4 Education in the Family and Family Policy in the Soviet Union

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FAMILY POLICY AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

In our Western societies we are living in a period in which we are confronted with the costs and limits of the following: economic planning and growth, the expanded state system of social policy, and expansion in the formal educational system. In this situation the search for quality instead of quantity, the search for private and grass-roots, instead of state, initiative, and the search for informal instead of formal settings for education and learning seem to be growing in importance. There is a widespread awareness that we have, by means of quantitative growth and expansion, created structures of economy, policy and education that have been shown to be unable to satisfy basic human needs, needs as reflected, for example, in the well-known hierarchy of Maslow. In this context of a change of conditions and attitudes, certain topics - partly new; partly old - seem to gain a new priority in policy. One example of a new topic of this sort is environmental policy and education, and one example of the new priority of an old topic is family policy and education.

The family is, on the one hand, not to be seen as an element of the educational system; what happens in families, by their very nature, cannot be planned or controlled by means of curricula, professional standards or examinations. Education in the family is not the object of direct public policy in the same sense as education in schools. On the other hand, the family has to be seen as the basic institution of society. It plays the decisive role not only in the physical reproduction of population but also in socialisation and education. In fulfilling these

functions the family depends on objective socio-economic conditions as well as on such individual conditions as one's knowledge and attitudes. Education in the family can thus become the object of public policy, in the sense of an indirect policy that tries to influence the aforementioned objective and individual conditions under which the family functions.

These notions are necessary in order to understand why family policy and educational policy have developed as different and separate fields of action. However, these two areas of public policy are connected by a common goal, namely, the support and shaping of the young, growing-up generation. Speaking about children, we can state that childhood in modern societies reflects a bipolar existence: there is family childhood, on the one hand, and school childhood, on the other. It is one of the problems of modern education that these two worlds of childhood tend to become more and more separated, the one being defined as the stronghold of privacy and the centre of everyday life, the other being shaped as an artificial and formalised setting for learning. One could say, therefore, that educational policy and family policy represent strategies for the reintegration of these two worlds of childhood. Educational policy would try, then, to bring back the elements of everyday life to the school, and family policy to bring the family nearer to public life. To look at the same thing from another perspective, one can say that educational policy and the educational system could contribute to the improvement of knowledge and attitudes as factors conditioning education in the family, whereas family policy, by improving the objective conditions of family life, could add to the ability to profit from the learning process within the formal educational system.

We can add to this that education, seen in a historical perspective, has tended to become more and more professionalised, in the sense that interaction with children has had to be increasingly guided by knowledge and competence. This tendency towards professionalisation has thus extended from public education to the field of family education. There are attempts to develop strategies of parent training similar to strategies of teacher training. For example, the German authorities launched a project in the 1970s under the title *Elternfuhrerschein* (driving licence for parents), and the Soviet authorities developed a so-called *programma-minimum* for parent education in the 1960s (Liegle, p. 72). We can state, therefore, that educational policy and family policy, being established as separate fields of action in the modern welfare state, are interconnected not

only in respect of common goals but also, at least partly, by similar strategies of action.

FAMILY POLICY AS A REACTION TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Referring, in this respect, to the Soviet Union, we can state that there, as in Western countries, family policy is a well-established field of action. We have to ask, however, whether, within this field, changes have occurred in the last decades and whether further changes can be foreseen in the 1980s. In order to answer this question we should distinguish between family policy as an *active* strategy, which tries to shape the social reality of the family in a predefined direction, and family policy as a *reactive* strategy, which tries to react to those social problems and to influence those objective and individual conditions of family life and education that work against the predefined goal. In the first case, referring to active family policy, I would assume that major changes did not, and will not, occur in the Soviet Union: the goal, generally speaking, to establish an effective family group as a loyal cell of the socialist society, has been essentially the same since the 1936 laws for the stabilisation of marriage and the family and will be essentially the same in the 1980s. In the second case, however, referring to family policy as a reactive strategy, I want to demonstrate the occurrence of certain changes that characterise the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s and that can be interpreted as reactions (new reactions in part) to changing social problems and to the changing objective and individual conditions of family life. I will discuss Soviet family policy mainly in this sense of a reactive strategy.

