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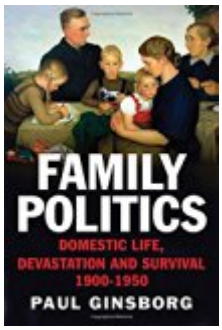

Paul Ginsborg. *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900-1950.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 544 pp. $35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-300-11211-5.

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Published on H-Italy (June, 2015)

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At the beginning of *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival 1900-1950*, Paul Ginsborg notes that families are located "perenially off stage" in most histories of the revolutions, wars, and dictatorships of early twentieth-century Europe (p. xiii). As Ginsborg shows, in reality families found themselves anything but "off stage" in the tumultuous events that accompanied the accession to power and rule of the regimes he examines. On the contrary, families, their legal position, affective relationships, domestic and habitual spaces, work and leisure time were all scrutinized by dictatorships, which sought to remold them according to their own political ideals. What is more, it was very often as families that the most cataclysmic and destructive events of the early century--war, revolution, genocide--were experienced. Many, perhaps most, family units did not come through these experiences unscathed.

Family Politics is a masterly work, which synthesizes the author's own research and that of many other political, social, and cultural historians, in order to set out a comparative history of the first half of the twentieth century within five European states/empires though the lens of "the family." It most certainly succeeds in its declared aim to "accord family life a central place in the larger narrative of events (without in any way presenting it as the explanation of everything)" (p. 437). Six chapters deal with, in turn: Russia before and after the Bolshevik revolution of 1917; the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the modern Turkish republic under Mustafa Kemal; the arrival and rule of Mussolini's Fascism in Italy; the Second Republic, civil war, and Francoist dictatorship in Spain; Germany's transition from Weimar democracy to National Socialist regime; and collectivization, famine, terror, and patriotic war in Stalin's USSR. This is a vast undertaking. A fully comprehensive discussion of all aspects of family life (in law, at work, at rest and at play, at home, in the affective relationships between wives and husbands, children and parents, in towns, cities, and countryside, in nuclear family units and broader conglomerations of "households" and kin networks and so on and so forth)

would of course be an impossible undertaking in a five-hundred-word volume on any one of these case studies; Ginsborg has necessarily had to be selective in the material he presents and is cognizant of this in his writing. Of course, individual readers, especially those who have expertise in one or other of the regimes under examination, may quibble at the omission of this or that aspect of family politics in this or that case study. Really, though, this cannot distract from the immense achievement of producing a careful and nuanced account which recognizes the variance and multiplicity of family experiences at the hands of these regimes at different times and in different places, according to gender, class, race, religion, and generation, whilst all the while maintaining a rigorously comparative analysis.

In each of the different case-study chapters, Ginsborg pauses to consider the impact of politics on families in multiple ways. He presents us with imagined families--the production of images of familial ideal-types in political and intellectual discourse and in art. He traces the actions of states towards families: the revolutions and evolutions in state family policy and legal codes. Finally, he reveals the social history of "actually-existing" families, how they were composed and how they were (and were not) transformed by the macro events that buffeted them through revolution, war, and dictatorship.

Across the case studies, it becomes clear that there are key lines of inquiry that hold Ginsborg's interest, which are common to most, if not all, of the regimes. One evident interest of Ginsborg, which is carried though all the chapters, is the comparison of the legal position of families with the lived realities of "actually-existing" families, setting out the gaps (as well as the occasional convergence) between the two. Discrepancies between the "two moving systems" (to use Mary Ann Glendon's terms) of family law and actual family life are identified in all cases, perhaps most obviously in the postrevolutionary USSR, Kemalist Turkey, and the Second Spanish Republic.[1] The gap between law and lived experience was more pronounced in rural areas than in towns and cities. In the NEP-era Soviet Union, women were legally emancipated, with equal rights to men, and in the cities like Moscow and Leningrad 74 percent of women (in 1925) were literate. The Spanish Republican constitution of 1931 accorded equal rights to men and women and subsequent laws sanctioned state-registered marriage and divorce. However, the "actual evolution" of family life often remained stubbornly out of sync with the law, sometimes partly as a result of the unintended appropriation of the legislation itself. For example, despite their nominal equality, most women in postrevolutionary Soviet cities--and even more so in the countryside--continued to live in family set-ups that were dominated by a single wage-earning husband. The introduction of legislation on workplace equality and legal protections like maternity benefits meant that employers were far less willing to take on female employees. The ease with which one could now divorce, imagined by Aleksandra Kollontai as a means to achieve genuine equality of the sexes, was one factor (alongside civil war and rapid urbanization) that contributed to the phenomenal rise in numbers of abandoned wives and children in the early 1920s. At the height of this tragic phenomenon in 1921-22, between four and seven million children were to be found, homeless, starving, and utterly desperate, in the railway stations, derelict buildings, and public spaces of Soviet cities (p. 50). In 1930s Spain, although the gap--in families of all political persuasions--between legal emancipation and the actual conduct of family life and relations between men and women was pronounced, the republic's divorce laws were reportedly not so "used and abused" as in the USSR (p. 231).

