

for scholars of women's representation is somewhat more limited. While the book is organised around issues central to this area, it is not explicitly organised around hypotheses derived from prior work nor does the conclusion focus on how the patterns found in these studies extend or contradict work based on prior research. However, I believe that the efforts contained in this book will aid ongoing work developing the theoretical implications of these patterns and empirically testing the relative impact of women's representation across national contexts. As the editors discuss in the first chapter, the question remains as to whether we can continue to view these nations as post-communist or whether new divisions require a rethinking of their place in relation not only to Western democratic traditions but also to each other.

Catherine Bolzendahl  
University of California, Irvine  
cbolzend@uci.edu

**Svetla Baloutzova: *Demography and Nation: Social Legislation and Population Policy in Bulgaria, 1918–1944***

Budapest and New York 2011: Central European University Press, 280 pp.

*Demography and Nation* is the first book by Svetla Baloutzova, who works at the Center for Advanced Study (CAS) in Sofia, Bulgaria. This well-researched and highly readable work is a pioneering attempt to investigate the historical origins of modern Bulgaria's social policies concerning women, child care, and family assistance. By providing a rich historical background and a wealth of little-known details, the monograph reconstructs the evolution of government policies on population and family welfare in Bulgaria between the two world wars, as driven by contemporary concerns about the country's demographic and national-security situation. It uses the meth-

odology of the 'regenerated' historical narrative to delve into the genesis of the more important acts of interwar legislation regarding social welfare and population policy. Unfortunately, Baloutzova never makes it clear to what extent her book is based on her almost identically titled doctoral thesis in history, which she defended at Cambridge University in 2005.

The protectionist approach to the family appears to have been first adopted as an official government policy during the disastrous aftermath of the First World War, in which Bulgaria was among the severely punished 'losers'. Elected to power in the immediate postwar period, the leftist Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union (BZNS) government of Prime Minister Aleksandar Stamboliiski (1919–1923) pursued an activist, state-assisted approach to maternal and child-health issues intended to help Bulgaria recover from the heavy war losses and not crumble demographically from the unbearable war reparations. Stamboliiski's draft Bill for People's Health submitted to the National Assembly in early 1923 was a democratic and egalitarian attempt at the 'physical and spiritual revitalisation' of the traumatised, impoverished and demoralised Bulgarian society, which for the first time included family and child welfare in the scope of state activities. Due to resistance not only from the conservative right but also from the BZNS's erstwhile communist allies, who preferred the statist approach adopted by the Soviet Union in the population domain, the draft bill was holed up in parliamentary committee until a right-wing military coup deposed and most sadistically murdered Prime Minister Stamboliiski in June 1923.

The ruling pro-fascist Democratic Alliance (1923–1934) passed the 1929 People's Health Act, which continued some of the BZNS's progressive policies dealing with the problems of family welfare and motherhood. It also included the broad preventive medicine measures modelled on the State

of New York's health-care system, which had been advocated by the financially and politically influential Rockefeller Foundation. But the new law outlawed abortion and even criminalised abortion- and contraceptive-related counselling, threatening both medical practitioners and patients with severe legal penalties, including imprisonment. More critically, its 'decentralised' approach to preventive medicine shifted the heavy burden for the medical treatment of the populace from the nearly bankrupt national government to individual patients and the financially strapped local authorities.

According to Baloutzova, the 1929 Act, based as it was on the imported Rockefeller Foundation's decentralisation model of preventive medicine, proved 'ineffective' (p. 82) in curbing Bulgaria's exceedingly high infant and child mortality rates, as well as the high rate of female deaths in the childbearing age group of 20 to 40, caused by poor diet and by primitive and unhygienic living, working, and child-delivery conditions. In fact, interwar Bulgaria surpassed all other European countries in infant mortality. The situation became even more worrisome by the mid-1930s, when the previously high childbirth rate began to fall, due mostly to the 'desperate poverty of the people' (p. 163), but also because of the lack of decisive state intervention in encouraging and protecting families, births, and motherhood. The contemporary parliamentary and press debates cited in the book decry the dismal living and working conditions of the population, contradicting propagandistic claims in Bulgaria's post-communist media that 1939 was a year of unprecedented national prosperity. As one deputy declared before the National Assembly on 4 January 1939: 'Impoverishment, pitiful attempts to make both ends meet, misery, low wages and salaries—these are the major factors for families to abstain from births and for induced abortions to flourish.' (p. 164)