Let me begin with the changing social problems and the changing conditions of family life to which policy reacts. One of these problems has been already mentioned in my introductory remarks, namely the costs and limits of economic growth. More evidence of such general social problems is to be found in the recent Soviet literature on the family. For example, Kharchev, the leading figure in this field, has worked out the following characteristics of the present stage of development of society:

> . . . on the one hand more will be demanded from the people and, consequently, from their education, and on the other, we will have to face growing complexities of the conditions of education in

> connection with the growth of big cities, the mass migration of population, the increase in the volume of information and other consequences of the scientific-technical revolution *(Sem'ya i obshchestvo,* p. 18).

These are very global notions, whose relevance to family and family policy seems not to be directly self-evident.

A more differentiated answer can be given to the question of the past and anticipated future changes in family education and policy if this question is directed towards the relevant conditions of parent-child interaction and towards the changing position of children in the social world of today. Many of the authors in the field of family research have devoted parts of their interpretations of empirical data to this question, and we can find here similar evidence, generally speaking, concerning the developments in the post-industrial societies, including our own.

To cite Kharchev again:

> Nowadays, the child develops much faster than some decades ago, because it is daily confronted by direct communication and by television and radio with so much information as in earlier times over months or years. Consequently there is less time for inner concentration, less possibility for the development of phantasy and imagination . . .
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> . . . Urbanization, which destroys the directness and regularity of man's contact with nature, claims additional measures from society, in order to compensate for this loss . . .
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> . . . Life in the cities makes the out-of-home and out-of-school behaviour of children today, more than ever before, independent of the direct control of grown-ups . . . *(Sem'ya i obshchestvo,* p. 18).

We can add to this numerous factors of stress within everyday life, discussed in Soviet literature, as, for example: the high density and scarcity of living quarters; the lack of time for parent-child interaction inside the family because of the out-of-home work of both parents; the heavy burden of household duties and shopping; the stress of learning within and outside the school; and the general rise in the standards of living, connected with the rise of materialistic orientation and a loss of social contacts. The development in the conditions of family life and education can be perceived as a change in what Urie Bronfenbrenner calls the ecology of human development.

There are manifold phenomena of the crisis in family life and education, which can be, and are, interpreted as indirect, and direct, consequences of the abovementioned changes in the ecology of human development by Soviet experts. For example, one out of three marriages ends in divorce (cf. Bodalev); families tend to be childless or to have only one child *(Sem'ya sevodniya,* p. 114); a growing number of grown-ups and youths react to the stress factors of a more and more complicated world by alcoholism, neurosis and other forms of what is called deviant behaviour. In this context, public policy towards the family today is an instrument designed to diminish the negative consequences of scientific-technical development, economic growth and social change, i.e. an instrument of crisis management whose positive purpose it is to improve the living conditions and ecology of families and children.

We have argued so far that family policy reacts to social change and problems. We should ask, in concluding this section, why it is the family that gets priority in political action and not, for example, the school or the sphere of work. One argument, proposed by Kharchev (and other Soviet authors), is that the family represents 'not simply a most important, but a necessary and quite specific, component in the socialisation of children' *(Sem'ya i obshchestvo,* p. 18), and that this is especially true under the conditions of a changing and increasingly complex world.

This would mean, firstly, that society has to rely on the family as the basic institution of socialisation and, this being so, that support for the family is of public interest. This would mean, secondly, that the family is perceived by the people themselves as the centre of their lives, as the main factor in self-realisation and education. Relating to this second aspect, Kharchev cites two recent investigations into which social factor is seen as having the most important influence on education. The answer of 959 respondents - managers of industrial and agricultural enterprises - showed the following order of social factors: (1) family, (2) school, (3) mass communication, (4) social organisations and work collectives, (5) comrades and friends, (6) self-education, and (7) literature and the arts. A similar preference for the family over other social factors was found in a questionnaire whose respondents were 1669 university students and pupils in 'tekhnikumy' *(Sem'ya i obshchestvo,* p. 17). There is additional evidence from investigations into the hierarchy of values in the young generation that here, too, the family ranks first, with 'peace' being the second in the hierarchy. This being so, support for the family by means of public

policy seems to be an apt response not only to public interests but to individual needs, preferences and values as well.

