

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1212  
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

# Marriage and Morals in Soviet Russia

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HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS  
GIRARD, KANSAS

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## MARRIAGE AND MORALS IN SOVIET UNION

Few questions are more discussed today in the Soviet Union than marriage and morals. Congresses are held about these questions, pamphlets are prepared for the youth of the nation, marriage laws are proposed, discussed, revised, and referred to the people, to be again discussed in trade union meetings and women's organizations. The discussion is very free and untrammelled. Views of responsible leaders of thought vary all the way from the extreme position of Kollontai—who would destroy the family, finance all children by taxation, and leave youth free to woo the "winged Eros" in whatever form and however frequently he displays himself—to the position taken by Zalkind, which out-puritan the Puritans, and in the name of efficiency for the class struggle denounces such time-wasting insincerities as flirting, courtship and all methods of sex conquest, and demands even within marriage a rigorous self-control.

The most striking fact about all these discussions is that nowhere is the attitude taken: "We must preserve morality." Always the view is: "We must create morality." No traditions have weight; the argument that such has been the morality of the past is never advanced either for or against a theory. It is tacitly assumed that the morality of the past is of no special interest; not because it was

too rigorous, but because it was based upon a different period of human existence, upon a master-slave conception of human life, in which the wife was the property of the husband, in which rulers laid down rules for the masses. These preconceptions have passed; it is needful now to create a morality for a society of equal, co-operating workers. This must be done, it is held, by reason and science.

Already, under the discussion and practice of the past eight years, two standards are obviously emerging, one applicable in law and the other in precept. In law, the standard is that sex relations must be without compulsion, either of physical violence or of economic pressure or by bonds of custom. The state intervenes on this realm only to prevent compulsion, and to secure support of children; otherwise the state does not consider that it has any function in the sphere of sex morals. In precept, the standard is emerging that sex irresponsibility is wrong because it wastes the strength and attention of the worker, and leads to brutal treatment of women and children. But this precept is enforced only by education; no law attempts to intervene in the sphere of sex irresponsibility.

There are therefore no Mann acts, and no police raids on dwellings or hotel rooms to discover sweethearts who in mutual agreement have dispensed with legal rites. There is, indeed, prosecution for prostitution; but the penalties in this case seem rather to be directed toward punishing those who profit through exploiting others than toward penalizing immoral

ality directly. Thus I remember a criminal case in which several prostitutes charged the keeper of the house where they lived with forcing men upon them against their own choice; and further charged the policeman on the beat with using his position to try to compel complaisance. The policeman and the keeper of the house were punished, and the latter was ordered to make over, to the girls involved, all the furniture of their rooms without pay, "to the end that they may not be economically dependent on her nor forced to act under her direction against their own wishes."

Not only does law punish those who by economic compulsion compel prostitution, but in the sphere of marriage also, the desire of either party is sufficient to secure divorce. If both parties desire divorce, the matter does not even come into court at all, but is transacted in the same Bureau of Registration which registers births, deaths, marriages and contracts. The parties to the divorce write out their own agreement ("collusion" of the most flagrant and perfect variety), covering disposal of property, care of children, etc., and register it with the bureau, after which it has all the force of any legal contract. But if the parties cannot agree, then one brings suit in court, and if the one desiring divorce persists in that desire against the wish of the other, the judge in the end, after exhausting moral suasion, must grant divorce, "since there cannot be compulsion in the marriage relation."

Even the compulsion of old traditions is

fought whenever possible by the state apparatus. A young girl of Tartar family told me her love tale. Her married sister died, and according to tribal custom, the bereaved husband proceeded to take to wife the younger sister. The girl did not like him, but was very young, and without will to oppose parental and tribal pressure. When she came before the registration officer, she was three times asked: "Are you sure you do this of your own free will? Are you sure you want this man? Remember, no ancient custom has power to compel your marriage now in the Soviet Union, unless it is your own free choice." Intimidated by the surrounding relatives, the girl stammered that it was her free choice, and the registration officer completed the formalities. But that night, the girl found the relation impossible; for several nights the husband, unwilling to face the shame of open rejection, continued to woo her with self control and consideration. At last, finding that she could not bring herself to accept him, she fled from his roof and got a divorce without further ado, from a registration officer who told her simply: "I knew you would be coming back to me." She went to the city to school and met a young student of her own race, by whom she had a child. He wished to marry her, but lacked her energy of will to oppose his parents who considered it a shame to take into the family this girl, not because she had yielded to their son without marriage, but because by tribal custom she belonged to her dead sister's husband. After living for three or four years with this man, and finding him too weak-willed

to complete the marriage, she left him and married a Russian. In all this story, there is nothing which the girl should be afraid to have known among any friends she may make in the city. None of it is regarded today as a disgrace in Russia; if she apologizes for any part of it, it is for the lack of will power which led her into the first contract and humiliated her husband; and that, of course, she and others excuse on the ground of inexperience and youth.

The revolution in the sphere of marriage is perhaps as great as that in either politics or economics, for the old law of czarist Russia, like the law of most lands today, was based upon the idea of the subjection of woman. The husband as head of the family had unlimited power over her; she could not without his consent even secure a passport of her own; if she ran away from him, she might be picked up by the police as a passportless vagrant and brought back. If he migrated, the wife was bound to go with him. All her life it was woman's duty to submit, first to her parents, then to her husband. The law made this quite plain: "a wife is obliged to predominant submission to her husband, but this does not free her from duties toward her parents." If she succeeded in living apart from him the law stated clearly that she had no right to ask him for support of her children.

How complete the change is may be summed up briefly in the facts that today a wife can get a divorce by asking for it; that if her husband migrates and she doesn't want to go, she



needn't; that in case she lives apart from him, he is none the less obliged to pay toward the support of the children. Even if the husband wishes to take the children and support them himself, the judge will rule that the question of support has no bearing on the question of which parent can best bring up the children; if the mother is adjudged the fittest for this, the father cannot use his financial power to influence possession of the children.

In the property relations of husband and wife the mutual rights are interestingly phrased: "The Soviet Government prizes all toil of women wherever it takes place, in factory, field or family. Therefore in the division of property mutually acquired, the law takes into account the toil of the housewife which was useful to the family." This law is causing considerable trouble in peasant districts where it carries with it also equal right to land and where a peasant who wishes to get rid of his wife must give her the proper share of land. Since the land in most rural districts is still held, not by the individual peasant, but by his entire family of father and brothers, these very much resent it when an alien woman acquires rights to their household land. The chief trouble arises not with wives taken into the family by ancient custom, with the consent and usually the planning of parents, but to relations assumed by the irresponsible son of the house which get the whole family into debt for support of some unexpected child. In the old days a rich peasant's son could seduce a girl of poor family with impunity; even if he

wished to marry her, he could not do so without the consent of his parents, for the priest would refuse to pronounce the ceremony. The patriarchal family, therefore, was not subject to assaults on its possessions by any damsel except such as might be chosen by the family itself. But today, even a casually taken sweetheart may bring suit for support of her child against its father, and if the father is an impecunious younger son of a peasant household, the entire family may have to face the burden.

The shock which this causes in the dark, backward rural districts of Russia can only be appreciated if something of the old, brutal attitude toward woman is understood. The Russian country-side is full of proverbs which indicate what man thought of woman. "A sick wife is not dear to her husband". . . "Beat your wife for dinner and for supper also". . . . "A chicken is not a bird; a woman is not a person". . . . "Long hair, short sense". . . . "Who doesn't beat his wife doesn't live with her comfortably". . . . Against this may be placed some of the communist maxims of the new state. "No nation can be free when half its citizens are enslaved by the kitchen," said Lenin. And again he remarks: "Every kitchen maid must learn to rule the state." Another prominent communist says: "Working women and peasant women are a great power. Without them, and especially against them, we could never win." The complete antithesis of these maxims shows clearly the difference of attitude toward woman on the part of old, peasant Russia and the new communist rulers of today.

Naturally this difference of attitude provokes comment and debate. A striking illustration of this was the discussion, a few months ago, of the proposed new marriage code. The most revolutionary thing about this code was not the details contained in it, but the way in which it was presented, discussed and withdrawn. Important communists, at the head of the Department of Justice, presented it for consideration as a codifying of actual practice in soviet courts today. When it came to the Central Executive Committee there was opposition developed, especially among peasant men and women delegates. A majority for the bill could easily have been obtained; but the Russian congress never passes a bill by a mere majority, but only when practical unanimity is obtained. So, to avoid further dissension, the authors of the bill withdrew it, stating that it should go to the country for further discussion. Forthwith there began debates in every city and hamlet, chiefly before groups of women. The women opposed the bill, and it did not pass. It will not, until it has been brought up in sufficiently modified form.

The actual details of the bill were relatively unimportant, merely putting into form what has already been the practice of soviet courts. Thus, the code passed in 1918 was intended primarily to abolish church marriage; it therefore stipulated that only marriage registered in the civil bureau was legal. But in actual practice, since all children were entitled to support from the father, the judges tended more and more to extend all the protections of marriage,

including common property, to any couple living together in actual relations, whether registered in the civil bureau or not.

