

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

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The Plight, Struggle and Liberation of Women

Selected Works 1907-1947

ISBN: 978-1-387-55838-4

THE NOVEMBER 8TH PUBLISHING HOUSE
OTTAWA 2022



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International Socialist Conferences of Women Workers

1907-1916

The First International Conference of Socialist Women — Stuttgart: 1907

A new danger is threatening the domination of the bourgeoisie — women workers are resolutely adopting the path of international class organization. The downtrodden, submissive slaves humbly bowing before the omnipotence of the modern Moloch of capital are, under the reviving influence of socialist doctrine, lifting their heads and raising their voices in defence of their interests as women and their common class interests.

While the “poison of socialist doctrine” had infected only one half of the working class, while opposition was concentrated exclusively in the male section of the proletariat, the capitalists could breathe freely; they still had in their power an inexhaustible supply of compliant workers always ready obediently and selflessly to enrich by their labour the happy owners of the instruments of production. With unconscious calculation the bourgeoisie availed itself of the advantage offered by this state of affairs: it set one half of the proletariat against the other, shattered its unity, compelled the women to appear as the menacing rivals of their menfolk, sapping the class solidarity of the workers. With malicious smugness it countered the resistance of united proletarians with the indifference of the unconscious female elements, and the more ignorant and dispersed the women remained, the more un-

successful was the struggle waged by the organized elements of the working class.

However, the class consciousness of the women workers, once aroused, was sufficient to compel them to grasp the hand of friendship held out to them by their male worker comrades and adopt the path of open and stubborn resistance. The involvement of proletarian women in the common class struggle, and their growing solidarity have shaken the usual self-confidence of the bourgeoisie and spread alarm in place of its previous tranquillity: the increasing organization of the female proletariat removes the last defenceless victim of capitalist exploitation. The ground is disappearing from beneath the feet of the bourgeoisie, and the light of the approaching social revolution glows ever more brightly.

Is it therefore surprising that the bourgeoisie is doubly hostile to any sign of protest among women workers, and to any attempt on their part to defend their needs and interests as women and their common class interests and needs? Even in the most democratic and advanced countries everything possible is done to make it difficult for women to defend their labour interests. To grant the woman worker the same rights as the man would be to put in the hands of the working class a new and dangerous weapon, to double the active army of the militant opponent; the bourgeoisie is too intelligent to agree to such a dangerous experiment.

The whole bourgeois world listened with unconcealed animosity to the solemn and harmonious notes that rang out from Stuttgart in 1907, during the International Socialist Congress. But most of all it was an-

gered by the bold voices of the female proletariat. However radical were the speeches pronounced by the men, whatever “mad” resolutions they might adopt, the bourgeoisie always consoled itself with the thought that it still had one tested method at its disposal: break the resistance of the “hotheads” by replacing them with submissive female workers. And now a new surprise: from all over the world women representatives of the working class are gathering in order to forge by their united efforts a new weapon with which to fight the world hostile to the proletariat. The daring of women has exceeded all expectations: yesterday’s silent slave is now a courageous fighter for the liberation of the working class. Could one imagine a more vexatious spectacle! Spiteful ridicule rained down upon the heads of the women representatives of the working class, ridicule that failed to conceal the genuine anxiety of the bourgeoisie.

The gentlemen of capital and property do now indeed have something to ponder over, something to be depressed about: new successes are being achieved in the organization of the working class. And if, until only recently, the bourgeoisie could draw comfort from the lack of unity in the female section of the proletariat, now, after the Stuttgart Conference, it has lost even this sweet solace.

On the basis of facts and figures these women representatives described the growing awareness of the female proletariat and its organizational successes, particularly in recent years. England has the largest number of organized women workers: 150 thousand are members of trade unions; 30 thousand are politically organized in “independent workers” parties and

women workers are also members of the Social-Democratic Federation. In Austria trade union organizations include 42 thousand women among their members. In Germany the number of women who are trade union members is also impressive — 120 thousand; despite all the police harassment, 10,500 women workers have joined the Social-Democratic Party, and the distribution figure for the women workers' magazine *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) is 70 thousand copies. In Finland the Social-Democratic movement has 18,600 women. In Belgium 14 thousand women workers are trade union members. In Hungary 15 thousand women workers are in trade union organizations, etc.

The growing organization of women workers and the specific social objectives which it is mainly their task to carry through led to an awareness of the need for greater solidarity and closer contact among the organized women workers of the world.

The first women's international conference in Stuttgart set itself two objectives: 1) to elaborate the basis for more uniform activity on the part of the socialist movement (in various countries) in the struggle to win voting rights for women workers; 2) to establish permanent and correct relations between women's organizations throughout the world.

The main question discussed at the conference was, without any doubt, the question of voting rights for women workers. Put forward for discussion by the conference and introduced into the Social-Democratic congress as a special resolution, this question is designed to meet the growing need within the female proletariat to define the future tactics of international Social-Democracy in the struggle for political rights

for women workers, and to transfer this principle from the sphere of theoretical recognition to that of practical activity. With the growth of its class consciousness and organization, the female proletariat was brought by its basic material needs to an acute awareness of its lack of political rights, and learned to see in those rights not only a “policy principle” but also an urgent and immediate need.

Over recent years, the working class, in one country after the other, has faced the question of achieving universal suffrage. It might have seemed that the four-part election formula advanced by the Social-Democrats and supplemented with a fifth section specifying “without distinction of sex,” would have left no room for doubts and hesitations regarding the way the party would act in such circumstances. However, it turned out, otherwise. When it came to the defence of the fifth section, not only male Social-Democrats, but even the women revealed their fundamental instability, their vacillation, and by their compromising attitude to this issue, so important to the working class, demonstrated that this fundamental principle has not yet become an integral part of Social-Democracy.

One after the other women from Belgium, Austria, Sweden, accepted the removal from the agenda of the demand for political rights for women workers and gave their support to an emasculated, abbreviated compromise formula for electoral reform. However, most characteristic of all was the fact that this opportunist policy was not condemned by consistent and steadfast supporters of socialism but, on the contrary, won their sympathy and approval and was even presented to proletarian women in other countries as a

model. The working women themselves cannot be blamed for this compromise tactic — it is typical of less aware and less disciplined party elements — but the other, the male section of the proletariat, whose spirit and consciousness has been tempered in battle, should not have allowed itself to be drawn along the path of practical opportunism.

There are democratic principles which, for the sake of its own interests, the working class must not sacrifice: there are slogans which the proletariat cannot change without damaging itself, even though the change is made in order to achieve the maximum results at any given moment.

If, in some politically backward country, the working class had had the opportunity to attain universal, equal, secret but indirect rather than direct voting rights, the position of the Social-Democrats in such a situation would have been obvious: despite the risk of stalling a reform that was otherwise certain to be adopted, the workers' party would fight to the last moment for the full formula... Perhaps the indirect electoral system would be adopted despite the opposition of the Social-Democrats, and no doubt they would have to reconcile themselves to this fact, but their attitude to it would be perfectly clear: they could view it only as a defeat.

The situation is different as regards the issue of voting rights for women workers. The demand "without distinction of sex" has not yet become an integral part of the practice of proletarian struggle: awareness of the importance of full and equal political rights for women workers in the name of the interests of the whole class has not yet had time to take firm root. It

must not be forgotten that women began to work outside the home only comparatively recently, and have only recently begun to play a role in the proletarian movement. The ideological survivals of the bourgeois-capitalist world affect the purity and clarity of proletarian class consciousness in regard to women, and blur the distinct outlines of a principle that would appear to be indisputable in the eyes of the proletariat, namely the principle of equality of civil rights for all the members of the world proletarian family.

The vacillating tactic of the party in the struggle for women's voting rights obliged the Social-Democrats to devote particular attention to this issue at the congress. The adoption of a resolution which would clearly and precisely express the willingness of the working class to fight for voting rights for women workers with the same unswerving determination with which Social-Democracy pursues all its principles — this was the slogan of the women's socialist conference, a slogan dictated by the interests of women workers. Such a resolution appeared all the more desirable in that it was fully in accord with the spirit of Social-Democracy...

The resolution on voting rights for women put forward at the women's conference and then introduced at the socialist congress was advanced with a view to demanding the clear and precise recognition of the fifth section of the election formula ("without distinction of sex") as being of equal importance with the other four.

However, the resolution met with opposition. Two trends appeared within the women's socialist movement: one orthodox, the other opportunist in the spirit

of unconscious feminism. The first trend was represented by the women Social-Democrats from Germany, the second by those from Austria and some from England.

The resolution put forward by the German delegates had two objectives: in demanding that the socialist parties recognize the full extent of the importance of a practical struggle to secure the political equality of women, the resolution was also intended to draw a distinct line between bourgeois feminism and the women's proletarian movement. This struck the English socialists at their most vulnerable point. It is a well-known fact that many of them work hand-in-glove with bourgeois champions of women's rights, and in the heat of a sometimes selfless struggle in defence of women's interests, they lose sight of class distinctions.

The struggle to achieve political equality for *proletarian women* is part and parcel of the overall class struggle of the proletariat; when it becomes an independent militant aim in itself it eclipses the class objectives of women workers. The inventive bourgeoisie, who love to hide their real desires behind a screen of splendid-sounding slogans, put the world of women and its objectives in opposition to the class cause of women workers. However, as soon as the women's cause is put above the proletarian cause, as soon as women workers allow themselves to be seduced by fine-sounding phrases about the community of women's interests regardless of class divisions, they lose their living link with their own class cause and thus betray their own particular interests. Bourgeois women, according to their own assertion, are gener-

ously demanding rights for “all women,” whereas women workers are only fighting for their class interests. However, in practice the situation is precisely the reverse: in winning political rights for themselves, women workers are also opening up the way to the voting booth for women of other classes. In resolutely and consistently defending the interests of the women of its own class, Social-Democracy is putting into practice the principles of the fullest form of democracy and promoting the success of the women’s cause as a whole.

Bourgeois hypocrisy also affected the English supporters of women’s political equality. English women workers are prepared to support *limited, qualified* electoral rights for women — an unforgivable and despicable betrayal of the proletarian cause. The representatives of the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian Society did not hesitate to defend this clearly treacherous position before the whole socialist world, and only the Social-Democratic Federation, together with the proletariat of other countries, condemned such a solution to the problem and demanded electoral rights for all citizens who had reached majority, regardless of sex.

This disagreement yet again clearly demonstrated the importance for the socialists of working out a clearly defined tactical position on the question of achieving political equality for women workers. However, such a clearly defined formulation of the question was precisely what the English wanted least... Together with the Austrian delegates they demanded that each party be given the right to settle this question independently in accord with the circumstances then

obtaining; they declared a single model of action compulsory for each country to be completely unnecessary. The resolution put forward by the German Social-Democrats obliged the English to do some painful thinking. It faced them with a question: are they defending the interests of their class as a whole in its difficult struggle to survive, passing through great trials today in the expectation of equally great triumphs in the future, or are they merely fighting for new privileges for those women who neither sow nor reap, but who gather into the barns?

The Austrian delegates represented the opposite extreme. Furious opponents of feminism, they were not, of course, prepared to work together with bourgeois feminists in the defence of rights for “all women.” However, despite their sworn hostility towards feminism and its tactic of adaptation, Austrian women socialists fell into the same error as the English. In defending at the conference the position they had adopted during the recent struggle in Austria to achieve universal suffrage, they attempted to show that, in certain political conditions, it is permissible to put aside the interests of one section of the proletariat — in this case women workers — in order to achieve practical advantages for another section. Instead of a categorical demand that the principle of political equality for proletarian women be recognized on the same footing with all other democratic demands by the proletariat, the Austrians introduced into the resolution by means of an amendment a poorly-defined wish that the *moment* and the *very method of struggle* for electoral rights for women be determined by each country at its own discretion...

Every time the question of party tactics becomes a matter of urgency for Social-Democracy, it has to return to the tested method of solving this question: it must once more carefully and precisely determine to what extent a given demand, a given principle is essential in order to achieve the ultimate objective of the working class. If this principle is indeed of considerable importance for the ultimate objective being pursued by the workers, then there cannot be, must not be, any room for compromise in policy even if such a compromise promises to bring immediate benefit. Indeed, what would become of the class objectives of the proletariat if Social-Democracy put away its basic policy principles every time it hoped it might thereby acquire some “practical advantage”? And what would then distinguish its policy principles from hypocritical bourgeois diplomacy?

The principle of political equality for women is beyond dispute. Social-Democracy long ago proclaimed in theory the importance of extending voting rights to women workers. However, the tactic of “concessions,” the tactic of “step by step” is now seeking another solution to this problem also. In place of the usual principled determination and steadfastness of Social-Democracy, it proposes “compliance” and “moderation.” Fortunately the proletariat is only too well aware that its “modesty” has never reaped any reward. The tractability and compliance of the proletariat are, in the eyes of its enemy, proof positive of its “impotence,” and the more moderate, the more “reasonable” are its demands, the more miserly are the concessions granted to it. The victory of one of the two warring sides is decided not by the compliance of

one of them, but by the “actual balance of forces.” The proletariat presses its demands waging a resolute and consistent struggle to achieve them, but it can only achieve that which corresponds to its actual influence and importance at any given moment. The more resolute is Social-Democracy’s adherence to its basic principles, the further removed its tactic from concessions decided upon beforehand, the more closely will the results of its struggle correspond to the actual balance of power and forces between the warring sides.

All of the above constitutes a “well-worn truth,” but a truth that has to be repeated every time a proposed compromise tactic postpones a new victory by the proletariat and threatens to damage one of the basic tenets of Social-Democracy. If the amendment introduced by the Austrian delegates were accepted, such damage would be unavoidable. With their precautionary “compliance” the Austrian delegates would not only postpone the extension of voting rights to proletarian women but also, and more importantly, violate one of the basic principles of socialism: preserving the unity of the working class as the major guarantee of success in the proletarian struggle.

“Naturally,” said Clara Zetkin, addressing the commission on women’s voting rights at the congress, “we are not so politically uneducated as to demand that the socialist parties of every country, in every struggle for electoral reform and in all circumstances, make the demand for voting rights for women the cornerstone, the deciding factor in their struggle. That will depend on the level of his-

torical development in individual countries. We are criticizing the tactic of abandoning *in advance*, without a struggle, the demand for voting rights for women...”

This precise and consistent class policy was also defended by German Social-Democrats: Luise Zietz, Emma Ihrer, Ottilie Baader, Hilja Pärssinen, woman deputy to the Finnish Seim, Csozi from Hungary, representatives from Russia, Shaw from England and others. Those who supported this view demanded that the international congress confirm the proposition that the struggle for voting rights for women workers is not separate from the class struggle, and that any concession in this area, any deviation from principle, is a compromise that damages the whole cause of the working class.

The defenders of the opportunist tactic came mainly from among the Austrian delegates, and they received a measure of support from Viktor Adler. Lily Braun was also on their side. However, this trend did not meet support at the conference. All the arguments advanced by the Austrians to the effect that the “obstinacy” of the Social-Democrats only served to make political gains by the proletariat more difficult to achieve, all the arguments of the representatives of Catholic countries — Belgium and France — that the influence of clericalism would allegedly increase with the involvement of women in politics and would lead to a regrouping of parliamentary representation to the disadvantage of the working class, paled before the indisputable fact that the most impoverished, exploited section of the proletariat — women workers — are

still deprived of the possibility of opposing the violation of their rights. It is to these pariahs of contemporary society, these pale, worn slaves of capitalism, that their comrades in misery, their comrades in the struggle for a brighter future, preach resignation, patience and self-denial — the clichéd, Pharisaical virtues of the bourgeoisie!...

The mood of the conference was not favourable to such trends. In contrast to the usual “respectful obedience” of women, the conference was marked by a lively, bracing atmosphere quite distinct from the somewhat dry, business-like air of the socialist congress itself. The massive organizational structure of the congress, the presence of almost 900 delegates and the need to observe a whole series of formalities cooled the enthusiasm of the representatives of the socialist world, and only now and again was this enthusiasm able to break through to the surface and affect all those taking part. Here at the congress the most experienced “masters of the spoken word,” skilled in all the finer points of parliamentary battle, crossed verbal swords, but perhaps for this very reason many of them sounded excessively “cautious.”..

At the women’s conference, on the other hand, the living pulse of bold faith and confidence beat without ceasing and one could sense that courageous rejection of and revulsion towards compromise decisions which are characteristic of organizations that are still young and have not yet become set in fixed forms. The majority of the representatives of proletarian women could not but realize what tragic consequences would follow upon the adoption of the Austrian amendment...

By a majority of 47 votes to 11, the women's socialist conference adopted the resolution put forward by the German delegation and placed it before the socialist congress.

The living spirit of proletarian self-consciousness compelled the representatives of the workers to support this resolution and confirm the principle of the common interests of both sexes, their solidarity in the struggle for political rights for the whole of the working class. This is without doubt a major event in the history of the workers' movement, demonstrating yet again to the bourgeois world that, despite repeated assertions about the "death of Marxism," the true spirit of scientific socialism is still alive and is continually inspiring the many millions who make up international Social-Democracy.

The question of the formation of an international women's socialist secretariat was second on the conference agenda. The German Social-Democrats introduced a proposal to establish closer contacts among representatives of the working class from different countries and to set up for this purpose a secretariat which would gather information on the women's proletarian movement everywhere. Although this question was purely organizational, it provoked a lively exchange of opinions, and once more revealed two heterogeneous trends within the women's section of Social-Democracy.

The proposal to form an independent women's international secretariat was put forward by the German delegates, and the Austrian delegates once again introduced an amendment. Having declared themselves opposed to separating proletarian women in

any way whatsoever, they considered it unnecessary to form a separate secretariat to ensure international communication among women workers. In their opinion, comrades abroad could be kept informed on the state of the women's proletarian movement in each country by empowering a member of the party in each country to send reports on the position of women workers' organizations and on successes achieved by the movement to the central socialist organs of the other countries. This amendment vividly illustrates the constant fear on the part of the Austrians of discrediting themselves by a too clearly-marked defence of "women's interests" which might earn them the label "feminists."..

The German Social-Democrats, on the contrary, defended the idea that an independent grouping of *proletarian* women *within the party* has clear organizational advantages. Such an organization would make it possible to concentrate the attention of the party on the specific needs and requirements of women workers, and would also make it easier to rally around the party the generally less aware female members of the proletarian class.

The involvement of women workers in the party is necessitated by practical and urgent considerations. Up till now women workers remain the most deprived section of the proletarian family; they are still oppressed everywhere by "special laws," and even in countries which have broad democratic representation women alone remain *without rights*.

With every year that passes, involvement in the political life of their country is becoming an increasingly urgent issue for the women of the working class. How-

ever, among the broad masses of the male proletariat the urgency of this demand is not as yet sufficiently recognized.

In order to defend this demand, in order to inculcate in their comrades the proper attitude to the question of equal rights for women workers in every sphere and draw them into the struggle to attain in practice equal civil rights for women, women have only one course — to unite their forces around the party. Women workers must set up a “women’s secretariat,” a commission, a “bureau” within the party, not in order to wage a separate battle for political rights and defend their own interests by themselves but in order to exert pressure on the party *from within*, in order to compel their comrades to wage their struggle in the interests of the female proletariat as well.

Thus greater party concern about the specific requirements of women workers will increase the popularity of the party among the less class-conscious female population, stimulating the flow of new forces into the army of the fighting proletariat, while the unification of women workers within the party will allow this homogeneous core, motivated by the same requirements, to defend its specific requirements and needs more resolutely within the party too. It was not only police obstacles that led in Germany to special, separate propaganda work among women: this method of work is gradually being adopted in other countries living under freer political regimes.

The need to unite women’s forces within the party is, of course, felt with particular force in countries where it is only the women who remain without political rights. In those cases where the question of the

struggle for the further democratization of voting rights is to the fore, the core of class-conscious women workers can only strive to ensure a more steadfast attitude in the party towards the question of achieving voting rights for women also...

The position of proletarian women in contemporary society, and the specific needs which they experience in the field of social relations, create a practical basis for conducting special work among the female proletariat. However, such a grouping of proletarian women within the party (the setting up of commissions, bureaus, sections, etc.) has, of course, nothing in common with feminism. Whereas the feminists are struggling to extend to the women of the bourgeois classes those privileges which were hitherto enjoyed only by the men, women workers are pursuing a solely proletarian, common class objective.

At the women's international conference, the victory went to the left, that is, to that section which suggested the creation of an independent international secretariat. The editorial board of *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) has been elected as the central organ of the international movement of socialist women until the next international congress. There can be no doubt that both this purely organizational decision and also the congress resolution on tactics, a resolution which determines the attitude of Social-Democracy to the question of votes for women, will have a beneficial effect upon the further development of the Social-Democratic movement among women workers, and will promote the more rapid growth of the organized army of the female proletariat.

Only if they are firmly united amongst themselves

and, at the same time, one with their class party in the common class struggle, can women workers cease to appear as a brake on the proletarian movement and march confidently forward, arm in arm with their male worker comrades to the noble and cherished proletarian aim — towards a new, better and brighter future.

The Second International Women's Conference in Copenhagen: 1910

When the First International Conference of Socialist Women was held in Stuttgart in 1907 on the initiative of the German socialists, the women's socialist movement was still in its infancy everywhere except Germany. Its shape was still hazy and unclear, and the conference itself was convened not so much to review what had been already achieved as to give its "blessing" to the movement and stimulate its further development. Stuttgart was merely a *symptom* of the awakening of broad masses of working-class women, but a symptom nonetheless significant, promising and pregnant with consequences...

Three years have passed. During this short period of time the women's proletarian movement has succeeded not only in increasing its numbers, but also in becoming a social force which cannot be ignored in the process of the class struggle. Particularly rapid has been the success achieved by Germany in the organization of the female proletariat: according to the data presented at the conference in Stuttgart, that is, in 1907 the Social-Democratic Party had only some 10 thousand women members; by 1910 it already had more than 82 thousand, and the central socialist organ

for women workers *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) had a circulation of 80 thousand. Similar giant strides have been taken by Austria in the organization of working-class women: in 1909 the party had only 7 thousand women members; in 1910 it had more than 14 thousand, the trade union movement had around 44 thousand women members and the women's worker newspaper had a circulation of 20 thousand. Finland, though small in population, was also not left behind. Here women (more than 16 thousand) accounted for some 31 per cent of the membership of the workers' party. England can boast of more than 200 thousand women trade union members. Everywhere — in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Holland, Italy, the United States — the women of the working class are awakening, attempting to create a women's socialist movement and direct it along the path boldly marked out by the energetic efforts of German women socialists.

According to the calculations made by the Swiss delegation, the numerical relationship between the male and female sections of the organized working class in various countries is as follows¹:

Finland	for 1 organized woman worker there are	6	organized male workers
Denmark	»	8	»
Austria	»	10	»
England	»	11	»
Italy	»	12	»
Sweden & Norway	»	13	»
Germany	»	14	»
Switzerland	»	19	»

¹ *Statistical Report* to the Second International Conference of Socialist Women, 1910, p. 26.

Of course, if these figures are compared with the number of women workers on the labour market and the growing number of women earning their own living in every country, the scale of female participation in the workers' movement appears very modest — even insignificant. However, in order to assess the importance of the women's socialist movement accurately, two things must be remembered: firstly, its short history — 15-20 years ago it had never been heard of; secondly, the *prospects* opening up before it. The question of the further democratization of the electoral system, which is now posing itself in one form or another in England and the United States, in the federal states of Germany and the Scandinavian countries, must have and will have its inevitable effect upon the further development and success of the women's proletarian movement. The women's proletarian movement has ceased to be merely a luxury and become a daily practical necessity...

The growth of the women's proletarian movement over the last three years was noticeable at the opening of the Copenhagen Conference. In Stuttgart the delegates numbered 52, in Copenhagen they already numbered around 100 and represented 17 countries. This time only the French and the Belgians were absent. Socialist parties and trade unions were represented, together with clubs, societies, and unions of women workers adopting a class position.

The conference agenda included, in addition to the organizational question of establishing closer links between organized socialist women from different countries, two major issues: 1) ways and means of achieving in practice universal suffrage for women and 2) so-

cial security and protection for mother and child. Despite these seemingly specifically female topics, the conference in Copenhagen was free of that sickly-sweet “feminine” flavour which provokes such irrepressible boredom in the practical politician who is used to the “cut and thrust” of real political battle... The questions discussed at the conference were examined not only from the point of view of the common tasks of proletarian class policy, but were also, and inevitably, supplemented with more general demands. The fate of Finland, a country with an extremely democratic system of popular representation, the question of war, peace and the fight against militarism, the struggle against domestic manufacture and night work, compelled those taking part in the congress to move beyond the narrow framework of feminine issues and, having become more familiar with wide-ranging, urgent issues, to join in the active struggle being waged by the many millions who compose the army of the organized working class.

However, while one cannot object to the position adopted by the conference on the issues it debated, and while, indeed, one can note with satisfaction that the “women’s worker army” is marching side by side with the whole proletarian movement, it must be stated that, in terms of the formal conduct of its conferences, the women representatives of international socialism still have something to learn from their male colleagues. The lack of familiarity with “parliamentary practice” led to a number of omissions, which gave rise to misunderstanding and dissatisfaction: certain resolutions were not only not put to the vote, but were not even debated; debates were bunched to-

gether, questions were removed from the agenda on the decision of a questionable majority, etc. All of these errors could have been avoided with greater experience...

The main topic discussed at the conference was, of course, that of voting rights. The conflict between the left wing of the women's international, led by the German delegation, and the representatives of those English workers' organizations who work together with the suffragettes and thus support the slogan of *qualified* electoral rights, was inevitable. The English produced as their "trump card" the venerable and well-known socialist and champion of the women's cause, Charlotte Despard, whose personal attractiveness, noble bearing, grey hair and skilful, impressive speech was intended to win sympathy and soften the severity of the left-wing judgement. A "furious battle" was expected. However, although the discussion was lively, the expected "battle" did not take place: from the very beginning it was clear that the overwhelming majority at the conference supported the "left," and that the English were fighting for a lost cause... The ease with which victory over the "right" was won is explained in part by the fact that, with the exception of Despard, they did not have one good orator on their side. The English defence lacked spirit and imagination, their arguments in defence of their tactic were naive, almost "genteel" — the "harmony" of women's interests, complaints against the "harshness" of class politics, against social injustice, which also affected the bourgeois woman...