THE SOVIET MODEL OF FAMILY POLICY

My second point relates to the question of which model of family policy is used in the Soviet Union in order to facilitate solutions to the social problems mentioned above, and whether this model has undergone changes in recent times. Any model of family policy has to be analysed in at least three dimensions: (1) the dimension of aims, (2) the dimension of instrumental means, and (3) the dimension of actors.

Referring to the aims of family policy, I would like to repeat my notion that, in this dimension, one finds a rather strong continuity in Soviet policies since 1936, as well as a rather obvious similarity of Soviet policy to family policies in Western countries, namely, the stabilisation of marriage and the family, and support for the care and education of children within and outside the family. There is, in my view, only one point in the dimension of aims that is worth mentioning in respect of change: since the 1970s the Soviet authorities claim more outspokenly than in the past the improvement of demographic development to be the main aim of family policy. This old-new trend is a very clear example of the abovementioned fact that family policy has to be seen as a reaction to social problems, the social problem being defined here by the unsatisfactory demographic development of Soviet society. The interconnection of family policy and population development is a well-known phenomenon, not only in the Soviet Union, and I will come back to this later.

Of more interest is the second dimension: the policies towards the family and children. Here we have to identify, roughly speaking, two strategies, income strategy and service strategy. The first is meant to improve the material situation of spouses, of parents and children and of the whole family system by direct and indirect payments. It comprises measures like credits for young couples, leave of absence from work for pregnant women and young mothers, child allowances, tax reductions for families with several children, housing programmes and so forth. The second type of strategy is meant to improve and to complete the functions of the family - mainly household and child care - by the establishment of a network of social services. It comprises measures like public eating-houses, health services, day-care institutions, schools with a prolonged day, counselling services and so

forth. It has been, and continues to be, characteristic for family policy, not only in the Soviet Union but also elsewhere, that both these strategies are used at the same time. However, there are different orientations to be found within the income and the service strategy as well as in the way both are combined. It is my impression that Soviet family policy is at present undergoing a remarkable change in respect of such orientations, a change whose consequences will become clear only during the 1980s.

The combination of income and service strategies in Soviet family policy has until recently shown the following features: income strategies have concentrated on direct payments, whereas service strategies have concentrated on the expansion of institutional child care and education. Meanwhile, there have been signs of new orientations. Within the income strategy, mothers' leave of absence from work and, thereby, the time for mother-child interaction, has been remarkably expanded. Within the service strategy, support systems for mothers and children such as prevention, counselling and education, get similar attention to the expansion of institutional care and education. Both developments point, in my view, to the same direction and tendency, namely, to a higher evaluation of the family as a socialising and educative agent - in other words, to a support system that is meant to improve the conditions of parent-child interaction and child care *inside* the family. I would like to come back to this tendency in the concluding section. At this point I want only to speculate that this new type of family policy has been chosen by Soviet authorities on the assumption that it will prove an adequate means for reaching the main aim of the present family policy: to motivate women to have more children.

Before I continue with the demographic aspect of family policy, I have to describe the third dimension of the actors in family policy. This can be done in a few words. In contrast to the traditions in Western societies, the whole spectrum of support systems in Soviet family policy is managed by public organisations and agencies and controlled by administrative or Party authorities. Considering the costs of bureaucratisation, as, for example, in educational policy and in the educational system, one can speculate that such a model is apt to create certain problems for those who are the consumers of these services. This is the well-known problem of public social services - that support is always connected with social control.

So far, I have tried to characterise the Soviet model of family policy, its changes through time and its common and different traits in

comparison with other models. For this purpose I have introduced the three dimensions. Clearly, this can only be an analytical distinction. Therefore, in the following and in the concluding section, I will try to give a more integrative view of the aims and instruments of Soviet policies towards the family and children, concentrating here on some of the abovementioned new tendencies.