In the increasingly tense and authoritarian atmosphere of the late 1930s and early 1940s, an alarmed outcry was raised over the nation's steep fertility decline (of no less than 50% since 1906, as another contemporary Bulgarian lawmaker informs us on p. 163) and the need for assisting large, 'multi-child' (*mnogodetni*) families. The plummeting fertility of the population, especially in the vitally important countryside where the birth rate was much higher than in urban areas, forced the authorities to rethink the role of the state as the main organiser and provider of maternal and child health care, including the neglected natal and postnatal care. The ruling circles were worried in particular about the possible weakening of Bulgaria's military defences resulting from a likely future demographic decline compared to the fast growing populations of the other Balkan countries. While Bulgaria's demographic situation at that time was not nearly as catastrophic as it is today, the need for national self-preservation required that marriages and births be given legal encouragement and social assistance. As Baloutzova writes, child support in general, and child support of large families in particular, was widely perceived as an issue of social solidarity and social justice, as well as of national cohesion and strength.

In light of such demographic and geopolitical misgivings and apprehensions, the increasingly nationalistic right-wing government saw the looming threat of another war followed by Bulgaria's entry into the Second World War on the side of the Axis Powers in March 1941 as requiring an urgent pronatalist legislative intervention. The enactment of the Law on Children Born Outside Marriage and on Their Avowal and Adoption in November 1940 reflected growing public concern over the very high mortality rate among illegitimate infants as well as the rise of Bulgaria's illegitimacy ratio from just 0.48% in 1907 (when only 869 illegitimate children were

born, compared to 180 284 children born within marriage) to around 3.0% by 1938—still one of Europe's lowest rates of illegitimacy. By contrast, the number of children born out of wedlock was 40 850 in 2010 (according to the most recently released data of the National Statistical Institute), while only 34 663 infants were born within marriage—one of the highest illegitimacy rates in the world, which failed to elicit any serious policy response from the post-communist authorities.

The 1942 Decree for Family Allowances and the 1943 Regulations for Family Allowances were part of the pro-German government's measures aimed at promoting maternal and child health care and providing social protection for large families during the stressful war years. In line with Sofia's geostrategic and ideological concerns about future population growth in the expanded 'Greater Bulgaria', which now included the newly-occupied (or 'newly-liberated') territories of Aegean Thrace, Macedonia, and the Pirot region in eastern Serbia, the pronatalist Act on Large Bulgarian Families was passed on 31 March 1943 to enable strong state intervention in the field of child protection and family assistance. Baloutzova credits the Minister of the Interior and People's Health Petar Gabrovski (1940–1943) in particular with making possible the enactment of this key omnibus bill, whose aim was to improve the living standards of families with three or more children and reverse Bulgaria's negative fertility trend with the help of generous child allowances, tax relief, railway-fare discounts, reduced or eliminated school fees and other educational expenses—in addition to other social allowances and cash benefits. The extensive social support (requiring certified proof of Bulgarian citizenship and of Bulgarian ethnic origin, as well as medical certification of good eugenics) that these and similar legislative measures promoted were all part of the comprehensive national-security and social-welfare policies which

the wartime government was pursuing in order to preserve the vitality and labour productivity of the population, protect the welfare of large families and their children, and increase future demographic growth. For the most part, they were borrowed from the pronatalist experiences of other European countries, especially Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.

