an employment record of at least 5 years and of three uninterrupted years of work at the moment of application for the pension.

³² *O vvedenii vremennykh posobii na nesovershennoletnikh detei v sluchaiakh nevozmozhnosti vzyskaniia alimentov s ikh roditel'ei*, Resoultion of the Soviet of Ministers N 134 from 06.02.1984.

³³ Namely, regardless of the working status of mother, a lump-sum benefit at birth and monthly allowance were paid: for the 4th child – 65 Rubles at birth and 4 Rubles monthly, for the 5th child – 85 and 6, for the 6th child – 100 and 7, for the 7th and 8th child – 125 and 10, for the 9th and 10th child – 176 and 12,50, for the 11th and further children – 250 and 15 Rubles, respectively.

In order to solve one of the most acute problems, housing, young families (first marriage with both spouses under the age of 30) were entitled to the priority allocation to a room, or a one-room apartment when a child was born within 3 years from the moment of marriage (Resolution 235). Additionally, from 1982, enterprises and collective farms were allowed to lend interest-free loans for improving the living conditions of young families – with an employment record of at least two years at the enterprise – of up to 1500 Rubles for a period of 8 years. In case of a second child being born during the term of the loan, the family would receive a 200 Rubles deduction, and at the birth of the third child a 300 Rubles deduction³⁴.

Resolution No. 235 from 22 January 1981 also promoted the necessity of youth education in the spheres of sexual upbringing and family life. A sense of responsibility (towards family and society) and respectful behavior towards women and elderly needed to be propagated. Hence, the school program was supplemented by two obligatory courses. ‘Hygiene and sexual education’ (*Gigienicheskoe i polovoe vospitanie*) was introduced in 1983 for pupils in their 8th year of school and in 1985 ‘Ethics and psychology of family life’ (*Etika i psihologii semeinoi zhizni*) was taught during the two last years of school, the 9th and 10th grades.

Several initiatives were undertaken in the sphere of contraception and safeguarding reproductive health. From 1 January 1985, women undergoing abortion were entitled to three days disability leave and a temporary disability benefit for these three days³⁵. In cases of spontaneous abortion, abortion due to medical reasons, and cases when women received a salary below the minimum wage level, the allowance was paid for the whole period of the temporary disability. In cases when temporary disability due to abortion lasted more than 10 days, a temporary disability benefit was paid starting from the 11th day of temporary disability.

In 1987, the Ministry of Health issued a development plan for the Healthcare system for following ten years; the plan included a paragraph on the necessity of combatting abortion and the introduction of modern measures of contraception. This was a 180-degree turn with respect to the previous position of the state on contraception and abortion³⁶.

³⁴ *O srokakh vvedeniia besptotsentnoi ssudy na uluchshenie zhilishchnykh uslovii pri obzavedenii domashnim khoziaistvom molodym sem'am, imeiushchim detei*, Resolution N 156 of the Soviet of Ministers of USSR from 25.02.1982.

³⁵ *O posobiakh po gosudarstvennomu social'nomu strakhovaniuu*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR N 191 from 23.02.1984.

³⁶ I. Kon. “Abortion or contraception?”, Demoscope, N 123-124, 2003. URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0123/analit02.php2>

2.6 Second half of the 1980s: further benefits for working mothers

The introduction of the new demographic policy in 1981-1983 coincided with the entry of the large cohort born at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s into the most fertile age range of 20–24. Concern with the number of women in fertile age became one of the trends of the second half of the 1980s; the previously introduced fertility measures were extended and further developed in the framework of a socially oriented economy. The development of regionally specific programs³⁷ for birth stimulation was announced as a priority in 1987.

One of the trends of the period is a further enhancement of the system of support measures to the most vulnerable families, namely poor and large ones. Since 1985, the age of children receiving monthly money allowances for poor families was increased from 8 to 12. From 1 January 1986, monthly allowances for children of military servicemen were augmented up to 35 Rubles³⁸. Additionally, paid (50 percent of salary) temporary leave for taking care of a sick child under the age of 14 was lengthened to 14 days. In cases when leave needed to exceed 14 days, the mother would receive a certificate of temporary exemption from work³⁹.

A further extension of benefits available to working pregnant women and women with children⁴⁰ came into the force in 1987: the administration of enterprises could not deny a request from pregnant women or women with children under the age of 8 to follow a part-time schedule (lower hours, or number of working days). Also young mothers with children under the age of one were now allowed to work part-time or work distantly at home, while retaining their childcare allowance.

In 1987, large families and poor families received the right of access to consumer durable goods in shortage, as well as to the right to a stable food supply for children in their second year of life. School age children from poor families with a single household head bringing up three or more children below age of 16 were entitled to the right to receive school/sports/pioneer uniforms, and breakfasts at school without pay⁴¹.

³⁷ *Ob usilenii raboty po realizatsii aktivnoi sotsial'noi politiki i povyshenii roli gosudarstvennogo komiteta SSSR po trudu i sotsial'nyim voprosam*, Resolution of VTsSPS N 825 from 17.07.1987.

³⁸ *O pervoocherednykh merakh po uluchsheniiu material'nogo blagosostoianiia maloobespechennykh pensionerov i semei, usileniiu zaboty ob odinokikh prestarelykh grazhdanakh*, Resolution N 436 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, of Soviet of Ministers and VTsSPS from 14.05.1985.

³⁹ See also: *Ob uvelichenii prodolzhitel'nosti oplachivaemogo perioda po ukhodu za bol'nym rebenkom*, Resolution N 1177 of the Soviet of Ministers and VTsSPS from 20.10.1987.

⁴⁰ *O rasshirenii l'got rabotaiushchim beremennym zhenshchinam, imeiushchim maloletnikh detei*, Decree of Presidium of Supreme Soviet of USSR N 7639-XI from 02.09.1987.

⁴¹ *O dopolnitel'nykh merakh pomoshchi maloobespechennym semiam, imeiushchim trekh i bolee detei, vospityvaemykh odnim iz roditelei*, Resolution of Soviet of Ministers and VTsSPS N 1137 from 25.09.1986.

As proposed in 1981, the exemption from the childlessness tax was extended on the first year after marriage⁴² beginning from 1 February 1987.

While the health of the population indirectly improved as a consequence of the alcoholic beverages ban of 1985–1987, still no significant initiatives were undertaken to improve the reproductive health. Possibilities for family planning were virtually nonexistent due to the lack of information, specialized medical services, and modern contraception methods; abortion remained the main mean of contraception⁴³.

