an organization founded in December 1880 by leading Irish landlords to defend their property rights against the Land League? (In this regard the extensive correspondence of the Property Defence Association to be found in the Courtown papers, Trinity College Library, Dublin, might have been consulted.) A more balanced result might have been achieved had more attention been devoted to the position and response of the landlords.

Deficiencies concerning chronology, documentation, and the landlords aside, Jordan has with this book considerably advanced our understanding of the dynamics and processes of the Irish land struggle in the crucible county where it began.

Thomas P. Power
University of Toronto

Wendy Z. Goldman — *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 351.

The Bolsheviks who staged a putsch in Petrograd in November 1917 hoped to transform not only people's material circumstances but all manner of human relationships. Dreaming of nothing less than the creation of a new type of human being, Marxists predicted that in the Communist future not only the traditional state would wither away, but also marriage and the family. In October 1918, the Russian Central Executive Committee ratified a Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship. It declared women's equality under the law, abolished illegitimacy, established easy divorce at the request of either spouse, and gave legal status only to civil marriage. It was watered down later, supplanted in November 1926 by a Family Code which effectively conceded that, at least for a while, Soviet society still needed some sort of family for the sake of stability. By 1936 the libertarian experiment was over, and traditional values were reasserted such that abortion was prohibited, pro-natalist measures were adopted, and divorce was more difficult. These developments, long overdue for a serious study, are the subject of this work.

Wendy Z. Goldman begins with a glance at the history of the debate about women's status among social democrats. Before 1917 Marxists commonly assumed that, once socialism prevailed, household labour would be done by paid workers in communal dining rooms, laundries, and so on. Free union would replace conventional marriage and children would be brought up in state-run nurseries. The attempt to implement such idealism, or ideology, had dire consequences. During the Civil War, which lasted until the spring of 1921, the economic policy labelled War Communism drove multitudes of people, including children, into destitution and crime. Some waifs were accommodated in appalling state homes, their numbers swelling to 540,000 by 1921. Despite the efforts of a Children's Commission created in January 1921, 90 to 95 per cent of children under the age of three died in areas affected by a massive famine.

At the war's end, amidst unprecedented poverty and chaos, the Bolsheviks

replaced War Communism with a New Economic Policy which introduced a limited form of capitalism. Although there was considerable recovery in the seven years that it was in effect, Goldman argues that it made things worse for needy women and children. Many daycare centres and homes for single mothers shut their doors. Meanwhile, "free union" and easy divorce exacerbated social problems. By the mid-1920s, the USSR had the highest divorce rate in Europe. Most women were either unemployed or doing menial jobs while often bearing sole responsibility for their children. Ideology notwithstanding, the state was forced to drop the 1918 prohibition of adoption.

It was virtually impossible to apply Soviet family law to the countryside, where a household spanning several generations was the basic unit of peasant production. Only males had a claim to its property. A 1922 Land Code abolished private ownership of land and affirmed that all citizens, male and female, had rights to the land which derived from labour usage. Most peasant households, however, could not pay alimony or child support, so that divorced women usually received nothing.

Undeterred by chaos, the faithful continued to believe that, under socialism, morality would eventually supersede law in governing social relations. Alexandra Kollontai, the pre-eminent Bolshevik advocate for this viewpoint, argued against any regulation of marriage. (She was, incidentally, the only woman ever to attain even a modicum of political influence in 74 years of Bolshevik rule.) Still, not everyone was so inclined to write marriage off completely. Bolsheviks debated whether an end to regulations was the sign of a liberation under socialism or of chaos and state-supported debauchery. Goldman recounts the arguments preceding the Family Code which became law in November 1926. While peasants opposed it because its implementation would ruin their households, others objected to pandering to peasant attitudes. Women's groups argued that easy divorce and sexual freedom liberated only men. Some thought the law to be premature, real freedom being attainable only in the Communist future. In the end, they produced a kind of compromise which recognized *de facto* marriage but strictly defined it. It established joint property, simplified the divorce procedure, and largely ignored peasant objections to divorce and alimony. According to Goldman, it was an "ideal compromise" between "reality" and "the social ideals of the Revolution" (p. 253).

In November 1920, Russia became the first state ever to legalize abortion. Goldman devotes a chapter to the subject. Crude though they were, abortions quickly exceeded births in some places. Eighty-five per cent of abortions were in towns, most of them in Leningrad and Moscow. In addition to merciless poverty, Goldman is inclined to see "positive reasons" for many abortions including "new opportunities" which "expanded women's horizons and choices" (p. 278) when they were not burdened with children.

The social experiment ended in June 1936 when abortions were outlawed, and the state actually offered such incentives for childbearing as more maternity clinics, milk kitchens, and childcare institutions. The same law made divorce harder to get and imposed criminal penalties upon men who refused to pay alimony. Nevertheless, the birthrate never increased substantially and the incidence of abortion remained high.

Despite the relevance of the topic, Goldman's book reads like a reworked doctoral thesis. It is bursting with statistics and quotations but the trees obscure the proverbial forest. There is a credulous quality to the work. For example, Goldman seems almost not to notice that the initial debate about family values and women's rights was waged during a civil war of unparalleled barbarity. She approves heartily of the "socialist ideal" of free love, communal living, easy divorce, and children raised by the state and declares the 1918 decree to be "nothing less than the most progressive family legislation the world had ever seen" (p. 51).

The deprivations of War Communism were due largely to the Bolsheviks' determination to destroy traditional relationships of trade and commerce. Goldman notes, for example, that in lieu of wages some workers received food from communal dispensaries. She exults in this "first step in the construction of a truly socialist economy and the emancipation of women from petty household labour ... a successful example of communism in action ... a social advance" (p. 129). She attributes the massive famine of 1921–1922 to a drought even though it has been shown to be the result of Bolshevik economic policies. The massive terror famine of 1932–1933, incited to coerce peasants into collective farms, is hardly noticed. She mentions but does not comment upon the intriguing fact that the Children's Commission was headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky, ruthless head of the CHEKA, nor upon the fact that the NKVD was involved in drafting the Family Code of 1926.

In spite of the book's title, Goldman deals with little but Russia aside from the odd reference to "the [*sic*] Ukraine". The policies she discusses must have had cataclysmic consequences for the USSR's Islamic people, for example, but these are not mentioned. Goldman is disappointed that the Communist Party turned its back on "the original socialist vision" and destroyed "the possibility of a new revolutionary social order" (p. 343). In view of the scale of the Soviet disaster in general, it scarcely seems to matter.

Elizabeth V. Haigh
Saint Mary's University

Sabrina P. Ramet — *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991. Pp. xii, 434.

Comment expliquer l'effondrement soudain et rapide des régimes communistes en Europe de l'Est en 1989? S'il existe différentes interprétations de ce phénomène, Sabrina P. Ramet, pour sa part, estime que l'explication de cette Grande Transformation réside dans une étude de ses racines sociales. L'auteure résume bien la thèse de ce livre lorsqu'elle écrit, en préface, que « changing social currents present political authorities with policy challenges » (p. ix). La crise découle de l'incapacité des institutions politiques en place à suivre ou, mieux encore, à s'adapter aux changements socio-économiques.

Démoralisés, divisés entre eux et conscients que leur crédibilité est en chute libre,