NEW TRENDS IN SOVIET FAMILY POLICY

A positive Demographic Policy

Starting with the demographic aspect, we can state that the aim of raising the birth rate became paramount in Soviet policy, as in family policies elsewhere, in the 1970s. It has been mentioned already that the new element is not this aim in itself but its outspokenness. Brezhnev, in his introductory speech at the 26th Party Congress, ascribed 'serious attention to the elaboration and realization of an effective demographic policy, to the problems of population development, which sharpened in recent times' (*Materialy,* p. 54). As the most important means for the solution of these problems, Brezhnev pointed to the strengthening of support for the family, young couples and, mainly, for women. He continued with the argument that, in this field, broader and more effective measures were necessary, the following measures being of special relevance:

1 The introduction of partly paid leave from work for child care during the first year of life and of part-time work for mothers with young children.
2 The expansion and improvement of pre-school institutions, of schools with a prolonged day and of household services.
3 The raising of child allowances, mainly in connection with the birth of a second or third child.

Already some time before the opening of the 26th Party Congress, a Decree of the Central Committee and Council of Ministers was published which described the details of future demographic and family policies. I would like to come back to this document in my last section. At this point, let me turn to the local level as an illustrative example of a family policy aimed at raising the birth rate. It is well known that demographic problems are concentrated in the European

parts of the Soviet Union and mainly in the big cities. Moscow, with its 8 million inhabitants, has the lowest birth rate of the whole Soviet Union. Relevant research has shown that 81 per cent of families have either no or only one child and that the average number of wanted children is 1.8. There is no natural reproduction of the Moscow population, the growth of which is due only to migration *(Sem'ya sevodniya,* p. 14). Reacting to this, Moscow Party and administrative authorities launched a 'Plan of measures for the improvement of the demographic situation and for stimulation of natural population growth of Moscow city' in September 1977. It is interesting to look briefly at the strategies and the character of the measures proposed by this plan for local family policy. The plan comprises four sections. The first section deals with the improvement of housing conditions for young families. It is said that a separate living place has to be seen as one of the most important preconditions for the establishment and development of a modern family. Some relevant measures giving young couples the right to an apartment are proposed. This clear prominence of the measures, which relate to the ecological dimension of family life and family education, is a relatively new phenomenon in Soviet family policy. It has to be seen as a reaction to the research evidence, which points to a positive correlation between marriage stability and the birth rate on the one side and the quality of housing on the other.

The second section of the plan deals with the expansion and improvement of institutions of pre-school education and other services for families and children. Here we find the continuation of a traditional strategy of Soviet educational and family policy, namely, a service strategy aiming at facilitating women's and mothers' productive work by freeing them from some of the child care and household duties by means of the establishment of public services. A new element within this strategy can be found in the Moscow plan, in that it proposes to establish experimentally two to three so-called 'house-rooms' for children in each city sector of Moscow, so that special services for family child care (e.g. the supply of milk and other baby-food) can be supplied.

The third section of the plan can be seen as a further specification of the second one, in so far as it deals with the expansion and improvement of public health services.

Of more interest is the last section of the plan, which proposes a whole set of measures for what is called educational propaganda in the population, relating to problems of sociology and demography, to

programmes for hygiene and sex education and to courses about the Soviet family and its juridical and moral foundations. We can see here that within family policy instruments of a non-economic, educational nature get increasing attention.

Support systems for Education within the Family and towards the Family

In this section, let me turn to a second new tendency in Soviet family policy, the consequences of which will become clear only during the 1980s. It can be characterised as follows. The aim of support and stabilisation of the family system is secured not by an income but by a service strategy, which uses the instrument of counselling instead of institutionalised education outside the family, and is directed towards the parents instead of the children.

Obviously, this approach is not new in itself. Starting with Makarenko's *Book for Parents* and up to the abovementioned *Programma-minimum for Parent Education for the Folk Universities,* there have been different activities in this field. The new phenomenon is the status of this approach within the whole field of family policy and the new orientation towards psychological/psychiatric methods, which had been taboo since the 1936 'Pedology' document under Stalin.