In contemporary analytic publications (e.g. Litvinova, 1989), moderate criticism of the family and fertility policy measures appeared. Regional differences were emphasized for not yet being adequately incorporated into the policies thus causing regional imbalances (while in RSFSR the number of desired children was under 2, in the Republics of Central Asia it was around 7 – a fertility level close to the reproductive limit). In addition, the author criticized the persistent lack of housing for young families, inactive family planning propaganda and the scarce availability of contraception measures other than abortion. The suggestion was to correct the legal and social mechanisms of fertility stimulation in a way to get 2–3 children from each physically and morally healthy family, and not a maximum of children from a maximum of families. The author (Litvinova) proposed the introduction of a child allowance of a significant amount already for the first child and the possibility for child care leave to be taken not only by mothers but also for fathers and grandmothers.

2.7 1989–1991: regional specifics in fertility stimulation

Regional specifics in fertility stimulation measures finally appeared in legislative documents from 1989–1990 Regional (republic) governments were allocated more freedom in the establishment of allowances and privileges and more differentiated regional coefficients for the centralized state allowances were introduced. A number of resolutions⁴⁴ further promoted the advancement of maternal and children's health and the social protection of families with children. Emphasis was placed on the specificity of the period, namely transition to a regulated market economy by 2000. However, the measures developed were not fully implemented due to the political changes the country underwent at the end of the decade.

⁴² *O dopolnitel'nykh l'gotakh po nalogu na kholostiakov, odinokikh i malosemeynykh grazhdan SSSR*, Decree of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of USSR from 13.01.1987.

⁴³ I. Kon. "Abortion or contraception?", *Demoscope*, N 123–124, 2003. URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0123/analit02.php2>

⁴⁴ *O neotlozhnykh merah po ulutsheniju polozenija zhenshin, ohrane materinstva i detstva*, Resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR N 1420-1 from 10.04.1990, esp. Art. 7; *O dopolnitel'nykh merah po obespetsheniju social'noj zashishennosti semej s detjmi v svyazi s perehodom k rynotshnoy ekonomike*, Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR N 759 from 02.08.1990; see also Art. 71 of Labour Code from 22.05.1990; Art. 165, 166, 167 of the Labor Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

Resolution 1420-1 further increased the ante-partum leave (70 days starting from 1 December 1990) and postpartum leave (56 days; 70 days in case of complications or multiple births). The leave was granted to women in its entirety regardless of the number of days used by women for ante-partum leave. Childcare leave was also extended from 1989 with a paid period of up to 1½ years and unpaid period of up to 3 years, with the right to restart working at the same position in the enterprise. In a revolutionary manner, the childcare leave became the parental leave, meaning not only mothers but fathers and other close relatives became eligible (Resolution No. 1420-1, Art. 7). Unlike in the previous periods, when flat rate benefits were widespread, the new allowance calculation became linked to the level of the minimum wage and hence indexed for inflation (for example, childcare benefit up to the age of 1½ years of the child became equal to one minimum wage up); regional coefficients could also be applied. In the case of the birth of two or more children the allowance was paid for each child. Another novelty introduced allowed parents without an employment record as well as those who had less than one year of employment to be eligible for the allowance at 50 percent of the minimum wage. The law extended the right of working mothers to request flexible (part-time day/week) working schedules until the child reached the age of 14.

For the social (and pension) protection of mothers, the law regarded their employment record as being uninterrupted for the means of calculating allowances when caring for a child up to the age of 14 (or 16 in case of child with disabilities) in cases when the women returned to the workforce at child's mentioned age (Art. 8).

Resolution No. 759 abolished the allowance paid to large families from the birth of their fourth child until the age of 5 (established in the 1947). The outdated allowance was replaced by a series of allowances and grants. From the 1 December 1990 a grant of 3 times the minimum wage (210 Rubles) paid at childbirth was established. Starting from the age of 1 ½ years, the moment when the paid childcare leave period would be completed, each child under the age of 6 in families with a per-capita family income below two times minimum wage was entitled to a monthly allowance amounting to 50 percent of minimum wage. Regional coefficients applied to adjust the allowances to the living standards of the regions.

Additional measures for the most vulnerable families included an increase of the monthly state allowance to single mothers (until the child reached 16 or until 18 if the child was studying without scholarship). The monthly allowance of 12 rubles per child up to the age of 12 in poor families with per capita monthly family income below 50 Rubles was kept (for families in Extreme North, Far East, and Siberia the threshold was 75 Rubles). Families with a per capita family income lower than 60 Rubles were exempted from the monthly fee for

childcare institutions; families with four children or more received a 50 percent deduction of the fee payments⁴⁵.

Some privileges for the mothers of multiple children were included into the Law on “Pension provision” (Par. 18): mothers of 5 or more children who took care of them until the age of 8, and mothers of disabled children that took care of them until the age of 8, had the right of early retirement at the age of 50 in case of an employment record of 20 years accumulated (including the time of childcare), or in case of the time record of 15 years (with childcare not included). Moreover, time spent for childcare (until the age of 3 of each child; or until 6 year in total for several children) was included in the employment record, as well as the time caring for a child with disability until the age of 16. Mothers Heroines received the right for a social pension equal in its amount to old-age pension.

New tax deductions were also established⁴⁶: a complete exemption for Mothers Heroines and persons with disabilities (starting from 1 January 1991), a 30 percent reduction in tax for large families with three or more children, and single mothers with two or more children under age of 16.

The main tendency of the legislative documents of 1990–1991 was an orientation towards increasing the length of childcare leave and the absence of efforts to promote the integration of women into market economy (e.g. Posadskaya, 1992). This strategy contributed to lowering women’s unemployment figures but also likely deepened inequality between the two sexes. Women’s competitiveness in the labor market decreased; women, in particular those with children, were becoming increasingly expensive in the labor force due to their right to a partial working day, flexible working hours, taking additional days of absence for family reasons, and additional days of holydays. In reality, a mechanism to implement protectionist schemes was widely missing. Apart from the relative competitiveness drop, women remained banned from some jobs through the list of prohibited occupations inherited from the Soviet times. The existence of the list itself was in violation of the Constitution of the Russian Federation⁴⁷. Some inconsistencies persisted: women, while virtually barred from the oil-drilling industry (which was characterized by high wages and a number of benefits including shorter working hours, longer holidays, and earlier retirement), but were welcomed into other potentially dangerous occupations such as medicine which was poorly paid and often had bad working conditions.

⁴⁵ *O razmerakh platy roditeli za sodержanie detei v doshkol’nykh uchrezhdeniakh*, Resolution of the Soviet of Ministers of USSR N 47 from 13.01.1990.

⁴⁶ *O podokhodnom naloge s grazhdan SSSR, inostrannykh grazhdan i lits bez grazhdanstva*, law of the USSR N 1443-1 from 23.04.1990.

