

From Baba to Tovarishch

The Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Women's
Struggle for Liberation

Barbara Raney



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From Baba to Tovarishch:

The Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Women's Struggle For Liberation

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TERMS

<i>Abortoria</i>	State-run abortion clinics.
<i>Apparatchiki</i>	Party-appointed, high-level state (male) bureaucrats.
<i>Baba</i>	Diminutive of “grandmother” (<i>babushka</i>). A derogatory term applied to women, implying something like “ignorant old hag”.
<i>Babki</i>	Peasant (“wise women”) who assisted in childbirth, performed abortions, and gave contraceptive advice.
<i>Batrachki</i>	Landless peasants who hired out for wage work and often ended up in beggary and prostitution.
<i>Besprizorniki</i>	Literally “shelterless waifs”. Orphaned or homeless children and youth who roamed the cities and countryside, reduced to begging, prostitution and petty crime.
<i>Besprizornost'</i>	The state of child homelessness.
Bloody Sunday	In 1905 workers, misled by Father Gapon, organizer of a police union, marched to the Winter Palace to petition the czar for relief from their suffering, and were massacred.
Bolsheviks	Literally “majority” (<i>bolsheviki</i>). When the Social Democratic Party split in 1903, the Bolshevik faction, led by Lenin, eventually became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik). The Bolsheviks stood for revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, a party led by professional revolutionaries organized on the dialectical principle of democratic centralism, and the hegemony of the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry.
<i>Chadri</i>	Black horsehair veil worn by Muslem women.
Comintern	The Third Communist Internationale founded in 1918. Worldwide organization of Communist parties.
Commissar	Head of a government department, or person in charge of political education, e.g., attached to Red Army.

CPSU(b)	The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik).
<i>De facto</i>	Marriage by fact. Unregistered marriage or cohabitation.
<i>Delegatki</i>	Working and peasant women delegated by their constituency to serve several months as apprentices in governmental agencies. Program run by <i>Zhenotdel</i> .
<i>Detkomissii</i>	Literally "Children's Commission" which handled problems of youth and <i>besprizorniki</i> .
<i>Duma</i>	The term for parliament in czarist Russia and under the Provisional Government.
Five-Year Plan	Economic plan for the Soviet Union; 1st plan, 1928-1932; 2nd plan, 1933-1937.
<i>Iskra</i>	Literally "spark". Marxist organizing newspaper, founded by Lenin, published from exile abroad, 1900-1905, and smuggled into Russia.
<i>Izvestiya</i>	Literally "the latest news/news of the hour". Official state newspaper of the Soviet Union.
<i>Kalyim</i>	Bride price: money, goods or services paid by bridegroom to bride's parents.
<i>Kolkhoz</i>	Collective farm: farm land worked collectively; farmers paid partly by wages and partly with produce, depending on profitability of farm; private subsistence farming allowed.
<i>Kommunistka</i>	"The Communist Woman". Theoretical journal of <i>Zhenotdel</i> .
<i>Komsomol</i>	Youth organization of the CPSU(b).
<i>Kulaks</i>	Literally "fist". Well-to-do peasant farmers, many of whom fought against the Bolshevik regime, hoarded grain and exploited the poorer peasants.
<i>Likbes</i>	Campaign to eliminate illiteracy.
Mensheviks	Literally "minority" (<i>menshevik</i>). After the final split with the Bolsheviks in 1912, the Menshevik faction became what is known today as "Social Democrats". The Mensheviks stood for a loose party organization, a reliance on the spontaneity of the masses, and a gradual transition to socialism based on alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie in order to build up a base of capitalism. They supported (while criticizing) the Provisional Government which proved

their ideas to be bankrupt. After the October Revolution, they ceased to be a viable force, although they remained opposed to the Bolshevik government.

- Mullahs* Muslem religious leaders.
- Narodniks Literally "The People". A 19th century peasant party, forerunner of the Social Revolutionaries.
- NEP New Economic Policy, 1921-1928. A partial retreat to capitalism, where some foreign concessions, private ownership and free market trading were allowed.
- NEPmansha* A woman who, during the NEP period, sought out men with good incomes, a "gold-digger".
- NEPmen Private traders during the NEP period.
- Orgburo Party department in charge of organizational affairs.
- Paranja* Black, head-to-toe garment, sometimes without eye holes, worn by Muslem women.
- People's Will (*Narodnaya Volya*). Terrorist wing of the *Narodniki* movement.
- Politburo Political Bureau of the CPSU; highest Party authority.
- Presidium Standing committee in Supreme Soviet (CPSU parliament); highest state authority.
- Pravda* Literally "truth". Bolshevik newspaper founded in 1912. Later, the official newspaper of the CPSU.
- Provisional Government The (Kerensky) bourgeois government which held power between the February Revolution and the October Revolution.
- Potemkin mutiny In 1905, sailors aboard the Potemkin mutinied against spoiled food. The mutiny escalated into a general revolt in Odessa.
- Prophylactoria* State-run facilities for the rehabilitation of prostitutes.
- Rabfacs* (*Rabochi facultet*). Workers' faculties to prepare selected workers and peasants who had not completed elementary school for higher education.

<i>Rabotnitsa</i>	Literally "The Woman Worker". Bolshevik women's magazine.
Secretariat	Body which supervised various departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU.
Seasonal wives	("Summer wives"). A form of labor exploitation of women. <i>Kulaks</i> married women for the planting through harvesting season and then annulled the marriage.
Social Democrats	Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDRP). Name of the Marxist Party founded in 1898. The Bolshevik and Menshevik factions split in 1903 over principles of organization and discipline. They reunited from 1906 until 1912, when the split became permanent. The Bolsheviks adopted the name Communist. After this, the term Social Democrat was applied to the leaders of the 2nd Internationale, the Mensheviks, and their modern followers in parties loosely termed "Socialist" who stood for a gradual transition from capitalism to socialism through parliamentary methods.
Social Revolutionaries	(SRs). A peasant party, opposed to the Bolsheviks.
Soviets	Literally "councils". Elected governing bodies on all levels: city, village, district, province, republic and all-union. Based on occupation, e.g. factory, or district.
<i>Sovkhoz</i>	State farm: workers paid in wages.
St. Petersburg	Capital of czarist Russia. Name changed from German to Russian form (Petrograd) in 1914. Capital moved to Moscow at beginning of Civil War in 1918. Petrograd changed to Leningrad in 1921. After dissolution of Soviet Union in 1991, name changed back to St. Petersburg.
Stakhanovites	Superior, "shock/storm workers". Named after an especially productive coal miner of the same name.
<i>Technicums</i>	Vocationally specialized high schools.
<i>Terem</i>	Complete seclusion (our word "harem"), in which Muslem women were kept.
<i>Tovarishch</i>	"Comrade" (same form for male and female).
<i>Trudodni</i>	"Labor days". The Soviet system for determining wages on collective farms, based on the difficulty of the job and on productive output.

- Workers' Opposition Faction of Party (1920-22), led by Shlyapnikov and Kollontai, which accused the Party of betraying workers' interests and bureaucratism. Wanted to give trade unions economic decision-making powers instead of the Party, and opposed NEP policies. Accused of petty-bourgeois syndicalism at 10th Congress in 1921, and factionalism prohibited at 11th Congress in 1922.
- ZAGS* Departments for the Registration of Acts of Civil Status, i.e., birth, death, marriage, divorce.
- Zhenotdel* Women's Section of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), 1919-1930.
- Zhensektor* Women's Sector; successors of local *Zhenotdels*.
- Zhensoviety* Women's Councils established in rural areas in 1950s.

FOREWORD

The articles in this book were prepared by members of a study group on women which was formed in 1990. This study group was organized by the Marxist-Leninist Party, and several of these articles originally appeared in the *Workers' Advocate Supplement*, a journal of the MLP. The articles have been edited and expanded for publication in this book.

The Marxist-Leninist Party has since dissolved -- in November, 1993. The MLP stood for Socialism, and for building an independent working class movement. One of the historic strengths of the Marxist-Leninist Party was its opposition to the betrayal of Marxism-Leninism that took place in the Soviet Union. In fact, the MLP and its predecessors saw themselves as anti-revisionist communists who opposed the bureaucratic state capitalist regime in the Soviet Union and its reactionary theories and tactics. The MLP worked to develop a critique of Soviet state capitalism and to rescue socialist theory and practice from years of distortion brought on by the Soviet-style *communist* parties, which had wide influence on the mass movements around the world. Today, the USSR doesn't exist. We were not surprised when economic and political crises brought down the Soviet system.

Developing this critique of Soviet revisionism was one of the issues which inspired our work on women.

The MLP came out of the mass struggles of the 1960s and '70s. It tried to break the reformist hold over the mass movements and to organize working people as a class for themselves. The MLP fought against the influence of the Democratic Party in the mass movement. It opposed the trade union bureaucrats for holding back the

workers' struggles. It opposed the revisionist and Trotskyist politics which attempt to tie the mass struggles to reformism.

The members of the study group have had many years of experience working to build a revolutionary movement. At the time the study group was formed, the MLP was actively working to build the Pro-Choice and Clinic Defense movements. It tried to develop more militant tactics by exposing the role of bourgeois feminism in the movement, and by broadening the perspective to focus on the concerns of working class, poor, and minority women.

The MLP was very aware of the conditions of women in the capitalist world of the 1980s and '90s. In the U.S., women make on average only 67% of the wages of men, poverty among women and children is rising, and there is an epidemic of violence against women. In many countries such as Japan, for example, violence against women is still hardly talked about. There is the widespread practice of genital mutilation of young girls in many African and some Asian countries, the murder of women for their dowries in India, the infanticide of female children in many countries, and the rise of fundamentalist religious attacks on women in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Bangladesh, and other countries. We could go on and on.

Our awareness of the condition of women throughout the world, and our (often frustrating) experience in the women's movement today was another current which led to our research on Soviet women under the Bolsheviks.

In our research, the study group reviewed the works of such major socialist theorists as Marx, Engels and Lenin, who wrote on the issues of women's oppression and how to end it. As

well, we studied the works of other socialist leaders to whom the liberation of women was a major concern, such as August Bebel, Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai. We wanted to have a better grasp of the views and experiences of the socialist struggle to liberate women. We also investigated certain questions of anthropology in order to better understand the historical basis for women's oppression.

We are informed of the controversies surrounding Engels and his use of Morgan's work. In the end, we found these criticisms to be insignificant in regard to the basic conclusions of our book. We are also aware of the many feminist analyses of the Marxist position regarding women which have been written over the last twenty years. We have found that most of these critiques were based on a false interpretation of Soviet history as *socialism*, and not on a correct analysis of its history as a failed attempt to create socialism that resulted in a repressive state capitalism.

We make the assertion that there has been no better blueprint for women's emancipation than that of Marxist-Leninism. It is our contention that fighting for women's liberation is closely linked to fighting the economic system of capitalism which maintains the oppression of women and that, conversely, socialism cannot be achieved without emancipating women.

Our study and discussion focused on the history of the struggle for women's liberation prior to and after the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The October Revolution brought to power the first proletarian regime to endure for more than a brief time. The fight of women against their oppression was a strong current

of this Revolution, and the victory of 1917 opened up an even broader fight. The struggle for women's liberation was intimately connected with the advances, as well as the failures, of the Bolshevik Revolution.

It is our view that the revolutionary socialist movement in the Soviet Union was betrayed, that eventually the Communist Party and the Soviet state lost all of their revolutionary character and became an entrenched state capitalist bureaucracy. One of the factors revealing this betrayal was the abandonment of the struggle for the liberation of women.

In our opinion, activists committed to women's emancipation should seriously look into the history of the revolutionary movement in the Soviet Union, a story which provides valuable lessons for the struggles of today. Our study on women has given us a better grasp of the long-term issues involved in building a progressive women's movement in this country.

In this book, we examine the history of the struggle for women's liberation in the Soviet Union in detail, concentrating on the period from 1917 through the middle 1930s. We investigate the Bolshevik goals for the liberation of women, the struggles of the women themselves, the policies of the Soviet government and the Communist Party, and the turn away from socialism, which undermined the progress of women's liberation and justified the exploitation of women anew.

We welcome any comments or criticisms about our book, and will willingly engage in dialogue on the issues involved in it. We include a form for your convenience.

OVERVIEW

The experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it.

Lenin, "Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women," November, 1918, p. 60

The emancipation of women was a major goal of the Bolshevik Revolution. It demonstrated that the emancipation of women is inseparably bound up with the struggle to radically transform society from capitalism to socialism, and that the initial victory over capital opens up the broad fight for women's liberation. Compared to any prior revolution, compared to any bourgeois state of its time, the October Revolution made great strides toward the emancipation of women and had tremendous impact throughout the world. Soviet history is not easy to assess. The revolutionaries were working in very harsh conditions: extreme poverty, famine, epidemic, bloody civil war with foreign intervention, incredible social and cultural backwardness. Furthermore, the anticipated proletarian revolutions in Germany and other European countries did not materialize to give them aid. Applying Marxist-Leninist principles in such conditions was not easy.

Lenin had theorized that the Soviet Union could arrive at socialism through the structure of a state economy under, however, proletarian hegemony and with the active input of the masses. Lenin spent his last days trying to revive the mass movements -- the soviets, the cooperatives, the workers' control organizations -- in order that they could fight against the growing bureaucracy in the Party and state and learn to participate in the administration of the country. At all times,

Lenin gave wholehearted support to the *Zhenotdel* and the mass movements of women in their struggle to participate in social and political life.

Proletarian democracy demands the training of large numbers of people, including women, to run the country. In Russia in 1917, proletarian women were a sizable and active part of the work force, and the proletarian dictatorship needed their support. This meant breaking down the restrictions placed on women so that they could participate fully in building socialism. In the countryside, any hope of winning the peasants to socialism and transforming the small-scale production of the peasant economy to collective, socialized production also had to include breaking down the age-old patriarchal oppression of women. For their part, Russian women in large numbers identified with the goals of the revolution for women's liberation and for class liberation, and they rallied to the ranks of the Bolshevik Party and the mass organizations.

However, Soviet history demonstrates that the revolution is not the end of the fight but merely the beginning of a new round.

THE MARXIST-LENINIST BASIS FOR WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

Frederick Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, set forth the problem:

The democratic republic does not abolish the antagonism between the two classes; on the contrary, it provides the field on which it is fought out. And, similarly, the peculiar character of man's domination over

woman in the modern family, and the necessity, as well as the manner, of establishing real social equality between the two, will be brought out into full relief only when both are completely equal before the law. It will then become evident that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished (p. 82).

Engels goes on to explain what some of these radical transformations are:

The emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible... as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree... [when] private domestic work [is converted] into a public industry (p. 152)... [and] the care and education of the children becomes a public matter (p. 83).

Lenin reiterated this, denouncing housework in harsh terms:

Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a domestic slave because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins [led by the proletariat wielding the state power] against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist econ-

omy begins ("A Great Beginning," July, 1919, pp. 63-64).

Lenin further argued that real equality for women required the full participation of women in the administration of the economy and the government:

Unless women are brought to take an independent part not only in political life generally, but also in daily and universal public service, it is no use talking about full and stable democracy, let alone socialism ("The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution," September, 1917, p. 46).

We want the working woman to be the equal of the working man not only before the law but in actual fact. For this working women must take an increasing part in the administration of socialized enterprises and in the administration of the state.... Elect more working women to the Soviet, both Communist women and non-party women ("To the Working Women," February, 1920, pp. 78-79).

To summarize, there are three points outlined in the above quotes which we view as essential requirements for the emancipation of women:

- 1) Legal equality is a necessary first step, but does not equal emancipation.
- 2) Women must participate fully in economic, social and political life.
- 3) Women's full participation is only possible when the family is no longer the basic economic unit of society.

WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

Full Legal Equality. Legal equality is necessary not only for its own sake, but most importantly because it opens the door to class struggle.

Achieving full equality before the law is only the beginning in the fight for women's liberation.

Modern capitalist society shows that formal equality -- which in large part exists in many capitalist countries -- still leaves women oppressed. A revolutionary working class regime will quickly grant legal equality to women. But, more importantly, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the state becomes a force for the emancipation of women, pushing ahead the class struggle and actively supporting women against reaction. Lenin stated:

Take the position of women. In this field, not a single democratic party in the world, not even in the most advanced bourgeois republic, has done in decades so much as a hundredth part of what we did in our very first year in power. We actually razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality... But the more thoroughly we clear the ground of the lumber of the old, bourgeois laws and institutions, the more we realise that we have only cleared the ground to build on, but are not yet building ("A Great Beginning," July, 1919, p. 63).

Full Participation in Political, Economic and Social Life. This means not just opening doors and providing opportunities, but that the revolutionary proletarian state must encourage and prepare women for every facet of social and economic life.

For centuries, since the beginning of class society, women were confined to domestic slavery. This kept half of society chained to the household, and it meant that women of the oppressed classes faced a double enslavement. Women were kept in a backward state with their horizons limited to the four walls of the home. Lenin stated:

The chief task of the working women's movement is to fight for economic and social

equality, and not only formal equality, for women. The chief thing is to get women to take part in socially productive labor, to liberate them from "domestic slavery", to free them from their stupefying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery ("On International Working Women's Day," March, 1920, p. 81).

There was a broad movement of working class women in Russia before, during, and after the revolutionary victory in 1917. Capitalism was developing rapidly in Russia. The capitalists in Russia, as elsewhere, desired cheap female labor. By 1913, 30% of the industrial workforce was female. With World War I, millions of workmen were sent to the front, and the number of women factory workers jumped to 40% by January, 1917. Still, on the whole, Russia was a peasant country, and working women were only a small minority. The strong feudal traditions and fetters of the Russian Orthodox Church and Islamic law complicated the class struggle and made the fight for women's liberation more difficult. Women were often considered to be no more than *beasts of burden*; they were not allowed to own land and in many areas were under the veil. Not infrequently, women were bought and sold as brides, concubines, servants or even draft animals!

In the cities, working class women typically held only menial jobs under sweatshop conditions, earning much lower wages than men. Domestic servant was the most common occupation for women, followed by textile worker. All the social questions facing women — their low wages, the double burden of work and care for the family and household — were intensified by the crisis brought on by the First World War. Social dislocation and poverty drove many more women into the work force. Frequently, they were the sole support of their families. These

social conditions moved women to take part in the general revolutionary movement. Women not only demonstrated their capabilities for organization and leadership, but also made clear that the revolution and the building of a new society could not be accomplished without their active participation.

In general, a revolutionary society must ensure that women participate in all spheres of economic, social and political activity. It is absolutely necessary to fight for better conditions and equal opportunities. Yet simply holding jobs, even at wages equal to men, is not sufficient. Women must be brought into the administration of the economy and of society as a whole.

Socialism aims at eliminating the differences between skilled and unskilled labor, the inequalities between managers and employees. It also aims at promoting the lower strata of society, and here we are talking about working class women, into skilled, technical, managerial and administrative positions. The same holds true for politics. Women must take the opportunity and the training to become political leaders and organizers of the working masses, as well as movement participants.

But how can there be equal access to economic, social, and political life if the family remains the economic unit of society?

Elimination of the Family as the Economic Unit of Society. The first condition is to integrate women into the work force and ensure them an independent living wage and benefits. The second condition is to free them to do this. Society must take responsibility for the survival of all its members and provide comprehensive, affordable socialized domestic services. The quality of life for its citizens, especially children and the elderly, must not depend on individual family income. The family will continue, but radically changed economic relations will undoubtedly

change its form and content, and change it in ways that are difficult, if not impossible, to predict (see Engels, *Origin*, Chapter 2, "The Family").

In capitalist society, the well-being of family members rests with the individual family unit. Maintenance of a home, care of children, care for sick and handicapped family members, for unemployed relatives, and a host of other responsibilities must be dealt with by each individual family. While recognizing this, we must also acknowledge that such burdens devolve first, and many times exclusively, on the woman. Lenin was adamant on this point:

Here we are not, of course, speaking of making women the equal of men as far as productivity of labour, the quantity of labour, the length of the working day, labor conditions, etc., are concerned; we mean that the woman should not, unlike the man, be oppressed because of her economic position. You all know that even when women have full rights, they still remain downtrodden because all housework is left to them. In most cases housework is the most unproductive, the most savage and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman ("The Tasks of the Working Women's Movement in the Soviet Republic," September, 1919, p. 69).

To remove this burden, housework must become a socialized industry. In addition to socialized medicine and education, adequate social security and pensions, and child care for every family that needs it, laundries, cafeterias and house-cleaning services are needed to rescue women from domestic drudgery. Socialization of housework occurs to a limited extent under capitalism. But these services are not affordable on a regular basis for working people. Thus, they do not

really eliminate the burden of domestic drudgery for working class women. Household maintenance performed as a "public industry," affordable and available to every working class family, will give women (and the men who do some of the housework) more time for social and political activity. But this is possible only with a radical economic transformation of society, a transformation that is only possible with a socialist revolution.

Today there is a lot of talk about changes in the family, and in a sense the family has changed quite a bit. The *traditional family* that the bourgeoisie love to talk about barely exists these days. Today women make up 45% of the work force. There has been a large increase in the number of single-parent families and a growing number of homosexual couples raising children. But the increase in *non-traditional families*, though an important social change, should not be exaggerated. Marxists look at the economic and class relations underlying the family. Its character as the economic unit of society does not change if *the family* is a single mother or father with children or a gay or lesbian couple. Whether *traditional* or not, the burdens of survival fall on the individual family unit. If there is no one who can maintain the family, most frequently its members are left without adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc. Therefore, regardless of what form the family takes, its economic character must be changed.

BOLSHEVIK ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

LEGAL EQUALITY

Immediately after seizing power, the Bolsheviks established legal equality for women. In November 1917, they decreed new marriage and ("no-fault") divorce laws. Prior to this the only

legal marriages were church weddings, and divorce was impossible except by special dispensation from the Patriarch of the Church. In Lenin's words, within a year the Bolsheviks had "razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality" ("A Great Beginning," p. 63). Russia became the first country in the world to grant women full equality before the law. This was an earthshaking event; it was a tremendous inspiration to women's rights activists around the world. [Note that women had already won the right to vote in May 1917. But the Provisional Government had not dared to change any of the reactionary czarist family laws.]

Abortion was immediately decriminalized and then legalized in 1920. The Bolsheviks decriminalized prostitution, and established protective legislation for women in the workplace. They made advances in undermining patriarchy in the countryside. Child marriage was abolished, as well as the selling of brides. In Muslim areas, the workers' state made it illegal to attack women who took off their veils. In time, they succeeded in eliminating the veiling of women altogether.

In the area of family law, the Family Code of 1918 and the Revised Family Law of 1926 were the most progressive laws enacted up to that time. Soviet law aimed at breaking down the patriarchy and eliminating the stranglehold of the church over women. It abolished illegitimacy and entitled all children to parental support. It gave women equal rights to land. The Revised Family Law of 1926 expanded the conditions for receiving alimony, recognized *de facto* (or common law) marriage, established community property sharing after divorce, and increased rights for peasant women. However, it still put major responsibility for women and children onto the husband or partner and not onto the state. Both these laws dealt with property relations, including child support, in a more or less capitalist context. At this time, the state simply did not possess the

resources to socialize dependent care except in extreme emergencies.

Unfortunately, many of the gains from the 1918 and 1926 laws were rescinded with the Family Policy of 1936. Among other things, the Stalinist regime outlawed abortion, criminalized homosexuality, and made divorce more difficult to obtain. In 1944, they took a further step backward reviving *illegitimacy*.

One undeniable conclusion from the Bolshevik experience is that equality under the law, once achieved, will only prove that more sweeping social changes are needed to liberate women.

PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

One of the most positive features of the Bolshevik regime was that it encouraged and assisted the mass movement of women for their emancipation. Lenin asserted:

We say that the emancipation of the workers must be effected by the workers themselves, and in exactly the same way the emancipation of working women is a matter for the working women themselves. The working women must themselves see to it that such institutions [to free women from housework] are developed, and this activity will bring about a complete change in their position as compared with what it was under the old, capitalist society ("The Tasks of the Working Women in the Soviet Republics," September, 1919, p. 70).

The Revolution brought millions of women into economic, social and political life. This was a big leap from czarism, but it only went so far.

The formation of the *Zhenotdel*, the Women's Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, was an accomplishment in itself. Women communists built an organization which led the women's movement in the Soviet Union

to several victories and effected permanent change. Over 10 million women passed through the delegate system of *Zhenotdel*. This was a step toward bringing women into the administration of the state and the economy. Through *Zhenotdel* and other forms, millions of women received political training and gained experience in organizing the working masses for class struggle.

The enthusiasm of the early years was thwarted by the New Economic Policy of 1921 (NEP), which was an especially bitter setback for women. They were hardest hit by the big layoffs, and often when male soldiers returned from the front women were thrown out of the work force. In the mid to late 1920s as the economy recovered somewhat [in 1926 it had only recovered to pre-WWI levels], women entered the workplace in larger numbers, and received a great deal of job training. Still, women were largely unskilled, and even where they did hold skilled positions, they were mainly at the low end of the technical/professional scale.

The goal of training large numbers of women as managers, technicians and political leaders was never quite fulfilled. Women were trained, but not in large numbers and not consistently. In the local soviets, women were sizably represented, but there were virtually no women in the higher levels of the government, Party or economy. After 1930, a very small number of women were involved in the management of collective farms. Because of a shortage of workers in certain industries, the Soviets trained a large number of women, e.g., as engineers. However, they never rose very high, for the strain of family duties held them back, a point that re-emphasizes the importance of transforming the family so that women can play an equal role in the administration of society.

THE ELIMINATION OF THE FAMILY AS THE

BASIC ECONOMIC UNIT

Starting from the extreme backwardness of czarist Russia, the Soviet government made some progress on this front. The Bolshevik goal was to guarantee all women employment and an adequate living wage, and to provide income and services for all children and other dependents, so that their welfare would not be dependent on the family income. The Bolshevik government established a system of alimony and child support for indigent women and children. It established free medical care and education through university level. It set precedents for social welfare, and many of their social programs, which were extremely radical for the early 20th Century, became demands of working class movements in other countries.

The Soviet Union was among the first countries to offer workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, and social security-style pensions. It made great advances in maternal and child care. In fact, its maternity-care hospitals and rest sanitoriums, and its labor laws providing maternity protection and benefits were precedent-setting. It established not only maternity leave, but also abortion leave. The system of free or low-cost workplace and district creches, while never adequate, was a radical concept at the time. The government instituted labor laws forbidding the dismissal of pregnant women and single mothers. It even set up the first battered women's shelters, and mandated harsh punishment for "anti-women" crimes. The state had some initial success in rehabilitating prostitutes, although prostitution and the care of homeless children (*besprizorniki*) proved to be a stubborn problem. The NEP and economic hardships undermined these programs.

Education and occupational training for women, especially Central Asian women, was an essential issue in order to prepare women for the work force. The Bolsheviks carried out a highly

successful mass campaign against illiteracy which was particularly beneficial to women, as czarist Russia had refused to educate them. They sent women on to higher education in large numbers. Overall, they succeeded in greatly improving the cultural level of the masses, prepared women for employment, and tried to enable women to free themselves from oppressive marital situations and to support themselves and their children.

THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE BOLSHEVIKS

The advances made were hard-won, and often called for great sacrifices. Reaction was strong in the countryside, and many women activists were murdered by priests, *mullahs*, outraged husbands or male relatives. In the cities, the working class was also infected with male chauvinism, and male workers and workers' organizations often proved to be obstacles to the emancipation of female labor. In the countryside, patriarchy and religion continued to exert reactionary influence. In the soviets, factories, unions, and even in the CPSU itself (which could not but reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet working class), opposition to the programs for women's liberation was a serious problem.

Without a doubt, one of the most serious obstacles to the development of socialism in the Soviet Union was the lack of modern industry. Setting up the large-scale operations that are needed to socialize housework, provide daycare for every family, etc., requires a very productive industrial base which the Bolsheviks just didn't have. Nonetheless, they looked for ways to encourage the masses to move in the direction of socialism and to create enthusiasm for "shoots of communism" through volunteerism. "Communist Saturdays" (*subbotniki*) and the communal kitchens set up during the Civil War were examples of this.

These communal kitchens were very suc-

cessful because it was the most efficient way to feed the population in an emergency situation. After the war, however, they mostly died out. Unfortunately, there were a lot of illusions that these crisis measures were shortcuts to communism. It turns out there are no shortcuts, but communists must find ways to mobilize the masses for socialist construction because it is the masses who build socialism!

On the whole, the Bolsheviks work on this front was a very mixed bag. Soviet society showed revolutionary energy from mass movements and social reforms well into the 1920s. But the ruined economy and the consequent lack of resources prevented the Bolsheviks from carrying out their initial plans. During the NEP the situation worsened, and many of the programs that had been initiated were wiped out. For example, they designed model communal housing that would efficiently share facilities but built few. They planned house cleaning services and communal laundries but never got them off the ground.

By the late 1920s, general social welfare programs and other transitional *socialist* measures were often opposed or downplayed by Stalin's regime. They were considered a hindrance to industrialization. However, the government tried to revive the old revolutionary fervor and volunteerism, promising that industrialization and collectivization was the "second stage of the revolution," the "revolution from above," the revolution that would create *socialism*. But this was empty rhetoric.

At the same time, a large number of creches, kindergartens and cafeterias were established under Stalin. They were directed at freeing women to work, since at the beginning of industrialization, the country suffered a big labor shortage. But they were not really designed to open the way to women's full participation in public affairs. While many public institutions and services established

in the 1930s may look *socialist* (i.e., publicly owned, helped people to live and work), these facilities are actually consistent with large-scale capitalist industry — especially when the capitalists are seeking cheap female labor. [For example, such facilities are common during wartime in many countries]. Factory cafeterias were set up in large numbers, not to lighten the load of domestic work, nor to socialize the family kitchen, but to make labor convenient for capitalist industrialization. And childcare facilities tended to be established at only the most profitable and prosperous enterprises and farms. This increased the stratification of the working class. If you worked in a new modern plant, you got the services; if you worked in a low-paying concern, you got nothing.

Socialism, on the other hand, opposes such stratification, and demands that childcare and other such services be provided for the whole class, not only to free women to work, but to develop their cultural and political potentials.

The Betrayal of the Revolution

It is a historical tragedy that many of the gains women made from the Revolution were only temporary. This is part of the larger tragedy of the betrayal of socialism by Stalin and the CPSU.

While the Soviet Union managed to pull itself out of the depths of poverty following WW1, the long years of foreign intervention and the Civil War, while it managed to industrialize and modernize its economy, it failed to build socialism. By the 1930s, it is clear that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was not organizing the working class for socialist construction nor approaching the working class in a revolutionary way. Instead, it was building what became a bureaucratic state capitalist economy under the he-

gemony of a privileged bureaucratic class (or strata, if you will), a new bourgeoisie which, while not technically *owning* the means of production, certainly controlled them, and pocketed the profits in devious ways. And in doing so, the workers were once again exploited, in a manner not too different from under the czars. And most women became doubly exploited, a subclass which assumed a double burden of work.

In 1930 *Zhenotdel* was dissolved. The leadership of the CPSU said to women in essence: "This is socialism and you are liberated." Therefore, no special institution for organizing women to fight their oppression was needed. This was a very significant act, for it signaled that the proletarian women's movement was dead.

Social programs remained throughout the 1930s. However, these were not socialist in content, but representative of a state capitalist society with social welfare features. The emancipation of women and the building of socialism were sacrificed to capitalist industrialization and collectivization and the consolidation of new bureaucratic bourgeoisie.

The CPSU abandoned socialism as its goal, and with this it reversed many of the gains women had previously won. Just as the transition to socialism is inseparably bound up with the liberation of women, the process of consolidating state capitalism demanded that the family once again be enshrined as the basic economic unit of society. The failure to carry through with measures that would lead to socialism (childcare, socialized housework, etc.) undermined the position of women. Legal equality was still on the books, but the reactionary measures passed in 1936 and 1944 made it a sham.

Along with these practical changes came ideological ones. The Marxist theory of women's emancipation and the family was discarded. Marx and Engels were abandoned in favor of bourgeois experts who asserted that the traditional bour-

geois family structure was what socialism required. They only gave the old structure a new name — "The Socialist Family."

In the difficult times of the 1920s, the new Soviet power had faced tremendous obstacles. The revolutionary movements did not succeed in Germany or other countries and the Soviet revolution was left isolated. The economy was wrecked after World War I and the Civil War. The working class itself was decimated. The state was forced to adopt a New Economic Policy which reestablished capitalist market relations and, consequently, strengthened bourgeois relations. In this situation, the CPSU and the Soviet state took various turns away from revolutionary politics and policies. We have not found any one event or political decision which marked a decisive turn. But collectively, the political stands and policies taken meant that at least by the early 1930s, the Party and state had given up all but the outward trappings of a struggle for socialism. The fate of the fight for women's liberation was closely bound up with the fate of the working class and peasantry as a whole. Women workers and peasants were mobilized in the fight for their own liberation, and there were many successes during the 1920s. But by the early 1930s, it was clear that the fight for women's liberation was given up.

WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE

Perhaps nothing could have stopped the turn away from the early Bolshevik ideals. However, we felt strongly about a couple of issues. First and foremost is the issue that mass proletarian organizations and movements were allowed to deteriorate. Lenin and the early Bolsheviks had envisioned arriving at socialism through a form of state capitalism under the hegemony, however, of the proletariat, and guided by a Marxist-socialist party which represented the interests of the proletariat and the other working masses. They envi-

sioned this to only work if the mass movements of the working peoples remained vital, not only for their input into decision-making and administration, but also as *watch-dogs* to ensure that the interests of the working masses were kept at the forefront, and to expose and check any bureaucratic deviations or corruptions which might occur. In fact, Lenin died making plans to re-establish "Workers' Control" organizations, and to infuse life into the masses by reviving the soviets and establishing cooperative movements. He never wavered in his support for the *Zhenotdel*.

In this context, we felt strongly that the *Zhenotdel*, or some other kind of mass women's organization, should have been maintained to advocate for women's issues such as domestic services, to insist on the necessity of abortion, to protest the restrictions on divorce. We felt that socialized services could have been reinstated at the time of industrialization, or perhaps after the first five-year plan had been completed when the country had the resources. We also felt that such an organization could have pursued the issue of raising men's consciousness more. But, obviously, any kind of vital mass proletarian movements would have hindered Stalin's plans.

Some historians and some trends in the Marxist movement (including in ex-MLP circles) feel that the revolutionary movement in the So-

viet Union was exhausted by the early 1920s. They say that the Bolshevik Party and Soviet state, by holding on to power, necessarily had to degenerate, and eventually had to take up various repressive measures against the masses, and that this could not help but consolidate repressive state capitalism. This is a serious question. The members of this study group believe that a transition to socialism requires the support of the masses and a mass movement for socialist measures. Our study about the fight for the liberation of women does not answer all the questions involved in the issues of what went wrong in the Soviet Union. Our study does show, however, that it is not accurate to say that the Soviet regime had no mass support after the early 1920s. The fight for the liberation of women intensified after the Soviet state came to power. Millions of women and men were mobilized into this battle throughout the 1920s. Nevertheless, by the 1930s, this struggle was undermined.

The eventual failure of the Revolution, however, does not negate its importance. The study of Soviet history is just as valuable for the shortcomings, as well as the successes, it reveals. It holds important lessons, some positive, some negative, for the socialist future and for the future of women.

ZHENOTDEL AND THE NEW WOMAN

This article discusses some of the work of the Bolsheviks in the fight for women's emancipation and in the organization of women workers and peasants into the revolutionary movement. It concentrates on the work of the *Zhenotdel* (*zhenskii otdel* -- women's section), formed in 1919 and disbanded in 1930.

PREHISTORY OF ZHENOTDEL

To understand *Zhenotdel*, it is necessary to discuss some of its prehistory. The issue of women's liberation had been a historical current since the early Russian revolutionary movements. For instance, in the *Narodniki* movement of the 1860s and 70s, women revolutionaries such as Vera Zasulich were among the best-known of Russian heroes. And as well, the fight for the social emancipation of women was an important current of the revolutionary movement leading to the victory of the Bolsheviks in October, 1917. Through the early 1900s, women were an increasingly important section of the working class. Often employed in the lowest-paid, dirtiest work, they frequently were little more than *beasts of burden*. By 1917 they made up 40% of all production workers. Although they had been militantly agitating for their rights for several decades, the history of the struggles of Russian working women has not received due attention (see article on Women's Work). Women workers took an active part in the 1905 Revolution. And in 1917, pouring into the streets of Petrograd on International Working Women's Day, women sparked the February Revolution.

Lenin and other leaders fully recognized the crucial role of women in achieving the Bolshe-

vik's goals. Lenin stated:

The success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it.¹

The building of Socialism will begin only when we have achieved the complete equality of women and undertake the new work together.²

The struggle for women's rights must also be linked with our principal aim -- the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat... we must combine our appeal politically in the minds of the female masses with the sufferings, the needs and the wishes of working women. They should all know what the proletarian dictatorship will mean to them.³

But pressing problems faced the Bolsheviks in organizing women workers and peasants into the revolutionary movement and advancing their struggles for emancipation. These included: winning the support of the class-conscious section of women workers for the Revolution; mobilizing those women workers and peasants who remained outside the revolutionary movement; and fighting the incredible backwardness of Russian society, which was a major brake on the participation of women in the Revolution. The emancipation of women meant much more than granting mere legal equality. It meant a fight to break down the barriers to participation in the work force and in the politics of society. It meant developing the conditions for women to be educated. It meant destroying the patriarchal rela-

tions dominant in the countryside and the authority of the church. And it meant carrying out a broad social and economic transformation which would develop conditions where the family was no longer the basic economic unit of society.

The history of *Zhenotdel* must be looked at in light of these tasks.

ORGANIZING WOMEN

There were discussions and plans within the Bolshevik Party over how and in what form to organize women for at least two years prior to the formation of *Zhenotdel* in the autumn of 1919. It was agreed to be essential, but there were various issues. The Bolsheviks declared themselves for women's complete social emancipation. They considered legal equality to be only a beginning, opening the way for a much broader struggle. As Lenin stated:

The more thoroughly we clear the ground of the lumber of the old, bourgeois laws and institutions, the more we realize that we have only cleared the ground to build on....⁴

The Bolsheviks were opposed to the bourgeois feminists of the time whose program chiefly consisted of winning the vote and other educational and legal rights. They realized that a total social transformation was imperative. Alexandra Kollontai assessed the matter succinctly:

Access to the ballot box and the deputy's seat is the true goal of the feminist movement. And the more politically conscious of the working women are aware that neither political nor legal equality can finally settle the "woman question." As long as a woman has to sell her labour power and suffer capitalist slavery, she will not be a free and independent person.⁵

The Bolsheviks recognized that the emancipation of women had a definite class basis. There could be no liberation of the mass of women unless they were also liberated as workers and peasants: "Women will only become free and equal in a world where labor has been socialized and where communism has been victorious."⁶ Kollontai and others outlined a series of urgent demands which included a shorter working day, higher wages, more humane treatment in the factories, maternity protection, better conditions for the hundreds of thousands of servants, equal rights to land for peasant women, breaking up the power of the landlords, etc. Without these conditions there could be no talk of the emancipation of women.

The necessity to take up special work among women workers and peasants came from various angles. Lenin held that the emancipation of women was impossible without women themselves fighting for it:

The emancipation of working women is a matter for the working women themselves... and this activity will bring about a complete change in their position as compared with what it was under the old, capitalist society.⁷

As well, the fact that women workers were already an active part of the revolutionary movement may have been a factor pushing ahead the discussion of special organizing among women workers and peasants. Another justification for this special work was to overcome the essential conservatism of women in order to increase support for the revolutionary movement.⁸ At this time, fully 85% of all women were peasants trapped within the reactionary domination of the church and the patriarchy.

Another issue that came up was whether or not a mass organization for women to fight for their liberation was needed. The Bolsheviks decidedly went against this concept. They felt that

this would inevitably assume a "feminist" nature, but they were against a separate Party organization of women as well, for they feared that this would split the male and female proletariat. Lenin set forth the Party view:

The communist women's movement itself must be a mass movement, a part of the general mass movements; and not only of the proletarians, but of all the exploited and oppressed.... We want no separate organizations of communist women... However, we must not shut our eyes to the facts. The Party must have organs--working groups, commissions, committees, sections or whatever else they may be called--with the specific purpose of rousing the broad masses of women, bringing them into contact with the Party and keeping them under its influence.⁹

As Hayden puts it: "The Bolsheviks [were in] the odd position of appealing to women as a separate group in order to convince them that they were not a separate group."¹⁰ What eventually was established was a Bureau of Agitation and Propaganda Among Women under the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee which was to direct agitational work among women.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CREATION OF ZHENOTDEL

The eventual creation of *Zhenotdel* began with the Revolution of February, 1917. The impetus for the February Revolution was a mass demonstration of women workers and soldiers' wives demanding "Peace and Bread" on International Working Women's Day in Petrograd. As women workers poured into the streets, the Petrograd committee of the Bolshevik Party delegated Vera Slutskaiia to draw up a plan for work among women. Her proposal included a bureau to coordinate agitational work, and the revival of the journal *Rabotnitsa* (*The Woman Worker*, first pub-

lished in 1914 but shut down by the authorities during the war). Apparently Slutskaiia made it clear in her report that this bureau was to be for "purely agitational work," and that "no kind of independent women's organization will be created."¹¹ Kollontai proposed the creation of an actual Women's Department at the 7th All-Russian Conference of the Bolsheviks held in April, 1917. Although the proposal was rejected, the chairman of the conference affirmed that "it is necessary to create a technical organ for the direction of agitation among women."¹²

Rabotnitsa resumed publication in May, 1917. It played a key role in organizing women for the proletarian revolution. To understand the work of *Rabotnitsa*, and other organizational forms of this period, one needs to understand that the Provisional (Kerensky) Government, which came to power after the defeat of the czar in February, 1917, had failed to take any significant action for women's emancipation, except to grant them the vote, although it had promised other civil rights. These empty promises spread wide discontent with this government composed of bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties, and provoked a turn towards the program of the proletarian revolution. *Rabotnitsa* urged that such a revolution was necessary in order to bring about the conditions where a fight for women's emancipation could be waged successfully.

Some idea of the work in this period can be gleaned from Holt's anthology of Kollontai's writings. Included in it are articles from *Pravda* warning that women needed to ensure equality in **practice**, that is, to ensure that such freedoms as were granted by the constitution did not pass them by.