Fundamental to this new and newly stressed approach is the different diagnosis of family deficits in the socialist society. A. A. Bodalev, one of the leading psychologists, has stressed that whereas in earlier times the term 'neblagopoluchnaya sem'ya' was associated mainly with the material situation, 'now another factor becomes prominent: the instability of relations within the family, the conflicts between father and mother. Now attention is paid to the emotional climate in the family which is detrimental for the child' (Kussmann, p. 8).

The largest chapter of a booklet entitled *Family and Society,* which appeared in 1982, is on 'Social-therapeutic activity in the field of marriage and family relations'. One argument in favour of this new orientation, presented in the first paragraph, is that changes in the family structure and relations, such as the strengthening of equality and equal rights of the sexes, lead to a situation in which conflicts can no longer be solved by traditional means, namely, formal authority, but only by the development of new ways of bargaining. A second argument is that the need for psychological support of the individual

has grown under the stress-inducing conditions of the scientific-technical revolution, and that in this context especially the family acquires an ever more important meaning. On the basis of these two arguments, the growing necessity for the establishment of counselling and therapeutic services is put forward:

> In the scientific literature of the last years the question of the necessity to establish in our country support services for the family has been judged unanimously. This is convincingly shown by the experiences of consulting agencies and cabinets for problems of family life which were collected in the last years. Until recently, the majority of these agencies had the character of social experiments . . . Meanwhile, the experts are confronted with the task of analysing and generalising experience which has been gathered in our country and in other socialist countries, as well as critically evaluating the experience of family therapy, which has been developed in capitalist countries. The aim is to establish organizational settings of family services which are optimal under the conditions prevalent in our socialist countries *(Sem'ya i obshchestvo,* p. 100).

The main sections of the article, a resume of which is given here, refer to the different types of counselling and family therapy that are to be found, mainly in American literature. It is astonishing, by the way, to observe that the evaluation of foreign experience in this field is concentrated on Western countries, in spite of the fact that the German Democratic Republic, for example, has developed quite a reputation in the field of counselling and therapy. One gets the impression that Soviet authorities orientate their policy, as, for instance, in the field of socialisation theory, in the field of behavioural and social science at large and in the field of science generally, according to the most developed standards to be found. In this respect, the introduction of concepts and strategies developed in Western countries (mainly the USA) is striking, even if one considers the critical notes that accompany this process of adaptation. Only in the last paragraphs of the cited article do the authors come back to experiences gathered in the Soviet Union, and here they refer mainly to the tradition (since 1962) of family counselling in the Latvian SSR, where the emphasis is on the preparation of youth for marriage and family life by special courses for tenth-graders in secondary schools. This model of, so to speak, anticipatory counselling and education is

judged as a very important and successful instrument for mediating what is called 'psikhologicheskaya gramotnost' of future spouses and parents, for the stabilisation of marriage and family. The article ends with the following statements:

> Giving therapeutic help to the family must be seen as a most important and fundamental component of a family support service. It must be exercised at all stages of the life cycle of the family and include manifold working methods, patterns and approaches. It is the function of family therapy to give universal help to the family, so that the family can successfully fulfil its numerous functions, guarantee the physical and psychic health of all its members and pave the way to a harmonic development of the personalities of the spouses and their children *(Sem'ya i obshchestvo,* p. 120).

If this tendency to establish consulting-therapeutic services for the family is pursued, I would not hesitate to interpret it as one of the symptoms of a turning point and a new pattern of Marxist thinking on man, on human nature and on personality development. This tendency expresses no less than the conviction that the self-realisation of man cannot be defined in terms of macro-sociological and economic categories, in terms of participation in society and mainly in the sphere of work. On the contrary, society and the work sphere, as moulded by the progress of the scientific-technical revolution, are more and more perceived in terms of their ambivalent consequences for self-realisation. Instead, the micro-social networks and relations, the interpersonal conditions and determinants as the basis of self-realisation, are stressed. It is not only the good (socialist) society which leads to satisfying human relations; human relations and mental health become aims in themselves, which have to be furthered by public support systems, not of an economic nature, but of an educative, consulting, therapeutic and ecological nature.