⁴⁷ See reports from the United Nations’ Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Among the projects that were not realized in full (Resolution 1420-1; see footnote 44) was the further development of the network of childcare institutions of all levels as well as medical ones, and the construction and modernization of the latter (planned for 1991–1992); a system of allowances for relatives providing childcare up to the age of 3; a new system of allowances to families with children with disabilities raising children within their families.

3. 1992 – 2015: Modern Russia

3.1 1992 – 2000: children's welfare takes priority

The Russian Federation inherited the main principles and directions of demographic policy from the Soviet Union, although in 1991–1992 the pro-natalist policy of the Soviet state had in fact ended.

Following Article 7 of the Constitution, the principles of a social state (*sotsial'noe gosudarstvo*) were laid in the background of the new policies. A new concept of state family policy was developed⁴⁸ based on the following principles: that the family is autonomous in its decision making; the child's interests, regardless of age and sex, must be pursued; all family types have equal rights in their access to state support; social assistance is differentiated in accordance to family characteristics; men and women are equal in sharing housekeeping responsibilities and in the opportunities of employment; social assistance includes a number of measures covering all the spheres of family vital functions. In line with the new Concept, a number of Decrees and policies targeted welfare of children and mothers.

The Presidential Decree 'On top-priority tasks for the development of the education system of RSFSR'⁴⁹ urged, among all, for the development of a Federal Program 'Children of Russia'. The main goal of the Federal Program became the maintenance of social guaranties for children, their access to education and health care, and respect for children's rights. The Target program "Children of Russia"⁵⁰ ran from 1994 until 2010, changing its focus to the most urgent issues during its duration. It included six sub-programs: (1) Family planning (*Planirovanie sem'i*), (2) Children of the North (*Deti Severa*), (3) Children with disabilities (*Deti-invalidy*), (4) Orphan children (*Deti-siroty*), (5) Children of Chernobyl (*Deti Chernobyliia*), and (6) the Baby food industry (*Industria detskogo pitaniia*). In addition, the program 'Anti-AIDS' (*Anti-SPID*) and some others were implemented to ameliorate population health, morbidity, mortality and problems with health services provision.

The extensive system of childcare allowances and benefits was simplified. Starting from 1 January 1994, a unified monthly allowance for children was introduced⁵¹ this replaced the set

⁴⁸ Government of the Russian Federation developed a "Concept of state family policy" (*Koncepcija gosudarstvennoj semejnoi politiki*) (1991) was accepted on the 12.05.1993 by the National Advisory Board on preparation of the International year of family. Reinforced by the Decree N 712 of the President of the Russian Federation from 14.05.1996 "On the main directions of family policy" (*Ob osnovnykh napravlenijah gosudarstvennoj semejnoi politiki*).

⁴⁹ *O pervoocherednykh merakh po razvitiu obrazovaniia v RSFSR*, Presidential Decree N 322 from 26.12.1991.

⁵⁰ *O prezident'skoi programme 'Deti Rossii'*, Presidential Decree N 1696 from 18.08.1994.

⁵¹ *O sovershenstvovanii sistemy gosudarstvennykh sotsial'nykh posobii i kompensatsionnykh vyplat semiam imeiushchim detei, i povyshenii ikh razmerov*, Presidential executive order N 2122 from 10.12.1993.

of previously in force allowances and benefits, such as a) the monthly allowance for children of the age of 1½ to 6 years; b) the monthly allowance for children of single mothers; c) the monthly allowance for children whose parents evade alimony payments; d) the state allowance for children of military servicemen on compulsory service; e) the state allowance for children under tutelage; f) the allowance for HIV positive children below the age of 16; g) monthly payments for children ineligible for benefits or pensions below age of 16 (in education but not in receipt of a scholarship due to poor academic progress under age of 18; for students of establishments of general educational – until completion of their education); j) monthly compensation for a child's nourishment/food to families with children below age of 3; k) quarterly compensation for the price increase in children-related to families with minor children; l) yearly compensations for clothing; m) allowances for non working mothers with children below 1½ years old. The new unified monthly allowance was paid for each child, whether natural or adopted, depending on family support, from the birth of the child until the age of 16 (or until the completion of the studies). The allowance was paid independent of the eligibility of the child to a pension scheme (social, either pension due to breadwinner loss) or/and to alimony payments. The amount of the allowance was fixed at 70 percent of minimum wage for children under 6 years old and 60 percent for children of 6–16 years old.

In order to improve reproductive health and to promote modern methods of contraception other than abortion, sexual education was incorporated into school teaching plans in the framework of the Federal Target program “Family planning” (a sub-program of the Federal program “Children of Russia”). However, the financing of the “Family planning” Program was suspended in 1998 after extensive criticism from the Russian Duma (*Federal'noe Sobranie*) and Russian Orthodox Church.⁵² The Federal Target Program “Safe motherhood” (*Bezopasnoe materinstvo*)⁵³ promoted new methods of contraception, and general attention to reproductive health among women, though a particular attention was paid to the prevention of abortions.

Larger and poorer families were targeted by a special Federal Program from 1999⁵⁴. The additional benefits varied across regions and included, among others, discounts on day care and public transportation, subsidies for childcare institutions fees, and social scholarships to students.

⁵² See, for example, Nina Krivelska “Planirovanie sem'i” – demografitsheskaja vojna v Rossii (Family planning – a demographic war in Russia), 16.10.1997, *Analiticheskii vestnik* 21, *Federal'noe sobranie – Parlament Rossiiskoi Federatsii Gosudarstvennaia Duma*.

⁵³ *O federal'noi tselevoi programme 'Bezopasnoe materinstvo' na 1995–1998 gody*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 1173 from 14.10.1994, *O federal'nykh tselevykh programmakh po uluchsheniiu polozheniia detei v Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 1988-2000 gody*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 1207 from 19.09.1997.

⁵⁴ *O gosudarstvennoi sotsial'noi pomoshchi*, Federal Law N 178 from 17.07.1999.

3.2 2000: Demographic policy until 2015 – combating the demographic crisis

Regardless of the yearly natural loss of around 400,000 people during 1992–2000, the demographic projections of the second half of the 1990s were still rather optimistic, although even these did not predict a reversal of the decline (e.g. Pirozhkov and Safarova, 2006). However, by the end of the decade mass media and the government began to be concerned about the demographic situation describing it as a “demographic crisis” (Isola, 2008).

In order to handle the situation, a set of legislative documents envisaged the main points and priorities for the further development and national security of Russia. The Concept for the demographic policy of the Russian Federation until 2015⁵⁵ was announced in September 2001. It was intended as the guidelines for the government and local authorities in their efforts to stabilize the population and to create favorable conditions for the population growth. The main focus was on three spheres:

1. Fertility regulation and strengthening family ties, and family support, including:
 - Promotion of the family model with at least two children regarded the societal norm.
 - Improvement of life standards, the quality of family life, and stability of the labor market.
 - Creation of favorable socio-economic conditions for youth education, professional development, and housing.
 - Creation of working conditions allowing the combination of work and family responsibilities for families with children.
 - Development of strategies targeting family placement of orphans.
2. Health and longevity of the population.
3. Migration and population distribution.

