

# Family Policies in Post-Communist Nations

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THE COUNTRIES THAT CLAIMED TO BE Communist also claimed to meet the needs of their families. What happened to those claims when the countries became capitalist? The fall 2007 issue of *Social Politics* seeks to answer that question. It analyzes family policies of Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia. Some social welfare scholars have created a typology of welfare states in relation to the “family wage” ideology, i.e., male breadwinner and woman homemaker. They name the states that subscribe to this ideology “maternalist,” or “neofamilialist” rather than egalitarian. Those states encourage women to stay home and care for the children and the housekeeping, and the men to work at paid jobs. States are considered egalitarian if they encourage women to work in the paid labor force, and develop support systems that make that possible. The states that have a mixture of these two types are labeled as “third way” or “mixed.” All of the articles in this collection follow these typologies, at least in a general way, in their analysis. They also analyze nations in relation to labor policies and policies about reproduction. Nations that face population shortages are more likely to have policies that encourage women to stay home, and nations that want more labor are more likely to have support systems that make it possible for women to work in the paid labor force. None of the writers of these articles questions the term “Communist” in referring to Communist nations. This leaves the impression that those nations were being governed by Marxist ideology. However, the goals of Marx and Engels and the 1917 Russian revolutionaries were very different from the subsequent repressive Stalinist state. I think it would be useful to understand what those revolutionaries hoped for, as a framework to understanding how those lofty goals deteriorated under the Stalinist regime. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Leon Trotsky describes the ambitious goals of the 1917 revolutionaries:

The place of the family as a shut-in petty enterprise was to be occupied, according to the plans, by a finished system of social care and accommodation: maternity houses, crèches, kindergartens, schools, social dining rooms, social laundries, first-aid stations, hospitals, sanatoria, athletic organizations, moving-picture theaters, etc. The complete absorption of the housekeeping functions of the family by institutions of the socialist society, uniting all generations in solidarity and mutual aid, was to bring to woman, and thereby to the loving couple, a real liberation from the thousand-year-old fetters.<sup>1</sup>

The revolutionaries wanted to abolish the family, but as Trotsky pointed out, “You cannot ‘abolish’ the family: you have to replace it. The actual liberation of women is unrealizable on a basis of ‘generalized want.’” (145) The social dining rooms were inferior and after 1935 when the food-card system was abolished, workers returned to the home dining table when they could afford to. The social laundries “tear and steal linen more than they wash it.” (146) The crèches “are not satisfactory as a general rule to the least fastidious demands... It is no wonder if the better-placed workers’ families avoid crèches.” (147) Homeless children were criminalized and brought to court rather than cared for. “A vast amount of the homelessness of children obvious and open as well as disguised, is a direct result of the great social crisis in the course of which the old family continues to dissolve far faster than the new institutions are capable of replacing it.” (148) Trotsky continues:

Back to the family hearth! But home cooking and the home washtub, which are now half shamefacedly celebrated by orators and journalists, mean the return of the workers’ wives to their pots and pans — that is, to the old slavery. It is doubtful if the resolution of

the Communist International on the “complete and irrevocable triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union” sounds very convincing to the women of the factory districts! (146)

Trotsky adds that the only women among the 40 million Russians who could consider themselves free were the 5 to 10 percent of the women of the upper strata:

Complete equality before the law has so far given infinitely more to the women of the upper strata, representatives of bureaucratic, technical, pedagogical and, in general, intellectual work, than to the working women and yet more the peasant women. So long as society is incapable of taking upon itself the material concern for the family, the mother can successfully fulfill a social function only on conditions that she has in her service a white slave: nurse, servant, cook, etc. (146)

Trotsky had this to say about anti-abortion laws in the Stalinist state:

On this subject even the optimistic *Pravda* is sometimes compelled to make a bitter confession: “The birth of a child is for many women a serious menace to their position.” It is just for this reason that the revolutionary power gave women the right to abortion, which in conditions of want and family distress, whatever may be said upon this subject by the eunuchs and old maids of both sexes, is one of her most important civil, political and cultural rights. However, this right of women too, gloomy enough in itself, is under the existing social inequality being converted into a privilege... In reality the new law against women ... is the natural and logical fruit of a Thermidorian reaction. The triumphal rehabilitation of the family, taking place simultaneously — what a providential coincidence! — with the rehabilitation of the ruble, is caused by the material and cultural bankruptcy of the state. Instead of openly saying, “We have proven still too poor and ignorant for the creation of socialist relations among men, our children and grandchildren will realize this aim,” the leaders are forcing people to glue together again the shell of the broken family, and not only that, but to consider it, under threat of extreme penalties, the sacred nucleus of triumphant socialism. It is hard to measure with the eye the scope of this retreat. (156-157)