The conference, sharply criticizing co-operation between English socialists and the bourgeois suffra-

gettes, adopted a resolution which, however, failed to stress this aspect sufficiently. "The women's socialist movement in every country rejects qualified electoral rights," runs the resolution, "as a falsification and as an insult to the very principle of political equality for women. The movement is fighting for the only viable and concrete expression of this principle: universal suffrage for all women who have reached their majority, without qualifications of property, tax, education or any other kind which hinder members of the working class from availing themselves of their civil rights. The women's socialist movement wages its struggle not together with the women's bourgeois movement, but in close co-operation with socialist parties, who are defending electoral rights for women as one of the basic and, in practice, one of the most essential demands in the call for the full democratization of the electoral system." The conciliatory note sounded by the Austrian delegate, Adelheid Popp, in a speech intended to soften the harshness of this judgement found no support, and the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, with ten votes against.

On the issue of maternity insurance and protection, no serious differences emerged, and it was only a formal oversight on the part of the presidium that caused conflict with part of the English delegation, which then left the conference hall. The resolution introduced by the German delegation on this issue repeated in essence the basic demands of the Social-Democrats, as developed and supplemented at the women's conference in Mannheim: the demand for an 8-hour working day, the prohibition of the use of female labour in particularly unhealthy branches of

production, 16-week leave for expectant and nursing mothers, and the introduction of the principle of compulsory maternity insurance, etc. Unfortunately this fundamental question that affects directly the interests of every working woman was accorded too little time, and the debates were hurried and abbreviated. Resolutions introducing important addenda to the demands presented by the German delegation were not put forward for debate nor put to the vote, and this despite the fact that the Finnish resolution proposed by Pärssinen, Aalle and Silänpää and other deputies to the Seim, clearly emphasized a point omitted in the German resolution — the extension of all forms of maternity protection to include both *legitimate* and *illegitimate* mothers, and a review of the laws on infanticide, committed mainly by mothers who have been abandoned to their fate...

It should not be thought that all the measures demanded in the resolution *automatically* covered both legitimate and illegitimate mothers. It is precisely such a fuddled mode of thinking that dominates in the West, sadly even among women socialists, that preference for legalized marital cohabitation, which made it desirable to debate this fundamental point more thoroughly. It was important to emphasize with all the authority of the conference that maternity is to be recognized as a social function independently of the marital and family forms it assumes... The question of principle involved in maternity insurance and protection was, however, submerged in a number of practical details.

Mention must also be made of yet another important omission in the resolution adopted at the con-

ference: it fails to point clearly and precisely to the principle underlying maternal insurance. Is such insurance an independent section of social insurance, or is it merely a subsection of social insurance in case of illness? The formulation of the resolution indicates that those who drew it up viewed maternity insurance as one of the functions to be carried out by hospital bursaries. If this proposition had been more clearly expressed, however, it would undoubtedly have led to an elucidation of certain other propositions which require closer examination. It would have raised the question of the grounds for extending insurance to cover that large section of the female population not gainfully employed (i.e. the wives of workers) that can still be found in many countries. Is it possible, and is it acceptable to extend insurance to them via their husbands? What is then to be done in the case of “non-legalized” cohabitation?

A “simplification” of this complex question in order to avoid debates of principle and heated feelings would scarcely be in the interests of the cause. Despite the adoption of the resolution, the question of maternity insurance cannot be considered as fully dealt with, and Social-Democracy will undoubtedly have to return to it.

More impassioned debate was provoked by the Danish proposal on night work. This resolution, introduced on the initiative of women type-setters, pointed out that legislation prohibiting night work for women but permitting it for men hindered the working woman in her struggle to earn her living. It is only with enormous effort that women succeed in gaining access to better-paid jobs and better working condi-

tions (in printing, for example), and the prohibition on night work for women pushes them back into the ranks of the unskilled workers, exposes them once more to all the temptations of prostitution and the horrors of approaching destitution. Night work must be abolished *simultaneously* for both men and women, as it is equally harmful to both...

The “over-simplified” way in which the Danish delegates presented the question of night work meant that their resolution was unable to win support. By a majority of 13 votes to 2 (voting was by country) the resolution was rejected. An individual demand meeting the interests of only one specific profession (night work in a skilled profession is found mainly in the printing industry) could not override a demand corresponding to the interests of the class as a whole. However, the conflict this question provoked indicates the need for a serious approach to the question raised by the Danish and Swedish delegations, namely the simultaneous equalizing of the conditions of male and female labour...

The resolution put forward by the chairwoman of the conference, Clara Zetkin, expressing sympathy with Finland, and another resolution put forward by the English, reminding women of their obligation to oppose chauvinism and bring up their children in a spirit of anti-militarism were both adopted without debate and were met with warm applause.

The central women’s international bureau remained as before in Stuttgart, and *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) was again recognized as the organ of the international socialist movement.

Whatever may have been the superficial failings of

the second international socialist conference, its work will undoubtedly have a major and beneficial influence upon the further success of the workers' movement. There is every reason to hope that the women's socialist movement, which is an integral part of the whole workers' movement, will assume larger and even more impressive dimensions before the next, the third conference. It will also clearly and irrefutably demonstrate that only special propaganda work among the female proletariat, work organized within the party on the basis of technical independence, can supplement the ranks of the organized workers with a "second army," the army of women workers fighting for the common workers' cause and for the comprehensive emancipation of women.

Summary

What is the women's socialist movement, and what are its objectives and aims? What are the forms that it is taking? Is it not simply a branch of bourgeois feminism, its "left wing"? And if not, how is the existence of separate women's newspapers and magazines, the convocation of meetings, congresses and conferences to be explained? Why is the movement not absorbed into the powerful current of the whole workers' movement?

These questions, which inevitably arise in connection with the women's international socialist conference in Copenhagen in August 1910, frequently cause bewilderment even among socialists, who are, unfortunately, insufficiently familiar with the history of the women's working-class movement in the West.

The history of this movement, however, is instruc-

tive and to a certain extent provides the answer to such questions.

Today there is hardly a socialist who would openly dispute the importance of the organization of women workers and the desirability of creating a broad women's socialist movement. Socialists now take pride in the size of the "women's army" and, when estimating the chances of success in the process of class struggle, take into account this new and rapidly increasing active force. However, there was a time, and not all that long ago — about 25 years — when such a thing as a *women's socialist movement* had never been heard of in any country, even if it had hundreds of thousands, millions, of women workers.

When, 14 years ago, during the international congress held in London in 1896, 30 women delegates (from England, Germany, America, Holland, Belgium and Poland) arranged for their own separate women's conference, only a couple of countries (Germany, England) were making their first attempts to set up a women's socialist movement. The workers' organizations in every country did, it is true, include individual women in their ranks, but, on entering the ranks of the party and taking part in the trade union struggle, the majority of these women as it was renounced in advance their work on behalf of the most deprived and legally unprotected section of the working class — women workers. Virtually nothing was being done by the party to raise the class consciousness of working women, for the emancipation of women as housewives and mothers.

This was the situation in Germany until the beginning of the 1890s, in England and other countries until

the beginning of the 20th century, and in Russia up to the revolutionary upheavals of 1905. In those countries where organizations of working women assumed primarily a professional form (for example, England and America), work was conducted in the main together with the bourgeois feminists and under their direct leadership: there was no question of a class struggle.

The first unofficial conference of women socialist delegates held in London in 1896 concerned itself mainly with an examination of the relationship between bourgeois feminism and the women's proletarian movement. It was recognized as desirable to distinguish between the women's bourgeois movement and the women's socialist movement, and emphasis was placed upon the urgent need to intensify socialist propaganda work among working women in order to involve them in the class struggle.

Eleven years have passed since then. Capitalism has continued its successful progress, developing itself to the full and subordinating to itself not only new branches of production, but also new countries. Female labour has become a major social force within the national economy. However, it was precisely women workers, outside any organization, not linked to their class comrades by any obligations, dispersed and isolated from one another, who were in effect dangerous and damaging rivals of the male section of the working class, often undermining the successes the latter had achieved by active demonstrations.

The question of organizing women workers and of the ways and means of involving them in the general movement became an urgent and immediate issue.

Feeling their way, adapting to the conditions in their country, the worker organizations in different countries attempted, each using its own methods, to solve this problem. The result was a variegated and motley scene. The forms taken by the women's proletarian movement varied according to local conditions. However, the most important thing was that the movement of the women of the working class had been called into being — it existed.

By 1907 the movement had assumed such a scale that it was possible to convene the first international women's conference in Stuttgart. When the representatives from the various countries revealed what they had achieved in their own countries, the results, if not impressive of themselves, held promise in terms of the possibilities opened up for the future. There now emerged the question of the formation of an international women's bureau to co-ordinate the women's socialist organizations in different countries. The bureau was set up in Stuttgart, and the magazine *Die Gleichheit* (Equality) was recognized as the central organ of the international movement.

The conference held in Stuttgart was of decisive importance for the socialist movement. It secured for the movement that independence which it needed for the future success of its work. It became clear that the women's proletarian movement was an integral part of the whole movement of the working class. Nonetheless, the specific social and political position of women in contemporary society requires that a particular approach be adopted towards women, and puts before the party a number of special objectives. These objectives, while they form part of the whole working-

class movement, while they form *part* of the common aim, nonetheless affect specifically female interests more closely and are therefore more properly pursued by the *women representatives of the working class themselves*. This point of view has now prevailed, but its elaboration nonetheless required great effort on the part of the women and provoked a sharp conflict of opinions...

The German party was the first to conduct independent propaganda work among the female proletariat; other countries gradually followed its example. The seeds sown by the first supporters of the women's socialist movement led by Clara Zetkin are already taking root...

Over recent years efforts have been made everywhere to arouse the awareness of working-class women by drawing them into the party. Everywhere the movement is carrying out painstaking work to involve working women in the broad current of the whole movement... The reports made by different countries at the women's conference in Copenhagen is proof of this tireless activity.

How this meeting of almost 100 representatives of the working class of 17 countries differed from the usual bourgeois congresses of suffragettes!...

After two days of animated and enthusiastic work, the delegates to the second socialist women's conference left the hall of the hospitable People's House imbued with the firm belief that by the third international conference of socialist women, the "second army" of the working class in every country will be able to swell its ranks with a fresh inflow of new and active forces from among the women of the working

class.

From *The Social Basis of the Woman Question*

1909

Leaving it to the bourgeois scholars to absorb themselves in discussion of the question of the superiority of one sex over the other, or in the weighing of brains and the comparing of the psychological structure of men and women, the followers of historical materialism fully accept the natural specificities of each sex and demand only that each person, whether man or woman, has a real opportunity for the fullest and freest self-determination, and the widest scope for the development and application of all natural inclinations. The followers of historical materialism reject the existence of a special woman question separate from the general social question of our day. Specific economic factors were behind the subordination of women; natural qualities have been a secondary factor in this process. Only the complete disappearance of these factors, only the evolution of those forces which at some point in the past gave rise to the subjection of women, is able in a fundamental way to influence and change their social position. In other words, women can become truly free and equal only in a world organized along new social and productive lines.

This, however, does not mean that the partial improvement of woman's life within the framework of the modern system is impossible. The radical solution of the workers' question is possible only with the complete reconstruction of modern productive relations;

but must this prevent us from working for reforms which would serve to satisfy the most urgent interests of the proletariat? On the contrary, each new gain of the working class represents a step leading mankind towards the kingdom of freedom and social equality: each right that woman wins brings her nearer the defined goal of full emancipation...

Social-Democracy was the first to include in its programme the demand for the equalization of the rights of women with those of men; in speeches and in print the party demands always and everywhere the withdrawal of limitations affecting women; it is the party's influence alone that has forced other parties and governments to carry out reforms in favour of women. And in Russia this party is not only the defender of women in terms of its theoretical positions but always and everywhere adheres to the principle of women's equality.

What, in this case, hinders our "equal fighters" from accepting the support of this strong and experienced party? The fact is that however "radical" the equal righters may be, they are still loyal to their own bourgeois class. Political freedom is at the moment an essential prerequisite for the growth and power of the Russian bourgeoisie; without it, all the economic welfare of the latter will turn out to have been built upon sand. The demand for political equality is for women a necessity that stems from life itself.

The slogan of "access to the professions" has ceased to suffice; only direct participation in the government of the country promises to assist in raising women's economic situation. Hence the passionate desire of women of the middle bourgeoisie to gain the

franchise, and hence their hostility to the modern bureaucratic system.

However, in their demands for political equality our feminists are like their foreign sisters; the wide horizons opened by social democratic learning remain alien and incomprehensible to them. The feminists seek equality in the framework of the existing class society; in no way do they attack the basis of this society. They fight for prerogatives for themselves, without challenging the existing prerogatives and privileges. We do not accuse the representatives of the bourgeois women's movement of failure to understand the matter; their view of things flows inevitably from their class position...

The Struggle for Economic Independence

First of all we must ask ourselves whether a single united women's movement is possible in a society based on class contradictions. The fact that the women who take part in the liberation movement do not represent one homogeneous mass is clear to every unbiased observer.

The women's world is divided, just as is the world of men, into two camps; the interests and aspirations of one group of women bring it close to the bourgeois class, while the other group has close connections with the proletariat, and its claims for liberation encompass a full solution to the woman question. Thus although both camps follow the general slogan of the "liberation of women," their aims and interests are different. Each of the groups unconsciously takes its starting point from the interests of its own class, which gives a specific class colouring to the targets and tasks

it sets itself...

However apparently radical the demands of the feminists, one must not lose sight of the fact that the feminists cannot, on account of their class position, fight for that fundamental transformation of the contemporary economic and social structure of society without which the liberation of women cannot be complete.

If in certain circumstances the short-term tasks of women of all classes coincide, the final aims of the two camps, which in the long term determine the direction of the movement and the tactics to be used, differ sharply. While for the feminists the achievement of equal rights with men in the framework of the contemporary capitalist world represents a sufficiently concrete end in itself, equal rights at the present time are, for the proletarian women, only a means of advancing the struggle against the economic slavery of the working class. The feminists see men as the main enemy, for men have unjustly seized all rights and privileges for themselves, leaving women only chains and duties. For them a victory is won when a prerogative previously enjoyed exclusively by the male sex is conceded to the "fair sex." Proletarian women have a different attitude. They do not see men as the enemy and the oppressor; on the contrary, they think of men as their comrades, who share with them the drudgery of the daily round and fight with them for a better future. The woman and her male comrade are enslaved by the same social conditions; the same hated chains of capitalism oppress their will and deprive them of the joys and charms of life. It is true that several specific aspects of the contemporary system lie with double

weight upon women, as it is also true that the conditions of hired labour sometimes turn working women into competitors and rivals to men. But in these unfavourable situations, the working class knows who is guilty...

The woman worker, no less than her brother in misfortune, hates that insatiable monster with its gilded maw which, concerned only to drain all the sap from its victims and to grow at the expense of millions of human lives, throws itself with equal greed at man, woman and child. Thousands of threads bring the working man close. The aspirations of the bourgeois woman, on the other hand, seem strange and incomprehensible. They are not warming to the proletarian heart; they do not promise the proletarian woman that bright future towards which the eyes of all exploited humanity are turned...

The proletarian women's final aim does not, of course, prevent them from desiring to improve their status even within the framework of the current bourgeois system, but the realization of these desires is constantly hindered by obstacles that derive from the very nature of capitalism. A woman can possess equal rights and be truly free only in a world of socialized labour, of harmony and justice. The feminists are unwilling and incapable of understanding this; it seems to them that when equality is formally accepted by the letter of the law, they will be able to win a comfortable place for themselves in the old world of oppression, enslavement and bondage, of tears and hardship. And this is true up to a certain point. 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. But each new concession won by the bourgeois woman would give her yet another weapon for the exploitation of her younger sister and would go on increasing the division between the women of the two opposite social camps. Their interests would be more sharply in conflict, their aspirations more obviously in contradiction.

Where, then, is that general “woman question”? Where is that unity of tasks and aspirations about which the feminists have so much to say? A sober glance at reality shows that such unity does not and cannot exist. In vain the feminists try to assure themselves that the “woman question” has nothing to do with that of the political party and that “its solution is possible only with the participation of all parties and all women”; as one of the radical German feminists has said, the logic of facts forces us to reject this comforting delusion of the feminists...

The conditions and forms of production have subjugated women throughout human history, and have gradually relegated them to the position of oppression and dependence in which most of them existed until now.

A colossal upheaval of the entire social and economic structure was required before women could begin to retrieve the significance and independence they had lost. Problems which at one time seemed too difficult for the most talented thinkers have now been solved by the inanimate but all-powerful conditions of production. The same forces which for thousands of

years enslaved women now, at a further stage of development, are leading them along the path to freedom and independence...

The woman question assumed importance for woman of the bourgeois classes approximately in the middle of the nineteenth century — a considerable time after the proletarian women had arrived in the labour arena. Under the impact of the monstrous successes of capitalism, the middle classes of the population were hit by waves of need. The economic changes had rendered the financial situation of the petty and middle bourgeoisie unstable, and the bourgeois women were faced with a dilemma of menacing proportions; either accept poverty, or achieve the right to work. Wives and daughters of these social groups began to knock at the doors of the universities, the art salons, the editorial houses, the offices, flooding to the professions that were open to them. The desire of bourgeois women to gain access to science and the higher benefits of culture was not the result of a sudden, maturing need but stemmed from that same question of “daily bread”.

The women of the bourgeoisie met, from the very first, with stiff resistance from men. A stubborn battle was waged between the professional men, attached to their “cosy little jobs,” and the women who were novices in the matter of earning their daily bread. This struggle gave rise to “feminism” — the attempt of bourgeois women to stand together and pit their common strength against the enemy, against men. As they entered the labour arena these women proudly referred to themselves as the “vanguard of the women’s movement.” They forgot that in this matter of win-

ning economic independence they were, as in other fields, travelling in the footsteps of their younger sisters and reaping the fruits of the efforts of their blis-tered hands.

Is it then really possible to talk of the feminists pi-oneering the road to women's work, when in every country hundreds of thousands of proletarian women had flooded the factories and workshops, taking over one branch of industry after another, before the bour-geois women's movement was ever born? Only thanks to the fact that the labour of women workers had re-ceived recognition on the world market were the bour-geois women able to occupy the independent position in society in which the feminists take so much pride...

We find it difficult to point to even one fact in the history of the struggle of the proletarian women to im-prove their material conditions to which the general feminist movement has contributed significantly. Whatever the proletarian women have achieved in the sphere of raising their own living standards is the re-sult of the efforts of the working class in general and of themselves in particular. The history of the struggle of the working women for better conditions of labour and for a more decent life is the history of the struggle of the proletariat for its liberation.

What, if not the fear of a dangerous explosion of proletarian dissatisfaction, forces the factory owners to raise the price of labour, reduce hours and intro-duce better working conditions? What, if not the fear of "labour unrest," persuades the government to es-tablish legislation to limit the exploitation of labour by capital?...

There is not one party in the world that has taken

up the defence of women as social democracy has done. The working woman is first and foremost a member of the working class, and the more satisfactory the position and the general welfare of each member of the proletarian family, the greater the benefit in the long run to the whole of the working class...

In face of the growing social difficulties, the sincere fighter for the cause must stop in sad bewilderment. She cannot but see how little the general women's movement has done for proletarian women, how incapable it is of improving the working and living conditions of the working class. The future of humanity must seem grey, drab and uncertain to those women who are fighting for equality but who have not adopted the proletarian world outlook or developed a firm faith in the coming of a more perfect social system. While the contemporary capitalist world remains unchanged, liberation must seem to them incomplete and impartial. What despair must grip the more thoughtful and sensitive of these women. Only the working class is capable of maintaining morale in the modern world with its distorted social relations. With firm and measured step, it advances steadily towards its aim. It draws the working women to its ranks. The proletarian woman bravely starts out on the thorny path of labour. Her legs sag; her body is torn. There are dangerous precipices along the way, and cruel beasts of prey are close at hand.

But only by taking this path is the woman able to achieve that distant but alluring aim — her true liberation in a new world of labour. During this difficult march to the bright future, the proletarian woman, until recently a humiliated, downtrodden slave with

no rights, learns to discard the slave mentality that has clung to her; step by step she transforms herself into an independent worker, an independent personality, free in love. It is she, fighting in the ranks of the proletariat, who wins for women the right to work; it is she, the “younger sister,” who prepares the ground for the “free” and “equal” woman of the future.

For what reason, then, should the woman worker seek a union with the bourgeois feminists? Who, in actual fact, would stand to gain in the event of such an alliance? Certainly not the woman worker. She is her own saviour; her future is in her own hands. The working woman guards her class interests and is not deceived by great speeches about the “world all women share.” The working woman must not and does not forget that while the aim of bourgeois women is to secure their own welfare in the framework of a society antagonistic to us, our aim is to build, in the place of the old, outdated world, a bright temple of universal labour, comradely solidarity and joyful freedom...

Marriage and the Problem of the Family

Let us turn our attention to another aspect of the woman question, the question of the family. The importance that the solution of this urgent and complex question has for the genuine emancipation of women is well known. The struggle for political rights, for the right to receive doctorates and other academic degrees, and for equal pay for equal work, is not the full sum of the fight for equality. To become really free woman has to throw off the heavy chains of the current forms of the family, which are outmoded and op-

pressive. For women, the solution of the family question is no less important than the achievement of political equality and economic independence.

In the family of today, the structure of which is confirmed by custom and law, woman is oppressed not only as a person but as a wife and mother. In most of the countries of the civilized world the civil code places women in a greater or lesser dependence on her husband, and awards the husband not only the right to dispose of her property but also the right of moral and physical dominance over her...

Where the official and legal servitude of women ends, the force we call "public opinion" begins. This public opinion is created and supported by the bourgeoisie with the aim of preserving "the sacred institution of property." The hypocrisy of "double morality" is another weapon. Bourgeois society crushes woman with its savage economic vice, paying for her labour at a very low rate. The woman is deprived of the citizen's right to raise her voice in defence of her interests: instead, she is given only the gracious alternative of the bondage of marriage or the embraces of prostitution — a trade despised and persecuted in public but encouraged and supported in secret. Is it necessary to emphasize the dark sides of contemporary married life and the sufferings women experience in connection with their position in the present family structure? So much has already been written and said on this subject. Literature is full of depressing pictures of the snares of married and family life. How many psychological dramas are enacted! How many lives are crippled! Here, it is only important for us to note that the modern family structure, to a lesser or greater extent,

oppresses women of all classes and all layers of the population. Customs and traditions persecute the young mother whatever the stratum of the population to which she belongs: the laws place bourgeois women, proletarian women and peasant women all under the guardianship of their husbands.

Have we not discovered at last that aspect of the woman question over which women of all classes can unite? Can they not struggle jointly against the conditions oppressing them? Is it not possible that the grief and suffering which women share in this instance will soften the claws of class antagonism and provide common aspirations and common action for the women of the different camps? Might it not be that on the basis of common desires and aims, co-operation between the bourgeois women and the proletarian women may become a possibility? The feminists are struggling for freer forms of marriage and for the “right to maternity”; they are raising their voices in defence of the prostitute, the human being persecuted by all. See how rich feminist literature is in the search for new forms of relationships and in enthusiastic demands for the “moral equality” of the sexes. Is it not true that while in the sphere of economic liberation the bourgeois women lag behind the many-million strong army of proletarian women who are pioneering the way for the “new woman,” in the fight for the solution of the family question the laurels go to the feminists?

Here in Russia, women of the middle bourgeoisie — that army of independent wage-earners thrown on to the labour market during the 1860s — have long since settled in practice many of the confused aspects of the marriage question. They have courageously re-

placed the “consolidated” family of the traditional church marriage with more elastic types of relationship that meet the needs of that social layer. But the subjective solution of this question by individual women does not change the situation and does not relieve the overall gloomy picture of family life. If any force is destroying the modern form of the family, it is not the titanic efforts of separate and stronger individuals but the inanimate and mighty forces of production, which are uncompromisingly building life on new foundations...

The heroic struggle of individual young women of the bourgeois world, who fling down the gauntlet and demand of society the right to “dare to love” without orders and without chains, ought to serve as an example for all women languishing in family chains — this is what is preached by the more emancipated feminists abroad and our progressive equal righters at home. The marriage question, in other words, is solved in their view without reference to the external situation; it is solved independently of changes in the economic structure of society. The isolated, heroic efforts of individuals is enough. Let a woman simply “dare,” and the problem of marriage is solved.

But less heroic women shake their heads in distrust. “It is all very well for the heroines of novels blessed by the prudent author with great independence, unselfish friends and extraordinary qualities of charm, to throw down the gauntlet. But what about those who have no capital, insufficient wages, no friends and little charm?” And the question of maternity preys on the mind of the woman who strives for freedom. Is “free love” possible? Can it be realized as

a common phenomenon, as the generally accepted norm rather than the individual exception, given the economic structure of our society? Is it possible to ignore the element of private property in contemporary marriage? Is it possible, in an individualistic world, to ignore the formal marriage contract without damaging the interests of women? For the marital contract is the only guarantee that all the difficulties of maternity will not fall on the woman alone. Will not that which once happened to the male worker now happen to the woman? The removal of guild regulations, without the establishment of new rules governing the conduct of the masters, gave capital absolute power over the workers. The tempting slogan “freedom of contract for labour and capital” became a means for the naked exploitation of labour by capital. “Free love,” introduced consistently into contemporary class society, instead of freeing woman from the hardships of family life, would surely shoulder her with a new burden — the task of caring, alone and unaided, for her children.

Only a whole number of fundamental reforms in the sphere of social relations — reforms transposing obligations from the family to society and the state — could create a situation where the principle of “free love” might to some extent be fulfilled. But can we seriously expect the modern class state, however democratic it may be, to take upon itself the duties towards mothers and children which at present are undertaken by that individualistic unit, the modern family? Only the fundamental transformation of all productive relations could create the social prerequisites to protect women from the negative aspects of the “free love” formula. Are we not aware of the depravity and ab-

normalities that in present conditions are anxious to pass themselves off under this convenient label? Consider all those gentlemen owning and administering industrial enterprises who force women among their workforce and clerical staff to satisfy their sexual whims, using the threat of dismissal to achieve their ends. Are they not, in their own way, practising “free love”? All those “masters of the house” who rape their servants and throw them out pregnant onto the street, are they not adhering to the formula of “free love”?