An amusing case which came into Moscow courts gives the flavor of life today in the Soviet Union in a way which will seem almost incredible elsewhere. A woman engaged in private trade (hence known as a "Nep-woman") was married to a trade union worker and had by him several children. The entire family occupied six rooms in a Moscow apartment. The house committee, claiming that the woman was the highest paid bread-winner of the family, charged room rent on the basis of her earnings. Such is the rent law of Moscow, and the proposed rent was several times what the man, as trade union worker, would have paid. The woman was willing to pay the high rent for the one or two rooms which she occupied, but objected to paying for the entire family.

Her defense was this: That although registered as married to this man, she was not actually living with him any more, but with a different man, while he, her registered husband, was actually living with another woman. Therefore she was not responsible for his rent and should not be charged with it. The lower court ruled that a registered marriage constituted a legal marriage and carried with it the obligation of the richer party to pay the rent. But the woman appealed to a higher court and won. Her husband came into court and admitted that his wife spoke the truth: that he was not actually living with her, but

with another woman, and that she, in her turn, lived with another man. The judge thereupon stated: "Registration of marriage is a fact which has legal weight if there is a dispute between the two parties as to the relation; but since both parties agree as to the actual relation, registration as such has no legal force and does not constitute a marriage. It is the actual marriage relation which must be taken into account." So the woman did not pay the rent for her registered husband!

I think no one can consider this incident without being struck by the fresh and almost startlingly novel approach to the subject. There is a real attempt today in the soviet union to base law on actual facts and actual human relations, and not on formalities or rules. The decision of the judge was in violation of the marriage code of 1918, which ruled that only registered marriage was legal; but it conformed to the development of court practice since that time, and to the rules of the new code, not yet adopted. One principle of this new code was that any "actual marriage" was legally the same as registered marriage. In actual practice there are in the cities large numbers of unregistered marriages, where the two persons are living together openly with the knowledge of all their friends and with every expectation of continuance. The new code recognized this, and tried to define "actual marriage" and to make provision for it.

But a storm broke out against the new code, especially from peasant households and peasant women. The storm was formless, and had lit-

tie relation to the details of the code. One peasant woman cried: "A man can marry 365 times a year and produce that many children. Does the court recognize all of them?" Wives of fifteen years' standing objected to the decisions whereby their husbands might be saddled with the support of children born to them out of wedlock. Morally, she might forgive his lapse, knowing that men are weak creatures, but was the property she had painfully helped to amass through fifteen years to go to help support another woman's child? Women arose in factory meetings and said: "We don't think it proper that a married man should pay for supporting children born after he is married to another woman. Ivan wouldn't do anything to Mary if Mary didn't want it, and Mary should know that he is married and that she has no rights."

Due to these protests, the new code was not passed, but the court practice still continues to place all children on an equality. "What has been done by the October Revolution in abolishing the division between legal and illegal children must never be lost," said the judges. And a pamphlet printed by the Government Publishing House makes the proud claim that "the Workers' and Peasants' State is the only state where there exist no illegal children."

To an outsider, a most striking aspect of the discussion is the view that lawyers themselves take of law in the Soviet Union. In every other land law is a matter of precedent; in Russia precedent is never mentioned. Law

is a matter of conforming general regulations to the actual practices of men in such a way as to give the utmost freedom consistent with order, and to mold society toward newer, better methods. Law looks not to the past for standards, but to the present and even the future. One lawyer stated it, in the discussion before the All Union Congress of Trade Unions: "We must raise the whole question: Where are we going? What are the prospects of development in family relations? Is it desirable to support marriage or vice versa? We must have in view present possibilities and also future development, and have law which conforms to present possibilities but assists future development." I think such a view of law has never been expressed outside the Soviet Union.

"Are you afraid of the break-up of the family in the village?" he goes on. "Yes, the pastoral social life is broken with a tremendous smash. But do you want to pull it back to the time when everything in the family was in order? How about the woman? Was that order pleasant to her? Was she satisfied in the patriarchal family?"

"Can we create a stable marriage? No, we can't. No measures, no laws will create it. In spite of all suppressions and prohibitions, there are more divorces abroad than in the Soviet Union. In Paris alone in 1921 there were 5,000 divorces; in the United States from 1906-15 there were 112,000 divorces a year . . . Take the question of illegal children in bourgeois lands. In Vienna of each 1,000 chil-

children born, 449 are illegal; in Prague, 439; in Munich, 339. There is no stable marriage there either. All measures proposed have been tried somewhere. No results, ever, in any country. Stop divorce, prohibit new marriages! Does that stop actual marriage and the birth of children? No, it only makes the child illegal."

So the discussion ends on the note which characterizes all law relating to marriage in the Soviet Union—that it is not the function of the State to introduce any compulsion into sex relations, but rather to register such relations as people choose to form, seeing to it meantime that every man is responsible for the results of his actions, for the support of any children born to him in any relation whatever.

This leads out of the domain of law into that of precept, into the question whether stable marriage is possible. What ideals shall be held up before the new generation? Can a communist marry a bourgeois and remain in the party? Is it "philistine" for a girl to refuse the advances of young men? Or is it moral? What can be expected and what hoped, in the future, of the family relation? "Lectures, discussions and articles on marriage and family life have become the most common occurrence in the country," says Kurski. The press and the meetings of older communists are full of advice to youth, and especially of laments over the excesses of youth.

These laments over youth's excesses are often published outside the Soviet Union as



admissions by communists themselves that the young people of the Soviet Union are completely irresponsible sexually. They may be taken just as seriously, and no more seriously, than similar laments of the older generation in every land that "we never behaved like that in our day." Such laments are the common property of each aging generation.

What is probably true, according to the greatest variety of opinion obtainable on the subject (for in these matters statistics are impossible), is that the world war, followed by the revolution and civil war, strained and shattered many family relations, sending sons to kill fathers and fathers to kill sons, separating husbands and wives for many years, and perhaps permanently in an atmosphere where life was uncertain, death a constant companion, and where consequently the barracks attitude toward casual pleasure before death held sway. The young generation brought up in this atmosphere, and now in its twenties, was perhaps seriously and permanently affected by this, and has acquired habits of sexual irresponsibility which may never be eradicated. But the still younger group, the Pioneers, now in their early teens, are already receiving, and responding to, a teaching of responsibility and self control, a frank, honest, decent attitude toward sexual questions.

As to actual living, all observers agree that there is much less prostitution, in the sense of commercialized vice, in Russia than in any other part of Europe. The economic equality of women with men, and the state protection of

babies, together with the state prosecution of all compulsion in sex relations, largely accounts for this. But the place of commercialized prostitution is to some extent taken by free, non-commercialized, casual relations. Possibly these are more common in Russia than elsewhere; they are certainly less frowned upon, and bring with them no lasting disgrace either to the girl or the man. They do bring, as has been mentioned many times, responsibility for support of offspring, which doubtless tends to make them less casual. This responsibility brings with it no shame, but is entirely open. A friend of mine working in a certain government store selling metals, informs me, for instance, that ten men in his shop are paying "alimony," this being support of children by women with whom they have lived, but who may or may not have been their wives. No one thinks to ask, either legally or socially, if a marriage ceremony was performed; the presence of a child is the only fact that counts in this case, and all are alike "paying alimony," for which the women come frankly to the cashier of the store, collecting it directly as a lien on the man's wages.

But the fact that these consequences are open and without legal or social shame does not mean that they are without discomfort. In one court case, a man protested for some time his innocence, but being confronted by a coherent story of the whole affair from the girl, he stammered and grew embarrassed. "Come now, confess," said the judge. "It's your child. Pay her the thirty roubles a month." . . . "I don't

mind the thirty roubles," said the man in despair. "But my wife's a schoolteacher. She'll be nagging me every month about it at home." These are the penalties of too casual intercourse in the Soviet Union, probably as deterring in their effect as the more spectacular but less relevant penalties of Mann Acts.

For men and women willing to accept full responsibility for their acts, to support any children if they have them, and to work out mutually whatever is necessary of mutual toleration—there is no legal or social punishment in the Soviet Union today, however frequent or promiscuous their relations. And yet a strong tide of propaganda is setting in among the young people, fostered, of course, by their elders in the communist party, against too frequent or too casual relations. This propaganda has nothing religious or "moral" in it; it is based on "health" and "efficiency" and "science"; it takes no account of ceremonies or registration or marriage. But it states clearly, even more strongly than the usual moral teaching outside Russia, that any over-emphasis of sex is bad, either in or out of marriage.