The importance of propaganda (mass media) for the success of the Concept’s implementation was stated explicitly. The promotion of a higher social value for children was supposed to convince individuals to reconsider their priorities and diminish the perception of children as obstacles to the achievement of other personal goals. In the framework of the Family Planning Program (2002), television and radio programs on topical issues of family planning were broadcasted.

⁵⁵ Presidential Decree N24 “Concept of national security of the Russian Federation” (*O koncepcii nacional’noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federacii*) from 10.01.2000 and Concept for demographic policy of Russian Federation for the period until 2015 (*Kontseptsiiia demograficheskogo razvitiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2015 goda*) URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/knigi/koncepciya/koncepciya>

At the same time, to encourage an increase in the number of births⁵⁶, in 2003 9 of the 13 reasons that women could use to apply for a legal abortion from the 12th to the 20th week of pregnancy were abolished. Such social reasons as a disabled child in family, unemployment, very low income (lower than life subsistence level in the region), three children in family, inappropriate housing (e.g. no flat of their own, living in a dormitory) were removed from the law. Only the following reasons were retained: disability of the husband (I–II group of disability), death of the husband during pregnancy, pregnancy which followed rape, a court decision on the termination of parental rights, incarcerated pregnant women. In the foreign press the Decree was seen as a sign of an increase in the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church⁵⁷. Perlman and McKee (2009) argued that “national concern about declining fertility has led to policies that may have detrimental effects on family planning. For example, government financial incentives encourage women to have more children, legislation enacted in 2003 reduced the number of indications for legal abortion, and the government has expressed little support for and sometimes actual opposition to family planning programs” (p. 41). At the same time, the high abortion rate in Russia signaled the urgent need to improve the awareness of the population about the modern family planning methods.

As researchers note, in 2004 there was still potential for a further fertility increase, as the actual number of children per woman was lagging behind the ideal number of children that women wanted to have (Maleva and Siniavskaia, 2006). Among the factors frequently cited for this was an unfavorable male to female ratio and poor housing conditions (UNDP, 2008, p 21). It was emphasized that policymakers should not have relied only on financial methods to stimulate fertility.

⁵⁶ *Peretchen'sotsial'nykh pokazanii dlia iskusstvennogo preryvaniia beremennosti*, Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation N 485 from 11.08.2003.

⁵⁷ Low-birth Russia curbs abortions, by Nick Paton Walsh, 27.09.2003 The Guardian. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/sep/24/russia.nickpatonwalsh> Accessed on: 14.10.2015.

3.3 Second half of the 2000s: birth certificate and maternity capital

While in 2004 the number of women of fertile age began to decrease, the official statistical body, the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (*Rosstat*), predicted a continuous growth of the birth rate until 2016⁵⁸. However, in 2006, the total fertility rate per woman was only 1.3, with the highest age-specific fertility for the age ranges 20–24 and 25–29 being 85 and 77 per hundred, respectively. These numbers were nearly twice lower than in 1970: where the rate was 153 and 110, respectively, and total fertility per woman was equal to 2⁵⁹.

It was in 2006 that the public interest was drawn to the problem of depopulation by a number of politicians, such as the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and the Chairman of the Council of the Federation Sergey Mironov, who called for the action to fight the problem. Mironov stated in his February 2006 interview that “Family is the basis of the state” and that for the previous 15 years Russia had had no consistent and efficient demographic policy, and that the demographic situation was not considered a priority by a majority of politicians. Mironov declared that both the relevant Presidential Decree and the Concept of Demographic policy until 2015 (issued in 2001) were no more than a declaration of intentions. According to his opinion, the demographic crisis was developing spontaneously, driven by the unstable economy, aggressive mass culture, and the propaganda of consumerism. Mironov called for the creation of favorable economic and social conditions in order to achieve a fertility increase. In April 2006, President Putin stated in his Address to the Federal Assembly that Russia urgently needed a range of the long-term programs targeting both an increase in the fertility rate and a decrease of mortality, and the creation of attractive conditions for migration⁶⁰. Demographer Sergei Zakharov (2006) wrote that it was the first time in the post-Soviet Russia that the pro-natalist position of government was so clearly stated and that an emphasize was placed on stimulating fertility and not providing support to families.

Contemporaneously, the Russian government made improvement of the health of the population a national priority. The National Priority Project “Health” was launched in January 2006, with a budget equating to more than 400 billion rubles between 2006–2009. This substantial injection of finances into the Russian health system funded the main activities of the project: augmenting the salaries of primary and emergency care physicians; facilitating the purchase of primary care equipment; buttressing vaccination programs; providing free medical examinations; constructing new high-tech centers for tertiary care; and promoting fertility.

⁵⁸ Later, the official forecasts were revised to predict 2011 being the last year of fertility growth.

⁵⁹ Source: World Fertility Patterns 2009, URL: Accessed on: 14.10.2015 <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldfertility2009/world>

⁶⁰ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, 10.05.2006. Text: <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2006/05/105546.shtml>

The birth certificate (*rodovoi sertifikat*) was introduced in the framework of the National Programme “Health” from 1 January 2006⁶¹. The main goal of this financial instrument has been an amelioration of the quality of medical service during prenatal observation, delivery and the first year of life of the newborn. To achieve this goal, a payment for the services was supposed to be transferred to the hospitals and doctors chosen by patients (and not obligatorily linked to their place of residence, as before). An indirect goal was to discourage women from having abortions. The certificate itself initially consisted of two coupons intended to cover, though partially, the expenses of women in health centers for prenatal visits (*zhenskaia konsul'tatsiia*) (2,000 Rubles, or about 65 euros) and in maternity hospital (5,000 Rubles). The nominal value of the certificate was augmented several times (e.g. up to 10,000 Rubles in 2007; up to 11,000 Rubles in 2008) and a third one for use in a pediatric clinics was added in 2011 (1000 Rubles) intended for medical check-ups for babies under 1 year old, in order to combat infant mortality and to improve the health of the newborn.

A second new important scheme, ‘maternity capital’, was introduced on 1 January 2007 by the Federal Law on Additional Measures of State Support for Families with Children⁶². It offered a certificate for a sum of 250,000 Rubles (about 8000 Euros), subject to a correction for inflation every year⁶³, to mothers on the birth of their second and subsequent children. From the time that the child reaches the age of three, the certificate could be disbursed to one of the three following purposes: improvement of housing conditions (partial payment for a mortgage), as a payment for children’s education, or as a pension contribution for the mother. A family is entitled to a maternity capital certificate in the case of the birth (or adoption) of a second child (or third or subsequent child, if the family had not previously used its right to receive these funds) between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2016. It is important to note that a family would be eligible to receive the certificate only once; moreover, in framework of this program no cash allowances were paid to women on birth of their children.