## **Family Policy in Russia**

IN HER DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY POLICY IN Russia, Tatyana Teplova<sup>2</sup> describes how the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union resulted in forced mobilization of the labor force, including women. Women were predominantly seen as “productive units.” While women were required to work, they were also expected to do the work of caring for children and maintaining the household. In effect, they had two jobs. By the late 1920s, however, the massive entrance of women into the labor force led to a drop in the birthrate and decrease of family size. In an effort to counteract this, the regime expanded childcare facilities, which were hastily organized in factories and collective farms. Policymakers also introduced relatively generous paid maternity and child care leave. “During this time, a woman’s maternal function came to be seen as the foundation of sex differences. Abortions were outlawed and divorces became very expensive ... and the party leaders repeatedly declared that the nuclear family was one of the main foundations of Soviet society.” (288) The tremendous loss of population during World War II increased the problem of underpopulation. But while the Soviet state was able to achieve high female labor force participation rates, the birth and

fertility rates remained relatively low. The inadequacy of public child care provisions resulted in many women relying on family networks, especially grandparents. Social provisions were provided through employment and were universal because employment was mandatory. The Soviet state did not encourage shared responsibility for domestic work between men and women but equated equality with women's employment and the expansion of benefits and privileges related to motherhood. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in the shock therapy of neoliberalism, with privatization of companies. "Newly privatized enterprises were under increasing pressure to minimize production costs in order to become more competitive and improve labor productivity. Social service provision was becoming unsustainable." (290) Because most welfare provisions had been administered through the work place, the newly privatized enterprises were under pressure to cut costs, and social service provisions were among the first to be cut. The new economy created a "flexible labor market," which led to rising unemployment and a growth of the informal economy and part-time work. Abortion, which had been legalized, contributed to increasingly low fertility rates (1.3 births per woman in 2005). In 1992, the abortion rate was 98 per 1,000 women aged 15-49, and abortions outnumbered births by more than two to one. (291) As a result of fiscal pressures and high unemployment, the idea of bringing women back home became very popular. The provision of childcare services became less important and a number of facilities closed. The bulk of childcare is now provided at home. Yet, despite neoliberal pressures to cut long paid childcare leaves, these were preserved and maternity leave payments remain reasonably generous. Fathers or other family members are allowed to take some of the childcare leave with the permission of the mother. While the policy of extending childcare leave to fathers and other family members follows the policy advocated in Western Europe and OECD countries, few fathers take advantage of it in any country. "In the absence of policies designed to redistribute caring labor, women will continue to be expected to perform this role." (298) Some of the social provisions had to be provided by private enterprises, which often constituted a disincentive to hire women. There was a substantial growth in part-time employment at the beginning of the 1990s. Teplova argues that access to long parental leaves and in-home caregiving allowances, even for part-time workers, favors the growth of labor market flexibility and expansion of low wage, low-skill work for women, and lays the foundation for neofamilialist regimes, particularly when accompanied by a move away from institutionalized childcare. The effects of neofamilialist policies on women's employment include a decline in the employment of mothers with young children; increased utilization of maternity/parental leave; increased part-time employment of mothers of young children; and increased rate of mothers with young children becoming full-time homemakers. Yet, despite these policies, the rates of female labor force participation continued to be high, which Teplova says can be partially explained by the legacy of fulltime employment and the legacy of higher education for women. The majority of women (53 percent) are still interested in their career growth. Over 46 percent of women had higher education or vocational training according to the 1989 census, as compared to 34.2 percent of men. Most former state enterprises continued to provide benefits to their employees such as sick leave, sanatoria and other health services, access to special goods, as well as sport and other facilities. Because wages are low and welfare provisions are not sufficient to provide even a minimum standard of living, most women have to continue working for pay, "despite the attempts of neofamilialist policymakers to 'push women into the homes.'" (312) This is especially true for lone mothers. Many married women did stay home to care for their children, and many women say they would stay home if they had a chance.