One of the propagandists among young people thus expressed the view to me: "In America they think that everything that is inside marriage is right, and everything outside marriage is wrong. We do not think so. Everything that wastes a man's strength and revolutionary virility is wrong; everything that builds him up is right. Every relation that is open is right; everything that a man feels he

must conceal is wrong. . . . We view sex not as a mystery but one of the natural fulfillments of human existence. But to over-indulge, in marriage or out, to over-emphasize its importance, is to waste yourself as a worker, to waste yourself as a revolutionist. It uses up time and human strength and feeling which might find worthier and more lasting satisfaction in more varied development. Youth is taught that the sexual instinct is something that can be controlled, and that unless you control it, it becomes worthless and in the end gives no pleasure. Develop yourself physically with athletics; look upon woman as equal. When the mature and real feeling comes, there is nothing wrong or to be concealed about it. But if you yield to something less and indulge for mere sensation, then you waste energy in every direction and injure a strong instinct so that it will never mean as much to you as to others who behave sensibly. . . . We don't tell them that God is going to punish them for one unconsidered act. But we tell them the revolutionary leaders who have endured prison and sleepless nights and civil war and starvation are still energetic because they conserved their vitality and behaved decently."

Perhaps it is as a result of this type of teaching that there is far less sex tension and sex emphasis in Russia today than in other lands of my acquaintance where young people are put under the burden of believing that a single slip is ruin. Perhaps it is merely the primitive, simpler life of the Russian peasant and worker. At any rate, I can testify from

my own experience that in going about Russia a woman is subjected to far fewer unpleasant approaches than in any other country. There is little sex consciousness; men and women are put casually into the same sleeping compartments in a train; and dozens of such experiences which I have had, have never resulted in the slightest suggestiveness. A man or woman visitor arriving from a distant city, quite frequently under the crowded conditions of Moscow, will be received as guest in a single room by a person of the opposite sex; and no one will assume thereafter that sexual relations have taken place. In fact, no one will assume anything at all about it; that's their private business entirely. Men and women bathe in rivers without clothing, but by custom take different parts of the shore; persons of the other sex are easily observable bathing at a slight distance, but I have never seen anyone pay attention, or even as much as send a glance toward them. There is a certain fundamental decency and absence of emphasis of sex in Russia to which one becomes accustomed; and whenever I have left the Soviet Union and traveled across Europe, I have experienced a most painful shock at the suggestive leers, the shoving of men against women in tramways, and the quick, sneering assumptions of sex interest which one finds in Berlin and Paris. Only in the far west of the United States, among pioneers and hardy open-air builders of a continent, does one find a freedom and absence of sex consciousness even approaching that of Russia.

No consideration of moral theories in Russia

His complete without Kollontai's contribution to the subject, since it is she who is most often quoted abroad to prove that communists practice the most casual and frequent relations. Her style is inspired and beautiful; but her precepts are hardly considered orthodox for the present day. Yet no communist denies that she expresses an ideal for some future state, in her pamphlet *The Road to the Winged Eros*, in which she writes:

During years of acute civil war the mystery of sex occupied the minds of few. Other much more potent passions and experiences occupied tolling humanity. Before the face of the great goddess Revolution, the delicately winged Eros had to disappear. For lover's joys and tortures there was neither time nor superfluity of spiritual force. . . . The lord of the situation during that time was the uncomplicated voice of nature, the biological instinct of reproduction. . . . Man and woman, lightly, much more lightly than before, simpler than before, would come together and part. Would come together without great spiritual emotions and part without tears and pain. . . . During those years the relations of the sexes could not be otherwise. . . . Either marriage continued to hold by the firm feeling of many years of friendship, or the sexual relation arose and was satisfied alongside other things, as a purely biological need from which both sides hastened to get away for more important work of the revolution. . . . The un-winged Eros consumes less spiritual force than the exacting winged Eros, Love, knit from the thinnest net of all kinds of spiritual emotions. The un-winged Eros does not give birth to sleepless nights, does not soften the will, does not confound the calm work of the mind. To the class of fighters at the moment when over tolling humanity incessantly rang the bell of revolution, it was impossible to fall under the power of the winged Eros. It was irrational to waste moral forces of the members of the struggling collective on side-line soul

experiences that did not serve directly the cause of revolution.

She goes on to state that now that the extreme crisis of revolution is over, men may turn to cultivate the winged Eros, go in for "love romances," experience the tortures and delights of love. Even here, she says, there must be social control. We must recognize love as a strong social force which can be directed toward the interests of the collective. . . . "In all stages of life men have defined the conditions under which love is lawful and when it is sinful," i. e., when it contradicts the will of the collective. Kollontai's view is that the family must be abolished, all children supported by the state, and that men and women should cultivate and encourage whatever emotional feelings have social value; whatever love life expands their sense of joy, beauty, social responsibility. It may be destroyed tomorrow; what matter if today it is the supreme flight of the soul!

But Kollontai's glorification of the love instinct is looked upon with scorn by the more rugged communists, who declare that the revolution is not yet over, that the class struggle still demands fighters, and that sex, and love, like all personal emotions, are feelings to be strongly controlled and always subordinated to the grim needs of the struggle. And here it is possible to find that stern view of life which out-puritans the Puritans, and that will bring a sense of shock to many of our orthodox moralists by the sweep of its condemnation.

Nezamof, one of the sticklers for purity of fighting spirit, writes:

Both sexual immorality which leads to syphilis, and the philistine mire of petty family comfort and coziness are equally harmful. Everything that interferes with the strength of the working class must be ruthlessly thrown aside. The syphilitic who sows poison of physical disintegration, and the philistine who spiritually rots the martial ranks of the workers are dangerous and must be thrown out of our ranks.

And so, perhaps less drastically, say all. Lenin expresses the same view:

You know our young comrade XYZ, an excellent high talented youth. I fear that in spite of all, nothing decent will come of him. He jumps from one love affair to another. That's no good for the revolution. I cannot guarantee the firmness and reliability of those women with whom personal romance mingles with politics, or of those men who let each dame wind them round her fingers. . . . Though I am less than anything a grave ascetic, yet to me the so-called "new sexual life" of the youth and often of the adults, appears a mere variety of the old bourgeois public house.

Nothing more scathing could be said in Russia than that. He goes on:

Youth needs especially joy of life and courage. Healthy sport, athletics, excursions, physical training of all kinds, variety of spiritual interest, study, investigation, scientific exploration — and all of these if possible combined—give youth more than sex discussions and the so-called "utilization of life." Neither a monk nor a Don Juan nor yet a German philistine as the happy medium! . . . The revolution demands concentration, tensivity of all forces of the personality. . . . The proletariat is an advancing class; he does not need drunkenness to deaden or arouse him. He does not need drunkenness by sexual intemperance nor by alcohol. . . . There should be no weakness, no waste and destruction of forces; self-discipline, self-control are not slavery; they are necessary also in love.



So Lenin. And Zalkind, professor in Sverdlov University, one of many who seek to develop the Bible of social rules for communist youth, lays down twelve precepts among which are: No early development of sexual life, but athletics instead. . . . Continenence till marriage and marriage only in conditions of maturity. . . . Sexual relation only as completion of many sided sympathy. . . . The sexual act should not be frequent. . . . The less sexual variety the better. . . . Love should be monogamous. . . . In each act remember the possibility of child-birth. . . . Never introduce elements of flirtation, coquetry, courting and sex conquest. . . . There should be no jealousy. If you are supplanted by a worse man, explain and convince; if by a better, give way. . . . And, lastly, the sexual life must in every way submit to the class interest, in no way interfere and in every way serve.

So much for standards of personal morals, as preached in the Soviet Union today, influencing an increasing number of the youth. But toward what ideals of family life do these standards point? There are many discussions on this, of which Trotsky's is the most renowned. It is necessary to recognize, he says, that the old family has been shattered. Just as the state was shattered, and the old economic life was shattered, by the revolution. It was fairly easy to build a new state, harder to build a new economic life, hardest of all to rebuild the new family. The destructive period in the building of the state has long since passe<sup>d</sup>, and the constructive era is in full

swing. In the sphere of industry also the corner has more recently been turned, and the tendency is upward. But in the sphere of the family, the destructive tendency is still manifest; the new family has not begun to appear. Trotsky writes as follows:

To establish political equality of woman with man in the soviet state—that was simple. To establish economic equality in the factory—that is harder. But to establish real equality of woman and man in the family, this is immeasurably more difficult. . . . Yet without real living equality of husband and wife in the family, one cannot seriously speak of their equality even in politics, because woman is tied to family cooking, sewing and cleaning, and her chance for state life is cut down.

It is not surprising if the first protests against the old chains take anarchic form. [Trotsky outlines four typical cases of man and wife separated by the revolution.] A husband thrown by mobilization out of ordinary conditions—becomes a new man . . . revolutionist . . . life widens . . . returns to find family unchanged, superstitious, ignorant, unwilling to improve . . . dissatisfaction leads to break. A husband and wife, both communists, grow immersed in social and political life and home comforts disappear, leading to break. A husband, communist, lives with a non-partisan wife a peaceful but really separated existence. Then comes the party order to remove ikons. The wife sees catastrophe in this. They become conscious of a gulf which widens. . . . Then, break. Or, in another case the wife acquires interests outside the home, another world opens before her; the husband resents the loss of family comfort. And here follows—a break.