Other measures proposed during this period included:

- A discussion on the reintroduction of the tax for childlessness (abolished in 1992) was begun by Minister of Health Mikhail Zurabov and Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee for Health Protection Nikolai Gerasimenko, although the measure did not find a support from other deputies⁶⁴.

⁶¹ See the official site of the National Program “Health”: <http://www.rost.ru/projects/health/p04/p34/a35.shtml> and Warrant “Birth certificate” No. 701 from 28.11.2005 by Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development of the Russian Federation, and its recent amendments Law No. 20221 from 22.03.2011. See also: <http://fss.ru/ru/fund/activity/14142/14143/index.shtml> documents related to the certificate.

⁶² *O dopolnitel'nykh merakh podderzhki semei, imeiushchikh detei*, Federal Law No. 256 256-FZ from 29.12.2006 (latest version/edition from 01.07.2011).

⁶³ For example, it was an amount of 408960 Rubles in 2013; 387640 Rubles in 2012.

⁶⁴ “Tax on childless couples may be reintroduced in Russia”, *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/sep/28/mainsection.international11>; “Federation Council speaker opposes childlessness tax in Russia”, *Rianovosti*, 21.09.2006 <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20060921/54135819.html>

- More constraints on abortions were introduced in mid-2009 within the framework of the Program ‘Sanctity of motherhood’, although they were only implemented in two regions of Russia (Krasnoyarsk region and Volgograd oblast) by the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development including a compulsory consultation with a psychologist (religious representative) in order to encourage women to change their decision⁶⁵.
- Some measures of family support were revised in 2006, leading to the augmentation, and wider coverage, of allowances for children under 1½ years old; so that part-time workers and those working at home also became eligible for the child care allowances. The procedure of payment of the allowance at birth and childbearing was simplified⁶⁶. However, by mid-2007, childcare and families allowances were still too low (and constituted only an insignificant share of incomes) and childcare facilities such as preschool facilities were insufficient (e.g. UNDP, 2008, p.10). From 1 January 2007, non-working mothers could receive a monthly child benefit of 1500 Rubles for their first child and 3000 for their second child (up to the age of 1½ years). Pregnant women were eligible for a lump sum benefit of 300 Rubles for registration at medical institutions during the early term of pregnancy (up to a maximum of 12 weeks).

In October 2007 a new ‘Concept for Demographic policy to 2025’ was adopted⁶⁷. The concept claimed to take a systematic approach to the demographic problems, while paying particular attention to the heterogeneity of regional development, and to the interaction of the governmental bodies and civil society at all levels.

The goals of the new Concept included:

- Stabilizing the population at 142 to 143 million people by 2015; creating the prerequisites for further growth and increasing the population up to 145 million by 2025.
- Increasing longevity (to 70 years by 2015, and 75 years by 2025); decreasing mortality (by 30% by 2015 and 1.6 times by 2025, with 2006 as the base); and increasing fertility (by 1.3 times by 2015, and 1.5 times by 2025 also using the 2006 as the base).

The program had three stages of implementation each with a different focus:

1. Stage I (2008 – 2010): a focus on decreasing population losses and increasing migration flows (e.g. improvements in the diagnosis of diseases and amelioration of working conditions).

⁶⁵ See also the website of the Program “*Sviatost’ materinstva*” <http://kfcnsr.ru/>, and especially the program “You are not alone (*Ty ne odna*)” – obligatory pre-abort consultations.

⁶⁶ *Ob obiazatel’nom sotsial’nom strakhovanii na sluchai vremennoi netrudosposobnosti i v sviazi s materinstvom*, Federal Law N 255 from 29.12.2006.

⁶⁷ *Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii demograficheskoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2025 goda*, Presidential Decree N 1351 from 09.10.2007.

2. Stage II (2011 – 2015): a focus on stabilizing the demographic situation (e.g. improving population health).
3. Stage III (2016 – 2025): a focus on the prevention of any possible deterioration and an evaluation of already implemented projects (e.g. the promotion of second and more births).

The Concept of Demographic Policy to 2025 came under criticism. A number of experts pointed out that even in case of active and efficiently implemented demographic and migration policies a recovery from the crisis and stabilization of population were unlikely (Vishnevsky 2009, UNDP, 2008). In addition, the focus on short-term consequences was warned against. The experts noted that current policies might only stimulate a change in the timing of births but not the desire to have more children. This may only amplify or create new demographic waves in the Russian situation when generations with very different demographic destinies live contemporaneously. This distortion could lead to unfavorable social and demographic realities that are rarely taken into account by politicians (Vichnevski, 2009; Botev, 2007, 2008).

3.4 2007–2010: Program of demographic development until 2025, Stage I

The list of the measures to be implemented during the Stage I (2007–2010) of the Concept's Program included, among all: the improvement of medical care during pregnancy and delivery; improvement of the system of social support for families with children; prevention of family problems and child abandonment; promotion of female employment for mothers with children under 3 years old; measures on strengthening families, and the popularization of family values.

Some additional measures were supposed to be undertaken through the Federal Program "Children of Russia"⁶⁸ in 2007–2010, which were intended to create favorable conditions for the multi-dimensional development of children, as well as state support of children in difficult life situations. The Program was supposed to contribute to the socio-economic development of Russia through the following channels: improvement of the demographic situation (lowering the mortality of newborn, children, and mothers; and improvement of their health conditions); improvement of the social climate in the society (a decrease in the numbers of neglected children and orphans); and particular attention to be paid to the conditions of children and families in difficult life situations. The Program included three sub-programs: Healthy Generation (*Zdorovoe pokolenie*), Gifted Generation (*Odarennye deti*), and Children and family (*Deti i semya*).

⁶⁸ Site of the Program: <http://fcp.economy.gov.ru/cgi-bin/cis/fcp.cgi/Fcp/ViewFcp/View/2007/210>; See Resolution N 172 from 21.03.2007

From 2007, families with children were entitled to the partial compensation of kindergarten fees: of 20% for the first child, 50% for the second, and 70% for the third child⁶⁹.

In the 2008, the childcare allowance system was reinforced by two more measures⁷⁰: a lump-sum allowance to the pregnant (under 180 days) wives of citizens in the obligatory military service (14000 Rubles in 2008), and a monthly allowance to families with children under the age of 3 of citizens in obligatory military service (6000 Rubles in 2008). Both allowances are corrected for inflation and paid regardless of the level of other allowances received by the mother. It is important to note that the introduction of the two allowances followed an amendment to the legislation that canceled a postponement of the military service for men whose wives were pregnant (less than 26 weeks) or who had children under the age of 3.