Rabotnitsa encouraged soldiers' wives to demand greater benefits and to send delegates to local soviets. It agitated to support the strike of 8,000 laundresses in Petrograd, pointing out the importance of this action to the working class as a whole. It criticized the trade unions for not

taking up the issue of equal pay, and for blocking the participation of women in the trade union movement.¹³ The *Rabotnitsa* editorial board also convened factory and district meetings to discuss general issues of importance to women workers and peasants, such as the eight-hour day, the democratic republic, and confiscation of landlord property, as well as "women's issues" such as maternity protection, protection of female and child labor, and equal civil and political rights. The need for organization on the part of women and for solidarity with their brother workers was at all times stressed.¹⁴

Opposition to the slaughter of millions and to the mass starvation and deprivation caused by the war had been a key factor in the demonstrations of women workers in February, 1917. *Rabotnitsa* organized a campaign against the war and high prices in June, 1917. This was an important cut against the Provisional Government and the bourgeois feminists who supported Russia's participation in the war.

In September, the Petrograd Women's Bureau organized a conference of working women. Delegates assembled in late October -- "500 hundred delegates representing 80,000 women from factories, workshops, trade-unions, and unions of socialist youth and Party organizations."¹⁵ The October Revolution interrupted the conference; when it reconvened in mid-November, its deliberations provided the basis for legislation on maternity protection and other laws of the new government.

This gives some idea of the work among women leading up to the victory of the October Revolution of 1917.

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION OPENED THE WAY FOR A FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

When the Bolsheviks came to power in October, 1917, they took a series of immediate steps forward. They declared the complete legal

equality of women. They made marriage and divorce simple civil procedures. They enacted decrees providing protection for female and child labor and social insurance, including pregnancy leave. The first Constitution in 1918 not only confirmed women's right to vote but also to be elected to office. Abortion was decriminalized after the Revolution, and legalized in 1920 (see article on Abortion).

At the same time, Bolshevik leaders declared that these were only the first steps to prepare the way for the social and economic transformations that must take place. They called for a fight against the conditions which kept most women domestic slaves, and against the influence of the priests and *mullahs*. However, the Bolsheviks were only able to take a few steps along this path when the new regime became involved in a life and death struggle with counter-revolution in a devastating civil war.

THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD

THE WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS AND THE CREATION OF ZHENOTDEL

The victory of the October Revolution and the immediate steps taken had opened up an even broader fight for women's liberation. In November, 1918, the First All-Russia Congress of Working and Peasant Women was held. This was a pivotal event in the eventual creation of *Zhenotdel*. Women were coming into the revolutionary movement in large numbers. Three hundred delegates were expected at this Congress, but 1147 arrived. Anecdotes of the time described how unexpected was this large turnout and the difficulties of suddenly accommodating such a number of people.¹⁶ Lenin addressed the Congress, the first national leader in history to endorse a full program for women's emancipation.

The work of this Congress covered many topics, including mobilization of women for the

war; involvement of women in the Party, government, trade unions and soviets; problems of education and social welfare; and institutions to socialize household labor -- all to refashion women and "give Communist society a new member." The Congress shouted approval when someone proposed outlawing the derogatory term "*Baba*."¹⁷ A proposal which laid the basis for the formation of *Zhenotdel* was adopted: a commission (*ad hoc* body) was to be attached to each Party organization to be responsible for conducting agitation among working women. A head commission was to be established in Moscow directed by Inessa Armand, Alexandra Kollontai and Vera Moirova.

Following this Congress, there was intensive work to involve women in defense of the Revolution. Kollontai addressed women's meetings to persuade Party members and unpaid volunteers to set up and staff women's groups. Leading women cadres were sent across the land in brightly-postered propaganda trains to recruit women to the war effort. This work seems to have had success. In her essay, "The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia," Kollontai stated that women workers and peasants were involved in the Civil War from the beginning, but that by the end of 1918 this activity had become highly organized. Women labored in weekend work brigades (*subbotniki*), conducted campaigns against epidemic diseases, and dispensed aid to families of Red Army soldiers and homeless children. They organized feeding stations and childcare: posters in the Ukraine urged, "Be a mother not only to your child but to everyone's children."¹⁸

Over 73,000 woman served in the Red Army as political propagandists, medical workers, scouts, and combat soldiers; there were even some women commanders. Kollontai reported:

The proletarian women of Petrograd not only provided 500 Red nurses and medical orderlies for the front, but also served in their thousands in the machine-gun com-

panies, in communications, in sapper companies, and labored selflessly in the cold autumn weather to dig trenches and surround Petrograd with barbed wire.... The industrial centers in particular sent a large number of women to the front.¹⁹

At the Congress of 1918, Armand and Kollontai had argued that the liberation of women could not come about solely by their participation in the work force, but that family life must also be transformed. This necessitated the reorganization of domestic labor and childcare, requiring such institutions as creches, communal dining halls, laundries and clothes-mending centers to be put in place. This was in line with Lenin's goals for the industrialization of housework, what he termed "shoots of communism:"

Public catering establishments, nurseries, kindergartens -- here we have examples of these shoots, here we have the simple, everyday means, involving nothing pompous, grandiloquent or ceremonial, which can *really emancipate women*, really lessen and abolish their inequality with men as regards their role in social production and public life.²⁰

By 1920-21, 12 million urban people were eating at the canteens, over 80% of the population of Petrograd and 93% of the population of Moscow.²¹ Public feeding was obviously a measure necessitated by the war situation, i.e., the only way to organize food distribution given the scarce resources. All children were fed free, and food coupons were issued as part of the voucher system which replaced monetary wages under "War Communism." But at the time, these "communist shoots" were definitely seen as ushering in an era when women would no longer be tied to the slavery of home and kitchen. In addition to setting up domestic and child services, the Commissions were also involved with the protection of mother and child, inspection of labor conditions

having to do with women and children, and the elimination of illiteracy.

Shortly after the 1918 Congress, Armand had proposed a more organized method of drawing women into the construction of the new society. At women's meetings in the winter of 1918-19, delegates were elected to serve for three months as "apprentices" or paid interns in various government departments and soviets. Paid instructors from the Commissions supervised their work. Thus began the delegate system which was a feature of the Commissions then, and later of *Zhenotdel*. Armand envisioned the delegate system not only as a means of political education, but also as a source of future employment. *Delegatki* would be trained to take part in the administration of society. They would then return and report to the conferences that elected them to encourage other women. The goal was to learn how government worked and to become actively involved in its tasks. Smith describes this procedure:

One out of every ten workers, and one out of every hundred housewives and peasants are elected every year by as large a number of women as can be got to participate in the elections. The women thus elected meet twice a month under the leadership of a trained Party worker, and are given a course in the structure and problems of the government, the position and rights of women, questions of education, cooperation, living conditions, etc. The program for working-women concentrates on industrial and trade union problems, and for peasant women on agricultural and village questions.... Each group of delegates is divided into sections for more intensive study of special questions. Members of the sections are attached as *praktikants* to local soviet, cooperative, or trade union organizations. The heads of these institutions have been instructed officially to make it possible for these women to become fully acquainted

with the organization, and to give them some practical work.... Each year a new set of delegates is elected, and the "graduates" are drawn upon for teachers, and to take regular positions in the organizations where they have been training. Meetings are held periodically at which the delegates report to their "constituency."²²

By the time of the 8th Party Congress in March, 1919, the Women's Commissions had received thousands of letters from women all over the country begging for material help and support. Kollontai's speech emphasized that the Party would have no success in recruiting women with general political appeals: "We have to conduct a struggle with the conditions that are oppressing women, and emancipate her as a housewife and mother. This is the best approach toward women -- this is agitation by the deed."²³ Specific proposals for work among women were adopted: each Party committee should ensure that its organizational meetings were attended by representatives from the Women's Commissions, and political education courses for women would be set up. A resolution was passed which committed the Party to giving every support and encouragement to the work of the Commissions.

In the midst of the Civil War, September, 1919, *Zhenotdel* received official status. The chief impetus was that the 8th Party Congress resolution had prompted a flood of complaints from women that their work was being undermined and undervalued. Therefore, they requested that the status of the Women's Commissions be elevated into a nationwide, Party-sponsored Department. Armand, who had long been arguing for a women's national bureau based on the German Party model, was named Director, with Kollontai as Deputy Director. Shortly afterward, in 1920, Armand was also delegated to establish a Women's Department of the Comintern.

One of the first things *Zhenotdel* did was to issue an instruction requiring every enterprise to

have at least one delegate apprenticed in the factory inspectorate. The role of the delegate was to monitor the conditions of women workers, ensuring that laws were carried out concerning the length of the working day, night work, overtime, protection of the rights of mothers and pregnant women, and sanitary and safety conditions. The *delegatki* were also supposed to organize meetings and lectures centered upon protection of labor and conditions of work in the factories.

Zhenotdel also turned its attention to social problems. Since millions of men had been mobilized and large numbers had died, most women found themselves solely responsible for their families. In 1920, Nadezhda Krupskaya wrote that the years of war had forced women to become more independent, while sexual relationships had taken on a temporary and informal character, more "candid" than the old bourgeois marriage relations. As a result of the hardships of war, prostitution was rampant, illegal abortions often resulting in illness or death were widespread, and hundreds of thousands of children had been abandoned. Therefore, she urged the state to move rapidly to aid destitute mothers and children, providing healthcare, day nurseries, and children's homes.²⁴ *Zhenotdel* organizers mobilized women volunteers to establish and staff these facilities, and also tried to deal with the problems of the *besprizorniki*, homeless youth of both sexes who survived on the streets by begging, thieving and prostituting themselves.

In November 1920, a *Zhenotdel* commission to fight prostitution was established. It stipulated that all women found prostituting themselves on the streets would be taken to the Commissariat of Labor, where they would be encouraged to attend courses of study, helped to get jobs, or sent to recuperate at sanatoria. Only if a woman were repeatedly found guilty would she be sentenced to a period of enforced labor (see article on Prostitution). *Zhenotdel* also endorsed the Legalization of Abortion Decree in 1920, and helped establish

its criteria of health care (see article on Abortion).

Toward the end of the War in 1920, *Zhenotdel* initiated a decree for compulsory (if minimal) military training for young urban women between 16 and 18. Since the War was drawing to a close, this appears to have been a measure to dramatize sexual equality, but it was also a means of mobilizing women for future social action.²⁵ Although this was not carried through for very long, it illustrates a certain romantic or unrealistic attitude of the Bolsheviks, including Kollontai, toward the period of "War Communism." That is, many thought that these war measures, where the state took over complete management of society, where feeding was collectivized, labor was "militarized," and grain was forcibly requisitioned from the peasantry to feed the urban population and the army, was indeed "communism," and that it could be continued.²⁶ In justifying the NEP which followed, Lenin admitted that "War Communism" had been allowed to go on too long, and that this thinking had been utopian.²⁷

By 1921, Women's Bureaus had been established in every province of European Russia. Kollontai states that there were 70,000 *delegatki* representing three million women.²⁸ Despite male resistance and skepticism, the red-kerchiefed delegate had already become a familiar and popular figure in the villages and towns. A jingle of the time conveys the liberating atmosphere:

Like it or not, I do not care,
Your wife's no addlepate,
Lay finger on me, if you dare,
And I'll be a delegate!²⁹

This gives some picture of the work of *Zhenotdel* during the Civil war.

NEP PERIOD

At the end of the Civil War, the Bolsheviks needed to reassess their program, including the work of *Zhenotdel*. As already pointed out, *Zhenotdel delegatki* had been involved in organizing the communal kitchens, laundries, etc., during the Civil War. With the easing of this crisis, the number of such facilities severely diminished, and under NEP state funding was largely withdrawn. In the first year after the War, more than half the daycare centers and homes for single mothers closed down.³⁰ Through the 1920s, *Zhenotdel* organizers and *delegatki* were involved in organizing what facilities remained. Volunteers were urged to set up neighborhood childcare and communal dining facilities. There were creches and canteens at some of the larger factories. Hayden reports that in 1925 in Leningrad, there were 53 childcare centers in the factories serving 2,270 children.³¹ Smith reports that in 1927, the large Three Hills textile factory in Moscow had an impressive chain of kindergartens and day nurseries. But she also adds:

Here I saw also another side of the picture, workers' wives living in crowded quarters swarming with children who could not be accommodated in the day nurseries because there was still not space enough for all the women themselves working in the factory.³²

It seems that nurseries and dining rooms were available to workers at the more prosperous factories, and that they were mostly funded by the factories themselves. They were by no means available to the working class as a whole. Nonetheless, this does not alter the fact that the workplace creche, where mothers could nurse and visit their children, was a very radical measure for its day. How many work places today furnish this kind of convenience for working mothers?

A crucial issue at the end of the Civil War and the entry into NEP was unemployment. As

4 million men returned to the work force, war industries shut down and domestic industries were in a shambles, there were large-scale dismissals of women workers. *Kommunistka* (*The Communist Woman*) projected that in the initial wave of adjustment to NEP, one-third of all women workers -- 900,000 people -- would lose their jobs. *Kommunistka* deplored the "groundless firing of women workers" based only on "prejudice" and not on any kind of defensible economic, social, or political consideration.³³ Some trade unions did pass resolutions against this situation, and the labor code placed various restrictions on the firing of women. This was at the urging of *Zhenotdel* which admitted, however, that it was impossible to enforce these regulations.³⁴ The government also cut apprentice programs for women, and reduced the number of places designated for women in vocational skills institutions (see article on Women's Work). Hayden describes the attempts of *Zhenotdel* to deal with this situation:

Since unskilled workers were the first to be laid off, and women workers were for the most part unskilled, the *Zhenotdel* organized meetings of women workers to explain to them the skills required for different trades, and tried to find ways of raising their level of skills. In addition, the *Zhenotdel* organized unemployed women into artels, where they did things like sewing and knitting articles of clothing for sale.³⁵

These measures proved inadequate, and so in 1924 *Zhenotdel* reluctantly agreed to lift the ban on night work for women "in order to give employers as little excuse as possible to lay off women workers" (see article on Women's Work).³⁶

Throughout the NEP period, *Zhenotdel* agitated for the reestablishment of domestic services, for childbirth and infantcare relief for unemployed women who had lost their social insurance, for any measures that would give women an

independent wage to prevent such horrors as beggary, prostitution and infanticide which were growing at an alarming rate among women cast out of the work force.

But the economic conditions of the NEP undercut the goals of *Zhenotdel*. Budget cutbacks seriously reduced both the central and regional *Zhenotdel* staffs. In 1922, the soviets withdrew funds previously allocated to pay the interns, and this appears to have been the case with other state organs as well.³⁷ Hayden quotes a report from a national meeting of *Zhenotdel* organizers held in 1921:

Many people are stating that there are dangers that the new economic conditions are not only destroying any possibility for work among women, but also that they will strengthen the enslavement of working women. In connection with all these questions, there arose the inability to coordinate our work with the changing economic conditions. Work began to decline, doubts in the usefulness of the *zhenotdels* were born.³⁸

WORK AMONG THE PEASANTRY AND IN THE EAST

The end of the Civil War inaugurated a period of increased *Zhenotdel* work among the peasantry, and the women of the East who were mainly Muslim. Hayden relates this turn to the difficulties of dealing with the conditions facing urban women workers. It is also possible that Kollontai was over-optimistic about the successes of communist work among these workers:

It is now not individuals, but masses of women workers who are joining in the task of constructing the Soviet republic. As yet, the peasant woman is only timidly following in their wake. The women among the urban poor have become conscious of their rights and have bound their future to

the future of communism. The Party's task is to find the way to the mind and heart of the peasant woman.³⁹

It is clear that the increased work in the countryside was mandated by the leadership of the Party. In 1923 Stalin wrote an article for *Kommunistka* stating that "*Zhenotdel's* aim must be to draw into the construction of Soviet life the millions of peasant women."⁴⁰ *Zhenotdel* was criticized for expending too much effort on "politicizing" women, and was directed to turn its attention to the concerns of women's daily life, called "socialization of *byt*."

No fight for the emancipation of women could succeed without breaking down the patriarchal system and other backward conditions facing women peasants. It appears that there was objective motion among peasant women. After all, World War I and the Civil War had caused extreme social dislocation in the countryside; many women were then solely responsible for the family *dvor* (homestead) and for working the land. They were not satisfied with the same old ways. Still, at first, *Zhenotdel* had a difficult time in the rural areas. The urban style of the young *Zhenotdel* organizers and their modern notions aroused the suspicion of the conservative peasant women. For example, they were resistant to the idea of creches, fearing these "godless people who wished to take children away from mothers."⁴¹ In the end, they came to greatly appreciate the child-care, literacy classes and handcraft artels.

During this second phase of *Zhenotdel* work, the number of women peasants recruited increased markedly, while the number of urban workers declined. At the end of 1923, 30% of the *delegatki* were workers and 40% were peasants; by July 1925, 63% were peasants and 18% were workers. In 1926, one-half million *delegatki* were elected throughout the country, 64% peasants and 20% workers. The remainder were housewives, office workers and domestic servants.⁴²

As Kollontai phrased it, "after the peasant woman comes the 'last slave', the woman of the East."⁴³ Halle presents a number of detailed anecdotes of both the successes and the difficulties of this work.⁴⁴ In the spring of 1921, 20 or so *Zhenotdel* workers in agit-trains and boats set off for Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Bashkiria, the Crimea and the Caucasus. By the end of March, 45 Muslim women, most from Turkestan, attended a preliminary conference in Moscow to discuss the best way to change the Muslim laws. It was decided to set up clubs, literacy classes, and nurseries in the Central Asian regions to provide an example of the benefits of the new regime. The first organizers were Russian urban women. But there were also a number of Tatar organizers from Kazan and Crimea, where the position of women was freer, women were unveiled, and many women spoke Russian. These organizers carried on agitation in home visits (when men were absent), at funerals, in streets, marketplaces and bathhouses. They sometimes had to don *paranjas* like the Muslim women in order to disguise their activities.

In addition to regional *Zhenotdel* offices themselves, women's hostels, clubs, and stores which offered modern hygienic products (like soap!) were set up. Red Corners, Red *Yurtas* (tents), and Red Boats were organized, depending on local conditions. These might contain a medical consultant, a legal consultant, a newspaper reader, and a day nursery. Courses were given on hygiene, childcare, midwifery, literacy, typing, and elementary politics. Lenin Corners offered simple political propaganda, exhibits and pamphlets. Dramas, films and lectures portrayed social issues, and performing arts groups toured the countryside. Many large conferences were held, drawing peasant women from the furthest regions of the East together with the proletarian women of the West. And International Working Women's Day was a huge and often dramatic celebration. According to Halle, *Zhenotdel* grew rapidly in the

East. For example, in 1924 there were 5,000 members in Central Asia; by 1925 there were 15,000 members.⁴⁵

In June 1921 at the 2nd Comintern Women's Conference, *delegatki* from the East had dramatically thrown off their veils. An observer wrote: "That moment when the delegates of the eastern Soviet republics walked in and raised their *chadris* (veils) before the conference was a symbol of our victory in joining the women of the East to communism."⁴⁶ But this was just a prelude. In 1927 the offensive against the veil and seclusion stepped up. At Party meetings, communist men unveiled their wives to set an example. In waging this campaign, *Zhenotdel* appealed to Mohammed's original writings; in turn, the *mullahs* counteracted with "progressive Muslimism" to lure women away from *Zhenotdel*. However, in 1927 at a celebration of International Working Women's Day in Bukhara, 100,000 women tore off their veils, dipped them in paraffin and burned them. They then marched through the streets tearing the veils off the wealthier women. Afterwards there were terrible recriminations. Hundreds of de veiled women were murdered by husbands and fathers, and by the next year, all but 5,000 had re-veiled themselves. However, by 1930 there were no veiled women in Bukhara. The government could not issue a law against the veil, since it was too entrenched in Muslim culture, but it enforced protective laws for women who unveiled. *Zhenotdel* also waged campaigns against *kamsol* (breast binding) among Kalmuks, against *kalym* (bride price), and another for cloaks for Caucasian women who were forbidden them and froze in winter.

During this period *Zhenotdel* houses became refuges for battered wives, rebellious women, and rescued child brides. A fierce male reaction led by the *mullahs* and nobility followed. They called *Zhenotdel* "*jinotdyel*" (devil's chancellory), and started rumor campaigns against the Bolsheviks for holding orgies, sharing women in common,

and using their centers as houses of prostitution. Earthquakes, droughts and plagues were blamed on de veiling. Women leaving a Baku women's club were set upon by wild dogs, and men threw boiling water at them. An eighteen year old Uzbek activist was mutilated and thrown into a well. A Muslem woman in her 20s was hacked to death by her father and brothers when she appeared in public in a bathing suit. Many *Zhenotdel* organizers were also killed. Stites reports that there were three hundred such murders in Central Asia in only three months of one year.⁴⁷ However, exemplary trials were held for murderers of women, and the government eventually classified such crimes as counter-revolutionary offenses (in 1929).

The campaign to liberate the women of the East was perhaps the most notable (and dramatic) work of *Zhenotdel*. It demonstrates that the struggle of women for their emancipation was indeed a major current of the Bolshevik Revolution. Despite the hardships, the determination and enthusiasm of the *Zhenotdel* workers reflected the vigor of the revolutionary movement at that time.

This gives an indication of the kind of work *Zhenotdel* was involved in from the end of the Civil War through the 1920s. In many ways it was quite impressive.

CONTROVERSIES WITHIN THE PARTY OVER ZHENOTDEL

All through this period there were problems within the Party towards the work of *Zhenotdel*. At several Congresses *Zhenotdel* representatives claimed that the Party was not paying enough attention to their work, and that regional centers were deliberately hindering it. At the 9th Party Congress (1920), one Martynova complained:

It is essential that the Party committee pay serious attention to this work and not be limited by the taking of only one resolution. What should the participation in the

work consist of? Looking over the protocols of the Party committees you see that, if in one and a half years this question is put for discussion then this is an advanced committee; but in the majority of cases the comrades assign a worker who is by far not responsible but rather a rank and file communist woman, and on this quit themselves.⁴⁸

After this, a resolution put forth by Martynova was approved. It stated that "The 9th Congress of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) considers the work among the female proletariat one of the tasks of the moment which cannot be put off and an essential part of our general Party work." The resolution called for "organizing women's sections among our Party committees where they don't exist and strengthening their work where they do exist.... in this providing these sections with responsible organizers and leaders from among the best Party workers."⁴⁹

In spite of Party resolutions, Konkordia Samoilova complained that *Zhenotdel* was treated as a joke, and that most Party members, including women, considered this work "beneath their dignity." More seriously, Party officials in the outlying districts were actively sabotaging *Zhenotdel* work. According to Hayden, in the first year of NEP, several local women's departments were arbitrarily disbanded. There continued to be incidents where Party provincial committees refused to allow delegate elections, and even called for the liquidation of *Zhenotdel*.⁵⁰ Therefore, the 10th Congress (1921) called for more cooperation between *Zhenotdel* and agitation and propaganda departments of the Party. Hayden says that after the 10th Congress, the Central Committee "repeatedly issued circulars instructing its local organizations to stop 'liquidation' of the women's departments."⁵¹

Nevertheless, matters had reached a crisis point. At the 11th Congress (1922), *Zhenotdel* raised the complaint that their directors were

generally not invited to meetings of heads of Central Committee departments, but told to wait in the hall until the subject under discussion concerned women. Sofia Smidovich, then *Zhenotdel* director, called for disbanding *Zhenotdel* if more support was not given. The 11th Congress made the decision to maintain *Zhenotdel*, and again promised more support.⁵²

By the end of 1922, a number of non-Party women's publications had sprung up. This may have reflected dissatisfactions arising from the problems brought on women during NEP -- loss of jobs, decrease in funds for daycare, laundries, etc. In 1923, Vera Golubeva, Deputy Director of *Zhenotdel*, put forth a radical scheme. She felt that since the Party did not support *Zhenotdel*, it was accomplishing very little. Therefore, it would be more useful if men and women outside the Party would form themselves into special societies dedicated to the emancipation of women. She proposed experiments in communal living as a first step. Her ideas received an immediate and hostile reaction from the Party -- and from most of the rest of the *Zhenotdel* leadership.⁵³ In January 1923 *Rabotnitsa* was revived, apparently to deal with this situation.

The 12th Congress (1923) also tried to deal with this. It reconfirmed that *Zhenotdel* should have equal status with other Central Committee departments. It stated:

The continuing, and becoming more complicated, conditions of this work in the face of the slowing construction of institutions to lighten the conditions of the women workers creates some soil for feminist deviations. These deviations can assist the creation of such specialized societies which, under the flag of improving the daily life conditions of women, in fact, would lead to the splitting of the female part of the laboring people from the general class struggle.⁵⁴

The 12th Congress issued a call "to strengthen the work of the assigned organizations in the matter of improvement of the daily life of women along with the improvement of the position of the working class as a whole." But it also noted what it called "the significant separation of the work among women workers and women peasants from the general Party work, and the inadequate inclination and activity flowing from this to a large degree of the *Zhenotdel* workers towards general Party work." A resolution proposed methods to resolve this: "The Congress proposes to the Party committees to get rid of these phenomena by putting into effect the full leadership of the Party committees in the work of the *Zhenotdels* and by making them up of qualified women Party workers."⁵⁵ The resolution further supported the delegate system and work in the East. However, in other words, *Zhenotdel* was acting too autonomously, and was put under tighter Party control.

We are in no way able to assess the different controversies and debates concerning *Zhenotdel* at the Party Congresses. However, it is clear that work among women was an issue of discussion at each Party Congress through the 1920s. McNeal states that "few other issues in the 1920s were the subject of as many party decisions as the 'woman question'."⁵⁶ It is also clear that the chauvinism permeating the Soviet society did not totally escape the Party. Lenin said: "Scratch the Communist and a philistine appears. To be sure, you have to scratch the sensitive spot,-- such as their mentality regarding women."⁵⁷

TRADE UNION OPPOSITION

There are many references in the literature to ongoing difficulties in the relations between *Zhenotdel* and the trade unions. In the autumn of 1919, Kollontai wrote a letter to the Politburo on the "pressing question of the relationship between trade unions and the women's sections, in

view of the heated discussions which are disrupting our work."⁵⁸ There continued to be tensions of "turf" and hostile reactions from the male members. So, instead of using *Zhenotdel* instructors, the trade unions were put in charge of the work of the *delegatki*. Nonetheless, the unions had to be constantly pushed into their commitments toward women, and they too repeatedly called for the liquidation of *Zhenotdel*.

Smith recounts an informative discussion with the daughter of a *Zhenotdel* leader:

The daughter reported that originally all work among women in the factories rested on *Zhenotdel*. As a result, the factory committee often failed to take initiative and refused to put subjects of special interest to women on their programs. When women came to meetings they were met with: "Well, let's hear what the *babas* have to say." Because women were afraid to express themselves it was necessary to organize special women's meetings. This person thought this had some good effect but led to a *we/they* attitude. Therefore, a decision was made for a change of method. She stated that the trade union congress voted to place responsibility for work among women on factory committees as a whole. This congress instructed unions to include questions of special interest to women on their general program. She thought that this had a healthy effect. The unions became more active in drawing women into their work. Her conclusion was that *Zhenotdel* prepares the ground for union work.⁵⁹

Smith also gives an interesting example from this period of *Zhenotdel* work in the textile manufacturing district of Ivanovo Voznesensk. Of the 126,000 textile workers in the district, two-thirds were women, and of these 26,000 were peasant women who had come to work in the factories for the first time in the last two years. *Zhenotdel* faced many difficulties, including the harsh life

of the peasants. Yet in the end, 30,000 of these women were reached in one way or another by *Zhenotdel* and over 8,000 became delegates. Hundreds of women were studying in the political circles, and 3,000 women were members of circles which discussed household and other questions of immediate interest to women. Smith states that in two years (1926-28), the number of women elected to soviets in this area increased to 23%, the number of women shareholders in co-operatives from 48,000 to 70,000, and the number of women in the Communist Party from 18% to 23%.⁶⁰

However, it appears that the relation between the work of *Zhenotdel* and the work of the trade unions was never adequately settled. There is also evidence that a similar situation existed in the local soviets, where (male) leadership also eventually co-opted control of the *Zhenotdel delegatki*.

THE DEMISE OF ZHENOTDEL

Zhenotdel was officially dissolved at the 16th Party Congress in June, 1930. There had been forewarnings. In 1926, the Women's Secretariat of the Comintern had been downgraded to an appendage of the Executive Committee. In 1927, the Party Central Committee had issued a circular letter to all local organizations noting the failure of *Zhenotdel* to mobilize women around the tasks of the Party.⁶¹ *Zhenotdel* was perfectly willing to organize women to carry out Party directives, but insisted that women had to be emancipated in their daily life before they could fulfill these tasks. In 1927, *Zhenotdel* held its second All-Union Conference of Women Workers and Peasants, in which women very vocally presented a list of their grievances. They expressed disgust with the male chauvinism in the trade unions and soviets and with the callousness of factory managers. They criticized the Commissariat of Labor for not following up on its decrees to pro-

tect women workers from unemployment, for not providing adequate job training, and for ignoring the inequality of wages that persisted. They demanded better healthcare and childcare facilities for unemployed women, and appealed to the government for the promised domestic services. The peasant women presented a particularly horrific picture of their plight. In effect, the women accused the Party and Government of betraying their interests and treating them as second-class citizens. This appears to have brought the ongoing tension between *Zhenotdel* and the Party to a head, but to little avail. Hayden reports that in the following year, of the 16 slogans for International Working Women's Day, 15 dealt with mobilizing women for industrialization and collectivization needs, and only one slogan referred to emancipating women in their daily lives.⁶²

In 1929, the Secretariat was abruptly reorganized to suit the new period of industrialization and collectivization. Special departments (Jewish, Village and Women's) were subsumed under Agitation and Mass Campaigns. Stites states that "the furious pace of industrialization and collectivization beginning in 1928 posed tasks of mass mobilization which were, in the minds of some, much too imposing to be handled by *Zhenotdel*. One Party figure, according to Stalin's spokesman Kaganovich, felt that '*Zhenotdel* was no longer a center of progress, but rather a brake to it'.⁶³ In a complete about-face, Kaganovich blamed *Zhenotdel* for concentrating too much on the problems of women's everyday lives, and not enough on political education, therefore, not preparing the peasant women for collectivization!⁶⁴ [*Zhenotdel* had been given the impossible task of organizing the *batrachki* (landless peasant women), probably the most down-trodden segment of society who lived an almost subhuman existence.] Kaganovich further stated that the conditions which gave rise to *Zhenotdel* no longer existed. Women were full citizens with equal rights, i.e., their mass entry into production. It was acknowl-

edged that *Zhenotdel* had done important and necessary work, but it was outdated. There was now a solid cohort of liberated women, and a special organ was no longer needed. The Party as a whole would assume this work.⁶⁵

There was evidently no debate leading up to the decision to abolish *Zhenotdel*. At the Congress, it was presented as a *fait accompli*. Stites recounts that "some comrades applauded the abolition of *Zhenotdel* as long overdue, while others... lamented the decision."⁶⁶

The current *Zhenotdel* leadership, as well as Krupskaya, concurred in its liquidation. Party minutes did record at least one strong protest. P.F. Kudelli, an original editor of *Rabotnitsa*, protested that although working women had essentially contributed in building the new economy, they still enjoyed none of the benefits promised to them in their homes, and that women struggling to combine work, home life and political activity suffered from an impossible conflict of interests. She stressed the need for workers' communal living arrangements, and accused the Party of hypocrisy in forcing collectivization on the peasants, when neither the workers nor the leadership lived collectively.⁶⁷

THE AFTERLIFE OF ZHENOTDEL

The legacy of *Zhenotdel* lingered on. Successors of local *Zhenotdel* organs (*Zhensektors*) organized delegate meetings in rural areas until 1934, and these departments were maintained in certain non-Russian regions into the 1950s to combat the remnants of feudal prejudice. Commissions of Work Among Women officially remained a part of trade unions and soviets. Cultural, political and professional women's groups continued, as did mass campaigns around various issues; and International Working Women's Day continued to be celebrated. But *Kommunistka* was abolished [theory about women was clearly not desired!], and Party presses discontin-

ued women's pages. Put under Party editorship, *Rabotnitsa* survived, but with considerably watered-down content.

However, the women's activities that remained were entirely tied to the perceived needs of the nation and the Party, e.g., the main slogan for International Working Women's Day in 1930 was "100% collectivization."⁶⁸ Local organizations served chiefly to transmit Party directives on production quotas and to mobilize women in support of the five-year plans. After 1930, many Red Clubs and Tents were opened to men and concentrated on work training. Delegate meetings were essentially replaced by women's "production conferences." After Stalin's death, *Zhensoviety* (Women's Councils) were established in the non-urban regions. Browning gives an interesting analysis of these councils as means to "mobilize women for the tasks decided by the Party" and as transmitters of bourgeois family ideology.⁶⁹

ZHENOTDEL'S ACHIEVEMENTS

By 1930, significant gains had been made towards the emancipation of women. Women had full legal rights. The great majority of urban working women had been won over to the regime. Large numbers of women were again employed, and could be found in occupations previously undreamed of. Major progress had been made against illiteracy; maternal and child services were increasing; and labor protection laws were again enforced. Significant gains had been made against domestic slavery, the veil and other outrages.

However, *Zhenotdel* had not been able to achieve two of its major goals -- the eradication of prostitution and the establishment of collectivized housekeeping. The conditions of NEP had frustrated the first goal, since it impoverished women and reestablished their dependency on the male income (see article on Prostitution). And the priorities of the Party prevented the

second goal from being achieved, as it sacrificed the well-being of women in order to increase production and profit (see article on Women's Work).

Some figures demonstrate these gains. In ten years, nine to ten million women had passed through the delegate system. At the time of *Zhenotdel's* demise, almost half of all women were literate. Women comprised over 30% of all university students and approximately 40% of trade school students. Party membership was about 14% female. Women's membership in rural and urban soviets and distribution centers was 20-25% at this time (see article on Women's Work).

The accomplishments of *Zhenotdel* cannot, however, be measured by statistics alone. The modest forces of the *Zhenotdel* were expected to go everywhere and do everything. *Zhenotdel's* economic resources were scant at best, and constantly reduced. Its efforts were thwarted and ridiculed by the trade unions and soviets. It received only lukewarm Party support, and its priorities were continually being changed by the Party. And *Zhenotdel* workers were actively persecuted by the reactionary, patriarchal forces. Given the incredibly oppressed and backward position of women before the Revolution, the fact that by 1930 most women were conscious of their rights as full and equal citizens and were seeking to achieve them is the true and remarkable legacy of *Zhenotdel*.

DISCUSSION

Impressive as some of these facts are, to us, this was only a beginning, opening up the possibility for an even broader fight for the emancipation of women.

Continuing on the path to socialism would have required such a fight, including equalizing the conditions of male and female workers, raising the level of pay and skills of women workers, continuing the fight against patriarchal condi-

tions in the countryside, organizing to socialize domestic services, and other fights. It is possible that by 1930 some other form of organization among women besides *Zhenotdel* was needed. Stites states bluntly that the abolition of *Zhenotdel* marked "the end of the Proletarian Women's Movement."⁷⁰ But the real issue is that the fight for women's emancipation was given up because the fight for socialism was given up.

By the 1930s it is clear that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was not organizing the working class for socialist construction nor approaching the working class in a revolutionary way. Instead, they built what became a state capitalist economy which they called "Socialism." The state capitalist economy required the participation of women workers; there was a labor shortage. But measures did not go beyond that. The emancipation of women and the building of socialism took a back seat to the industrialization and collectivization programs and the consolidation of Stalin's regime. To disguise this, Soviet leaders insisted that "The Victory of Socialism" had completely liberated women.

It does seem to us that in the conditions of Russia at the time of the Revolution, a mass organization outside the Party to fight for women's emancipation might have been reasonable. Russia was a country of incredible backwardness. The condition of women was horrendous. The extent of patriarchal domination and male chauvinism was vast, and the Party itself was not immune. Furthermore, women workers and peasants had a long history of activism in fighting for their rights. The Party's fear of a separate Party organization splitting the proletariat is understandable, but there was an irresolvable contradiction in its position. Hayden puts the matter thus: "Lenin viewed *Zhenotdel* as the representative of the Party among women, whereas the early *Zhenotdel* leaders viewed it as the representative of the interests of women within the Party and the institutions of the Soviet state."⁷¹ This was

not a contradiction in Lenin's thinking, and need not have been a contradiction as long as the Bolsheviks were on the socialist track.

But the contradiction became apparent when *Zhenotdel* had to constantly battle the Party for support and fight against male prejudice within the Party. It was exacerbated when, after Lenin's death, the Party began to veer away from its original goals. As a Party department (of the Secretariat, headed by Stalin), *Zhenotdel* had no choice but to follow Party directives.

Further, despite the Party's fears, *Zhenotdel* could not but have the features of an "organization." For example, *Zhenotdel* leaders repeatedly had to assert that the major advantage of delegate meetings was their "temporary" character; women would not become "isolated" from the rest of the working class because delegate meetings were not a continuing organization with regular members. Where ongoing women's organizations did spring up, whether spontaneously or organized by *Zhenotdel* workers, the *Zhenotdel* leadership insisted they be disbanded.⁷² The point is that there was a natural tendency for women to organize themselves. Perhaps if that had been allowed, they might have been able to fight against the erosion of their rights, such as the abolition of abortion, or could have pressured the state for the domestic services promised them.

By the mid to late 20s, the economic situation in the Soviet Union had somewhat stabilized. We thought that by that time some discussion of organizing daycare services, dining rooms, etc., for the working class as a whole could have been taken up. But we have found no indication that it was. In fact, social welfare programs and other "shoots of communism" continued to seriously decline. Certainly in the 1930s, intense industrialization demanded that more factory daycare programs and cafeterias be established. But they were not aimed at lightening the burden of domestic work so as to free working women to take part in society more fully. Rather, they were necessities

to make women's labor available for capitalist industrialization and accumulation. Moreover, the connection of creches and dining rooms to the factories meant that a certain stratification of the working class took place. If women worked at the more prosperous factories, they received these benefits. But there was no organized work to make such services available to the class as a whole. Furthermore, we question whether a more direct struggle for employment and improving the working conditions of women should have been waged during NEP. And not least, a campaign to raise men's consciousness was never adequately attempted.

We recognize the extreme difficulties in the economy of the Soviet Union of that period, the drastic decline in production, the fact that large sections of the population had gone back to the countryside because industry was at a standstill. We recognize that contradictions of the regime with the peasantry had become severe. We recognize the purpose of NEP in getting the economy going at that time and establishing a compromise with the peasantry. However, we have questions as to whether NEP went too far in concessions to the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. We question whether more restrictions could have been put on these strata, and more pressure exerted to force them to honor the laws and resolutions regarding women.

At the bottom is the issue that, in general, the mass movements of workers declined in this period. The soviets degenerated from grass-roots policy-making bodies into mere appendages which carried out Party directives. The trade unions also became mere transmitters of Party policies to the workers, and strikes were suppressed. The concept of citizen "watch-dog" organizations which were to check the rising bureaucracy was abandoned during NEP and never revived. In short, the proletarian character of the Revolution was destroyed. Lenin theorized that socialism could be reached through a state capitalism under pro-

letarian rule. But proletarian organizations were undermined and sabotaged. It is our thesis that the emancipation of women is inseparably linked to the general triumph of the proletariat. Without means for the proletariat (including women proletarians) to exert their goals, reactionary, bureaucratic state capitalism was consolidated without serious opposition. By the 1930s, it is clear that this had happened. We agree with Stites that *Zhenotdel* had many features of a genuine proletarian movement, and when it was eliminated, the fate of Soviet women was sealed.

Certainly, by the 1930s, when there was almost full employment and material conditions had greatly improved, the state could have established the promised system of domestic and childrearing services, and turned its attention to the promotion of women to their highest capacities. But by this time, the individual family was again fully entrenched as the "basic cell" of society and had reassumed many of its former economic and social responsibilities. This aided the new rising class of bureaucrats to enrich themselves from state profits and to build up a military economy to protect its position (see article on Family Law).

It is a historical tragedy that many of the gains women derived from the Revolution were only temporary. The following articles on Family Law, Abortion, Prostitution, and Women's Work discuss the gains and reversals in detail. They reveal that the betrayal of the early Bolshevik goals for women is part of the larger tragedy of the betrayal of socialism by Stalin and the Communist Party.

ZHENOTDEL DIRECTORS

INESSA ARMAND (1919-1920)

Bourgeois intellectual background. A long-time, close associate of Lenin. Briefly opposed, then supported Lenin's April Theses. Appointed Head of Women's Section of the Internationale

in 1920. Directed women's Civil War work, worked with Commissariats of Justice and Social Welfare to legalize abortion and decriminalize prostitution, conceived delegate system. Died in 1920. [Anna Kollontai, deputy director].

ANNA KOLLONTAI (1920-1922)

Bourgeois intellectual background: novelist and essayist. Organized first Social Democratic women's groups in Petrograd. First woman on Executive Committee of Petrograd Soviet and on Party Central Committee. Supported Lenin's April Theses. First woman in government as Commissar of Social Welfare. Founded Office of Maternal and Infant Welfare and had major input into first Family Code and Prostitution legislation. Member of Left Opposition to Brest-Litovsk, dropped from Central Committee and resigned Commissariat in 1918. Propagandist for Red Army during Civil War. Secretary of Women's Section of Internationale after Armand. Active in famine relief of 1921, in protection of rights of urban women workers, and in campaign to liberate women of the East. Removed from post because of role in Worker's Opposition. Remanded to diplomatic posts in Norway and Mexico; first Soviet woman ambassador -- to Sweden. Negotiated treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1940. Returned to Soviet Union in 1945. Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize. Advisor to Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Died 1952. [Vera Golubeva, deputy director].

SOF'IA SMIDOVICH (1922-1924)

Petty-bourgeois, non-intellectual background. Social Democrat since 1889; organized women

factory workers. Head of Moscow Regional *Zhenotdel* from 1919-1920. Concerned with maternal and child protection. Conservative on "psychological liberation," abortion and the family. Stalin supporter. Resigned *Zhenotdel* for post on Central Control Commission. Died 1934.