A second common line of inquiry is found in the family lives and upbringings of the five dictators (Kemal, Mussolini, Franco, Hitler, Stalin). A hated, authoritarian father and devoted mother

crop up repeatedly in the dictators' own early years, although, to be clear, Ginsborg in no way assigns responsibility for the dictatorships and their crimes simply to their leaders' childhoods. Almost all of the dictators failed to actually live the kinds of family lives they advocated, or insisted upon, for their populations. Only Franco came close to living the stable, patriarchal, traditional familial structure they all promoted. In this sense, the dictators were, as Ginsborg puts it, "father figures more than fathers" (p. 132), a status evidently acknowledged by Mustafa Kemal, who took for himself not a militaristic epithet like Duce or Caudillo, but Atatürk, "Father of all Turks."

The comparison of the five regimes also brings to light a key moment in the development of intellectual theorizing about the family. Many of the most important, and some of the most radical, writings on the family examined in this book were written in the years between 1918 and1920. Antonio Gramsci's article, "La famiglia," was published in February 1918; Kollontai's ***Communisim and the Family*** was written in the winter of 1918-19; Lenin's "A Great Beginning" in July 1919; and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's ***Democrazia futurista*** also in 1919. Although the writers were far from uniform in their analysis--Kollontai and Marinetti saw the Western bourgeois family model as outdated and moribund, albeit for vastly different reasons and with different replacements in mind, whilst Gramsci was almost alone among Marxist theorists in praising the family as an important "organ of moral life"--it is surely no coincidence that these theorists all chose to devote their intellects to the family, so shaken by the postwar "political ferment," at this time (p. 157). Certainly, they did not do so, collectively, again.

Readers of H-Italy will no doubt take particular interest in Ginsborg's chapter on Fascist Italy. There is perhaps not a great deal that will be very new, as such, for those already familiar with the literature although there is, of course, immense value in the bringing together of different strands of research into the family under Fascism as well as in the comparative framework into which the Italian experience is placed. Ginsborg uses Marinetti's pronouncements on the ***passatista*** bourgeois family set-up, which had no place in the new "fatherland," and Gramsci's altogether more measured discourse on the family as a potential educator and "torch-bearer" of civilization, as conduits into his discussion of the family under Fascism. He notes the relative resilience of Italian family structures and ties in the face of industrialization and urbanization in comparison to prerevolutionary urban workers in Russia, suggesting that Italian workers, housed in peripheral city suburbs like Borgo San Paolo and Sesto San Giovanni, managed to maintain "some semblance of 'normal' family life" in the move from countryside to city and thus, in combination with other factors, perhaps felt they had just a little more to lose than their chains (p. 54). He traces Mussolini's family policy through the Rocco penal code, the demographic campaign and pronatalism, the ONB youth groups which "pulled out" Italian children from time with their family, and the OND's ***treni popolari*** which gifted families holiday time together, through surveillance and propaganda, to the dismantling and dismembering of families in the Fascist empire and at home, via the race laws and war. "Family" may not have merited an entry in the 1932 ***Enciclopedia italiana***, but it remained an important, if not coherently theorized, area of concern for Mussolini's Fascists. In the end, Ginsborg concludes that "Fascism never put family life at the centre of its politics" (p. 167). In part, this was because of the failings of the regime itself to assert control over all areas of family policy in all areas of the peninsular--to rule totally, in short. In part it was because the regime could never hope to supplant the moral authority of the Catholic Church over Italian family life in the space of twenty years. Finally, it was in part because "a profound divide separated the imperial and expansionist ambitions of the regime from the pacif-

ic, inward-looking and self-interested nature of Italian family strategies and culture" (p. 223).