A Presidential Decree designated 2008 as “Year of the Family”⁷¹. Programs promoting family values and the development of favorable conditions for large families were implemented and a focus placed on implementation at the regional level.

During the Year of the Family, the new Order of Parental Glory was established⁷²; this enabled the reintroduction of an award akin to the Mother Heroine title abolished in 1991. The Order is awarded to parent(s) or adoptive parent(s), regardless of the official status of their union, for successfully raising a large family with seven or more children as citizens of the Russian Federation. A grant of 50,000 Rubles accompanies the Order, rising to 100,000 Rubles since 1 January. A family is eligible for the award when the seventh child reaches the age of three, and their siblings are still living, with the exception of cases when older children were killed or missing in action in defense of the Motherland or its interests, or in the performance (or as a consequence of the performance) of military, official or civic duties. An adequate level of healthcare, education, and harmonious development of children is also taken into account. During 2008, eight families from eight different Russian regions were awarded the Order. In 2010, the Medal of the Order of Parental Glory was established⁷³. The Medal is awarded for successfully raising a family with four children.

⁶⁹ *O poriadke i usloviakh predostavleniia v 2007 godu finansovoi pomoshchi iz federal'nogo biudzheta v vide subsidii biudzheta sub'ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii na vyplatu kompensatsii chaste roditel'skoi platy za sodержanie rebenka v gosudarstvennykh i munitsipal'nykh obrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdenii, realizhuiuushchikh osnovnuiu obshcheobrazovatel'nuiu programmou doskol'nogo obrazovaiia*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 846 from 30.12.2006; see also amendments from 19.05.2007.

⁷⁰ *O poriadke predostavleniia v 2008 godu sibventsii iz federal'nogo biudzheta biudzheta sub'ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii na vyplatu edinovremennogo posobiia beremnoi zhene voennosluzhashchego, prokhodiashchego voennuiu sluzhbu po prizyvu, i ezhemesiachnogo posobiia na rebenka voennosluzhashchego, prokhodiashchego voennuiu sluzhbu po prizyvu*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 326 from 30.04.2008, and *Ob utverzhdenii Polozheniia o naznachenii i vyplate gosudartvennykh posobii grazhdanam, imeiushchim detei*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 865, amendments from 16.04.2008, in particular Art. VI.

⁷¹ For more information, see website of the “Year of Family” program: <http://www.semya2008.ru/>

⁷² *Ob uchrezhdenii ordena 'Roditel'skaia slava'*, Presidential Decree N 775 from 13.05.2008.

⁷³ *O merakh o sovershenstvovaniiu gosudarstvennoi nagradnoi sistemy Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Presidential Decree N 1099 from 07.09.2010.

Two years after the introduction of the birth certificate scheme, official sources published a positive evaluation of its implementation. The scheme covered 92.7% of pregnant women in 2008⁷⁴; and a great improvement in work of health centers for prenatal visits and maternity hospitals was reported. A number of clinics and consultation centers were renovated and the equipment upgraded, especially in the area of neonatal screening and diagnostics (in 2006 – 2008: 1,148.9 million of Rubles (about 48 million Euros) spent in framework of the Program “Children of Russia”). The official reports underlined a gradual but steady improvement of women’s health (e.g. 36.8% of births were without complications in pregnancy in 2008 against 35.1% in 2006), mothers’ mortality fell by 12.3% from 2006 to 2008, and perinatal mortality by 13.3%, down to 8.3 per 1000 live born.

However, the new schemes and the system of allowances connected to childhood and motherhood were still criticized. An independent analysis of the birth certificate scheme (Borozdina and Titaev, 2011), demonstrated that the main goals of the certificate’s introduction had not been achieved by 2011. Individualization of the medical services remained rare; the system of health centers for prenatal visits was still mainly financed according to Soviet planning. Double financial accounting, in order to fit both schemes, had become a widespread practice. Another scheme, the maternity capital scheme, was mentioned as being “nothing but a way to support the Russian pension system, because it is too small for other purposes” (Avdeeva, 2010, p 72). Voices of criticism were also raised against the low effectiveness of and difficulty of access to the allowances system, with the poorest, marginal or lonely parents mainly counting on its benefits. The share of children between the ages 0 to 16 receiving social allowances did not extend much beyond 40% (Avdeeva, 2010, p 72). The availability of places in pre-school facilities was still lacking. Revised payments compensating expenditures for the kindergartens (20% for the first child, 50% for the second, and 70% for the third child) were criticized as strengthening inequalities between families.

Gender discrimination as an indirect impact of the policies, was mentioned by some researchers. There had been a further institutionalization of gender inequalities in the labor markets and in the domestic sphere, which may “continue to depress the fertility rate of Russian women” (Avdeeva, 2011, p.3). Interestingly, a case of gender discrimination against men was confirmed in proceedings held in 2010–2011 by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Konstantin Markin, “a military serviceman [who] was not entitled to the same parental leave as a military servicewoman would have had in his case”⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ See report on the implementation of the measures of the Stage I on the website of the Ministry of the Economic Development of the Russian Federation, <http://www.economy.gov.ru/minec/activity/sections/ecosocsphere/departament/doc201001131124>

⁷⁵ Blog commenting on developments in the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, The special social role of women: the Strasbourg Court does not buy it (Konstantin Markin vs. Russia), October 14, 2010, by

On the completion of Stage I of the implementation of the Concept of Demographic development until 2015, Rosstat reported⁷⁶ a gradually diminishing natural population decline; and in 2009, for first time since 1994, a population increase of 10.5 thousand people (0.01%). The decisive role of migration in forming this surplus was not emphasized; amplification of migration was, however, one of the goals of the Stage I. On the 1 January 2010, the population of the Russian Federation was 141.9 million people just slightly lower than the lower boundary of the target established by the Concept-2025. Unfortunately, net migration figures declined by 30% in 2010 and the decline in population was registered again⁷⁷. It was the first time since 2004, when a growth in the number of deaths was registered (20.5 thousands deaths more when compared to year 2009). In 2010, in 72 regions of the Federation, a decrease in the number of births was observed.

3.5 2011–2015: Program of demographic development until 2025, Stage II

The plan⁷⁸ for the period 2011–2015, Stage II, targeted a decrease in the newborn mortality level (in particular, through the further introduction of new centers of prenatal diagnostics); improvement of the maternity capital investment mechanism (including schemes for regional financing); and construction of housing for young families in rural areas. The target total fertility rate per woman was fixed at 1.65-1.70 by 2015 (against 1.58 in 2011).