## **Poland and Hungary**

CHRISTY GLASS AND EVA FODOR compare the family policies of Poland and Hungary after 1989.<sup>3</sup> They say that the family policies of Poland were largely shaped by the conservative ideology of the Catholic Church. (A later article in the journal by Saxonberg and Szelewa argues that the economic crisis was a stronger influence than the Church.) Strong universal welfare provisions have generally

been won in countries where there is a strong labor movement, yet the authors see Poland as an exception to this because its labor movement was socially conservative and patriarchal, dominated by the Church. The Polish working class has been "significantly stronger in Poland than in any other country in the region," and Solidarity, as well as the Church, led in toppling the Stalinist government. Yet "both have cooperated in promoting a return to the traditional family of Poland's (re-imagined) pre-socialist era... The Solidarity government was openly pro-Catholic and immediately introduced targeted welfare measures that aimed to return men to their position as family breadwinner and women to their rightful roles as wives and mothers." (327) Solidarity has supported a strong anti-abortion platform since the 1980s. Only five percent of unemployed women are eligible for the government's public works program, even though they comprise a majority of the unemployed. Soon after Lech Walesa was elected president he disbanded the women's section of Solidarity because of their continued efforts to oppose the criminalization of abortion. This move was hailed by Catholic leaders. The trade unions have lost much of their oppositional power and now influence legislation through political parties and elected positions in legislative bodies. There has been a massive displacement of women from positions in government. "As joblessness, economic uncertainty, and poverty have risen dramatically since 1989, Solidarity's primary goal has been to protect the employment of male workers." (328-329) Welfare policies promote maternalism. Both parental leave and family allowance are means tested rather than universal, and coverage is low. The authors say that Hungary, in contrast to Poland, had relatively decentralized and politically weak trade unions "which were discredited among workers under state socialism and have been politically marginalized in the post-socialist era. As a result, working class interests were not articulated during the policy debates before and immediately following Hungary's move toward means tested family policies in the mid-1990s." (329) Instead, groups of middle class women mobilized against means tested benefits in 1995 and 1996, arguing for universal benefits as mothers. However, they did not want to leave the labor force but called for a return to the former policies that would support universal eligibility for paid maternity and long parental leaves. (330) Another study of Hungarian welfare policies, by Lynne Haney, pointed out that the change from universal to means tested benefits which occurred in 1996 were designed to exclude the middle class and to target the "needy."<sup>4</sup>The policy, called the "Bokros Plan" was designed to dismantle the remaining entitlement programs. It began income-testing of family allowances, making them available only to very poor families. Family allowances were no longer universal but means tested, and were reduced from 18 years to 6 years. Child-care grants were reduced from three years of maternity leave to 180 days. Family allowances and maternity leaves were no longer entitlements but "poor relief," subject to parliamentary politics. Glass and Fodor discuss the importance of timing in implementing policies. The Polish post-Solidarity government that came to power in 1989 immediately replaced universal and work-based welfare policies with limited and targeted measures. This speed was deliberate, a strategic attempt to use the post-89 euphoria to maximum political and economic advantage. "According to the rhetoric of the Polish shock therapy agenda, if some had to sacrifice in the short-run, all would be well in the long-run." (330-331) In contrast to Poland, the first democratically elected Hungarian government delayed reforms until the mid- 1990s. The first conservative-nationalist Hungarian government resisted cuts in state social welfare despite increasing pressure from the IMF and the World Bank to do so. Instead they sought to increase social spending in order to avoid political unrest. This changed in the mid- 1990s when the Socialist Party (the Communist Party successor) came to power. "In accordance with the IMF's heavy-handed structural adjustment policy recommendations," (331) they introduced means tests for family and maternity policies. However, when the centrist-conservative party defeated the Socialists in the first elections following the introduction of means tests, they restored universal eligibility for family welfare policies, which have remained universally available ever since. However, the value of these benefits has declined significantly since 1989. When means testing was introduced, middle class women were angry about losing their benefits. Lynn Haney says that a vociferous groups of populist writers protested the policy, arguing that it was teaching Hungarians that "being lumpen pays."