This statement sounds rather overdone. Let me, therefore, apart from philosophical speculations, come to some representative examples of action within the political system which can show that, with the beginning of the 1980s, Soviet policies towards the family have included new stresses in line with what I have tried to derive from the literature so far.

There is, first, the foundation of an All Union Guidance Council Centre within the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR in 1980. (The establishment of this Centre is to be seen in the context of

recommendations made both by the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and by the Research Institute for Psychology in the APN in 1978. The first referred to the establishment of public psychological services generally; the second put forward a proposal to set up a 'clinic' for psychological diagnosis and counselling, in which the professional profile of the 'counselling psychologist' could also be developed.)

The newly found Centre is intended to combine empirical research and practical counselling. As far as practical counselling in the field of marriage and family problems is concerned, one can find prototypes of such a Centre in the Latvian SSR and Leningrad, although they are mainly to be found in other socialist countries - 200 in the German Democratic Republic, forty-seven in Czechoslovakia, and thirty in Poland (Kussmann, p. 21).

Referring to the Leningrad experience, A. G. Kharchev, the leading figure in Soviet family research, stated in his book *Marriage and the Family in the USSR* in 1979:

> . . . It is not by chance that the questions of adaptation of young people to the conditions of family life become more and more important in scientific research work, as well as in practice . . . Regarding situations connected with the infringement of moral norms in the family, it is evidently necessary to exercise particular caution and consideration, not only in respect of the possible positive, but also of the possible negative consequences of intervention. Most appropriate to all these demands is a system of individualised consultations of psychologists and sexologists. This system must rest upon territorial counselling centres and at the same time be placed in a certain cooperative relationship with psychological services in enterprises (Kharchev, 1979, pp. 202-3).

My first example, the establishment of the first All Union Guidance Council Centre in Moscow, and the comments on it made by Kharchev and Bodalev, point to the following facts:

1 This Centre can be seen as a basis and official starting point for the introduction of a new family support system in the Soviet Union.
2 The future development of this support system seems to be characterised by the aim of establishing a growing number of decentralised services.

3 The concept and approach of counselling points to the conviction that family policy should act not only on the macro-system level but also on the levels of the meso- and micro-system.
4 This support system does not rely primarily on economic and political measures of intervention but on educative, counselling and therapeutic measures.

A second example of the new orientation of Soviet policies towards the family is the whole package of measures laid down in a Decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR on 22 January 1981 under the title 'On measures for strengthening governmental aid to families with children'. The majority of these measures is consistent with the tradition of Soviet family policy since 1936 and refers to the improvement of the economic and ecological conditions of family life (child allowances, other payments and credits in connection with childbirth, housing programmes, especially for young families, etc.) and to the expansion of child care and health services (cribs, kindergartens, prolonged school-days, prophylactic and counselling agencies for pregnant women, etc.). There are two groups of measures, however, which seem to signalise new trends in Soviet family policy.

One is what the Decree calls measures with the aim of creating more favourable possibilities for maternal care for newly born and young children'. The Soviet government adapts, under this title, the example of other communist states in conceding paid leave from work for mothers for the care of a child up to the end of the first year of life; further unpaid leave, connected with a guarantee for keeping the prior job assignment, is recommended for six months, and, in the future, for the whole second year of the life of a child. Additional measures are the expansion of part-time work for women with children and an additional three days' paid leave for women with two or more children under the age of twelve. (It is interesting to note, by the way, that in a country where equality of the sexes is one of the prominent aims, the expansion of time for child care within the family is exclusively defined within the context of female rights and duties.)

The other group is what the Decree calls measures 'in the field of improving propaganda and educational work'. The aims mentioned here are to expand knowledge about the family 'as one of the highest moral values in socialist society, to give more attention to the strengthening of the prestige of motherhood and to the stabilisation of marriage and family relations and to create an atmosphere of higher

care and respect for families with children'. As instruments for realising these aims, the government recommends the introduction of obligatory lessons on the psychology and ethics of family life and hygiene and sex education for boys and girls into the curricula of higher classes of the general and professional educational system. In addition, the Komsomol is invited to improve its work with young people in the fields of the propagation of a socialist life-style, of the development of feelings of responsibility towards family and society, and the development of respectful relations with girls, women, mothers and the aged.