At the beginning of this period, several controversial measures that would likely worsen the conditions of women were proposed. Three examples, that induced a wave of protests, included a change in the procedure for calculating the amount of allowance available during pregnancy and child care leave during the first 1½ years of a child's life, some amendments to abortion regulation, and development of the system of juvenile justice.

In December 2010 and January 2011 a number of protests by pregnant women against the amendments to the Federal Law No. 343 “Allowances for temporary disability, pregnancy and delivery under compulsory social insurance”⁷⁹ that were supposed to come into the force on 1 January 2011 took place in several big cities. The new procedure for calculating the monthly maternity benefit was supposed to change the base from the amount of the last salary (income

Alexandra Timmer [http://strasbourgobservers.com/2010/10/14/"the-special-social-role-of-women"-the-strasbourg-court-does-not-buy-it-konstantin-markin-v-russia/](http://strasbourgobservers.com/2010/10/14/)

⁷⁶ “Modern demographic situation in the Russian Federation” published on the website of Rosstat: URL: http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/2010/demo/dem-sit-09.doc Accessed on : 15.10.2014.

⁷⁷ Experts note that in 2010 net migration decreased by 30% declining down to 158 thousands. Demoscope Weekly, N 457-458, 7-20 March 2011, URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2011/0457/barom05.php>

⁷⁸ Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation N 367-p from 10.03.2011.

⁷⁹ *Ob obiazatel'nom sotsial'nom strakhovanii na sluchai vremennoi netrudospobnosti i v sviazi s materinstvom*, Federal Law 343 adopted on 08.12.2010.

during a year preceding the pregnancy, divided by either 365 or the number of actual worked days) to the net income gained during two calendar years preceding pregnancy (divided by 730). The procedure was opposed as it was seen as significantly reducing the amount of benefit due because of periods of low income during the two years preceding pregnancy that were widespread among women after the crisis of 2008–2009, as well as periods of sick-lists, retention during pregnancy, and of vacations. The governmental response to these protests was to introduce a “special transition period”, between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2012, during which it was possible to choose which of the two procedures was most suitable to calculate the allowance on a case-by-case basis. The general procedure was supposed to be changed from 1 January 2013, when the calculation would be based only on the periods when a woman was actually in work (and paying contributions to the Fund of Social Insurance)⁸⁰.

Numerous attempts to introduce further obstacles to abortion procedures were discussed at the Russian Duma with the aim of stimulating fertility growth⁸¹. Contemporaneously, several funds such as the Fund of socio-cultural initiatives (*Fond sotsial'no-kul'turnykh initsiativ*)⁸², promoted anti-abortion initiatives. Among these, two can be noted: a yearly information week “Give me a gift of life!” (*Podari mne zhizn'!*) in July and “The day of family, love, and fidelity”⁸³ celebrated on the 8th July, beginning in 2008. The Fund promoted obligatory pre-abortion consultations and distributed leaflets presenting the consequences of abortion sometimes in an exaggeratedly negative way. However, the Fund also accompanies pre-abortion consultations with some schemes of material help to women who abandoned their decision to abort, e.g. shelters for pregnant women who have no place to stay. Another initiative of the Fund, although not yet covering the whole territory of Russia, is a program of promoting the safeguarding of female reproductive health “White rose” (*Belaia roza*). The program established centers of diagnostics and the prevention of oncological diseases in the reproductive sphere in St. Petersburg, Arkhangelsk and several other cities⁸⁴.

In July 2011 President Dmitri Medvedev signed into law additional restrictions to legality of abortions during the later months of pregnancy to those introduced in 2004. An interest group

⁸⁰ Marina Rabzhaeva “*Beremennym okazalos' proshche naiti drug druga*”, 01.03.2011, Sensus Novus, <http://sensusnovus.ru/opinion/2011/03/01/5788.html>; “*Dektetnye posobiia: perezagruzka*”, RIA News, 01.02.2011: <http://ria.ru/analytics/20110201/329043292.html>; RIA News 18.01.2011 “Russian women protest against new maternity benefits payment system”: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110118/162191854.html> <http://russiaprofile.org/politics/a1294773645.html>; Svetlana Kononova, Russia Profine, 11.01.2011 “Bump and protest”.

⁸¹ See for example, Demoscope weekly, N477-478 12-25.09.2011, URL: demoscope.ru/weekly/2011.0477/gazeta02.php

⁸² See the website of the Fund at URL: <http://www.fondsci.ru/>

⁸³ Promoted by Svetlana Medvedeva, wife of President Dmitry Medvedev, a local day of Saints Petr and Fevroniia. URL: <http://densemyi.ru/>

⁸⁴ See the official site of the program: <http://www.fondsci.ru/projects/social/356/>

“Fight with abortions, not with women”⁸⁵ formed to campaign against the new measures. The measures entailed the proliferation to the whole territory of Russia of the pilot project implemented in Krasnoyarsk Area and Volgograd Oblast in 2006-2007 of obligatory consultations with a psychologist when an abortion is requested. The intention of these consultations was to convince women (sometimes in an aggressive manner) to carry the child to term. The activists of the interest group noted that during the consultations the possible complications of abortion were emphasized, as well as an concerted attempt made to develop a sense of guilt about considering the procedure⁸⁶. Problems with contraception were left out of the scope of these consultations. The new amendments to the Law included a time gap between the request for abortion and the operation of at least 48 hours for a pregnancy of 4–7 weeks and 11–12 weeks, and of at least seven days – the so-called “week of silence” – for a pregnancy of 8–10 weeks. For pregnancies of 12 to 22 weeks, three of the four social reasons for the procedure were removed, namely group 1–2, the invalidity of the father, death of father during pregnancy, and being in prison during pregnancy. Only rape as the reason for pregnancy was left among the social reasons for a late term abortion⁸⁷.

Among the additional measures that were proposed but not passed into the law was the necessity of obtaining the husband’s signature to signify his agreement to abortion procedure.

The amendment was strongly criticized, particularly for the delay to abortions. This measure was likely to increase a risk of complications during the abortion and to have an even more negative effect on the reproductive health of women undergoing the operation. Moreover, there was a clear difficulty in meeting the obligation for several medical visits due to their high costs in terms of time and money, especially in rural areas. The latter might lead to an increase in the number of illegal abortions. Other critiques mentioned the absence of a program of material support for women who changed their decision, the underdevelopment of the system of information provision and consultations on the prevention of pregnancy and contraception, and also the lack of a move from surgical abortions to those carried out by medication (and vacuum) as recommended by the World Health Organization (the latter constitute only 29% of abortions in Russia in 2009).