Ginsborg refers often to what he does not have the space to discuss, and one of the boons of this book is that it indicates where there remains research to be done. The relative brevity of the discussion of the family under Franco's dictatorship in Spain must in part be because less has been researched and written on this than for other regimes. It would be instructive to be able to compare in detail the actions carried out by the Francoist state through the Auxilio social welfare organization or the Frente de Juventudes youth groups with their (approximate) Italian and German counterparts. An additional issue which is surely ripe for further development is the way in which families acted as agents, using their structures, practices, and relationships to gain distance from or greater proximity to the dictatorial state (or something in between). One of the most fascinating parts of Ginsborg's book is his identification of "typologies" of family responses to the violence that accompanied the splitting of Spanish territory and people into the two sides that would fight the civil war, during the summer of 1936. One typology, for example, was for families to remain emotionally connected even if they were politically divided by the coup which precipitated civil war, so that one family member on the "right" side might save another whose political views put him or her on the "wrong" side. Another typology identifies the use of family "social capital" or reputation to save (or condemn) a family member (p. 270). Ginsborg returns to this kind of analysis in his equally fascinating discussion of husband-wife and intergenerational responses to terror in the Stalinist USSR of the late 1930s. There are hints at similar "family strategies and cultures" at play in Mussolini's Italy and, although these are not outlined in any detail here, we know from Luisa Passerini's pathbreaking study *Fascism in Popular Memory* (2009) that family members in Turin, especially women, often interceded on behalf of their relations, whether to allow them to "save face" with the regime or to gain its favor. As she states, families were particularly adept "mediators" between the individual and the state precisely because of the family's "persistent ambiguity in relation to power."[2] The outcome of these mediations was usually decidedly ambivalent also, entailing negotiations between achieving distance, benefit, compromise, and acceptance. As Ginsborg declares in the conclusion to this work, the question of the place of families within the political systems of the dictatorships is not just the question of the "intentions of regimes" but also of the "intentions of families." In seeking to live their lives in tumultuous political times, families drew upon "the peculiar qualities and resources that families have--flexibility, solidarities, networks, well-kept secrets and so on" (p. 436). A more systematic exploration of how such family resources operated across these regimes would be a very welcome addition to the laying-out of typologies provided here.

Whilst eschewing overgeneralization, Ginsborg reaches a number of conclusions about the connections between family and politics in early twentieth-century Europe. All the regimes examined prized the family to some extent (with the possible exception of the most radical Bolsheviks), but in all cases this was qualified. Families whose composition or lifestyles were somehow disapproved of on political ("kulak" families in the USSR, "red" families in Franco's Spain), eugenic (the "feeble-minded" in Nazi Germany) or supposed racial grounds (children of mixed-race unions in Italy's empire, Armenian families in Turkey, Jewish families in Italy, Germany, and, sometimes, in the USSR) were attacked by the dictatorships with disciplining and often destructive policies. Indeed, the brutality and violence meted out by these regimes and the effective "dismembering" of families by revolution and, especially, war and genocide is a constant presence in the book. It often makes for difficult, heart-rending reading.

None of the regimes, whatever their pretensions to totalitarianism, succeeded in ruling the family totally. The "great tyrant regimes of the twentieth century" may have sought to collapse the private into the public, forcing civil society into the service of the state, as Walter Benjamin recognized during a visit to the USSR in 1926-27, but they were unable, both because of their own failings and because of the actions of families, to put this fully into effect.

Ginsborg concludes that the attitudes of the early twentieth-century dictatorships towards "the family" cannot be pinned down simply. All believed in the state's right to intervene in family life and did so. But this took many forms. The state sought to shore up and exalt some (often imagined) families, offering them material help and a prized status; it sought to intrude into families, often bypassing parents in order to colonize the time and worldviews of their children; some families, the state simply tried to destroy. That Ginsborg has been able to capture such rich and infinite variety in this book is a remarkable achievement, and one from which scholars and students of the political and social history of early twentieth-century Europe will undoubtedly draw great benefit.

Notes

[1]. Mary Ann Glendon, ***The Transformation of Family Law: State, Law and Family in the United States and Western Europe*** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 5.

[2]. L. Passerini, ***Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*** , trans. R. Lumley and J. Bloomfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 139.

Citation: Kate Ferris. Review of Ginsborg, Paul. *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900-1950.* H-Italy, H-Net Reviews. June, 2015.

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