“But we are not talking of that kind of ‘freedom’,” object the advocates of free marriage. “On the contrary, we demand the acceptance of a ‘single morality’ equally binding for both sexes. We oppose the sexual licence that is current, and view as moral only the free union that is based on true love.” But, my dear friends, do you not think that your ideal of “free marriage,” when practised in the conditions of present society, might produce results that differ little from the distorted practice of sexual freedom? Only when women are relieved of all those material burdens which at the present time create a dual dependence, on capital and on the husband, can the principle of “free love” be implemented without bringing new grief for women in its wake. As women go out to work and achieve economic independence, certain possibilities for “free love” appear, particularly for the better-paid women of the intelligentsia. But the dependence of women on capital remains, and this dependence increases as more and more proletarian women sell their labour power. Is the slogan “free love” capable of improving the sad existence of these women, who earn only just enough to keep themselves alive? And any-

way, is not “free love” already practised among the working classes and practised so widely that the bourgeoisie has on more than one occasion raised the alarm and campaigned against the “depravity” and “immorality” of the proletariat? It should be noted that when the feminists enthuse about the new forms of cohabitation outside marriage that should be considered by the emancipated bourgeois woman, they speak of “free love,” but when the working class is under discussion these relationships are scornfully referred to as “disorderly sexual intercourse.” This sums up their attitude.

But for proletarian women at the present time all relationships, whether sanctified by the church or not, are equally harsh in their consequences. The crux of the family and marriage problem lies for the proletarian wife and mother not in the question of the sacred or secular external form, but in the attendant social and economic conditions which define the complicated obligations of the working-class woman. Of course it matters to her too whether her husband has the right to dispose of her earnings, whether he has the right by law to force her to live with him when she does not want to, whether the husband can forcibly take her children away, etc. However, it is not such paragraphs of the civic code that determine the position of woman in the family, nor is it these paragraphs which make for the confusion and complexity of the family problem. The question of relationships would cease to be such a painful one for the majority of women only if society relieved women of all those petty household cares which are at present unavoidable (given the existence of individual, scattered domes-

tic economies), took over responsibility for the younger generation, protected maternity and gave the mother to the child for at least the first months after birth.

In opposing the legal and sacred church marriage contract, the feminists are fighting a fetish. The proletarian women, on the other hand, are waging war against the factors that are behind the modern form of marriage and family. In striving to change fundamentally the conditions of life, they know that they are also helping to reform relationships between the sexes. Here we have the main difference between the bourgeois and proletarian approach to the difficult problem of the family.

The feminists and the social reformers from the camp of the bourgeoisie, naively believing in the possibility of creating new forms of family and new types of marital relations against the dismal background of the contemporary class society, tie themselves in knots in their search for these new forms. If life itself has not yet produced these forms, it is necessary, they seem to imagine, to think them up whatever the cost. There must, they believe, be modern forms of sexual relationship which are capable of solving the complex family problem under the present social system. And the ideologists of the bourgeois world — the journalists, writers and prominent women fighters for emancipation — one after the other put forward their “family panacea,” their new “family formula.”

How utopian these marriage formulas sound. How feeble these palliatives, when considered in the light of the gloomy reality of our modern family structure. Before these formulas of “free relationships” and

“free love” can become practice, it is above all necessary that a fundamental reform of all social relationships between people take place; furthermore, the moral and sexual norms and the whole psychology of mankind would have to undergo a thorough evolution. Is the contemporary person psychologically able to cope with “free love”? What about the jealousy that eats into even the best human souls? And that deeply-rooted sense of property that demands the possession not only of the body but also of the soul of another? And the inability to have the proper respect for the individuality of another? The habit of either subordinating oneself to the loved one, or of subordinating the loved one to oneself? And the bitter and desperate feeling of desertion, of limitless loneliness, which is experienced when the loved ceases to love and leaves? Where can the lonely person, who is an individualist to the very core of his being, find solace? The collective, with its joys and disappointments and aspirations, is the best outlet for the emotional and intellectual energies of the individual. But is modern man capable of working with this collective in such a way as to feel the mutually interacting influences? Is the life of the collective really capable, at present, of replacing the individual’s petty personal joys? Without the “unique,” “one-and-only” twin soul, even the socialist, the collectivist, is quite alone in the present antagonistic world; only in the working class do we catch the pale glimpse of the future, of more harmonious and more social relations between people. The family problem is as complex and many-faceted as life itself. Our social system is incapable of solving it.

Other marriage formulas have been put forward.

Several progressive women and social thinkers regard the marriage union only as a method of producing progeny. Marriage in itself, they hold, does not have any special value for woman — motherhood is her purpose, her sacred aim, her task in life. Thanks to such inspired advocates as Ruth Bray and Ellen Key, the bourgeois ideal that recognizes woman as a female rather than a person has acquired a special halo of progressiveness. Foreign literature has seized upon the slogan put forward by these “advanced women” with enthusiasm. And even here in Russia, in the period before the political storm of 1905, before social values came in for revision, the question of maternity had attracted the attention of the daily press. The slogan “the right to maternity” cannot help producing lively response in the broadest circles of the female population. Thus, despite the fact that all the suggestions of the feminists in this connection were of the utopian variety, the problem was too important and topical not to attract women.

The “right to maternity” is the kind of question that touches not only women from the bourgeois class but also, to an even greater extent, proletarian women as well. The right to be a mother — these are golden words that go straight to “any women’s heart” and force that heart to beat faster. The right to feed “one’s own” child with one’s own milk, and to attend the first signs of its awakening consciousness, the right to care for its tiny body and shield its tender soul from the thorns, and sufferings of the first steps in life — what mother would not support these demands?

It would seem that we have again stumbled on an issue that could serve as a moment of unity between

women of different social layers; it would seem that we have found, at last, the bridge uniting women of the two hostile worlds. Let us look closer, to discover what the progressive bourgeois women understand by “the right to maternity.” Then we can see whether, in fact, proletarian women can agree with the solutions to the problem of maternity envisaged by the bourgeois fighters for equal rights. In the eyes of its eager apologists, maternity possesses an almost sacred quality. Striving to smash the false prejudices that brand a woman for engaging in a natural activity — the bearing of a child — because the activity has not been sanctified by the law, the fighters for the right to maternity have bent the stick in the other direction: for them, maternity has become the aim of a woman’s life...

Ellen Key’s devotion to the obligations of maternity and the family forces her to give an assurance that the isolated family unit will continue to exist even in a society transformed along socialist lines. The only change, as she sees it, will be that all the attendant elements of convenience or of material gain will be excluded from the marriage union, which will be concluded according to mutual inclinations, without rituals or formalities — love and marriage will be truly synonymous. But the isolated family unit is the result of the modern individualistic world, with its rat-race, its pressures, its loneliness: the family is a product of the monstrous capitalist system. And yet Key hopes to bequeath the family to socialist society! Blood and kinship ties at present often serve, it is true, as the only support in life, as the only refuge in times of hardship and misfortune. But will they be morally or socially

necessary in the future? Key does not answer this question. She has too loving a regard for the "ideal family," this egoistic unit of the middle bourgeoisie to which the devotees of the bourgeois structure of society look with such reverence.

But it is not only the talented though erratic Ellen Key who loses her way in the social contradictions. There is probably no other question about which socialists themselves are so little in agreement as the question of marriage and the family. Were we to try and organize a survey among socialists, the results would most probably be very curious. Does the family wither away? Or are there grounds for believing that the family disorders of the present are only a transitory crisis? Will the present form of the family be preserved in the future society, or will it be buried with the modern capitalist system? These are questions which might well receive very different answers...

With the transfer of educative functions from the family to society, the last tie holding together the modern isolated family will be loosened; the process of disintegration will proceed at an even faster pace, and the pale silhouettes of future marital relations will begin to emerge. What can we say about these indistinct silhouettes, hidden as they are by present-day influences?

Does one have to repeat that the present compulsory form of marriage will be replaced by the free union of loving individuals? The ideal of free love drawn by the hungry imagination of women fighting for their emancipation undoubtedly corresponds to some extent to the norm of relationships between the sexes that society will establish. However, the social influ-

ences are so complex and their interactions so diverse that it is impossible to foretell what the relationships of the future, when the whole system has fundamentally been changed, will be like. But the slowly maturing evolution of relations between the sexes is clear evidence that ritual marriage and the compulsive isolated family are doomed to disappear.

The Struggle for Political Rights

The feminists answer our criticisms by saying: even if the arguments behind our defence of the political rights of women seem to you mistaken, is the importance of the demand itself, which is equally urgent for feminists and for representatives of the working class, thereby reduced? Cannot the women of the two social camps, for the sake of their common political aspirations, surmount the barriers of class antagonism that divide them? Surely, they are capable of waging a common struggle against the hostile forces that surround them? Division between bourgeois and proletarian is inevitable as far as other questions are concerned, but in the case of this particular question, the feminists imagine, the women of the various social classes have no differences.

Feminists keep returning to these arguments with bitterness and bewilderment, seeing preconceived notions of partisan loyalty in the refusal of representatives of the working class to join forces with them in the struggle for women's political rights. Is this really the case? Is there a complete identity of political aspirations, or does antagonism hinder the creation of an indivisible, above-class army of women in this instance as in all others? We have to answer this ques-

tion before we can outline the tactics that proletarian women will employ in winning political rights for their sex.

The feminists declare themselves to be on the side of social reform, and some of them even say they are in favour of socialism — in the far distant future, of course — but they are not intending to struggle in the ranks of the working class for the realization of these aims. The best of them believe, with a naive sincerity, that once the deputies' seats are within their reach they will be able to cure the social sores which have in their view developed because men, with their inherent egotism, have been masters of the situation. However good the intentions of individual groups of feminists towards the proletariat, whenever the question of class struggle has been posed, they have left the battlefield in a fright. They find that they do not wish to interfere in alien causes, and prefer to retire to their bourgeois liberalism which is so comfortably familiar.

No, however much the bourgeois feminists try to repress the true aim of their political desires, however much they assure their younger sisters that involvement in political life promises immeasurable benefits for the women of the working class, the bourgeois spirit that pervades the whole feminist movement gives a class colouring even to the demand for equal political rights with men, which would seem to be a general women's demand. Different aims and understandings of how political rights are to be used create an unbridgeable gulf between bourgeois and proletarian women. This does not contradict the fact that the immediate tasks of the two groups of women coincide to a certain degree, for the representatives of all clas-

ses which have received access to political power strive above all to achieve a review of the civil code, which in every country, to a greater or lesser extent, discriminates against women. Women press for legal changes that create more favourable conditions of labour for themselves; they stand together against the regulations legalizing prostitution, etc. However, the coincidence of these immediate tasks is of a purely formal nature. For class interest determines that the attitude of the two groups to these reforms is sharply contradictory...

Class instinct — whatever the feminists say — always shows itself to be more powerful than the noble enthusiasms of “above-class” politics. So long as the bourgeois women and their “younger sisters” are equal in their inequality, the former can, with complete sincerity, make great efforts to defend the general interests of women. But once the barrier is down and the bourgeois women have received access to political activity, the recent defenders of the “rights of all women” become enthusiastic defenders of the privileges of their class, content to leave the younger sisters with no rights at all. Thus, when the feminists talk to working women about the need for a common struggle to realize some “general women’s” principle, women of the working class are naturally distrustful.

“Women’s Day”

1913

What is “Women’s Day”? Is it really necessary? Is it not a concession to the women of the bourgeois class, to the feminists and suffragettes? Is it not harmful to the unity of the workers’ movement?

Such questions can still be heard in Russia, though they are no longer heard abroad. Life itself has already supplied a clear and eloquent answer.

“Women’s Day” is a link in the long, solid chain of the women’s proletarian movement. The organized army of working women grows with every year. Twenty years ago the trade unions contained only small groups of working women scattered here and there among the ranks of the workers’ party... Now English trade unions have over 292 thousand women members; in Germany around 200 thousand are in the trade union movement and 150 thousand in the workers’ party, and in Austria there are 47 thousand in the trade unions and almost 20 thousand in the party. Everywhere — in Italy, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland — the women of the working class are organizing themselves. The women’s socialist army has almost a million members. A powerful force! A force that the powers of this world must reckon with when it is a question of the cost of living, maternity insurance, child labour and legislation to protect female labour.

There was a time when working men thought that they alone must bear on their shoulders the brunt of the struggle against capital, that they alone must deal

with the “old world” without the help of their womenfolk. However, as working-class women entered the ranks of those who sell their labour, forced onto the labour market by need, by the fact that husband or father is unemployed, working men became aware that to leave women behind in the ranks of the “non-class-conscious” was to damage their cause and hold it back. The greater the number of conscious fighters, the greater the chances of success. What level of consciousness is possessed by a woman who sits by the stove, who has no rights in society, the state or the family? She has no “ideas” of her own! Everything is done as ordered by the father or husband...

The backwardness and lack of rights suffered by women, their subjection and indifference, are of no benefit to the working class, and indeed are directly harmful to it. But how is the woman worker to be drawn into the movement, how is she to be awoken?

Social-Democracy abroad did not find the correct solution immediately. Workers’ organizations were open to women workers, but only a few entered. Why? Because the working class at first did not realize that the woman worker is the most legally and socially deprived member of that class, that she has been browbeaten, intimidated, persecuted down the centuries, and that in order to stimulate her mind and heart, a special approach is needed, words understandable to her as a woman. The workers did not immediately appreciate that in this world of lack of rights and exploitation, the woman is oppressed not only as a seller of her labour, but also as a mother, as a woman... However, when the workers’ socialist party understood this, it boldly took up the defence of women on both

counts as a hired worker and as a woman, a mother.

Socialists in every country began to demand special protection for female labour, insurance for mother and child, political rights for women and the defence of women's interests.

The more clearly the workers' party perceived this second objective vis-à-vis women workers, the more willingly women joined the party, the more they appreciated that the party is their true champion, that the working class is struggling also for their urgent and exclusively female needs. Working women themselves, organized and conscious, have done a great deal to elucidate this objective. Now the main burden of the work to attract more working women into the socialist movement lies with the women. The parties in every country have their own special women's committees, secretariats and bureaus. These women's committees conduct work among the still largely non-politically conscious female population, arouse the consciousness of working women and organize them. They also examine those questions and demands that affect women most closely: protection and provision for expectant and nursing mothers, the legislative regulation of female labour, the campaign against prostitution and infant mortality, the demand for political rights for women, the improvement of housing, the campaign against the rising cost of living, etc.

Thus, as members of the party, women workers are fighting for the common class cause, while at the same time outlining and putting forward those needs and demands that most nearly affect themselves as women, housewives and mothers. The party supports these demands and fights for them... The requirements

of working women are part and parcel of the common workers' cause!

On "Women's Day" the organized women workers demonstrate against their lack of rights.

But, some will say, why this *singling out* of women workers? Why special "Women's Days," special leaflets for working women, meetings and conferences of working-class women? Is this not, in the final analysis, a concession to the feminists and bourgeois suffragettes?

Only those who do not understand the radical difference between the movement of socialist women and bourgeois suffragettes can think this way.

What is the aim of the feminists? Their aim is to achieve the same advantages, the same power, the same rights within capitalist society as those possessed now by their husbands, fathers and brothers.

What is the aim of the women workers? Their aim is to abolish all privileges deriving from birth or wealth. For the woman worker it is a matter of indifference who is the "master" — a man or a woman. Together with the whole of her class, she can ease her position as a worker.

Feminists demand equal rights always and everywhere. Women workers reply: we demand rights for every citizen, man and woman, but we are not prepared to forget that we are not only workers and citizens, but also mothers! And as mothers, as women who give birth to the future, we demand special concern for ourselves and our children, special protection from the state and society.

The feminists are striving to acquire political rights. However, here too our paths separate.

For bourgeois women, political rights are simply a means allowing them to make their way more conveniently and more securely in a world founded on the exploitation of the working people. For women workers, political rights are a step along the rocky and difficult path that leads to the desired kingdom of labour.

The paths pursued by women workers and bourgeois suffragettes have long since separated. There is too great a difference between the objectives that life has put before them. There is too great a contradiction between the interests of the woman worker and the lady proprietress, between the servant and her mistress... There are not and cannot be any points of contact, conciliation or convergence between them. Therefore working men should not fear separate Women's Days, nor special conferences of women workers, nor their special press.

Every special, distinct form of work among the women of the working class is simply a means of arousing the consciousness of the woman worker and drawing her into the ranks of those fighting for a better future... Women's Days and the slow, meticulous work undertaken to arouse the self-consciousness of the woman worker are serving the cause not of the division but of the unification of the working class.

Let a joyous sense of serving the common class cause and of fighting simultaneously for their own female emancipation inspire women workers to join in the celebration of Women's Day.

Preface to *Society and Motherhood*

1915

Among the numerous problems raised by contemporary reality there is probably none more important for mankind, none more vital and urgent than the *problem of motherhood* created by the large-scale capitalist economic system. The problem of protecting and providing for the mother and young child is one that faces social politicians, knocks relentlessly at the door of the statesman, engages the health and hygiene specialists, concerns the social statistician, haunts the representative of the working class and weighs down on the shoulders of tens of millions of mothers compelled to earn their own living.

Side by side with the problem of sex and marriage, enveloped in the poetical language of the psychological suffering, insoluble difficulties and unsatisfied needs of noble souls, there is always to be found the majestic and tragic figure of motherhood wearily carrying her heavy burden. Neo-malthusians, social-reformers and philanthropists have all hastened to provide their own particular solution to this thorny problem, and all sing the praises of their own method of restoring paradise lost to mothers and babies.

Meanwhile the number of children's corpses grows and grows, and the unruly birth rate, instead of "sensibly" rising to the level that would meet the requirements of the state, reveals an unpleasant tendency to steady decline. The prosperity of national industry and the development of the national economy depend upon a constant supply of fresh labour; the military

might of the nation is ensured by the continual increase in the able-bodied male population. What should be done if the population growth not only diminishes with every decade but, as is the case in France, repeatedly drops below replacement level? Disturbed by these worrying symptoms, the state authorities in one country after another are joining the ranks of the defenders of young children and are turning to a principle alien in spirit to the modern order — *the principle of state maternity insurance*, a principle in sharp contradiction with the present social structure as the latter undermines the basis of marriage and violates the fundamental concepts of private-family rights and relationships. However, if, in the name of “higher” considerations of state and under the pressure of necessity, the state authorities have been compelled to advance and implement a measure so at odds with the prevailing spirit of the representatives of the bourgeois world, at the other end of the social scale, among the working class, the principle of providing for and protecting mother and child is welcomed with enthusiasm and sympathy.

The demand that the social collective (the community) provide maternity insurance and child protection was born of the immediate and vital needs of the class of hired workers. Of all the strata of society, this class is the one which most requires that a solution be found to the painful conflict between compulsory professional labour by women and their duties as representatives of their sex, as mothers. Following a powerful class instinct rather than a clearly understood idea, the working class strove to find a way of resolving this conflict.

It was only feeling its way forward, and did not immediately choose the right path, but nonetheless it was without doubt the organized section of the working class that called for the defence of motherhood when the representatives of other classes were still denying the existence of the very problem, and when the measures suggested to solve it were looked upon as childish utopianism. As early as the first congress of the International in the late 1860s, the socialists raised the question of the protection of women workers as mothers and representatives of their sex. Since then, the organized representatives of the working class have constantly returned to this question. The measures originally proposed by the workers were, it is true, somewhat inconsistent and contradictory, and did not correspond to the basic tendencies within the workers' movement. However, as the close link between the working-class movement and the trend of increasing female professional labour became clearer, the basic demands of male and female workers on this issue were gradually defined.

The demands at present being put forward by socialists for the protection of and provision for mother and child are fully in accord with the overall tasks of the socialist movement. The evolution of social relations is clearly demonstrating that in this area the dominant trend is towards the transfer to the social collective (community) of those tasks and duties that hitherto were considered to be the inalienable functions of the members of individual families.

Thus it has come about that, approaching this issue from different points of view and basing themselves on different reasons, both the state authorities

on the one hand and the socialist parties on the other have arrived at one and the same conclusion, namely the need for state protection and provision for motherhood. The difference of opinion that now exists concerns not the recognition of the *principle of maternity insurance*, as was the case until fairly recently, but rather the application of this socio-political measure, its scope and implementation. Even in those countries that have already taken the first steps towards providing maternity insurance, the state authorities are seeking to limit themselves to the minimum, making concession after concession to a disapproving bourgeois world. The representatives of the working class, on the other hand, are demanding radical measures and are subjecting to merciless criticism the inadequate reforms introduced by the present governments, who are attempting to defend the mother and child with one arm, while upholding with the other the very system of exploited hired labour which leads to the destruction of both.

The question of protecting and providing for motherhood via state insurance is one that arose only recently. Moreover, one of the most characteristic features of this social measure is that, here, practice preceded theory. The first step to protect the mother by legislation was taken in Switzerland in 1878, when an eight-week maternity leave for the working mother was made compulsory. State maternity insurance first began in Germany when, in 1883, a special clause on assistance for nursing mothers was included in the law on health insurance. Neither of these measures was dictated primarily by humanitarian considerations or the interests of working mothers. They were both

prompted by the same phenomena, which for the first time were causing concern among state authorities: the horrific level of infant mortality in industrial areas (it had reached 65 per cent in the industrial districts of Germany by the 1870s), and the growing shortage of army recruits.

However, while the state authorities were taking the first practical steps towards protection and provision for mother and child, they, together with the representatives of the bourgeois world, were drowning with their cries of disapproval the first apostles of the concept of comprehensive maternity insurance, such visionary philanthropists as Jules Simon, Félix Pousineau, the famous French gynecologist Adolphe Pinard, the theoreticians Louis Frank in Belgium and Paulina Schiff in Italy, Ellen Key in Sweden and, later, Ruth Bré in Germany, all of whom advanced this idea in the name of “humanity” and “justice,” in the name of the health and viability of the nation, in the name of the reassertion of the oldest of women’s rights — the right to motherhood. While giving way to necessity, the state authorities attempted for some time to preserve outward decorum and to give the impression that the practical recognition of the principle of maternity insurance in no way contradicted the inviolability of the private family unit. Thus governments constantly emphasized that provision for nursing mothers is not a maternity payment, but simply a payment made during enforced unemployment.

Despite their inconsistency, the state authorities are being compelled in practice to move further and further along the road of state protection and provision for mothers. Whereas, only some twenty years

ago, the idea of state maternity insurance was looked upon as utopianism, now such insurance is a practical reality included among the urgent socio-political tasks facing any “far-sighted” government.

All those measures to protect and provide for mother and child which are now being implemented by the authorities with extreme caution and circumspection are, of course, very far from adequate. They are, as yet, nothing more than the first uncertain steps on the long and difficult path that leads to the realization of the ideal: the transfer of the task of caring for the new generation, so precious to mankind, from the shoulders of private, individual parents to the whole community. What has been done so far in this area is nothing more than the proclamation and recognition of the *principle* — but this itself is of major importance and brings with it many implications.

Over the last ten years, i.e., in the first decade of the 20th century, an important step forward has been taken on the question of maternity insurance. In recent years this issue has not only been raised at workers’ congresses, but has also come to the attention of the broad public and aroused interest among public hygiene experts and physicians, statisticians and social politicians. In a number of countries it has remained constantly on the parliamentary agenda. It provoked heated debate in the German Reichstag (the 1910-1911 session), while the French Assembly and Senate have discussed the question several times during recent years (1908-1913), and the English Parliament touched upon it during the debate of the national insurance bill (1909 and 1913). It has been debated in the Italian parliament (1905-1910), in the Swiss Fed-

eral Assembly (1906-1911), the Austrian parliament (1909-1913), in the Norwegian Storting (1909-1911), in the national parliaments of Sweden, Finland, Romania and Serbia, and at the Third State Duma in Russia during the elaboration of legislation on health insurance (1909-1912). The result has been the introduction of state insurance for nursing mothers in eight European states (Italy, France, Norway, Switzerland, Russia, Romania, England, and Serbia-Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Australia, and also the extension of insurance legislation covering working mothers in those countries that had already introduced this form of social insurance (Germany, Austria, Hungary and Luxembourg).

Nonetheless, despite the indisputable signs of growing interest in the question of providing for mother and child, this task, which is of the utmost importance for the state, is still receiving too little attention even in countries which are leading the way in terms of social legislation. The state authorities are doing all they can to limit themselves to reforms in the narrow sphere of direct protection for nursing mothers, leaving the working mother to spend the rest of her life subjected to precisely those deleterious living and working conditions which render normal motherhood impossible. What is more, the question of provision and protection for mother and child is an aspect of social policy which cannot be arbitrarily separated off from other, closely related reforms affecting the labour and living conditions of the working class. Will the mother and child gain any significant benefit from the introduction of relatively comprehensive protection if the working woman is subjected for the rest of

the time to unrestricted exploitation by capital, if her working day is so long as to sap her strength, and the whole of the working class exists permanently on the edge of starvation?

If the problem of protection and provision for mother and child is to receive a solution that is in any way satisfactory, this can only be achieved by the simultaneous introduction of a complex system of radical financial and economic reforms, which all state authorities are so reluctant to accept. The ruling circles prefer to stretch out their protecting arm to the woman of the working class only at the moment when she is providing the state with a new member, while for the rest of the time it leaves her in the grip of merciless exploitation by capital. This same mistake is repeated by the social-reformers when they suggest the implementation of isolated solutions to the problem of motherhood, rejecting all those fundamental demands advanced by the organized working class in behalf of the working woman both as a member of the working class and as the bearer of the future, as a mother.

Protection and provision for mother and child constitute an integral part of the total network of social reforms indicated by the working class, and this is the chief merit of those measures to protect mothers proposed by the Social-Democrats. These measures make up, as it were, consecutive rungs in the ladder which leads to the ideal-aim that beckons us to follow in pursuit — the comprehensive solution of the problem of motherhood. This problem is closely bound up with basic class objectives and cannot be solved if the ultimate aim of that class is not realized. However, it

is precisely because the issue of maternity insurance constitutes an integral part of the socialist programme and is inseparable from it, it is precisely because this problem affects as no other the interests of the working class, that one cannot but be surprised that socialist thought has done so little as regards the theoretical elaboration of the question of provision for mothers and protection for young children. There is no issue of social policy so scantily represented in socialist literature as this fundamental and complex issue of motherhood, so important for the future.