The old family based on the subjection of woman, is broken. The elements of the new family are being prepared, but have not yet taken life. In the spiritual sense the new family demands a cultural development of the worker's personality, raising his demands. Without this there can be no new, higher family, because in this sphere we can speak only

of internal discipline, never of outside compulsion. The force of internal discipline and harmony is determined by the volume and value of those ties which unite husband and wife.

On the other hand, the material conditions for the new family are not yet present, but go along with the general socialistic upbuilding of the country. The workers' state must become much richer in order to start seriously the emancipation of the family from kitchen and wash-tub. Public kitchens which give better food than home-made, public laundries where your linen is neither torn nor stolen, public nurseries under good teachers who find in this work the inspiration of their calling.

Thus the road to the new family is double. The cultural development of a class and the personality within the class; and the material enrichment of the class organized as a state. Meantime he suggests that progressive families try experiments in co-operative laundries, co-operative kitchens, co-operative nurseries, in order to determine what parts of family life can advantageously be handled collectively. The first successes in this sphere will call forth others. In time to come, the enriched state will take hold of this process, with the assistance of local municipalities and co-operatives, will generalize the work, will widen and deepen it. In this way will the human family perform, in the words of Engels, the jump from the state of compulsion into the state of freedom.

## "GETTING BORN" IN THE SOVIET UNION

Apparently the Soviet Union is the only land where increase of population goes on at a greater rate than before the World War. As a cheerful health official said to me: "There are more little Bolsheviks every day." Others look at it not so cheerfully; I heard Keynes solemnly warn a large assembly of Moscow officials, during his visit here, that they were laying up a frightful future for themselves by allowing such expansion of population. The audience smiled at his remarks and afterwards I heard many of them ridiculing the idea. What! With all Siberia and Central Asia to spread to, with untold wealth of mines, forests, and fields to be developed, could the Soviet Union beget too many children? Was not the proper way rather to organize life so that each child could properly and healthfully become a producer of national wealth with skill and ability?

That is the Russian view today. In no other civilized land are children produced with such ease and lack of worry, either on the part of mothers or of statisticians. In my visits to rest-houses and sanitariums, I come upon many mothers who have been sent for a vacation or "cure" from some factory. Quite often they bring along a small child—quite incidentally to share bed and board without extra charge. No more work, it seems, than an extra suit-case.

The government's attitude greatly increases the ease of having and rearing babies. So the

birth-rate is increasing, due to ease in the conditions of life. At the same time, surprisingly, the death-rate among babies is decreasing strikingly, due also to the special care given through state funds to mothers. These two factors, seldom acting together, are operating now in the Soviet Union, and the result is a natural increase in population higher than in any country whose statistics are known.

This is only one of the many striking facts brought out at the recent All Union Congress for Protection of Motherhood and Infancy, composed of delegates from boards of health all over the land. Other equally striking reports, which would send a shudder through most assemblies outside the Soviet Union, related to five years' experience of "legalized abortions," which the speakers declared no health workers now would give up. The nation-wide experiment in this delicate field was handled frankly and constructively with only one criterion of judgment. Not morals, nor traditions, but the health of women and the proper care of future babies. That is the only aspect of motherhood and infancy with which the state feels competent to wrestle. Abortions, illegitimacy, casual sex relations, are all considered today in the Soviet Union, not as coming under the field of criminal law, but the field of health and child protection. The only penalty attached to irresponsible actions in this sphere, is not the criminal penalty of a jail sentence or a fine, as in many lands, but the enforcement of a rule that every man and woman shall openly support his own offspring, however it may have been

produced. This may in the end prove a greater deterrent to irresponsible action than any criminal code.

Whenever I talk with workers in this sphere, or read their reports, I am surprised again and again by the freshness and frankness with which they disregard all taboos of custom or preconceived penalties, and come back always to the one criterion—the health of mothers and babies. No moral ideals, no communist ideals even, are allowed to interfere. Marriage laws, abortion permits, raise simply the question: What is good for healthy survival? When it was discovered, for instance, that foundlings died in the best hospitals but survived when farmed out to mothers all communist theories to the contrary were given up, and a widespread system of individual family care for motherless babies was instituted in Moscow, with good pay and under solicitous state control.

Professor Mihailovski, a well known statistician in the field of health, is authority for the figures on births and deaths in the Soviet Union. All over the world, he points out, marriages and births increased immediately after the world war, when the soldier boys came home to their sweethearts. But in other lands this was a brief spasm of one year; in Russia marriages are still increasing, reaching last year 13 to every thousand persons, about two-thirds higher than the prewar norm. And lest some cynic assume that these are new marriages following many divorces, he goes on to point out that divorce continues low, and for

the entire land is only five or six percent of the number of marriages, a figure barely half that of the United States, if my memory serves me.

Along with marriages, births also are going up in contrast to most countries in Europe. Professor Mihailovski points out the terrible depression caused in the German birth-rate by the after war conditions, which sank from 300 births to 210 in every ten thousand population, a figure almost as low as France and showing the result of the hard life since the war. Thousands of women are in jail today in Germany for trying to commit abortions, in order to avoid unwanted babies. In Russia no one can be put in jail for this, but none the less the births increase, and have reached 430 to every ten thousand population, which is approximately the prewar figure. This increase comes, of course, after a great sinking in the birth-rate during the period of civil war and famine.

Meantime the death-rate of babies, which is usually high with a high birth-rate, has been sinking rapidly. That this is due to the special help given to mothers and babies through the social insurance is shown very clearly by the fact that it is precisely in the crowded industrial districts, where the highest death-rate among babies prevailed before the war, that the lowest death-rate now exists. In Tver, the industrial section where the famous Russian samovars are made, together with other brass work and many injurious trades, there used to be 37 deaths in every hundred babies born. Less than one youngster in three had a chance

to survive. Now, since the social insurance gives special care to women through factory organization, six out of every seven babies in Tver survive; the death-rate has sunk to 14 per hundred.

Among the ignorant peasant women, where health organization grows more slowly, the babies still die in fairly large proportions. But even here improvement is shown. Nijni Novgorod province, on the Volga, has fallen from 32 to 17 deaths per hundred babies. Yaroslavl from 30 to 17, and others in proportion. Moscow, in spite of appalling housing conditions, has reduced infant mortality from 26.3 percent to 13.7 percent. But perhaps, after all, the housing conditions have grown worse only for the "bourgeois." For statistics show that although industrial workers live about four to a room in Moscow at present, they lived six to a room in pre-revolutionary Moscow, before they rose up and moved into the "bourgeois" homes! It is those of us who are accustomed to one room or more per person who feel acutely the present housing shortage in Moscow.

Madame Lebedeva, head of the Section on Motherhood and Infancy in the Health Department of Russia, noted with approval that the delegates were not yet satisfied. "The whole conference sighed," she exclaimed, "when we heard the high infant mortality in certain provinces. This of itself shows that we have left behind the unstandardized years and are measuring ourselves by what we know ought to be accomplished. Yet we have really done much. In great poverty and with no



trained workers, we have reduced the prewar deaths of babies by half already. I said to my statistician: 'Be careful! They'll check us up not only in the east but also in the western nations!'. . . But we checked in every way, by questionnaires and direct proof, by registrations of city after city. We may be mistaken by a fraction of a percent, but the general picture holds. Baby deaths, especially in factory districts, have been cut in half in Russia."

Lebedeva went on to mention the steady increase of the institutions caring for babies. Factory day-nurseries—where working mothers leave their infants and come every three hours for an hour's leave on pay to nurse them, have increased as follows:

|           |      |           |
|-----------|------|-----------|
| 1917..... | 14   | nurseries |
| 1918..... | 78   | "         |
| 1919..... | 126  | "         |
| 1920..... | 565  | "         |
| 1921..... | 668  | "         |
| 1922..... | 914  | "         |
| 1923..... | 447* | "         |
| 1924..... | 503  | "         |
| 1925..... | 584  | "         |

These are the figures for Russia proper; in

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\*The sudden drop in nurseries in 1923 was due to the gradual working of the new economic policy, under which factories began to have to pay real money for everything, including nurseries. In 1923 the rouble was stabilized, leading to enforced economies. The great expansion of nurseries in the years preceding shows how far in advance of the actual resources of the state the ideal of caring for all babies ran. The present increase is based, of course, on a more solid foundation.

the entire Soviet Union there are 778 factory nurseries.

There have been so many generalizations about the Soviet Union, and so few facts—so many descriptions of special homes for babies without reference to the extent to which they serve the entire population—that I am going to risk wearying you with a few more statistics from Lebedeva's report. There are 103 homes in the Soviet Union which care for mothers and babies for a few weeks after birth. There are 521 consultations for children, to which mothers bring babies for free advice of doctors; 276 consultations for pregnant women; 276 village consultations for mothers on all subjects connected with child health; 130 legal consultation offices where mothers may learn their legal rights for the support of children. In the last four years there have been established 2,614 day-nurseries for summer time in rural districts, so that the men and women, who, according to old peasant methods, still work in the fields together, may leave their babies not, as in the past, in the care of some slightly older sister, but under trained direction, themselves receiving also many hints on care of babies. "The old women don't believe what the nurse tells them about babies," grinned a peasant to me. "However," he added proudly, "my wife believes her. My wife can read and write and is a progressive woman." Such are the influences that are steadily saving babies' lives even in the distant countrysides of Russia.