(Haney, 178) This is an example of how universal benefits can mobilize the middle class to protect those benefits, as happened with Social Security in the United States when the middle class mobilized to prevent privatization of the program. It also illustrates how means-testing increases the hostility of the middle class toward the poor. Haney documents how the poor were demonized and pathologized by the middle class and by welfare workers during the period of means testing. (199-204) Glass and Fodor say that neither Poland nor Hungary provides public child care for children under 3. However, over 85 percent of Hungarian children are in public kindergarten, while only 33 percent of Polish children are. Hungary has more generous parental leave policies than Poland and is more supportive of women's paid work. "The privatization of welfare in Poland — including the disappearance of public childcare since the early 1990s — has forced most mothers to either depend on wage-earning husbands, to purchase child care on the market (although the prices are prohibitively high for many), or to depend on unpaid, retired grandmothers to provide care." (342)

## **Poland and the Czech Republic**

STEVEN SAXONBERG AND DOROTA SZELEWA compare the family policies of Poland and the Czech Republic.<sup>5</sup> Since the EU countries have moved toward greater defamilialization, making it easier for women to balance work and family, social welfare scholars have been interested in whether the post-Communist states would move in the same direction or toward "refamilialization" policies by encouraging women to leave the labor market and stay at home. The authors say the former Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe have gone in the direction of encouraging women to return to the home, and they ask why this is so, since "their starting point was much more defamilialized and more conducive to supporting gender equality than most West European countries." (353-354) I question this assumption. While women were forced to work in those countries, they also had to care for the children and do housework. That is hardly liberation. The most common explanations blame the anti-feminist ideology of the Communist regimes. No feminist debate, or any other kind of debate, was allowed and no independent women's organizations could emerge to promote women's interests. Because women were forced to work, they saw work as negative rather than liberating. Also, the family was seen as a refuge from the reach of the all-encompassing state, which strengthened the role of the woman as caretaker. The authors say that these reasons cannot explain the differences in policies between nations and they hope their comparison of the directions that Poland and the Czech Republic took will help to illuminate this question. One explanation of the differences has been the strength of the Catholic Church in Poland. But the authors argue that the Church has not had as great an influence as is commonly claimed, as shown by their comparison of the most Catholic regime in Poland with the most secular regime in the Czech Republic. "If the Catholic hypothesis was correct, Poland's policies would come the closest to the conservative, 'general family support' model. In fact, we will show that the Czech Republic actually fits this model much better than Poland, which in fact comes closer to the liberal, market-oriented, Anglo-Saxon model, where the market is designed to solve family problems and most benefits are means tested." (355) The authors argue that the countries' differing economic situations well before 1989 account for the main differences in family policies. Poland faced a greater economic crisis than did the Czech Republic; therefore economic scarcity was a larger factor in shaping its policies.

International organizations such as the IMF and World Bank tried to induce the post-communist countries to implement market-liberal reforms ... Poland had the greatest foreign debt crisis of any post-communist country.... Not only did Poland follow a more neoliberal, "hands-off" policy concerning childcare, it also followed a more neoliberal policy toward parental leaves as both the extended maternal leaves and child allowances

were means tested. Furthermore, the income-based maternity leave at 16 weeks was shorter than the usual 6 months which mothers in the other Central European countries enjoyed. (355)

If the Catholic Church had had a major influence on Poland's policies, it would have advocated more generous extended maternity leaves, but by making them means tested, many mothers were ineligible. The Catholic Church did, however, try to influence policies. It criticized policies that reduced maternity leave and family allowances, calling them "anti-family" and claiming "the short sixteen-week leave is 'overwhelmingly harmful for young mothers and their children.'" (363) In contrast to Poland's maternity leave policies, the Czech Republic added a year to the extended parental leave, while keeping benefit levels at a low flat rate. "In 2006, however, the then center-left coalition government passed a measure increasing the parental allowance for extended leave to 40 percent of the average wage. In January, 2007, it will be ... nearly twice as much as in 2004." (364) The European Union pressured countries to open up the extended leave to men in order to join the EU. Poland succumbed to this pressure but their policies were half-hearted and "officials did not expect any men to actually take part in this leave." (364) The Czech Republic, on the other hand, changed its parental leave policy to allow men to take part in it even before the EU pressure, but the level of support is too low to induce many men to go on the extended leave. "Since the Czech Republic inherited the region's strongest and most balanced economy, the Christian Democrats were not under economic pressure to accept means testing for the parental leaves, although they agreed to make child allowances means tested in 1995." (366) The authors discuss the problem of low fertility in many countries and the family policies intended to address the problem. They conclude "the only way to encourage women to have children is by making it easier and not more difficult to balance work and family life." (372) Even conservative politicians are beginning to realize that if they want to preserve the family "in the industrialized world only policies promoting increased gender equality can succeed in enabling most women to balance work and family... The Polish Vice-Minister in charge of family policy "confided that she believes that the Swedish model provides the best alternative for her country's future. She would like to increase access to childcare for children under 3 and eventually to extend the period of maternity leave to a long enough level that it would be possible to reserve some months for fathers." (372)