Practice has here, once again, outstripped theory, and the very demands made by the socialists in the sphere of protection and provision for mother and child are still in the process of taking shape. There is as yet no work imbued with the spirit of socialism which provides a serious and in any way comprehensive analysis of this section of the working-class programme and examines to what extent the practical measures and demands put forward correspond to the aims of the class and the interests of the movement, and this despite the fact that such a question merits more serious attention on the part of those who represent the class that is most affected by it. Does not this issue touch upon the most fundamental essentials of modern society? Does it not directly affect the fate of the family? Does it not alter the very nature of marital relations? Does it not constitute an important element in the foundations of the proposed future social structure? Is it not time to correlate the demand for comprehensive maternity insurance with the basic objectives of the working class, to clearly recognize the position occupied by this part of the socialist pro-

gramme in the total majestic plan of social transformation?

Socialist literature still does not provide a clear, theoretically substantiated answer to the following important question: which of the existing forms of maternity insurance most corresponds to the interests of the working class and comes closest to meeting its basic objectives? Is the spread of that form of maternity provision which comprises insurance for expectant and nursing mothers within the health insurance system — the form adopted by the government in Germany and taken as a model by many other governments — in fact desirable from the point of view of the workers? Should it not rather serve merely as a transitional stage in the move towards a more complete, a more comprehensive system of maternity provision which, in view of the scale of the task itself, should become part of a social insurance system founded upon a different principle?

The answers to these questions depend on the way maternity insurance is to be defined and the attitude to the function of child-bearing. There exist three different points of view on this subject.

If one adopts the point of view of the German legislators and equates giving birth with a pathological phenomenon, an illness resulting in enforced unemployment, against which the woman is insured, then the fact that maternity insurance and health insurance are treated as one appears logical. But does this identification meet the interests of the working class? And can any comprehensive maternity provisions be brought within the narrow, already clearly defined framework of health insurance? The very legislators

who introduced this identification are compelled, even given the present modest scale of maternity insurance, to go beyond the confines of health insurance and append supplementary paragraphs on working mothers. Unwilling to recognize maternity insurance as an independent branch of social insurance, the legislators are opting for a middle path and converting maternity provision into a function of the health insurance system that is conceptually distinct from ordinary sickness benefit.

However, there is another view of maternity provision supported mainly by the Romance countries: maternity is viewed as a particular social function, and the assistance given to the working mother is treated as a *reward* for the service that the mother is performing for the state. Such a point of view results in the formulation of a different principle of maternity insurance that is not connected with illness and enforced unemployment, and which makes it possible to separate off maternity provision as a special and independent branch of insurance. Is this viewpoint acceptable for the working class? Does it meet the interests of the movement? This is another question to which no direct answer is to be found in socialist literature.

Finally, there is the third view of maternity provision as one of the means of lightening the burden of motherhood for the woman worker, as a transitional stage on the way to a situation in which concern for the new generation will cease to lie with individuals and will be handed over to society. That this last view comes closest to meeting the interests of the working class can be seen from the fact that it most fully corresponds both to the ideal of the future relationship be-

tween the sexes and to the mutual obligations of the community and the individual which are to underlie a social system built upon a different labour principle. In formulating the social measures which are designed to protect motherhood, the organized working class must proceed on the basis of this ultimate ideal-aim, which promises fully to resolve the problem of motherhood. This fundamental proposal and ideal must also serve as the criterion when Social-Democracy is choosing between different systems of maternity insurance.

However, in order to choose correctly between these forms of maternity provision, one must carefully examine the third of the points of view cited above in order to judge to what extent it does, in fact, correspond to the general plan for the future development of society and to those socialist ideals that follow therefrom.

That view of maternity insurance which sees it as a measure to lighten the burden of motherhood for the working-class woman and, at the same time, as a measure encouraging the transfer of concern for the new generation from private individuals (parents) to the community, is acceptable only if one admits that the present form of the family will inevitably collapse and disintegrate in the course of the future historical evolution of society. While the family was strong, stable, viable, while the woman lived and worked exclusively within the family, the question of protecting and providing for motherhood could never arise.

The problem of motherhood is an offspring of large-scale capitalist production, as are a number of other urgent social ills which together compose the so-

cial question facing modern society. The problem of maternity came into existence together with the labour problem, has existed since the women of the deprived strata of society have been compelled to tear the child from the breast and take their labour to the labour market.

The tremendous evolution of economic relations that, over the last hundred years, has overturned all the foundations of previous socio-economic relations, has directly affected the organization of the family and caused its previous forms to disintegrate. The family as it has come down to us was based on specific economic principles. It rested on production relations which at that time bound the members of one family more firmly than could even the closest blood ties. In the days when the family was an economic unit, the smallest economic unity of the community, and moreover not merely a consumer but also a producer, a creative unit, the family (*gens*) was able, thanks to its joint use of what was then the major tool of production — land — to produce all that was necessary for its members; care for the young, their material support, upbringing and training were part of its natural and inalienable obligations. In order to flourish (both economically and socially), the family required new members, a constant inflow of fresh labour. It is not at all surprising that responsibility for the new generation then lay with the family, and that the family alone carried the full burden of the support and upbringing of the younger generation.

Today, however, when the family as a specific social unit has no production functions within the bourgeois order, with its widespread division of labour and

individualistic principle of production, there are no longer any positive arguments that can justify leaving all responsibility for the new generation with this private unit.

The family of tribal life, the family as a productive unit providing its members with all the essentials of life, has passed into history. Now not only the fathers but increasingly the mothers also are working not within and for the family, but outside the family, on and for the market, serving with their labour not their blood relatives but strangers who are consumers on the commodity market. Now the constant inflow of fresh labour, necessary to ensure the further development of the productive forces, is no longer needed by the family, by a self-enclosed, small, private unit, but by the whole of the social collective.

Logically it would appear that responsibility for the new generation should lie with that economic unit, with that social collective which has need of that generation for its own future existence. Once the family has actually ceased to exist as an economic unit, once it has ceased to require an influx of fresh labour, once the adult receives what he needs to live not from the family but from the wider community, the care of young children and the mothers who give birth to them should also be the responsibility of this community. Such an argument, however, is acceptable only to a society that is genuinely concerned to care for the interests of the entire "whole" entrusted to it... Present state authorities on the other hand, who serve only the interests of the monopolists, seek to make use of the ready-made labour force while freeing themselves of all responsibility for the life of the children and moth-

ers, preferring to impose on the individual private family those obligations which it once bore at another, earlier stage in human economic development. Such an inappropriate and contradictory state of affairs could only arise historically, but history is called upon to correct this unreasonable situation by gradually increasing communal concern over the fate of children and their mothers.

The thoughtlessness and indifference shown by modern society towards this important question of the fate of mothers and children will appear as gross negligence to future generations. Today we are in no way surprised that the state assumes responsibility for the sick, the handicapped, the insane, that it builds schools and universities and maintains public libraries and museums. On the contrary, we would be amazed if the public authorities suddenly declared that the upbringing and education of young people was a matter not for the state but for the family, pointing to the fact that once, in tribal life, all the knowledge a man acquired he acquired within the self-contained family unit. The people of the future will be no less amazed at the present common assertion that concern for the fate of mother and child is not an obligation of the community.

If the state finds it to its benefit to assume responsibility for the upbringing and education of youth, surely it should view it as even more important to save the hundreds of thousands (and in Russia more than a million) children who perish as a result of inadequate protection and the total lack of provision for motherhood. These hundreds of thousands of children are, after all, not only future producers, but also

the future taxpayers so desired by the state and, moreover, also possible recruits!

The attempt to preserve the former obligations of the family on the basis of its outmoded form has the most regrettable consequences highly damaging to the interests of the whole of society: it leads to the deliberate lowering of the birth rate and increases infant mortality.¹ With the full weight of responsibility for children lying on the individual family, those families that belong to the most deprived section of the population find children such an intolerable burden, find that they bring such worry, difficulty and sorrow, that a neo-Malthusian approach seems the only solution. If the worker has managed, by overcoming enormous difficulties, to attain a certain level of economic security and cultural development, then the only way he can safeguard this precious achievement on getting married is to remain childless. On the other hand, the lack of provision for motherhood, the lack of the necessary protection of the interests of the mother, leave the woman entirely in the power of those production relations which destroy both her and her child.

The lack of provision for millions of mothers, and the lack of concern for young children on the part of

¹ “The principle of laying the economic burden of the upbringing of children upon the private households responsible for bringing them physically into the world,” says Doctor Schmidt, “is so unreasonable, such a mad idea... that our descendants will be totally unable to understand the outlook of an age to which this principle appeared normal and self-evident.” Dr. Kaspar Schmidt: “Die Mutterschafts-versicherung als Grundlage einer mutterrechtlich-polygamischen Sexualordnung” in *Politisch-Antropologische Revue*, No. 5, 1906, S. 283.

society, are the cause of the present bitter conflict over the incompatibility of female professional labour and motherhood, a conflict which lies at the heart of the whole problem of motherhood. This conflict has only two possible solutions: 1) either the woman must be returned to the home and forbidden any participation in national economic life or 2) such social measures, including comprehensive maternity insurance and provision for young children, must be implemented as will enable the woman *to fulfil her natural calling without abandoning her professional obligations, without losing her economic independence, and without withdrawing from active participation in the struggle for the ideals of her class.*

As the wheel of history cannot be turned back at will, the first solution must be discarded. Even if it proved possible forcibly to remove women from all the spheres of economic life in which her labour is now widely and regularly used, these measures would still be incapable of preventing the further disintegration of the family. Thus, a woman with a child who was returned to the dying family hearth would have even less provision against the deprivation, care and sorrow caused by the burden of numerous children than she has in the present set of transitory circumstances.

There therefore remains only the second solution advanced by the organized working class. This solution means that the question of insurance must be approached from the point of view of lightening the burden of motherhood for working-class women by gradually increasing social concern for the fate of young children and providing comprehensive protection of the interests of the mothers themselves. Basing oneself

on the general pattern of the future historical development of social relations, one cannot but conclude that maternity insurance must be viewed not as mere assistance rendered necessary by temporary unemployment and inseparable from health insurance, nor as a reward paid to mothers for the service they have rendered to the state, but as a step forward in the process of transferring care of the next generation into the hands of the community, as one of the measures leading to female emancipation.

Such an approach to the question of maternity insurance follows from the very principle underlying the socialist movement, and fully corresponds to that new morality in the sphere of relationships between the sexes that is gradually taking shape among the working class in the very course of the class struggle.

Statistics from every country show one and the same picture: the age at which people, even from the working class, are entering into marriage is constantly rising. Previously, workers married at the age of 20-22 years; now they marry at the age of 27-29 years. Low wages on the one hand and increasing cultural requirements on the other do not permit the worker to assume all the responsibilities of married life at an early age. However, neither the heart nor physiological needs take into account the size of the weekly wage... The result — “irregular relationships” and, as the novelists call it, “free love”; and this free cohabitation leads to free motherhood, the full burden of which falls upon the woman.

Free motherhood, the “right to be a mother” — fine words, and what woman’s heart does not respond to this natural requirement? However, in the present

circumstances, “free motherhood” is a harsh right which not only does not liberate the woman, but is the source of endless shame, humiliation, and dependence, the cause of crime and death... Is it then surprising that in such abnormal circumstances the woman does all she can to bind to her the man who is the father of her child in order to transfer to his shoulders the expense of providing for the child? For his part, the man concedes, i.e. agrees to the legislation of their relationship, often not so much out of love for the woman and child, but out of a sense of duty. If there had been no “consequences,” those who had come together freely would separate on friendly terms to go their different ways, but the child exists, and the “guilty” man considers it his duty to lead the woman down the aisle in order to share the burden of family care.

How often is it that the ceremony of marriage, even among the working class, is a funeral service said over the corpse of dead feelings... Is it then surprising that fear of the consequences obliges the workers to be wary as regards relations between lovers, and to have recourse more and more frequently to neo-Malthusian practices?

The problem is also not solved when the man, having refused to marry, agrees to pay child maintenance to the woman who has had his child. Economic dependence is always felt to be oppressive, burdensome and humiliating. It is particularly burdensome for a working woman accustomed from her youth to economic independence, even from her parents. This work-based economic independence gradually moulds the woman into a fellow comrade, an active

and conscious member of her class. The fact of receiving “financial support” from a comrade-in-arms is so unpleasant, so bitter, that it may completely warp the most sincere and friendly of relations, while at the same time it reinforces the material dependence of the woman on the man and violates the principle of the equality of all the members of one and the same class.

How different would be the relations between the sexes in the working class if the question of “consequences” was not the determining factor in deciding whether to marry, and if it did not join by force in a situation where the whole value of the relationship is based on inner freedom. However, there is only one way to free marriage of the calculations that have become a part of it and which have nothing to do with love, but result from the pressures imposed by the family as it now exists, and that is to advance the principle of general and comprehensive provision for motherhood.

If every working woman was guaranteed the possibility of giving birth to her child in healthy conditions, with the appropriate care for herself and her child, the possibility of looking after the child during the first weeks of its life, the possibility of feeding him herself without the risk of loss of pay, this would constitute the first step to the designated end. If, in addition, the state and the community would undertake to build refuges for expectant and nursing women, to provide medical consultations for mother and child, and to supply high-quality milk and a layette, if there was a broad network of crèches, nursery schools and children’s centres where the working mother could leave her child with a quiet mind, this would be the

second step towards the designated end.

If social legislation attached due importance to the protection of female labour, established a short working day, break periods for nursing mothers and a shortened day for young girls, took steps to replace harmful production methods with techniques less injurious to female physiology, prohibited a number of dangerous labour practices, etc., this would be the third step towards the designated end.

Finally, if the community — i.e. the state — would guarantee to mothers during pregnancy, birth and the nursing period material assistance sufficient to meet the needs of both her and the child, this would be the fourth and most important step forward.

The working class now faces the following task: to achieve everywhere the implementation of those reforms and social measures which would not only take from the shoulders of women burdened with professional labour the main load of motherhood, but would also guarantee the necessary care for the newborn child, thus saving this young life, that has barely started on its way, from the jaws of premature death. The problem of motherhood is closely linked to the fate of the working class, and both its sexes, women and men, have an interest in its solution. Only if the whole of society implements the principle of rationally providing for the mother and protecting the child can relations between the sexes among the working class be cleansed of that bourgeois grime which now besmirches them. Only this will facilitate the emergence of the new morality and the new relations between men and women required by the movement: the increase in comradeship between the two sexes with

their total economic independence the one from the other.

From whichever angle one approaches the question of maternity insurance, from a point of view limited strictly to considerations of state, from a class point of view or from the point of view of the interests of mankind as a whole, the conclusion remains one and the same: maternity insurance is a social policy issue requiring immediate attention and must be further developed and improved.

The more completely and comprehensively this problem is solved within the framework of modern production relations, the shorter will be the path to the new "era" of human history...

Working Woman and Mother

1916

Mashenka the factory director's wife

Mashenka is the factory director's wife. Mashenka is expecting a baby. Although everyone in the factory director's house is a little bit anxious, there is a festive atmosphere. This is not surprising, for Mashenka is going to present her husband with an heir. There will be someone to whom he can leave all his wealth — the wealth created by the hands of working men and women. The doctor has ordered them to look after Mashenka very carefully. Don't let her get tired, don't let her lift anything heavy. Let her eat just what she fancies. Fruit? Give her some fruit. Caviare? Give her caviare.

The important thing is that Mashenka should not feel worried or distressed in any way. Then the baby will be born strong and healthy; the birth will be easy and Mashenka will keep her bloom. That is how they talk in the factory director's family. That is the accepted way of handling an expectant mother, in families where the purses are stuffed with gold and credit notes. They take good care of Mashenka the lady.

Do not tire yourself, Mashenka, do not try and move the armchair. That is what they say to Mashenka the lady.

The humbugs and hypocrites of the bourgeoisie maintain that the expectant mother is sacred to them. But is that really in fact the case?

Mashenka the laundress

In the same house as the factory director's wife, but in the back part in a corner behind a printed calico curtain, huddles another Mashenka. She does the laundry and the housework. Mashenka is eight months pregnant. But she would open her eyes wide in surprise if they said to her, "Mashenka, you must not carry heavy things, you must look after yourself, for your own sake, for the child's sake and for the sake of humanity. You are expecting a baby and that means your condition is, in the eyes of society 'sacred'." Masha would take this either as uncalled-for interference or as a cruel joke. Where have you seen a woman of the working class given special treatment because she is pregnant? Masha and the hundreds of thousands of other women of the propertyless classes who are forced to sell their working hands know that the owners have no mercy when they see women in need; and they have no other alternative, however exhausted they may be, but to go out to work.

"An expectant mother must have, above all, undisturbed sleep, good food, fresh air and not too much physical strain." That is what the doctor says. Masha the laundress and the hundreds and thousands of women workers, the slaves of capital, would laugh in his face. A minimum of physical strain? Fresh air? Wholesome food and enough of it? Undisturbed sleep? What working woman knows these blessings? They are only for Mashenka the lady, and for the wives of the factory owners.

Early in the morning before the darkness has given way to dawn and while Mashenka the lady is still having sweet dreams, Mashenka the laundress gets up from her narrow bed and goes into the damp, dark

laundry. She is greeted by the fusty smell of dirty linen; she slips around on the wet floor; yesterday's puddles still have not dried. It is not of her own free will that Masha slaves away in the laundry, she is driven by that tireless overseer — need. Masha's husband is a worker, and his pay packet is so small two people could not possibly keep alive on it. And so in silence, gritting her teeth, she stands over the tub until the very last possible day, right up until the birth. Do not be mistaken into thinking that Masha the laundress has "iron health" as the ladies like to say when they are talking about working women. Masha's legs are heavy with swollen veins, through standing at the tub for such long periods. She can walk only slowly and with difficulty. There are bags under her eyes, her arms are puffed up and she has had no proper sleep for a long time.

The baskets of wet linen are often so heavy that Masha has to lean against the wall to prevent herself from falling. Her head swims and everything becomes dark in front of her eyes. It often feels as if there is a huge rotten tooth lodged at the back of her spine, and that her legs are made of lead. If only she could lie down for an hour... have some rest... but working women are not allowed to do such things. Such pamperings are not for them. For, after all, they are not ladies. Masha puts up with her hard lot in silence. The only "sacred" women are those expectant mothers who are not driven by that relentless taskmaster, need.

Masha the maid

Mashenka the lady needs another servant. The master and mistress take in a lass from the country.

Mashenka the lady likes the girl's ringing laughter and the plait that reaches down below her knee, and the way the girl flies around the house like a bird on the wing and tries to please everyone. A gem of a girl. They pay her three rubles a month and she does enough work for three people. The lady is full of praise.

Then the factory director begins to glance at the girl. His attentions grow. The girl does not see the danger; she is inexperienced, unsophisticated. The master gets very kind and loving. The doctor has advised him not to make any demands on his lady-wife. Quiet, he says, is the best medicine. The factory director is willing to let her give birth in peace, as long as he does not have to suffer. The maid is also called Masha. Things can easily be arranged; the girl is ignorant, stupid. It is not difficult to frighten her. She can be scared into anything. And so Masha gets pregnant. She stops laughing and begins to look haggard. Anxiety gnaws at her heart day and night.

Masha the lady finds out. She throws a scene. The girl is given twenty-four hours to pack her bags. Masha wanders the streets. She has no friends, nowhere to go. Who is going to employ "that kind of a girl" in any "honest" house? Masha wanders without work, without bread, without help. She passes a river. She looks at the dark waves and turns away shivering. The cold and gloomy river terrifies her, but at the same time seems to beckon.

Masha the dye-worker

There is confusion in the factory's dye department; a woman worker has been carried out looking as if she

is dead. What has happened to her? Was she poisoned by the steam? Could she no longer bear the fumes? She is no newcomer. It is high time she got used to the factory poison.

“It is absolutely nothing,” says the doctor. “Can’t you see? She is pregnant. Pregnant women are likely to behave in all sorts of strange ways. There is no need to give in to them.”

So they send the woman back to work. She stumbles like a drunkard through the workshop back to her place. Her legs are numb and refuse to obey her. It is no joke working ten hours a day, day after day, amidst the toxic stench, the steam and the damaging fumes. And there is no rest for the working mother, even when the ten hours are over. At home there is her old blind mother waiting for her dinner, and her husband returns from his factory tired and hungry. She has to feed them all and look after them all. She is the first to get up in the mornings, she’s on her legs from sunrise, and she is the last to get to sleep. And then to crown it they have introduced overtime. Things are going well at the factory; the owner is raking in the profits with both hands.

He only gives a few extra kopeks for overtime, but if you object, you know the way to the gates. There are, heaven be praised, enough unemployed in the world. Masha tries to get leave, by applying to the director himself.

“I am having my baby soon. I must get everything ready. My children are tiny and there is the housework; and then I have my old mother to look after.”

But he will not listen. He is rude to her and humiliates her in front of the other workers. “If I started

giving every pregnant woman time off, it would be simpler to close the factory. If you didn't sleep with men, you wouldn't get pregnant."

So Masha the dye-worker has to labour on until the last minute. That is how much bourgeois society esteems motherhood.

Childbirth

For the household of Masha the lady, the birth is a big event. It is almost a holiday. The house is a flurry of doctors, midwives and nurses. The mother lies in a clean, soft bed. There are flowers on the tables. Her husband is by her side; letters and telegrams are delivered. A priest gives thanksgiving prayers. The baby is born healthy and strong. That is not surprising. They have taken such care and made such a fuss of Masha.

Masha the laundress is also in labour. Behind the calico curtain, in the corner of a room full of other people. Masha is in pain. She tries to stifle her moaning, burying her head in the pillow. The neighbours are all working people and it would not do to deprive them of their sleep. Towards morning the midwife arrives. She washes and tucks up the baby and then hurries off to another birth. Mashenka is now alone in the room. She looks at the baby. What a thin little mite. Skinny and wrinkled. Its eyes seem to reproach the mother for having given birth at all. Mashenka looks at him and cries silently so as not to disturb the others.

Masha the maid gives birth to her child under a fence in a suburban backstreet. She enquired at a maternity home, but it was full. She knocked at another but they would not accept her, saying she needed various bits of paper with signatures. She gives birth; she

walks on. She walks and staggers. She wraps the baby in a scarf. Where can she go? There is nowhere to go. She remembers the dark river, terrifying and yet fascinating. In the morning the policeman drags a body out of the river. That is how bourgeois society respects motherhood.

The baby of Masha the dye-worker is stillborn. It has not managed to survive the nine months. The steam the mother inhales at the factory has poisoned the child while it was in the womb. The birth was difficult. Masha herself was lucky to come through alive. But by the evening of the following day, she is already up and about, getting things straight, washing and doing the cooking. How can it be otherwise? Who else will look after Mashas home and organize the household? Who would see that the children were fed? Masha the lady can lie in bed for nine days on doctor's orders, for she has a whole establishment of servants to dance round her. If Masha the dye-worker develops a serious illness from going to work so soon after the birth and cripples herself as a result, that is just too bad.

There is no one to look after the working mother. No one to lift the heavy burdens from the shoulders of these tired women. Motherhood, they say, is sacred. But that is only true in the case of Masha the lady.

The cross of motherhood

For Masha the lady, motherhood is a joyful occasion. In a bright, tidy nursery the factory owner's heir grows up under the eye of various nannies and the supervision of a doctor. If Masha the lady has too little

milk of her own or does not want to spoil her figure, a wet-nurse can be found. Masha the lady amuses herself with the baby and then goes out visiting, goes shopping, or to the theatre, or to a ball. There is someone at hand to look after the baby. Motherhood is amusing, it is entertainment for Masha the lady.

For the other Mashas, the working women — the dyers, weavers, laundresses and the other hundreds and thousands of working-class women — motherhood is a cross. The factory siren calls the woman to work but her child is fretting and crying. How can she leave it? Who will look after it? She pours the milk into a bottle and gives the child to the old woman next door or leaves her young daughter in charge. She goes off to work, but she never stops worrying about the child. The little girl, well-intentioned but ignorant, might try feeding her brother porridge or bits of bread.

Masha the lady's baby looks better every day. Like white sugar or a firm rosy apple; so strong and healthy. The children of the factory worker, the laundress and the craft-worker grow thinner with every day. At nights the baby curls up small and cries. The doctor comes and scolds the mother for not breast-feeding the child or for not feeding it properly. "And you call yourself a mother. Now you have only yourself to blame if the baby dies." The hundreds and thousands of working mothers do not try to explain themselves. They stand with bent heads, furtively wiping away the tears. Could they tell the doctor of the difficulties they face? Would he believe them? Would he understand?

They die like flies

Children are dying. The children of working men and women die like flies. One million graves. One million sorrowing mothers. But whose children die? When death goes harvesting spring flowers, whose children fall to the scythe? As one would imagine, death gathers the poorest harvest amongst the wealthy families where the children live in warmth and comfort and are suckled on the milk of their mother or wet-nurse. In the families of royalty, only six or seven of every hundred newborn children die. In the workers' families, from thirty to forty-five die. In all countries where the capitalists control the economy and the workers sell their labour power and live in poverty, the percentage of babies to die in early childhood is very high. In Russia the figures are higher than anywhere else. Here are the comparative figures for the number of children that survive early childhood: Norway 93%, Switzerland 89%, England 88%, Finland 88%, France 86%, Austria 80%, Germany 80%, Russia 72%. But there are several provinces in Russia, especially those with many factories, where 54% of children die at birth. In the areas of the big cities where the rich live, child mortality is only 8-9%: in working-class areas the figure is 30-31%. Why do the children of the proletariat die in such numbers? To grow healthy and strong a young child needs fresh air, warmth, sun, cleanliness and careful attention. It needs to be breast-fed: its mother's milk is its natural food and will help it grow and grow strong. How many children of working-class families have all the things we have listed?