KLAVDIIA NIKOLAIEVA (1924-1927)

Proletarian background: typesetter/book-binder. Veteran of feminist Congress of 1908; organized proletarian women's circles, former editor of *Rabornitsa*, Director of Petrograd *Zhenotdel*, Head of Women's Section of Internationale after Kollontai, member of the Central Committee and Orgburo. Directed peasant women's entry into cooperatives and rural soviets. Dismissed for role in Zinoviev's Leningrad Opposition; remanded to minor posts in provinces. Returned to Party, re-elected to Central Committee in 1939. Died 1944. [Aleksandra Artiukhina, deputy director].

ALEKSANDRA ARTIUKHINA (1927-1929)

Proletarian background: textile worker and trade unionist. Member of Kollontai's "Women's Mutual Aid Club" in St. Petersburg in 1907, *Zhenotdel* deputy director in 1924, member of Central Committee, Orgburo and candidate for Secretariat. Organized agricultural workers into production. Led *Zhenotdel* in opposing Leningrad Opposition. Possibly removed from Directorship for supporting Bukharin's Right Opposition. Later, rewarded for economic and trade union work. Served on Central Control Commission and as President of Cotton-worker's Union. Died 1969.

NOTES

1. Lenin, "Speech at the First All-Russian Congress of Working Women," p. 60.
2. Lenin, "A Great Beginning," p. 69.
3. Zetkin, in Lenin, *The Emancipation of Women*, p. 113.
4. Lenin, "A Great Beginning," p. 63.
5. Kollontai, "Towards a History of the Working Women's Movement," *Selected Writings*, p. 52.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Lenin, "Tasks of the Working Women's Movement," p. 70.
8. See Kollontai, "The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia," *Selected Articles and Speeches*, pp. 163-164.
9. Zetkin, p. 110.
10. Hayden, p. 154.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Holt, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, pp. 115-116.
14. Hayden, pp. 152-153.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
16. See, e.g., Stites, "Zhenotdel," pp. 177-178; Kollontai, "Lenin and the First Congress of Women Workers," *Selected Works*, pp. 153-156.
17. Stites, "Zhenotdel," p. 177.
18. Porter, p. 339.
19. Kollontai, "The Woman Worker," *Selected Articles and Speeches*, p. 171.
20. Lenin, "A Great Beginning," p. 64.
21. Goldman, p. 128.
22. Smith, pp. 48-49.
23. Porter, p. 338.
24. Hayden, p. 159.
25. McNeal, pp. 77-78.
26. See Kollontai's scheme for social insurance (article on Women's Work). Trotsky's plan to "militarize" labor also falls under this type of thinking.
27. See Lenin, "The New Economic Policy of Soviet Russia and the Perspectives of the World Revolution" (speech delivered at the November 14th, 1922 session of the Fourth World Congress of the Comintern).
28. Kollontai, "The Woman Worker," *op. cit.*, p. 166.
29. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, p. 274.
30. Goldman, p. 126.
31. Hayden, p. 170.
32. Smith, p. 13.
33. Hayden, pp. 163-164.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
37. McNeal, p. 81.
38. Hayden, pp. 164-165.
39. Kollontai, "The Woman Worker," *op. cit.*, p. 178.
40. Porter, p. 436.
41. Kollontai, "The Woman Worker," *op. cit.*, p. 163.
42. Hayden, p. 436.
43. Kollontai, "The Woman Worker," *op. cit.*, p. 178.
44. Halle, *Women in the Soviet East*, pp. 142-208.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
46. Louise Bryant, *Mirrors of Moscow*, in Porter, p. 394.
47. Stites, "Zhenotdel," p. 187.
48. *Protokoly IX S'ezda RKP(b)*, pp. 334-335.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
50. Hayden, p. 164.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
54. *Stenograficheskoy Otchet XII RKP(b)*, p. 724.
55. *Ibid.*
56. McNeal, p. 76.
57. Zetkin, p. 114.
58. Porter, p. 346.
59. Smith, p. 56.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
61. Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, p. 342.
62. Hayden, p. 171.
63. Stites, "Zhenotdel," p. 191.
64. Hayden, p. 171.
65. Stites, "Zhenotdel," p. 191.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Hayden, p. 172.
68. Stites, "Zhenotdel," p. 192.
69. Browning, pp. 213-234.
70. Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, p. 344.
71. Hayden, p. 162.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

LAW AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FAMILY

The best criterion of the cultural level is the legal status of women.

(Lenin, "On International Working Women's Day," 1920).

BACKGROUND

The passage of the Family Law of 1918 was the keystone of the legal emancipation of Soviet women. It was a remarkable accomplishment of the October Revolution. Capitalism had emerged in Russia only a half-century earlier. Czarism had been overthrown just six months before. Under czarism, all authority had begun with god and the czar, passed through the clergy and aristocracy and then, by right of gender, devolved upon fathers, husbands, sons and brothers. The clergy regulated every important life process from birth to marriage to death. In the best of cases, fathers had to give consent for their children to marry. Otherwise, they outright arranged marriages. In the rural and Muslim regions, fathers even sold daughters into marriage. If a young person married without paternal consent, disinheritance or even imprisonment was possible. Although, technically, women had the legal right to own and acquire separate property (dowry, inheritance, gifts, earnings), common practice nullified this right. A woman owed complete obedience to her husband; she was unable to take a job, get an education, obtain a passport, or conduct a monetary transaction without her husband's consent. If her husband changed place of residence, she was obligated to follow. In reality, women were property: *head servants* in households of the upper classes, *beasts of burden* in the lower classes. They

had no separate identity, but were appendages of their patriarchal owners. According to czarist law, it was a woman's duty

to obey her husband as the head of the family, to be loving and respectful, to be submissive in every respect and show him every compliance and affection, he being the master of the house.¹

They called this enslavement of women a religious sacrament ordained by god. Lenin called it medievalism and feudalism, and regarded the enforced inferior status of women as a "relic of serfdom."² Orthodox religious law did allow dissolution of marriage (annulment), but mainly by the husband; Muslim law granted this right only to the husband. Among sections of the peasantry, this enabled a regular system of exploiting women. Peasant men took *seasonal wives* for planting and harvesting, then annulled the marriage when the crops were in, and abandoned the women. Women did not even have the right to their own children. Any children of a dissolved marriage went to the man, if he wanted them, because they were his heirs. At the same time, husbands could escape responsibility for children born out of wedlock. These were the *illegitimates* upon whom society placed a great stigma. The czarist government even stamped this status on passports. And all this was but the tip of the iceberg in the barbaric treatment of women -- and children.

Prior to the October Revolution, the rising Russian bourgeoisie had added social hypocrisy to the absolute authority of the man. They spoke of equality in marriage, and of love as its founda-

tion, but only in order to obscure their real interests -- the male-dominated economic foundations of marriage and the family. Lenin scathingly decried the "decay, putrescence and filth of bourgeois marriage."³ The bourgeois parties, with their program of constitutional monarchy, were too conciliatory to the aristocracy and too respectful of "the sacred rights of private property" to consider real equality for women.⁴ A reform law of 1914 did allow a woman to separate from her husband and obtain her own passport, but only under extreme conditions of adultery, impotence or abandonment. This, however, mainly benefitted a small portion of the upper classes.

Nevertheless, capitalism had been gradually breaking up the old social relations. The patriarchal family was falling apart. As capitalism forced women to seek work outside the home, they became breadwinners or workers alongside their husbands, with some degree of independence. The social dislocation of World War I accelerated the disintegration of the family. The number of women who worked for a living grew dramatically, as did the number of women who headed peasant households. Even before this, proletarian women had joined in the struggles of the day on their own initiative. They participated in educational, cultural and political, factory and community clubs. They raised general democratic demands, plus demands for their class and for themselves as an especially oppressed section of the population. They took part in strikes and even led them (see article on Women's Work).

Lenin emphasized that the oppression of women to some degree cut across class lines, affecting "the working woman, the wife of the worker, the peasant woman, the wife of the little man, and even in many respects the woman of the propertied class."⁵ One must acknowledge the efforts of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women to liberate both themselves and others. For example, the socially conscious women of the 19th century populists (*Narodniks*) were forced to flee

their fathers and enter into marriages of convenience in order to get passports to obtain medical educations abroad and return to work for the liberation of the peasantry. And many women of the People's Will and other political groups spent years in prison and exile, and even gave their lives for revolutionary causes.

During the early years of the 20th century, several bourgeois feminist groups had worked for the emancipation of women. Mainly these efforts were in the legal and political arenas: the franchise for women was the big issue, but they also questioned such matters as church-sanctified marriage and husbands' rights over women and children. They were chiefly concerned with issues related to their own class, although a certain segment of this movement had promoted more radical social reforms: land reforms for peasant women, maternal protection, and insurance for working women and household servants. The bent, however, was to organize all women on a gender basis, which obliterated class conflicts.

Alexandra Kollontai and other Social Democratic women regarded most of these efforts as a sort of *noblesse oblige*. They recognized that organizing women by gender left untouched the class-based economic foundations of society, which was the real cause of women's oppression. They insisted that mere legal reforms could not really alleviate the horrendous conditions of working women. The matter came to a head when Social Democratic and proletarian women stormed the bourgeois All Russian Women's Congress of 1908 to press their demands for a revolutionary social and economic program which would liberate working women (see articles on *Zhenordel* and Women's Work).

After the February Revolution, the bourgeois Provisional (Kerensky) government was forced to grant women suffrage and nominal civil rights, but hesitated to implement these rights. The task of advancing the liberation of women fell to the October Revolution, which smashed the czarist

and bourgeois apparatus. As part of tearing down the old and building up the new, the Bolsheviks immediately began examining and reconstructing the whole legal apparatus.

The importance of Bolshevik women and the working women's movement in formulating what eventually became the first Family Law cannot be overemphasized. The measures urged by Kollontai, Krupskaya, Inessa Armand and others, who drew upon direct input from working women, largely formed the basis of these laws. Immediately after the October Revolution, the first All-Russia Congress of Working and Peasant Women in November of 1917 formulated the measures on divorce and marriage, maternal and infant protection, adoption, and labor protection of women and children.

FIRST FAMILY LAW - 1918

The first Family Law (or Code) came about piecemeal, and was not codified until October 18, 1918. The Divorce Decree was the first element to be put in force, in December of 1917. At the same time, civil marriage replaced ecclesiastical marriage, and Registrar's Offices (*ZAGS*) were established. A Decree Forbidding Adoption was issued in 1918, but was not originally part of the Law (see Discussion). The Abortion Decree, instituted in November, 1920, also was not originally part of the Family Law but was considered a health measure (see article on Abortion). Further amendments were made in 1922 in the Land Code (peasant rights) and in the Civil Code (inheritance). All these additions through 1922 may be considered part of the First Family Law, as they have direct bearing on the family. Additional protective laws for women and children were under the Health and Welfare Code, the Criminal Code, and the Labor Code (see article on Women's Work).

Rudolf Schlesinger's *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the U.S.S.R.* provides

the text of the Family Laws. Wendy Goldman's *Women, the State and Revolution* presents a well-researched and documented analysis of the social consequences of these laws. The first Family Law was very lengthy and elaborately spelled out. It tried to cover all varieties of situations and to foresee complications which might arise. Following is a summary of its main points:

ON MARRIAGE:

- A marriage must be registered to be legal. Religious marriages concluded before October 17, 1917 are considered legal.
- Mutual consent is necessary to enter into a marriage.
- The age of consent is 16 for females and 18 for males.
- Polygamy and marriage between close relatives are prohibited.
- Parties of different religions may marry, as may all clergy.

ON ANNULMENT:

Marriages may be declared void by either party, outside involved persons, or the state if:

- contracted by persons already married.
- persons are not able to appreciate the significance of their acts.
- one of the parties is underage -- unless action is begun after the age of consent, or if pregnancy or offspring have resulted.

ON DIVORCE:

- The only grounds needed are mutual consent of both parties or the desire of one of them to obtain the dissolution of both registered and religious marriage.
- Mutual consent divorce is merely processed at *ZAGS* office.
- Contested divorce is handled by local courts.
- Divorce may be appealed to a higher court.

ON RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE:

- Parties must choose a common married name: husband's, wife's or a combination.
- If parties are of different nationalities (and one is Russian), either party may change citizenship.
- Change of residence on the part of one of the parties does not obligate the other to follow.
- Marriage does not establish community of property.
- Both parties are obligated to support the other if either is unable to work, after divorce as well, until financial situation is secure.
- The spouse of the deceased is entitled to receive only the first 10,000 rubles of property after death.

ON FAMILY RIGHTS:

- Children descended from non-registered unions have equal rights with those descended from registered marriages.
- Both unmarried and married women may name the natural father of their child, up to three months before birth. The natural father must assume financial responsibility for childbirth and support of the child.
- In cases of disputed paternity, the court decides.

ON PERSONAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS:

- Paternal rights are exercised by parents conjointly until male child is 18 and female child is 16.
- Parents are obligated to provide education and training for useful activity.
- Parents have the right to decide on upbringing and instruction of children, but have no right to enter children into any employment contract from ages 16 to 18 without their consent.

- Parents may determine the nationality of their children; if they fail to agree, children may choose upon reaching legal age.
- Parents may determine the religion of their children; if they fail to agree, children are considered to have no religion until age 14 when they may choose.
- In cases of abuse or neglect, the state may remove children with visitation as appropriate.

ON PROPERTY RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN:

- Parents are equally responsible for supporting minor children, in accordance with the means of each, unless children are maintained by state.
- Parents are equally responsible for supporting minor children after divorce or annulment. Disputes are handled by the court.
- Children are obliged to provide maintenance for their parents if they are unable to work and not maintained by the state.
- Neither children nor parents have rights to property of the other.

ON RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF RELATED PERSONS:

- Close relatives (parents, children, siblings, half-siblings) are required to support each other if they have no other means of support.
- No difference is made between relationships established inside or outside of registered marriage.

While examining other parts of the legal system, the Bolsheviks adopted additional measures which benefitted women and children:

- In 1918, the government banned adoption to prevent sexual and labor exploitation and inheritance fraud.
- Immediately after the Revolution, it re-

moved criminal penalties for performing abortions. Then on November 19, 1920 it legalized abortion (see article on Abortion).

- In 1921, it amended the Land Code which covered peasant rights. This gave women and children equal membership in the *dvor* (peasant farmstead) and, therefore, the right to receive their share of its disburseable assets after annulment or divorce.
- In 1922, it amended the Civil Code to abolish the status of illegitimacy in inheritance rights. It also limited inheritance to direct family members (spouse, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and indigent family members already supported by deceased), not to exceed 10,000 rubles each.
- All disputes over property, inheritance, marital support, familial support, alimony, child support or child custody to be settled by the court.
- The Health and Welfare Code guarded the welfare of mothers and children with maternity and infant care, milk and feeding stations, creches and kindergartens.
- The Criminal Code protected women from sexual exploitation by establishing penalties for non-consensual sex, rape, pandering, abuse, and the forcing or sale of females into marriage.
- The Labor Code established equal pay for equal work, paid leave for child bearing and abortion, extra rations and time off from work while nursing, and banned many types of work for women, especially when pregnant or nursing (see article on Women's Work).

DISCUSSION

The Bolsheviks acted immediately to alleviate the worst social conditions oppressing women, to save their lives and free them from desperate

marital situations. Underlying motives were to win the support of women (considered the more conservative element) for the new regime and to free them to work, an urgency many times expressed by Lenin:

Unless women are brought to take an independent part... in political life... [and]... public service, it is no use talking about full and stable democracy, let alone socialism.⁶

The Party passed the Law with a minimum of serious debate over its individual clauses. Schlesinger offers an interesting theory why these laws were enacted so swiftly. That is, in the very real danger that the regime would not survive the forces of counter-revolution, the Bolsheviks hoped that by being officially on the books some of these laws might survive.⁷ While a few hot-heads argued against registered marriage as being a step backwards from socialist goals, it was justified as necessary to combat the influence of the church and religious marriage. Similarly, objections to alimony as insulting to the new-won equality of women were easily refuted by social and economic realities.

Although these laws were carefully worded in terms of absolute equality of rights and responsibilities between the sexes, they were obviously intended to protect women. For example, the marriage laws prohibited arranged and forced marriages, the selling of women, multiple wives, and child marriage. These measures were explicitly directed against practices in the rural and Muslim regions. Mutual consent divorce was simply a matter of registering the desire at ZAGS and receiving a certificate. The complicated, expensive and humiliating process of establishing trumped-up legal grounds was eliminated. Even if one party sued for divorce, the procedure was simplified. If the other party (usually the husband) could not be found, the court issued a

summons; after a prescribed time, the divorce was granted whether the party responded or not (popularly called "post card divorce"). While the laws insisted on shared economic responsibility, obviously mainly women benefitted from the alimony laws, since most women were economically dependent on men. Peasant women were in a particularly bad situation. Note that the law did not put any end limit on spousal support after divorce. Given the economic conditions, there could be no prediction when the majority of women would be able to gain employment and become self-supporting.

The Law had the best interests of children at its core. It may be viewed as a complete about-switch from *parental rights* (common to bourgeois law) to *children's rights*, even today a novel notion. The abolition of the status of *illegitimacy* was a very radical measure for its time. This benefitted children in two ways: it granted them child support and it allowed them to inherit from their natural father. Strenuous attempts were made to find and name these natural fathers. The hundreds of thousands of abandoned and orphaned children left by the war were a tremendous problem. The Bolsheviks had plans to care for these children in state facilities and raise them in a communal fashion. One must look at the prohibition against adoption, which sounds so strange to the modern reader, in this context. It was specifically directed against the *kulaks*, who commonly "adopted" orphans only to exploit their labor on the farms. But while the Bolsheviks had grand plans for the care and education of children, the 1918 Law mainly put responsibility for support of children onto the parents, since the state at this time was not able to take over this function except in emergency cases (and emergencies were extreme and endless).

The property and inheritance clauses attempted to put the burden of familial support onto the bourgeois classes. In one of the provisions it was phrased that indigent members were

entitled to support from their "wealthy" relatives. Obviously, this law hardly even applied to the working classes, since they had no means to support needy relatives. In this case the state assumed responsibility. The prohibition against adoption may also be viewed in this context. Since the Bolsheviks put a strict limit on the amount one could will to heirs, this prevented the bourgeoisie from claiming orphans as "heirs" and fraudulently distributing their income in this manner, only to reclaim it later.

A problematic area, which has been much noted by contemporary commentators on the Law, is the lack of community property sharing. For this not only seemed to cheat the housewife out of compensation for her years of domestic work and child-raising, but also ignored the peasant woman's lifetime of farm labor on the *dvor*. Schlesinger calls this provision a remnant of "feminist thinking" (i.e., strict property division),⁸ but it had its logic. It conserved to the woman her own earnings and savings, however meager. It also returned property and dowries to the woman who came into marriage with some assets but which under Czarist law were controlled by her husband. Because the right to female property was rare in European law, it was probably considered very important to conserve this right. Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women, of course, would have profited from this, but so too might have the poor peasant woman, who customarily brought into marriage a modest dowry of domestic goods and animals. But community property sharing at this time was simply not a burning issue. Bourgeois property had been expropriated at the time of the Revolution -- land, businesses, stock, bank accounts, even houses. For the working class, there would be almost no community property amassed during marriage beyond a few household furnishings. And peasant property was communal, belonging to the *dvor*, not to the married couple. The situation was mitigated by the fact that indigent women were granted ali-

mony after divorce for an undetermined period, and children were granted support until the age of majority.

The question comes up now, and indeed came up then, whether these laws were *socialist* laws or merely the most advanced bourgeois democratic laws, i.e., whether they could have gone further. Schlesinger, for example, considers that “[the] general features correspond rather to a consistent bourgeois democratic revolution rather than to a socialist one.”⁹ Farnsworth, a biographer of Kollontai, sees the Law as a compromise between the conservative goal of Lenin to preserve the family structure, and the more radical views of Kollontai and others who envisioned a larger role played by the state in the “withering away of the family.” She attributes the eventual reestablishment of the bourgeois family to the compromising nature of these laws. It is interesting, but not very useful, to consider how the laws were viewed at the time of their creation. According to Goldman, the chief author of the Law regarded it as “proletarian” law, i.e., so constructed as to strengthen the position of the proletariat, but also with its own obsolescence in mind:

Proletarian power constructs its codes and all of its laws dialectically, so that every day of their existence undermines the need for their existence.... We must accept this [code] knowing that it is not a socialist measure, because socialist legislation will hardly exist. Only limited norms will exist.¹⁰

[There is a semantic problem here because at the time many casually interchanged the terms “socialist” and “communist” rather than adhering to the classic definition of socialism as the dictatorship of the proletarian class and communism as the absence of all classes.] At any rate, another jurist of the time termed the legislation “not socialist legislation, but legislation of the transitional time.”¹¹ This concept conforms with

the Marxian tenet that law is not an eternal category but is a social phenomenon expressing the prevailing relations of production. It also conforms to a basic tenet of Marx, which Lenin was keenly aware of, that laws cannot be higher than the cultural level of the society. That is, it is utopian to institute laws which can neither be obeyed nor enforced. In real terms, this means that while the family as a social unit was preserved, it was considerably weakened. Certain measures removed some of its economic basis and, therefore, its coercive and oppressive nature. One commentator put it rather romantically:

The new family rights stand on the border between the old world and that shining new world where all society will be one family.¹²

The Bolsheviks were very proud of the Family Law. Speaking at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women in 1918, Lenin boasted:

For the first time in history, our law has removed everything that denied women rights... nowhere else in the world have equality and freedom for working women been so fully established.¹³

Lenin obviously saw the laws as surpassing bourgeois law:

Not a single democratic party in the world, not even in the most advanced bourgeois republic, has done in one decade so much as a 100th part of what we did in our very first year in power. We actually razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality.¹⁴

He maintained that the Bolsheviks “solved the problems of the bourgeois revolution with these laws.”¹⁵ In other words, the bourgeoisie could not even implement such laws as they did

decree without altering the economic foundations of society and of the family, which they could not do.

In practical terms, what exactly did the First Family Law do for women? It liberated them from the tyranny of religion and from the patriarchal social order. It established absolute equality between the sexes, granted more autonomy and freedom to women, and made crucial life processes which formerly constrained their lives (birth, marriage, divorce) simple civil procedures. Engels stated:

the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry, and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished.¹⁶

What did the law do in respect to the goal of eliminating the economic foundations of the family? In its measures on familial support and inheritance, it destroyed the basis of the bourgeois family which rested upon willed property succession. And it guaranteed an income (after divorce) to women and their children so that they were not forced to remain in an oppressive family structure.

But Engels also warned that law alone could not eliminate the economic foundations of the family.¹⁷ The Bolsheviks were aware that much more needed to be done to liberate women within the family. A whole series of domestic services were necessary to free them to take full part in social production. But at this time, the state could not assume economic responsibility for the rearing of children, could not even cope with the burden of homeless children. It could not guarantee all women employment, nor could it supply all the support services necessary. At the very least, what these early laws did was to remove all legal constraints against women which would hamper their further liberation and prevent them

from taking their rightful place in a future socialist society. Certain measures, such as "no-fault" divorce, children's rights, and the abolition of illegitimacy, were far ahead of their time.

REVISED FAMILY LAW -- 1926

As social conditions changed, the Family Law went through a number of revisions. The first of these began in 1925 with a Union-wide discussion of the marriage, divorce and alimony provisions of the Law. These discussions concluded with several important amendments and additions in 1926. The Revised Law was considerably streamlined. The significant changes are summarized below. Because the *de facto* provision was the most controversial, it is worth quoting in full:

- *De facto* union has full legal parity with registered marriage.
- Where *de facto* conjugal relations exist between persons, which relations have not been registered... such persons are entitled at any time to regularize their relations by registration, stating when so doing the period of their actual cohabitation.
- [Marital property rights] extend also to the property of persons married *de facto* though not registered, provided such persons recognize their mutual status of husband and wife, or their marital relationship is established as a fact by a court on the basis of the actual conditions under which they live.
- Proof of joint cohabitation is sufficient for the court to establish marital cohabitation in cases where the marriage has not been registered, provided that in addition to proof of joint cohabitation, proof of a common household be adduced, and that statements have been made to third persons either in personal correspondence or in other docu-

ments tending to prove the existence of marital relations, taking also into consideration such circumstances as the presence or absence of mutual material support, joint raising of children, and the like.

- Communal property sharing, in addition to separate property rights, is granted to *de facto* unions as well as to registered marriages.
- Alimony payments are extended to unemployed ex-spouses for six months, but limited to one year for disabled or needy ex-spouses of both registered and *de facto* unions.
- Spouses may retain their premarital last names, original citizenship and separate residences.
- No time limit is set on claiming paternity, but only one natural father is recognized.
- Adoption is no longer prohibited.
- Peasant children of a dissolved union have the right to support from the private means of parents over and above their share of the *dvor*.
- *Ex parte* divorce (suit brought by one spouse) may be conducted through ZAGS rather than the courts.

In addition, marriageable age was raised to 18 years for both sexes; any religious persuasion designated by parents was not binding on children; provision for needy relatives was extended to grandparents; and support for minors was expanded to grandparents, step-parents, and even to parents who had lost legal custody.

DISCUSSION

Halle reports that "the whole country was shaken to its depths" over the discussions of the revisions in the Family Law, particularly the *de facto* provision. In one year, there were thousands of meetings which ranged from one end of

the Soviet Union to the other, on all levels of government, in factories, women's meetings, peasant associations, newspapers and journals.¹⁸ The Law was put out for public discussion because, since its hurried inception, continual disputes had arisen over its legal points. Unforeseen social conditions obviously necessitated some changes in the law. Several revised drafts were offered by various agencies, but the Central Executive Committee, in a long series of heated debates, had not been able to arrive at a consensus. In fact, "vituperation grew so heated and bitter that the Commissar of Justice suggested that the proposed law be submitted to mass discussion."¹⁹ In addition to eliciting public opinion, there was also the necessity to educate the rural population to accept these changes. Halle states that this was "the first time a people of 160 million made a law for itself."²⁰ But while the year of debate was certainly lively and controversial, in reality, public discussion only changed minor features of the draft, such as raising the marriage age, and spelling out the definition of *de facto* marriage more clearly.

The most common fears expressed about *de facto* marriage were these: It would decrease the desired tendency toward registered marriage and revive the impetus toward religious marriage. It would encourage casual or mercenary attitudes toward cohabitation, or even lead to a kind of serial polygamy or polyandry. It would allow women to exploit men by going from one *de facto* union to another, collecting multiple alimonies. It would discourage women from looking for work. It would increase the number of abandoned children. It would put an intolerable burden on the courts to determine *de facto* unions; *de facto* was, in fact, impossible to determine. It would put an intolerable burden on the courts to collect support from men involved in these unions. Finally, some thought *de facto* was a concept ahead of its time, unworkable without state-supported services for women.

On the other hand, others argued that *de facto* further weakened the concept of bourgeois marriage, and was therefore compatible with future communist goals. [Zhenotdel objected to any limitations placed on the definition of *de facto*.] The realists insisted it was the only way to protect women and children in this period of economic instability. Statistics given by Schlesinger reveal that in the rural villages, 60% of the population were against *de facto* marriage, but that in the towns 60% were for it, and that in the larger cities, it was overwhelmingly approved.²¹ In the end, the law was passed for expedient reasons, similar to the abortion law. *De facto* union was already a serious quantitative fact, and women were being harmed by their lack of legal protection in such unions.

Goldman discusses an interesting study done in Moscow in 1925, right before the passing of the Law. Fully 45% of the women bringing alimony (child support) suits were unmarried, and two-thirds of these had lived with a partner for less than a year.²² She also gives very complicated divorce statistics, but it suffices to mention only a few. By 1926, in Moscow, there was one divorce for every two marriages. While the urban rate was twice as high as the rural rate, even in the conservative countryside the divorce rate exceeded that of any European country. And it appears that a large percentage of these liaisons were of rather short duration.²³ Given the instability of relationships during this period, something had to be done.

The *de facto* provision did not apply to the Muslem republics where the control of the *mul-lahs* and the long tradition of polygamy were still too strong. Therefore, registered (civil) marriage was insisted upon. On the other hand, the marriage age was slightly lowered according to local customs and earlier maturity.

A major opponent of the *de facto* measure was Alexandra Kollontai, who felt it demeaned women to beg for alimony and child support.

She insisted that the state should immediately assume responsibility for child care. Therefore, she put forth a plan for universal social insurance in an article titled "A Common Pot or Individual Alimony" (1925). She believed the proposed *de facto* law proceeded from a wrong basis. That is, broad as the provisions were, *de facto* ignored the even more casual relations which resulted from hard conditions and poverty in the villages and towns. In such situations, it was impossible to regularize unions or to exact alimony. Instead, she proposed a general fund from a small tax levied on the working population, on a sliding scale, to fund nurseries, children's homes, and provide support for needy single mothers. Her scheme, while hotly debated, was in the end almost universally rejected by the public. They feared that men would treat liaisons with women even more lightly, knowing they would not have to pay alimony. They objected that it penalized single people unfairly, and degraded and impoverished women and children by making them welfare wards of the state. And they foresaw increased antagonism between city and countryside. That is, since most peasants did not have wages, a tax could not possibly be exacted from them. The urban workers would end up subsidizing the peasants.²⁴ In addition, there was a huge and growing number of unemployed workers. Thus, Kollontai's plan may be viewed as another utopian holdover from the War Communism period, in that it simply did not correspond to the social realities of the time.

The really radical feature about *de facto*, however, was not that it recognized short-term or more casual relationships, but that it granted alimony to ex-partners (women) of such unions. Here, the term "alimony" must be clarified. Technically, it meant support for the separated spouse. But it was often used in the literature of the time to mean child support as well. Under the first Family Law, alimony had been granted only to ex-spouses of registered marriages, whereas child

support was granted to offspring of both married and unmarried women equally.

There had been, from the first, much peasant disapproval of the easy divorce law and the alimony provisions. Peasants feared that the *dvors* were being destroyed by constant disbursing of their moveable assets. When a young man left the *dvor* for life in the city, or a divorced woman and her children left with their share of the *dvor*, all members suffered. The concept of private property was alien to the peasant lifestyle. Practically speaking, since there was little actual money in the *dvor*, the divorced spouse (with dependent children) who walked off with the only cow or horse could seriously threaten the poorer *dvor's* existence. Even many peasant women were negative toward divorce. They felt it left them at a great disadvantage. They could hardly start a new life with a few sacks of potatoes or a cow. Even if a woman were granted a subdivision of the land to work, she could not make a go of it. Only the rich *kulaks* could really afford divorce.

So, the *de facto* alimony provision raised an uproar with the peasant (male) population. The first Family Law, with its basis of individual rights, had continually come into collision with the Land Code, which governed peasant relations and was based on communal rights. Problems had come up about whose *dvor* the children of a divorced and remarried woman belonged to; what to do if a woman's original dowry had been converted into other items, and a host of other complicated issues. All sorts of unsatisfactory compromises had to be worked out, often decided on a case-by-case basis in the courts. Men hid their outside wages; peasants falsified dimensions of their land plots; they even cut back production to prevent crops from going out in alimony. Goldman states that half of the peasant women who sued for alimony were unable to collect anything.²⁵ Most of the divorced women became *batrachki*, landless and often itinerant laborers hired out to *kulaks* or state farms, or were exploited as *seasonal wives*,

or drifted into prostitution. But in the end, peasant objections were simply overridden. Even though the peasantry constituted the vast majority of the population, its reactionary basis could not be allowed to govern the law. Some even felt that if the traditional peasant life was destroyed, so be it. Collectivization was the way of the future.

It should be noted that the Family Law was revised at the height of the NEP period where some private market relations and profit-making were allowed, cash and vodka reappeared, and greater religious tolerance was considered prudent. The 1926 Revisions are often viewed today as representative of the increased social freedom of this period. But they may also be viewed in a totally different manner, as measures to put a brake on the resurgence of bourgeois relations under NEP. This is the period where state services were being reduced and women were being pushed out of the work force. The Revisions definitely increased the economic protection of women and children with the *de facto* clause. They also increased the economic responsibility of the bourgeoisie for its own members, thus relieving the State of more financial burdens. Winter states that *de facto* marriage came about precisely because the resurgence of money during the NEP period had brought a change in property relations.²⁶ And Schlesinger makes an even stronger point: that this and other features of the Revised Law were actively designed to limit capitalist accumulation. That is, individual profits were diverted into increased economic responsibility for family members.²⁷

One must also see the change to community property, a measure urged by working women, as compatible with this interpretation. It was really a more radical idea than *de facto* marriage, for it recognized women's domestic work as *real* work and as a social contribution which must receive paid compensation. [This is still an issue in the women's movement today!] In the NEP period when great numbers of women could not

obtain employment, community property sharing was important protection for the many women forced back into being housewives. As well, it acknowledged the lifetime of farm labor the peasant woman contributed to the *dvor*. [It is not clear from the literature, however, how community property settlements, clearly anathema to the peasant way of life, were ever settled.] Also, by the middle twenties, in addition to the Nepmen and *kulaks*, the more well-off workers were able to accumulate a little property. So that, in this sense, the Revision tallied with the restored capitalist market relations of NEP. Goldman adds an important point: that community property sharing was not presented in terms of "marriage" equity, but in terms of "labor" equity.²⁸

In this context, one can also consider the question of reinstating adoption. The state had lofty plans, but it simply could not cope with all the abandoned children; children's institutions were often termed a "disgrace" if not a real "horror." So necessity prompted this reversal. Goldman gives an excellent analysis of the *Besprizornost'* problem which led to this change in the adoption law. She calls the period from 1914 to 1921 a "demographic earthquake" where 16 million people died from war, famine and epidemic, leaving in 1922 an estimated 7.2 million starving and dying children -- begging, stealing and prostituting themselves in order to survive.²⁹ Moreover, the beginning of NEP saw the shutting down or transfer to localities of many children's homes. The *Detkomissiiia* (Children's Commission) tried all sorts of measures, from shifting children back and forth between city and countryside, relocating children with relatives, sending them out to *kulak dvors* as hired farm laborers, and organizing self-supporting children's colonies. Despite these measures, by 1924 a subclass of chronic *besprizorniki* had formed, and officials were afraid it would turn into a permanent *lumpenproletariat*. In 1925, thinking had shifted to encouraging families to bring up their own

children. A last-ditch attempt to offer stipends to private, urban families to take these children was unsuccessful. So, necessity prompted peasant adoption, with the avowed aim to "cut state expenditures and prepare children for employment."³⁰

However, the adoption law was conceived to protect these children as much as possible. For example, children over 10 had to give consent to be adopted. Priests, criminals, former czarist officials and the insane were not allowed to adopt, and single men were discouraged. If natural parents were alive and not unfit, their consent had to be given; and they still had responsibility to contribute to the support of their children, who could inherit their property. The peasant *dvor* could only adopt one child, and was contracted to supply education and all normal necessities. Eventually, the child could become a full member of the *dvor*. In turn, the *dvor* received a stipend, an extra plot of land or tax breaks.³¹ As were many measures of the NEP, the reversal of the adoption law was definitely regarded as a "retreat" from original ideals, but a temporary retreat. It was certainly recognized that many of these children would be exploited by their peasant families, but it was considered the only alternative to the streets.

In the end, the Revised Law was passed because, as many judges noted, it was simply a written expression of current court practices. Since 1922 many courts had both recognized joint property and awarded alimony to women in *de facto* marriage.³² And, as noted, since the end of the Civil War, orphaned youth had been hired out to the countryside as a desperate measure.

REVISED FAMILY POLICY -- 1936

In 1936 Soviet Family Policy took a sharply conservative turn, which may be seen as a turn from ensuring individual rights to subordinating individual rights to the *good* of the society. Changes

were made which, while not officially added to the Family Law until 1944, nevertheless reversed the course of women's emancipation. The most important of these was the prohibition against abortion:

- prohibition of abortion (see article on Abortion);
- increased material aid to women in childbirth, nursing mothers and aid to large families.
- extension of insurance to previously uninsured women toilers.
- increased maternity leave for women employees.
- criminal penalties for employers who refused to employ pregnant women or who reduced wages.
- additional state allowances for mothers of large families.
- increased network of maternity homes and obstetrical services, especially in the countryside.
- increased creches, kindergartens and feeding stations.
- tighter restrictions on divorce.
- mandatory attendance of both parties at ZAGS, and entry of fact of divorce on passports.
- increased fees for divorce in line with number of divorces sought.
- tightening up of alimony (child support) requirements.
- increased child support payments.
- system of alimony based on labor-days for collective farm women.
- increased criminal sentence (up to two years) for non-payment of alimony.

DISCUSSION

There appears to have been no heated parliamentary discussion over the 1936 Family Pol-

icy changes, as with the 1926 laws. With much self-contragulatory publicity, the Party did put the draft out to "test public opinion" in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, but for barely one month. This highly-manipulated public discussion did not alter any essential features of the laws, certainly not in the most contested issue of abortion. Only minor changes were incorporated, such as reducing the maximum amount of alimony, and increasing stipends for mother and children.

Since the prohibition of abortion was the lynchpin of these changes, the other amended laws were all meant to ameliorate its effects. The Preface stated:

Only under the conditions of socialism where exploitation of man by man does not exist and where woman is an equal member of society and the continual improvement of the material well-being of the toilers constitutes a law of social development, is it possible seriously to organize the struggle against abortions by prohibitive laws.³³

The other changes on divorce and alimony were intended to "combat a light-minded attitude towards the family and family obligations."³⁴

The Soviets obviously felt under some pressure to justify the new Family Policy, for the official Explanations in journals of the CPSU were quite elaborate. In them, two themes predominated: 1. the complete victory of *Socialism*, attributed to nationalization of industry and collectivization, which ushered in "the period of socialism some five years ago;" and 2. the necessity of destroying the remnants of bourgeois morality to allow the "new Soviet morality" and the "new Soviet family" to flourish.³⁵ There was no sense of the contradiction between the "complete victory" of Socialism, and also dangerous bourgeois "remnants." [Goldman speaks of Stalin's "oxymorons"!]. Nonetheless, this was used as a double-edged sword against women. In short, the "com-

plete victory" had totally liberated them. They did not need abortion. Abortion was a bourgeois "remnant." Socialism had established conditions which now allowed them to reproduce the "new Soviet family" and also contribute to the building of *Socialism* in the workplace. Negative views toward this end were termed counter-revolutionary, Trotskyism, or worse, Fascist ideology (see article on Abortion).

The accomplishments of women in the fields of education and the workplace were lauded, as were the accomplishments of the Soviet state in providing child and domestic services. Incredibly, it was stated that "the dictatorship of the proletariat has... liquidated the numerous household obstacles which in the exploiting societies stand in the way of women's productive and social activity."³⁶ Moreover, "the State of the proletariat which has built socialism, has created all the conditions necessary for transforming women from 'household slaves' into free citizens of socialist society enjoying full rights."³⁷ A woman could now "combine harmoniously an active participation in productive and social life with the performance of her family functions, her duties as a mother."³⁸ All it took was a little organization! This, of course, was far from the truth. Maternal and child facilities were obviously grossly inadequate, or why would the government promise such huge increases in them? There had never been nearly enough creches; and communal kitchens, laundries, and other domestic services had largely fallen by the wayside during the NEP years. From all accounts, real wages fell considerably during the first years of industrialization. The average family simply couldn't make it without both partners working. In short, this fact, plus the need for women in the work force to increase production, allowed the state to make a virtue out of a necessity.

An all-out attack on the concept of the "withering away of the family" was launched. This concept was removed from the ideas of Marx and

Engels and attributed to petty-bourgeois "remnants." Rather, "Socialism does not lead to the breaking up of monogamy, but to its stabilization."³⁹ Assertions that socialism leads to the "extinction of the family" were considered profoundly mistaken and harmful: "They only help those exponents of the survivals of capitalism in the minds of the people who attempt to hide their acts of exploitation behind an empty 'leftist phrase'" [e.g., Kollontai].⁴⁰ All of a sudden, the "new Soviet family" was the ideal of post-capitalist relationships between men and women which Engels had envisioned but declined to delineate. This, however, is what Engels actually said:

That will be settled after a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in all their lives have had occasion to purchase a woman's surrender either with money or with any other means of social power, and of women who have never been obliged to surrender to any man out of any consideration other than that of real love, or to refrain from giving themselves to their beloved for fear of the economic consequences. Once such people appear, they will not care a rap about what we today think they should do. They will establish their own practice and their own public opinion, conformable therewith, on the practice of each individual -- and that's the end of it.⁴¹

It was insisted that this "new Socialist family" had been taking shape over the last five years, and was becoming "purified" and "fortified." "Now that socialism has achieved complete victory, now that life has become rich and civilized, all the conditions for the existence of strong and healthy families based on profound emotion are present in the U.S.S.R."⁴²

On concrete measures, the Preface justified the restrictions on divorce by stating that freedom of divorce, while a right to be preserved, was being abused and turned to "anarchist-indi-

vidualistic use to the detriment of society."⁴³ The abolition of abortion was justified on exaggerated medical evidence, and on the grounds that Lenin intended it to be only a temporary measure until social and economic conditions made it unnecessary (see article on Abortion). Now it was delaying "the growth of a new generation for socialist society."⁴⁴ "To have many children in the U.S.S.R. is not a misfortune, as it is thought to be in the capitalist countries, but a respected achievement which deserves every encouragement and support on the part of the socialist State and society."⁴⁵ As to the more stringent alimony laws, "our socialist State will not tolerate the old contemptuous attitude toward mother and child."⁴⁶

The New Family Policy clearly demonstrated the desire to keep women in the work force to increase production (re: employer sanctions), but also to encourage them to increase the population. Its authors insisted that women could and had been doing both: "The fact that women are increasingly participating in social production under the conditions of socialism does not lead to a decline in the birth-rate [debatable], but on the contrary increases it and lowers infant mortality."⁴⁷ It even guaranteed women anesthetized childbirth! The Policy both gave and took away. It said in effect, "Have more children, and we'll promise you certain benefits."

To strengthen traditional marriage, the Family Policy penalized husbands and fathers rather severely for walking out on their financial obligations. Peasant women had already benefitted from collectivization in the sense that wages could be withheld from men to meet their support obligations. The new amendment concerning alimony based on labor-hours was, probably, a long overdue adjustment and benefitted women further. [More labor hours were allocated to higher skilled jobs, which were held mainly by men.] Despite the insistence that the majority of Soviet citizens were registering marriages, there proba-

bly was a considerable problem of "light-mindedness." Both the abortion rate (see article on Abortion) and the divorce rate continued to soar. Already by 1929, for example, Moscow's divorce rate had accelerated to four-fifths of all marriages.⁴⁸ According to questionnaires quoted by Schlesinger, 20% of registered marriages were concluded as a result of one month's acquaintance, and 53.9% of all marriages entered into were the result of an acquaintance of less than a month.⁴⁹ With *de facto* marriage still on the books, they could not tighten marriage restrictions, so they had to tighten divorce procedures.