An amusing pamphlet issued by the Friends

Service tells what uphill work some of these "consultations" are in backward village districts. There are outraged mothers who think it a reflection on their honesty and mother love to weigh the babies—"do they wish to see if the food is really inside them? But are we the enemies of our own that we should steal from their little mouths?" "O, Lord, what a trial," cries another, "they've invented curing well babies!" "And she says, don't give him the pacifier. Don't swing him. Don't give him the breast every time he cries, but give it by the clock. That's the way to drive your man out-of-doors! And who is to have a clock always!"

But in a few months the consultations make their way, and the experienced mothers begin to lecture the newcomers. "Stop rocking him! Take off that bonnet and unwrap him! What kind of a babka are you to keep him bundled up in this warm room! Look at the picture there of the happy baby and the sick baby! The doctor will give it to you!" This sort of work goes on now every month of the year in half a thousand consultations, and during the summer months in 2,614 nurseries.

The factory baby, as everyone knows, is in a much better situation than his country cousin. The social insurance funds take from every industry amounts equaling from one-sixth to one-seventh of the total pay-roll, and use it lavishly for the care of invalid workers and for the birth-expenses of factory babies, whether these are born to working women or the wives of workers. I visited one of the fac-

tory nurseries in Moscow maintained on these funds; not in any land have I seen a better one. The most striking feature of it was the complete absence of the "charity" feature. The mothers who patronized this nursery controlled it through their own committee and had no more sense of receiving charity than a mother whose child goes to a public school in the United States. Technical features of excellence were also not lacking. Isolation rooms for slight ailments developing during the day; clean special clothing provided for each infant on arrival, segregation by age groups, constant attendance of nurses and daily visit of doctor—all of these were routine features. The mothers came every three hours to nurse their babies—and were given full factory pay during those hours by the social insurance. If the baby was ill, the mother was sent home, and a slip from the nurse gave her that day's pay from the same bounteous social insurance. Even the layette and the extra food for the mother came from the same source.

"Babies must be a very expensive item to industry," I remarked to the factory director, expecting perhaps to hear him echo a complaint.

"Babies are always expensive to someone," was his calm rejoinder.

There you have the assumption underlying all baby care in the Soviet Union—that the industry in which a man works owes support not only to him as a worker, but as a human being in all the manifold functions of life. That it owes him care for his children and education,

clubs and civic enlightenment. And especially that industry in which a woman who works must look after her babies. It is, for instance, forbidden by law to discharge a pregnant woman—except in extreme cases, such as the shut-down of an entire factory. And, since all regulations have their abuses, it occasionally happens that pregnant women seek jobs, concealing their condition, in order to have the care that goes to all factory workers bearing babies.

These are the factors that have brought the general mortality rate in over-crowded Moscow down to a figure lower than that of Paris (in Moscow 14.5 for every thousand population; in Paris 16.5), and that in general are bringing the cities of the former "dark Russia" to compare favorably with other European cities in the matter of death-rates.

No doubt the most startling innovation in all the Soviet Union's health program for women is that factory women who have abortions performed "on permit" not only receive no obloquy or prosecution, but actually get a free operation and sick leave on pay from the social insurance. This is a complete overturning of all precedent. Even the discussion of five years of "legalized abortion," as carried on in the Motherhood Congress, would probably be unprintable in most lands. Not that it indulges in unpleasant details; on the contrary, it is most calmly constructive. But this is a problem which most countries still try to banish by ignoring its existence.

In Russia a woman who does not want to

bear the baby already conceived within her goes, if she is a factory worker, to the woman representative on the Committee for Protecting Labor in her factory. "Look here," she says, "I have three children already. I simply can't look after another." The committee talks with her, tries to find some way for her to manage, but, failing in this, gives her a note to the Motherhood and Infancy Section of the local Health Department, certifying the fact and making such recommendation as they see fit. Here, also, a social worker talks to her and if unable to convince her that she can manage to care for another child properly, will give her a slip to the hospital, where she gets her operation, and sick leave on pay.

If the woman is unable to convince the factory committee, and fails to secure her permit, she may go to a private physician and a private hospital and secure an operation by paying for it. It is quite legal for any physician to do this; the only prosecution comes if he does it under unsanitary conditions leading to complications. He is then punished for malpractice.

Simple and direct. In a field where, since the world began, there has never been either simplicity or directness, but only hidden, groping anguish. Yet every health worker in the conference took it for granted that abortions were a serious evil. An evil like any disease or any operation. But an evil to be cured not by suppression and criminal prosecution, but by cultural improvement of the entire community along two lines. First, make it possi-

ble for every mother to know that her baby will be properly cared for if she wants it. Second, make it easy for every woman to know the best and most hygienic methods to prevent it, if she does not want it! The state itself, through its Department of Health, actually disseminating information on birth control. And making investigations into the best methods! So that the having of children, or the not having of them, will be a matter not of compulsion, or fear, or chance, but of the free choice of every woman, who knows that she can avoid them if she wishes, or can bear them in the knowledge that they will be properly cared for. Such is the ideal which the Soviet Union, through its Health Department, openly sets before itself. And meantime, its conference discusses the problem of abortion calmly, and frankly, as a misfortune, not a crime.

Dr. Hens, in his long report, says:

Five years ago we legalized abortions. Five years ago we took on ourselves the responsibility for this most radical solution of the painful question with its tremendous social significance. A weighing of the problem is entirely timely. In 1920 very many physicians and health workers opposed legalization; today you will hardly find one.

In Germany today from five to seven thousand working and peasant women sit in jail for undergoing this "criminal" operation. A woman there may get imprisonment at hard labor for five years, and even if conditions are held to justify her act, the judge cannot forgive her. The least he can give her is six months. In France also, the doctor gets up to five years in jail, and the women up to two years for agreeing. All over Europe it is the same. Yet this does not stop abortions. The number in Berlin is the same as in Leningrad; 56 to every ten thousand population. And we know that

all of ours are registered openly; but we do not know of all the German ones. . . . This is not an accidental coincidence; it proves the social nature of the problem. Not individual evil-will, but pressure of social conditions, causes this evil. It cannot be cured by suppression or by jail sentences. In spite of all jail sentences, various German authorities agree that the number has increased greatly since the war and has now reached one-quarter of all births.

But in Germany, due to the suppression and fear, there are many more deaths andcripplings of women from this cause than with us. There were 13 deaths from septic poisoning in Berlin to 3 in Leningrad in every 1,000 women undergoing either births or abortions. The high percentage in Berlin—that civilized city where science and medicine are far more advanced than in backward Russia—is explainable only by the illegal abortions, conducted under the most appalling conditions.

Since 1920, when we for the first time in history legalized abortions, we began to get authentic information about their causes. We have had data based on 131,572 cases. We still have many suppressed, secret operations, of people who through shame or ignorance do not come to the hospital until they have attempted other means. These secret abortions are the worst evil; it is these that kill or ruin the health of women. But these are now decreasing. In the cities now about one-third start in this way; but in the villages still nearly one-half.

So the doctors go on to say that the chief evil to fight is the hidden unhygienic operations in rural districts, and that the fight must be waged—shades of tradition and taboo preserve us—by increasing the number of free beds for this operation in the village hospitals! And by giving more sanitary information to peasant women, giving them advice about how to prevent superfluous pregnancies.

Says Lebedeva, summing up discussion as



chairman: "As for these committees that give permits, if they get the idea that their chief function is to fight abortions, that is a mistake. For if they are too strict in granting permits, they lead to an increase of unauthorized and hence unsanitary measures. Their function is rather to be committees of social assistance. When you are able widely to assist the birth of the child and its upbringing, then you will be able actually to fight this evil. Along with this goes general information against pregnancy. This is a question discussed also in the west; but the approach is different. The western groups follow the false road of Malthus, believing that to limit population is to help the working class. We do not consider that birth control is such a panacea. Improvement of the working class is with us on a different plane, it depends on the economic organization and control of the country's wealth. But birth control is a purely personal problem of hygiene and the care of children. We must discover the best methods and give them to all who wish them!"

Down among the dark, uninformed masses of Russia's peasant women—they who have borne more and lost more children than any women of the western world—there is stirring a revolt! In a questionnaire, some five thousand peasant women, applying for the operation that in other lands is criminal, gave their reasons. One-third of all gave material need as a motive; another third the large number of children already born, or the presence of another child to be nursed; and the remaining third various

Instabilities in the marriage relation or medical reasons.

Racy with the breath of the soil are many of the comments of these women. "I am ashamed to be always bearing children," said one. "Literate people do not give birth; only we fools keep on," cried another peasant woman. And a third says, "Children have tortured me to death; where shall I put them? it is time for me to cut this." Through comments like these one glimpses the burden of generations of laboring women, who, until now, have been buried unexpressive and dumb under the sentimental assumption of men that motherhood is always a joy.