Death makes a firm place for itself in the homes of working-class families because such families are poor,

their homes are overcrowded and damp, and the sunlight does not reach the basement; because where there are too many people, it is usually dirty; and because the working-class mother does not have the opportunity to care for her children properly. Science has established that artificial feeding is the worst enemy of the child: five times more children fed on cow's milk and fifteen times more children fed with other foods die than those who are breast-fed. But how is the woman who works outside the home, at the factory or in a workshop to breastfeed her child? She is lucky if the money stretches to buying cow's milk; that does not happen all the time. And what sort of milk do the tradesmen sell to working mothers anyway? Chalk mixed with water. Consequently, 60% of the babies that die, die from diseases of the stomach. Many others die from what the doctors like to call "the inability to live": the mother worn out by her hard physical labour gives birth prematurely, or the child is poisoned by the factory fumes while still in the womb. How can the woman of working class possibly fulfil her maternal obligations?

Work and maternity

There was a time not so long ago, a time that our grandmothers remember, when women were only involved in work at home: in housework and domestic crafts. The women of the non-property-owning classes were not idle, of course. The work around the house was hard. They had to cook, sew, wash, weave, keep the linen white and work in the kitchen garden and in the fields. But this work did not tear the women away from the cradle; there were no factory walls sep-

arating her from her children. However poor the woman was, her child was in her arms. Times have changed. Factories have been set up; workshops have been opened. Poverty has driven women out of the home; the factory has pulled them in with its iron claws. When the factory gates slam behind her, a woman has to say farewell to maternity, for the factory has no mercy on the pregnant woman or the young mother.

When a woman works day in day out over a sewing machine, she develops a disease of the ovaries. When she works at a weaving or spinning factory, a rubber or china works or a lead or chemical plant, she and her baby are in danger of being poisoned by noxious fumes and by contact with harmful substances. When a woman works with lead or mercury, she becomes infertile or her children are stillborn. When she works at a cigarette or tobacco factory, the nicotine in her milk may poison her child. Pregnant women can also maim or kill their children by carrying heavy loads, standing for long hours at a bench or counter, or hurrying up and downstairs at the whim of the lady of the house. There is no dangerous and harmful work from which working women are barred. There is no type of industry which does not employ pregnant women or nursing mothers. Given the conditions in which working women live their work in production is the grave of maternity.

Is there a solution to the problem?

If children are to be stillborn, born crippled or born to die like flies, is there any point in the working woman becoming pregnant? Are all the trials of child-

birth worthwhile if the working woman has to abandon her children to the winds of chance when they are still so tiny? However much she wants to bring her child up properly, she does not have the time to look after it and care for it. Since this is the case, is it not better simply to avoid maternity?

Many working women are beginning to think twice about having children. They have not got the strength to bear the cross. Is there a solution to the problem? Do working women have to deprive themselves of the last joy that is left them in life? Life has hurt her, poverty gives her no peace, and the factory drains her strength; does this mean that the working woman must give up the right to the joys of having children? Give up without a fight? Without trying to win the right which nature has given every living creature and every dumb animal? Is there an alternative? Of course there is, but not every working woman is yet aware of it.

What is the alternative?

Imagine a society, a people, a community, where there are no longer Mashenka ladies and Mashenka laundresses. Where there are no parasites and no hired workers. Where all people do the same amount of work and society in return looks after them and helps them in life. Just as now the Mashenka ladies are taken care of by their relatives, those who need more attention — the woman and children — will be taken care of by society, which is like one large, friendly family. When Mashenka, who is now neither a lady nor a servant but simply a citizen, becomes pregnant, she does not have to worry about what will happen to her

or her child. Society, that big happy family, will look after everything.

A special home with a garden and flowers will be ready to welcome her. It will be so designed that every pregnant woman and every woman who has just given birth can live there joyfully in health and comfort. The doctors in this society-family are concerned not just about preserving the health of the mother and child but about relieving the woman of the pain of childbirth. Science is making progress in this field, and can help the doctor here. When the child is strong enough, the mother returns to her normal life and takes up again the work that she does for the benefit of the large family-society. She does not have to worry about her child. Society is there to help her. Children will grow up in the kindergarten, the children's colony, the crèche and the school under the care of experienced nurses. When the mother wants to be with her children, she only has to say the word; and when she has no time, she knows they are in good hands. Maternity is no longer a cross. Only its joyful aspects remain; only the great happiness of being a mother, which at the moment only the Mashenka ladies enjoy.

But such a society, surely, is only to be found in fairy tales? Could such a society ever exist? The science of economics and the history of society and the state show that such a society must and will come into being. However hard the rich capitalists, factory-owners, landowners and men of property fight, the fairy-tale will come true. The working class all over the world is fighting to make this dream come true. And although society is as yet far from being one happy family, although there are still many struggles and sac-

rifices ahead, it is at the same time true that the working class in other countries has made great gains. Working men and women are trying to lighten the cross of motherhood by getting laws passed and by taking other measures.

How can the law help?

The first thing that can be done and the first thing that working men and women are doing in every country is to see that the law defends the working mother. Since poverty and insecurity are forcing women to take up work, and since the number of women out working is increasing every year, the very least that can be done is to make sure that hired labour does not become the "grave of maternity." The law must intervene to help women to combine work and maternity.

Men and women workers everywhere are demanding a complete ban on night work for women and young people, an eight-hour day for all workers, and a ban on the employment of children under sixteen years of age. They are demanding that young girls and boys over sixteen years of age be allowed to work only half the day. This is important, especially from the point of view of the future mother, since between the years of sixteen and eighteen the girl is growing and developing into a woman. If her strength is undermined during these years her chances of healthy motherhood are lost forever.

The law should state categorically that working conditions and the whole work situation must not threaten a woman's health; harmful methods of production should be replaced by safe methods or com-

pletely done away with; heavy work with weights or foot-propelled machines, etc. should be mechanized; workrooms should be kept clean and there should be no extremes of temperature; toilets, washrooms and dining rooms should be provided, etc. These demands can be won — they have already been encountered in the model factories — but the factory-owners do not usually like to fork out the money. All adjustments and improvements are expensive, and human life is so cheap.

A law to the effect that women should sit wherever possible is very important. It is also vital that substantial and not merely nominal fines are levied against factory owners who infringe the law. The job of seeing that the law is carried out should be entrusted not only to the factory inspectors but also to representatives elected by the workers.

Maternity protection

The law must protect the mother. Even now, Russian law (Article 126: “conditions in industry”) gives working women in large factories the right to four weeks’ leave at childbirth. This, of course, is not enough. In Germany, France and Switzerland, for example, the mother has the right to eight weeks’ leave without losing her job. This, however, is not enough either. The workers’ party demands for women a break of sixteen weeks: eight before and eight after the birth. The law should also stipulate that the mother has the right to time off during the working day to feed her child. This demand has already become law in Italy and Spain. The law must require that crèches be built and other adequately heated rooms be pro-

vided by the factories and workshops, where babies can be breastfed.

Maternity insurance

However, it is not sufficient for the law to protect the mother merely by seeing that she does not have to work during the period of childbirth. It is essential that society guarantees the material well-being of the woman during pregnancy. It would not be much of a "rest" for the woman if she were simply prevented from earning her daily bread for sixteen weeks. That would be dooming the woman to certain death. The law must therefore not only protect the woman at work but must also initiate, at state expense, a scheme of maternity benefits.

Such security or maternity insurance has already been introduced in fourteen countries: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Luxembourg, England, Australia, Italy, France, Norway, Serbia, Romania, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Russia. In eleven countries, including Russia, the working woman insures herself at an insurance bureau, paying weekly contributions. In return the bureau pays out benefits money (the amount varies from country to country, but nowhere exceeds the full wage) and also provides the assistance of a doctor and midwife. In Italy the working woman pay her dues and receives help from special maternity bureaux. Further contributions are paid by the owner of the factory where she works, and by the state. Even in this case, however, the working woman has to shoulder the main financial burden. In France and Australia the working woman does not have to take out any kind of insurance policy. Any woman, married or

unmarried, is entitled to receive help from the state if she needs it. In France she receives benefits over a period of eight weeks (twenty to fifty kopeks a day, sometimes more), besides help from a doctor and a midwife. In Australia she is given a lump sum worth fifty rubles. In France a system of “substitute housekeepers” has also been organized. Towards the end of a woman’s pregnancy, a friend or neighbour who has attended the free courses on the care of pregnant women and young children comes in to help. She continues to make daily visits until the mother is well enough to get up and about again; she tidies the house, cooks dinner, looks after the baby and is paid for this work by the bureau. In France, Switzerland, Germany and Romania the mother also receives benefits from the insurance bureau during the period she is breastfeeding her child. The first steps have thus been made towards providing security for mothers.

What are the workers demanding?

All that is being done at the moment is, of course, too little. The working class is trying to see that society takes upon itself the difficulties of childbirth. The working class wants to ensure that the law and the state shoulder the most pressing worries of the working woman — her material and financial worries. Although the working class realizes that only a new society, the large and friendly family mentioned earlier, will take upon itself the full care of the mother and child, it is possible even now to ease the life of the working-class mother. Much has already been won. But we have to struggle on. If we work together we shall win even more.

The workers' party in every country demands that there should be maternity insurance schemes that cover all women irrespective of the nature of their job, no matter whether a woman is a servant, a factory worker, a craftswoman or a poor peasant woman. Benefits must be provided before and after birth, for a period of sixteen weeks. A woman should continue receiving benefits if the doctor finds that she has not sufficiently recovered or that the child is not sufficiently strong. The woman must receive the full benefit even if the child dies or the birth is premature. Benefits must be one and a half times higher than the woman's normal wage; when a woman has no job, she should receive one and a half times the average wages of women in that area. It should also be written into the law — and this is very important — that benefits be no lower than one ruble a day for large towns and seventy-five kopeks a day for small towns and villages. Otherwise, if a woman's wage were thirty kopeks, she would receive only forty-five kopeks. And can a mother and child be expected to live properly on forty-five kopeks a day? Can a mother get everything she needs for life and health with forty-five kopeks? The mother should also be drawing benefits from the bureau for the entire period she is breast-feeding her child, and for not less than nine months. The size of the benefit should be about one half the normal wage.

Benefits should thus be paid out both before and after birth, and should be paid directly into the hands of the mother or some person authorized by her. The right to receive benefits must be established without any of the conditions which are in force at the moment. According to our Russian law, for example, a

woman must have been a member of the bureau for three months in order to be eligible. A woman must be guaranteed the free services of a doctor and midwife and the help of a “substitute housewife” as organized in France and to some extent in Germany and England.

Responsibility for ensuring that the law is observed and that the woman in childbirth receives everything to which she is entitled must lie with delegates elected from among the working women. Pregnant and nursing mothers must have the legal right to receive free milk and, where necessary, clothes for the new baby at the expense of the town or village. The workers’ party also demands that the town, zemstvo or insurance bureau build crèches for young children at each factory. The money for this should be supplied by the factory owner, the town or the zemstvo. These crèches must be organized so that each nursing mother can easily visit and feed her baby in the breaks from work that the law allows. The crèche must be run not by philanthropic ladies but by the working mothers themselves.

The town, zemstvo or insurance bureau must, at its own expense, also build a sufficient number of: (i) Maternity homes, (ii) Homes for pregnant and nursing mothers who are alone and have no work (these already exist in France, Germany and Hungary), (iii) Free medical consultations for mothers and young children, so that the doctor can observe the course of pregnancy, give advice and instruct the mother in child care, (iv) Clinics for sick children such as have been built by the Women’s Labour League in England, (v) Kindergartens where a mother can leave her

young children — the two to five-year olds — while she is at work. At the moment the mother returns from work tired and exhausted, needing peace and quiet: and immediately she has to start work again coping with her hungry, unwashed and untidy children. It makes all the difference for the mother to call for and collect her children well-fed, clean and happily full of news, and to have her older ones, who have been taught to help at the kindergarten and are proud of their know-how, giving a hand around the house, (vi) Entrance-free courses on child care for young girls and mothers, (vii) Free breakfasts and dinners for pregnant and nursing women, a service which has already been started in France.

These measures must not be stamped with the bitter label of “philanthropy.” Every member of society — and that means every working woman and every citizen, male and female — has the right to demand that the state and community concern itself with the welfare of all. Why do people form a state, if not for this purpose? At the moment there is no government anywhere in the world that cares for its children. Working men and women in all countries are fighting for a society and government that will really become a big happy family, where all children will be equal and the family will care equally for all. Then maternity will be a different experience, and death will cease to gather such an abundant harvest among the newborn.

What must every working woman do?

How are all these demands to be won? What action must be taken? Every working-class woman, every woman who reads this pamphlet must throw off

her indifference and begin to support the working-class movement, which is fighting for these demands and is shaping the old world into a better future where mothers will no longer weep bitter tears and where the cross of maternity will become a great joy and a great pride. We must say to ourselves, "There is strength in unity"; the more of us working women join the working-class movement, the greater will be our strength and the quicker we will get what we want. Our happiness and the life and future of our children are at stake.

A Serious Gap

1917

The trade union is calling an all-Russian conference; the organized proletariat, both men and women, must begin now to prepare for this important event. For increasingly the workers' movement is developing not just a fight for certain political objectives but a direct and fierce revolutionary struggle against the organized capitalists for *full economic power*. The trade unions are confronted with new, grandiose and responsible tasks; the former type of union movement, which concentrated mainly on the improvement of the economic position of the workers and on mutual aid, no longer answers the needs of the current higher stage of capitalist development. Now that new forms of social relations are maturing and the glow of the approaching social revolution, under the impact of the war, colours the whole world in unprecedented tones and shades, the trade unions must be prepared not to make compromise deals with capital but, at the moment of collapse of the old world, to become organs capable of entirely taking over the management of industry and the organization of production.

The new tasks demand not only that the trade-union movement be built along different lines (the most important changes include the elimination of the shop divisions, the transition to organization at enterprise-level and the merging of the unions and the political organizations) but also make necessary a review of tactics. The narrow opportunist unionism that had flourished in England and has over the last fifteen

years become firmly established in Germany must now, in the present conditions, give way to a clearer class tactic which is closely connected with *the mass activity* of the organized proletariat, in defence of its political and economic demands.

Despite its importance the agenda of the conference makes no mention of the tactics to be employed in the current struggle of the organized proletariat against the growing organization of capital. There is another serious gap in the agenda of the conference. The question of equal pay for equal work, which is one of the most burning questions for the working class as a whole and for working women in particular, is not down for discussion. The low pay women receive is now even more impermissible since the war has thrown a large number of women on the labour market who are their family's sole "breadwinners." The women often have not only their children to support but their husbands, who have returned from the fighting as invalids and are unable to work. The class-conscious worker must understand that the value of male labour is dependent on the value of female labour, and that by threatening to replace male workers with cheaper female labour the capitalists can put pressure on men's wages, lowering them to the level of women's wages. Therefore only a lack of understanding could lead one to see the question of equal pay for equal work as a purely "women's issue" or to accuse those who bring forward this demand of "feminism."

It is essential that the conference fill this gap and include the question of equal pay for equal work on its agenda. The organized working women must, for their part, begin to collect material showing the diffi-

cult economic position of women workers and the differences between the pay of men and women: and they must prepare a paper for the conference on this question, which is of importance for the whole working class. It is time that working women began to exhibit self-activity; it is time they began to take a real part in trade-union affairs. The question of equal pay for equal work is near and dear to the working woman, and if this issue is taken up it should prove possible to show that the patience and passivity of centuries is being overcome by the new woman who is coming into being within the working class — the woman-comrade who is a fighter for the general workers' cause and for the idea of the bright future.

In the Front Line of Fire

1917

“If we close down, you’ll suffer — you’ll be walking the streets without work.” That’s how the owners of the laundries try to frighten their women workers. This is the usual method used by the employers to scare their hired slaves. But the laundresses have no need to fear such threats. Just because the owners shut down, seeking more profitable investment for their capital, this does not mean that the demand for laundries disappears. Laundry workers are still needed and that means there is a way out of the situation, particularly now that the “New Russia” is being built.

The town itself must shoulder the responsibility of organizing municipal laundries in all areas, and of organizing them in such a way that the work is made easier by machines and technology, the working day does not exceed eight hours, wages are established by agreement between the municipality and the laundresses’ union, a special cloakroom is provided where the working women can change into dry clothes after work, and much else besides is done to lighten the hard labour of the laundry workers.

During the elections to the regional and central town dumas the laundresses and all class-conscious, organized workers must express their support for these demands. This would be a clear and practical reply to the threat of redundancy and unemployment with which the employers attempt to intimidate the women on strike. It would then be the employers and the laundresses who would be forced to swallow their

pride and make concessions.

At the present moment the strike continues, but the employers are using all means at their disposal to break the firm stand of the three thousand women workers organized in the union. The employers are acting in the most outrageous and insolent manner. They are trying to set up their own employers' union of strike-breakers, and when the organized women come to call out these women, who through their lack of understanding of their class interests are jeopardizing the common cause, they are not only met with threats and foul language: there was one instance where a woman agitator had boiling water thrown at her, and in one enterprise the proprietress tried to use a revolver.

The employers do not let slip any opportunity to use violence and slander. The working women have only one method of self-defence — *organization and unity*. By fighting for better working conditions in the laundries, for an eight-hour day and for a minimum wage of four rubles a day, the women are fighting not only for themselves but for all working people. The men and women working in other sections of the economy must understand this. The victory of the laundresses will be a fresh victory for the whole proletariat. But in order to guarantee victory a flow of aid is necessary; money is needed. We cannot, we must not deny our material and moral support to those who are fighting for the workers' cause and are bearing the hardships of strike-action.

Every gathering or meeting of working men and women should express its solidarity with the firm struggle waged by the laundry women and should

make a collection for these women strikers. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies should declare their solidarity with the working women, for the women are fighting to force the employers to accede to demands passed by the Soviet. The refusal of the employers to fulfil these demands is thus a *direct challenge to the Soviet*. Comrades, let us hasten to the aid of those who now stand in the trenches, defending the workers' cause; let us support those who are now in the "line of fire," facing the attacks of the capitalist employers.

Women Fighters in the Days of the Great October Revolution

Reminiscences of 1917

The women who took part in the Great October Revolution — who were they? Isolated individuals? No, there were hosts of them; tens, hundreds of thousands of nameless heroines who, marching side by side with the workers and peasants behind the Red Flag and the slogan of the Soviets, passed over the ruins of Tsarist theocracy into a new future...

If one looks back into the past, one can see them, these masses of nameless heroines whom October found living in starving cities, in impoverished villages plundered by war... A scarf on their head (very rarely, as yet, a red kerchief), a worn skirt, a patched winter jacket... Young and old, women workers and soldiers' wives, peasant women and housewives from among the city poor. More rarely, much more rarely in those days, office workers and women in the professions, educated and cultured women. But there were also women from the intelligentsia among those who carried the Red Flag to the October victory — teachers, office employees, young students at high schools and universities, women doctors. They marched cheerfully, selflessly, purposefully. They went wherever they were sent. To the front? They put on a soldier's cap and became fighters in the Red Army. If they put on red armbands, then they were hurrying off to the first-aid stations to help the Red front against Keren-

sky at Gatchina.¹ They worked in army communications. They worked cheerfully, filled with the belief that something momentous was happening, and that we are all small cogs in the one class of revolution.

In the villages, the peasant women (their husbands had been sent off to the front) took the land from the landowners and chased the aristocracy out of the nests they had roosted in for centuries.

When one recalls the events of October, one sees not individual faces but masses. Masses without number, like waves of humanity. But wherever one looks one sees women — at meetings, gatherings, demonstrations...

They are still not sure what exactly it is they want, what they are striving for, but they know one thing: they will put up with war no longer. Nor do they want the landowners and the wealthy... In the year of 1917, the great ocean of humanity heaves and sways, and a large part of that ocean is made up of women...

Someday the historian will write about the deeds of these nameless heroines of the revolution who died at the front, were shot by the Whites and bore the countless deprivations of the first years following the revolution, but who continued to bear aloft the Red Banner of Soviet power and communism.

It is to these nameless heroines, who died to win a new life for working people during the Great October Revolution, to whom the young republic now bows in recognition as its young people, cheerful and enthusiastic, set about building the basis of socialism.

However, out of this sea of women's heads in

¹ Gatchina — a suburb of Petrograd (now Leningrad).

scarves and worn caps there inevitably emerge the figures of those to whom the historian will devote particular attention when, many years from now, he writes about the Great October Revolution and its leader, Lenin.

The first figure to emerge is that of Lenin's faithful companion, Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, wearing her plain grey dress and always striving to remain in the background. She would slip unnoticed into a meeting and place herself behind a pillar, but she saw and heard everything, observing all that happened so that she could then give a full account to Vladimir Ilyich, add her own apt comments and light upon a sensible, suitable and useful idea.

In those days Nadezhda Konstantinovna did not speak at the numerous stormy meetings at which the people argued over the great question: would the Soviets win power or not? But she worked tirelessly as Vladimir Ilyich's right hand, occasionally making a brief but telling comment at party meetings. In moments of greatest difficulty and danger, when many stronger comrades lost heart and succumbed to doubt, Nadezhda Konstantinovna remained always the same, totally convinced of the rightness of the cause and of its certain victory. She radiated unshakable faith, and this staunchness of spirit, concealed behind a rare modesty, always had a cheering effect upon all who came into contact with the companion of the great leader of the October Revolution.

Another figure emerges — that of yet another faithful companion of Vladimir Ilyich, a comrade-in-arms during the difficult years of underground work, secretary of the Party Central Committee, Yelena

Dmitriyevna Stassova. A clear, high brow, a rare precision in, and an exceptional capacity for work, a rare ability to “spot” the right person for the job. Her tall, statuesque figure could be seen first at the Soviet at the Tavrichesky palace,¹ then at the house of Kshesinskaya,² and finally at Smolny. In her hands she holds a notebook, while around her press comrades from the front, workers, Red Guards, women workers, members of the party and of the Soviets, seeking a quick, clear answer or order.

Stassova carried responsibility for many important matters, but if a comrade faced need or distress in those stormy days, she would always respond, providing a brief, seemingly curt answer, and herself doing anything she could. She was overwhelmed with work, and always at her post. Always at her post, yet never pushing forward to the front row, to prominence. She did not like to be the centre of attention. Her concern was not for herself, but for the cause.

For the noble and cherished cause of communism, for which Yelena Stassova suffered exile and imprisonment in Tsarist jails, leaving her with broken health... In the name of the cause she was like flint, as hard as steel. But to the sufferings of her comrades she displayed a sensitivity and responsiveness that are found only in a woman with a warm and noble heart.

Klavdia Nikolayeva was a working woman of very humble origins. She had joined the Bolsheviks as early

¹ The Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies met at the Tavrichesky palace.

² After the February revolution, the St. Petersburg Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) met at the house of the ballerina Kshesinskaya.

as 1908, in the years of reaction, and had endured exile and imprisonment... In 1917 she returned to Lenin-grad and became the heart of the first magazine for working women, *Kommunistka*. She was still young, full of fire and impatience. But she held the banner firmly and boldly declared that women workers, soldiers' wives and peasant women must be drawn into the party. To work, women! To the defence of the Soviets and communism!

She spoke at meetings, still nervous and unsure of herself, yet attracting others to follow. She was one of those who bore on her shoulders all the difficulties involved in preparing the way for the broad, mass involvement of women in the revolution, one of those who fought on two fronts — for the Soviets and communism, and at the same time for the emancipation of women. The names of Klavdia Nikolayeva and Konkordia Samoilova, who died at her revolutionary post in 1921 (from cholera), are indissolubly linked with the first and most difficult steps taken by the working women's movement, particularly in Lenin-grad. Konkordia Samoilova was a party worker of unparalleled selflessness, a fine, business-like speaker who knew how to win the hearts of working women. Those who worked alongside her will long remember Konkordia Samoilova. She was simple in manner, simple in dress, demanding in the execution of decisions, strict both with herself and others.

Particularly striking is the gentle and charming figure of Inessa Armand, who was charged with very important party work in preparation for the October Revolution, and who thereafter contributed many creative ideas to the work conducted among women.

With all her femininity and gentleness of manner, Inessa Armand was unshakable in her convictions and able to defend what she believed to be right, even when faced with redoubtable opponents. After the revolution, Inessa Armand devoted herself to organizing the broad movement of working women, and the delegate conference is her creation.

Enormous work was done by Varvara Nikolaevna Yakovleva during the difficult and decisive days of the October Revolution in Moscow. On the battleground of the barricades she showed a resolution worthy of a leader of party headquarters... Many comrades said then that her resolution and unshakable courage gave heart to the wavering and inspired those who had lost heart. "Forward!" — to victory.

As one recalls the women who took part in the Great October Revolution, more and more names and faces rise up as if by magic from the memory. Could we fail to honour today the memory of Vera Slutskaya, who worked selflessly in preparation for the revolution and who was shot down by Cossaks on the first Red front near Petrograd?

Could we forget Yevgenia Bosh, with her fiery temperament, always eager for battle? She also died at her revolutionary post.

Could we omit to mention here two names closely connected with the life and activity of V.I. Lenin — his two sisters and comrades-in-arms, Anna Ilyinichna Yelizarova and Maria Ilyinichna Ulyanova?

...And comrade Varya, from the railway workshops in Moscow, always lively, always in a hurry? And Fyodorova, the textile worker in Leningrad, with

her pleasant, smiling face and her fearlessness when it came to fighting at the barricades?

It is impossible to list them all, and how many remain nameless? The heroines of the October Revolution were a whole army, and although their names may be forgotten, their selflessness lives on in the very victory of that revolution, in all the gains and achievements now enjoyed by working women in the Soviet Union.

It is a clear and indisputable fact that, without the participation of women, the October Revolution could not have brought the Red Flag to victory. Glory to the working women who marched under that Red Banner during the October Revolution. Glory to the October Revolution that liberated women!

The First Steps Towards the Protection of Motherhood

1917-1918

The idea of establishing a Department for the Protection of Mother and Child arose in the heat of the October battles. The basic principles underlying the work of the department and the related statutes on social provision for mothers and expectant mothers were drafted at the first conference of women workers immediately following the October Revolution.

The conference was summoned at my suggestion as a member of the Central Committee, and we set up a lead group of women Bolsheviks at the editorial board of the magazine *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker). This first conference of the representatives of women industrial workers to be held in Russia had the task of binding together the female working masses who had spontaneously inclined towards the revolution, supporting the Soviets and the Bolsheviks. The conference was attended by more than 500 women delegates from the factories and plants of Petrograd. There were also some delegates from Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Tula and Kaluga.

The preparations for the conference were marked by lively enthusiasm, and evoked interest and eager response among the awakening masses of women workers who already had their own team of workers grouped around the magazine *Rabotnitsa* and its heart — Klavdia Nikolayeva and Konkordia Samoilova.