The author's claims to the contrary notwithstanding, the exclusion of ethnic and religious minorities from the scope of these laws obviously resulted from tacit racist ('eugenic') anxieties about Bulgaria's 'imbalanced' ethnic demography, stemming from the higher childbirth rates among the large Turkish and Roma communities compared to that of the Slavic majority. While it was not to become a hot political issue until decades later and was for the time being relieved by a recently concluded bilateral treaty allowing limited emigration by Bulgaria's ethnic Turks to neighbouring Turkey, the disproportion in minority-majority fertility rates still weighed on the minds of Bulgarian politicians responsible for crafting a legislative response to the nation's declining natural population growth. This legal exclusion on ethno-racial, rather than religious grounds, which was rescinded by the new communist regime in 1945, is all the more curious, given the seldom-acknowledged fact that many of the nominally Slavic Bulgarians are in fact assimilated Gypsies and Turks. It is also disappointing that the role of pre-communist Bulgaria's monarchy in launching these pronatalist initiatives has been left out of the picture, especially since King Boris III wielded nearly absolutist power from the time of a pro-royalist coup in April 1935 until his sudden death of a heart attack in August 1943.

According to Baloutzova, there was also pressure from below, coming mainly from the League of *Mnogodetni* (Multi-Child Parents), a grassroots organisation established in 1933 as a vehicle to alleviate the

plight of struggling large families, especially those living in the poverty-stricken rural countryside. The League was taken over by the fascist regime in July 1941, which forced upon it its own handpicked and pro-government leadership. The League's newspaper, originally called *Mnogodetnik* ('Multi-Child Parent'), advocated an unprecedented level of state activism in family welfare. *Mnogodetnik's* 1 March 1940 issue, for instance, called for introducing a social-welfare system of national income redistribution which would combat widespread poverty by granting child allowances and other benefits to needy large families, ostensibly because 'It was the state's responsibility to break with liberal market principles and to adopt a social role which would turn it into the arbiter among the classes in the name of their common interest. It was only via the imposition of social justice that the state could secure the protection of society and of itself.' (pp. 187–188) The League lobbied the authorities hard—and very successfully—to grant large families social benefits and allowances, including land distribution and redistribution grants for personal use under an amendment to the Act on Labour Land Funds passed by the National Assembly in May 1940. It is noteworthy that the 1943 Law for Large Bulgarian Families was left largely intact following the pro-Soviet coup of 9 September 1944, as the new communist authorities only stripped it of its ethnically discriminatory clauses while adding a new requirement mandating civil marriages for all Bulgarian citizens.

Finally, while the book aptly describes 'post-1990 Bulgaria as a pronatalist, family-and-child-friendly country' (p. 5), one should not lose sight of its retreat from the strongly pro-family and pro-child policies of the 'socialist era'. Gone are the days when Bulgarian mothers received generous financial assistance from the state, which included, among many other benefits such as the provision of free and universal health care, a substantial lump-sum

maternity premium for every newborn infant, a fully-paid three-year maternity leave for all working mothers (which counted towards retirement as full-time employment), and a monthly maternity stipend (equal to the average wage at the time) for all child-rearing women who were university-level students. This post-1990 retreat is best epitomised by the current Prime Minister's widely-reported outburst in 2010, when he angrily shouted down a young mother who was complaining to him in public that her family's meagre income was insufficient to feed her two children: 'You should have thought about that when you were conceiving them!'

Rossen Vassilev  
Ohio State University  
vassilev.1@osu.edu

**Pat Lyons: *Mass and Elite Attitudes during the Prague Spring Era: Importance and Legacy***

Prague 2009: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, v.v.i., 362 pp.

The Prague Spring has entered historical consciousness as one of most decisive periods in the history of communism. It is now common wisdom that the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 dashed all hopes for 'socialism with a human face' with the result that communism entered into the phase of Brezhnevite stagnation, its decline visibly symbolised by the sullen faces of Soviet gerontocrats and their sundry East European counterparts. The result was the abandonment of all socialist hopes among the intelligentsia and the gradual rise of anti-communist dissent throughout East-Central Europe. But were the intended messages of the Prague Spring and the unintended consequences of its forcible suppression indeed that transparent?

Impressive historical accounts and personal memoirs, from Gordon Skilling's