While the abrupt revision of the Family Law took many by surprise, this conservative swing did not happen overnight. Since the middle of the 1920s, educational and family theorists had been promoting a return to the traditional family, portraying it as the "basic cell of Soviet society" -- except, of course, that this was now called the "new Soviet family." Foremost among these was the state-approved educator Makarenko, who promoted the (ideally large) family as "the first collective," and thus the ideal environment in which to teach children *socialist* virtues.⁵⁰ During the years of industrialization and collectivization, there was a marked step-up in propaganda against abortion and divorce, and for the stabilization of the family as necessary to instill labor discipline to build *Socialism*. And the peasants had never been enthusiastic about abortion, divorce or *de facto* union.

During this period, Soviet militarists were constantly predicting what percentage of the population would be lost in the impending Imperialist war. There seemed to have been a race with Nazi Germany in terms of increasing both production and population, e.g., the many references to "Fascists" who opposed the idea that women could be both workers and mothers.⁵¹ This is confirmed by an admission of a Soviet jurist after World War II:

High fertility of the Soviet family was one of the socialist state's basic purposes in publishing the decree of June 27, 1936 on the banning of abortions.⁵²

Goldman maintains that the continuing problem of *Besprizornost'* also bore major responsibility for the conservative shift.⁵³ The connection between single mothers, divorce, male irresponsibility and the persistence of *besprizorniki* was drawn, so that from 1927 a series of preventative measures had been attempted. Help for single mothers and out-of-work teenagers, subsidies to urban families who would adopt, and subsidies to employers were tried but with little success. Another factor which contributed to *besprizornost'* was that transferring divorce to ZAGS meant a delay in women getting alimony and child support, since a separate petition had to be made to the courts. Moreover, the time limit for alimony payment was insufficient, and collecting alimony was all too often a problem. A study showed that 90% of men refused to pay voluntarily. They changed addresses and jobs, and women were forced to go to their employers to collect. Men were often not prosecuted for this, and convictions of men dropped from 1932 to 1934.⁵⁴ This put more *besprizorniki* on the streets. The civil courts were simply overwhelmed, and when prevention did not work, Criminal Law was amended to step in. The family was seen as an essential "auxillary social formation."⁵⁵ Parents who abandoned children were criminally prosecuted. Juveniles as young as 12 could now be given criminal sentences, instead of reeducation. The family unit was made responsible for the conduct of its members. This covered both criminal acts and political "crimes against the State." History demonstrates how this law was used in the purge trials.

NEW FAMILY LAW -- 1944

The revisions of 1936 must be carried through to their conclusion in the Family Law of 1944 to see their full implications. The Family Law of 1944 explicitly put forth as its goal: "encouraging large families and providing increased protection for motherhood and childhood." It also stated that "during and after the War, when many families face more considerable material difficulties, a further extension of State aid measures is necessary."⁵⁶ It might thus be regarded as a special war law, except that it crystallized the tendencies of the 1936 revisions and, further, many of its provisions stayed on the books. Namely, its keystones were the abolition of *de facto* marriage and further restrictions on divorce. Its main bent was to force people back into traditional marriage. The chief points of the Law are as follows:

ON MARRIAGE:

- Only registered marriage produces the rights and obligations of husband and wife... Persons having *de facto* matrimonial relations... may formally establish their relationship by registering their marriage.
- A woman may not apply for alimony or child support from a man she is not legally married to.
- Children born to a woman not legally married assume their mother's name.

ON DIVORCE:

- all divorces are now heard in a court.
- increased fees for divorce.
- motives for divorce are required, and witnesses are necessary for disputed divorces.
- public notice of all divorces.
- court is obligated to try to reconcile parties, and may deny divorce.

ON ALIMONY AND TAXATION:

- severe penalties for non-payment of alimony and child support.
- increased taxes on bachelors, spinsters, and citizens with small families.

ON AID AND PRIVILEGES TO MOTHERS:

- increased stipends dependent on number of children.
- increased aid to unmarried mothers
- increased leave of absence for pregnancy and motherhood, restrictions on work, and increased food rations.
- Motherhood medals

ON EXPANSION OF FACILITIES AND GOODS FOR MOTHERS AND CHILDREN:

- increases in maternity facilities, creches, milk stations, kindergartens, and children's articles of use.

DISCUSSION

The 1944 Family Law reflected the urgency of replacing the tremendous losses of World War II. Even unmarried women were positively encouraged to produce offspring. The rhetoric regarded them as heroines sacrificing for a cause. Not only did the Law elevate motherhood on a pedestal, but it penalized childless people and small families. Because of the lack of men, and the casual relationships caused by war, the State was forced to increase its burden to provide materially for these children.

To encourage population growth, pregnancy leave was further extended; overtime was denied to pregnant women, as was night work for nursing mothers. Food rations were increased for pregnant and nursing mothers, and creche and kindergarten fees were reduced for low-income parents with three or more children. Subsidies to married women began with the third child and lasted from age two to five (as opposed to the

1936 Law where subsidies began with the seventh child). Subsidies for unmarried women were even more generous, beginning with the first child and lasting until the child was 12. Increased facilities for mothers and children were again promised. Motherhood Medals were awarded to women with five or more children, culminating in the "Heroine Mother" award for 10 or more children.

But at the same time, amidst this fecundity, the family structure was tightened. Only registered marriage was now recognized; *de facto* marriage ceased to exist. It was now regarded as a relic of the fight against the *kulaks* of the 20s; like abortion, it was a temporary expedient. Since collectivization had long since taken care of the *kulaks*, it was declared that the position of women was no longer vulnerable:

This subject can no longer be approached solely with a view toward protecting the interests of the weaker party -- of woman. In our land, woman occupies the same economic and political position as man. It must be fully emphasized that men and women bear equal responsibility for the consequences of their relations.⁵⁷

And after all, one of the first acts of the Bolsheviks was to register marriage. To be fair, there is evidence that the courts were very overburdened in determining the validity of *de facto* liaisons. It was not always an easy matter to sort out just which men had to pay alimony to which women, or support to which children. And support for multiple families was simply not possible on most workers' salaries.

Along with demanding legal marriage, the difficulties, expense and moral approbation of divorce were further increased. These tighter restrictions were to combat a "light-minded attitude," but also to protect minor children. All divorces now became court procedures, complete with grounds and witnesses. Contested divorces

could be denied, and divorces were published in the press and stamped on passports. Larger fees were deliberately imposed to discourage divorce, and the person at *fault* had to pay the fees. Fees became so high that poorer workers and farmers often could not afford to divorce.

Another measure to strengthen marriage and the family was that no longer could a woman sue for paternity and child support from a man outside of registered marriage. In other words, an unmarried man was legally childless; the husband in a registered marriage was financially obligated to all children, his or not. The flip side of this is that the child of an unmarried woman had to bear her name (on her passport), and therefore once again was burdened with the stigma of *illegitimacy*. This had further consequences in that *illegitimates* could no longer inherit from their natural fathers.

Last but not least, elaborate ceremonies and facilities were established for such life occasions as naming, marriage and death. For example, Las Vegas-style wedding chapels came complete with music, flowers, witnesses, rice, and an appropriate ritual to sentimentalize the concept of marriage and encourage people to register their union.

The rhetoric employed in the official explanations of the 1944 Family Law was almost rabid. The prevailing "light-minded" attitude toward family obligations was termed "ultra-leftist," "bourgeois libertinism," "anarchist-individualistic," and "a remnant of petty-bourgeois liquidation." Especially virulent attacks were launched against the "anti-Marxist" idea that under Socialism the family "becomes extinct" and against child-rearing by the State, ideas attributed to Kollontai with much scorn.

The new Law marked the shift that had been taking place in the definition of woman from *worker* to *worker/mother* to *mother*. With men once more returning from war to take the places of women workers, it was desirable to

encourage a certain segment of women to stay home and have babies. It was now possible to have a *profession* of Motherhood, complete with *raises* (increased subsidies for each child) and *titles* of achievement (Motherhood Medals). Still, Motherhood was pretty much an unpaid, or at the least underpaid, *profession*, with no pension or social security unless one secured a husband. It is unlikely that after 5-10 children a woman would have the energy or skills to re-enter the work force in any meaningful way.

For traditionally married couples, the call to *Motherhood* put the burden of supporting the family back onto the husband, and thus further differentiated between the sexes in their roles. The Bolsheviks had never been very concerned with the sharing of household duties between the sexes, since they had relied on the eventual establishment of domestic services. Since these never materialized, housework continued to be the woman's responsibility -- and millions of women continued to work outside the home as well. Unpaid housework was now glorified as socially useful work, a concept which completely turned on its head Lenin's views on "household slaves" in "domestic bondage." Women remained "burdened with the drudgery of the most squalid and backbreaking and stultifying toil in the kitchen and the individual family household."⁵⁸

SUMMARY

The 1918 Family Law liberated women from feudal, religious, and patriarchal oppression. It was the most progressive family law of its time, and many of its features were admired and emulated throughout the world. The Revisions of 1926 reflected societal changes that the Bolsheviks had not foreseen, but the intention to emancipate women and yet at the same time protect them from victimization was still its salient note.

The 1936 Family Law Policy revealed how totally most early Bolshevik ideals had been over-

turned. The "withering away of the family" -- not to mention the "withering away" of the state and the law -- had been completely abandoned. [Goldman notes that in 1937, the chief author of the 1918 Family Law was consigned to a mental institution!]⁵⁹ The changes marked the abdication of state social responsibility and the sanction of women's "double shift." Not only did the new laws rest completely on a concept of the bourgeois family, but they actually increased the exploitation of women. Without abortion, they were now workers forced to bear children without adequate support services. Women's well-being was sacrificed to increased production -- and reproduction. The justification for these laws rested on false propaganda and outright lies -- "the complete victory of socialism" -- and on the perversion of the ideas of Lenin and Engels. The major premise was that since the USSR had achieved *Socialism* and was led by a *Communist* Party in the interests of the proletariat, any opposition whatsoever to the laws it declared was counter-revolutionary.

The 1944 Law, in the aftermath of war devastation, presented a rather horrifying picture of woman as exalted *breeder*, her rights now sacrificed to rapid population replacement. At the same time -- impossibly -- she was encouraged to work to "fulfill" herself and her *Socialist* obligations. The increased state subsidies promised for child care were not to free women to participate in useful production and the running of society, as Lenin had demanded, but only to facilitate the production of war materiel or future citizens. Whatever historical conditions can be used to justify the Family Law of 1944, it must remain the low point of legal oppression of women since the czarist regime. As Goldman so aptly puts it:

And the greatest tragedy is that subsequent generations of Soviet women, cut off from the thinkers, the ideas, and the experiments generated by their own Revolution, learned to call this "socialism" and to call this "liberation."⁶⁰

NOTES

1. Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia*, p. 281.
2. Lenin, "4th Anniversary of the October Revolution," p. 87.
3. Zetkin, in Lenin, *The Emancipation of Women*, p. 105.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
6. Lenin, "Tasks of the Proletariat," p. 46.
7. Schlesinger, *Soviet Legal Theory*, p. 81.
8. Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 234.
9. Schlesinger, *Soviet Legal Theory*, p. 265.
10. Goldman, pp. 1, 57.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
13. Lenin, "Speech at the First All-Russian Congress of Working Women," p. 59.
14. Lenin, "A Great Beginning," p. 63.
15. "4th Anniversary of the October Revolution," pp. 87-88.
16. Engels, p. 82.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
18. Halle, p. 118.
19. Winter, p. 120.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
21. Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 125.
22. Goldman, pp. 135-136
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.
24. Halle, pp. 121-122.
25. Goldman, p. 176.
26. Winter, p. 119.
27. Schlesinger, *Soviet Legal Theory*, p. 92.
28. Goldman, p. 196.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 98-99.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
33. Schlesinger, Preface, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 270.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 271.
35. *Ibid.*, "Explanations," p. 303.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 285.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, p. 302.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 345. One of the principle authors of the official "Explanation of the New Family Policy" had to awkwardly recant his earlier support of the *withering away* theory.
41. Engels, p. 89.
42. Schlesinger, "Explanations," *Changing Attitudes*, p. 307.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 308.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 310.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 329.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 331.
48. Goldman, p. 297.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
50. Geiger, pp. 89-91.
51. The officials were definitely drawing a contrast between Soviet ideology, which conceived of woman as both worker and mother, and Fascist ideology, which promoted an idealized portrait of woman as contented *hausfrau* raising *kinder* for the glory of the Third Reich.
52. Goldman, p. 341.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 302.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 310
56. Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 367.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
58. Lenin, "On International Working Women's Day," p. 84.
59. Goldman, p. 340.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

THE ABORTION DILEMMA

One of the fiercest struggles taking place today in the U.S. is the fight to retain the hard-won right to legal abortion. In view of this, it is instructive to examine the issue of abortion in the Soviet Union under the Bolsheviks -- and after. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks immediately decriminalized abortion: all penalties for abortion were abolished. On November 18, 1920, the Bolsheviks legalized abortion and set up a system to ensure safe and essentially free abortions. Today, it is rather astonishing to realize that, with a stroke of the pen, the Bolsheviks granted women the right to legal abortion. They were the first government in modern history to do so. This testifies to the fact that the Bolsheviks gave protection of the health and welfare of women one of the highest priorities on their agenda. They realized that, at this time, access to legal abortion was essential to liberate women from their oppressive circumstances. The full story, however, is complex. Legal abortion was abolished in 1936. In retrospect, this act marks the point where the betrayal of Bolshevik goals to liberate women cannot be disguised.

THE NECESSITY FOR LEGAL ABORTION

Under czarist law, abortion was considered an act of premeditated murder. However arbitrarily the law was enforced, persons performing abortions could receive severe punishment: cancellation of medical license, long periods of imprisonment, and even death if the woman died. If an abortion were self-induced, the woman herself could be punished. Abortion could be legally performed only if a woman's life was threatened.

It was therefore driven underground for poor rural and working class women who self-induced abortion or resorted to quacks, herbalists, midwives or other "wise women" (*babki*). Abortions were induced by knitting needles, crochet hooks, feathers, roots, herbal teas, quinine, poisonous chemicals such as bleach, poultices, scalding baths, and heavy lifting. As always, the daughters and wives of the rich could procure the service through private doctors.

After 1905, many physicians (mainly women) and jurists had argued for abortion reform, and some professional organizations had even dared to propose legalizing abortion. Nothing came of this. During World War I, when social disruption and economic crisis greatly increased the illegal abortion rate, efforts to ameliorate the situation were renewed. The state only reacted by threatening to increase penalties for abortion for both the woman and the abortionist.

After the October Revolution, there were many public forums, newspaper debates and women's meetings over abortion and the new morality. *Zhenotdel* workers confirmed that women were demanding legalized abortion and were giving undeniable economic justification for it.¹ Still at this time, legalizing abortion did not seem a viable option, due to the shortage of doctors and facilities; moreover, most of the medical profession was resistant. However, merely removing criminal penalties had resulted in an increase in abortions, and the death and injury rate from self-induced abortions and unqualified practitioners had become even more appalling. Contraception was almost unknown among the working classes.

The conditions of the Civil War finally impelled the law of 1920. In a country not recovered from the previous war, the new civil strife created a massive breakdown of families, incredible poverty, famine, and disease which resulted in huge numbers of widows, abandoned women, orphaned children, infanticides, and pregnancies that were an intolerable burden. Women resorted to even more desperate measures. Official sources estimated that of these women who underwent abortions without medical supervision, 50% became infected, and that 4% of them died.² Moreover, freedom from the burden of over-large families was considered necessary to liberate women into the work force and the war effort, as well as to free them from ecclesiastical and patriarchal cruelty. For example, in the rural and Muslim areas, underage girls were often forced, sometimes by rape, into maternity.³ Above all, economic conditions, and most particularly the housing shortage, were crucial factors.

It is important to understand that the decision to legalize abortion was not based on the criterion of a "woman's right to control her own reproductive processes," as it is expressed today in the Pro-Choice movement. Almost no one liked the idea of abortion or viewed it as a long-term solution. Instead, abortion was considered a temporary right, as the Decree stated,

for so long as the moral survivals of the past and difficult economic conditions of the present compel some women to resort to this operation.⁴

Underlying this qualified view toward abortion were the assumptions that children were the Soviet Union's *socialist future*, and that bearing children was woman's natural function and social contribution. Even Kollontai, that most radical of social theorists, criticized the feminist idea of woman's absolute right to control her body as bourgeois selfishness, a failure on the part of women to provide the collective with future

workers. Both she and Krupskaya, for example, accepted abortion as necessary, but strongly advocated research into contraception. It seems that the option of childlessness as an acceptable lifestyle was not even considered. It must be added that not all Party members condoned legalized abortion. For example, Sofia Smidovitch, a later *Zhenotdel* director, vigorously expressed the view of many who feared that legal abortion would lead to promiscuity and the disintegration of the family.⁵

There were other factors which contributed to the dilemma. Abortion was, at this time, still considered a dangerous operation, and the medical profession was on the whole conservative. Pregnancy was considered less damaging to women's health, and early efforts had been directed into improving maternal and infant care. There also seems to have been a fear of the social engineering ideology of the European birth control advocates, the Neomalthusians, who advocated limiting the birthrate of the working classes and ethnic minorities. Lenin, of course, had made a clear distinction between the "hypocrisy of the ruling class" and the "protection of elementary democratic rights" in his 1913 article, "The Working Class and Neomalthusianism." He had stated: "[We demand] the unconditional annulment of all laws against abortions or against the distribution of medical literature on contraceptive measures."⁶ Concerns about replacing population decimated by war, famine and epidemic, and the desire to populate the vast barren Eastern regions also cannot be overestimated. This latter factor has been constant throughout Soviet history.

So, at the beginning of the Bolshevik regime, legalizing abortion was regarded as a "necessary evil." It was considered a temporary solution until contraception could be improved (see Coda on Contraception), and until domestic, social and educational services could be put in place to free women to be both mothers and productive

workers. Given the grim realities of the current situation, it was considered necessary that women have access to abortions in clinics under medical supervision, and that scarce resources be diverted into establishing such a healthcare system.

THE ABORTION DECREE - 1920

The Decree on the Legalization of Abortions was not at this time a part of the Family Code, as it later came to be (see article on Family Law). Abortion was under the joint jurisdiction of the Commissariats of Health and Justice, which justified the Decree on these grounds:

For the past ten years the number of women having abortions has been growing in our country and around the world. The legislation of all countries struggles against this evil by punishing women who opt for abortion and the doctors who perform it. This method of struggle has no positive results. It drives the operation underground and makes women the victims of greedy and often ignorant abortionists who profit from this secrecy.⁷

The Decree added, however, that legislation must be linked to "agitation against abortion among the masses of working women."⁸ The principles behind the Abortion Decree were these: 1. Poverty drove women to abortion, but improved material circumstances would obviate the need; 2. The decision to bear children was not personal but social; and 3. Society's reproductive needs took precedence over individual women's desires.⁹ The conditions of legal abortion were as follows:

1. To permit such operations to be performed freely and without any charge in Soviet hospitals, where conditions are assured of minimizing the harm of the operation.
2. Absolutely to forbid anyone but a doctor to

carry out this operation.

3. Any nurse or midwife found guilty of making such an operation will be deprived of the right to practice, and tried by a People's Court. [Illegal abortionists could be tried for manslaughter if the woman died.]
4. A doctor carrying out an abortion in his private practice with mercenary aims will be called to account by a People's Court.

IN ADDITION, it provided that:

- a. Abortions be surgical operations, not induced by drugs.
- b. After abortions, women stay in a medical facility 3-5 days.
- c. Working women be granted 2 weeks of recovery with full pay.
- d. Abortions not be performed after 2 1/2 months (some accounts say 3).
- e. An abortion not be performed for the first pregnancy unless the woman's health is endangered.
- f. Under these conditions, no doctor has the right to refuse an abortion, but is at liberty to discourage it in any fit manner.¹⁰

DISCUSSION

Initially, a strict hierarchy of eligibility for abortion was established:

Insured women with medical problems;
 Single, insured, unemployed women registered with labor exchange;
 Single, insured working women with one child;
 Married, insured women workers with three or more children;
 Working class housewives with three or more children whose mates were insured (and peasant wives);
 All uninsured women in the same order.¹¹

However, this hierarchy did not seem to be followed closely, and fell apart as NEP threw women out of the work force. The prohibition against first pregnancy abortions was justified on the grounds that the concept of illegitimacy had been erased. Exceptions were made for juveniles and victims of rape and incest. It was thought that pregnancy was actually beneficial to a woman's health and psychological well-being, so it was urged that abortion be discouraged if a woman had fewer than three children, if her health was good, and if her living situation was adequate. Women were not supposed to apply to the clinics more than twice each year. Even though doctors could not refuse abortions to qualified applicants, Field states that from 50% to 80% of the women who applied for first abortions were discouraged.¹² But evidently, due to the great variability in medical personnel and facilities, virtually any woman who persisted could obtain one. For example, if a first-time pregnant woman insisted on abortion, she could be considered psychologically *unfit* for motherhood. No facts are available on abortions performed after the first trimester, but there are indications that this also was possible under certain conditions; under Soviet law, the fetus at any degree of development was not considered a person.

Since it was recognized that facilities and education were inadequate in many regions, women who self-induced abortions were not prosecuted. In fact, Schlesinger states that it was common for women to self-induce abortions in order to gain admission to the clinics and avoid the red tape and long waits.¹³ A campaign was vigorously carried out against the *babki* because they were considered repositories of religious superstition. But because rural and Muslim women were suspicious of doctors in general, they often preferred their own "wise women." Goldman speaks of the "pact unto death" between the *babki* and women desperately seeking abortions.¹⁴ And, it

seems the law turned a blind eye. Also, at first, registered midwives were prohibited from performing abortions, but later they were permitted to do so to alleviate the shortage of doctors. Because clinics had long waiting lists, women could also go to private doctors with appropriate referral. There appears to have been some confusion about the legality of doctors performing abortions outside of medical facilities on their own time and charging a fee, but they did not seem to have been prosecuted. Abortions were covered by social insurance. For those without it, a very small fee was charged, but this was often waived. In the end, many measures were relaxed because the number of women applying for abortions quite overwhelmed the original plan.

THE ABORITARIA

Aboritaria (state abortion facilities) were established in major cities and towns. Foreign medical personnel, scientists and writers commonly toured model facilities which were regarded as state-of-the-art. Among these visitors, Fannina Halle, Alice Field, and Ella Winter visited the Moscow *Aboritaria* in 1930-32. They were very impressed. Following is a summary of their observations.

Propaganda posters explaining safe, legal abortion were prominently displayed in public museums, schools, factories and the Points of Consultation, which were gynecological clinics throughout the towns and countryside. The visitors were quite astonished at the medically explicit language, the graphic portrayals, and the freedom of discussion in mixed-sex groups. On the other hand, other posters cautioned: "To allow abortion is not the same as to encourage it," and "Prevention, not abortion."¹⁵

The procedure to obtain an abortion was very thorough, to say the least. One suspects that the bureaucratic red tape was specifically designed

to discourage abortion. Women had to obtain a license from the *Abortus-Troyka*, consisting of a doctor and various community members or public officials (originally, *Zhenotdel* workers). Where such resources were available, a visiting nurse was sent to obtain a complete medical history. Doctors and social workers emphasized the risks of abortion and the health benefits of pregnancy; and women were often persuaded to view films of abortions or real procedures. Field states that out of every 100 pregnant women coming to the Moscow health clinics, 18-20 asked for abortions, but that during the laborious intake process, up to 60%-75% of these applicants changed their minds.¹⁶ Unless the woman was very nervous, abortions were done without anesthetic, and took only five to ten minutes. After an abortion, women were referred to contraceptive clinics. The method used was described as similar to "pulling teeth." [No explicit description of either abortion methods or contraceptive devices could be published in the United States at the time of these accounts, and Field regrets that she had to expunge many relevant details in order to be published.]¹⁷ Later writers have added that the operation was a d & c, and that anesthetic was purposely withheld to discourage further abortions although, to be fair, anesthetics were in short supply and rarely even used for childbirth. The visitors in the early 1930s were impressed not only by the hygiene and efficiency of the facilities but also by the solicitude of the (mainly female) staff and the relaxed atmosphere among the patients. They state, however, that the number of *Aboritaria* was nowhere adequate (13 in Moscow and environs), especially in the countryside, and that they were always very overcrowded with long waiting lists. The fact that Clinics for Incomplete Abortions (mangled or self-induced abortions) were also eventually established in 1931 testifies to these conditions.

The abortion planners had assumed that the largest segments of women seeking abortions would

be the young, the unmarried and the unemployed. This did not quite tally with the facts. A rough profile can be obtained from various accounts. Although urban women comprised only 15% of the female population, 85% of abortions were performed in cities and towns.¹⁸ Many women had undergone four, five, six abortions and some had even had 15-20. The average number was seven. The typical woman seeking abortion was between 25-40, urban, married, employed and had two or more children. Surprisingly, women in white collar jobs or married to men in that strata comprised the largest percentage, then wives of the unemployed, and then employed, blue-collar women. On official questionnaires, economic hardships comprised almost 60% of the reasons given, with medical problems next. "Egoistic" reasons were not listed on the questionnaires, but privately women confided that the demands and opportunities of the new revolutionary lifestyle simply precluded large families. Working women cited the lack of childcare facilities and the difficulties of nursing children while working. [No acceptable infant formula was available, or even diapers!] Of the younger, unmarried women, the largest social group was students, who could not complete their studies with a child, and who cited lack of adequate housing as a major factor. Even though the law had erased the concept of illegitimacy, unmarried, peasant women often cited the shame of pregnancy out of wedlock.

THE EFFECTS OF LEGALIZED ABORTION

By 1932, there were no cases of criminal abortion prosecuted in the Soviet Union.¹⁹ The abortion policy had evidently achieved its intent. But it had been a struggle. As early as 1924, the medical profession had become alarmed about the abortion rate, and had passed a regulation that restricted abortion to medical emergencies. Due to a prompt upsurge in illegal abortions,

this was hastily reversed. Then a fee was introduced, based on family size, but this did not seem to deter the rate and was often waived. Party members and their wives had been urged from the first not to resort to abortion in order to set a public example.²⁰

Statistics on abortion, like most Soviet statistics, are somewhat questionable. It was popular to compare legal abortion in the Soviet Union to illegal abortion in western European countries, especially Germany (where, however, since abortion was illegal, reliable figures are doubtful). Soviet officials boasted that "we are the country in which abortion is least practiced,"²¹ and in 1929 stated that the Soviet abortion rate was 8.2% per 1,000 women, or half the rate of Germany.²² Field states that by 1927 only 14% of abortions were performed outside of state facilities, as compared to 41% in 1923, and that the mortality rate was only .079% in state hospitals.²³ Winter confirms this low mortality rate; for example, in 1931, only one fatality in 26,000 abortions, 10 times lower than in Germany and in the U.S.²⁴

In 1927, a major conference of gynecologists was held in the Ukraine to assess the results of the Abortion Law. Schlesinger maintains that this was, in effect, "a demonstration against legalized abortion."²⁵ The vast majority of the participants took an extremely negative view. They stressed the "manifold harm done to women by artificial abortion" citing: subsequent psychological problems, birth difficulties, sterility, deformed organs, hormonal trauma, and still-born embryos. On the other hand, they admitted that Soviet abortion policy had saved countless lives, and that procedures were the most enlightened and safe in the world. Still, they feared that this fact was encouraging a "light-hearted" approach toward abortion and a "paralysis of the will to parenthood." In short, abortion was damaging the sanctity of marriage and the family.

Only one doctor held the position that abor-

tion is a woman's inherent right:

The woman's request is sufficient because no one is more capable than she herself of judging her social indication; no one of us men would accept a decision by some commission.... Do not prevent women from deciding for themselves a fundamental issue of their lives. Woman has a right to a sexual life as freely realized as is that of man.²⁶

He added a voice of reason to the proceedings, stressing the deleterious effects of multiple pregnancies and the lack of economic resources to support children.

The Resolutions of the Conference confirmed:

1. a remarkable increase in abortions;
2. a considerable decrease in secret abortions, diseases and deaths ensuing thereof;
3. that abortion had not resulted in a reduction of the Ukrainian population;
4. that the public must be warned against the harmful consequences of abortion;
5. that it should not be carried out except by authorized medical personnel;
6. that the most effective method to counteract abortions is distribution of harmless contraceptives; and
7. that scientific investigation and testing of contraceptives is the most urgent social task before gynecologists.²⁷

The effects of legalized abortion on the Soviet birthrate and overall population growth is an interesting question. By the late 1920s, doctors and researchers were very concerned about the falling birthrate. In many of the larger cities, the abortion rate had superseded the birthrate and the disparity was growing fast. The experts were alarmed because women were electing to limit their families to one or two children. Goldman gives some very detailed statistics. She cites that

in Moscow in 1930, there were twice as many abortions as births. In Russia, in 1926 there were 1.3 abortions for every 1,000 people, but in 1935, 13.1, a more than tenfold increase. She notes a distinct drop in the crude birthrate around the time of industrialization.²⁸ Some Party officials viewed the abortion rate in the cities as "massive and horrifying" and saw an ominous portent for future population growth.²⁹ Yet, it was repeatedly insisted in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* from 1927 to 1936 that the overall population level was **not** decreasing; it was either holding its own or slightly increasing. By 1936 it was said to be increasing at a healthy rate: 1.5% annually compared to Europe's .03%-07%.³⁰

Since other important social influences on the birthrate must also be considered, it is difficult to assess this. For example, infant mortality and childbirth deaths had been cut by more than half, due to really excellent maternal and infant care, and better health care in general had increased the life span of Soviet citizens.

SUMMARY

What can be concluded about legalized abortion between 1920 and 1936? No one liked it, but it had accomplished its goal. The health and social condition of women had greatly improved. Despite advanced medical procedures, it was still viewed as medically dangerous. Still, women resorted to the service in huge numbers, while at the same time a considerable percentage was discouraged. The abortion rate in the cities particularly alarmed the government. There were sporadic attempts to substitute contraception, but nothing really adequate was accomplished. Legal abortion had not greatly harmed the population level, yet the birthrate was probably not growing at a pace fast enough to suit many. Perhaps most important, abortion was seen as fostering immorality and as harming the family structure. And, as it has been noted, since the middle twen-

ties, there had been a strong conservative effort to strengthen the traditional family (see article on Family Law).

THE PROHIBITION AGAINST ABORTION - 1936

In 1936, legal abortion was abolished. The Prohibition decreed:

1. In view of the proven harm of abortions, to forbid the performance of abortions whether in hospitals and special health institutions, or in the homes of doctors and the private homes of pregnant women. The performance of abortions shall be allowed exclusively in those cases when the continuation of pregnancy endangers life or threatens serious injury to the health of the pregnant woman and likewise when a serious disease of the parents may be inherited, and only under hospital or maternity-home conditions.
2. For the performance of abortions outside a hospital or in a hospital under conditions violating the above provisions, the doctor performing the abortion shall be criminally punishable to the extent of one to two years' imprisonment, while for the performance of abortions under unsanitary conditions or by persons who have no special medical training a criminal penalty of not less than three years' imprisonment shall be fixed.
3. For compelling a woman to undergo an abortion, a criminal penalty of two years' imprisonment shall be fixed.
4. In relation to pregnant women undergoing an abortion in violation of the said prohibition, to establish as a criminal penalty a social reprimand, and in the event of a repetition of the violation of the law on the prohibition of abortions, a fine up to 300 rubles.³¹

In order to ameliorate the new law, the state mandated stricter sanctions against employer discrimination toward pregnant women; increased subsidies to new mothers and mothers of large families; increased numbers of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens, stricter divorce laws; and harsher penalties for non-payment of alimony (see article on Family Law). Another call for increased research into better contraceptive methods was issued.

The Prohibition Against Abortion was part of the revision of Family Law begun in 1936 and completed in 1944. However, as distinct from the 1926 Family Law revision, there was no parliamentary wrangling about this most important step, although the draft bill was submitted for "public debate."

Schlesinger presents a representative sampling of opinion from *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. Given the bias of these official organs, it is understandable that most of the responses -- heavily weighted by sociologists and medical personnel -- registered approval of the measure. A slightly more critical attitude was expressed in *Izvestiya* which, being under Bukharin's editorship, possibly implied that he was not in favor of the bill. However, individual opinions by leading Party officials are not available; given the climate of purge trials, this is not surprising. Ordinary people certainly expressed negative views, mainly citing inadequate economic resources and housing necessary to raise children. And as before, female students protested that unwanted pregnancy interrupted their studies. While it is impossible to ascertain the true feelings of the general population from these excerpts, what is certain is that this public forum did not, in the end, alter any of the proposed features of the new law.³²

THE RATIONALE

The rationale for the Prohibition Against Abortion was expressed in the Forward to the

Decree, and in official Explanations of the New Family Policy published in organs of the CPSU.³³ All the stops were pulled out to convince the masses of the correctness of this decision. The arguments were numerous, contradictory and specious, and the rhetoric was inflammatory. The main tactic was to invoke the authority of Lenin (and Engels). The chief argument was as follows: Lenin opposed abortion in principle, and meant abortion to be only a temporary measure until conditions had changed. Conditions have changed. Therefore, Lenin would wish abortion to be abolished. Lenin's "The Working Class and Neo-Malthusianism" was cited as a chief support for this argument. In this work of 1913, it is true that Lenin had exhorted class-conscious workers to oppose artificial restriction of the birth rate imposed on them by the bourgeoisie. He had portrayed class-conscious workers as enemies of Neomalthusianism, a theory "suited only to unfeeling and egotistic petty-bourgeois couples, who whisper in scared voices: 'God grant we manage somehow by ourselves. So much the better if we have no children'."³⁴ But in defense of the banning of abortion, Lenin's statements were taken totally out of context. He was analyzing conditions under capitalism, and refuting the Malthusian principle that overpopulation, not capitalism, was the source of the workers' oppression.

The Soviets now insisted that conditions had changed. Socialism had achieved "complete victory;" therefore, abortion was no longer justified. The Decree stated:

Only under conditions of Socialism, where exploitation of man by man does not exist and where woman is an equal member of society, while the continual improvement of the material well-being of the toilers constitutes a law of social development, is it possible seriously to organize the struggle against abortions by prohibitive laws as well as by other means.³⁵

The rationale asserted that existing (or planned) state services allowed women to be both productive workers and mothers: "We alone have all the conditions under which a woman can fulfill her duties as a citizen and as a mother responsible for the birth and early upbringing of her children."³⁶ It was even argued that the relatively low abortion rate (compared to Europe) proved that Soviet women were insistent on having children and fulfilling their natural function, and that they had already proven that they could handle both children and work: "In the USSR, woman's productive and social work does not in the least interfere with motherhood but is beautifully coordinated with it."³⁷ Therefore, "mass abortions for egoistic reasons are not to be tolerated... tens of thousands of women ruin their health and delay the growth of a new generation for socialist society."³⁸

But, while the large number of abortions was called "tragedy," and Soviet medical experts testified to the horrors of abortion and the mutilation of women, the evidence is not very convincing. As an example:

There are few operations so dangerous as the cleaning out of the womb during pregnancy. Under the best conditions and in the hands of the most experienced specialists, this operation still has a "normal" percentage of fatal cases. It is true that the percentage is not very high. Our surgeons have brought the technique of performing abortions to perfection. The foreign doctors have unanimously testified that their technique is irreproachable.³⁹

The flip side of the argument was that the Prohibition actually protected and elevated Soviet women. Abortion was seen as an insult to womanhood, motherhood -- and even to fatherhood! The argument stated that the NEP period had furthered bourgeois libertinism and irresponsibility, of which liberalized abortion was a com-

ponent. The new decree would free women from being forced into abortion by husbands, relatives and, above all, employers. Abortion was associated with the degradation of women through male egoism, Don Juanism, philistinism, free love and the nationalization of women. These were all considered lingering "remnants" of bourgeois society which must be eradicated. The implication was that women could only receive dignity and protection within the confines of the "new Socialist family." And in a great leap of illogic, it was asserted that the "new Socialist family" is what Engels really had in mind when he refused to speculate on post-capitalist relationships between men and women.

The climate of the purge trials is very apparent in the rhetoric of these documents. Abortion was a "foul and poisonous idea from the enemies of the people to liquidate the family and disrupt marriage."⁴⁰ "The Fascists have invented the legend that taking part in social production and work is incompatible with motherhood."⁴¹ And even the "arch-enemy-of-the-people" Trotsky was dragged in as holding these "Fascist" views toward the incompatibility of work and childrearing. Needless to add, Kollontai's early writings were attacked as being anti-family and anti-motherhood, in short anti-*Socialist*. If abortion had become an "enemy" of the *Socialist* future, then, anyone in favor of it was an "enemy" of the *Socialist* state.

THE AFTERMATH

But no law could (or can) prevent women from acts of self-preservation. Goldman states that in 1939, the incidence of abortion was higher than in 1926 during the period of legalization. After 1936, 10% of abortions performed in hospitals were legal, but 90% were abortions initiated outside the hospital. She says:

After 1936, doctors saw an enormous increase in the numbers of women suffering from infections, peritonitis, perforation, hemorrhage, chronic inflammation, sepsis, infertility, and other complications, [and] the death rate soared.⁴²

The Soviet leadership only reacted with more repression. At the same time the Prohibition Against Abortion was incorporated into the Revised Family Law of 1944, divorce was further restricted. The Law of 1944 did, however, promise more maternal and children's facilities, and provided for even more generous subsidies to mothers and children. It even established rewards for women with large families: The "Motherhood Medal" for five-six children, "Motherhood Glory" for seven-nine children, and "Heroine Mother" for ten or more children. These honors were equally available to unmarried women.

But Soviet women continued to resort to illegal abortion, and so in 1954, criminal penalties against women were revoked, and in 1955 abortion was again legalized.

DISCUSSION

What lay behind the 1936 Prohibition Against Abortion Decree was many-sided. The perceived necessity to increase population in view of the impending World War was dominant and, in fact, the USSR was eventually to lose over 25 million lives. Another important factor obviously was economic. Having given up ideas of eliminating the economic foundations of the family through the expansion of state services, these resources could be diverted into industrialization. In conjunction with this, it may have been reasoned that the discipline required for rapid industrialization and collectivization demanded strengthening the family as a measure of social control and obedience. In the NEP period, *de facto* marriage had undeniably resulted in social instabil-

ity because of the lack of state services to support women and children. And the rapid onset of industrialization and collectivization had further increased disruption. Another factor which has been proposed is the desire of the Party during this period, which was calling for new sacrifices, to gain the loyalty of the peasantry. The majority of the peasants still held traditional views toward the family and looked askance at divorce and abortion.⁴³ But at the core is the fact that a new reactionary class had come to power which had no desire to emancipate women and, in fact, relied on the old bourgeois family structure to prop up the state capitalist structure.

The Prohibition Against Abortion plainly reveals the revisionism of Communist ideals which had been taking place, since one of the chief tenets of Marxist-Leninism is the emancipation of women. In contrast, the Prohibition actually increased the exploitation of women. It imposed the burden of being both workers and mothers/housekeepers, without adequate state services to relieve domestic drudgery. Thus, it restricted women's right to rise to their highest capacity. In doing so, it reversed the concept of women from *workers* to *mothers*. It almost relegated women's bodies to the service of the state as *breeders*, and once again subjected them to mutilation and death by unqualified practitioners and self-abortions. The new law particularly affected rural women in a negative way, as both the birthrate and the rate of illegal abortions rose dramatically in the countryside. Essentially, the ban against abortion strengthened the reactionary view toward women which still largely prevailed there.

The Prohibition also illustrates how Marxism-Leninism had been deliberately rewritten. Lenin's statements on Neomalthusianism were distorted to fit a false context. To justify confining many women to the home with large families, it redefined domestic labor as *socially useful work*. Compare this to Lenin's numerous diatribes against domestic slavery. The new law also

distorts Engels' concept of the relationship between man and woman as based on freely expressed sexual attraction and compatibility, in that it basically redefined the relationship between the sexes as parental. It presented the "new Soviet family" as that ideal form of social relationship which Engels envisioned but declined to delineate. In so doing, it nullified the Communist ideal of state responsibility in the social as well as the educational rearing of children. It regarded this as merely another feature of Kollontaism or ultra-leftism. Not least, it ignored the early Bolshevik insistence that people's sex lives were not the business of the Party.

The original decree had endorsed abortion until "such time as moral survivals from the past and the economic conditions of the present compel some women to resort to this operation." The new law insisted that these conditions no longer prevailed. This was plainly false. The most blatant hypocrisy was expressed in the insistence that *Socialism* had been fully achieved, in order to justify the taking away of women's rights and the reestablishment of the bourgeois social structure.

A CODA ON CONTRACEPTION

The Soviets never came to terms with contraception. They continued to be ambivalent toward it. On the one hand, contraception was viewed positively as an alternative to abortion but, on the other hand, it was also viewed negatively. The old Malthusian worries intervened: contraception threatened population growth and the increase of "proletarian" families. It also gave impetus to promiscuity and social instability. It was an irresolvable contradiction.

Before 1917, contraception was practically unknown, except among the upper classes who had access to European goods. Poor women relied on *coitus interruptus* and a variety of crude, makeshift barriers, such as lemon halves, mush-

room caps and small balls. But the Bolsheviks did have plans to develop and promote contraception as an alternative to abortion. A system of free contraception clinics was established, and devices were cheap. After the attempt by doctors to revoke the abortion decree failed, a Laboratory for Preventatives was established in 1925, and was said to be the first of its kind in the world. Granted, the Soviet Union did not have a large rubber industry, but it did have innovative ideas, for example, an experiment for developing a contraceptive out of the *biolaktin* in buttermilk!⁴⁴ There were plans to dispense birth control information at the marriage registries, but evidently this was considered too blatant. Few wanted to view abortion as a long-term solution, and the more far-sighted Bolsheviks, including Lenin, knew that the transition to socialism -- when women would be relieved of their domestic burdens and children would be cared for -- would take a long time. Obviously, the conditions of NEP put a damper on these plans to develop contraception, but they were never renewed.