## **Domestic Violence Politics**

JANET ELISE JOHNSON compares domestic violence politics in Russia with Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia, using social movement theory to analyze the factors that lead to progressive policies.<sup>6</sup> In Russia in the early 1990s people denied the existence of domestic violence, but now they accept that it exists and that the family is a place of violence. Despite widespread resistance to discussing gender related issues, increased public awareness of the problem has led to "increasing the state's response to domestic violence, such as collaborations between social services, law enforcement, and the women's crisis centers." (381) Russia, followed closely by Ukraine, has made more progress than Moldova and Armenia. In the early to mid-1990s, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia were "all similar in their abysmal response to domestic violence." (382) By 2001, activists in all four societies had formed organizations or redirected them toward domestic violence. Russia had 80; Ukraine had 10; Moldova had 5; and Armenia had 2. However, shelter space in Russia was limited and even when it was available "cultural proscriptions about leaving a husband because of abuse, especially one who was the father of one's children, meant that women tended to use the shelters as a temporary respite and then returned to their abusive partners." (383) Most crisis centers were more likely to name the problem "violence in the family" and, "while maintaining that it was a violation of women's rights, to use Soviet-sounding arguments about the need to protect the family." (384)

Organizations, especially in Moldova and Ukraine, tended to be service- oriented, rather than advocacy-oriented, thus less concerned with fostering women's empowerment and indifferent to creating a social movement. For example, the Ukrainian Women for Women centers focused on women's psychological problems as a result of domestic violence, often ignoring the perpetrator's behavior; the Moldovan Woman Today shelters sought to reunify the family after a brief rest. Unlike in Russia where the first domestic violence organizations were avowed feminists alienated from the state, these organizations tended to be "government- organized nongovernmental organizations" headed by individuals with close ties to the corrupt political leadership. (386)

Only Ukraine had launched significant campaigns similar to those in Russia, and Ukraine is the only one of the four countries in which national domestic violence legislation had been approved. Armenian society was especially resistant to the campaigns. In Moldova and Armenia, there were no policy reforms. The author examines three factors that affect domestic violence campaigns: foreign assistance, Russian exceptionalism, and crisis center movement autonomy and women in politics. The effect of foreign assistance is mixed. It sometimes "neuters" the NGOs that receive grants for "democracy assistance" because they "often serve the interests of foreign donors more than those of the local population." (390) It sometimes encourages elitism, discourages grassroots activities, causes jealousy between recipient groups, and focuses on short-term rather than long-term goals. However, it can also provide needed resources to local groups. The most significant donor to Russia in the mid-1990s was the U.S.-NIS Women's Consortium, which distributed almost \$100,000 to a variety of women's NGOs. This established the crisis center as the model domestic violence organization. Later the U.S.-based Ford Foundation and international development supported the cause. The U.S. Agency for International Development gave money to 35 crisis centers between 1999 and 2001. When the Bush administration withdrew support, European agencies and foundations and international organizations such as UNICEF and UNIFEM picked up some of the slack. The infusion of international funds in Russia was positive for the most part. In other post-Soviet nations, foreign assistance has been important but less successful. Groups in Moldova received funds from a U.S. NGO, CONNECT/U.S.-RUSSIA, and the Open Society. Groups in Ukraine received funds from the NIS-U.S. Women's Consortium and the U.S. State Department funded Project Harmony. "However, in both societies, already existing elites were able to secure most of these grants for themselves, undermining the potential for radical reform." (392) "Russian exceptionalism" is the belief that Russian culture is particularly resistant to domestic violence politics, and that policy reform is likely to occur first to countries geographically closest to the West. The author believes that the evidence belies both of these beliefs. "Among the countries in this study, the greater the percentage of the population who is Russian, the greater is the development of domestic violence politics." (393) The geographic proximity argument is given the lie by the fact that international norms of domestic violence were first introduced in Russia, the state furthest away from the West. The author finds that crisis center movement autonomy and women in politics are essential ingredients in progressive solutions to domestic violence. "The autonomous women's movement holds the state accountable for its promises and precludes the state from seeing the problem as gender neutral, while the women's policy agencies have at least some state authority to enact change." (395) Russia was the only nation where a social movement emerged against domestic violence, and the movement's organizations were the most autonomous. In Ukraine domestic violence workers did not pressure the state for reform because there was no autonomous movement. "In Moldova, domestic violence organizations were similarly cozy with the state." (397) The author concludes, "This study affirms the importance of the one-two punch of an autonomous women's movement combined with some institutionalized channels for considering women's issues." (398)