The resolution passed on the report concerning abortions is interesting because it expresses the views of an All Union Congress, from the far corners of European and Asiatic Russia, from the Caucasus and the Ukraine, 638 delegates, all of them health workers, most of them women. Great Russians, White Russians, Poles, Armenians, Jews, Ukrainians, Tartars, Chuvash, Lithuanians, Germans, Rumanians, Zierane, Finns. All the ends of the earth were met and they passed this resolution, which is worthy of note for its fearlessly constructive approach to a world-old tragedy:

1. The congress recognizes that the decree on legalization of abortions has justified itself.

2. Declaring that in the sphere of rural abortions the chief danger for the moment is the wide wave of hidden operations that ruin the health and kill the peasant woman, the congress considers that the basic problem here is the struggle with these concealed operations, by means of creating greater

facilities for carrying out the operation in the local hospitals.

3. The further economic development of the country, the popularization of our soviet laws on alimony for support of children, the organization of the community services to the family, and the organization of more institutions for the care of mothers and babies, will show results in the fighting of abortions.

4. The congress considers that in this fight, in the coming period, a most essential measure is the familiarization of women with preventive measures, through consultations for women and through gynecological ambulatories; and also wide assistance to needy pregnant women.

So ended the discussion on this hitherto undiscussed subject.

But not only do health conferences in the Soviet Union today violate all traditions and ideals of morality of the past; they also violate the traditions and ideals of their own communist hopes. For hardly was this subject ended than the congress passed to another—the farming out of motherless infants to private care. Private care! What is more anathema to a good communist! Has not the Soviet State even been accused of taking away children from their own mothers in order that the state might more completely control them? (This, by the way, is an error. It has been advocated by many important communists, but has never been actually done except in conditions of emergency through famine, when the mothers dumped the children on the state through dire starvation). But now this same state is actually hunting new private mothers to look after motherless children, who are obviously and unconditionally the wards of the state!

The reason is simple. It is the same reason as before—the health of babies. Experiment showed in Moscow, as it has also shown in New York and elsewhere, that nursing babies could not survive in hospitals, even with the best care and attention. The 40 to 60 percent mortality among foundlings, running up in some institutions to practically 100 percent, is no worse in Russia than in other lands. The Soviet Union chose the same way out as that recommended by the best advice of New York foundations: to give the babies out under state inspection, to individual mothers. But when the first experiment of this kind was tried in Moscow, the measure of state control showed itself in the regulations adopted.

The Moscow Health Department advertised through the Baby Consultations that mothers were wanted to look after babies for pay. Many women applied, and after very careful investigation, of 1,250 applicants, 450 were chosen. Each woman was investigated from both the social and sanitary standpoint, and was given a blood test. The babies also, who were to be given to these new mothers, were given blood tests to avoid infecting some unsuspecting woman. The mother then received a bed, bath tub, linen and clothing for the baby. She was paid \$12.50 a month for her work, which is a reasonable consideration in Moscow. She got also free milk and gruel and fruit juices from the Consultation. All children must be brought once each week to the Consultation for examination; and once each week also the doctor or nurse inspects the home. A significant note adds that

"delegatkas also inspect occasionally." These delegatkas are women delegates from trade unions who make it their business to perform the function of good, prying citizens generally. Evidently, the mother who took a baby from the state to rear ceased to be a private person!

Practically all the babies given out were underweight, some little more than half of normal. But almost all began to improve, as babies have improved under similar treatment in other lands. The new thing in the Soviet Union is not the style of treatment, which can be duplicated by good organization for child care in many cities, but the fact that, a revolution having once upset traditions, new methods can be adopted easily, and when once proved useful, can be spread with a rapidity unhampered by any customs or traditions or vested interests, even vested charitable interests. Anyone who has worked in charitable organizations knows what this means!

Not yet has the Soviet Union removed the ancient burden of women, that in physical pain and in mental incertitude must she bear her child. Not yet even has the chance of life for Russia's babies reached that of the most favored cities of America where pure water and milk and adequate means keep death rates down. But the gains of the past few years are surely enormous. A baby death-rate cut in half in industrial centers. Already the factory woman faces birth with the knowledge that many of the most grinding insecurities will be spared her by the social insurance, and that the cost of having a baby will not fall alone on

her weak shoulders. Already the battle has been openly launched by the powers of the state against that most humiliating of burdens—the bearing of unwanted babies under compulsion of ignorance and violence. Being a baby today in Russia is a rather proud affair. Not only your dotting mother, but an equally dotting state bows before you, considering you the “flower of life and of our future.” What wonder then, that from that land of the unborn—which Maeterlinck describes in the *Blue Bird*, whence the children set out to seek mothers—such an increasing number of babies are hastening to be Bolsheviks!

## WOMEN'S LIFE THROUGH THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

It's a hard life, keeping house through a revolution. But millions of women managed it, in all kinds of ways. Some of them understood what was happening to them and some of them didn't. Some of them took part, vitally, in overthrowing the old and establishing the new order, and rose to places of prominence unattained by women anywhere else in the world. Others merely suffered dumbly an unknown cataclysm that tore from them sons and husbands and left them starving with their babies. And others, out of the great mass of workers and peasants, saw the swift dawning of a new opportunity for knowledge and freedom, and grasped it, and began to use it.

I made a speech once in the city of Kiev to a great woman's meeting. Wives of workingmen, mostly, with faded shawls over their heads and faded working dresses, for working women do not yet dress up in Russia to go to meetings. I made it in very bad French and another woman translated it into Russian no doubt improving it and adding what she thought necessary for the occasion. So I am not sure if my meaning ever reached those women exactly. But I know the band played the International at every pause in my speech and the women applauded. They thought I was very wonderful, because I was a comrade come all

the way from America. But I was trying to tell them that every woman in that audience was more wonderful than I.

Every one of them had kept house through sixteen bombardments. The city of Kiev changed governments sixteen times by force of arms. The Germans took it, and Denikin and the Poles and the Volunteers and the Bandits. And between them, each time, again and again the Bolsheviks. When we read in the papers of bombardments, we think only of shells and the dread excitement of warfare. But if you ask a woman of Kiev what life is like in a bombardment, she will tell you that it means cooking meals when the water works have been blown up and you have to walk a mile to the river for water; when the coal supply is cut off by armies and you have to hunt for furniture to burn in your broken stove.

Madame Rakovski, who sits now with her husband in the historic Russian Embassy in Paris, dining with diplomats and receiving elaborate floral tributes from American millionaires en route to Russia, told me how she washed the family clothes through the fuelless winters of Petrograd, in a room below freezing and in water from which ice had been broken, till her arms above the elbows were raw as butcher's meat in a shop. . . . "But somehow, I couldn't let the family go dirty," she remarked, displaying in the remark that woman's heroism which may not make revolutions but which keeps life going through them. She laughed as she told me also how when she first came south to the bountiful wheat region, she



gorged herself on plain white bread, without butter or cheese, till she fell sick from over-eating. "All winter in Petrograd there had been no white bread. There had been cheese and butter and caviar, but hardly any grain. So we ate butter on cheese, or caviar on butter till we got so sick of them that when I finally saw plenty of white bread I didn't want anything else with it."

Another woman of high position told me how they used to go down to the city hall square in Moscow and watch the big placard where was posted the position of food trains. For Moscow lived like a besieged city, with armies to north and south and east and west; and if no food arrived on Monday to give you your tiny ration of bread, you could go down to the square and feast your eyes at least on the knowledge that the train had passed the firing line and would perhaps arrive on Wednesday!

"Getting clothes was even worse," she said. And she told me how all the clothes and cotton and woolen goods in the country had been gathered in big government warehouses, and no one was allowed to have any more till they proved that their old ones were quite worn out. "I went to apply once for a pair of stockings, because I heard that a lot of new ones had been unearthed. I stood all day in line to get permission, showing them that I had only one pair left and that was falling to pieces. Then I stood in line another day and found it was the wrong window. When at last I got to the right place, I found they had never had my size at

all." She laughed as she told me this, but it was no laughing matter in those days. It was a matter of grim endurance.

How did women keep house under these conditions? The historians of revolutions omit these little details which make up life for half mankind. They crowded into the fewest possible rooms and tore up woodwork and furniture for fuel. The plumbing burst in the vacant rooms and in spring the thawing pipes added to the damage. When I myself arrived in Moscow, in August, 1921, the city water system could not force water above the second floors of dwellings or hotels, because of the numberless leaks all over the city.

During those days the children were gathered together, and sent out of town to places of food. Scores of beautiful villas once inhabited by the aristocracy of Russia, were filled by poorly clad, hungry children. Epidemics swept through crowded, unheated children's homes and carried off many lives. Yet a mother told me: "It was the only chance for my child. In the city where I had to work, there was no possibility of caring for her. Not a drop of milk or a crumb of decent bread to give her. So I got her sent to the country, where at least she had milk and bread. But she died, of scarlet fever, one Sunday morning just before I reached her. Diseases swept so easily through these children's homes."