At the conference the main demands of Bolshevik women workers were put forward and adopted.

Prominent among these demands was the question of protection and provision for motherhood. In a modest building somewhere on Bolotnaya St., in the very midst of the October revolution, when the approaches to Petrograd had still not been completely cleared of the troops of the Provisional Government, when something akin to a self-appointed government of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries was still sitting in the City Duma in Petrograd, women workers were engaged in business-like and enthusiastic discussions on the measures that should be immediately introduced by the Soviet government in order to protect working mothers and their babies.

On 6 November, 1917, I delivered a speech on the protection of motherhood in my capacity as a member of the party Central Committee and secretary of the lead group of women workers. My theses were taken as the basis for discussion. The women workers attending the conference listened to my report with great interest and took an active part in the discussions and the elaboration of the theses. These theses were then passed on "as guidelines" to the People's Commissariat of State Welfare and the People's Commissariat of Labour, which then included the Department of Social Security.

If the legislation on protection and provision for motherhood now in force is compared with the theses adopted at the first conference of women workers, it is clear that it was precisely the aspirations expressed at the conference that served as the basis for Soviet legislation in this area.

It should therefore be noted that the initiative on the issue of protection and provision for mother and

child came from the working women themselves. At that time, very few working women actively participated in the Soviets. But from the very first days of Soviet power, working women were able to contribute constructively to the work of the Soviets as regards lightening the burden of motherhood for women.

The measures to protect and provide for motherhood were carried through in the first months of Soviet government by two People's Commissariats: the People's Commissariat of State Welfare and the People's Commissariat of Labour. The latter drew up a series of statutes in the field of social legislation. The People's Commissariat of State Welfare carried through the measures designed to assist working mothers.

The first concern of the People's Commissariat of State Welfare was to maintain and rebuild the huge children's homes in Petrograd and Moscow, in order to convert these "angel factories" into homes for mother and child.

The People's Commissariat also took control of all the existing crèches, consultation centres and children's homes (very few in number) that had been founded before the revolution by charitable organizations.

In order to take possession of these institutions and run them in accord with Soviet policy, the People's Commissariat of State Welfare first had to form a section of social investigation whose members included a large number of women workers from factories and plants. Its first task was to investigate all institutions whose work was connected with the protection of mother and child, and to deal with the open

sabotage by their staff and administrators.

In December 1917, that is, six weeks after power had been transferred into the hands of the proletariat, it became clear that the People's Commissariat required a special centre to supervise the work being done in the sphere of protection for mother and child if it was to cope with the increasing demand and workload.

On 31 December, 1917, the People's Commissariat issued a decree on the creation of a board whose task was to set up a Department for the Protection of Mother and Child. Doctor Korolyov was appointed head of the department, while the chairman of the board was the People's Commissar for State Welfare.

The Soviet government is the first government in the world to officially and legally recognize maternity as one of the social functions of women and, basing itself on the fact that in a republic of working people women will always have this particular labour obligation towards society (i.e. the obligation to bear and bring up children — *Tr.*), it has approached the problem of providing for motherhood from this new point of view.

During the first months of Soviet power, the People's Commissariat concentrated on the organization and reorganization of those institutions which could help lighten the burden of motherhood and combat the high infant mortality rate.

With the decree issued on 20 January, 1918, the People's Commissariat of State Welfare began to set in order and reorganize lying-in hospitals. The decree ordered that all lying-in hospitals and all centres, clinics and institutes of gynecology and midwifery be

transferred to the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child. The decree also ordered that medical services for expectant mothers be organized on the basis of three new principles: 1) that medical assistance be available to all needy mothers, i.e. that the doors of lying-in hospitals be opened precisely to the poorest section of the female population — workers, peasants and office workers; 2) that doctors be paid a state salary so as to abolish the advantages enjoyed by more prosperous women able to pay the doctor for his services, thereby ending the inequality between poor and prosperous expectant and nursing mothers; 3) that expectant and nursing mothers, particularly the poor, be protected against a view which saw them as “sacrifices to science” on whom unskilled midwives and young students gained practice. No one, noted the decree, has the right to view a woman fulfilling her sacred but painful civic duty of motherhood as a “sacrifice to science.” The decree also replaced one-year midwifery courses with two-year courses, and the trainee midwives were permitted to assist at deliveries only in the second year.

The next step taken by the board for the protection of mother and child was to bring together in one state organization all the institutions caring for mother and child in the pre- and post-natal periods, and all institutions involved in child care, from children’s homes to village crèches. A decree issued by the People’s Commissariat on 31 January, 1918, instructed the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child to create a network of institutions which would bring up for the Soviet Republic spiritually and physically strong and healthy citizens. This same decree also or-

dered the creation of a model Palace of Motherhood and the conversion of all the lying-in hospitals and children's homes in Moscow and Petrograd into one general institution to be known as "The Moscow Children's Institute" and "The Petrograd Children's Institute." Children's homes were renamed young children's palaces.

The increasing scope of the activity undertaken by the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child, and the enthusiastic response this activity elicited among working women obliged the People's Commissariat to broaden the composition of the board for the protection of motherhood to include men and women representatives of the trade unions, health insurance, the Petrograd district Soviets and the editorial board of the magazine *Rabotnitsa*.

By a decree issued on 31 January, the board was reorganized into a commission whose activity was to pursue three basic aims: 1) protection of the child, i.e. the reduction of infant mortality; 2) the upbringing of the child in an atmosphere corresponding to the broad concept of the socialist family (the organization of mother and baby homes, laying the basis for social upbringing from the very first days of the child's life; 3) the creation of a healthy environment in which the child can develop both physically and spiritually.

In January, 1918, before the decree was published, the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child set about organizing a Palace of Mother and Child Protection, which was to comprise: a Young Children's Palace (a former children's home) and a Palace of Motherhood (a former clinical institute of midwifery and gynecology in Petrograd). According

to the plans drawn up by the Commission for the Protection of Mother and Child and the Department, the Palace of Mother and Child Protection was to include a museum devoted to the protection of mother and child (an idea which was to be brilliantly executed later by V.P. Lebedeva in the form of an exhibition on the protection of mother and child), exemplary crèches, consultation centres, a baby food dispensary, a child fostering centre... The former Nikolayevsky Institute, which was found to be eminently suitable for the purpose, was chosen to house the new Palace...

From the Commissariat of Social Welfare

1918

Through the ignorance and backwardness of an oppressed people and the inaction and indifference of a class government, two million young lives have ended in Russia every year almost before they began. Every year two million suffering mothers have wept tears of grief and with their blistered hands filled in the early graves of these young children who should never have died, who were the innocent victims of a deformed state system. After a search that has lasted centuries, human thought has at last discovered the radiant epoch where the working class, with its own hands, can freely construct that form of maternity protection which will preserve the child for the mother and the mother for the child. Capitalist morality allowed the existence of children's homes with their incredible overcrowding and high mortality rate, forced women to suckle the children of others and to foster out their own, and trampled on the emotions of the working mother, turning the citizeness-mother into the role of a dumb animal to be milked. Russia is fortunate that all these nightmares have, with the victory of the workers and peasants, disappeared into the black gloom of the past. A morning as pure and bright as the children themselves has dawned.

The new Soviet Russia calls all you working women, you working mothers with your sensitive hearts, you bold builders of a new social life, you teachers of the new attitudes, you children's doctors and midwives, to devote your minds and emotions to

building the great edifice that will provide social protection for future generations. From the date of publication of this decree, all large and small institutions under the Commissariat of Social Welfare that serve the child, from the children's home in the capital to the modest village crèche, shall be merged into one government organization and placed under the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child. As an integral part of the total number of institutions connected with pregnancy and maternity, they shall continue to fulfil the single common task of creating citizens who are strong both mentally and physically. The Petrograd children's home, with all its branches, will be included in the organization under its new name, the "Palace of Childhood," and will serve as the all-Russian organization for the protection of childhood, an institution upon which others will be modelled. The Moscow children's home and the "Moscow Institute of Maternity" will work jointly under the name "Moscow Institute of Childhood."

For the rapid elaboration and introduction of the reforms necessary for the protection of childhood in Russia, commissions are being organized under the auspices of the departments of maternity and childhood. Representatives of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, workers' organizations and specialists interested in questions of the social protection of childhood are included on the commissions. The commissions must base their work on the following main principles:

1. The preservation of the mother for the child: milk from the mother's breast is invaluable for the child.

2. The child must be brought up in the enlightened and understanding atmosphere provided by the socialist family.

3. Conditions must be created which permit the development of the child's physical and mental powers and the child's keen comprehension of life.

People's Commissar, **A. Kollontai**.

Member of the collegiate directing the Department for the Protection of Mother and Child, **N. Korolev**.

Secretary, **Tsvetkov**.

Document no. 1247, 31 January 1918

V.I. Lenin and the First Congress of Women Workers

Reminiscences of 1918

Vladimir Ilyich was the one who initiated the involvement of broad masses of women from the cities and villages in the building of a socialist state.

The Soviet Union occupies a unique position in the world in this respect. No comparable phenomenon can be found in any other state.

In every country of the world women waged and are waging their own struggle for their rights, and face powerful resistance and curt rejection on the part of their own bourgeois governments. In many countries women fought heroically for their rights, but they were nonetheless unable to achieve anywhere else those rights enjoyed by every woman in every Soviet republic.

The uniqueness of the Soviet Union lies in the fact that it is not the women themselves who demand from the government the right to work, to education, and to the protection of motherhood, but the government which itself draws the women into every sphere of labour, including those to which they have absolutely no access in the majority of bourgeois countries, and simultaneously protects the interests of women as mothers. All of this is written into the Soviet Constitution, and it is without parallel anywhere in the world.

...The first congress of women workers began the great work conducted by the party among the millions of women of the USSR. Vladimir Ilyich was present

at this congress...

From the very first days of the October Revolution, Soviet power accorded women full rights; however, not all women were as yet able to avail themselves of them. Among the women there were those who, as a result of their lack of class consciousness, were deceived by the opponents of Soviet power.

Vladimir Ilyich (once) said (and I clearly remember his words):

“If even the most resolute and courageous fighter on the civil war front returns home and has to listen day after day to the grumbles and complaints of his wife and face in her, as a result of her lack of political consciousness, an opponent to the continuing struggle for Soviet power, the will of even a valiant warrior hardened in battle may weaken, and he who did not surrender to counter-revolution may surrender to his wife and come under her harmful influence.

“Therefore,” said Vladimir Ilyich, “we must mould the female working masses into a solid bulwark of Soviet power against counter-revolution. Each woman must understand that, in fighting for Soviet power, she is fighting for her own rights and for those of her children.”

In the autumn of 1918, the party sent a group of active Bolsheviks to various parts of the country in order to conduct work among the women. I was sent by Sverdlov to Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Kineshma, Ivanovo and other places. I remember how one woman textile worker called Anuchkina invited me home. She offered me a cup of tea; there was no bread, no sugar, but a great deal of enthusiasm. During our conversation, comrade Anuchkina expressed the opinion that

it was now time to convene a congress of working and peasant women. I liked the idea, and put it before the party Central Committee when I returned to Moscow.

Vladimir Ilyich fully approved of this idea and gave it his support.

“Of course,” he said, “there should be no separate women’s organizations, but the appropriate apparatus should be set up within the party which would assume responsibility for raising the level of consciousness among the female population, and which would teach women how to use their rights in order to build the Soviet state, that is, in order to build a better future. Women must be drawn into local Soviets in both the towns and the villages, they must be given practical tasks and knowledge. Particular attention must also be given to the development of those institutions which lighten the burden of motherhood for women actively engaged in working for the state in the Soviets and factories.”

These ideas and tasks set forth by Vladimir Ilyich formed the basis of the work done at the first congress of women workers, held on 16-21 November, 1918.

The lead group of women Bolsheviki, which included Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, Inessa Armand, myself and some others — altogether the group had 20-25 members — drew up reports and resolutions on various issues.

I was given the job of preparing a report and resolution on methods of work among women and on the organization of the appropriate apparatus within the party, that is, the creation of women’s sections. This resolution was approved at our congress, and formed the basis of a decade of work by these women’s sec-

tions in the party. It was also adopted at the Second International Conference of Women Communists in 1921 as a guideline for all the parties that are members of the Comintern.

At the time the congress was convened, not everyone appreciated its importance and significance. I remember that there was opposition from Rykov, Zinoviev and others. However, Vladimir Ilyich declared that the congress was necessary. He always inquired how we were progressing and whether women were responding to our call.

The preparatory work for our first congress was not easy. The postal service was operating badly and we received no reply from party committees to our appeal to send women delegates. On the basis of rough calculations, we estimated that about 300 would come. In fact, the number was 1,147. By that time we had been given premises in the 3rd House of Soviets (Sadovo-Karetnaya St. in Moscow). However, we had laid on food for only three-five hundred people. That night I received telephone calls from Podchufarova and Baranova, who told me: “The delegates have arrived, but discontent is growing — there is no bread, no sugar, no tea..”..

There is a report on the congress in the magazine *Kommunistka*, No. 11, 1923 (“How We Convened the First All-Russia Congress of Working and Peasant Women”).

Vladimir Ilyich followed events at the congress, and Nadezhda Konstantinovna, who was a member of the presidium, gave him an account of its work each day. She told Lenin that the delegates included a number of poor peasant women in sheepskin jackets who

spoke against the kulaks, and that there were many good speakers. Vladimir Ilyich told her he would go and see them.

Vladimir Ilyich arrived unexpectedly during a speech given by Comrade Soboleva. We wanted to interrupt her, but Vladimir Ilyich insisted that she finish her speech. However, everyone had, of course, stopped listening to her.

On 19 November, Vladimir Ilyich made his historic speech that became the basis of our work. The congress adopted proposals on methods of work, on the protection of mothers and young children, and many others.

Vladimir Ilyich believed that women should be given the possibility of working in the state apparatus while simultaneously being able to be mothers. Women are a valuable creative force, but they also have the right and duty to be mothers. Motherhood is a major social obligation.

Our Soviet state is implementing to the full these basic propositions put forward by Vladimir Ilyich.

Not only the women of the Soviet Union, but women throughout the world should know that Vladimir Ilyich laid the foundations of female emancipation. To attain legal rights is insufficient; women must be emancipated in practice. The emancipation of women means giving them the opportunity to bring up their children, combining motherhood with work for society.

Nowhere in the world, nowhere in history is there such a thinker and statesman who has done so much for the emancipation of women as Vladimir Ilyich.

From Towards a History of the Working Women's Movement in Russia

1919

What point in time ought to be considered as the beginning of the women workers' movement in Russia? The movement of women workers is by its very nature an indivisible part of the general workers' movement; it is impossible to separate the one from the other. The working woman, as a member of the proletariat and a seller of labour power, moved with the working man every time he went into action to win his human rights. In all the risings and in all the factory riots which were so distasteful to tsarism she took an equal part, alongside the working man.

Thus the movement of working women begins with the first signs of an awakening class consciousness among the Russian proletariat and with the first attempts to achieve, by strikes and direct action, more bearable and less humiliating living conditions.

Working women played an active role in the unrest at the Krengol'mskaya factory in 1872 and in the riots at the Moscow Lazarev cloth factory in 1874; women were involved in the 1878 strike at the Novaya Pryadil'na factory in St. Petersburg, and in 1885 they led the textile workers in that famous strike in Orekhovo-Zuyevo, when the factory buildings were destroyed and the Tsarist government was forced to hurry through, on 3 July, a law banning night work for women and young people.

It should be noted that the spontaneous wave of strikes that roused the Russian proletariat to action in

the 1870s and early 80s affected the textile industry in particular, where cheap female labour was always employed. The unrest of this period was, however, of a purely “economic” character; it was a response to a situation of unemployment and to the severe crisis in the cotton industry. Nevertheless it was indeed wonderful that the politically naive factory girl, hopelessly bowed down by harsh, unbearable work conditions, despised by one and all (even by the female half of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, from whom she differed in her firm allegiance to the old peasant customs) should be in the vanguard, fighting for the rights of the working class and for the emancipation of women. The difficult living conditions with which the independent wage-earning member of the proletariat had to cope were pushing the woman factory worker into open action against the power of the employers and against her enslavement by capital. In fighting for the rights and interests of her class the working woman was unconsciously paving the way for the liberation of her sex from those special chains that weighed upon it and were creating, even within the united working class, a situation of unequal status and unequal working conditions.

In the mid and late 90s, which was a period of increasing unrest among the proletariat, women workers also participated actively in the various disturbances. The “April Rebellion” of 1895 at the Yaroslav factory was carried out with the help and under the influence of the women weavers. The women workers of St. Petersburg did not desert their comrades during the sporadic economic strikes of 1894-96, and when the historic strike of textile workers broke out in the

summer of 1896 the women workers joined the men in a unanimous walk-out. What did it matter if for coming out on strike many of them were threatened with the sack, with a prison sentence or even with exile? The common cause of their class stood higher, was more important and more sacred than maternal feelings, domestic cares, or personal and family well-being.

At a time of unrest and strike action the proletarian woman, downtrodden, timid and without rights, suddenly grows and learns to stand tall and straight. The self-centred, narrow-minded and politically backward "female" becomes an equal, a fighter and a comrade. This transformation is unconscious and spontaneous, but it is important and significant because it reveals the way in which participation in the workers' movement brings the woman worker towards her liberation, not only as the seller of her labour power but also as a woman, a wife, a mother and a housekeeper.

In the late 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century there were many disturbances and a series of strikes in factories employing predominantly female labour: at the Shaishal tobacco factories, at the Maxwell spinning factories in St. Petersburg, etc. The working-class movement in Russia grew stronger and more organized. The female proletariat's opposition to the Tsarist regime likewise grew. But until the great year of the first Russian revolution the movement was primarily of an economic character. Political slogans had to be hidden or presented furtively. A sound class instinct drew working women to support strikes, and often they were responsible for initiating and carrying out industrial action. But since women had as yet no

sufficient organization or channels of communication, as soon as the wave of strike activity died down and the workers returned to work whether in victory or in defeat, the women would be scattered and isolated once again. In those days women in the illegal party organizations were few and far between. The broad objectives of the socialist party were still failing to attract the proletarian woman; she remained indifferent to political ideas, and did not believe in the possibility of her liberation as a worker or as a woman. The life of Russia's six million proletarian women was, in those early years of the twentieth century, one long round of hunger, deprivation and humiliation. The working day lasted twelve hours, or at the very least eleven. The women worked for starvation wages of twelve to thirteen rubles a month and they lived in overcrowded barracks. Neither the government nor society assisted them in times of illness, pregnancy or unemployment, and it was impossible to arrange a system of mutual aid because the Tsarist government victimized without mercy any such organizational attempts on the part of the workers. Such was the lot of the working woman. Her shoulders were bent under the weight of an unbearable oppression. She could see only poverty and hunger ahead, and refused to believe in a brighter future, in the possibility of fighting to overthrow the yoke of Tsarism and the yoke of capital.

Even in the early twentieth century the average working woman avoided politics and the revolutionary struggle. It is true that the Russian socialist movement prides itself on the number of great and heroic women through whose active work and self-sacrifice

the underground movement was established and the way prepared for the expansion of subsequent years. But these women, from the first socialists of the seventies like Sofiya Bardinaya and the Leshern sisters, who had personal charm as well as great moral strength, to the iron-willed Perovskaya, were not from the proletariat. They were the young women Turgenev celebrated in his prose poem "On the Threshold": girls of wealthy and aristocratic backgrounds who had left their parents' homes and broken with their past. In an attempt to atone for the sins of their fathers they took up the struggle against social injustice and "went to the people" with revolutionary propaganda. Even much later, when Marxism had firmly established itself in the Russian workers' movement it was only the occasional proletarian woman who took part in political life. The active members of the underground organizations in those years were women of the intelligentsia, not working women. It was only rarely that a factory girl could be persuaded to attend an illegal meeting. Neither did working women visit the Sunday evening classes held on the outskirts of St. Petersburg which were the only "legal possibilities" in those times, the only way the broad mass of workers could make contact with the ideas of Marxism and revolutionary socialism, presented under the guise of harmless lessons in geography and arithmetic. The working women were still avoiding life and struggle, believing that their destiny was the cooking pot, the washtub and the cradle...

The first revolution: 1905

The picture changes swiftly once the red flag of

revolution is hoisted high above Russia. The revolutionary year of 1905 had a profound effect on the working masses. For the first time the Russian worker sensed his strength and understood that the well-being of the nation rested on his shoulders. In the revolutionary years of 1905 and 1906 the woman worker also became aware of the world around her. She was everywhere. If we wanted to give a record of how women participated in that movement, to list the instances of their active protest and struggle, to give full justice to the self-sacrifice of the proletarian women and their loyalty to the ideals of socialism, we would have to describe the events of the revolution scene by scene.

Many can still remember those years, for they left vivid impressions; many can still recall those “grey” women beginning to come to life. The women listened to the orators at the packed meetings of the Gapon organization,¹ their faces eager and full of hope and their hearts’ alight with enthusiasm. As they marched in the close ranks of the workers’ processions their faces glowed with concentration, triumph, and firm determination. On that memorable Sunday, 9 January,² they were out in force. The sunshine was unusually bright for St. Petersburg. It lit up the faces of the many women in the crowd. They paid dearly for their illusions and their child-like trust, for many women were among the victims of that January day. The call

¹ Workers’ organizations whose origins lay in the police and whose leader, a priest named Gapon, was backed by liberal members of the Tsarist regime.

² “Bloody Sunday,” when troops fired on an unarmed demonstration outside the Tsar’s palace.

for a general strike reverberated around the workshops and was taken up by women who the day before had been deaf to politics. For many women this was the first taste of industrial action.

The working women in the provinces did not lag behind their comrades in the larger cities. During the October days, exhausted by their working conditions and their harsh hungry existence, women would leave their machines and bravely deprive their children of the last crust of bread in the name of the common cause. The working woman would call on her male comrades to stop work. Her words were simple, compelling and straight from the heart. She kept up morale and imparted a renewed vigour to the demoralized. The working woman fought on tirelessly and selflessly; the more involved she became in action, the quicker the process of her mental awakening. The working woman gradually came to understand the world she was living in and the injustice of the capitalist system, she began to feel more bitter at all the suffering and all the difficulties women experienced. The voices of the working class began to ring out more clearly and forcefully for the recognition not only of general class demands but of the specific needs and demands of working women. In March 1905 the exclusion of women from the elections of workers' delegates to the Shidlovskii commission¹ aroused deep dissatisfaction; the hardships the men and women had been through together had brought them closer to

¹ A commission, with elected workers' representatives, which the government instituted during the first weeks of the 1905 revolution to deal with the demands of the movement.

each other, and it seemed particularly unjust to emphasize woman's inferior status at a time when she had shown herself an able fighter and a worthy citizen. When the woman chosen by the Sampsonovskaya factory as one of their seven delegates was ruled by the Shidlovskii commission to be ineligible for such office, indignant women workers from several different factories got together to present the commission with the following protest;

“The working women deputies are not being allowed to take part in the commission of which you are chairman. This decision is unjust. At the factories and places of manufacture in St. Petersburg there are more women workers than men. In the textile industry the number of women workers increases every year. The men transfer to factories where the wages are higher. The workload of women workers is heavier. The employers take advantage of our helplessness and lack of rights; we get worse treatment than our comrades and we get less pay. When the commission was announced our hearts beat with hope: at last the time has come, we thought, when the women workers of St. Petersburg can speak out to all Russia, and make known in the name of their sister workers the oppression, insults and humiliations we suffer, about which the male workers know nothing. Then, when we had already chosen our representatives, we were told that only men could be deputies. But we hope that this decision is not final. The government ukase, at any rate, does not distinguish between women workers and the working class as a

whole.”

Deprived of representation, women workers were shut off from political life at the moment when through the first state Duma the population had its first opportunity to direct the affairs of the country. This seemed a glaringly unjust move against the women who had borne the brunt of the struggle for freedom. Working women frequently attended the meetings held in connection with the elections to the first and second Dumas, noisily expressing their dissatisfaction with a law that prevented their voting over such an important matter as the selection of delegates to the Russian parliament. There were instances in Moscow, for example, where working women broke up meetings with their demonstrations of protest.

The majority of the forty thousand persons who signed the petitions sent to the first and second Dumas demanding that the franchise be extended to women were working women. This is evidence that working women were no longer indifferent to their lack of civil rights. The signatures collected by the bourgeois women's organizations, including the Union for Women's Equality, were from the factories. The willingness, however, of these women to sign petitions organized by women of another class shows that their political awakening had only made certain steps forward, and had stopped at a halfway point. The working women began to sense their inferior political status in terms of their sex, and were not yet able to connect this with the general struggle of their class. They had yet to find the path that would lead proletarian

women to liberation; they still clung to the skirts of the bourgeois feminists. The feminists tried every means of establishing contact with the working women and winning them to their side. They attempted to gain their support and organize them in women's unions that were supposedly "above class" but were in fact bourgeois through and through. However, a sound class instinct and a deep distrust of "ladies" saved the working women from being diverted into feminism and from any long and permanent connection with the bourgeois feminists.

Women's meetings were especially numerous during 1905 and 1906. Working women attended them willingly; they listened attentively to the bourgeois feminists but did not respond with much enthusiasm, since the speakers gave no suggestion as to how the urgent problems of those enslaved by capital might be solved. The women of the working class suffered from the harsh conditions at work, from hunger and insecurity. Their most urgent demands were: a shorter working day, higher wages, more human treatment from the factory authorities, less police supervision and more scope for "independent action." Such needs were foreign to the bourgeois feminists, who came to the working women with their narrow concerns and exclusively "women's demands." The feminists could not understand the class character of this embryonic working women's movement. The serving maids were a particular disappointment to them. During 1905 the bourgeois feminists in St. Petersburg and Moscow took the initiative in organizing the first meeting for servants. The response was encouraging and the first meetings were well attended, but when the "Union for

Women's Equality" tried to organize servants according to its formula of an idyllic union of lady employers and their employees, the servants turned away and, to the chagrin of the feminists, transferred themselves rapidly to the party of their class, organizing their own special trade unions. This was what happened in Moscow, Penza, Khar'kov and other towns. The attempts of the Women's Progressive Party, an organization even further to the right, to bring together domestic servants under the watchful eye of their mistresses ended in the same way: the servants overstepped the limits set down by the feminists. Glance at the newspapers of 1905 and you will see how much information they give about the strikes and street demonstrations through which serving girls, even in the farthest corners of Russia, expressed their protest. The cooks, laundresses and housemaids either went on strike separately or they united under the common banner of "servants"; militancy spread from area to area like an epidemic. The demands were usually: an eight-hour day, the establishment of a minimum wage, better living conditions (the provision of separate rooms), more considerate treatment from employers, etc.