From 1920 to 1928, despite devoted workers in the contraceptive field, birth control essentially meant abortion. Then during the early phase of industrialization and collectivization, when once again women were badly needed in the work force and the abortion rate accordingly skyrocketed, the contraceptive campaign was renewed. Posters against abortion became somewhat hysterical, e.g., "Abortion is a great evil! It must die out! The destruction of it is the most important social problem of the immediate future."⁴⁵

Like abortion, contraception was under strict state control. Halle, Field and Winter also visited the state contraception centers and gave the following account. Women were usually referred to these clinics only **after** they had delivered a child. These facilities were scarce and overcrowded, and the procedure was ponderous (forms, exams, visiting nurses). Field says that 50% of the women were issued a "particular mechanical device" only

used in the Soviet Union [a barrier method or even possibly an early form of the IUD] which involved returning to the clinic every 10 days for checking and cleansing.⁴⁶ Condoms and, later, spermicides were also dispensed. But there was evidently a serious problem in instructing uneducated people how to use the devices properly under largely unsanitary living conditions. Information on contraception was also included in the traveling medical units in the countryside, but rural women were reluctant to visit the clinics.

At any rate, contraceptives were in short supply, and both those dispensed by clinics and those sold illegally on the street corners were of poor quality and the butt of jokes. Contraceptive advocates were forced to promote even these imperfect devices on the grounds that risk added a measure of excitement to sex!⁴⁷ While contraceptive use continued to increase, e.g., 40% from 1927 to 1930, the total figures remained very low.⁴⁸ The contraception campaign was always put in terms of a "weapon against abortion," not as a weapon for women's rights; and terminology suggesting family planning was avoided. This half-hearted approach toward contraception seems even more glaring, since concurrently its role in family planning was being promoted all over Europe and in America.

A good source for later information about abortion and contraception in the Soviet Union is April Von Frank. The continuing dependence of Soviet women on abortion rather than contraception is reflected in the data that in the year following the 1936 law, the birthrate jumped from 41% to 93% in the larger cities and even more dramatically in the countryside.⁴⁹ Sporadic attempts to promote contraception continued, but after the 1944 Family Law, information, sale and manufacture of contraceptives were apparently banned, at least temporarily.⁵⁰ At any rate, it is clear that women continued to resort to illegal abortions in large numbers, until abortion

was again legalized in 1955. Von Frank proposes that this time illegal abortion was seen not only as a threat to women's health, but as a threat to the economy. She states that absenteeism, ill health and deaths of women were cited as undermining the work force which depended on them.⁵¹ Geiger adds that the government viewed the substantial underground economy of medical personnel doing abortions on the side as a real problem.⁵² At the same time there was a renewed attack on family planning, i.e., limitation of the birth rate. Controlled fertility was equated with genocide, warfare, murder and depravity.⁵³

As late as 1979, Von Frank states that while the state now supported contraception, it still was not widely used, and that 40% of women who had undergone an abortion still used no contraception.⁵⁴ What contraception is available today is still unsatisfactory and scarce; and it is suggested to visitors to the [former] Soviet Union that, in addition to cigarettes, blue jeans and cassette tapes, contraceptives are welcome gifts and items for barter.

Soviet history shows that there was either massive use of legal abortion or massive resort to illegal abortion. The development of contraception would have greatly aided the liberation of women. It would have freed them from the psychological and economic burden of unwanted pregnancies and from the pain and danger of abortions. It would have assisted their participation in the administration of the state, as envisioned by the early Bolsheviks. But a double social contribution from women was demanded: as both full-time workers and as mothers producing future workers (and sometimes soldiers). The early Bolsheviks realized that this could only work if comprehensive services were provided to free women from domestic labor, if the state took over much of the care and training of children, and if contraception was developed. These goals were not realized, and abortion continued to be a central issue in the lives of Soviet women.

NOTES

1. Field, p. 75.
2. Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia*, p. 44. Overall statistics on abortion before it was legalized are unavailable.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
4. *Ibid.*, Abortion Decree, p. 44.
5. Farnsworth, pp. 362-363.
6. Lenin, "The Working Class and Neo-Malthusianism," p. 30.
7. Goldman, p. 255.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
10. Field, pp. 79-81; Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 44.
11. Goldman, p. 261.
12. Field, p. 90.
13. Schlesinger, *Ibid.*, p. 175.
14. Goldman, p. 281.
15. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, p. 139.
16. Field, p. 90.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
18. Goldman, p. 265.
19. Halle, *Ibid.*, p. 143.
20. Mace, p. 245.
21. Halle, *Ibid.*, p. 144.
22. Schlesinger, *Ibid.*, p. 173.
23. Field, p. 78.
24. Winters, p. 147.
25. Schlesinger, *Ibid.*, pp. 174-187.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Goldman, pp. 288-290.
29. Geiger, p. 73.
30. Schlesinger, *Ibid.*, p. 313.
31. *Ibid.*, Abortion Decree, pp. 271-272.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-266.
33. *Ibid.*, Decree on the Prohibition of Abortion, pp. 270-272; Explanation of the New Family Policy by Soviet Theorists, pp. 280-347.
34. Lenin, "The Working Class and Neo-Malthusianism," p. 30.
35. Schlesinger, *Ibid.*, Abortion Decree, p. 270.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
37. *Ibid.*, Explanation, p. 310.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
40. Schlesinger, p. 252.
41. *Ibid.*, Explanations, p. 325.
42. Goldman, p. 294.
43. Geiger, p. 97.
44. Halle, p. 139.
45. Field, p. 77.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
48. Winter, p. 46.
49. Von Frank, p. 31.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 32. There is some doubt whether this was really the case or whether there was merely a shortage of materials. On the other hand, even in the U.S. at this time, the sale of contraceptives was banned in many states.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
52. Geiger, p. 167.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
54. Von Frank, pp. 14-15.



A Typical Workers' Dormitory Before the Revolution



Volga Boat-Women Roped Together Hauling a Barge



Youthful victims of the famine of 1921-1922
(The New York Times)

Тиль малолѣтней проститутки. Снимокъ сдѣланъ въ Кіевѣ въ 1904 году



A Nine-Year Old Prostitute of Kiev (1904)
M.K. Mukalov, *Deti ulitsy*. SPB, 1906.



Alexandra Kollontai

Zhenotdel

Directors



Inessa Armand



Sofia Smidovich



Klavdiia Nikolaeva



Anna Artiukhina



Nadezhda Krupskaya

and
Other
Prominent
Communist Women



Clara Zetkin



Kollontai and *Besprizorniki* from a Children's Home



Kollontai and Kindergarten Students



Uzbek Women Learning to Sew



A Delegate Addressing a Meeting



Krupskaya Addressing the Red Army
During the Civil War

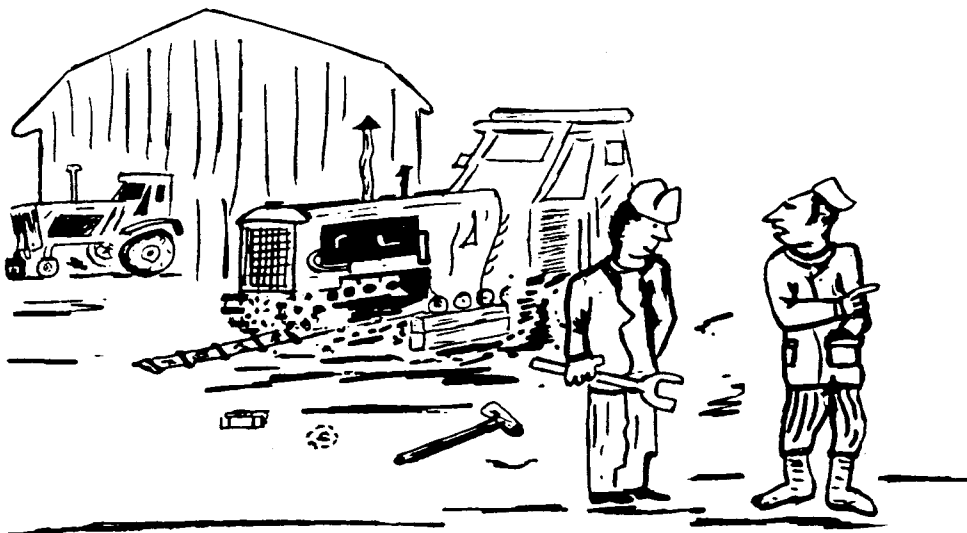


The *Likbes* Campaign
Women Learning With Their Children



"The Liberation of Women from Domestic Slavery"

Woman: "Mercy on us! The liberators have come"
(Soviet Cartoon)



"Let's stop messing about with this tractor.
We'll give it to the women's brigade, it'll do for them."
Soviet Cartoon (*Krest'yanka*)



Women *Kolkhoz* Farmers at a Moscow Conference on the Spring Sowing Campaign



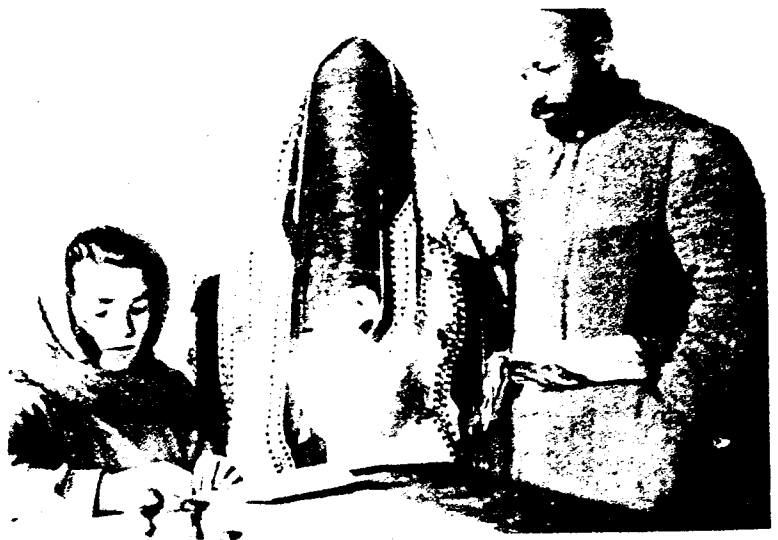
Women *Kolkhoz* Farmers Reading the Newspaper



Law Court in Tadjikistan
Woman Lay-Judge Was First Woman in the City to Discard Her Veil.
The Complainant (Veiled) is a 16-Year Old Girl Accusing Her Husband of Beating Her.
(Soviet Photo Agency)



Uzbek Bride in a *Paranja*
Taking Leave of Her Family



Registering an Uzbek Marriage at ZAGS



Woman Worker in a Cotton-Reeling Mill in Uzbekistan



An Uzbek Laboratory Assistant



Woman Worker in a *Prophylacticum*



Woman Mechanic Repairing a Tractor



Women Cadets in Soviet Navy (1930s)



Women Militia in the Streets of Moscow (1930s)



First Uzbek Woman Parachutist



Uzbek Woman Flight Student

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST PROSTITUTION

The elimination of prostitution was a declared goal of the Bolshevik Revolution. It was a relentless struggle which took various forms as the social and economic conditions changed. Very innovative methods were employed and major gains were made, but it was not to be a lasting accomplishment.

Attitudes toward prostitution may be summarized in four stages. Under czarism, the prostitute was hypocritically condoned. Under the Bolsheviks, during the Civil War, the prostitute was regarded as a labor deserter, no different from anyone else. During NEP, the prostitute was treated as a displaced worker, and efforts were made to safeguard her from prostitution and engage her in the workforce. Finally, beginning with the period of industrialization and collectivization, and continuing afterwards, the prostitute was viewed as a psychological deviant or as a criminal, and was treated accordingly.

THE SOCIAL BASIS OF PROSTITUTION

The Bolsheviks viewed prostitution as a consequence of exploitive economic and social relations. The prostitute was displaced from the work force -- a victim of poverty or a helpless dependent. The foundations for this view may be found in Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), Bebel's *Women and Socialism* (1879), Lenin's, "Address to Fifth International Congress Against Prostitution" (1913), Clara Zetkin's "My Recollections of Lenin" (1920), and Alexandra Kollontai's "Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It" (1921).

In his study of the evolution of social rela-

tions, Engels regarded the emergence of blatant market prostitution as a consequence of capitalist commodity production and the bourgeois marriage of convenience. He went further, regarding bourgeois marriage itself as an arrangement in which "two prostitutions make one virtue;"¹ for bourgeois marriage is *de facto* prostitution, in which the woman

only differs from the ordinary courtesan in that she does not let out her body on piecework as a wage worker, but sells it once and for all into slavery.... [However], we are now approaching a socialist revolution in which the hitherto existing economic foundation of monogamy will disappear just as certainly as will those of its supplement -- prostitution.²

Bebel added that in bourgeois society "prostitution is an institution similar to the police, the army, the church, and capitalist enterprise."³ Thus, as for all other social institutions came the so-called regulation, or shameful system of police supervision of prostitutes which began in Russia in 1843. Lenin stated the matter succinctly:

[Prostitution] is supported precisely by the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie;⁴ [Prostitutes] are pitiable double victims of the accursed system of bourgeois society. Victims, first, of its accursed system of property and, secondly, of its accursed moral hypocrisy.⁵

Kollontai translated this premise into everyday terms:

Prostitution is above all a social phenomenon.... The roots of prostitution are in economics. Woman is on the one hand placed in an economically vulnerable position, and on the other hand has been conditioned by centuries of education to expect material favours from a man in return for sexual favours – whether these are given within or outside the marriage tie. This is the root of the problem. Here is the reason for prostitution.⁶

There were many schemes to combat prostitution in Europe and Russia during the years preceding the Revolution. It was fashionable among the ladies' charity groups. This moral hypocrisy outraged Lenin. As far as he was concerned, these reformers had two methods: religion and the police. He scathingly termed them "acrobats in the field of philanthropy and police defenders of the mockery of poverty."⁷ On the other hand, he scolded Clara Zetkin for not opposing the schemes of her German communist comrades to "organize the prostitutes as a specific revolutionary guild contingent and publish a trade union paper for them."⁸ This he called a "morbid [bourgeois] deviation." While springing from commendable social sympathy and indignation against hypocrisy, in the end, it was no better than "the literary vogue which made a sweet madonna out of every prostitute."⁹

Kollontai's ideas were often considered extreme, but since she was instrumental in drafting the legislation on prostitution, her views on the matter must be considered. She had a different slant on prostitution, stressing its psychological aspects, e.g., her famous definition that it "suffocates the love in human hearts; from it Eros flies in fear of fouling its wings on a filthy bed." She felt that, in addition to freeing women from bourgeois property relations, a profound reshaping

of the human psyche was necessary. In her early views (1911), she attributed prostitution not just to bourgeois marriage but to monogamous marriage *per se*, which too often failed to satisfy people's sexual and emotional needs. Thus, she viewed prostitution as a squalid outlet for marital incompatibility. Prostitution damaged all women; it "allowed men with startling naivety... to ignore women's physical experiences in the moment of the most physical act." But what was an even more radical idea was that prostitution damaged men as well as women. Prostitution

distorts our ideas, forcing us to see in one of the most serious moments of human life – in the act of love, in this ultimate accord of complex spiritual feelings – something shameful, low, coarse, and animal.... The normal woman seeks in sexual intercourse completeness and harmony, whereas the man, reared on prostitution – which destroys all the complex vibrations of the sensations of love – follows only his pallid, monotonous physical inclinations, leaving sensations of spiritual hunger and incompleteness on both sides.¹⁰

Since divorce was almost impossible at the time she wrote this, she counterposed "erotic friendships" between men and women as the alternative to prostitution as an outlet to alleviate the "prison" of marriage. Kollontai's views were very controversial, to say the least. They were distorted by her enemies, who couldn't see the difference between the two relationships, as condoning prostitution. And while after the Revolution her approach changed considerably, the public continued to associate her with these early views.

At any rate, the matter of prostitution was complex. Generally, it was seen by the Bolsheviks as a social abnormality, similar to poverty, alcoholism, or crime, caused by class inequalities and the social relationships created by the capitalist system. In smashing this system and creating a

more just and equal social order, they had high hopes of eradicating prostitution. Lenin did not, however, view the problem as easily solved. His words were prophetic:

The question of prostitution will confound us even in our country of many a difficult problem. Return the prostitute to productive work, find her a place in the social economy – that is the thing to do. But the present state of our economy and all the other circumstances make it a difficult and complicated matter.¹¹

PROSTITUTION PRIOR TO THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

It was common currency that prostitution in czarist Russia was more widespread than in any other European country. It was an institution condoned by both state and church. This account may be exaggerated, but a visitor to Moscow expressed the situation thus: “The new brothel was formally opened by the police officer, and was hallowed by a religious ceremony in... which the premises were blessed by a Russian Orthodox priest.”¹² Brothels were regulated by police inspection. Prostitutes were issued special passports (*yellow tickets*), and subjected to regular physical exams. “Houses of Patience” were provided for czarist officers, and brothels were maintained at the rear of the army.¹³ But while “Houses” were protected and higher-class call girls tolerated, poor streetwalkers were harassed, beaten, imprisoned and forced into the brothels. The *yellow ticket* relegated the prostitute to a ghetto and barred her from any other employment for life. Virtually a slave, she could be set free only if she were seriously ill and obtained two medical certificates.¹⁴ Yet the professional (or brothel) prostitutes actually comprised only a small percentage. Kollontai estimated that, in Petrograd on the eve of the Revolution, there were 6,000-7,000 professionals and approximately

33,000 streetwalkers and part-time prostitutes.¹⁵ What used to be called “white slavery” also flourished, and the traffic in children was particularly odious. Russian women and young girls were kidnapped and exported to the Muslem regions, where Islam forbade the use of Muslem women as prostitutes.

Halle gives an early profile of prostitution. She states that, according to official inquiries from 1897 to the beginning of World War I, four-fifths of all prostitutes came from conditions of extreme poverty. Only 8.4% of the female population at this time were self-supporting; and of this number, women factory workers made only a half to a third as much as their male counterparts who themselves did not make a living wage. Of former factory workers, most prostitutes had been cigarette-makers, precisely the most miserably paid industry. Even so, the rising class consciousness in the factories enabled industrial workers to resist prostitution much more so than domestic servants, seamstresses, and laundresses, who contributed over 75% of the total number of prostitutes. These women tended to have a more recent peasant background, were probably totally illiterate, and were extraordinarily exploited by employers.¹⁶

Prostitution (and venereal disease) increased alarmingly during World War I. Due to general war conditions and economic crisis, army widows, abandoned spouses, and destitute peasant women flocking to the cities swelled the ranks and created a fierce competition for business which deteriorated the conditions of prostitutes even further. Increasing numbers of orphaned and abandoned young girls (*besprizorniki*) were forced to turn to prostitution as the only way to survive on the streets.

Ending legalized prostitution had been a strong theme of the women’s congresses headed by Kollontai and Inessa Armand; and appealing to the working woman’s fears of slipping into prostitution had evidently been a effective rally-

ing point for the Bolshevik program. After the February Revolution, the Provisional (Kerensky) government did abolish the *yellow ticket*, but since it took no other measures to help the victims, the result was chaos. Porter describes an account by visitors to Moscow who witnessed a lurid and horrifying spectacle as prostitutes openly flooded the streets

“...in jewels and expensive furs, walking up and down, and crowding the cafes” – “women and girls, hardly more than children, carried on with painted faces, half-drunk eyes, and cigarettes dangling from their hands.” Finally, indignant citizens formed local committees and raids on brothels took place. The women were arrested and thrown into special labor camps – and still prostitution continued.¹⁷

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD

Immediately after the October Revolution, it looked like “prostitution vanished overnight from the streets” as the bourgeoisie fled.¹⁸ Certainly during the Civil War, prostitution decreased immensely due to the nationalization of hotels, cafes, dance halls and bathhouses, a cashless economy, the absence of foreigners, and the prohibition against alcohol. The Bolsheviks had immediately put an end to police regulation and the persecution of prostitutes, although discrepancies were great in the manner in which the women were treated. But while the appearance of prostitution seemed to have “vanished,” the prostitutes themselves had not; they had only gone underground. There was obviously a need for a real plan.

The First All-Russian Congress of Worker and Peasant Women declared in 1918:

A woman of the Soviet labour republic is a free citizen with equal rights, and cannot

and must not be the object of buying and selling.¹⁹

In 1919, Kollontai was instrumental in creating a Commission to Combat Prostitution under the venereal section of the Commissariat of Public Health. [Most prostitutes were found to be tubercular or venereally diseased.] This floundered, but another Commission was set up in 1920 under the Commissariat of Public Welfare, which Kollontai headed. Her publication “Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It” set forth the official view:

Let there be no special measures for the struggle with prostitution. Professional prostitutes must be treated like the rest of the work deserters apprehended for failing to contribute productively to the collective.²⁰

Since the prostitute who sold herself to many men was considered no different from the wife who “sold” herself to one man, she was classed with the legal wife (even of a commissar!) who “stays at home [and] does no useful work for the society.”²¹ Therefore, prostitutes would be taken to the Commissariat of Labor where they would be encouraged to attend courses of study, helped to get jobs, or sent to recuperate at sanatoria. Only if a woman were repeatedly found guilty of returning to prostitution would she be sentenced to a term of hard labor at a regular work camp. According to this logic, clients of prostitutes could not be prosecuted either, for if a client is “someone who buys a woman’s favours, in that case the husbands of many legal wives will be guilty.”²² They could only be subject to public moral condemnation. Procurers and madames, however, were prosecuted on two grounds: for evasion of compulsory labor and for living off unearned income. *Zhenotdel* workers set up meetings on the streets to help the women find work and medical attention, and also to raise their self-esteem.²³ This was about as much as could be done in this period.

As the Civil War drew to a close, the Commission lapsed, and the number of prostitutes again increased due to chaotic conditions similar to the end of World War I.

THE NEP PERIOD

During the NEP years, prostitution (and venereal disease) resurged in astounding proportions. In 1921, there were 17,000 prostitutes in Leningrad, but by 1922 the number had jumped to 32,000.²⁴ The dismissal of women from jobs was the major cause, but also the recirculation of money, the rescinding of the prohibition against alcohol, the reopening of bars and dance halls, and the presence of foreigners were contributing factors. The housing shortage was also critical, for women often sold themselves for a place to stay. Conditions had altered the social composition of prostitution. Professional prostitutes had pretty much been eliminated. Now they were peasant women forced into the cities by famine, *besprizorniki* girls, abandoned wives, widows, mothers with small children, newly unemployed women, and a huge number of women from the former bourgeois classes. A new phenomenon of part-time prostitutes arose, comprised of working women who were forced to supplement their income or were lured by black-market consumer goods. Stites gives some figures for Moscow prostitutes: 43% were of peasant origin, 14% of working class origin, and fully 42% were "former people" -- 21% bourgeoisie, 14% merchant, and 7% gentry. Child prostitution also soared, involving 60-80% of all delinquent girls (*bezprizorniki*).²⁵ The sites of prostitution changed from the streets to hidden spots -- freight cars, alleys, public baths, and hotels for foreigners which could not be patrolled. The American journalist Louise Bryant observed in 1923:

Prostitution is practiced by Soviet employees in order to obtain, for the sale of carresses, boots that go up to the knees; prostitution is resorted to by mothers of families, working women, peasant women, who sell their bodies to the manager of the rations division in order to obtain for their children a full bag of precious flour. Sometimes the girls in the offices associate with their superiors, not for manifestly material gain, but in the hope of advancement.²⁶

Numerous studies throughout NEP confirmed the connection between unemployment and prostitution. Statistics cited by Goldman are very telling. For example, 80% of one large sample of women studied in 1925 entered prostitution only after 1921. A 1924 study of Moscow prostitutes found that 60% had been in the working class, and that almost 45% had entered prostitution from industries that had experienced sharp cutbacks. It found that 51% of these women had become prostitutes out of direct need, and that fully 84% had tried to leave prostitution but were unable to find work. Another study found that only 15% of the women surveyed had work skills which would enable them to become self-employed.²⁷

There were other disturbing statistics. An inquiry in 1926 revealed that clients of prostitutes were not only the bourgeois "remnants" and Nepmen, but also large numbers of working class men, in direct proportion to their salaries. For example, the range was 29.6% who resorted to prostitutes among the lowest-paid, unskilled workers, up to 46.9% among the highest-paid metal workers.²⁸ Students and *Komsomol* youth who rejected romantic attachments as "bourgeois" also resorted to prostitutes.

The new, freer social relationships, easy marriage and divorce, when coupled with the impossibility of self-supporting employment, had put

women in a no-win situation. Goldman puts the matter very well:

Prostitution represented the most painful, but not the most improbable, fate of the husbandless woman under NEP. It made a mockery of the idea that women were free, independent individuals who could enter a union on the basis of personal choice. Without an independent wage, women were forced into the most unfree of acts: to garner some portion of the male wage by selling their sexuality to whoever wanted them. Many of the women expressed a desperate desire to leave prostitution. Others felt deep shame at their situation. For most, it was the last resort before starvation.²⁹

Stites puts it more bluntly: "men with money and women without it."³⁰

Thus began a "war on prostitution" with the stipulation, however, that "under no circumstances must it degenerate into a war against prostitutes" [Kollontai's formulation.] The government recognized that social conditions were changing, and that the matter had to be handled differently:

Unemployment struck at women first, and prostitution grew. We now found we could not treat the problem as we had treated it during the period of War Communism. To punish prostitution by forced labor when there is unemployment is absurd... if the Government cannot assure to all women the work they need to make a living, it cannot punish them for earning a living as best they can -- in this instance by taking their own bodies to market.³¹

The goal was two-fold: prevention and rehabilitation. The Venereal Section of Public Health set forth the measures to be employed: protect women from dismissal from work, establish co-ops to employ untrained women, increase women's

trade education, establish homes for unemployed women and girls, develop welfare work among destitute children, and increase propaganda about prostitution as non-socialist behavior. *Zhenotdel* was directed to make the eradication of prostitution a top priority.

Effective propaganda was done through traveling exhibits in the countryside and Health Theaters in factories, clubs and the military. Strong attempts were made to re-educate men, as well as women. More combative measures included: strict supervision of places of temptation, more severe prosecution of abettors of prostitution, and free treatment for venereal diseases.³² The rhetoric was that of "war" and newspapers announced "victories" in big headlines. In 1924-25, the Militia for Combatting Prostitution was said to have destroyed 2,228 "nests of vice" in Russia alone.³³ Social guardianship sisters (social workers) patrolled the train stations rescuing naive peasant girls before they could be lured into prostitution. There were anti-prostitution weeks and days throughout the USSR, and the public generally was drawn into the fight.

New laws regarding prostitution were added to the Criminal Code, which already mandated penalties for sexual crimes against women such as venereal infection and rape:

1. for forced sex with a woman who was materially dependent, such as wives or employees, not less than 3 years imprisonment;
2. for physical or mental compulsion to practice prostitution, solitary confinement of not less than 3 years;
3. for procuring or maintaining brothels, imprisonment not less than 3 years and partial or total confiscation of property. For forcing underage or dependent women into prostitution, 5 years.³⁴

The tactic of public trials was also used widely and successfully. Procurers were prosecuted relentlessly, and male clients received public exposure and condemnation for committing "anti-woman" crimes. Prostitutes, however, were at all times treated sympathetically as victims. The policeman was directed to treat prostitutes with utmost respect: "[He] must observe all the rules of politeness toward her and permit himself no rudenesses."³⁵

THE *PROPHYLACTORIA*

In 1923-24, *Prophylactoria* were set up in major cities and towns. These were combination medical centers, work-training sites, and homes for prostitutes, although women were encouraged to live off the premises in order to get used to "going to work." No total figures are available, but the number were never considered adequate (only five in Moscow), and women could be brought in from the villages only if there was room. Juvenile prostitutes were rehabilitated in children's homes run on similar principles, but with increased emphasis on education. Like the *Aboritoria*, the *Prophylactoria* were showcases toured by many foreign visitors. In a sense, the concept behind them was a forerunner of the modern "holistic" approach. Propaganda lauded their merits over European rehabilitative facilities, which were usually run by philanthropic ladies or nuns who treated prostitutes as pitiable charity cases or sinners to be redeemed. The following picture is taken from the accounts of Halle, Winter and Field, who visited the Moscow *Prophylactoria* in 1930-32.

While entrance to the *Prophylactoria* was voluntary, considerable persuasion was exerted by Red Army soldiers and civil militia who scoured the streets for practicing prostitutes. The intake procedure was very thorough, and the women were charted carefully all through their stay, and afterwards as well. The typical resident was from

peasant origin, illiterate or semi-literate, unemployed for over a year or never employed, unmarried, from 18-25 years old, venereally diseased and childless. [This is somewhat misleading, since such children as were not aborted were probably abandoned or left with peasant relatives.] The women were trained in factory skills and the work ethic, manufacturing simple items such as baby layettes. They were paid trade-union wages on a group basis to encourage responsibility and cooperation, and charged for room and board. They had considerable freedom in their living arrangements and were not forbidden to associate with men. The word *prostitute* was taboo; women were addressed as *tovarisch* (comrade), and every effort was made to help the women view themselves as displaced workers and regular citizens. Halle states that only 3-4% of those accepted were considered "incurable," and left or were dismissed.³⁶

The women were given total health care; 90% of the women suffered from venereal diseases, hence the name "*Prophylactoria*." In addition, they were given literacy classes, moral and political education. Great emphasis was placed on cultural activities: music, drama, poetry, dance, and cinema. The women formed performing ensembles, sports teams, and put out their own newspaper. An interlocking system of sponsorship existed in order to emphasize the individual's role in the collective society. For example, a large factory might sponsor a *Prophylactorium* and provide eventual employment, while the *Prophylactorium* itself might sponsor a collective farm and provide lectures and entertainment to the members.

Women remained in the *Prophylactoria* for approximately one year and then were placed on probation in factory positions, where their past remained anonymous though their behavior was monitored by Factory Committees. Each was assigned an "after-care sister" who helped with housing and basic needs, and generally gave support.

Women who had made a successful adjustment regularly returned to the *Prophylactoria* to encourage other women. Beginning in 1931, Conferences of Former Prostitutes, Now Workers were held which were great celebratory occasions.

THE PERIOD OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND COLLECTIVIZATION

With the introduction of the First Five Year Plan and the re-entry of women into the work force, the attitude of the government toward prostitution became more severe. Prostitution and venereal disease were at a new low, and the government now had hopes of dealing the final death blows. It boasted that there was no more organized prostitution in the USSR and that brothels had totally disappeared. Because prostitution itself was not an offense, only statistics related to venereal disease were kept but, as an example, a health census in 1931 recorded only 400-700 prostitutes in Moscow, as opposed to 20,000 in 1913.³⁷

In 1930 there began a step-up in the war against vice centers. "Social guardians" and voluntary workers' brigades monitored night shelters, public lavatories, back alleys and other dark corners where street prostitution still lurked. The campaign against alcohol increased, attempts were made to remedy the housing shortage, and Turkish baths were closed.

By this time, most *Prophylactoria* were closing as having outlived their function. The prostitutes in the remaining facilities were now largely rural girls; 25% were now under 16 years of age. The original criterion that women had to be diseased to enter was seen as no longer relevant, and plans were made to open new institutions for non-diseased women or women on the verge of prostitution. As a preventative measure, employers were forbidden to discharge single women with children.

By 1932, the emphasis definitely was swinging toward punishment, called "measures of social defense." Because of almost full employment, prostitution was thought to be an intolerable remnant of capitalism. Along with the rhetoric of having established *Socialism*, there was much propaganda regarding prostitutes and their male collaborators as "enemies of the socialist regime." Harsher criminal laws were instituted against male participants: clients were liable to fine or imprisonment rather than mere moral approbation. Names of male offenders were published in the newspapers. Procurers (*kots* - tomcats) were sent into administrative exile. But the prostitute herself was also treated less tolerantly. Women were classified into two categories: "unhealthy minds" and "parasitical elements" (formerly called labor deserters). The former were regarded as carriers of an "anti-social disease" and underwent compulsory psychological treatment. The latter were regarded as "two-time losers," and along with *kulaks*, speculators and other profiteers, as traitors or counter-revolutionaries.³⁸ These recalcitrant prostitutes were sent to harsh labor camps, at worst, to the dreaded Solofki prison camp in Siberia for "political and habitual criminals." Some were even executed. As the tide turned further away from socialism, the Soviets resorted to methods not much better than those under czarist Russia.

In the Explanation of the New Family Policy of 1936, the government confidently declared:

By the victory of socialism the economic roots of prostitution in our country have been completely eliminated: the absence of unemployment, the progress in woman's material independence, the collectivization of the village, the large-scale participation of women in social and productive work, equal pay for male and female labour, the rise in women's cultural and political standard -- all this destroys every excuse for prostitution.³⁹

In 1937, an apologist for the Soviet Union blithely (but quite wrongly) wrote that in 1930 "unemployment completely ceased among women, and the most terrible concomitant of unemployment -- prostitution -- was done away with."⁴⁰ This is typical of the mechanistic view the Soviet leadership held: industrialization and collectivization -- full employment -- would solve all problems, would indeed bring about *Socialism*. However, prostitution continued to be a stubborn problem, and this reality baffled the experts. Sociologists, criminologists and psychologists carried on fierce debates whether the tendency toward prostitution was inborn or conditioned. They argued whether prostitution was really a "capitalist survival" or whether the demand for it might be a byproduct of prosperity. The only solution they could come up with was to administer stern moral warnings admonishing the new, more affluent proletarian citizen to shun this anti-socialist behavior.

DISCUSSION

The program of the early Bolsheviks for eradicating prostitution was far-reaching. It involved eliminating the market economy, guaranteeing full employment with equal pay, expanding social services to ensure that the survival of women and children did not rest with their individual families, producing housing and consumer goods

that the masses could afford, and mass re-education of both women and men. But the later Soviet leadership accomplished only a small part of the remedy for eradicating prostitution, i.e., full employment. Even here, women's jobs generally remained at a lower level of pay and status. The promised social services never materialized to free women to become fully independent members of society. Women never reached the condition where they were totally non-dependent on some part of the individual male income.

There were serious social consequences which resulted from these economic factors. Because the bourgeois economic foundation of marriage and the family was not transformed but was, in fact, strengthened, oppressive bourgeois social relationships persisted. Therefore, the hoped-for new, equal and respectful relationships between men and women did not materialize. Labor was exploited in a new way -- to enrich the pockets of the bureaucrats. And the emergence of a privileged bureaucracy re-established class inequities which not only resulted in much cynicism, but deprived people of basic goods. The priorities were such that ordinary consumer items were never produced in sufficient quantity or quality, nor made available to ordinary citizens through regular means. And the housing shortage was never adequately dealt with. All these factors combined to perpetuate the problem of prostitution in the Soviet Union.

NOTES

1. Engels, p. 70.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 82-83.
3. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, pp. 219-221.
4. Lenin "Fifth Congress," p. 32.
5. Zetkin, in Lenin, p. 100.
6. Kollontai, "Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It," *Selected Works*, p. 264.
7. Lenin, "Fifth Congress," p. 32.
8. Zetkin, *op. cit.*, in Lenin, p. 100.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Kollontai, "On An Old Theme, 1911," in Porter, p. 187.
11. Zetkin, *op. cit.*, in Lenin, p. 100.
12. Mace, p. 75.
13. Winter, p. 182.
14. Halle, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
15. Kollontai, "Prostitution," p. 270.
16. Halle, pp. 220-221.
17. Porter, p. 362.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Kollontai, "Prostitution," p. 266.
20. Farnsworth, *Aleksandra Kollontai*, p. 194.
21. Kollontai, "Prostitution," p. 267.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 272.
23. Porter, pp. 362-363.
24. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, p. 372.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Mace, p. 79.
27. Goldman, pp. 119-120.
28. Winter, p. 192.
29. Goldman, p. 122.
30. Stites, *op. cit.*, p. 374.
31. Halle, *op. cit.*, p. 184.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 225-228.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
38. Winter, p. 193.
39. Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia*, p. 345.
40. Serebrennikov, p. 47.

WOMEN'S WORK AND PUBLIC LIFE

THREE PORTRAITS OF WORKING WOMEN BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

THE URBAN PROLETARIAN WOMAN

The urban proletarian woman probably worked in a textile mill or a tobacco factory. Her work day could stretch from 10 to 16 hours, with only two half-hour meal breaks. It could extend to seven days a week, for she often took piece-work home to finish. The working environment was horrendous, a true sweatshop: cold and damp or hot and steamy, dimly lit, noxious fumes, poor ventilation, unsafe structures, faulty equipment. Her routine was backbreaking and monotonous, bending over a machine all day or doing precise handwork. Her hands and arms were covered with scratches and infections. She suffered chronic illnesses, and even miscarriages, from breathing unhealthy chemicals. If she was pregnant, her legs swelled with varicose veins for she was often forbidden to sit down. She worked right up to her delivery date -- there are many records of women giving birth at the workbench -- and she returned to work immediately after childbirth for fear of losing her job. While she labored, if she was lucky, her youngest children were with relatives; if not, they were farmed out to the countryside where abuses of children were common. Her own breasts dripped milk while her hapless baby weakened. At her side might be working her young daughters; she herself might have started working at age five or six. If she was unmarried, she lived in crowded, unsanitary workers' barracks, sometimes alternating beds with male workers. She was paid considerably less than her male

counterpart, and was fined for the slightest infractions. She endured sexual exploitation and even beatings by male supervisors. She might turn to prostitution on the side to support her children or other family members. Because of this, the bourgeois ladies, and sometimes her peasant sisters, regarded her as immoral and promiscuous. She was subjected to uplifting Bible study sessions on her day off to reform her morals.

THE PEASANT WOMAN

The peasant woman's working day was never over. She spun the cloth, made the clothing, churned the butter, cared for the household, the children, the kitchen garden and all the farm animals. Folk wisdom defined her: "A woman is not a woman without a cow." In peak seasons, she labored in the fields from dawn to dusk in merciless heat and cold, her limbs weary, her lips caked with dust, her spine bent for hours -- weeding, mowing, reaping, pulling a plough like a draft animal, with an infant on her back and small children trailing behind. If times were especially hard, she would hire out as a migrant laborer for wages sometimes only one-fifth of a man's. As a daughter-in-law, she was a personal servant to a demanding mother-in-law, and often victim of sexual advances from her father-in-law. If her husband died, she could be turned out into the cold. After her long work day, she knit stockings or wove lace to sell at the market. Or she took in piece work, such as rolling cigarette holders, but was often cheated by her employer. She had no voice in the allocation of family resources, nor

was she ordinarily allowed to sit on the village councils. She might give birth to up to 20 children in her lifetime, but was lucky if half survived. She gave birth in the bathhouse or the cowshed or the fields, because she was "unclean." She was probably totally illiterate. She was an old woman by 30.

Single girls were often lured into marriage by *kulak* farmers and then discarded after the harvest. They might escape to the city only to become servants, or turn to prostitution. There was another saying: "Beat your wife for breakfast, and for dinner too." But no matter how abused, the peasant wife could not leave because she had no share in the family *dvor*, nor inheritance rights, only the small trousseau of pots and linens or perhaps an animal she had brought with her. She was a non-entity: "A hen is not a bird and a *baba* is not a person."

THE MUSLEM WOMAN

The Muslem woman of Central Asia was a silent slave -- a quailing, eyeless, faceless shadow. She was kept in *terem* (complete seclusion) from birth to death with her sister-wives. She rarely stepped out of the home unless properly chaperoned. When she did, she was veiled, and in some areas shrouded in a dark garment from head to toe, sometimes without eye slits, in order to shield her from men's gazes. She probably had been sold into marriage as a child as young as nine or ten to an old man, and was under the complete subjugation of her father, her husband, her sons and the *mullahs*. She could not speak to a man first, or eat at his table. In addition to household duties and childraising (ideally producing sons), she perhaps spent her life crouched in a torturous position, sweat dripping into her eyes, wool dust clogging her lungs, hands crippled with arthritis, weaving and knotting intricate, beautiful carpets, three to six thousand knots per square meter. One large carpet might equal one woman's

life. Blindness and consumption were the rewards of old age. She received no compensation for her work. The Turks said: "If a woman is unable to weave, neither shall she eat." She could never be employed outside the household. The Kazakhs said: "A woman's path is between the house and the well." If she could read at all, she was only allowed to read appropriate passages in the Koran which taught her submission to Allah and her husband: "A woman's hair is long, but her mind is short." Writing was forbidden in case she might be tempted to write "love letters" -- she was known to be lascivious and to consort with the devil. Islamic law condoned the mutilation and even killing of suspected errant wives. The nomad Muslem woman spent her life walking hot, dusty trails driving the herd, feeding them, watering them, acting as midwife to the animals, giving birth to her own young in a ditch by the wayside. Her husband, lately displaced from his warrior and hunter role, did little but deal at the markets and indulge in games and sports.

MARXIST-LENINIST THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF WOMEN'S WORK

What is the relationship between the emancipation of women and the building of socialism? According to Lenin, the two are inseparable: the emancipation of women will help build socialism, and building socialism will effect the emancipation of women:

Unless women are brought to take an independent part not only in political life generally, but also in daily and universal public service, it is no use talking about full and stable democracy, let alone socialism.¹

And how are women to be emancipated to take part in the building of socialism? According to Engels:

The first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished.²

The first part of the premise is **reintroduction into public industry**. Except for the idle rich, women had always been overburdened by work, except that much of their work was in the domestic sphere, controlled by the interests of the patriarchal family structure. As Engels demonstrated in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, before the accumulation of private property had created the rise of the patriarchy, and doomed women to a subordinate position within the household, women had indeed shared equally in primitive "public industry," and had enjoyed equal status in society. This premise is reiterated over and over by Lenin:

The chief thing is to get women to take part in socially productive labour, to liberate them from "domestic slavery," to free them from their stultifying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery.³

In his book *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 1899, Lenin developed Marx's thesis that the rise of large-scale industry would create the basis for the emancipation of women, in that "work at factories broadens their outlook, makes them more cultured and independent and helps them to break the shackles of patriarchal life."⁴ But of course, capitalist industry exploited the labor of women, and children as well, and did nothing to alleviate the burden of domesticity.