It was a girl of twenty-three who spoke thus about the death of her baby. Yet she was not brooding over it, as a woman in more leisurely circumstances might. So much tragedy had

happened around her that personal details had ceased to seem so important. At twenty-three, with husband and child both dead, she was starting to go to college! Such is the casual vitality of the Russian woman.

The life of another friend of mine shows the effect which revolutionary strain had in breaking up personal relations. Sonia, a girl in her late teens, married during the first years of the revolution. Later she wanted to go to the front to fight but her husband opposed it. She left him and fought with the armies for a year and a half; she organized and managed a great military hospital where a thousand men lay sick of typhus. When she got back, she found her husband living with another woman; so she got a divorce, and whatever her inner thoughts, she had been trained in too hard a school to show any outer signs of grief.

Then suddenly, down on the Volga, working with me in famine fighting, she heard that her former husband was alone and sick with typhus. Sonia packed up her things and went back to Moscow to nurse him. In an American novel, this episode would be good for many pages of soul analysis. But in Sonia's active life it was only an incident. She went back, not as to a husband, but as to a relative who needed help, nursing him, and then leaving him as soon as he was well enough to do without her. The Revolution had torn them apart as lovers, but they were still good friends.

Russian women today, at least in the cities, are very independent. Practically every woman I know has her own job outside her home.

Lenin's wife, who goes by her own name Krupskaja, is head of one of the bureaus in the Department of Education. Trotsky's wife manages the museums of Moscow, since she is well acquainted with art and historical subjects; when Trotsky goes south for his vacation, she may or may not find time to go with him.

That women as well as men should work outside the home, is nothing new in Russia or anywhere else in the world. Always the primitive peasant woman has worked in the fields along with her husband, as she still labors today on the great Volga plains. Always the wife of the factory worker has been forced into the factory to eke out his meager earnings. So when the working class took power in Russia, it was nothing new that their wives should still continue working. What is new is the equality of opportunity which has been introduced for women. For always in the past, woman has been given the weariest, and worst paid jobs. In the Soviet Union this still persists, due to the lack of training among women. But strong efforts are made, and are already succeeding, to draw more and more women into public life, to send more and more to higher schools of learning. There is no political or social or economic barrier today for woman in the Soviet Union; there is not even the barrier of her motherhood, since for that she receives state aid and special funds; there is only the barrier of her own ignorance, which is already being torn down by united attempts of government, party and trade unions.

Elsewhere in the world one may hear women

boast of the number of posts in government that have been acquired by women. Nowhere else does the government itself boast that "we have succeeded in drawing into our local municipal and county councils a membership of one third women." Yet such was the proud boast I read in the official newspaper of Kiev.

In higher posts one has Kollontai, the first woman to head a great government department anywhere in the world, and now the first woman ambassador in history. One of the acting heads of the Department of Education is Yakovleva, a woman. It was Madame Radek who superintended the sending back to Poland of more than a million prisoners of war and famine-stricken refugees. There are women managers of trusts and factories, women holding important posts in the cooperatives. In the Central Congress of Soviets, the highest governing body of the land, there is always a fair sprinkling of women, the most striking of whom are the women of Turkestan in Central Asia, whose mothers still live in harems behind the veil, but who themselves, the younger generation, take part with men in public assemblies.

All of these women have histories of privation, struggle, achievement. I remember a beautiful girl in her twenties whom I met convoying a train-load of famine victims slowly and painfully with many stops on side-tracks, to lands of bread. Clad in leather jacket and breeches as protection against cold and vermin, she slept in the midst of twenty men on planks in a box-car, fitting up her office with two

boards in one corner. Yet she was a graduate of a university and very charming. . . .

I remember another, heiress to a large estate under the czardom, who had fled with her aunt in the days of peasant uprisings, and had watched the older woman die while waiting for trains in a station. The girl herself discovered that she had organizing ability, that when she spoke to struggling crowds of refugees, she could induce order. Building her future on this trait she is now a traveling instructor under the Department of Agriculture. She says that she thinks on the whole she is happier now than in the old days.

"What was there for me then, but to sit on a big estate till I got married and then sit some more on a big estate? Now I feel that I really am useful in the life of my country."

Another girl of my acquaintance, a student in the university now, went as nurse girl to the fever-stricken Volga when she was but sixteen years old. She had typhus, typhoid and smallpox, all in succession, in a miserable pest-house where the patients were crowded two in a bed. She woke from delirium to feel the dying struggles of the old woman in bed with her. Terrified, she rolled to the floor and lay through the night while the woman died above her. She herself was so far gone that the doctor said: "Put her with the dead ones"—by the merciless rule that reserved the scanty food and care for those who still had a chance. When they took away the corpses a day later, she opened her eyes and the doctor said: "She

has more strength than I thought—put her back!"

So she lived. She will always have stomach trouble from eating substitute straw bread after typhoid. But she walks six miles a day to study at the university. And in the evening, after working for board and bed in a family, she writes page after page of music, her own composition. Not sad, minor tunes, like the ancient folk songs of Russia, but songs with a touch of rollicking defiance.

Among others I have known was a student at the university who was sent there as a reward for ability shown at the front in the civil war, still naive and fresh in her enthusiasms, after two years of warfare. None of these girls take their personal life, either its joys or its tragedies, too seriously. If they fall in love, they slip quietly down and "get registered," or even dispense with that ceremony. There are no engagement parties or press announcements. Their friends discover the fact by finding them living together. And when the baby arrives, there is a day nursery at the university. But none of these girls consider marriage their chief end in life. Their job, their function in the revolution, is their chief end; marriage is merely their choice of companionship, not a special career.

But the real change in woman's life today in the Soviet Union, must be looked for not among the students, who have always been more or less carefree, but among the women of the factory. The peasant woman is also feeling a new freedom. Occasionally one reads of a backward

village in the plains of Siberia where the women have gone on strike against beatings by their husbands, and have unitedly compelled the men of the village to come to terms. Peasant girls take their own mates, in defiance of ancient custom whereby the respective families agreed on the betrothals. Peasant mothers are finding the rapidly spreading field nurseries a good place to leave their babies during the field work, and are learning new methods of baby care from the nurse.

But after all, the peasant woman is still to a large extent backward and illiterate, only beginning to use the new freedom which has been thrust upon her and which she herself did nothing to obtain. It is rather in the factories where the women, together with men, fought for the revolution, and where the Soviet Union has made for womanhood a new world.

I shall never forget the tiny, skinny old woman in a black sleazy dress, who got up on the stage in the Grand Opera House of Moscow, in the days of the Curzon ultimatum, after Trotsky and Chicherin had finished speaking. She had no sense of embarrassment, but spoke in a high shrill voice charged with feeling. "I can't make great speeches like Comrades Trotsky and Chicherin. I'm only a factory woman from Rezan. And I never had any schooling except three months learning to read and write under the soviets. But all the life I got, I got from the revolution, and a fish could live without water better than we could live now without our soviets."

There are tens of thousands of such won



who before the revolution lived in darkness, in miserable barracks with two families to a room. Illiterate, slaves of man and of factory manager and of their own ignorance. And now they have learned to read; they have been sent to some technical school; they are beginning to hold public jobs and do public work, on municipal committees; they find the burdens of motherhood lifted by the social insurance, which gives them four months vacation on pay, and extra food and clothing for the bearing of a child, and furnishes free day nurseries, and is attempting to furnish central cooperative laundries and kitchens.

The past from which these women have come is extremely dark.\* They are constantly writing to the papers little letters expressing their joy in the better times that have come. One tells about how she used to be beaten by the mistress for whom her father worked, how she was made to serve the whims of her mistress's children, how her longing for school was denied with jests. "Quite different is the life of my children. My oldest son is a comsomol; he has sport and clubs and many classes to learn everything. My oldest daughter works in the office of the court. She is all the time merry; she studies civics; she comes home and teaches me. The middle son and daughter are Pioneers; they also have their clubs and classes. There they have music, there they rest, there they v and there they learn."

\* Dunja, the Story of a Working Woman, in *'s' Life in Soviet Russia*. (Little Blue Book 5.)

The more energetic of the factory women become "delegatkas," women delegates, each representing five or ten other women in the general meetings of workers which guide the workers' affairs in the factory. There are about half a million of these "delegatkas" in Russian factories today. In the past year efforts were made to draw them into "social work," which means public affairs of all kinds. Whereas in January, 1924, 60,000 of these women did "social work"; there were 147,000 doing it in January, 1925. Of these some 68,000 were doing "soviet work," i.e., acting on municipal commissions, housing, health, taxation, unpaid government work of all kinds. Trade union work absorbed 31,000 on its wage committees, sanitary committees in factories, cultural committees. Some 20,000 were actively working on boards of management or various committees in the co-operatives, and 29,000 were in miscellaneous social work.