These measures, announced in a Decree that has to be seen in the context of the 26th Congress of the CPSU, points to the following conclusions:

1 Soviet family policy in the 1980s shows a new tendency of shortening the work time of women in favour of time that can be used for family tasks. Of special interest here is the paid leave from work during the first year of life of a child. In virtue of this measure child care within the family gets a new public prestige and an additional incentive for parenthood is striven for.
2 Soviet family policy in the 1980s strengthens the tendency to add to the traditional economic instruments a group of instruments of an educative nature. Of special interest here is the introduction and improvement of anticipatory parent education in schools and youth organisations. By this it is made clear that the quality of marriage and family relations and the quality of education in the family are not only dependent on macro-system conditions but also on factors like knowledge and attitudes.

FAMILY POLICY AND SOCIAL CONTROL - CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

If one looks back to what I have called new trends in Soviet family policy in the 1980s, one gets the impression that aims and instruments in this field of political action show a diminishing difference between East and West. This impression holds true if one tries to identify some of the common characteristics of family policy, such as:

1 The present predominance of an active demographic policy.
2 The aim to support the family system mainly in the field of child care and especially during the first years of the life ofxhildren.

3 The development of a differentiated policy according to the life-cycle of the family, with special attention to the young family.
4 The expansion of services for the out-of-family care of children.
5 The introduction of counselling and therapeutic services for spouses and parents and the decentralisation of such services.
6 The introduction and improvement of different forms of anticipatory education for marriage and parenthood.
7 The combination of economic with educative, counselling and therapeutic instruments, and the attention to the micro- and meso-system variables, which influence the quality of education in the family.

Besides these common traits of strategies of family policy in East and West, there remain, however, clear differences. One decisive difference has already been mentioned, namely, the role of the political administration and the Party at all levels - All-Union, republic, regional and local - and in all dimensions of family policy, including services for children and families. Whereas in Western countries we have a tradition of non-state activity and private initiative and responsibility mainly in the areas of child care and counselling services, the Soviet tradition of state activity and Party control has remained unbroken. In spite of the facts that decentralisation is furthered and that the needs of the people to find self-realisation, not in the work sphere and society at large but rather in the micro- and meso-milieu of family and community, is supported by different measures, there is no example of any activity in the area of family policy where support systems work outside the formal system. One gets the impression that it is just because the family ranks so highly in the value hierarchy of people that the political system is anxious, by supporting the realisation of this value, not to lose control over people's loyalty.

Let me conclude with some more general remarks. We are used to perceiving modern society as one in rapid change. Indeed, the transformation of conditions is a continuing process, influenced by what is called the scientific-technical revolution. On the other hand, the solutions to all those human problems that have developed as by-products of socio-economic change seem to be traditional ones, seem to display continuity with, or even the tendency to return to, old values. One example of this phenomenon is the old-new priority, which the family, as social group and socialising agent, has assumed in the context of socio-economic and educational policy and planning.

This is true not only for the Soviet Union but also for many societies in the East and West. I have the impression, however, that for the Soviet society this reorientation towards the family is of special importance. The Soviet model of planned socio-economic change is characterised by an extremely high degree of centralisation, bureaucratisation and control, which is obviously unable to motivate private initiative and creative solutions. In this context the family, as the only social setting in which self-determination is relevant, becomes especially important, not only for individual self-realisation but also for the functioning of society at large. It is interesting to note that, under these conditions, the family itself did not and does not undergo much social change. It is the traditional nuclear family group, with a high degree of sex-role differentiation and parent-child hierarchy, which is prominent and which is supported by public policies. The socialist dreams of new life-styles, of collective life and of collective education, once experimented with during the 1920s, have turned into a reality in which a bourgeois type of nuclear family has become the stronghold of personal and social identity, easing, as it does, the growing experiences of alienation in society at large. Present family policy is, so to speak, a reaction to this situation of the marginal man.

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