The political awakening of women was not limited to the urban poor alone. For the first time the Russian peasant woman began to think in a stubborn and resolute way about herself. During the closing months of 1904 and all through 1905 there were continual "women's riots" in the countryside. The Japanese war gave impetus to this movement. The peasant woman, as wife and mother, felt all the horror and hardship, all the social and economic consequences of this ill-

fated war. Though her shoulders were already weighed down by a double workload and a double anxiety, she had to answer the call for more food supplies. She, who had always been incapable of standing alone and afraid of everything outside her immediate family circle, was suddenly forced to come face to face with the hostile world of which she had been ignorant. She was made to feel all the humiliation of her inferior status; she experienced all the bitterness of undeserved insults. For the first time the peasant women left their homes and their passivity and ignorance behind, and hurried to the towns to tread the corridors of government institutions in the hope of news of a husband, a son or a father, to make a fuss about allowances or to fight for various other rights. The women saw clearly and with their own eyes the ugliness of reality: they had no rights, and the existing social system was based on falsehood and injustice. They returned to their villages in a sober and hardened mood, their hearts full of bitterness, hatred and anger. In the south, during the summer of 1905, there was a series of "peasant women's riots." With an anger and boldness not usually expected from women the peasant women threatened the troops and the police and frequently gave the requisitioners a beating. Armed with rakes, forks and brooms, the peasant women drove the soldiers out of the villages. This was how they protested against the war. They were, of course, arrested, taken to court and harshly sentenced, but the unrest did not abate. These disturbances were in defence of general peasant interests and of specific women's interests — the two were so closely intertwined that it is impossible to separate them or to see the unrest as part of the "femi-

nist" movement.

Besides the political protests there were others motivated by economic necessity. It was a time of general peasant unrest and strike activity over agricultural matters. The peasant women often took part, urging on their men or sometimes initiating activity. On occasion, when the men were reluctant to make a move, the women would go alone to the landlord's estate with their demands. And armed with what they could lay their hands on, they went out ahead of the village men to face the expeditionary forces. The peasant women, downtrodden by centuries of oppression, found themselves unexpectedly active and indispensable participants in the political drama. Over the period of the revolution they fought, in close unity with their men, in defence of the common peasant interests, and with amazing tact they brought up their own women's needs only when this did not threaten to harm the peasant cause as a whole.

This did not mean that the peasant women remained indifferent to or ignored their own needs as women. On the contrary, the mass entry of peasant women into the general political arena and their participation in the general struggle strengthened and developed their awareness of their position. In 1905 peasant women from Voronezh province sent two delegates to a peasant conference to demand "political rights" and "freedom" for men as well as women. Then there is the historic letter sent by peasant women from the Voronezh and Tver' provinces to the first Duma. And the telegram from Nogatkin to the deputy Alad'in:

“In this great moment of struggle for rights we, the peasant women of the village of Nogatkino, greet those elected representatives who express their distrust of the government by demanding that the ministry resign. We hope that the representatives will support the people, give them land and freedom, open the doors of the prisons to liberate the fighters for the people’s freedom and the people’s happiness. We hope that the representatives obtain civil and political rights for themselves and for us Russian women, who are unfairly treated and without rights even within our families. Remember that a slave cannot be the mother of a free citizen.” (Authorized by the seventy-five women of Nogatkino.)

The peasant women of the Caucasus were particularly militant in the fight for their rights. In Kutaisi province they brought forward resolutions at peasant meetings demanding that they be given equal political rights with men. There were women among the deputies to a meeting held in Tiflis province, where representatives from both the urban and the rural areas gathered to discuss the question of introducing the zemstvo¹ system into the Caucasus, and these women were insistent on the need for women’s rights.

Alongside the demands for political equality, peasant women everywhere were naturally vocal in defence of their economic interests; the question of the

¹ The zemstvo was a local government organ initiated from below, usually by the local bourgeoisie; the Tsarist regime permitted it to meet and make effective decisions, although it was not an officially recognized institution.

allocation of land was as much a cause of concern for the peasant women as for their men. In some areas the peasant women warmly supported the idea of confiscating privately-owned land, but lost their enthusiasm when it seemed that women might not benefit directly from the redistribution. "If they take the land from the landowners and give it only to the men, that will mean absolute enslavement for us women," was their reaction. "At the moment we at least earn our own kopeks, but if they divide up the land like that we would be simply working for the men instead of the landowner." However, the fears of the peasant women were completely unfounded, because out of purely economic considerations the peasants were forced to demand land for the "female souls" too. The agrarian interests of the peasant men and peasant women are so closely entwined that in struggling for the abolition of the existing oppressive land relations the peasants were fighting for the economic interests of their women. And at the same time the peasant women, while fighting for the economic and political interests of the peasantry as a whole, learned to fight for the special needs and demands of women. This was also true of the working women who fought unflinchingly in the general liberation movement, and who did even more than their country sisters to prepare public opinion to accept the principle of the equality of women. The realization of civil equality for women in Soviet Russia was made possible by the spontaneous struggle of the masses of working and peasant women that came with the first Russian revolution of 1905.

In my book *The Social Basis of the Woman Question*, published in 1909, I had this to say to the bour-

geois feminists (against whom my book was as a whole directed): “If, in the near future, the peasant woman wins a better position for herself, if the everyday conditions of her life improve and her economic and legal status is raised, this will be thanks to the unified efforts of peasant democracy directed towards the realization of the general peasant demands which the rural community has constantly put forward. The attempts of the feminists to ‘clear the way for women’ are irrelevant here... If the peasant woman can free herself from the existing agricultural relations, she will have won more than all the feminist organizations together are in a position to give her.”

These lines, written ten years ago, have been justified by events. The great October revolution has not only satisfied the basic and most pressing demands of the peasants of both sexes — that the land be given to those who were slaves of the land — but the revolution has raised the peasant to the respected status of a free and absolutely equal citizen, held back only by the outmoded forms of economy and the traditions of domestic life.

A world which the working and peasant women were only just beginning to dream about in the days of the first Russian revolution has been made reality by the great events of October 1917.

Bourgeois feminism and the question of women’s political equality

The 1905 revolution brought forward and established the idea of equality for women. The question had never before and has never since been so heatedly debated in Russia, and never before nor since has it

assumed such an important position in the fighting platform of the various political parties. All the bourgeois groupings, from the Octobrists, the representatives of big business, to the petty-bourgeois Trudovik group, were grappling with the woman question, each party trying to settle the question on the basis of its particular programme, derived from its narrow class interests. The parties to the right of the Cadets, stood for limited franchise, especially when it was zemstvo autonomy that was being discussed; the Cadets, the Social Revolutionaries and the Trudoviki insisted on democracy, or rather on bourgeois democracy, in the shape of a five-tiered election that would guarantee a majority of petty-bourgeois representatives in parliament, and a bigger majority if women were included as voters. The "woman question" was debated everywhere: by the zemstva, a conference of liberals, the large Cadet unions and the first two Dumas.

This sudden interest in women's rights created favourable soil for the growth of bourgeois feminism in Russia. The first revolutionary storm gave birth to bourgeois women's political organizations, which tried to unite women of all classes under their narrow feminist banner. At first, they trod cautiously, trying to find a way to participation on a large scale in the political life of the country. Before 1905 there had existed only the Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society, a women's club whose aims were philanthropic and modest in scope: to provide the opportunity for pleasant conversation, hostels for working girls from the intelligentsia and decorous meetings for its members, who were exclusively women of the bourgeoisie. Shabanova and Anna Pavlovna Filosofova were the lead-

ing lights of this group. The bourgeois feminists had also attempted to spread their ideas by the written word: in 1898 an annual "Women's Calendar" had been started (Praskov'ya Arian was the publisher), and from 1899 to 1901 a magazine, *Zhenskoye delo* ("Women's Affairs"), came out. But the censorship of Tsarist Russia put a stop even to such innocent female ventures, for in furthering their ideas the feminists had to discuss methods of organization — the most forbidden topic of all.

The revolutionary year of 1905 threw up new demands and opened up before Russian society (before "society" rather than before the working people) the unexpected possibility of struggling for the realization of their class interests, and thus forced the women of the bourgeois classes to make a move. Alongside the Russian Women's Mutual Aid Society, whose moderate stand prevented it from taking any active part in political life, there appeared a more militant organization, the Union for Equality. The society had a distinct Cadet flavouring, with Tyrkova (a member of that party's central committee), L. Gurevich and Mirovich among its leaders, but was anxious to assure working women that it was "above class" and fought for the interests of women of all sections of the population. The Union started its own paper, *Soyuz zhenshchin* ("Union of Women"), and opened up branches all over Russia which by 1906 had more than eight thousand members.

The steady growth of women's political awareness, however, made a regrouping of social forces inevitable. The political bloc of bourgeois elements was possible at the height of the 1905 revolution, but had

by 1906 become too confining even for the feminists. As the political consciousness of the feminists increased, different factions emerged more distinctly (the same process was evident in the male organizations), and despite the call for a united women's movement a split reflecting the different levels of political radicalism was soon an established fact. The bourgeois women's bloc came to an end a little while after its male counterpart had disintegrated.

By the spring of 1906 the right-wing feminists in the Union for Equality had broken from the bloc. They were closer in spirit to the advocates of "law and order," and as politically weak and formless as the diehard right-wingers grouped around *Zhenskii Vestnik* ("Women's Herald"), the paper edited by M. Pokrovskaya. More radical elements formed a separate group, the Women's Political Club, which was however closed by the police at the time of the dissolution of the first Duma. The women in this club, though less moderate than the members of the other organizations, could not explain to themselves, let alone to others, what class they represented and what they considered as their main objectives. They were unsure whether they should defend the interests of factory women, peasant women or working women in general, and whether they should pursue exclusively feminist aims or involve themselves in more general political questions; shuffling indecisively between these alternatives, the club was doomed to a short existence. When, for example, the question arose of presenting a petition to the first Duma demanding an extension of the franchise to include women, the members of the club could not make up their minds to

which political party they were closest and ended up by sending their petition to the Trudovik group.

I have deliberately dealt in some detail with the bourgeois feminists during the period of the first revolution because in those years the bourgeois women's movement posed a serious threat to the unity of the working-class movement. Not only the working women, who were just awakening to political life and searching for a way to their liberation, but the organized and experienced social democrats too were captivated by the novel and (in the Russian context) militant slogans of the feminists.

During 1905 and 1906 the poison of feminism infected not only the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries but even some active Bolsheviks. At the first large women's meeting held on 10 April 1905 at the Tenishevskaya Institute in St. Petersburg, only two speakers (one of whom was a working woman) dared to raise a voice of dissent against the friendly choir of representatives from the various social groups and political parties. We who were opposed to any bloc with the bourgeois feminists, however temporary, warned the working women against being carried away by feminism and called on them to defend the single revolutionary worker's banner. But the resolutions we put forward outlining principles of proletarian class unity and emphasizing the necessity of a joint struggle for the common interests of working people were decisively defeated.

In those days the position now accepted without question — that in a society based on class contradictions there is no room for a women's movement indiscriminately embracing all women — had to be fought

for fiercely. The world of women is divided, just as is the world of men, into two camps: one is in its ideas, aims and interests close to the bourgeoisie, the other to the proletariat, whose aspirations for freedom incorporate the complete solution of the woman question. Thus the two groups, even though they share the general slogan "women's liberation" have different aims, different interests and different methods of struggle. Each of the groups instinctively represents the interests of its class, and this gives a specific class bias to their aims and their actions. The individual woman may rise above and reject her own interests in the name of the victory of another class; a woman's organization, however, will reflect all the needs and interests of the social group it represents. For the feminists, the battle to obtain equal rights with men within the limits of the capitalist world is a sufficient aim in itself; for the women of the proletariat this is only a means of extending the struggle against the economic oppression of the working class. The feminists consider that men, who have unjustly taken all the rights and privileges for themselves and left women in prisoners' chains and with a thousand obligations, are the main enemy, and that victory will be the abandonment by the male sex of their exclusive prerogatives. The women of the proletariat see the situation very differently. They certainly do not see men as the enemy or the oppressor. For them, the men of the working class are comrades who share the same joyless existence, they are loyal fighters in the struggle for a better future. The same social conditions oppress both the women and their male comrades, the same chains of capitalism weigh on them and darken their lives. It

is true that certain specificities of the contemporary situation create a double burden for women, and the conditions of hired labour sometimes mean that the working woman is seen as the enemy rather than the friend of men. The working class, though, understands the situation.

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, she cannot be a wife who chooses her husband only as her heart dictates, a mother who does not need to fear for the future of her children. The women of the proletariat thus aim to break the antagonisms of the class world and to win another and better society, where there will be no place for the exploitation of one person by another.

Women will only become free and equal in a world where labour has been socialized and where communism has been victorious.

The first attempts to organize working women along class lines

In the years of the first revolution the bourgeois feminist propaganda of "the one and indivisible women's movement" was still a serious threat to the cohesion of the workers' movement. The "left" feminists, in particular, who were fond of revolutionary phrases and sought the support of the social democratic women, could have presented a danger.

Conscious of these dangers on the one hand, and aware, on the other, of the new aspirations of the working women, which up till that time had failed to attract the direct attention they deserved from the party, a group of social democrats composed of both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks (an official merger of the two factions had taken place at that time) decided to take the question of the organization of working women in hand. This group included Marusya Burko (a tailoress), Comrade Antonova (a weaver), Comrade Anna Semenova (a textile worker), Comrade Solov'eva (a typesetter) and myself. (We were later joined by Klavdiya Nikolayeva and several others.)

In 1905 individual members of this group had carried out an open campaign against bourgeois feminism, speaking at meetings, explaining to the working women the ideas of revolutionary Marxism on the woman question and the problems of working women. From the spring of 1906 this group worked to draw the attention of the party to the demands and needs of working women, insisting that in order to attract women of the working class into the party and the trade-union movement special agitation was necessary.

An attempt to begin special agitation and propaganda amongst working women was, however, met by some members with indifference and by others with distrust. During 1906 and 1907 the party centre was engrossed in its serious and urgent political tasks, and although in principle it recognized the usefulness of this kind of work, it did nothing to help or support the work of the group. The rank-and-file comrades often did not grasp the meaning of what we were doing, and

identified our activities with the "hated feminism." They gave no encouragement and even went as far as trying to hinder the group. Working women arranging their first meetings, for example, and relying on using the rooms where evening classes were held or where some union or club had its headquarters, would find that the building was locked up, and on making enquiries would be told that the rooms were not to be had for special women's meetings.

Such an attitude was based on an easily understandable fear that the working women might leave their class movement and become entangled in the snare of feminism. But in consequence we had to cope with a considerable amount of confrontation with comrades, and the development of extremely necessary work was impeded. Nevertheless, in 1906 we managed to hold a number of meetings outside the Neva gates. These gatherings were usually of a semi-legal character: twenty-five to thirty women would pose as a "meeting of representatives" at the union administration building or, less frequently, assemble at a Sunday school for a "lecture" which had the permission of the authorities.

By the spring of 1907 the movement among working women was already of such a distinctly mass character that socialists decided to reply to the bourgeois feminists by calling their own meetings. Those organized at the Nobel' house that spring played an important part in the development of the working women's movement, marking for the women of the proletariat a step along the path to class self-determination. These were the first meetings which the party organized for working women and at which the

women themselves spoke. The atmosphere was electric, the large hall full to overflowing. Members of the textile and needlewomen's unions, typesetters and workers from many enterprises on the Vyborg side were among those to attend and follow the speeches with rapt attention. The questions of the labour protection of women and children, the security of maternity, political equality and the attitude of the revolutionary workers' party to the feminist movement were discussed. The feminists, significantly, did not dare send their representatives; the line of division between the feminists and the growing women workers' movement was now more clearly drawn.

One of the meetings coincided with a strike at a large factory on the Vyborg side, and was quick to show its solidarity with the strikers and to protest against the yoke of capital. The police hurried to restore order and ban these "women's meetings," to which the authorities, accustomed to the moderation and "good sense" that prevailed at the gatherings of the bourgeois feminists, had at first turned a blind eye.

It was then, in the spring of 1907, that the decision was taken to make use of the "legal opportunities" that existed for carrying out agitation and propaganda among the broad masses of working women.

In the spring of 1906 the left feminists around the Women's Political Club had established four clubs for working women in different parts of St. Petersburg. The club on Vasili Island was particularly active, and continued to function semi-legally even after the Women's Political Club had been closed. Working women clung firmly to this form of organization, and clubs and societies of "self-education" flourished.

However, the general clubs and organizations had very few women members: out of six to nine hundred members, little more than a dozen were working women. It was, as usual, the lack of political consciousness and the backwardness of the women that restrained them. The group which had begun special work among the women of the proletariat decided to make use of this legal possibility, and with the help of club propaganda attract the more backward of the working women.

In 1907 the socialists managed to get permission to open their first club, which was to have the extremely innocent title of "Society of Working Women's Mutual Aid." The rules of the club laid down that while membership was open to men, only women were to be involved in the running of it. The aims of the club (not mentioned in the statutes, of course) were to prepare the ground for socialist work among the population, to encourage the workers' self-activity, to strengthen their revolutionary militancy and to bring together the isolated working women and draw them into the trade unions and the party.

During the winter of 1907-08 lectures were read, discussions and meetings held. The club had its own reading room and an inexpensive buffet serving tea and sandwiches. In the summer a "colony" was organized, affording the working women most in need of rest the opportunity of being in the countryside, even if only for a few weeks. The "colony" was financed by the pooled resources of the participants. The male members also took part in this scheme, and generally speaking the society did not bear the stamp of a specifically women's club. During the first months of its

existence the club on Predtechenskaya Street attracted more than three hundred members, one hundred of whom were working men. The club was situated near the textile workers' union headquarters and there was a lively exchange between the members of the two organizations. The women who joined the club were mainly textile workers, weavers and knitters, but domestic servants, seamstresses and workers' wives also became members.

The women who had initiated the special agitational work among proletarian women concentrated entirely on work in the club. They arranged lectures and — when the police gave permission — meetings, including meetings for women delegates from the various trade unions. They also carried out agitation in the party districts. The group became particularly active after the first International Conference of Socialist Women that took place in Stuttgart in 1907, and at which the author of these lines was the Russian representative.

In the years of reaction this, the working women's first club was closed down by the police. But its achievements were lasting. The club on Predtechenskaya Street had laid the foundations of revolutionary class propaganda among the broad mass of Russian proletarian women.

The working women and the feminist conference

The winter of 1907 thus marked the beginning of separate party work among the women proletariat, aimed at bringing working women into the revolutionary movement. Differences with the bourgeois feminists became increasingly pronounced; the more

obvious the “Cadet spirit” of the Union for Equality, the more rapid the desertion from that organization of the working women, who had been unsure and hesitant. By the end of the winter, relationships between the feminists and the organized women had become so strained that when social democrats tried to speak at feminist meetings they were prevented.

Nevertheless, when the feminists decided to call an All-Russian Women’s Congress in December 1908, the social democrats were of the opinion that the conference should be used as a platform to propagate the ideas of socialism and explain the fundamental difference between the social democratic and the feminist attitudes to the woman question.

The Central Bureau of trade unions took the initiative in holding elections of delegates among working women. The Petrograd committee of the social democratic party, considering that the preparation for these elections should be used to carry out socialist propaganda, later joined in the work, and delegated Vera Slutskaya (who was killed during the days of the October revolution). From September onwards, meetings were held in union buildings, clubs and in workers’ flats. Wherever possible legal meetings were held, but more often than not they had to be illegal, and every possible way of avoiding the ever-present and watchful eye of the police — such as organizing a club “name-day party,” a “handicrafts class” or an arithmetic lesson — had to be employed. For the writer of these lines the work was made particularly difficult by the fact that at the time of these preparations she became a “wanted person.” In spite of all the obstacles and hindrances, meetings to discuss the women’s con-

ference took place almost every day. It has been calculated that in St. Petersburg alone more than fifty meetings were held in the space of two months, which for that time must be considered a very large number.

The large factories sent their representatives to the conference, as did the St. Petersburg Committee of the party and the trade unions. However, on 10 December, the day of the triumphant opening of the All-Russian Women's Congress in the hall of the Town Duma, there were in all only forty-five representatives of the organized proletariat, as against seven hundred representatives of bourgeois feminism. But this tiny group of working women was able to show the difference between the ideas of the feminists and the proletarian class objectives.

Immediately the conference opened, the representatives of the workers' organizations, accepting a revolutionary class position, formed themselves into a separate group. On all fundamental issues discussed at the conference (female suffrage, labour protection, cottage industry, the organization of women into parties or their unification around the bourgeois women's societies), the group brought forward independent resolutions that proclaimed their revolutionary perspectives.

These resolutions were systematically voted out by the majority at the conference. The most heated debate was on the question of the means and methods of struggle to achieve the vote for women. Confirmed feminists such as Mirovich, Kal'manovich and the Cadet, Tyrkova, attacked the working women and sneeringly accused the social democrats of only accepting the equality of women "in theory." The socialists an-

swered by pointing to the hypocrisy of bourgeois feminism, which was apparent in its position over the struggle for women's equality. For while demanding equality, the feminists were prepared to leave in force the basic elements of the social structure — private property and the capitalist means of production — on which the slavery of women is based.

E.D. Kuskova, with two or three other followers, tried to make peace between the feminists of the Cadet type and the group of working women. However, the wider the debate ranged, the clearer the basic differences between the suffragettes and the supporters of social democracy on the questions of tactics and a political programme became. Since it had been decided to use the conference as a "legal platform," the group of working women made contributions to the discussion on all the basic questions. Comrades Nikolayeva, Volkhova and Burko were among those who spoke, and their speeches, printed in the "Materials of the Women's Congress," give a wealth of statistical information and an accurate picture of the position of women in the factories, the small handicraft industries and the printing works, etc.

When the various points on the agenda had been dealt with, the conference went on to the main question of the creation of an "all-women's" organization which would be supposedly "above class" but essentially bourgeois. The group of working women delivered a statement of their position and left. Their exit emphasized the fact that the participation of the organized working women in a bloc with the bourgeois feminists was considered unacceptable on any terms. Their action displeased not only the feminists but the

whole bourgeois press.

For the broad mass of working women the conference and the intervention of the working women's group was of great educational significance, for a sharp and distinct line had been drawn between bourgeois feminism and the proletarian women's movement. Some of the less politically conscious women had up until the conference harboured illusions about the possibility of unifying all women in the name of the fight for women's rights and interests: after the conference debate, which had shown the hostility of the feminists towards revolutionary socialism, these illusions died a natural death. It became clear to every thinking working woman that nothing could be expected from the bourgeois feminists.

The women's conference destroyed any attraction feminism might have had for the broad masses of the working class. After the conference, working women joined the unions in large numbers and grouped themselves round the party. There was steady progress in the class education of the working women. It would have been possible to look to the future with great hopes had not the political atmosphere been so gloomy. Russia was entering a period of dark and terrible reaction.

Communism and the Family

1920

Women's role in production: its effect upon the family

Will the family continue to exist under communism? Will the family remain in the same form? These questions are troubling many women of the working class and worrying their menfolk as well. Life is changing before our very eyes; old habits and customs are dying out, and the whole life of the proletarian family is developing in a way that is new and unfamiliar and, in the eyes of some, "bizarre." No wonder that working women are beginning to think these questions over. Another fact that invites attention is that divorce has been made easier in Soviet Russia. The decree of the Council of People's Commissars issued on 18 December 1917 means that divorce is no longer a luxury that only the rich can afford; henceforth, a working woman will not have to petition for months or even for years to secure the right to live separately from a husband who beats her and makes her life a misery with his drunkenness and uncouth behaviour. Divorce by mutual agreement now takes no more than a week or two to obtain. Women who are unhappy in their married life welcome this easy divorce. But others, particularly those who are used to looking upon their husband as "breadwinners," are frightened. They have not yet understood that a woman must accustom herself to seek and find support in the collective and in society, and not from the

individual man.

There is no point in not facing up to the truth: the old family in which the man was everything and the woman nothing, the typical family where the woman had no will of her own, no time of her own and no money of her own, is changing before our very eyes. But there is no need for alarm. It is only our ignorance that leads us to think that the things we are used to can never change. Nothing could be less true than the saying "as it was, so it shall be." We have only to read how people lived in the past to see that everything is subject to change and that no customs, political organizations or moral principles are fixed and inviolable. In the course of history, the structure of the family has changed many times; it was once quite different from the family of today. There was a time when the kinship family was considered the norm: the mother headed a family consisting of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who lived and worked together. At another period the patriarchal family was the rule. In this case it was the father whose will was law for all the other members of the family; even today such families may be found among the peasantry in the Russian villages. Here the morals and customs of family life are not those of the urban proletariat. In the countryside, they observe norms which the worker has long forgotten. The structure of the family and the customs of family life also vary from nation to nation. Among some peoples such as the Turks, Arabs and Persians, a man is allowed to have several wives. There have been and there still are tribes where the woman may have several husbands. We are used to the fact that a young girl is expected to remain a virgin until

marriage; however, there are tribes where it is a matter of pride to have had many lovers and where the women decorate their arms and legs with the corresponding number of bracelets. Many practices which might astonish us and which might even seem immoral are considered by other peoples to be quite normal and they, in their turn, consider our laws and customs "sinful." There is, therefore, no reason to be frightened of the fact that the family is in the process of change, and that outdated and unnecessary things are being discarded and new relations between men and women developing. Our job is to decide which aspects of our family system are outdated, and to determine what relations between the men and women of the working and peasant classes and which rights and duties would best harmonize with the conditions of life in the new workers' Russia. That which is in line with the new life should be maintained, while all that is old and outdated and derives from the cursed epoch of servitude and domination, of landed proprietors and capitalists, should be swept aside together with the exploiting class itself and the other enemies of the proletariat and the poor.