"How does it work out?" said one of them to me. "I will show you. At five o'clock the factory ends, then comes the study circle. Then perhaps the factory committee or the group for reduction of illiteracy, or the committee on protection of mother and child. Life demands and you must hurry to be everywhere at once. Because the mass of working women not only trust you but demand of you."

Comrade Chernoshof, a "delegatka," is forty-four years old. She began work at fifteen years, working ten hours daily. Last year she learned to read and write and joined the party. She is a member of the shop committee, working

at the loom and fighting for improvement of production. She discovers that the trouble with factory production is the poor sizing used on the goods. She proves this, and gets it changed. That is the sort of work that delegatkas do.

Here is Anna Kulikova, a director of a factory, who has worked 27 years in one place. She also learned to read and write since the revolution, was sent for three years to a school for delegatkas and came back to join the factory shop committee. Then she was sent for higher technical courses and is now a full-fledged manager, with 1,000 workers under her. She put special washing rooms into the factory and decreased waste. She is a good manager and a mother to all her flock of women workers. "To whom but to Anna could you go," says one of them, "when your husband drinks and it is pay-day and you want to get off fifteen minutes early so as to get to him before he has his money! She'll let you off to take care of the wages."

In another factory you ask: "Where is the director?" "She is on decreed leave" comes the answer, referring to the decreed leave of absence granted to all women to have babies. So the youthful factory director is found at home, nursing the baby. Her father was a cab-driver, her mother illiterate; neither of these taught her to run a factory. The revolution gave her the chance and her quick brain and rugged health made use of it.

The questions that come to these delegatkas how how the old, superstitious life is struggling among ignorant women with the new

ideas. "Aunt Daria," says one woman to a delegatka, "here's Olga, my daughter, who wants to get married. But her young man is a young communist. And I say she must get married in church or it will not hold." To which the delegatka answers: "Well, what of it? Look here. The folks that lived next to you, they married in church, but didn't they part?" . . . Next day Olga comes and falls at the delegatka's feet. "Thanks, Aunt Daria; mother agrees to my getting registered."

These delegatkas have meetings twice a month. The local doctor reports on the condition of the hospital; the local judge on the people's court, or the director of the factory comes before them and tells how production is getting on. They have regular courses in civics and government. They are the energetic elements which are expected to enlighten gradually the whole mass of factory women.

Lenin boasts:

No democratic country in the world, not even the most advanced, has done one-hundredth part as much for women as we have done in the first years of our existence. We have left no stone unturned of those damnable laws of inequality of women, of difficulty of divorce, and the vulgar, mean formalities that preceded it, of the non-recognition of illegal children. Remnants of these laws still exist in all bourgeois countries. We can a thousand times be proud of what we have done in this sphere. But the more we clear the soil from the remnants of old bourgeois laws and institutions, the clearer it becomes that this is merely clearing soil for a new structure, but not yet the structure itself.

Woman continues to remain a household in spite of emancipating laws, because she is oppressed and stifled by petty household cares, being driven to kitchen and nursery, stealing her

by barbarically non-productive, petty, nervous, deadening work. Real emancipation will begin only with a mass struggle against this petty household, and a mass reconstruction of life into large socialist households. Public dining rooms, nurseries, kindergartens—these are the simple unexciting means which can really free woman. Created, as are all the material requisites of socialism, by large capital. But under capitalism they are either commercialized or are acrobatic stunts of philanthropy, which the more independent workers justly hated and despised. We have many more of these institutions and they are beginning to change their character.

Probably no women living in America, and certainly none of those enjoying the charming bungalows of the Pacific coast, can have any idea of the backwardness of housekeeping in Russia, based as it was on a race of servants whose comfort need not be considered. Perhaps the farm women of our western prairies know something of it, those women who struggled in kitchens without running water, or decent light, but even they have never carried water from the distant village well. America has long since found a way out of the wearisome housekeeping of Europe—the way of electric conveniences and well-planned dwellings; but even in America there are housewives who feel enslaved by labor. Russia is seeking a different way out—the way of public kitchens, co-operative day nurseries. These things have been introduced in a few places in America, but already they have attained wide development in Russia.

It is interesting to go into a plain little factory restaurant, with oil-cloth tables and simple white crockery, and see on the wall: "Public

dining-rooms—the road to socialism.” Or Lenin’s statement: “No nation can be free when half of its population is enslaved in the kitchen.” Or “In unity there is strength.” As yet these dining-rooms are little more than the cheap workers’ restaurants run in America for profit; but here they are run at cost by committees of workers from the factory.

When a factory makes profits, 20 percent of these go to a special fund for the daily life of the workers, and the more progressive workers are always agitating to use these funds for co-operative housing, kitchens, nurseries. The women are now agitating widely for co-operative laundries, and most factories have them. In some it is merely a room with boiling water and various conveniences, where each woman brings her own laundry; but an increasing number of factories have now mechanical laundries run co-operatively for their workers.

By far the most comfortable houses in Moscow today are the various Workers’ Communes, in which the workers of a given factory take over not only one but several large apartment houses and organize their life within it. I still remember the envy with which I gazed at the house of the Amo Auto-Workers. Secured from the city rent free for ten years in return for making fundamental repairs to the building, these workers had a house of three hundred apartments. On the second floor was a common dining-room and kitchen where 75 single men hired a cooking staff to prepare meals for them jointly. In the basement was a far larger kitchen, with enormous oil-burning ovens kept

at even temperature, and some 100 feet of shelves and sinks, where the women of various families brought down their food and placed it in the oven, leaving it in charge of two women especially hired to watch it. There were great laundries and drying-rooms; and a Russian bath, which is like a Turkish bath, only wetter.

Upstairs were two great clubrooms for dancing and dramatics. Every Saturday the house dramatic club had plays and dancing; sometimes they hired artists from the Grand Opera to come and sing. In these club-rooms by day was a nursery, kindergarten and school for the youngest children; the older ones went out to the regular city schools. On the first floor were forty famine orphans, adopted jointly by these three hundred auto-workers for the period of need and brought up in the playground and nursery with their own children. On Sundays, in summer, the auto-workers borrowed the auto-trucks from the factory, and took the children out to the country for picnics.

Here was well rounded home-life, not home-life as we know it, but a kind of home-life and housekeeping that is widely advocated and steadily growing in Russia. When I visited the day nursery of the Red October Candy Factory and asked the director: "Is this really your permanent ideal? Or is it merely a temporary makeshift while women have to work? Do you expect that mothers will always go to factories and babies to day nurseries?" His eyes lit up and he answered: "Certainly, it is our ideal. A woman should not be shut in a little room as a cook for a man or a nurse for a baby.

She also is a citizen and a social being and wishes to mix with the rest of the world part of the day, in factory or office. At evening she is at home, as he is also."

It remains to be seen whether the women of the Soviet Union will agree or disagree with this ideal. So far they are enthusiastic for it, as a change from the old degrading life of factory barracks. It is their agreement or disagreement that will in the end settle the matter.

## WOMEN AND MARRIAGE IN THE SOVIET UNION

[*Brief summary from pamphlet published by the Soviet government for peasant and working women.*]

(1) *Under the czar* the law affecting women was based on their subjection to man, first to parents, then to husband. A woman could not even have a passport of her own without her husband's permission. She was bound to submit to him and could get a divorce only with extreme difficulty.

(2) The first basis of *soviet law on women* is equality with man in all respects. Equal in voting, equal pay for equal work, equal in rights over children. Divorce is granted to anyone who demands it with sufficient persistence, "since there cannot be compulsion in the marriage relation." If the couple are agreed about the divorce, they write down their agreement regarding care of children, division of property, etc., and merely register it with the proper officer, after which it has the force of a legal contract. If they disagree, they go to court, and the court decides these matters.

(3) There are *no illegitimate children*. Any woman about to have a child, can file statement regarding the father three months prior to birth; the supposed father is then informed, and if he does



not within two weeks deny it, he is assumed to accept the support of the child. If the case comes to court, these cases have precedence over all others, so that the woman may not be kept waiting. Parents' rights over children exist only for the good of the children. Mothers and fathers have equal rights. If the father wants the child to enter the Comsomol and the mother doesn't, who decides? Not as in the past, the husband by beating the wife, but it comes to court if the case is serious, and the judge decides.

(4) *Women in industry* may not be allowed in industries harmful to health, or in night work. The law aims not to take woman out of industry, but to protect her in it. When she has a child, the social insurance, supported by all industry jointly, gives her two months before and two months after birth vacation on pay, extra food, a baby's layette, and food for the entire first year. The factory provides a day nursery to which she brings the child during the day after she returns to work. She is allowed an hour off every three hours to nurse the child; this time being paid by the social insurance. If the child is sick, she also gets her wages from the social insurance while staying at home with it. . . . If the type of work she does proves bad for the child (as when a hot place sours her milk) she will be transferred by doctor's orders to another job, but her wage may not be lowered.

(5) *Peasant women* have the same rights as men in the division of land. Peasant women working for others must have the same food as the employer. There must always be a woman on every local land committee to protect the rights of women in the division of family property.