While the Federal Target Program “Children of Russia”, supervised by the government, was completed in 2010, a call for the development of a new paradigm in the sphere of childhood

⁸⁵ Site of the initiative group “Fight against abortions, not against women” <http://sites.google.com/site/protivabortov2011/>

⁸⁶ Methodical recommendations N15-0/10/2-9162; The text of the methodical recommendations for a psychologist can be found at <http://kfcnsr.ru/images/stories/Documents/metod-rec.pdf>

⁸⁷ *Ob osnovakh okhrany zdorov’ia grazhdan v Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Federal Law N 323 from 21.11.2011. See also *O sotsial’nom pokazanii dlia iskusstvennogo preryvaniia beremennosti*, Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation N 98 from 06.12.2012.

was announced by the Foresight Project “Childhood 2030”⁸⁸. Among the main goals of the project was to refresh the ideas and priorities of the Russian society as related to childhood, parenthood, and the provision of childcare and related goods. Children are considered the main subject of investments (the only project that will bring secure profit in the future). The program put a strong emphasis on new technologies. So-called “life trajectories” should be developed for children, and social services should tackle the problems when parents are “unable” to contribute to these trajectories. The project inevitably created a wave of disagreement for being distant both from reality and for its close connection to the fast developing system of juvenile justice. While the goals of the juvenile justice system include the defense of the institution of the family, including measures against aggression against children, and the defense of the rights of children, these targets are often considered very ambiguous. Voices of criticism arose warning that in absence of strict criteria practically any person could be blamed and potentially manipulated with children used as a “threat”⁸⁹. On the 22 December 2010, a public forum consisting of more than 3000 people drawn from the whole of Russia was held and submitted a petition against the project to the President.

One more program was launched in 2011 but its implementation over the following three years met without much success. It was related to granting free plots to large families in order to enable them to build their own house. In order to be eligible, a family must consist of citizens of the Russian Federation, who have at least three minor children; and it was supposed to had lived at least five years in the area where the request for the land plot was placed⁹⁰. Coinciding with this program, a number of regional initiatives were undertaken in order to promote the birth of a second and third child. Popova (2014), among others, mention the introduction of a regional parental capital in Republic of Komi in July 2011.

In order to further improve population health, deputy Mohamed Selimkhanov proposed to the Duma on September 2015, a law requesting a HIV/AIDS certificate for those who wanted to get married. A similar law has already been implemented in the Chechen Republic since 2011.

By the beginning of 2016, it was planned that population figures would be stabilized at 142-143 million people, that average life expectancy at birth would reach 70 years, to increase the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) by 30% in comparison to 2006 (thus a planned increase from 1.3 to 1.7), and to improve indicators of mortality by 30%.

⁸⁸ See the official site of the project: <http://www.2010-2030.ru/> Initiated in April 2008 by the Charity Foundation My generation (*Moe pokolenie*) <http://www.moe-pokolenie.ru/>

⁸⁹ E.g. Alexander Privalov, War with the last ally (*Vojna s poslednim sojuznikom*) Expert, N2, 17.01.2011 <http://expert.ru/expert/2011/02/vojna-s-poslednim-soyuznikom/>

⁹⁰ On 16.06.2011, President Medvedev signed an amendment to the Federal Law N 161 “*O sodeistvii razvitiuu zhilishnogo stroitel'stva*” from 24.07.2008. The Law gave to the regional administrations the right to decide on the size and location of the land plots that could be allocated to large families.

According to Rosstat, on 1 September 2015, the population of the Russian Federation was 146.4 million people⁹¹. However, unlike in 2014, when the population grew due to the number of births exceeding the number of deaths, a natural population decrease of 11.7 thousand people was observed during the first eight months of 2015; the decrease was compensated for by migration figures. Similar dynamics are reflected in the population dynamics forecast on the site of the Rosstat⁹². According to the low version of the forecast, a natural decrease of 49.2 thousand people can be expected in 2016. The average version of the forecast sees a decrease of 42.6 thousand by 2018. While a TRF of 1.75, exceeding the target of 1.7, was reached by 2014, future forecasts predict a further decrease in the coefficient, primarily due to the decreasing number of women of fertile age. The target for reducing mortality was not met. However, life expectancy exceeded the goal of 70 years and it is predicted to increase further for both men and women.

⁹¹ Demographic situation on the 01.09.2015. Rosstat. URL: http://www.gks.ru/bgd/free/b15_00/IssWWW.exe/Stg/dk09/8-0.doc Accessed 11.11.2015

⁹² Demographic forecast for Russia until 2030. Rosstat. http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/demography/# Accessed on 11.11.2015. Last available version of 06.02.2015.

4. Concluding remarks

From 1917, the images of the new Soviet man and woman were constructed: woman as worker, activist, mother and caregiver, and man as worker and defender of the Motherland. The reproductive function of women always remained in the focus of the Soviet population policies due to a persistent lack of human resources needed for military and/or labor mobilization in different periods of Soviet history.

Contemporaneously with the active participation of women in the working sphere, the image of a large family as representing normality was repeatedly promoted, starting from the 1930s, as well as the women's predestination as mothers. The list of benefits to families with children and measures aimed at the reconciliation of working and family life was repeatedly updated; the lack of a regional-specific differentiation in the policies and of the measures promoting the safeguarding of reproductive health remained one of the main weaknesses of the period.

Modern Russia inherited from the Soviet Union a toolbox of family and fertility policies. Depopulation became evident shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 but it only attracted the serious attention of politicians since 2006 when a course of action on fertility stimulation was announced. From 2007, the Demographic Concept for Development of Russia until 2025 has been enacted. 2015 marked the end of the second stage of the Concept's implementation and official sources are evaluating whether the main goals of the stage have been achieved. It is, however, too early to announce the end of the depopulation process.

At the beginning of the first stage of the implementation of Concept 2025, Russian and international experts began pointing to favourable conditions for a fertility increase in view of the ridge of a demographic wave bringing a numerous cohort of women born in the 1980s to their most fertile age. Thus the current achievements may become only a short-term success as the currently favorable age structure ages. The maternity capital scheme, though regarded a success, is unlikely to be extended into the long-term as it has been rather burdensome for the state budget, although a two-year extension of the program was preannounced by President Putin in December 2015.

Other weak points that may contribute to the further fall in fertility are multiple. The system of allowances and benefits is often criticized as targeting mainly the poor. Economically active working women, from one side are welcome in the labor market for helping to support the aging population but the nature of labor relations between women and employers is such that women, especially those with children, are discriminated against for being a relatively more expensive labor force than men due to the number of non-monetary benefits connected with the status of mothers. As childbirths are postponed, partially due to career reasons, the average age of the first birth continues to rise. This makes some women ineligible for the benefits targeting young families. In addition, contraception culture is still undeveloped and programs for safeguarding

reproductive health are scarce. Importantly, the high reliance of the population on state support and stimulation may be responsible for women's lack of responsibility for their own fertility and health-related decisions. All these interdependent factors may lead to the inability to realize fertility intentions in full.

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