Under socialism, the second half of Engel's premise would be fulfilled: **that the quality of the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished**. Women would be

guaranteed an independent living wage, and the state would assume the burden of dependent care. The abolition of the family as the economic unit of society would be completed by the socialization of housework:

To effect her full emancipation and make her the equal of the man it is necessary for housework to be socialized and for women to participate in common productive labour. Then women will occupy the same position as men.⁵

At the same time, woman's role as child-bearer would be considered, for this was also part of her work and social contribution:

Here we are not, of course, speaking of making women the equal of men as far as productivity of labour, the quantity of labour, the length of the working day, labour conditions, etc., are concerned, we mean that the woman should not, unlike the man, be oppressed because of her economic position.⁶

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WORKING WOMEN'S STRUGGLES

On the eve of the Revolution, women comprised 40% of all production workers. Peasant women comprised 85% of all women,⁷ and over 70% of all women were farm laborers. Peasant women had flocked to the cities in huge numbers during the first world war, and had found employment as charwomen, maids, nannies, seamstresses, laundresses, waitresses, or in the very lowest, unskilled factory jobs. But women had been in the industrial workforce since the time of Peter the Great. The first women workers were forcibly impressed from the petty criminals, paupers and prostitutes of the streets and workhouses, as well as from the "idle wives of soldiers and sailors."⁸ They became increasingly preferred by

factory owners as employees because they were more malleable, less likely to drink, be absent or cause trouble. Most important, they could be paid one-third to one-half less than men for comparable work, and therefore helped depress wages (see Table 16).⁹ They comprised the vast majority of workers in the entire textile industry, from cotton spinning to lace making; at the outbreak of World War I, there were twice as many women in textiles as in all other industries. They also formed the majority of workers in the tobacco industry, in the manufacture of metal buttons and needles, and in the match industry (the lowest paid of all industries). These became known as "women's industries." Women also performed the unskilled labor in the manufacture of other consumer goods, such as clothing, boots and shoes, food processing, chemicals, cardboard, cosmetics, sugar, glass, rope, cement and brickmaking. In heavy industry, such as metals and mining, women performed the lowest, most brutal types of manual labor, loading and unloading, shoveling coal, and hauling barges. They were little more than *beasts of burden*. In mixed sex factories, the sexes were segregated by law. This gave the capitalists a distinct advantage, for it prevented the proletariat from uniting on the basis of their mutual oppression -- a sort of "divide and conquer" technique.

It is clear from Lenin's writings that the Bolsheviks regarded women as the most "backward stratum" in society. This is certainly true of peasant women, particularly the Muslem and other women of the East. These women were steeped in religious superstition, dominated by patriarchal relations, and clung to a pitiful concept of **private property** with their handcrafts, cows and kitchen gardens. But it is less true of urban proletarian women. Industrialization had given urban women some measure of independence and an awareness of their oppression. In fact, Kollontai insisted that the working women's movement

coincided with the first signs of awakening class consciousness in the proletariat as a whole.¹⁰ She felt that women's achievements had been underplayed, and she herself had urged the Social Democrats to engage in special work among women since 1906. A current writer, Anne Bobroff, goes much further. She maintains that the Bolsheviks did not recognize the "woman question" as an important issue until literally forced into it by the increasing militancy and organization of working women around 1910, as well as the very real threat from bourgeois feminist groups to co-opt this movement.¹¹

In fact, working women's militancy did begin with the first signs of general worker revolt. Current assessments credit them with the lion's share of labor struggles of that earliest period in the 1870s and first half of the 80s. It was precisely in the textile industry, in 1872, that women first became active in spontaneous riots, demonstrations and strikes. In 1878, women led a weavers' strike in which factory buildings were wrecked. Also in 1878, women tobacco workers protested piece work rate increases. When the managers responded with curses and threats, the women threw tools and furniture out of the factory windows, and the managers acceded to their demands.¹² As a direct result of these actions, the government was forced to pass legislation limiting night work for women and children, in 1885. In 1886 a strike of 30,000 textile workers resulted in the shortening of the working day. Four women were on the executive strike committee, including Krupskaya.

There was a lull in the strike movement until the middle 1890s. Then in 1895, in the famous "Revolt at Laferme," women cigarette-makers struck against wage cuts and the coarse behavior of the bosses, smashing factory windows and machinery and resisting the police, who responded with water hoses. The police chief advised the women to balance the wage cut by "picking up some extra money on the street."

Thirty of the ringleaders were banished from the city, but they won their demands.¹³ In 1898, there was a massive strike in the major textile district of Ivanovo-Voznesensk in which women workers successfully negotiated their demands with the factory management. In 1898, cigarette workers replicated the Laferme action in half a dozen cities (and reportedly threw tobacco in the policemen's eyes!).¹⁴ In addition, women supported men's strikes. For example, in the "Obukhov Defensive" of 1901, women (and their children) from a nearby cardboard box factory bombarded the police and militia with stones. Many women were arrested.

Since 1890, there had been "workers' colleges" or adult night schools, as well as social clubs in factories run by Social Democrats and other groups in St. Petersburg. One such group, "The Fighting Association for the Liberation of the Working Class", which included the young Lenin as a member, set up "Sunday schools" which, under the guise of literacy classes, taught rudimentary class politics. While few women attended, they obviously absorbed secondhand the consciousness instilled in their brother-workers. Since the late 1890s, the Social Democrats had recruited select women workers with high consciences into Party work. In 1900, Krupskaya's pamphlet *The Woman Worker* was smuggled into Russia from exile abroad. Based on Lenin's long years of research into conditions under capitalism and her own input gained from working with proletarian women, it gave the first Marxist analysis of working and peasant women's conditions. It was widely used as propaganda in the factories for many years after. Lenin's newspaper *Iskra* also carried letters describing the suffering and humiliation of women workers. All through this period, the influence of the Social Democrats was a major factor contributing to the rise of worker consciousness, including that of women workers. While their propaganda attempted to turn the

strikes into political actions, the message was at all times that women could achieve their demands only through a united effort with their male coworkers.

With the first revolutionary wave in 1905, there was a great upsurge in all kinds of strikes and demonstrations in which women took a militant role. Women took a major part in the "Bloody Sunday" protest in 1905, and many women and children were massacred. In the same year, Sofia Smidovich (secretary of *Iskra*) was a leader and agitator in Odessa of the famed Potemkin mutiny. Again, in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 11,000 women played a major role in the largest strike to date. Then there were the "petticoat rebellions" of 1905, when peasant women marched to the towns to demand news of husbands and to petition for financial relief. They also demanded the right to manage the economies of the *dvors* in their husbands' absence. Massive peasant riots also took place during this time, and women sometimes led the men in actions against exploitive landlords, burning and looting the manor houses. Even domestic servants took to the streets, demanding the eight-hour day, a minimum wage, their own room, and respect from their employers. Stites relates an amusing story of cooks who attempted to hold a meeting in the streets but were pursued by the police. With great ingenuity, they took refuge in a bathhouse and continued their meeting under the protection of their nudity.¹⁵

Up until 1905, strikes had been largely economic; political slogans had to be disguised. Women were concerned with wages, with financial assistance for pregnancy, illness and unemployment, and with better work and barracks conditions. Never was the slogan of "equal pay for equal work" advanced by women. However, with the strike wave of 1905-06, the tenor became more political. Mixed strike actions inevitably included women's specific demands for creches,

maternal leave and nursing rights. One such demonstration asked for a half day off a week to do the laundry! The slogan "equal pay for equal work" now began to appear, although just as often workers would concede this demand, and even offer to lower women's wages to win other demands. The Bolsheviks were strong in the textile mills of both St. Petersburg and Moscow, and Bolshevik women were very active in these strikes. They led another famous strike at the Ivanovo textile mills, and widely disseminated a popular pamphlet called *A Woman's Lot* which urged women to "take your place beside husbands and brothers."¹⁶ A memorial to the brave women textile workers was subsequently erected.

Most of these actions were spontaneous events, but there was a growing political consciousness on the part of women. Working women petitioned the *Duma* (parliament) for electoral rights and even broke up meetings. They protested their exclusion from workers' councils and commissions set up to investigate working conditions. Peasant women also demanded equal rights in the distribution of land and a voice in the peasant *Duma*.

Following this upsurge, the state brought down severe repression on the workers, and the activity of women workers accordingly declined. It was rare to find women at illegal political meetings, and they seldom attended the Bolsheviks' Sunday evening classes. But it must be understood that they were actively prevented from organizing themselves. Trade unions were male-dominated, giving only lip-service to female membership. Management and government authorities actively persecuted workers' organizations which attempted to recruit women.

At the same time, the percentage of women in the labor force during the period from 1901 to 1910 had increased dramatically, by 81%.¹⁷ Factory owners found women "more docile and steady."¹⁸ In other words, they were used as strike-

breakers. There were other reasons as well. The Russo-Japanese War conscripted male workers and created an economic crisis. Increased mechanization allowed women to be employed in formerly male-dominated jobs. And increased restrictions on children's labor meant that women often took their places -- at "child's wages." In fact, factory inspectors recommended the employment of women "to economize on wages."¹⁹

The Social Democrats had to find disguised means to reach women during this period. In the repression which followed 1905, women were organized into self-education, mutual help societies, and social clubs. For example, in 1907, in St. Petersburg, "The Society for Mutual Help Among Working Women" had 300 members, mainly textile workers. Kollontai was a chief organizer. While some Social Democrat members, particularly in the Bolshevik faction, supported these efforts, there was much criticism that it split the proletariat. At any rate, the authorities finally put an end to these efforts.

The importance of the female labor force had not escaped other groups. The Populists of the mid-1800s had briefly sent incursions of women politicians into the factories, but the appalling conditions they found had sent them back to their main work in the countryside. Since the middle 1860s, bourgeois women had agitated on the "woman question," with the aim of releasing upper-class women from enforced idleness and economic dependency. After 1899, these women also turned their attention to the poor factory girl. It is instructive to contrast their point of view and organizational tactics with that of the Social Democrats, and later the Bolsheviks. Up to 1905 feminist groups, such as the Mutual-Philanthropic Society, had been primarily interested in charity toward working class women (and uplifting their morals), and in obtaining access to education and professions for themselves. But after the upsurge in proletarian militancy of 1905-06, they took on

a more political character. Two such organizations, the Union of Equal Rights for Women and the Women's Progressive Party, did attempt to organize working women, and established a number of working women's clubs. But basically, their conception was based on gender, and their motive was mainly to get the support of working women for women's suffrage. One populist women's organization did call for reforms in women's working conditions, such as a shorter work day, higher wages, more humane treatment and less police supervision, but it too was essentially reform-minded and centered on the vote. There was little recognition of class differences based on economic realities, but rather "the one and indivisible women's movement." For example, one group wanted to incorporate their own maids with themselves into the same union! Communist women, led by Kollontai, continually crashed these meetings, trying to persuade working women where their true interests lay.

In 1908, bourgeois feminist groups organized a large All-Russian Women's Congress of 750 women, comprised mainly of the educated and professional classes. Kollontai fought hard to get permission from the leadership of the St. Petersburg Committee to bring in a contingent of 45 working women from the textile, tobacco and cardboard box industries, and from the domestic services. Amidst much vocal abuse from the audience, these women presented their class analysis of women's working conditions, and demanded such reforms as trade union participation, pregnancy insurance, as well as the vote. After having passed their own independent resolutions on all questions, they then walked out. Following the outraged response of the feminists, the police broke up the conference, the Social Democratic organizers fled abroad, and earned "the undying hatred of the feminists."²⁰ Subsequently, Kollontai published a major tract against the feminists, *The Social Basis of the Woman Ques-*

tion in 1909. It hit the nail on the head:

For the majority of women of the proletariat, equal rights with men would mean only an equal share in inequality, but for the "chosen few," for the bourgeois women, it would indeed open doors to new and unprecedented rights and privileges that until now have been enjoyed by men of the bourgeois class alone.²¹

After 1910, female strike activity again erupted in the textile industries. At first, efforts were disorganized and unsupported or even sabotaged by male coworkers, but gradually women became highly organized and militant as the strike wave spread to other industries, and they gained the support of the men. These strikes were prolonged and tenacious. Women organized strike funds and mutual support societies. In mixed sex actions, women began to represent themselves on strike committees and in negotiations with employers; they began to take seats on trade union committees and in the soviets. The notable difference in these actions is the emphasis on demands as women workers, not just as workers. In addition to wage increases, they demanded paid pregnancy leave, hygienic facilities for women, control of chemical hazards and heavy weight lifting detrimental to their health, nursing breaks, employment for pregnant women, and the end to sexual exploitation and verbal abuse by employers. Some of these demands were eventually met on an individual factory basis. All of these demands were incorporated into the subsequent Bolshevik labor laws. Bobroff deplores the lack of literature acknowledging this period of women's labor activity from 1910 to 1914, and insists it was critical to the Bolshevik program which followed.²²

The renewed activity by women workers during this period had prompted the bourgeois women's groups once again to turn to them to

get support for suffrage, and for their own class-based concerns. In 1912, under pressure from the feminists, a suffrage law was proposed by the *Duma*, but vetoed by the Cabinet. Minor reforms were passed, such as educational opportunity, equality under inheritance laws, and the granting of passports to women, but these reforms barely affected working women.²³ On the other hand, the Bolsheviks pushed successfully for a social insurance law which passed, however, only for large enterprises. Thus, only 9% of women workers were covered, since most tended to work in smaller enterprises or in domestic service. Still, women gained six weeks maternity leave at one half to full pay to be decided by workers' sick benefit societies (i.e., paid from their own wages).²⁴ The one women's populist group which had seriously attempted to appeal to working and peasant women fell apart when the *Duma* did not pass the vote bill.²⁵ From then on, the Bolsheviks began to lead the proletarian women's movement.

By 1913, the Bolsheviks had entered a new stage in their relationship to working women, in that a separate appeal to women became Party policy rather than a matter of individual efforts. In that year, they organized the first Russian International Working Women's Day March, led by textile workers. Women's Day had originated in New York in 1908, as a parade organized by Socialists-for-Suffrage to put an end to sweatshops and child labor, and to demonstrate the independence of women workers from the bourgeois suffragette movement.²⁶ The holiday had been established as an international event in 1910 by Clara Zetkin of the German Social Democratic Party. However, the Russian women couldn't get a permit from the police for their first demonstration, so they held a "learned symposium" in the grain exchange building. There was heavy police presence, but women workers, coached by Bolshevik women, spoke out boldly.²⁷

In 1912, under Lenin's insistence, *Pravda* began to include an ongoing women's section directed toward working women's concerns. The huge response from women was the impetus for *Rabotnitsa* (*The Woman Worker*), a women's journal launched in 1914 to coincide with the second celebration of Women's Day. It was under the editorship of Krupskaya and Samoilova (editor of *Pravda*) and, as well, a French edition was edited by Inessa Armand. Its aims were ambitious: to expose the bourgeois women's organizations, to enlist women in agitation against the war; to raise the consciousness of working women about their oppression; and most important, to issue a call for proletarian women to enter workers' organizations -- to join hands with their brothers in the call for socialism. As the first issue stated:

The "women's question" for working men and women is the question about how to involve the backward masses of working women in organization, how better to make clear to them their interests, how to make them comrades in the common struggle, the common cause, the common goals, and the common path to these goals.²⁸

Rabotnitsa dealt with a wide range of women's issues: maternity insurance, female labor, child-care centers, hygiene, electoral rights, etc. The magazine was legal, but constantly harassed by the police, and only lasted until 1916. Of the first six women editors, five were arrested and only one escaped.

World War I dampened strikes but exacerbated conditions and, therefore, worker consciousness. As the Bolshevik Samoilova wrote:

This war, which diverted thousands of working women from housework and threw them into the factories, gave the unquestioned stimulus to the proletarian development of working women; it "boiled them in the factory cauldron" and compelled them to

take a more active part in the general struggle of the working class for its liberation.²⁹

The war gave important impetus to the emancipation of working women in two ways. First, it split the feminist influence from the socialist influence, because the feminists largely supported the war. Second, it threw women into non-traditional jobs to replace the men at the front. In addition to manning heavy industry, they were street car conductors (previously only allowed on horse cars), truck drivers, administrators, and much more. There were even women combat soldiers in the czar's Women's Battalions. The war also created a new large group of organized women, the soldiers' wives.

It is often unrecognized that women workers led off the February Revolution of 1917. The impetus was International Working Women's Day. The Petrograd government had tried to prohibit the march, but textile workers (and soldiers' wives) defied authority and marched to protest food shortages and war conditions, banners demanding "Peace and Bread" held high. This led to a violent clash at the Putilov munitions works which quickly escalated into a mass revolt against the czar. The day after, *Pravda* praised the women highly:

The first day of the revolution -- that is the women's day, the day of the Women Workers' International. All honour to the women! All honour to the International! The women were the first to tread the streets of Petrograd on their day. In Moscow it was frequently the women who determined the attitude of the military: they entered the barracks and persuaded the soldiers to take the side of the revolution, and the soldiers followed them. All honour to the women!³⁰

The period of the Provisional (Kerensky) Government, between the February and October

Revolutions, continued to see mass strikes of women who were impatient with the promises of the government to improve their working conditions. In this period of relaxed censorship, the Bolsheviks established Women's Bureaus of Agitation and revived *Rabotnitsa* to deal with this situation. *Rabotnitsa* became a center of agitation where Bolshevik women trained women workers who returned to the factories to give speeches and recruit other women.³¹ Notably, two major actions frightened the government. One was a mass strike of laundresses which lasted four weeks and resulted in the trade unions confiscating the shops from the owners. The strikers included Bolshevik demands to end the war and to support the soviets. The second was a demonstration of 100,000 soldiers' wives who marched against the war, organized by Kollontai and other Bolshevik women. This was the largest demonstration of women in history.

During the October Revolution in Petrograd, the Bolsheviks organized women workers as nurses and medical orderlies. In the subsequent takeover in Moscow, women staffed supply, feeding and communication operations, and female tram car drivers served as scouts.³² After the October Revolution, Lenin paid special tribute to these women:

In Petrograd, here in Moscow, in cities and industrial centers and out in the country, proletarian women have stood the test magnificently in the revolution. Without them, we should not have won. Or barely won. That is my view. How brave they were, how brave they still are! Just imagine the sufferings and privations they bear. And they hold out because they want to establish the Soviets, because they want freedom, communism. Yes, indeed, our proletarian women are magnificent class warriors. They deserve our admiration and love.³³

LABOR LAW: PRE-REVOLUTION

There was no attempt to enforce labor law before 1882 when some legislation was passed to protect children and women. Factory inspection was established, but it was mostly concerned with children's conditions. Children under 12 were prohibited from working, and those under 15 could work only eight hours per day with no night, Sunday or holiday work, and were denied certain dangerous jobs. For these minors there was to be some provision for schooling. In 1884-5 the laws were strengthened. Night work was prohibited for children under 17 and for women in the cotton spinning industry and, in 1886, in all textile industries. In 1890, the laws were eased, and children were permitted to work in some industries, e.g., glass factories, on Sunday and holidays. Women could be permitted night work in other industries, and now even in the textile industry when "especially necessary" or when with their husbands. Factory owners justified this by cutting women's daily wages, on the grounds that night work was more demanding!³⁴ From 1900 to 1912, workers' compensation and partial social insurance were gradually established (paid out of workers' wages), but since these laws mainly covered skilled workers, most women were not included. A few factory inspectors, sanitation officials and doctors pressed for reforms, but mostly in vain. Factory inspection continued to be chiefly police surveillance of worker, not employer, violations, and strike breaking. Because of the large number of women who gave birth on the job, midwives were assigned to many factories. This did not prove feasible, so in 1912, pregnant women were prohibited from working four weeks before delivery -- but without pay unless they belonged to a sick benefit society.³⁵ Women and children continued to be thrown in and out of the work force as changing economic conditions required. They were considered "useful but expendable."³⁶

After the February Revolution, the Provi-

sional Government enacted a few labor provisions, such as prohibition of night work for women and for minors under 17, and the abolition of fines, but these were never enforced because of the demands of the war industry. A minimum wage was established with, however, two rates: a higher one for men and a lower one for women! At the 3rd Trade Union Congress, the Bolsheviks pushed through further resolutions on the protection of female and child labor and the eight-hour day. These proposals were fought bitterly by the capitalists, and the escalating conflicts between labor and management, as well as the workers' disgust with the government for not backing up these measures, ultimately culminated in the October Revolution and the victory of the Bolsheviks.³⁷

SOVIET LABOR LAW

Although Soviet Labor Law evolved slowly due to the crises of the Revolution and the Civil War, it is significant that within a week of the Revolution the government issued decrees which protected the labor of women and children, as well as instituting the eight-hour day, a weekly rest period, and limited overtime. Soviet Labor Law for women was based on two realities: the physical -- women's biological function -- and the sociological -- their actual living conditions. In Kollontai's words: "A woman is not only an independent worker and citizen -- at the same time she is a mother, a bearer of the future."³⁸

PRE-REVOLUTION: FIRST BOLSHEVIK PROGRAM - - 1903

The foundation for the eventual Soviet Labor Laws had been laid in 1903 at the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, which saw the formation of the Bolshevik wing (see Terms). The resolutions which applied to both sexes included:

- full equality, implying equal pay for equal work and an equal right to work;
- the eight-hour day;
- rest periods;
- no overtime or night work (except in certain essential industries);
- disability and old age pensions;
- prohibition of work for children under 15; and
- labor courts.

The measures specifically directed toward women were:

- ten weeks paid maternity leave;
- childcare facilities at all enterprises employing women;
- nursing mothers to get half an hour to suckle infants every three hours;
- female labor to be forbidden in industries specifically injurious to women's health;
- women [factory] inspectors to be appointed in industries in which female labor predominated.³⁹

The working conditions in Russia were regarded as the worst among the industrialized nations of Europe. So these demands were revolutionary at this time.

BOLSHEVIK PROGRAM OF 1917

The revised draft of the Bolshevik Party Program after the February Revolution elaborated on these measures. It mandated:

- a one hour meal break;
- in dangerous and unhealthy industries, the working day be reduced to from four to six hours;
- a weekly rest period of 42 hours for wage workers of both sexes;
- night work not to exceed four hours;

- general prohibition of the employment of children under 16 (in exceptional cases, 14);
- restriction of the work day for adolescents from 14-16 to four hours, from 16-18 to six hours; and
- prohibition of employment of adolescents in night work and in unhealthy industries and mines.

The protection of women was greatly expanded:

- prohibition of all night work for women;
- women to be released from work eight weeks before and eight weeks after childbirth, without loss of pay and with free medical aid;
- establishment of nurseries for infants and young children, and rooms for nursing mothers at all factories and other enterprises where women are employed;
- nursing mothers to be allowed recesses of at least a half hour duration at intervals of not more than 3 and 1/2 hours;
- such mothers to receive nursing benefits, and their working day to be reduced to six hours;
- full social insurance for childbirth, widowhood and orphanhood; and
- labor inspection to include domestic servants.⁴⁰

Changes in the Land Code gave peasant women the right to hold land, to act as heads of households, and to participate as full members in organs of peasant government.

With the end of World War I, women had been dismissed from the labor force in huge numbers to accommodate the demobilized soldiers. Many unions classed women with children as workers who should yield their places. For example, the printing and paper industries de-

cided to dismiss all women.⁴¹ The contradiction between these newly created labor policies and reality was obvious. Finally, the Petrograd Council of Trade Unions took a stand:

We must approach the question of dismissal with the greatest of care. We must decide each case individually. There can be no question of whether the worker is a man or a woman, but simply of need.... Only such an attitude will make it possible to retain women in our organizations, and to prevent a split in the army of workers.⁴²

Other unions followed suit, and the large-scale dismissal of women was checked. But in the end, this appeal was rendered superfluous by the Civil War which necessitated the conscription of women back into the labor force.

CIVIL WAR PERIOD: LABOR CODE OF 1918

Labor decrees were not officially codified until January, 1918. By this point, the impending Civil War colored the tone. The philosophy behind this Labor Code had two points. First, it introduced labor service, i.e., the **obligation** to work for all citizens of both sexes from 15 to 50. Second, it established the **right** to work in one's chosen trade or profession. Even in this crisis period, further protective measures were added to safeguard women's maternal social contribution:

- In case of public crises, everyone must take part in work, but pregnant women are not required to mobilize (or pay working tax) during floods, storms, disaster, civil war;
- Women seven months pregnant or more, or still breastfeeding, or with children under eight with no one to care for them, are exempt from conscription;
- If after four months away from work be-

cause of pregnancy a woman is still ill, she can get four more months leave without losing her job, and her insurance pays her expenses;

- A woman cannot lose her job because she is pregnant and must be re-accepted to her work after childbirth;
- Pregnant women after five months cannot be transferred from one factory to another town or factory;
- No overtime work, paid or unpaid, is allowed for pregnant and nursing mothers;
- Anyone who employs expectant or postpartum mothers during their legal leaves is subject to fine or imprisonment;
- After a miscarriage or abortion a woman is entitled to two to three weeks rest. [A trade union clause added that she could also have time off during menstruation, but this prerogative was rarely used.]

These laws only applied to wage workers. Therefore, they covered women workers on state farms but not those employed in co-ops or on collective farms. However, university students on government stipends were considered "workers," and were entitled to full maternity leave and benefits.

Immediately after this Code was published, the Civil War began and eventually most of these carefully wrought laws were overridden by the emergency, as every able-bodied man, woman and child was drawn into the defense of the Revolution. Women replaced men gone to the front in occupations never before dreamed of, including some the Labor Code had deemed dangerous to their health. They received valuable, but previously denied, experience administering social institutions, from canteens to hospitals to transport. In the Red Army, women served as engine drivers, secretaries of revolutionary tribunals, political commissars, combat soldiers, and even as battalion commanders. They manned the heavy industry factories supplying war materiel. Therefore, bans on night work and overtime were lifted

for women and children in many enterprises. Kollontai states that the Civil War was the turning point in the emancipation of the working woman in that afterwards it was no longer possible to look at her except as fully equal in ability to the male worker in all spheres.⁴³

However, at the same time, labor restrictions were also tightened. Women who extended their maternity leave were not assured a job upon return to the work force. While equal pay for equal work was strictly enforced, the war demanded maximum production and pay depended on amount of work performed. Therefore, women's physical limitations and domestic duties prevented them from earning as much as men in the same job.

Right after the October Revolution, there had been immediate labor conscription for the bourgeoisie who had lived on un-earned income, including their wives who were pressed into volunteer social services. Then in 1918, the *subbotniki* were established. This was voluntary, unpaid Saturday or Sunday work, a kind of labor competition. Women were called the "soul of the *subbotniki*" and highly praised for their participation and leadership. Finally, in 1920 at the height of the war, a Universal Compulsory Labor Law was issued for all citizens not having a work book or attached to a factory or service industry, or involved in Party work. The main intent of this was to draw housewives into public labor, and included women 16 to 40. This Women's Auxiliary worked in sanitation and maintenance, nursed and sewed for soldiers.

Zhenotdel worked out a list of exemptions. These included pregnant and nursing women, women with children under eight or caring for a family of five, or tending the sick or disabled. In recognition of the demands of domestic labor, housewives only had to work four hours per day and did not have to travel. Strong measures were enforced against "labor desertion," but pregnant women and women with small children were

exempted from punishment or deportation to the labor camps, and were given extra food rations. Throughout this desperate period, there was still an eye to the future in protecting the childbearing functions of women.

NEP: REVISED LABOR CODE OF 1922

At the beginning of NEP, the Labor Code was rewritten, as it had become pretty much of a shambles during the Civil War. At the end of the war, the economy was in ruins, industry was at a standstill, and four million men were demobilized from the Red Army to return to the work force.⁴⁴ Thus, labor competition between men and women began anew. At the end of the war, women comprised 46% of all production workers, 75% of people's feeding stations, 74% of sewing, 63% of medical workers, 60% of textiles; and in traditional trades dominated by men, they comprised a quarter of all jobs in metal and one-fifth of all jobs in mines.⁴⁵ Because the returning men threatened the jobs of women, the laws were revised with the expressed intent of protecting women workers from job loss. The gist was that single women with children be given hiring preference, and that being pregnant or nursing not be an excuse for being fired or refused employment. In order to revive productivity, the Party urged women to go into the factories and promised them increased domestic services. A call was issued to recruit women into all economic organizations, factory administration, factory committees and the administration of trade unions "since the execution of a unified economic plan depends on the efficient use of female labor." Since the government could not provide many social services, the Party urged local soviets to "organize life on communist principles" by setting up communal dwellings, creches at all places of work, laundries, dining rooms, repair shops, and cleaning artels to free women from unproductive work and the care of children.⁴⁶

The revised laws re-established the eight-hour day for most workers, for minors 16-18 a six-hour day (but paid for eight), and for professional workers, underground workers, and state employees, also a six-hour day. Adolescents, 16-18, were again banned from night work, overtime, underground work and work detrimental to their health, and were also granted a four-week vacation.

Maternity laws were strengthened further. Women workers were granted from 11 to 16 weeks of paid leave before and after pregnancy, depending on their job. They were also granted a supplementary cash benefit of one month's wage for necessities for the infant and, in addition, received one-quarter of an average month's wage for each month up to nine months of the child's life. If after maternity leave, women were still too ill to work, they had the right to stay home up to one year and return to a comparable job, with seniority intact. Women could not be discriminated against in hiring up to three months before birth, nor could nursing mothers.⁴⁷ If still weak after returning to work after childbirth, women could reduce their work hours to four hours per day for an additional month. They could also get extended paid sick leave to care for relatives. [This applied to men as well but, in reality, mainly women utilized this benefit].⁴⁸ Women were again prohibited from night work, except for necessary occupations such as telephone operators, nurses, etc. Female minors, pregnant women and nursing mothers were exempt.⁴⁹ Employers could not even ask pregnant women or women with small children to work overtime, without incurring a fine. Women with children up to age eight could refuse overtime, swing or graveyard shifts, and travel. Pregnant women after the fifth month could also refuse business trips.⁵⁰

Protective measures to ensure women's health were elaborated. Jobs which exposed women to lead dust or poisonous chemicals were prohibited; women could not work with rubber, gas,

lead or mercury or in too high or low temperatures.⁵¹ Therefore, jobs in certain industries were taboo: underground mining, conduction, smithing, lumber mills, and shipboard work such as oilers or stokers. Women under 18 were not permitted lifting jobs, and women loaders could only lift half the weight of men (10 lbs.) and could spend only a third of the workday lifting.⁵²

Special compensatory measures were added. For high-strain jobs, e.g., treadle sewing, women got two extra days off per month. Women working in the damp dyeing rooms in the cotton mills were only required to work six hours a day and were given extra rations of fat and milk.⁵³ Special "night sanatoriums" were established for women cigarette workers who were at risk for tuberculosis but not sick enough to be laid off from work; they would go to these sanatoriums at night for special care.⁵⁴ If women were dismissed, they could not be put out of housing, nor their children removed from nurseries. They continued to receive free maternity care.⁵⁵ [All unemployed were granted free rent, tax exemption, and reduced rates for various necessities.] When unemployment compensation was greatly reduced, minors and unmarried women with children were protected groups. Women workers were even given a half day off to prepare for International Working Women's Day, and theaters were stopped on that night so women could use the halls for meetings!⁵⁶

All industrial workers were organized into unions, which were mandated to protect these rights, as were the soviets. Domestic workers were also organized into unions. They too had a paid day off per week, paid holidays and vacation, maternity and social insurance equal to factory workers.⁵⁷ Even women in small or private employ had these benefits, such as houseworkers, private secretaries to writers, or personal care workers.⁵⁸ However, the eight-hour day and overtime restrictions did not apply to these types of workers, nor were they enforced for agricultural work-

ers.

DISCUSSION

At the beginning of NEP in 1921, the Council of Trade Unions had issued another appeal:

Under equal conditions of productivity of labor and industrial qualification, all women workers in case of personnel reduction are to be dismissed on equal terms (with men). Exceptions can only be made for unsupported women who have children up to one year old; they should be given preference.⁵⁹

But this appeal was largely ignored. The NEP shift to cost accounting had closed down whole industries and transferred many others to private hands. Fully 70% of the initially cut workers resulting from the partial restoration of the market system were women.⁶⁰ By the end of 1921, women comprised 62% of all unemployed registered with the labor exchanges.⁶¹ Despite the vast scope of these protective laws, and efforts by the government to force private employers to hire established quotas of women, the NEP years were devastating for women workers. The laws were impossible to enforce when factories were in the hands of private capitalists, or when women were employed in the homes of NEPmen. There was a double message being given out: on the one hand, women were urged to enter the work force and promised domestic assistance but, on the other hand, they were the first to be dismissed during economic adjustments, as they were the last-hired workers. Because of all the legal benefits granted to women, employers concerned with profits considered women just too expensive to employ. Government subsidies for childcare were greatly reduced, and it was not economically profitable for private factories to provide creches. When childcare facilities were reduced, and communal dining rooms and laundries largely disappeared,

women's unemployment further increased, since a great number of them had been employed in the service industry. Furthermore, factory trade schools cut places reserved for training women apprentices, since allocation of places was based on the number of workers employed.

By 1924, unemployment had reached huge proportions, and women comprised nearly one half of all unemployed.⁶² In 1925, the labor exchanges purged their membership and in effect stopped counting the unemployed. Unemployment particularly hit women and youth precluded by the revised law from certain types of work, and those who had newly entered into occupations denied before the Revolution, e.g., construction. As noted, prostitution began to increase (see article on Prostitution), and the *NEPmansha* ("gold-digger") appeared in large numbers. Women greatly appreciated the maternity benefits, but viewed other of the laws as restricting their economic well-being. The desperate situation caused many groups of women to stage protests against job discrimination, and finally *Zhenotdel* was forced to reluctantly petition the Party to alleviate the situation. Subsequently, many safety and health rules were relaxed, the ban on night work was lifted, and women were allowed into jobs previously deemed dangerous or unsuitable. [The government justified night work as a deterrent to prostitution!] *Zhenotdel* leaders worried that hard-won gains might never be recouped, and that this would destroy respect for women, undermine their newly-acquired pride and independence, and destroy the equal status of men and women as partners in building socialism. Some attempt was made to alleviate unemployment through public works projects and "labor artels," but only about a quarter of the unemployed taken care of in this way were women.⁶³

Between 1921 and 1927 the number of unemployed women had leaped six-fold.⁶⁴ The percentage of women in factory production re-

mained at a constant 28% from 1923 to 1929, but this did not reflect the facts that, meanwhile, industry had expanded greatly, or that huge numbers of displaced peasant women had been flooding into the cities.⁶⁵ In 1927, at the end of the NEP period, Artiukhina, then head of *Zhenotdel*, reported that 84% of women seeking work were wives of workers or peasant wives. They could not find jobs because they had not worked previously, were not union members, or had been out of work for three-four years, and therefore had no social insurance.⁶⁶

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND COLLECTIVIZATION

The revised Labor Code was continually refined, but remained substantially unchanged throughout the life of the Soviet Union. Gradually, the laws were enforced for women working on collectives, although agricultural workers received only half the pregnancy benefits of urban workers: eight weeks maternity leave, and maternity pay of only 50% of their wages. In 1928, a Committee for Improving the Working and Living Conditions of Worker and Peasant Women was established. The Committee mandated a model list of trades in individual industries, as well as lists of occupational titles in government and administration, in which female labor should be encouraged. It revised lists of strenuous and hazardous jobs in which women could not be employed, and increased standards for load handling. But at the same time, the pressures of rapid industrialization weakened enforcement of other provisions of the Code. For example, night and underground work were again permitted for women and juveniles in certain occupations. In fact, official studies confirmed that underground work was *not* detrimental to women's health! Again, the government promised increases in subsidies for child-care facilities. However, maternity benefits, which had been reduced in 1927, were further reduced. Women had to have served in the work force

longer before becoming eligible for insurance and nursing rights, and had to be below a certain income level to receive layettes and stipends for new babies.

At the beginning of the period of industrialization, women were much slower than men to enter or re-enter the work force, mainly because the emphasis was on heavy industry. Even in late 1929, they still comprised 50% of the unemployed and only 29% of factory workers.⁶⁷ A turning point occurred in 1930. As the demand for labor began to outstrip the supply, women were actively recruited into virtually every branch of the economy. Between January of 1930 and July of 1931, the percentage of women in heavy industry leaped from 22% to 42%. Women entered previously male-dominated industries such as construction, railroads, mining, metallurgy and machine production.

By 1932, women comprised 82% of new entrants into the labor force.⁶⁸ However, this did not alter the fact that during the first five-year plan, the majority of women remained segregated in "women's industries" -- textiles, sewing, rubber and matches.

DISCUSSION

Evidently, equal pay for equal work was rather strictly enforced yet, overall, women's wages continued to be only half to two-thirds that of men. There were many reasons for this. First, women were mainly untrained and therefore forced into unskilled or lesser-skilled jobs. A gender discrimination began, based not so much on the field of labor, but on the category of job within that field. There is evidence that men resisted women getting the same wages and even applied pressure to reclassify the same job into a higher category for themselves. This seems to have been particularly true in agriculture.⁶⁹ Mandel calls this "equal rights, but not equal status."⁷⁰ Also, women got the short end on unemployment in-

surance, since it only covered about one-fifth of all workers, and then mainly skilled workers. In 1930 the government boasted that it had eliminated unemployment, and that it had put an end to the three occupations which accounted for most female earnings before the Revolution: hired girls on farms, domestic servants and prostitutes.⁷¹ Unfortunately, only the first was true. Party officials and high level managers continued to employ servants, cooks and nannies; they were merely given other titles. And as we have seen, prostitution continued to be a problem.

The first five-year plan was to initiate the second stage of the "revolution," revolution from "above" this time, the "revolution" that would establish "socialism." Amidst this "revolutionary" fervor, as Goldman puts it, "Lenin's old fulminations against housework [were] dusted off."⁷² Propaganda thundered: "Down with the kitchen! We shall destroy this little penitentiary! We shall free millions of women from housekeeping!"⁷³ Officials predicted that the second five-year plan would "achieve 100% socialization of basic aspects of daily life."⁷⁴ Canteens and creches were hastily established at state factories to accommodate women workers. Citizens were again urged to voluntarily establish these in residential areas. In the countryside, seasonal, permanent, and movable field creches were organized. Between 1929 and 1932, the number of permanent nurseries doubled and the number of seasonal nurseries tripled. But the reality is that most of these facilities were tied to work hours and factory shifts, and to the periods when seasonal farm labor required them. They mainly appeared at the more prosperous factories and farms. Their total number was grossly inadequate. For example, in 1938-39, less than 5% of nursery-age urban children could be accommodated, and only 28% of rural children.⁷⁵ Old plans for housing-communes (communal apartment buildings) were revived. City planners designed whole new communities built around factories, based on communal living

with full services for women and children. But these chiefly remained on the drawing board as, for example, *Pravda* denounced plans without separate kitchens as a "left deviation," as "an attempt to artificially induce communal living." Similarly, in the countryside, the idea of communes was abandoned in favor of the *kolkhoz*, or individual housing surrounding common worked land.⁷⁶

Goldman makes the case that with industrialization, the full employment of women actually *increased* women's dependency on the family unit:

Between 1928 and 1932, real wages fell by a shocking 49%. As a result, real income per capita did not increase as more members of the family went to work, but actually decreased to 51% of the 1928 level. Two incomes were necessary where one had once sufficed.⁷⁷

Goldman proposes that economic planners may even have consciously engineered a drop in real wages to mobilize reserves of female labor. She argues that the family unit was now used as an effective means of labor exploitation: "It was the institution of the family that enabled the state to realize the surplus from the labor of two workers for the price of one."⁷⁸

A SUMMING UP

In the section to follow which attempts to assess the position of women nearly 20 years after the Revolution, we have chosen, as far as possible, to use the middle 1930s as the cut-off date for statistics. This is the point where Soviet leaders declared "The Complete Victory of Socialism," and where they insisted that women were completely the equals of men and did not need special consideration. By this time, the second five-year plan had almost been completed, and there had been massive employment of women in

the industrial work force and on the collective farms for several years. By 1936, the basic pattern of gender discrimination in all areas of Soviet life is blatantly clear. The pattern reveals that: 1) the largest percentage of women were tracked into certain occupations of lower pay and status, and 2) they were allowed to rise only so high in the fields in which they were trained, or in the organs of power in which they participated. This pattern basically remained unaltered for the life of the Soviet regime. Stites verifies this:

The same pattern holds for almost every pyramid of Soviet life: the factory, the collective farm, the unions, Party affiliates, and the social cultural and educational establishments. Managers, directors, chief-surgeons, rectors, chairmen are almost always men... although women do rise in Soviet career channels that are closed to them in most of the world, the peaks of these are generally denied to them.⁷⁹

[Readers interested in following this pattern through later decades are urged to read studies by Dodge, Blekher, Farnsworth, Sacks, and Lapidus.]

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

The Bolsheviks were passionate believers in education, in raising the cultural level of the masses. In the thundering words of Lenin:

We must learn in the first place, and learn in the second place, and learn in the third place – and then see to it that learning does not remain a dead letter with us or a modern phrase, but becomes flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and really is transformed into a fundamental part of the new *byt*.⁸⁰

And this meant a particular commitment toward women since they were the most culturally deprived. Education was to be compulsory,

free, universal and co-educational. Females were to have exactly the same opportunities for education and the same curricula as males. As Krupskaya pointed out: "Equality of sexes in real life [has] to be anchored in educational equality from the earliest years."⁸¹ An early decree of 1918 threatened:

All school institutions of the Republic... are thrown open to all, regardless of sex. All persons responsible for violating this decree shall be tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal.⁸²

The main point to consider about Soviet education is that there was no such thing as a "liberal" education. While there certainly was a motive to expand people's cultural horizons, all education was basically geared toward fitting people to take their places in public industry. No more embroidery, French lessons or home economics, such as well-bred young ladies formerly studied in the Smolny Institute. Yet the educational tracking of women which occurred ultimately predicted their place in the work force and in all areas of public life.