## Welfare Reform in the U.S.

ALL OF THESE AUTHORS assume that liberation of women and equality with men depends on women getting equal access to work. There is the implicit assumption that “work will make you free.” Because the authors are academics, they are probably thinking of their own relatively fulfilling careers. Yet they don’t emphasize the nature of the work for women of varying economic and ethnic statuses. The academics are not flipping hamburgers, making beds in hotels, or lifting patients in nursing homes. The mantra of welfare reform in the U.S. has been “any job is a good job,” but we all know this isn’t true. For most recipients, the meager means tested benefits of welfare (TANF) are contingent on their working at a low wage and unfulfilling job without the hope of advancement, since the welfare law restricts higher education to two years of vocationally oriented schooling. Women who have worked at low-wage jobs for all of their working lives would often prefer to stay at home to care for their children. Many women in the Stalinist states who were forced to work would have preferred to stay home to care for their children and home. Forced work is not liberation, either in Stalinist Russia or the United States. When Engels proposed freeing women from caretaking and housework so that they could work, he was not thinking of demeaning forced labor in capitalist enterprises. He was thinking of worker-managed enterprises where people had active control over the conditions of their labor. Some women (and men) find more scope for creativity in caring for their children than they do in alienating low-wage work. It is worth recalling Marx’s thoughts on alienated work:

What constitutes the *alienation of labor*? The fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague. External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification.<sup>7</sup>

Middle class and upper class women can afford to hire private care for their children and, like the rich women in Stalinist Russia, would not send their children to public day care facilities. Many of the nannies they hire for low wages are immigrant women who have left their own children in their native country. It is almost impossible to mobilize widespread support for universal public day care as long as middle class families don’t need it. Because of their commitment to getting women into the paid work force, many feminists did not object to welfare reform, which made receiving welfare benefits contingent on working in the paid labor force. The leaders of NOW recognized the threat that welfare reform posed for most women and most workers and they opposed it militantly, as did church groups and welfare rights groups. Yet NOW could not bring along many of its followers to fight against the welfare reform bill. Conservative policy makers call for middle class women to stay home to care for their children and pass legislation ‘giving’ tax breaks to “stay at home moms,” while they enact policies to force poor women to work. Flooding the low wage labor market with women lowers wages of working people, and pushing middle class women out of the labor market opens up professional jobs for men. Both policies reinforce the patriarchy for both middle class and poor women. NOW leaders fought against the Personal Responsibility Act because they recognized that it would not only inflict suffering on poor women and their children, but it also heralded a broader effort to pressure all women into repressive sexuality, limited reproductive choices, and



conventional family arrangements. The radical right wing understands the connection between a safety net and women's autonomy. Title I of the Personal Responsibility Act, titled "Reducing Illegitimacy," declared that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society" and went on to give a laundry list of so-called facts about illegitimacy that features teenage mothers and linked criminality with black fathers. No country has solved the problem of getting fathers to take equal responsibility for caretaking and housework. As long as fathers make more money than mothers, the problem is not likely to be solved since the family loses more money when the father opts out of the labor force. Sweden has gone the farthest in trying to solve this problem. It has replaced part of the leave for the father and has a high enough benefit level that families do not lose money if the father goes on leave. Yet even there relatively few fathers take advantage of this. The solution to the problem involves more than money; there are deep-seated cultural attitudes that need to be resolved. *Social Politics* provides a valuable service by publishing international articles about gender, state, and society by leading academic feminists. Their articles are instructive but sometimes dull and not very well written. There is no provision for dissent or questioning. I have never completely trusted a journal that does not publish letters to the editor.