The educational task of the Bolsheviks was monumental. They immediately embarked on a campaign to eradicate illiteracy (*Likbes*), for as Lenin stated: "An illiterate is shut out from politics."⁸³ According to the last czarist census of 1897, the over-all literacy rate of the Russian empire, ages 9-49, was 28.4%. The definition of "literacy" then meant just barely being able to read and write. For women, literacy was only 16.6%, and for rural women, only 12%. Factory women had a considerably higher percentage of literacy, over 21%.⁸⁴ Among older women it was probably only about 4%. In the Muslem areas, the situation was abysmal. Literacy there was only 2%, and less than 1% among the women.⁸⁵ It was practically unheard of to send Muslem girls to school. The Muslem areas remained a problem for some time due to fierce male resis-

tance to female education, and the fact that girls were often withdrawn from school to be married off. For example, as late as 1924 it was estimated that there were only 25 literate women in all of Turkmeni.⁸⁶

However, the Bolsheviks put strenuous efforts into helping women catch up. Factories held classes and provided childcare; so did the Red Corners. Since many older women and women with children could not attend classes, volunteers tutored them in their homes. Increasing literacy was a chief task of the *Komsomol*, and *Zhenotdel* delegates were widely used in the countryside. By all accounts, women were more eager to learn and more serious students than men. The test of literacy was the ability to read the posters and pamphlets which informed women of their rights, but many barely literate women were encouraged to write or dictate stories, poems and accounts of their lives which were published in *Rabotnitsa* or other women's journals and newspapers. Literacy opened up the world for women (see Table 1).

By the 1926 census, 42.7% of females were literate, although the standard had dropped to reading only. In 1930, under pressure of the needs of industrialization, the standard was raised to 4th grade level (later to 7th grade), and the rate by 1939 was 81.6%. The Soviet Union eventually achieved almost 100% literacy. However, the picture was not quite that rosy. Even by 1959, 44.2% of women only had a fourth grade standard of education, and these resided mainly in the rural and Muslem areas.⁸⁷ This is a huge number of women who were therefore unqualified for any but the lowest-level jobs such as fieldhand, janitorial, or totally unskilled factory work.

In the Soviet Union, all high-school education was specialized. In 1921, the government established a prototype "affirmative action" program, mandating that a certain number of positions be reserved for girls in the *technicums*. These were vocational high schools which qualified one for a "semi-professional" job. By 1928 almost

half the students were female.

However, it is interesting to note which *technicums* girls selected: 93.6% of nursing/midwifery students were female; 64.5% teacher training; 57.7% art; 44.6% business (bookkeepers, accountants); and only 19% agriculture and 8.7% industrial.⁸⁸ At the onset of industrialization, the government increased these reserved positions to 30% in all specializations, in order to divert girls into industrial and agricultural fields.

The Soviet higher education system was composed of technical and training colleges, universities and research institutes. Women's representation in higher education remained a stable 31% from 1926 to 1932,⁸⁹ but then jumped to 41% by 1936. The reason for this is that in 1930, the government also issued a decree reserving 30% of the places in higher education for women to encourage them to go into industry/engineering and agriculture. While these two areas increased considerably by 1936, still women were most highly represented in socio-economics (40%), educational-cultural (47%), and medicine (69%). The one vocational trend that the 1936 data does not clearly predict is the influx of women into engineering which did not occur until the 1970s. On the graduate level, the percentage of women fell off sharply. Women earned only 20.5% of candidate (Ph.D.) and 9.6% of doctoral (post-doc) degrees. Their largest representation was in pure science, especially chemistry and biology, which qualified them for medical research work, but it is significant that the percentage of higher degrees in medicine was much lower. Only these degrees qualified one as a surgeon, professor of medicine, or head of a scientific research institute. Women's representation was low to non-existent in technology (e.g., engineering) and agriculture (see Tables 3 and 4). Sacks states that the admission requirements at the research institutes were more stringent for women than for men.⁹⁰ And Dodge adds that admission to higher education was governed by priorities which were

given to military veterans, to those with a certain number of years of previous employment in the field, and also to the projected "productivity" of the applicants, in which was considered lost work time and interrupted careers due to pregnancy, as well as assignment difficulties for married women. Therefore, given their late entry into the work force and their family commitments, women were at a distinct disadvantage.⁹¹

Two of the most unique educational institutions established in the 1920s were the University of the East, which brought unschooled, mainly Muslim people with high political consciousnesses from Central Asia to Moscow, and the University of the North, which brought a similar group of Far Eastern and Northern peoples to Leningrad, many of whom did not even possess a written language. In addition to providing useful training, these universities attempted to preserve indigenous languages and cultures. Women were actively recruited and provided with special care and protection while in the big cities. Many women writers and artists emerged from this experience.⁹²

The Soviets also had an extensive system of adult worker education. The factory trade schools (*fabzavuches*) apprenticed youth to veteran workers to learn skilled trades while they also attended high school. Girls were 37% of the enrollment by 1931, although there was a drop in actual employment after the apprenticeships ended. Initially, there was a reluctance to accept female apprentices into heavy industry, such as metal (where wages were the highest)⁹³ but, again, after industrialization factories were urged to do so. In the corresponding Schools for Peasant Youth, only 26% were female. Another type of facility, the *rabfacs*, were a kind of adult high school. These prepared older (age 20-26) selected workers and peasants with only primary education for higher education (technical colleges). Almost half these students were female by 1936. Once again, their highest representation was in socio-economic, health and education, although apparently the

female quota system also applied to them. The last type of facility, the "Workers' Universities," weren't universities at all, but a system of day, evening, weekend and correspondence classes which offered a large variety of subjects to enable older, experienced workers to fill in gaps in their education, update their training, acquire managerial skills, and the like. By 1931 women comprised 25% of this group (See Tables 5-7). Significantly, only 4% of these women were able to attend the evening and weekend classes, and they were the heaviest correspondence course users. In the thirties these "Universities" also offered special classes to "improve and reorganize the woman's mode of living."⁹⁴ In other words, these were "stress management" classes for women on how to juggle their work, home life, and volunteer social work! (see Appendix G).

SUMMARY

Thus, in the professional fields, women were educated in medicine, hard sciences, technology, journalism, teaching, languages, and law. In semi-professional education, they graduated as lab technicians, midwives, pharmacists, dentists, teachers, accountants/bookkeepers, or cultural workers. Women's representation was low in all areas of engineering, in the construction, transportation, and communications industries, and in agricultural science. Dodge maintains that this distribution of women among broad fields has remained essentially the same since the 20s,⁹⁵ as has the predictable curve where the percentage of women falls off sharply at the highest levels of education. In the factory, women still mostly received skilled training in light manufacturing, such as textiles, needles, printing, paper, chemicals and animal products. They had a much lower representation of skilled training in heavy industry jobs: fuel, electrical, mining, minerals, machines and metallurgy. As will be clear in the next section, women's education and training directly

determined their economic and social position in society.

WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE

When one looks at the position of women in the work force before the Revolution, and then in the middle thirties only 20 years later, one has to be impressed. In the mid-thirties, women comprised approximately 45% of the total labor force, about 30% of the nonagricultural labor force, and over 50% of the agricultural labor force. But, these were no longer merely laboring in the sweatshops of textile or tobacco factories or weeding the fields; these were skilled workers in all kinds of areas, including "men's" fields, such as heavy industry or machine driving, which were previously denied to them. They were doctors, professors, judges, scientists, writers, artists, managers, civil servants, teachers, engineers, agricultural experts, technicians, and even pilots. One of the most famous women of this period was the pilot, Polina Osipenko, who broke Amelia Earhart's record for long-distance flight. About the only place women absolutely were not, was in the military. Women could attend the military academies, but could not serve in the military. Another place they were rarely seen was as chauffeurs: train, bus, truck and taxi drivers. There was an irrational prejudice against women and machines! The most glaring place where they were absent was as the "big boss." Still their distribution among various fields was far more impressive than the situation of their sisters in the U.S. or in the most advanced European countries at the time.

Kingsbury gives a no-doubt idealized portrait of the young woman newly entering the work force, but it probably does convey something of the enthusiasm of the times engendered by propaganda about the "new revolution" -- the industrial revolution:

The wives and daughters of the workers have come also to take their places at the machines.... She flings herself into the shock brigades in every factory, pours life and energy into every club.... She walks with an erect carriage and a vigor that at times come close to a swagger. She laughs with a ringing note that fills silent hallways and shakes cobwebs from dusty corners. Her red kerchief tied closely about her head lends sparkle to every gathering. If she has fears or doubts, she gives no sign; the new life and new hopes engendered by the Revolution belong to her; modern Russian youth is epitomized in her. To the age-old feminine desire for life and love, she has added a new one, which she calls "responsible work"... she sees herself as an active participant in building a new world. She shows no intention of returning to the old way.⁹⁶

According to Halle, women proved to be the "pillars of the first 5-year plan," the majority (60%) of brigade Stakhanovites ("storm or shock workers"). They were praised because they "do not drink, shirk work, swindle, and are more capable of enthusiasm than men and know how to handle machines with care!"⁹⁷

In 1931, a poll of young girls set forth their ambitions. Here, in order of preference, is how they visualized their future careers: civil engineering, construction of roads and bridges, sinking mines, mechanical engineering, architecture, agricultural sciences, chemistry, hydraulic engineering.⁹⁸ But let us look more closely at some of the tables in Appendix B to evaluate how realistic these girls' dreams were. A word about Soviet statistics, here. They are very frustrating because they do not measure precisely the same data from study to study or year to year. Moreover, the government constantly reclassified occupations into different categories and renamed them. Still, the future pattern of Soviet women workers can be ascertained.

WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRIAL WORK FORCE

The first thing one notices when examining the labor statistics from the 1930s is the influx of women into "non-traditional" jobs, such as heavy industry, building, transport, mining, metal and machine, and timber (Tables 9 and 10). The second thing of note is their representation in highly skilled industries (Table 11). But let us look closer at what their actual jobs were in all these industries. In non-traditional industries, their representation was still low in construction and transport (denied to them before the Revolution). It was also quite low in anything having to do with machine construction or electrical. As far as engineers or technicians in, e.g., heavy metal or chemical (again, some of the most highly paid industries), by 1934 the percentage of women was still very low. Where one found them in heavy industry was at the lowest level, as laboratory workers (53% to 75%). Their numbers were highest in light-industry, as they always had been: rubber, ceramics, printing, leather, lumber, bread baking. All these were occupations in which women had been sizably represented before the Revolution.

In most all industries, women represented from 50% to 75% of the unskilled workers (Table 8). Much manual or unskilled labor by women was contained in the service industries. They continued to be the waitresses, the cooks in public canteens, the laundry workers, the hotel maids, the mail carriers, the trolley ticket-takers, the attendants in public buildings, the nursemaids and nannies. A curious fact is that no statistics can be found that represent janitorial or maintenance work. The brigade of kerchiefed, elderly women wielding brooms, buckets and shovels is still today one of the most striking images one carries away from the [former] Soviet Union. Almost exclusively, women scoured the buildings, swept the streets, tended the gardens and parks, collected the garbage, and cleared the snow from the railroad tracks. So, in fact, the unac-

knowledged (or, rather, hidden under "service industry") occupation of "charwoman" represents a vast amount of manual labor performed by women.

In highly skilled industries, women were mostly to be found in light industry and food preparation, precisely where wages were lowest.⁹⁹ They predominated in textiles, paper (printing), and ceramics, occupations which required fine hand-work such as drilling, polishing, grinding, typesetting, sewing, finishing, hand-painting, pattern cutting, etc. They were only very slightly represented in heavy industry, automobile, electrical, urban transportation, machine construction, and metalwork. These occupations eventually became known as "men's occupations."

WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL AND SEMI-PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

The advancement of women into professional and semi-professional fields is also impressive, again especially when compared to other countries at this time. Table 13 shows that by 1939, 34% of women were employed in "mental" or specialized occupations. What is immediately striking is that in 1926 very few women were employed in significant numbers in **any** of these occupations except medicine, dentistry and education, and a lesser number in sales personnel. The only positions of authority women held in 1926 were as heads of primary schools (in which most teachers were women), and a few as heads of public health institutions (women doctors were 40% of the total).

But let us look more closely at their representation in the thirties. Professional and semi-professional jobs women held were as doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, midwives, teachers, employees in youth facilities -- still health and education -- and in the new fields of communications and culture: as writers and editors, librarians, workers in cultural and recreational institu-

tions, proofreaders, designers, draftsmen and artists, telegraph and telephone operators. Women also were sizably represented as hairdressers, sales personnel, and managers of public feeding facilities. They clearly predominated as office personnel, from clerks to secretaries. The largest new semi-professional field for women was laboratory technician (79%). Technicians (and draftsmen) were the only positions in science, engineering and industry where women were sizably represented, and these were the lowest rung, lowest paid positions which usually required only *technicum* training.

Similarly, where one sees the largest numbers of professionals as administrators was as chief doctors and heads of public health institutions, as nursery directors, and as heads of various types of youth educational institutions, again in the fields known as "women's work" -- health and education. By 1931, there were still only 18 women managers of factories, and all these were all-women factories.¹⁰⁰ For propaganda purposes, the Soviets deliberately promoted Muslim women to these positions. Also it was necessary in the Muslim regions to segregate many factories, in order to allay men's fears about women leaving the house to work.

Let us examine the two professional fields where women predominated: education and health. In 1935, women were 90% of primary teachers, and 67% of high school teachers, but only 2% of professors in colleges or universities. They accounted for only 15% of professors, lecturers and assistants altogether.¹⁰¹ Although the overall percentage of women was much higher in education (except in Muslim areas), the typical pattern is apparent: women predominated at the lowest level of status and pay, were decently represented at the middle level of status and pay, and fell off sharply at the highest level of prestige and pay. Moreover, lower education remained notoriously underpaid and undervalued. Blekher compares the teacher's job to an "iceberg" where most of

the work was "invisible:" that is, considering preparation, grading, and counseling, a teacher with a 24 class-hour week really worked at the very least a 48 hour week.¹⁰² Dodge mentions that most lower-level teachers were forced to teach extra classes, give private tutoring, or take on secondary jobs to supplement their inadequate salaries.¹⁰³ When women did rise to the level of director of institutions, these were mainly primary schools.

If the western world knew anything about female employment in the Soviet Union, it had heard that a much larger percentage by far of the doctors were women than in other countries. This looked very impressive. The tradition of women in medicine actually goes back to the time of the czars. We have seen how the earliest women radicals defied parents and husbands to go abroad to get medical education. A women's medical college was eventually established in 1897, and by 1913, women were already 10% of all physicians.¹⁰⁴ In 1926, women were 40% of all doctors, by 1939, 61%. But women practiced (and still do) mainly in the fields of general medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics and women's health. In these areas, medicine was a low-paid, low prestige occupation. A physician usually made less than a skilled factory worker. Because of the shortage of doctors in many areas, it was not uncommon for women doctors to work a 9-10 hour day.

The attraction of women to medicine obviously had some connection with their long history as "healers" (midwives, "wise women") in Russia, but also with the fact that working hours could sometimes be adjusted to family schedules. This, however, worked to their disadvantage since the dependable flow of women into the field gave the government no necessity to raise salaries (which in fact happened at a later date when more men were actively recruited into the field). Women therefore viewed medicine not so much as a "career" but merely as a way of earning a living.¹⁰⁵ Women were rarely surgeons or professors in medical col-

leges, and never the heads of medical or research establishments, nor winners of the coveted Lenin Prizes for scientific achievement. [Note that in 1936 women received only 10% of the doctoral degrees in medicine (see Table 4)].

WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNIONS

Membership of women in the trade unions did not increase appreciably in the period we have looked at. There is evidence that the trade unions had to be continually pushed by the Party and by *Zhenotdel* to incorporate women, and we have seen that they gave the *delegatki* a hard time. In 1920, women comprised 39% of all trade union members.¹⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, during NEP this percentage decreased to 25%, but had only risen to 30% by 1932.¹⁰⁷ In the lower branches of trade unionism, where positions were volunteer and unpaid, women were moderately active (20%), but in higher trade union administration, the numbers notably declined (13%).¹⁰⁸ By 1932, there were only seven female trade union district heads and, as might be expected, they were all in "women's occupations." Women served as top executives only in district Sewing Trades and Textile Trade Unions.¹⁰⁹ On the lowest level of the factory committees (again, volunteer labor) women comprised 20% of the positions, but were mainly represented in the culture/education and social life/welfare divisions. It was an expressed goal of the Party that women be appointed as labor inspectors to oversee the conditions of working women and children. But women were highly represented only in the sanitary or medical inspector group, since most physicians were women.¹¹⁰ A woman trade unionist of the time expressed the situation thus: "Women do the dirty work; men preside over the meetings."¹¹¹ Executives in state enterprises were commonly drawn from trade union executives who were, in turn, usually Party members. As we shall see later, this had direct bearing on the lack of women's

political influence.

The trade unions sponsored workers' clubs or circles to raise the cultural level of their members. Women's participation in these activities actually fell from 1926 to 1932. It is interesting to note that in 1926, women had high attendance in sewing, tailoring, cultural and educational circles, but much lower attendance in Marxist-Leninist study, anti-religious classes and labor problems. By 1932 there was a more even distribution of interests (see Tables 19 and 20). Factories devoted wall newspaper sections to women's concerns, and special evening attractions were presented which offered free childcare to lure them.¹¹² But most probably, women increasingly did not have the time or energy to attend these after-hours activities (see Time Study, Table 27).

SUMMARY

Despite dramatic advances both in the depth and the scope of penetration into all branches of the economy, the hard facts are that women continued to perform most of the unskilled and service jobs in industry, jobs with no prestige, low remuneration, and no chance for advancement. Skilled women workers assumed the lowest level positions. Women's rise in management mainly halted at the middle level, and was confined to fields of traditional "women's work." Moreover, women were forced to retire from the work force five years earlier than men.

Another way of looking at this is that the fields where women's labor predominated at all levels, whether in the manufacture of consumer goods or in the delivery of services (including culture, education and medicine), were rather disparagingly termed in the literature of the day "non-productive" fields -- as if only the manufacture of heavy metal objects or the creation of massive structures was "productive" for the human race! Here is the place to discuss the very impor-

tant matter of wage differentials or "tariff divisions." There were eight to 16 categories of wage differentials in both manual and technical/administrative work. These wage differentials were set on the basis of the skill required and the dangerousness of the job, and on the importance of the work to the economy. Therefore, all jobs in heavy or expanding industries were rated much higher than jobs in "non-productive" industries. In addition, bonuses were given for both productive output and work done in less time. Therefore, women were at a distinct economic disadvantage in several ways: they tended to congregate in the "non-productive" industries; having been in the work force a shorter time and having acquired less training and education than men, they assumed the lower skill levels in all industries; they were barred by labor law from many "dangerous" occupations; and given their domestic responsibilities, they had less opportunity and energy for overtime work -- thus a lower output. In addition, administrators and high officials (almost exclusively men) were awarded various bonuses, as well as many perquisites which significantly increased their material well-being.¹¹³ Wage differentials were established in 1918, but the original Bolshevik conception was that the differential disparity should continually decrease, as the transition to socialism gradually equalized all labor and reduced the distinctions between physical and mental work. Rather, as the betrayal of socialist ideals progressed and class differentiation became crystalized, these wage differentials continued to increase.

Another phenomenon was clearly apparent by the middle 1930s: the continuation of the *NEPmansha*. A considerable parasitical section of wives of officials, managers, engineers and high-level technicians did not have to and did not work. This was obviously such an embarrassment that *Pravda* devoted much space imploring them to become "activist wives," to organize themselves into "social work brigades," to become

"watch-dogs" to make sure quality work took place in children's, health and cultural organizations. It even suggested they "raise chickens!" There is no more ironic sign of the reactionary turn and class stratification that had evolved than "Comrade Stalin's slogan" that this group of privileged women were responsible for "civilization in everyday life [and] the care of men."¹¹⁴

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

By 1933, Soviet agriculture consisted of 10.7% state farms, 73.8% collective farms, and 15.5% individual farms.¹¹⁵ Collectivization promised to bring great gains for the peasant woman. In many ways it did. Now she was a wage earner. Now she could escape an oppressive family situation, knowing that her ex-mate's wages could be garnished for child support or alimony. Now she was guaranteed some maternity and childcare benefits. But even after collectivization had been a reality for several years, women's options remained very limited. The two areas in which women clearly predominated were precisely in those occupations which had traditionally been termed "women's work:" livestock and fieldwork. They tended cattle and milked the cows, and performed the manual labor in intensive, unmechanized crops such as flax, sugar beets, cotton, rice or fruit, or in other fieldhand work, such as gleaning grain, bundling hay, hand-hoeing, etc. The main positions of authority women held also had to do with livestock and dairy, or as team (link) leaders in the fields, or with social work (clubs). Purely physical (fieldhand) labor by women actually rose during collectivization, from 50% in 1926, to 58% in 1939.¹¹⁶ Manual labor performed by women rose to two-thirds of the total by 1940.¹¹⁷ What childcare facilities there were tended to be mainly seasonal and linked to the more prosperous farms. There was, therefore, a disproportionate percentage of older women doing this work (see Appendix D).

Let us acknowledge that during this period, agriculture in general was exploited to feed the urban workers and to provide a pool of surplus labor for the factories. But, the exploitation of women was intense. Let us take the dairy workers as an example. Fully 100% of milkmaids were women: "A woman is not a woman without her cow!" Although more highly paid than field work, this was particularly debilitating work and had the highest turnover of all jobs. Cows were hand-milked three times a day, so the workday could extend from 3 AM to 10 PM, with a couple two to three hour breaks for women to run home and work their garden plots, tend the family livestock, and look after the house and children. As one milkmaid complained: "Women do not, in fact, feel free from their work at any time of the day or night."¹¹⁸ The milkmaid not only milked the cows; she ground the feed, cleaned the barns, hauled the water, and cared for the new-born calves. To water a single cow, she had to haul 80 to 100 pails of water, and she was responsible for 10-18 cows. It took 50,000 squeezes of a cow's udder a day to complete her work, and her hands were subject to crippling arthritis, boils and abscesses, not to mention the risk of infectious cattle diseases.¹¹⁹ She rarely had a holiday or a vacation. One looks in vain for the labor legislation which protected industrial women. Moreover, as mechanized milking began to be introduced, men tended to assume these positions!

There are several factors which accounted for the position of women in agriculture. First and foremost was the prejudice of the male peasantry and the traditional division of labor. In this context, let us debunk the myth of the woman tractor driver. Positions in the MTS (Machine Tractor Station) were the elite jobs, the best paid, the most prestigious, and the basis of Soviet hopes for a rosy agricultural future. Table 12 reveals that from 91.8% to 99.6% of all positions in the MTS were held by men. However, Soviet propaganda glamorized the female tractor driver as the

symbol of "the new woman." There were lots of feature articles and pictures in magazines and newspapers showing a smiling and triumphant Pasha on her tractor. A Central Committee study even found that women tractor drivers made better drivers than men since they were more disciplined, careful and worked more land. Still, their percentage in 1936 was only 4%.

Manning describes the incredibly difficult life of these pioneers. Most were young, single women because this job required long stretches of time away from home in the fields, so that few women with children could apply. The field conditions were very primitive and women lacked any semblance of privacy. Because they were stranded with men, they earned a promiscuous reputation. It was very hard work: long hours, hot sun, noxious fumes and choking dust from the fields. Manning gives many chilling anecdotes about the harassment these women received from coworkers, and how the MTS leaders resisted orders to attract or retain women drivers, sabotaged them with ancient tractors which constantly broke down, and refused to supply backup services.¹²⁰ Except for a surge during WWII, when women replaced men in all jobs on the farms, the percentage of women dealing with machines actually declined. By 1959 the percentage of women tractor drivers was way down, to 1.5% and still only 6.5% women operated farm machinery.¹²¹

Even when women were noted for being exceptional workers, the reward was often negative. They comprised fully 80% of the agricultural Stakhanovites, and received rewards and honors. But Manning describes many instances where female Stakhanovites were persecuted by male workers and collective farm officials as well, who not only were jealous but feared that their increased output of work would become a norm.¹²²

There were, of course, some women who actually headed collective farms (2.7%), but these were mainly dairy farms. Many of these women also received a lot of harassment. Particularly in

the Muslem areas, women administrators were threatened, beaten, and even murdered.¹²³ Manning states that while the government constantly urged the promotion of women into higher positions, resistance to women's advancement actually grew at lower levels of administration where traditional rural attitudes prevailed.¹²⁴

Another cause of women's inferior position was the Soviet system of "labor-days" (*trudodni*) which determined pay. Labor days were based on two criteria: the status (difficulty) of the position and productive output. Therefore, since women held mainly the unskilled or lesser-status jobs, they received less pay because they acquired fewer labor-days. Also, men occupied the better paying, year-round jobs, while women tended to do more seasonal labor, and in addition were almost totally responsible for the family plots and livestock which occupied a great amount of their time.¹²⁵ Therefore, although the ratio of males to females was almost 50/50 on the farms, males received two-thirds of the labor days in 1937.¹²⁶

SUMMARY

The agricultural pattern that emerges is much more conservative than the urban industrial pattern. By far, the largest percentage of rural women continued to do the jobs they had always done: caring for the animals, performing manual labor in the fields, and maintaining the family garden plots which produced not only food for the family, but essential supplementary income. Krushchev admitted in the 1950s that fully 97% of women collective farmers were engaged in physical labor: "It turns out that it is the men who do the administering and the women who do the work."¹²⁷ Moreover, rural women had even less leisure and even more domestic responsibility than urban women (see Rural Time Budget, Table 28).

WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE

"We are not utopians," affirmed Lenin. "We know that an unskilled laborer or a cook cannot immediately get on with the job of state administration."¹²⁸ "[But] our task is to make politics available to every working woman."¹²⁹ He elaborated:

The gist of Bolshevism and the Russian October Revolution is getting into politics the very people who were most oppressed under capitalism... But you cannot draw the masses into politics without drawing the women into politics as well.¹³⁰

Lenin constantly urged that "working women must take a bigger part in the elections:"

We want the working woman to be the equal of the working man not only before the law but in actual fact. For this working women must take an increasing part in the administration of socialized enterprises and in the administration of the state. Elect more working women to the Soviet, both Communist women and non-party women.¹³¹

Early on, *Zhenotdel* had sent women delegates directly into executive positions in departments and institutions for two months. The aim was to infuse life into state apparatuses and free them from bureaucratic elements, but also to train state executives from among women. This scheme appears to have been abandoned as unrealistic after one year.¹³² The NEP years had certainly been a setback for women in all areas, including their advancement in public life. In 1928, at the onset of industrialization, the Party Central Committee ordered the promotion of women to executive and management posts, but in 1930 it had to pass a special resolution recording extreme indecisiveness by local party bodies

regarding the promotion of women to leading posts involving independent authority, and in some cases absolutely open bigotry on the part of certain party organizations and members.¹³³

WOMEN IN THE CPSU

In 1919, women's membership in the Party was extremely low, 7.8%. Recognizing this, in 1920 *Zhenotdel* convinced the Party to allocate 10% of all places in institutions which taught Party courses to women *delegatki*. A special section of Sverdlov University (the main Party school) was created especially for women.¹³⁴ Despite these efforts, and constant Party directives to recruit women, female Party membership crept up at an agonizingly slow rate. By 1936 it was still only 17%, and continued to hover around a fifth of the total. Membership was considerably higher among urban women, who comprised 85% of all women members¹³⁵ (see Appendix E).

Before and right after the October Revolution, three women had served on the Central Committee of the Party. Two were candidate members and Kollontai was briefly a full member until 1918. She was replaced by Stasova, who served until 1919. From 1924 to 1939, there were only four women members on the Central Committee, two *Zhenotdel* leaders, Nikolaeva and Artiukhina, Krupskaya and one woman worker. Artiukhina served on the Orgburo and as a candidate Secretary, as a Stalin appointee. Before 1956, no women ever sat on the *Politburo* or *Presidium*.¹³⁶

At lower Party levels, the situation was slightly better. By the 1930s, women held about one-sixth of the administrative posts. However, the number of women delegates to Party Congresses never reached above 10%. In the 30s, there was even a slight decline in the number of women in responsible Party posts.¹³⁷

In the *Komsomol*, the Party organization for youth ages up to 25, young women comprised

about one-fifth of the total membership by 1928.¹³⁸ By 1933, they comprised almost one-third. Later, women comprised more than half of the members, but only 5% of women went on to become Party members.¹³⁹ *Zhenotdel* continually urged the *Komsomol* to promote women to the Party, but it was not felt that a *Zhenotdel* section of the *Komsomol* was necessary. It probably was needed as there is much evidence that the young men tried to keep leadership of the organization in their own hands.¹⁴⁰ Few females held high positions in the organization, although more did in the local units. However, they appeared to be mainly in charge of "domestic science" concerns. There was a noticeable decline in women's participation after marriage and motherhood. In the Red Pioneers, the children's organization, the ratio of boys to girls remained approximately equal.¹⁴¹

WOMEN IN THE GOVERNMENT (SOVIETS)

As Rigby rightly states, after the first revolutionary years, the soviets never played any considerable part in governmental policy formation. They mainly functioned to carry out Party directives. Still, the soviets were supposed to consist of the "best people."¹⁴² The situation of women in the soviets was somewhat better than in the Party. By 1936 on the local level, women comprised over a quarter of the members of village soviets and slightly less than one-third of urban soviet members (see Appendix F). In 1932 there were more than 5,000 chairwomen in town and village soviets, and ten times that figure working in some kind of administrative position in the soviets, but these were mainly the low-level positions.¹⁴³ Most soviet officials were also Party members, and as we have seen, women had a low representation in the Party. On the higher level, a few women did serve as Commissars (ministers) in the Central Union Republics. Again, Muslem women seemed to have been especially promoted

into these jobs, despite the harassment. But no woman (after Kollontai) ever occupied an All-Union post of Cabinet Minister (until 1956), and no woman ever served as President or Premier, though one woman did serve as a Deputy Chairman.¹⁴⁴

DISCUSSION

During the Revolutionary years, 1917-23, leading Bolshevik women had held both prestigious Party and governmental posts, but Stites maintains that after 1923-25, no Bolshevik women even came close to the seats of real power. Elena Stasova had served as Secretary of the Party during and immediately after the Revolution (preceding and replacing Sverdlov). After 1920, she disappeared from the scene. In addition to founding *Zhenotdel*, Inessa Armand had held important posts in the highest Party, soviet and economic agencies of the Moscow Province and had been Director of the Comintern's Women's Section. She died in 1920. Angelica Balabanova served as Foreign Minister to the Ukraine and as Secretary of the Comintern. In 1921 she resigned her positions. Nadezhda Krupskaya had been, in effect, the director of propaganda during the formation of the Party, and after the Revolution, Head of Adult Education. After 1925, while she retained her position, she was effectively silenced by Stalin. In addition to her post as Commissar of Social Welfare, Kollontai was Commissar for Propaganda for the Red Army in the Ukraine, and a Director of *Zhenotdel*. She was forced out of politics in 1922, due to her role in the Workers' Opposition (see Terms) and remanded to diplomatic posts abroad. She was eventually appointed by Stalin as ambassador to Sweden with much fanfare as the first Soviet women ambassador (and the only one ever), but this was mainly to remove her from public influence.¹⁴⁵ As the preceding articles discussed, Kollontai's ideas were regarded as a serious threat to the reactionary social policies of

state capitalism.

What reasons can be given for women's low level of political involvement? Harasymiu names a couple of factors: new Party members usually came from *Komsomol* activists, most of whom were men; and as long as personnel managers were men, women suffered underrepresentation.¹⁴⁶ Browning adds other reasons: obviously, the demands of children and domestic duties which precluded women from going after these demanding positions; the paternal attitude toward women of many Central Committee members; and the lower consciousness of women. That is, many women were convinced that the main acts of equality were introduced in 1917 -- by men -- and that men supported their equality; therefore, it was not necessary to have women in positions of political power.¹⁴⁷ To this must be added a fourth reason: the Party simply ceased to make the recruitment and advancement of women a priority.

CONCLUSIONS

Where is the emancipation of women by the mid-thirties? Women were stuck halfway and pretty much left on their own. Just as the earlier socialist ideals had been abandoned, the emancipation of women had been abandoned, their liberation sacrificed to the goals of production and reproduction, to the building of state capitalism. If one looks at their position before the Revolution, as slaves, servants and children, they had come an incredibly long way. But the point is to compare their real position in society with the Bolshevik goals for women. Of these goals: to give women legal equality, to educate them, to engage them in production, to engage them in political life, and to free them from domestic slavery, only the first three were accomplished. Legal equality was established very early and easily. The education of women was extremely successful. In fact, many were over-educated or over-trained for the situ-

ations in which they ultimately found themselves. They had made great advances in employment opportunities, but most were only allowed to rise in their fields so high. Most unskilled and physical labor continued to be performed by women. The majority of women continued to do the same work they had always done, only in expanded fields. They therefore never achieved economic equality with men. Their absence from higher levels of political life meant that they never had a real voice in the policies of the country. They were often the lower functionaries, but not the decision-makers.

In our opinion (and in Lenin's), the emancipation of women is inseparable from the building of socialism. The goal of socialism is to create a society of free and equal people, not a society where over half the population are second-class citizens. But it is not that simple. The wives and daughters of the Soviet male *apparatchiki* became as privileged as the former ladies of the bourgeoisie. They shopped in special stores with special prices, had access to western luxury items, had vacation houses and travel privileges, and exploited the labor of other women as domestic help. The triumph of state capitalism and the re-establishment of a new bourgeois class society meant that the proletarian movement and its goals had been given up and, therefore, the true emancipation of women had been given up.

If there is one recurrent theme throughout these articles, it is the supreme importance of the Bolshevik goal to free women from domestic slavery. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, this goal was totally abandoned. The image of the "new Soviet woman" was the working mother, and women tried to live up to this image under impossible conditions. The goal of communal living and

many public services such as laundries, etc., were either given up or were of such inferior quality that women chose not to use them. The nuclear family, with all its responsibilities, was sanctioned as the norm, while the state abandoned its responsibilities to assume care for its dependent members, except when it had no choice. The crowded housing situation was never really improved, and much of it remained without bathrooms, hot water or even running water. Labor-saving appliances remained a low priority, and shortages of most consumer items involved tedious searching and long queues. So women were stuck with what is popularly called the "double shift," the "double burden," or the "second job." They had gained a new sense of their own potential, and they had demonstrated the liberating effect of social commitment. So it is doubly cruel that they were thwarted in their complete emancipation.

As the time study tables in Appendix G reveal, women continued to work more, sleep less, and have far less time to educate themselves culturally or politically, much less engage in political activities. Blekher states that these time studies were actually much too conservative, and that her studies reveal that the work load of women was (and is) **twice** that of men, not counting work put in on motherhood!¹⁴⁸ As Lenin warned:

You all know that even with the fullest equality, women are still in an actual position of inferiority because of the housework thrust upon them.¹⁴⁹

No cook can *ever* learn to run the state if she is home cooking!

NOTES

1. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution," p. 48.
2. Engels, p. 82.
3. Lenin, "On International Working Women's Day," p. 81.
4. Krupskaya, Preface, in Lenin, *The Emancipation of Women*, p. 7.
5. Lenin, "Tasks of the Working Women's Movement in Russia," p. 69.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Mandel, pp. 44, 46.
8. Glickman, p. 64.
9. In 1914, women earned an average of 47% of men's wages, although this varied greatly from industry to industry, e.g., in textiles they earned 72% of men's wages (Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 33).
10. See Kollontai, "Towards a History of the Working Women's Movement in Russia," *Selected Writings*, pp. 39-57.
11. Bobroff, p. 541.
12. Glickman, pp. 81-82.
13. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, p. 244.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
16. Porter, p. 97.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
18. Bobroff, p. 551.
19. Glickman, p. 70.
20. Bobroff, p. 545.
21. Kollontai, "The Social Basis of the Woman Question," *Selected Works*, p. 61.
22. Bobroff, p. 567.
23. Mandel, p. 38.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 38. Supposedly, the original parade was to commemorate an 1875 march and demonstration by female garment and textile workers.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
28. Bobroff, p. 549.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 561.
30. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, p. 91.
31. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, p. 302.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 306.
33. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, p. 93.
34. Glickman, p. 69.
35. Price, pp. 26-34.
36. Glickman, p. 73.
37. Price, pp. 36-38.
38. Kollontai, *Women Workers Struggle for Their Rights*, p. 16.
39. Draft Program of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, *The Emancipation of Women*, pp. 17-19.
40. Materials Relating to the Revision of the Party Program, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-52.
41. Smith, p. 15.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
43. Kollontai, "The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia," *Selected Articles and Speeches*, p. 179.
44. Goldman, p. 110.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Dewar, p. 79.
47. Smith, p. 22.
48. Mandel, p. 112.
49. Smith, p. 23.
50. Mandel, p. 122.
51. Price, p. 73.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Smith, p. 14.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 58. There actually was a very complicated sliding scale which determined the rate of maternity pay. See Dodge, *Women in the Soviet Economy*, p. 69.
58. Mandel, p. 123.
59. Kingsbury and Fairchild, pp. 84-85.
60. Farnsworth, *Aleksandra Kollontai*, p. 339.
61. Goldman, p. 110.
62. Smith, p. 21.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
64. Goldman, pp. 111-112.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
69. Smith, p. 25.
70. Mandel, p. 68.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Goldman, p. 313.
73. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, p. 409.
74. Goldman, p. 313.
75. Dodge, *Women in the Soviet Economy*, p. 77. Unless indicated otherwise, all Dodge citations are from this work.
76. Stites, *op. cit.*, pp. 409-410.
77. Goldman, p. 316.
78. *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.
79. Stites, *op. cit.*, p. 413.
80. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, pp. 291-92.
81. Stites, *op. cit.*, p. 397.
82. Dodge, p. 103.
83. Halle, *Women of the Soviet East*, p. 215.
84. Glickman, p. 73.
85. Dodge, p. 141.
86. Smith, p. 61.
87. Dodge, p. 146.
88. Smith, p. 81.
89. Dodge, p. 111. Women actually comprised 25% of university students before the Revolution.
90. Sacks, p. 95.
91. Dodge, pp. 112, 236.
92. See Halle, *Women of the Soviet East*, pp. 219-243.
93. Smith, p. 28.
94. Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 189.
95. Dodge, p. 109.
96. Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 40.
97. Halle, *op. cit.*, pp. 323-324.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 323
99. Dodge, p. 214.
100. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, p. 320.
101. Blekher, p. 13.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
103. Dodge, p. 135.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
105. Dodge, "Women in the Professions," p. 223.
106. Price, p. 72.
107. Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 89.
108. Halle, *op. cit.*, p. 318.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
110. Price, p. 86.
111. Blekher, p. 121.
112. Smith, p. 20.
113. See Kingsbury and Fairchild, "Incentives and Rewards," pp. 46-54.
114. See Schlesinger, "New Trends After the Stabilization of Soviet Society," *Changing Attitudes*, pp. 235-250.
115. Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 126.
116. Dodge and Feshback, p. 240.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
118. Allott, p. 181.
119. Manning, pp. 217-218.
120. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.
121. Dunn, p. 176.
122. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.
123. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
127. Dodge, p. 168.
128. Lenin, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?", p. 55.
129. Lenin, "Tasks of the Working Women's

- Movement in the Soviet Republic," p. 70.
130. Lenin, "International Working Women's Day," p. 83.
131. Lenin, "To the Working Women," p. 79.
132. Kollontai, Introduction, *Women Workers Struggle For Thier Rights*, p. 165.
133. Mandel, p. 69.
134. Kollontai, "The Women Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia," *Selected Articles*, p. 175.
135. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, pp. 326, 413.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
137. *Ibid.*
138. Smith, p. 64.
139. Serebrennikov, p. 213.
140. Farnsworth, *Aleksandra Kollontai*, pp. 303-304.
141. Smith, pp. 64-65.
142. Rigby, pp. 469-470.
143. Halle, *Women in Soviet Russia*, p. 275.
144. Stites, *op. cit.*, p. 327.
145. *Ibid.*
146. Harasymiu, p. 142.
147. Browning, pp. 209-210
148. Blekher, p. 123.
149. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Working Women's Movement in the Soviet Republic," p. 89.

APPENDIX A: THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

Table 1. % Literacy of Population, ages 9-49, 1897-1959

Census year	Total	Males	Females
Urban and Rural			
1897	28.4	40.3	16.6
1926*	56.6	71.5	42.7
1939	87.4	93.5	81.6
1959	98.5	99.3	97.8
Urban			
1897	57.0	66.1	45.7
1926*	80.9	88.0	73.9
1939	93.8	97.1	90.7
1959	98.7	99.5	98.1
Rural			
1827	23.8	35.5	12.5
1926*	50.6	67.3	35.4
1939	84.0	91.6	76.8
1959	98.2	99.1	97.5

* Excludes Baltic States, western Ukraine and Belorussia.

Source: Norton T. Dodge, *Women in the Soviet Economy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 141.

Table 2. % Women In Educational Institutions, 1927-8, 1935-6

Type of Institution	1927-8	1935-6
Primary and Secondary	39.6	46.9
Workers High Schools	15.6	36.6
Technical Colleges	37.6	44.1
Universities	28.1	38.0

Source: Rudolf Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes: The Family in the USSR, Vol. I* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), p. 285.

Table 3. % Women In Higher Educational Institutions, 1926, 1936

Field	1926	1936
All Fields	30.9	41.0
Engineering-Industrial	7.2	26.6
Agricultural	16.3	29.3
Socio-Economic	16.5	39.7
Medicine	52.0	68.8
Educational-Cultural	48.0	47.4

Source: Dodge, p. 112.

Table 4. % Women In Candidate (Ph.D.) and Doctoral (Post-doctoral) Degrees in 1936

Field	Candidate	Doctoral
Pure Science	23.8	15.1
Physics, mathematics	6.1	7.7
Chemistry	25.9	8.3
Biology	36.8	23.3
Geology	22.7	9.1
Applied Science	19.0	8.4
Technology	4.4	0.0
Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine	19.5	0.0
Medicine	28.6	10.7
Total	20.4	9.6
Nonscientific fields (Humanities)	21.0	8.3
Total, all fields	20.5	9.6

Source: Dodge, pp. 137-138.

WORKERS' EDUCATION

Table 5. % Women in *Rabfacs* and Workers' "Universities," 1923 - 1934

Year	<i>Rabfacs</i>		Workers' "Universities"
	RSFSR	USSR	USSR
1923-24	20	NA*	NA
1924-25	18	NA	NA
1925-26	15	NA	NA
1926-27	14	NA	NA
1927-28	16.1	15.6	12.1
1928-29	16.9	16.1	13
1929-30	NA	18.6	17
1930-31	NA	24.8	25
1932	NA	25.7	40
1933	NA	34	ND**
1934	NA	36.9	ND

NA* = Not applicable. ND** = No data given.

Source: Susan Kingsbury and Mildred Fairchild, *Factory, Family and Woman* (NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935), pp. 189-181.

Table 6. % Women by Specialty in *Rabfacs*, 1927, 1936

Type	1927	1936
All Fields	37.6	46.7
Industrial	9.5	26.8
Agricultural	15.4	29.3
Socio-economic	36.3	51.1
Health	89.3	79.9
Education	53.5	55.9

Source: Dodge, p. 110.

Table 7. % Women Apprentices in Large-Scale Industry in 1931

Industry	% Women
Total	36.6
Electrical stations	21.0
Fuel	16.8
Ore mining	16.7
Working of minerals	20.0
Metal industries	25.4
Mineral manufactures	31.6
Chemical industries	44.1
Wood-working	28.7
Paper	42.7
Leather and furs	37.8
Animal products	58.8
Textiles	62.2
Food industries	31.0
Needle and toilet trades	78.0
Printing	51.5
Science and art	30.3
Public utilities	24.2

Source: Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 64.

APPENDIX B: WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE

INDUSTRY

Table 8. % Unskilled and Skilled Women Workers in Industry, 1927, 1934

Branch of Industry	Unskilled Workers		Skilled Workers
	1927	1934	1934
Agricultural machinery construction	6.7	55.9	27.5
Locomotive/railway car construction	13.0	62.9	20.4
Electrotechnical industry	22.5	42.3	38.6
Construction of production machinery and other machinery	16.7	56.1	27.0
Auto and tractor industry	ND*	60.6	30.4
Metalware industry	ND	39.0	42.1
Ferrous metallurgy			
blast-furnace plant	ND	50.3	ND
open-hearth plant	ND	61.5	ND
auxiliary plants	ND	67.1	ND
Electrical power stations	16.2	55.9	21.9
Rubber industry	ND	69.9	56.9
Coal-tar chemical industry	ND	65.6	22.9
Porcelain-ceramics industry	ND	54.1	52.6
Printing trade	ND	59.0	57.6
Leather and fur industry	8.1	64.4	45.8
Lumber and plywood industry	32.2	70.3	43.7
Bread baking	ND	75.1	48.4

ND* = No data given.

Source: Susan Blekher, *The Soviet Woman* (NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1979), p. 14.

Table 9. % Women in Labor Force (non-traditional jobs), 1928, 1936

Occupation	1928	1936
Whole of National Economy	27.2	33.4
Heavy Industry	27.9	38.3
Building Trades	7.0	19.7
Transport	8.0	16.6

Source: Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 286.

Table 10. % Women in Heavy Industry before Revolution and in 1935

Occupation	1913	1935
Coal mining	3.6	24.0
Metal and machine plants	4.2	25.8
Timber	9.9	39.7

Source: Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, pp. 286-287.

Table 11. % Women in Highly Skilled Industries, 1927, 1934

Occupation	1927	1934
Agricultural machinery	.08	13.9
Engine-fitters	1.6	25.5
Drilling machines	10.2	73.6
Milling machine operators	3.8	37.8
Polishers	8.1	39.8
Leather and Fur		
Sorters	0.7	39.8
Dipping	1.2	32.2
Hide-scraping	6.3	30.2
Wool-gatherers	1.1	39.1
China and Porcelain		
Potters	ND*	44.9
Finishers	ND	73.4
Hand-painters	ND	74.5
Printing		
Compositors	ND	43.7
Type personnel	ND	52.4
Typesetters	ND	75.9
Readers	ND	63.6
Footwear and Sewing		
Cutters	ND	56.3
Pattern-workers	ND	70.5
Seaming machine operators	ND	91.6
Paper		
Rollers	ND	43.3
Bleaching	ND	51.4
Grinding	ND	80.7

ND* = No data given. Source: Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 288.

Table 12. % Women Among Engineers and Technicians in Heavy Metal and Chemical Industries, 1925, 1934

Occupation	1925	1934
Heavy Metal		
Engineers and managers	0.0	4.3
Technicians	0.5	12.4
Laboratory workers	14.0	53.3
Chemical		
Engineers	6.8	14.2
Managers	0.5	3.9
Laboratory workers	22.5	74.9

Source: Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 289.

OTHER

Table 13. % Women in "Mental" Occupations (professional/semi-professional), 1926, 1939

Occupation	1926	1939
Total employed in "mental" work	26	34
Administrative Heads	6	12
Heads of Party, state, district, city, trade union, co-ops, Komsomol orgs.	-*	15
Heads of primary Party, Komsomol, trade unions and other orgs.	-	13
Chairmen and secretaries of executive committees of rural and village soviets	-	7
Heads of establishments (industrial, construction, forestry, transport, communications, etc.)	1	6
Directors of establishments	-	7
Shop, section, workshop, division chiefs	-	9
Engineering-technical personnel	-	22
Engineers	2	13
Builders, draftsmen	-	46
Foremen	-	9
Technicians	-	21
Laboratory personnel	-	79
Film mechanics	-	5
Coal mining foremen	-	2
Railroad technical personnel	-	11
Agricultural	-	14
Agronomists, zootechnicians	-	18
Veterinarians	-	16
Veterinary technicians, <i>feldshers</i> **	-	5
Foresters	-	7
Medical	58	81
Chief doctors, heads of public health inst.	31	39
Doctors	40	61
Dentists	79	72
Midwives, <i>feldshers</i> **	54	72
Pharmacists	-	93
Nurses	-	99
Nursery directors, training personnel	-	100
Scientific, teachers, training personnel	-	53
Higher educational institution teachers, heads of scientific research inst.	21	31
Heads and teachers in primary schools, secondary schools	63	55
Physical culture teachers	-	14
Children's homes, kindergarten heads, training personnel, boarding school personnel	-	93

Literary and Press	-	29
Writers, journalists, editors, proofreaders, designers	-	59
Cultural-enlightenment personnel	-	50
Library heads, librarians, directors of theaters, cultural and rest parks, museums, clubs	-	33
Art personnel	-	29
Artists, producers	-	42
Composers, conductors, musicians	-	14
Painters, sculptors	-	23
Juridical personnel	5	13
Judges, procurators	-	14
Lawyers, legal consultants	-	13
Communications personnel	-	68
Radio-telegraphers	-	26
Telegraphers	-	73
Telephone operators	-	95
Trade, public dining, procurement, supply and sales personnel	13	31
Sales personnel, heads of stores, pavilions, stalls, buffets	23	57
Planning, record-keeping personnel	-	40
Economists, planners, statisticians, bookkeepers, tally clerks, cashiers	-	65
Office personnel	-	77
Personnel of communal establishments and personal services	-	32
Barbers, manicurists	-	40
Agents and expeditors	-	13

* = less than a thousand women. ** *feldshers* = physicians' assistants, medics.

Source: Dodge, pp. 299-300.

Table 14. % Women Workers in Educational Institutions, 1927, 1935

Occupation	1927	1935
Primary and Secondary Schools		
Teachers (urban): Lower Form	81.3	90.2
Upper Form	43.6	59.8
Teachers (village): Lower Form	61.6	67.9
Upper Form	28.3	41.0
Higher Education		
Teaching assistants	ND*	22.0
Lecturers	ND	11.3
Professors	ND	2.9
Research Institutes		
Scientific workers and students	(22.8)**	29.1

ND* = No data given ** = 1929 Source: Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes* p. 294.

Table 15. % Women in Total Labor Force by Major Occupational Group, 1926, 1939

Occupational Group	1926	1939
Workers and employees	31.3	34.1
Non-agricultural	(31.0)	(35.4)
Agricultural	(33.3)	(27.9)
Co-op, handicraftsmen	NA*	22.7
Nonco-op, handicraftsmen	26.7	50.0
Collective farmers	NA	54.3
Private farmers**	49.9	65.1
"Bourgeoisie"	15.4	NA
Employed labor force	46.8	46.9
Unemployed	40.0	NA
Civilian labor force	46.7	46.9
Military	0.0	0.0
Total labor force	46.4	45.1
Nonagricultural labor force	28.1	31.2
Agricultural labor force	49.7	53.8

NA* = Not applicable. ** = individual farmers and subsidiary agriculture, i.e., kitchen gardens.
Source: Dodge, p. 44.

Table 16. Corresponding Wages of Men and Women Workers In (Selected Branches of) Industry, 1914-1930

Branches of Industry	% women's earnings compared to men's		
	1914	1924	1930
TOTAL AVERAGE FOR ALL INDUSTRY	47.4	64.6	67.4
Cotton textiles	72.1	65.6	76.7
Wool	72.1	77.6	79.2
Linen	64.8	67.5	67.3
Paper and printing	46.5	66.5	70.5
Wood working	44.3	61.8	60.1
Metal working	41.1	51.3	64.3
Animal products	58.2	72.9	78.7
Food	58.9	78.5	80.9
Chemicals	64.0	70.5	71.3

Source: Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 34.

APPENDIX C: WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNIONS

Table 17. % Women in Trade Unions, 1926, 1932

Occupation	1926	1932
Total Industrial	27.1	20.0
Miners	12.1	13.9
Metal workers	11.6	20.5
Chemical workers	30.4	29.7
Saw mill and wood workers	14.4	19.7
Paper workers	24.5	37.7
Printers	38.0	*
Textile workers	54.9	61.3
Needle workers	59.3	71.9
Leather workers	15.1	38.3
Sugar workers	18.1	19.5
Food workers	24.2	30.0
Total Transport	10.1	13.9
Railway transport	8.9	11.7
Water transport	6.4	11.9
Local transport	8.7	11.3
Post and telegraph	28.2	35.3
Construction workers	5.2	12.9
Total State Employees	38.3	46.2
Art	35.1	34.8
Medicine and Sanitation	63.4	70.0
Education	54.3	52.5
State and commercial	18.1	36.5
Public utilities	20.0	44.3
Domestic and restaurant	78.7	ND**
Agriculture, including State farms and machine-tractor-stations	15.9	22.5
GRAND TOTAL	25.3	29.7

*Subsumed under Paper. ND** = No data given, but probably more than 80%.
Source: Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 89.

Table 18. % Women In Trade Union Positions, 1924-1932

Position	1924	1926	1928	1930/31	1932
Total Executive Members	ND*	ND	ND	14.0	ND
Higher Administrative Organs	ND	6.4	ND	ND	13w**
Plenum	ND	ND	4.2	15.7	40.0
Praesidium	ND	ND	ND	40.0	40.0
Head of district trade unions (Textiles, Sewing)	ND	ND	ND	7w**	ND
All-Union Central Committees	ND	15.0	11.4	19.0	ND
Middle Level Organs					
Heads of Sub-district Unions (Textiles)	ND	ND	ND	21.0	ND
Local division central boards	ND	ND	19.6	21.1	ND
Paid union organizers	ND	12.6	ND	ND	ND
Lower Branch					
Local/branch committees	18.7	ND	ND	ND	ND
Factory committees	13.4	20.0	ND	ND	20.0
Labor protection	20.4	20.0+	ND	ND	ND
Cultural	8.8	ND	ND	ND	ND
Industrial/production	6.9	ND	ND	ND	ND

ND* = no data given. w** = number of women

Source: Data compiled from Smith, p. 19; Kingsbury and Fairchild, pp. 86, p. 318. [Trade union data is very incomplete and inexact, and only a rough idea of women's participation can be gleaned.]

Table 19. % Participation of Women in Trade Union Clubs in 1926

Activity	1926
All circles	33.0
Sewing, tailoring, etc.	94.8
Choral	57.3
Library	50.0
Literary	42.9
Dramatic	38.7
General education	35.8
Natural science	33.4
Physical culture	31.4
Production problems	30.6
Scientific organization of labor	30.4
Political (elementary)	29.5
Marxist	28.3
Leninist	28.2
Trade Union movement	27.0
Anti-religious	23.2
Chess	7.2

Source: Jessica Smith, *Women in Soviet Russia* (NY: Vanguard Press, 1928), pp. 19-20.

Table 20. % Participation of Women in Trade Union Clubs in 1932

Activity	1932
All circles	24.2
Social reconstruction	16.1
Political	
Party school	21.2
Trade Union activity	21.0
Current politics	21.0
Anti-religious	22.4
Assisting revolution abroad	26.5
Foreign language	22.1
Other	27.0
Artistic	
Agitators brigade	34.0
Dramatics	33.6
Living newspapers	36.5
Musical	12.2
Photography	13.2
Others	25.8
Others	
Physical culture	23.9
Military	18.7
Radio	13.8

Source: Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 281.

APPENDIX D: WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Table 21. Representation of Males & Females in Leading Posts in Agriculture in 1936.

Position in 1936	% Men	% Women
MTS (Machine Tractor Station) cadres		
MTS directors	99.6	0.4
Assistant MTS directors	91.8	8.2
Agronomists	90.3	9.7
Traveling mechanics	99.2	0.8
Combine drivers and helpers	93.7	6.3
Tractor brigade leaders/asst. leaders	99.3	0.7
Tractor drivers	96.0	4.0
Collective-farm cadres		
Collective-farm chairmen/asst. chairmen	97.3	2.7
Members of collective-farm boards	81.9	18.1
Chairmen of collective-farm revision commissions	84.9	15.1
Accountants, bookkeepers and assistants	95.5	4.5
Managers of livestock farms	83.9	16.1
Livestock brigade leaders	78.5	21.5
Cattle tenders	49.3	50.7
Stable hands	98.8	3.2
Field brigade leaders	97.3	2.7
Link leaders	33.2	66.8
Chauffeurs	99.3	0.7
Managers of clubs	89.4	62.4

Source: Roberta T. Manning, "Women in the Soviet Countryside on the Eve of World War II, 1935-1940," in Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola, eds., *Russian Peasant Women* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 213.

Table 22. % Women Collective-Farm Cadres in 1936.

Position	1936
Collective-farm chairmen	2.6
Assistant chairmen	(3.5)*
Heads of revision commissions	1.8
Members of revision commissions	15.1
Heads of livestock farms	16.1
Livestock brigade leaders	21.5
Zootechnicians	2.5
Agronomists	(3.5)*
Field brigade leaders	2.7
Bookkeepers/accountants	4.5
Link (team) leaders	66.8
Stablehands/horsetenders	3.2
Milkmaids	100.0

* = 1935. Source: Manning, p. 223.

APPENDIX E: WOMEN IN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT

Table 23. Representation of Women in the CPSU, 1922-1967

Year	% of Women Members
1922	7.8
1924	9.9
1927	12.1
1929	13.7
1932	15.9
1934	16.4
1937	14.8
1950	20.7
1967	20.9

Source: T.H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917-1967* (Princeton, 1968), p. 361.

Table 24. Women in Government, 1923, 1932

Year	Number of Women Village Delegates	% Executive Soviets	8.1	% County City Committees	%	Soviets	Number of Central Executive Committee Members Candidates
1923	95,000	9.9*	18.0	5	6		
1932	2,500,000	21.0	25.8	76	70		

* = 1926

Source: Ella Winter, *Red Virtue* (NY: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1933), p. 318.

APPENDIX F: WOMEN IN THE SOVIETS

Table 25. % Women in the Soviets, 1926-7, 1934

Role	1926-7	1934
Urban Soviets		
Members	18.2	30.4
Voted in elections	42.9	90.4
Village Soviets		
Members	9.9	26.2
Voted in elections	28.0	80.3

Source: Schlesinger, *Changing Attitudes*, p. 295.

Table 26. % Women in the Rural Soviets, 1926-1936

Year	Rural Soviet Chairmen	Rural Soviet Members
1926	0.6	9.9
1931	5.0	21.0
1934	7.7	26.3
1936	6.7	26.4

Source: Manning, p. 222.

APPENDIX G: TIME STUDIES

URBAN

Table 27. The Average Day of 841 Working Women and Men in the USSR in 1931

Occupation	HOURS AND MINUTES SPENT PER DAY						
	WOMEN			MEN			
	under 25 yrs.	25 to 35 yrs.	35 yrs. and over	under 25 yrs	25 to 35 yrs	35 yrs and over	
Productive work in industry	5	6	7	5	6	6	+
Domestic, travel and shopping	4	6	5	1	2	2	+
Domestic	3	4	4	0	2	2	+
Shopping and travel	1	2	1	1	1	1	+
Personal sanitation	1	0.30	0.36	1	1	1	-
Self-education	2	0.42	0.30	2	2	2	-
Political life	0.30	0.24	0.24	0.36	0.54	1	-
Rest & leisure	4	3	3	6	5	4	-
Sleep	7	7	7	8	7	8	-
TOTAL in the day hours & minutes	23.30	23.42	23.30	23.36	23.54	24.0	

+ = Women more than men

- = Men more than women

Source: Kingsbury and Fairchild, p. 249

RURAL

Table 28. Time Budgets of Collective Farm Workers, 1923, 1934.

Sex	1923 Summer	1923 Winter	1934 Summer	1934 Winter
Males				
Total Work	58	21	49	40
Work & time connected with private sub. agric.	52	12	48	38
Housework	6	9	1	2
Physiological needs	31	44	40	44
Free time	11	35	11	15
Other	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	100	100	99
Females				
Total Work	63	55	55	45
Work & time connected with private sub. agric.	34	17	33	19
Housework	29	38	22	26
Physiological needs	33	40	41	44
Free time	4	6	6	10
Other	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	100	101	101	99

Source: Michael P. Sacks, *Women's Work in Soviet Russia: Continuity in the Midst of Change* (NY: Praeger Publishers, 1976), p. 157.

APPENDIX H: MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN ON THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

The following collection was prepared with reference to the discussion of the emancipation of women. Since material on women by Marx is difficult to isolate from his vast volume of work, we hope it will be useful. However, we have included only a brief sampling from Engels and Lenin. Interested readers are urged to read Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (NY: Pathfinder Press, 1972) and Lenin, *The Emancipation of Women* (NY: International Publishers, 1966).

MARX

From *Capital*, Vol. 1, 1867

...It was not, however, the misuse of parental authority that created the capitalistic exploitation, whether direct or indirect, of children's labor; but, on the contrary, it was the capitalistic mode of exploitation which, by sweeping away the economical basis of parental authority, made its exercise degenerate into a mischievous misuse of power. However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes. It is, of course, just as absurd to hold the teutonic-Christian form of the family to be absolute and final as it would be to apply that character to the ancient Roman, the ancient Greek, or the Eastern forms which, moreover, taken together form a series in historical development. Moreover, it is obvious that the fact of the collective working group being

composed of individuals of both sexes and all ages, must necessarily, under suitable conditions, become a source of humane development; although in its spontaneously developed, brutal, capitalistic form, where the laborer exists for the process of production, and not the process of production for the laborer, that fact is a pestiferous source of corruption and slavery.

(Part IV, Chapter 15, "Machinery and Modern Industry," Section 9. "The Factory Acts. Sanitary and Education Clauses of the same. Their general Extension in England.") From the paragraph that begins:

So long as Factory legislation is confined to regulating the labor in factories, manufactories, etc., it is regarded as a mere interference with the exploiting rights of capital. But when it comes to regulating the so-called "home-labor," it is immediately viewed as a direct attack on the *patria potestas*, on parental authority.

The cheapening of labor-power, by sheer abuse of the labor of women and children, by sheer robbery of every normal condition requisite for working and living, and by the sheer brutality of overwork and nightwork, meets at last with natural obstacles that cannot be overstepped. So also, when based on these methods, do the cheapening of commodities and capitalist exploitation in general. So soon as this point is at last reached and it takes many years -- the hour has struck for the introduction of machinery, and for the thenceforth rapid conversion of the scattered industries and also of manufactures into factory industries.

(First paragraph of Part IV, Chapter 15 "Machinery and Modern Industry," Section 8. "Revolution effected in Manufacture, etc." Point e. "Passage of Modern Manufacture and Domestic Industry into Modern Mechanical Industry. The

Hastening of this Revolution by the Application of the Factory Acts to those Industries”)

The basis of the old method, sheer brutality in the exploitation of the workpeople, accompanied more or less by a systematic division of labor, no longer sufficed for the extending markets and for the still more rapidly extending competition of the capitalists. The hour struck for the advent of machinery. The decisively revolutionary machine, the machine which attacks in an equal degree the whole of numberless branches of this sphere of production, dressmaking, tailoring, shoemaking, sewing, hat-making, and many others is the sewing machine.

Its immediate effect on the workpeople is like that of all machinery, which, since the rise of modern industry, has seized upon new branches of trade. Children of too tender an age are sent adrift. The wage of the machine hands rises compared to that of the houseworkers, many of whom belong to the poorest of the poor. That of the better situated handicraftsmen, with whom the machine competes, sinks. The new machine hands are exclusively girls and young women. With the help of mechanical force, they destroy the monopoly that male labor had of the heavier work, and they drive off from the lighter work numbers of old women and very young children. The overpowering competition crushes the weakest of the manual laborers. The fearful increase in death from starvation during the last 10 years in London runs parallel with the extension of machine sewing. The new workwomen turn the machines by hand and foot, or by hand alone, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing, according to the weight, size and special make of the machine, and expend a great deal of labor-power. Their occupation is unwholesome, owing to the long hours, although in most cases they are not so long as under the old system. (Ibid., from the fourth and fifth paragraphs)

...this antagonism vents its rage ...in the devastation caused by a social anarchy which turns every economic progress into a social calamity.(7)

(Part IV, Chapter 15, Section 9, “The factory acts....” The paragraph in question begins: Modern Industry never looks upon and treats the existing form of a process as final. The technical basis of that industry is therefore revolutionary, while all earlier modes of production were essentially conservative....)

A new form of family, new conditions in the status of women and in the upbringing of the younger generation are prepared by the highest forms of present-day capitalism: the labour of women and children and the break-up of the patriarchal family by capitalism inevitably assume the most terrible, disastrous, and repulsive forms in modern society. Nevertheless, “modern industry, by assigning as it does, an important part in the socially organized process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between sexes. It is, of course, just as absurd to hold the Teutonic-Christian form of the family to be absolute and final as it would be to apply that character to the ancient Roman, the ancient Greek, or the Eastern forms which, moreover, taken together form a series in historic development. Moreover, it is obvious that the fact of the collective working group being composed of individuals of both sexes and all ages, must necessarily, under suitable conditions, become a source of humane development; although in its spontaneously developed, brutal, capitalistic form, where the labourer exists for the process of production, and not the process of production for the laborer, that fact is a pestiferous source of corruption and slavery” (end of Chapter 13, *Capital*, Vol. I).

MARX AND ENGELS

From *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848

The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into an eternal law of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property - historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production - this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you. What you see clearly in the case of ancient property, what you admit in the case of feudal property, you are of course forbidden to admit in the case of your own bourgeois form of property.

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the communists.

On what foundations is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeois. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital. (Chapter II, "Proletarians and Communists")

Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

But, you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations when we replace home education by social.

And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society, by means of schools, etc.? The communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to

rescue education from the influence of the ruling class. (Ibid.)

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of modern industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor.

But you communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus.

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will naturally fall to the women.

He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which they pretend is to be openly and officially established by the communists. The communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common and thus, at the most, what the communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalized community of women. For the rest, it is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that

system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.

ENGELS

From *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1844-March 1845

...Let us examine a little more closely the process whereby machinery continually supersedes hand-labor. When spinning or weaving machinery is installed practically all that is left to be done by hand is the piecing together of broken threads, and the machine does the rest. This task calls for nimble fingers rather than muscular strength. The labor of grown men is not merely unnecessary but actually unsuitable, because the bones and muscles of their hands are more developed than those of women and children. The greater the degree to which physical labor is displaced by the introduction of machines worked by water or steam power, the fewer grown men need be employed. In any case, women and children will work for lower wages than men, and as has already been observed, they are more skillful at piecing than grown men. Consequently, it is women and children who are employed to do this work.

[After refuting claims that men have not been displaced, Engels continues a couple of pages later:]

All this has led to a complete reversal of normal social relationships. The working classes have had no choice but to submit to this change, which has the most evil effects. When women work in factories, the most important result is the dissolution of family ties. If a woman works for twelve or thirteen hours a day in a factory and her husband is employed either in the same establishment or in some other works, what is the fate of the children? They lack parental care and control. They are looked after by foster parents, who charge

1 s. or 1 s. 6 d. per week for this service. It is not difficult to imagine that they are left to run wild. This can be seen by the increase in the number of accidents to little children which occur in the factory districts.

[After citing evidence and testimony regarding child neglect, he says:]

Children who grow up under such conditions have no idea of what a proper family life should be. When they grow up and have families of their own they feel out of place because their own early experience has been that of a lonely life. Such parents foster the universal decadence of family life among the workers. Similar evil consequences for the family follow from child labor. When children earn more than the cost of their keep they begin to make a contribution to the family budget and to keep the rest as pocket money. This often occurs when they are no more than fourteen or fifteen. In brief, the children become emancipated and regard their parents' house as merely lodgings, and quite often, if they feel like it, they leave home and take lodgings elsewhere.

Very often the fact that a married woman is working does not lead to the complete disruption of the home but to a reversal of the normal division of labor within the family. The wife is the breadwinner while her husband stays home to look after the children and to do the cleaning and cooking. This happens very frequently indeed. In Manchester alone there are many hundreds of men who are condemned to perform household duties. One may well imagine the righteous indignation of the workers at being virtually turned into eunuchs.

[He follows this by quoting at length from a very maudlin letter from a factory worker about a friend whose wife worked while he stayed home doing domestic stuff. The man was sad that he

couldn't provide for his family, embarrassed at doing "women's work," but did not give vent to Engels' imagined "righteous indignation" at role reversal. Engels continues with the combination of male prejudice and anger at the brutalizing overwork of women and underwork of men, but with surprising conclusions.]

Can one imagine a more senseless and foolish state of affairs than that described in this letter? It deprives the husband of his manhood and the wife of all womanly qualities. Yet it cannot thereby turn a man into a woman or a woman into a man. It is a state of affairs shameful and degrading to the human attributes of the sexes. It is the final result of all the efforts of hundreds of generations to improve the lot of humanity both now and in the future. If all that can be achieved by our work and effort is this sort of mockery, then we must truly despair of humanity and its aspirations. If not, then we must admit that human society has followed the wrong road in its search for happiness. We shall have to accept the fact that so complete a reversal of the role of the two sexes can be due only to some radical error in the original relationship between men and women. If the rule of the wife over her husband -- a natural consequence of the factory system -- is unnatural, then the former rule of the husband over the wife must also have been unnatural. Today, the wife -- as in former times the husband -- justifies her sway because she is the major or even the sole breadwinner of the family. In either case one partner is able to boast that he or she make the greatest contribution to the upkeep of the family. Such a state of affairs shows clearly that there is no rational or sensible principle at the root of our ideas concerning family income and property. If the family as it exists in our present-day society comes to an end then its disappearance will prove that the real bond holding the family together was not affection but merely self-interest engendered by the false concept of family

property. (From Chapter 7, (a) "Factory workers in the main textile industries," pp. 158-165, Stanford University Press edition, retranslated from the original German and updated in 1958)

[It was obviously a more mature Engels who wrote *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. He says in the preface to the English edition of 1892 that, since *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* was written, the situation in England had changed and also his views had changed and developed.]

From *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884

...For Morgan rediscovered in America, in his own way, the materialist conception of history that had been discovered by Marx forty years ago, and in his comparison of barbarism and civilization was led by this conception to the same conclusions, in the main points, as Marx had arrived at. (From the Preface to the first edition, 1884)

The rediscovery of the original mother-right gens as the stage preliminary to the father-right gens of the civilized peoples has the same significance for the history of primitive society as Darwin's theory of evolution has for biology, and Marx's theory of surplus value for political economy. It enabled Morgan to outline for the first time a history of the family, wherein at least the classical stages of development are, on the whole, provisionally established, as far as the material at present available permits. (Two pages or so from the end of the Preface to the fourth German edition, 1891)

...During the fourteen years that have elapsed since the publication of his chief work, our material relating to the history of primitive human societies has been greatly augmented. In addition to anthropologists, travelers and professional

prehistorians, students of comparative law have taken the field and have contributed new material and new points of view. As a consequence, some of Morgan's hypotheses pertaining to particular points have been shaken, or even become untenable. But nowhere have the newly collected data led to the supplanting of his principal conceptions by others. In its main features, the order he introduced into the study of the history of primitive society holds good to this day. (From the last paragraph of the Preface to the fourth German edition, 1891)

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this is of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labor, on one hand, and of the family, on the other. The less the development of labor, and the more limited its volume of production and, therefore, the wealth of society, the more preponderatingly does the social order appear to be dominated by ties of sex. However, within this structure of society based on ties of sex, the productivity of labor develops more and more; with it, private property and exchange, differences in wealth, the possibility of utilizing the labor power of others, and thereby the basis of class antagonisms: new social elements, which strive in the course of generations to adapt the old structures of society to the new conditions, until, finally, the incompatibility of the two leads to a complete revolution. The old society based on sex groups burst asunder in the collision of the newly-developed social classes; in its place a new society

appears, constituted in a state, the lower units of which are no longer sex groups but territorial groups, a society in which the family system is entirely dominated by the property system, and in which the class antagonisms and class struggles, which make up the content of all hitherto written history now freely develop. (From the preface to the first edition, 1884, second paragraph.)

Sex love in the relation of husband and wife is and can become the rule only among the oppressed classes, that is, at the present day, among the proletariat, no matter whether this relationship is officially sanctioned or not. But here all the foundations of classical monogamy are removed. Here, there is a complete absence of all property, for the safeguarding and inheritance of which monogamy and male domination were established. Therefore, there is no stimulus whatever here to assert male domination. What is more, the means too, are absent; bourgeois law, which protects this domination, exists only for the propertied classes and their dealings with the proletarians. It costs money, and therefore, owing to the worker's poverty, has no validity in his attitude towards his wife. Personal and social relations of quite a different sort are the decisive factors here. Moreover, since large-scale industry has transferred the woman from the house to the labor market and the factory, and makes her, often enough, the bread-winner of the family, the last remnants of male domination in the proletarian home have lost all foundation--except, perhaps, for some of that brutality towards women which became firmly rooted with the establishment of monogamy. Thus, the proletarian family is no longer monogamous in the strict sense, even in cases of the most passionate love and strictest faithfulness of the two parties, and despite all spiritual and worldly benedictions which may have been received. The two eternal adjuncts of monogamy -hetaerism and adultery--therefore, play an almost negligible role here; the woman

has regained, in fact, the right of separation, and when the man and woman can not get along they prefer to part. In short, proletarian marriage is monogamous in the etymological sense of the word, but by no means in the historical sense. (Chapter 2, "The Family," Section 4, "The Monogamian Family", about half way through section.)

[After exposing some of the hypocrisy which bourgeois society conceals underneath its claim that marriage is now freely and voluntarily contracted, Engels goes on to say:]

The position is no better with regard to the juridical equality of man and woman in marriage. The inequality of the two before the law, which is a legacy of previous social conditions, is not the cause but the effect of the economic oppression of women. In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to the women, was just as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the providing of food by the men. This situation changed with the patriarchal family, and even more with the monogamous individual family. The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a private service. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production. Only modern large-scale industry again threw open to her -and only to the proletarian woman at that -the avenue to social production; but in such a way that, when she fulfills her duties in the private service, she remains excluded from public production and cannot earn anything; and when she wishes to take part in public industry and earn her living independently, she is not in a position to fulfill her family duties. What applies to the woman in the factory applies to her in all professions, right up to medicine and law. The modern individual

family is based on the open or disguised domestic enslavement of the woman; and modern society is a mass composed solely of individual families as its molecules. Today, in the great majority of cases, the man has to be the earner, the breadwinner of the family, at least among the propertied classes, and this gives him a dominating position which requires no special legal privileges. In the family, he is the bourgeois; the wife represents the proletariat. In the industrial world, however, the specific character of the economic oppression that weighs down the proletariat stands out in all its sharpness only after all the special legal privileges of the capitalist class have been set aside and the complete juridical equality of both classes is established. The democratic republic does not abolish the antagonism between the two classes; on the contrary, it provides the field on which it is fought out. And, similarly, the peculiar character of man's domination over woman in the modern family, and the necessity, as well as the manner, of establishing real social equality between the two, will be brought out into full relief only when both are completely equal before the law. It will then become evident that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished. (Ibid., a page or so later)

We are now approaching a social revolution in which the hitherto existing economic foundations of monogamy will disappear just as certainly as will those of its supplement--prostitution. Monogamy arose out of the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of one person -- and that a man -- and out of the desire to bequeath this wealth to this man's children and to no one else's. For this purpose monogamy was essential on the woman's part, but not on the man's; so that this monogamy of the woman in

no way hindered the overt or covert polygamy of the man. The impending social revolution, however, by transforming at least the far greater part of the permanent inheritable wealth -- the means of production -- into social property, will reduce all this anxiety about inheritance to a minimum. Since monogamy arose from economic causes, will it disappear when these causes disappear?

One might not unjustly answer: far from disappearing, it will only begin to be completely realized. ... Prostitution disappears; monogamy, instead of declining, finally becomes a reality -- for the men as well.

At all events, the position of the men thus undergoes considerable change. But that of the women, of all women, also undergoes important alteration. With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter. Society takes care of all children equally, irrespective of whether they are born in wedlock or not. Thus, the anxiety about the 'consequences,' which is today the most important social factor -- both moral and economic -- that hinders a girl from giving herself freely to the man she loves, disappears. Will this not be cause enough for a gradual rise of more unrestrained sexual intercourse, and along with it, a more lenient public opinion regarding virginal honor and feminine shame? And finally, have we not seen that monogamy and prostitution in the modern world, although opposites, are nevertheless inseparable opposites, poles of the same social conditions? Can prostitution disappear without dragging monogamy with it into the abyss?

Here a new factor comes into operation, a factor that, at most, existed in embryo at the time when monogamy developed, namely, individual sex love. (Ibid., a page or so later)

What will definitely disappear from monogamy, however, is all the characteristics stamped on it in consequence of its having arisen out of property relationships. These are, first, the dominance of the man, and secondly, the indissolubility of marriage. The predominance of the man in marriage is simply a consequence of his economic predominance and will vanish with it automatically. The indissolubility of marriage is partly the result of the economic conditions under which monogamy arose, and partly a tradition from the time when the connection between these economic conditions and monogamy was not yet correctly understood and was exaggerated by religion. Today it has been breached a thousandfold. If only marriages that are based on love are moral, then, also, only those are moral in which love continues. The duration of the urge of individual sex love differs very much according to the individual, particularly among men; and a definite cessation of affection, or its displacement by a new passionate love, makes separation a blessing for both parties as well as for society. People will only be spared the experience of wading through the useless mire of divorce proceedings.

Thus, what we can conjecture at present about the regulation of sex relationships after the impending effacement of capitalist production is, in the main, of a negative character, limited mostly to what will vanish. But what will be added? That will be settled after a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in all their lives have had occasion to purchase a woman's surrender either with money or with any other means of social power, and of women who have never been obliged to surrender to any man out of any consideration other than that of real love, or to refrain from giving themselves to their beloved for fear of the economic consequences. Once such people appear, they will not care a rap about what we today think they should do. They will establish their own practice and their own public opinion, conformable therewith, on the practice

of each individual and that's the end of it. (From the end of Chapter 2)

...Here we see already that the emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree. And this has become possible only as a result of modern large-scale industry, which not only permits of the participation of women in production in large numbers, but actually calls for it and, moreover, strives to convert private domestic work also into a public industry. (Chapter 9, "Barbarism and Civilization," in the paragraph that begins "How and when the herds and flocks were converted from the common property of the tribe or gens into the property of the individual heads of families we do not know to this day; but it must have occurred, in the main, at this stage.")

LENIN

From "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," 1916

P. Kievsky does not understand the difference between 'negative' slogans that stigmatize political evils and economic evils. The difference lies in the fact that certain economic evils are part of capitalism as such, whatever the political superstructure, and that it is impossible to eliminate them economically without eliminating capitalism itself. Not a single instance can be cited to disprove this. On the other hand, political evils represents a departure from democracy which, economically, is fully possible 'on the basis of the

existing system', i.e., capitalism, and by way of exception is being implemented under capitalism -certain aspects in one country, other aspects in another. Again, what the author fails to understand is precisely the fundamental conditions necessary for the implementation of democracy in general! (From the latter part of Section 6. "The other political issues raised and distorted by P. Kievsky," Collected Works, Vol. 22, pp. 71-72)

That objection reveals complete failure to understand the relation between democracy in general and capitalism. The conditions that make it impossible for the oppressed classes to "exercise" their democratic rights are not the exception under capitalism; they are typical of the system. In most cases the right of divorce will remain unrealizable under capitalism, for the oppressed sex is subjugated economically. No matter how much democracy there is under capitalism, the woman remains a "domestic slave," a slave locked up in the bedroom, nursery, kitchen. The right to elect their "own" people's judges, officials, school-teachers, jurymen, etc., is likewise in most cases unrealizable under capitalism precisely because of the economic subjection of the workers and peasants. The same applies to the democratic republic: our program defines it as "government by the people," though all Social-Democrats know perfectly well that under capitalism, even in the most democratic republic, there is bound to be bribery of officials by the bourgeoisie and an alliance of stock exchange and the government.

Only those who cannot think straight or have no knowledge of Marxism will conclude: so there is no point in having a republic, no point in freedom of divorce, no point in democracy, no point in self-determination of nations! But Marxists know that democracy does not abolish class oppression. It only makes the class struggle more direct, wider, more open and pronounced, and that is what we need. The fuller the freedom of

divorce, the clearer will women see that the source of their "domestic slavery" is capitalism, not lack of rights. The more democratic the system of government, the clearer will the workers see that the root evil is capitalism, not lack of rights.... (Section 6, pp. 72-73)

...under capitalism the right of divorce, as all other democratic rights without exception, is conditional, restricted, formal, narrow and extremely difficult of realization. Yet no self-respecting Social-Democrat will consider anyone opposing the right of divorce a democrat, let alone a socialist. That is the crux of the matter. All "democracy" consists in the proclamation and realization of "rights" which under capitalism are realizable only to a very small degree and only relatively. But without the proclamation of these rights, without a struggle to introduce them now, immediately, without training the masses in the spirit of this struggle, socialism is impossible. (From the latter part of Section 6. "The other political issues raised and distorted by P. Kievsky," Collected Works, Vol. 22, p. 74.)

... For socialism is impossible without democracy because: (1) the proletariat cannot perform the socialist revolution unless it prepares for it by the struggle for democracy; (2) victorious socialism cannot consolidate its victory and bring humanity to the withering away of the state without implementing full democracy. (Section 6, p. 74)

... All democratic demands are "unachievable" under imperialism in the sense that politically they are hard to achieve or totally unachievable without a series of revolutions.

It is fundamentally wrong, however, to maintain that self-determination is unachievable in the economic sense. (Section 3. "What is economic analysis?," Collected Works, Vol. 22, p. 40).

... Both in foreign and home policy imperialism strives towards violations of democracy, towards reaction. In this sense imperialism is indisputably the "negation" of democracy in general, and not just of one of its demands, national self-determination.

... There can be no talk of democracy being "economically" unachievable. (Section 3, p. 43)

...imperialism contradicts, "logically" contradicts, all political democracy in general. (Section 3, p. 46)

[Here Lenin says that no matter how much democracy there is under capitalism, woman remains a slave, subjugated economically and locked up in the bedroom, nursery, kitchen. This indicates how unrealizable the equality of women is, although note that women are not simply locked up nowadays, they work outside as well, and so forth. Lenin's basic thesis is that democracy is economically fully possible under capitalism/imperialism, but very hard to realize due to economic subjugation. The specific examples of democracy addressed are mainly national self-determination, and divorce as a side issue. He does not address the general question of women's oppression. However, considering equality as a democratic issue would lead one to say that it is economically fully possible but very hard to realize. Lenin also raises a familiar point with respect to the attainment of political rights (divorce, national equality): the fuller these rights are, then the more likely that women (nationalities) will understand that capitalism is the cause of their oppression; fuller democracy makes the class struggle more direct.]

From "A Great Beginning," 1919

Take the position of women. In this field, not a single democratic party in the world, not even in the most advanced bourgeois republic, has done in decades so much as a hundredth part of what we did in our very first year in power. We actually razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality, restricting divorce and surrounding it with disgusting formalities, denying recognition to children born out of wedlock, enforcing a search for their fathers, etc., laws numerous survivals of which, to the shame of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, are to be found in all civilized countries. We have a thousand times the right to be proud of what we have done in this field. But the more thoroughly we clear the ground of the lumber of the old, bourgeois laws and institutions, the more we realize that we have only cleared the ground to build on, but are not yet building.

Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and nursery, and she wastes her labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against the petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.

Do we in practice pay sufficient attention to this question, which in theory every Communist considers indisputable? Of course not. Do we take proper care of the shoots of communism which already exist in this sphere? Again, the answer is no. Public catering establishments, nurseries, kindergartens - here we have examples of these shoots, here we have the simple, every-

day means, involving nothing pompous, grandiloquent or ceremonial, which can really emancipate women, really lessen and abolish their inequality with men as regards their role in social production and public life. These means are not new; they (like all the material prerequisites for socialism) were created by large-scale capitalism. But under capitalism, they remained, first, a rarity, and secondly, either profit-making enterprises, with all the worst features of speculation, profiteering, cheating and fraud, or 'acrobatics of bourgeois charity', which the workers rightly hated and despised. (Collected Works, Vol. 29, p. 429).

From "Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women," 1918

[In this earlier article on the occasion of the first anniversary of the October Revolution, Lenin made the same point as in "A Great Beginning" about the Soviet state smashing the legal foundation of women's inequality and oppression, but he also pointed out a problem they were having with even this much.]

For the first time in history, our law has removed everything that has denied women rights. But the important thing is not the law. In the cities and industrial areas this law on complete freedom of marriage is doing all right, but in the countryside it all too frequently remains a dead letter. ... This is due to the influence of the priests, an evil that is harder to combat than the old legislation.

We must be extremely careful in fighting religious prejudices; some people cause a lot of harm in this struggle by offending religious feelings. ... By lending too sharp an edge to the struggle we may only arouse popular resentment; such methods of struggle tend to perpetuate the division of the people along religious lines, whereas

our strength lies in unity. The deepest source of religious prejudice is poverty and ignorance; and that is the evil we have to combat.

The status of women up to now has been compared to that of a slave; women have been tied to the home, and only socialism can save them from this. They can only be completely emancipated when we change from small-scale individual farming to collective farming and col-

lective working of the land. This is a difficult task.

.....

The experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it. The Soviet government is doing everything in its power to enable women to carry on independent proletarian socialist work.

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