The type of family to which the urban and rural proletariat has grown accustomed is one of these legacies of the past. There was a time when the isolated, firmly-knit family, based on a church wedding, was equally necessary to all its members. If there had been no family, who would have fed, clothed and brought up the children? Who would have given them advice? In days gone by, to be an orphan was one of the worst fates imaginable. In the family of old, the husband earns and supports his wife and children. The wife for

her part is occupied with housekeeping and with bringing up the children as best she can. But over the last hundred years this customary family structure has been falling apart in all the countries where capitalism is dominant, and where the number of factories and other enterprises which employ hired labour is increasing. The customs and moral principles of family life are changing as the general conditions of life change. It is the universal spread of female labour that has contributed most of all to the radical change in family life. Formerly only the man was considered a breadwinner. But Russian women have for the past fifty or sixty years (and in other capitalist countries for a somewhat longer period of time) been forced to seek paid work outside the family and outside the home. The wages of the "breadwinner" being insufficient for the needs of the family, the woman found herself obliged to look for a wage and to knock at the factory door. With every year the number of working-class women starting work outside the home as day labourers, saleswomen, clerks, washerwomen and servants increased. Statistics show that in 1914, before the outbreak of the First World War, there were about sixty million women earning their own living in the countries of Europe and America, and during the war this number increased considerably. Almost half of these women are married. What kind of family life they must have can easily be imagined. What kind of "family life" can there be if the wife and mother is out at work for at least eight hours and, counting the travelling, is away from home for ten hours a day? Her home is neglected; the children grow up without any maternal care, spending most of the time out on the

streets, exposed to all the dangers of this environment. The woman who is wife, mother and worker has to expend every ounce of energy to fulfil these roles. She has to work the same hours as her husband in some factory, printing-house or commercial establishment and then on top of that she has to find the time to attend to her household and look after her children. Capitalism has placed a crushing burden on woman's shoulders: it has made her a wage-worker without having reduced her cares as housekeeper or mother. Woman staggers beneath the weight of this triple load. She suffers, her face is always wet with tears. Life has never been easy for woman, but never has her lot been harder and more desperate than that of the millions of working women under the capitalist yoke in this hey-day of factory production.

The family breaks down as more and more women go out to work. How can one talk about family life when the man and woman work different shifts, and where the wife does not even have the time to prepare a decent meal for her offspring? How can one talk of parents when the mother and father are out working all day and cannot find the time to spend even a few minutes with their children? It was quite different in the old days. The mother remained at home and occupied herself with her household duties; her children were at her side, under her watchful eye. Nowadays the working woman hastens out of the house early in the morning when the factory whistle blows. When evening comes and the whistle sounds again, she hurries home to scramble through the most pressing of her domestic tasks. Then it's off to work again the next morning, and she is tired from lack of sleep. For

the married working woman, life is as bad as the workhouse. It is not surprising therefore that family ties should loosen and the family begin to fall apart. The circumstances that held the family together no longer exist. *The family is ceasing to be necessary either to its members or to the nation as a whole.* The old family structure is now merely a hindrance. What used to make the old family so strong? First, because the husband and father was the family's breadwinner; secondly, because the family economy was necessary to all its members; and thirdly, because children were brought up by their parents. What is left of this former type of family? The husband, as we have just seen, has ceased to be the sole breadwinner. The wife who goes to work earns wages. She has learned to earn her own living, to support her children and not infrequently her husband. The family now only serves as the primary economic unit of society and the supporter and educator of young children. Let us examine the matter in more detail, to see whether or not the family is about to be relieved of these tasks as well.

Housework ceases to be necessary

There was a time when the women of the poorer classes in city and country spent their entire lives within the four walls of the home. A woman knew nothing beyond the threshold of her own home, and in most cases had no wish to know anything. After all, in her own home, there was so much to do, and this work was most necessary and useful not only for the family itself but also for the state as a whole. The woman did everything that the modern working and peasant woman has to do; but besides this cooking,

washing, cleaning and mending, she spun wool and linen, wove cloth and garments, knitted stockings, made lace, prepared — as far as her resources permitted — all sorts of pickles, jams and other preserves for winter, and manufactured her own candles. It is difficult to make a complete list of all her duties. That is how our mothers and grandmothers lived. Even today you may still come across remote villages deep in the country, far from the railroads and the big rivers, where this mode of life has been preserved and where the mistress of the house is overburdened with all kinds of chores over which the working woman of the big cities and of the populous industrial regions has long ceased to worry.

In our grandmother's day, all this domestic work was necessary and beneficial; it ensured the well-being of the family. The more the mistress of the house applied herself, the better the peasant or craftsman's family lived. Even the national economy benefited from the housewife's activity, for the woman did not limit herself to making soup and cooking potatoes (i.e. satisfying the immediate needs of the family), she also produced such things as cloth, thread, butter, etc. which had a value as commodities that could be sold on the market. And every man, whether peasant or worker, tried to find a wife who had "hands of gold," for he knew that a family could not get along without this "domestic labour." The interests of the whole nation were involved, for the more work the woman and the other members of the family put into making cloth, leather and wool (the surplus of which was sold in the neighbouring market), the greater the economic prosperity of the country as a whole.

But capitalism has changed all this. All that was formerly produced in the bosom of the family is now being manufactured on a mass scale in workshops and factories. The machine has superseded the wife. What housekeeper would now bother to make candles, spin wool or weave cloth? All these products can be bought in the shop next door. Formerly every girl would learn to knit stockings. Nowadays, what working woman would think of making her own? In the first place she doesn't have the time. Time is money, and no one wants to waste time in an unproductive and useless manner. Few working women would start to pickle cucumbers or make other preserves when all these things can be bought in the shop. Even if the products sold in the store are of an inferior quality and not prepared with the care of the homemade equivalent, the working woman has neither the time nor the energy needed to perform these domestic operations. First and foremost, she is a hired worker. Thus the family economy is gradually being deprived of all the domestic work without which our grandmothers could hardly have imagined a family. What was formerly produced in the family is now produced by the collective labour of working men and women in the factories.

The family no longer produces; it only consumes. The housework that remains consists of cleaning (cleaning the floors, dusting, heating water, care of the lamps, etc.), cooking (preparation of dinners and suppers), washing and the care of the linen and clothing of the family (darning and mending). These are difficult and exhausting tasks and they absorb all the spare time and energy of the working woman who must, in

addition, put in her hours at a factory. But this work is different in one important way from the work our grandmothers did: the four tasks enumerated above, which still serve to keep the family together, are of no value to the state and the national economy, for they do not create any new values or make any contribution to the prosperity of the country. The housewife may spend all day, from morning to evening, cleaning her home, she may wash and iron the linen daily, make every effort to keep her clothing in good order and prepare whatever dishes she pleases and her modest resources allow, and she will still end the day without having created any values. Despite her industry she would not have made anything that could be considered a commodity. Even if a working woman were to live a thousand years, she would still have to begin every day from the beginning. There would always be a new layer of dust to be removed from the mantelpiece, her husband would always come in hungry and her children bring in mud on their shoes.

Women's work is becoming less useful to the community as a whole. It is becoming unproductive. The individual household is dying. It is giving way in our society to collective housekeeping. Instead of the working woman cleaning her flat, the communist society can arrange for men and women whose job it is to go round in the morning cleaning rooms. The wives of the rich have long since been freed from these irritating and tiring domestic duties. Why should working woman continue to be burdened with them? In Soviet Russia the working woman should be surrounded by the same ease and light, hygiene and beauty that previously only the very rich could afford. Instead of

the working woman having to struggle with the cooking and spend her last free hours in the kitchen preparing dinner and supper, communist society will organize public restaurants and communal kitchens.

Even under capitalism such establishments have begun to appear. In fact over the last half a century the number of restaurants and cafés in all the great cities of Europe has been growing daily; they are springing up like mushrooms after the autumn rain. But under capitalism only people with well-lined purses can afford to take their meals in restaurants, while under communism everyone will be able to eat in the communal kitchens and dining-rooms. The working woman will not have to slave over the wash-tub any longer, or ruin her eyes in darning her stockings and mending her linen; she will simply take these things to the central laundries each week and collect the washed and ironed garments later. That will be another job less to do. Special clothes-mending centres will free the working woman from the hours spent on mending and give her the opportunity to devote her evenings to reading, attending meetings and concerts. Thus the four categories of housework are doomed to extinction with the victory of communism. And the working woman will surely have no cause to regret this. Communism liberates woman from her domestic slavery and makes her life richer and happier.

The state is responsible for the upbringing of children

But even if housework disappears, you may argue, there are still the children to look after. But here too, the workers' state will come to replace the family; so-

ciety will gradually take upon itself all the tasks that before the revolution fell to the individual parents. Even before the revolution, the instruction of the child had ceased to be the duty of the parents. Once the children had attained school age the parents could breathe more freely, for they were no longer responsible for the intellectual development of their offspring. But there were still plenty of obligations to fulfil. There was still the matter of feeding the children, buying them shoes and clothes and seeing that they developed into skilled and honest workers able, when the time came, to earn their own living and feed and support their parents in old age. Few workers' families, however, were able to fulfil these obligations. Their low wages did not enable them to give the children enough to eat, while lack of free time prevented them from devoting the necessary attention to the education of the rising generation. The family is supposed to bring up the children, but in reality, proletarian children grow up on the streets. Our forefathers knew some family life, but the children of the proletariat know none. Furthermore, the parents' small income and the precarious position in which the family is placed financially often force the child to become an independent worker at scarcely ten years of age. And when children begin to earn their own money, they consider themselves their own masters, and the words and counsels of the parents are no longer law; the authority of the parents weakens, and obedience is at an end.

Just as housework withers away, so the obligations of parents to their children wither away gradually until finally society assumes the full responsibility. Un-

der capitalism children were frequently, too frequently, a heavy and unbearable burden on the proletarian family. Communist society will come to the aid of the parents. In Soviet Russia the Commissariats of Public Education and of Social Welfare are already doing much to assist the family. We already have homes for very small babies, crèches, kindergartens, children's colonies and homes, hospitals and health resorts for sick children, restaurants, free lunches at school and free distribution of textbooks, warm clothing and shoes to schoolchildren. All this goes to show that the responsibility for the child is passing from the family to the collective.

The parental care of children in the family could be divided into three parts: (a) the care of the very young baby, (b) the bringing up of the child and (c) the instruction of the child. Even in capitalist society the education of the child in primary schools and later in secondary and higher educational establishments became the responsibility of the state. Even in capitalist society the needs of the workers were to some extent met by the provision of playgrounds, kindergartens, play groups, etc. The more the workers became conscious of their rights and the better they were organized, the more society had to relieve the family of the care of the children. But bourgeois society was afraid of going too far towards meeting the interests of the working class, lest this contribute to the break-up of the family. For the capitalists are well aware that the old type of family, where the woman is a slave and where the husband is responsible for the well-being of his wife and children, constitutes the best weapon in the struggle to stifle the desire of the working class for

freedom and to weaken the revolutionary spirit of the working man and working woman. The worker is weighed down by his family cares and is obliged to compromise with capital. The father and mother are ready to agree to any terms when their children are hungry. Capitalist society has not been able to transform education into a truly social and state matter because the property owners, the bourgeoisie, have been against this.

Communist society considers the social education of the rising generation to be one of the fundamental aspects of the new life. The old family, narrow and petty, where the parents quarrel and are only interested in their own offspring, is not capable of educating the “new person”. The playgrounds, gardens, homes and other amenities where the child will spend the greater part of the day under the supervision of qualified educators will, on the other hand, offer an environment in which the child can grow up a conscious communist who recognizes the need for solidarity, comradeship, mutual help and loyalty to the collective. What responsibilities are left to the parents when they no longer have to take charge of upbringing and education? The very small baby, you might answer, while it is still learning to walk and clinging to its mother’s skirt, still needs her attention. Here again the communist state hastens to the aid of the working mother. No longer will there be any women who are alone. The workers’ state aims to support every mother, married or unmarried, while she is suckling her child, and to establish maternity homes, day nurseries and other such facilities in every city and village, in order to give women the opportunity to com-

bine work in society with maternity.

Working mothers have no need to be alarmed; communist society is not intending to take children away from their parents or to tear the baby from the breast of its mother, and neither is it planning to take violent measures to destroy the family. No such thing! The aims of communist society are quite different. Communist society sees that the old type of family is breaking up, and that all the old pillars which supported the family as a social unit are being removed: the domestic economy is dying, and working-class parents are unable to take care of their children or provide them with sustenance and education. Parents and children suffer equally from this situation. Communist society has this to say to the working woman and working man: "You are young, you love each other. Everyone has the right to happiness. Therefore live your life. Do not flee happiness. Do not fear marriage, even though under capitalism marriage was truly a chain of sorrow. Do not be afraid of having children. Society needs more workers and rejoices at the birth of every child. You do not have to worry about the future of your child; your child will know neither hunger nor cold." Communist society takes care of every child and guarantees both him and his mother material and moral support. Society will feed, bring up and educate the child. At the same time, those parents who desire to participate in the education of their children will by no means be prevented from doing so. Communist society will take upon itself all the duties involved in the education of the child, but the joys of parenthood will not be taken away from those who are capable of appreciating

them. Such are the plans of communist society and they can hardly be interpreted as the forcible destruction of the family and the forcible separation of child from mother.

There is no escaping the fact: the old type of family has had its day. The family is withering away not because it is being forcibly destroyed by the state, but because the family is ceasing to be a necessity. The state does not need the family, because the domestic economy is no longer profitable: the family distracts the worker from more useful and productive labour. The members of the family do not need the family either, because the task of bringing up the children which was formerly theirs is passing more and more into the hands of the collective. In place of the old relationship between men and women, a new one is developing: a union of affection and comradeship, a union of two equal members of communist society, both of them free, both of them independent and both of them workers. No more domestic bondage for women. No more inequality within the family. No need for women to fear being left without support and with children to bring up. The woman in communist society no longer depends upon her husband but on her work. It is not in her husband but in her capacity for work that she will find support. She need have no anxiety about her children. The workers' state will assume responsibility for them. Marriage will lose all the elements of material calculation which cripple family life. Marriage will be a union of two persons who love and trust each other. Such a union promises to the working men and women who understand themselves and the world around them the most complete happi-

ness and the maximum satisfaction. Instead of the conjugal slavery of the past, communist society offers women and men a free union which is strong in the comradeship which inspired it. Once the conditions of labour have been transformed and the material security of the working women has increased, and once marriage such as the church used to perform it — this so-called indissoluble marriage which was at bottom merely a fraud — has given place to the free and honest union of men and women who are lovers and comrades, prostitution will disappear. This evil, which is a stain on humanity and the scourge of hungry working women, has its roots in commodity production and the institution of private property. Once these economic forms are superseded, the trade in women will automatically disappear. The women of the working class, therefore, need not worry over the fact that the family is doomed to disappear. They should, on the contrary, welcome the dawn of a new society which will liberate women from domestic servitude, lighten the burden of motherhood and finally put an end to the terrible curse of prostitution.

The woman who takes up the struggle for the liberation of the working class must learn to understand that there is no more room for the old proprietary attitude which says: “These are my children. I owe them all my maternal solicitude and affection; those are your children, they are no concern of mine and I don’t care if they go hungry and cold — I have no time for other children.” The worker-mother must learn not to differentiate between yours and mine; she must remember that there are only our children, the children of Russia’s communist workers.

The workers' state needs new relations between the sexes. Just as the narrow and exclusive affection of the mother for her own children must expand until it extends to all the children of the great proletarian family, the indissoluble marriage based on the servitude of women is replaced by a free union of two equal members of the workers' state who are united by love and mutual respect. In place of the individual and egoistic family, a great universal family of workers will develop, in which all the workers, men and women, will above all be comrades. This is what relations between men and women in the communist society will be like. These new relations will ensure for humanity all the joys of a love unknown in the commercial society of capitalism, a love that is free and based on the true social equality of happy young people, free in their feelings and affections. In the name of equality, liberty and the comradely love of the new marriage we call upon the working and peasant men and women, to apply themselves courageously and with faith to the work of rebuilding human society, in order to render it more perfect, more just and more capable of ensuring the individual the happiness which he or she deserves. The red flag of the social revolution which flies above Russia and is now being hoisted aloft in other countries of the world proclaims the approach of the heaven on earth to which humanity has been aspiring for centuries.

Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations

1921

Family and marriage are historical categories, phenomena which develop in accordance with the economic relations that exist at the given level of production. The form of marriage and of the family is thus determined by the economic system of the given epoch, and it changes as the economic base of society changes. The family, in the same way as government, religion, science, morals, law and customs, is part of the superstructure which derives from the economic system of society.

Where economic functions are performed by the family rather than by society as a whole, family and marital relations are more stable and possess a vital capacity: "The less the development of labour, and the more limited its volume of production... the more preponderantly does the social order appear to be dominated by ties of sex" (Engels, *Origins of the Family*). In the period of natural economy, the family formed an enclosed economic unit which was necessary for humankind and thus had a vital capacity. The family was at that time a unit of both production and consumption. Outside the family/economic unit the individual had no means, especially at the earliest levels of the development of society, of sustaining the conditions necessary for life. In some areas and in some countries where capitalism is weakly developed (among the peoples of the East, for example) the peasant family is still fundamentally a family/economic

union. With the transition, however, from a natural economy to a merchant capitalist economy based on trade and exchange, the family ceases to be necessary for the functioning of society and thus loses its strength and vital capacity.

The fact that with the consolidation of the capitalist system of production, the marital/family union develops from a production unit into a legal arrangement concerned only with consumption, leads inevitably to the weakening of marital/family ties. In the era of private property and the bourgeois-capitalist economic system, marriage and the family are grounded in (a) material and financial considerations, (b) economic dependence of the female sex on the family breadwinner — the husband — rather than the social collective and (c) the need to care for the rising generation. Capitalism maintains a system of individual economies; the family has a role to play in performing economic tasks and functions within the national capitalist economy. Thus under capitalism the family does not merge with or dissolve into the national economy but continues to exist as an independent economic unit, concerned with production in the case of the peasant family and consumption in the case of the urban family. The individual economy which springs from private property is the basis of the bourgeois family.

The communist economy does away with the family. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat there is a transition to the single production plan and collective social consumption, and the family loses its significance as an economic unit. The external economic functions of the family disappear, and con-

sumption ceases to be organized on an individual family basis; a network of social kitchens and canteens is established, and the making, mending and washing of clothes and other aspects of housework are integrated into the national economy. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat the family economic unit should be recognized as being, from the point of view of the national economy, not only useless but harmful. The family economic unit involves (a) the uneconomic expenditure of products and fuel on the part of small domestic economies, and (b) unproductive labour, especially by women, in the home — and is therefore in conflict with the interest of the workers' republic in a single economic plan and the expedient use of the labour force (including women).

Under the dictatorship of the proletariat then, the material and economic considerations in which the family was grounded cease to exist. The economic dependence of women on men and the role of the family in the care of the younger generation also disappear, as the communist elements in the workers' republic grow stronger. With the introduction of the obligation of all citizens to work, woman has a value in the national economy which is independent of her family and marital status. The economic subjugation of women in marriage and the family is done away with, and responsibility for the care of the children and their physical and spiritual education is assumed by the social collective. The family teaches and instils egoism, thus weakening the ties of the collective and hindering the construction of communism. However, in the new society relations between parents and children are freed from any element of material considerations and

enter a new historic stage.

Once the family has been stripped of its economic functions and its responsibilities towards the younger generation and is no longer central to the existence of the woman, it has ceased to be a family. The family unit shrinks to a union of two people based on mutual agreement. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers' state has to concern itself not with the economic and social unit of the family, since this unit dies as the bonds of communism are consolidated, but with the changing forms of marital relations. The family as an economic unit and as a union of parents and children based on the need to provide for the material welfare of the latter is doomed to disappear. Thus the workers' collective has to establish its attitude not to economic relationships but to the form of relationships between the sexes. What kind of relations between the sexes are in the best interests of the workers' collective? What form of relations would strengthen, not weaken, the collective in the transitional stage between capitalism and communism and would thus assist the construction of the new society? The laws and the morality that the workers' system is evolving are beginning to give an answer to this question.

Once relations between the sexes cease to perform the economic and social function of the former family, they are no longer the concern of the workers' collective. It is not the relationships between the sexes but the result — the child — that concerns the collective. The workers' state recognizes its responsibility to provide for maternity, i.e. to guarantee the well-being of the woman and the child, but it does not recognize the

couple as a legal unit separate from the workers' collective. The decrees on marriage issued by the workers' republic establishing the mutual rights of the married couple (the right to demand material support from the partner for yourself or the child), and thus giving legal encouragement to the separation of this unit and its interests from the general interests of the workers' social collective (the right of wives to be transferred to the town or village where their husbands are working), are survivals of the past; they contradict the interests of the collective and weaken its bonds, and should therefore be reviewed and changed.

The law ought to emphasize the interest of the workers' collective in maternity and eliminate the situation where the child is dependent on the relationship between its parents. The law of the workers' collective replaces the right of the parents, and the workers' collective keeps a close watch, in the interests of the unified economy and of present and future labour resources. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat there must, instead of marriage law, be regulation of the relationship of the government to maternity, of the relationship between mother and child and of the relationship between the mother and the workers' collective (i.e. legal norms must regulate the protection of female labour, the welfare of expectant and nursing mothers, the welfare of children and their social education). Legal norms must regulate the relationship between the mother and the socially educated child, and between the father and the child. Fatherhood should not be established through marriage or a relationship of a material nature. The man should be

able to choose whether or not to accept the role of fatherhood (i.e. the right which he shares equally with the mother to decide on a social system of education for the child, and the right, where this does not conflict with the interests of the collective, of intellectual contact with the child and the opportunity to influence its development).

There are two grounds on which, in the interests of the workers' collective, the relationships between the sexes ought to be subject to legislative regulations: (a) the health and hygiene of the nation and the race, and (b) the increase or decrease of the population required by the national economic collective. In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the regulation of relationships enters a new phase. Instead of laws and the threat of legal proceedings, the workers' collective must rely on agitational and educational influences, and on social measures to improve the relationships between the sexes and to guarantee the health of the children born from these relationships. For example, the Commissariats of Health and Education must carry out a broad campaign on the question of venereal and other infectious diseases, thereby reducing the danger of these diseases spreading through sexual intercourse and daily living. A person is guilty before the law not for having had sexual relations but for having consciously kept silent and hidden the fact that he or she has the disease from those with whom he or she lives and works, and thus for failing to observe the rule on precautions to be taken to reduce the likelihood of infection.

In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, communist morality — and not the law — regulates

sexual relationships in the interest of the workers' collective and of future generations.

Each historical (and therefore economic) epoch in the development of society has its own ideal of marriage and its own sexual morality. Under the tribal system, with its ties of kinship, the morality was different from that which developed with the establishment of private property and the rule of the husband and father (patriarchy). Different economic systems have different moral codes. Not only each stage in the development of society, but each class has its corresponding sexual morality (it is sufficient to compare the morals of the feudal landowning class and of the bourgeoisie in one and the same epoch to see that this is true). The more firmly established the principles of private property, the stricter the moral code. The importance of virginity before legal marriage sprang from the principles of private property and the unwillingness of men to pay for the children of others.

Hypocrisy (the outward observance of decorum and the actual practice of depravity), and the double code (one code of behaviour for the man and another for the woman) are the twin pillars of bourgeois morality. Communist morality must, above all, resolutely spurn all the hypocrisy inherited from bourgeois society in relationships between the sexes, and reject the double standard of morality.

In the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, relations between the sexes should be evaluated only according to the criteria mentioned above — the health of the working population and the development of inner bonds of solidarity within the collective. The sexual act must be seen not as something shame-

ful and sinful but as something which is as natural as the other needs of healthy organism, such as hunger and thirst. Such phenomena cannot be judged as moral or immoral. The satisfaction of healthy and natural instincts only ceases to be normal when the boundaries of hygiene are overstepped. In such cases, not only the health of the person concerned but the interests of the work collective, which needs the strength and energy and health of its members, are threatened. Communist morality, therefore, while openly recognizing the normality of sexual interests, condemns unhealthy and unnatural interest in sex (excesses, for example, or sexual relations before maturity has been reached, which exhaust the organism and lower the capacity of men and women for work).

As communist morality is concerned for the health of the population, it also criticizes sexual restraint. The preservation of health includes the full and correct satisfaction of all man's needs; norms of hygiene should work to this end, and not artificially suppress such an important function of the organism as the sex drive (Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*). Thus both early sexual experience (before the body has developed and grown strong) and sexual restraint must be seen as equally harmful. This concern for the health of the human race does not establish either monogamy or polygamy as the obligatory form of relations between the sexes, for excesses may be committed in the bounds of the former, and a frequent change of partners by no means signifies sexual intemperance. Science has discovered that when a woman has relationships with many men at one time, her ability to have children is impaired; and relationships with a number of women

drain the man and affect the health of his children negatively. Since the workers' collective needs strong and healthy men and women, such arrangements of sexual life are not in its interests.

It is accepted that the psychological state of parents at the moment of conception influences the health and life capacity of the child. Thus in the interests of human health, communist morality criticizes sexual relations which are based on physical attraction alone and are not attended by love or fleeting passion. In the interests of the collective, communist morality also criticizes persons whose sexual relationships are built not on physical attraction but on calculation, habit or even intellectual affinity.

In view of the need to encourage the development and growth of feelings of solidarity and to strengthen the bonds of the work collective, it should above all be established that the isolation of the "couple" as a special unit does not answer the interests of communism. Communist morality requires the education of the working class in comradeship and the fusion of the hearts and minds of the separate members of this collective. The needs and interests of the individual must be subordinated to the interests and aims of the collective. On the one hand, therefore, the bonds of family and marriage must be weakened, and on the other, men and women need to be educated in solidarity and the subordination of the will of the individual to the will of the collective. Even at this present, early stage, the workers' republic demands that mothers learn to be the mothers not only of their own child but of all workers' children; it does not recognize the couple as a self-sufficient unit, and does not therefore approve

of wives deserting work for the sake of this unit.

As regards sexual relations, communist morality demands first of all an end to all relations based on financial or other economic considerations. The buying and selling of caresses destroys the sense of equality between the sexes, and thus undermines the basis of solidarity without which communist society cannot exist. Moral censure is consequently directed at prostitution in all its forms and at all types of marriage of convenience, even when recognized by Soviet law. The preservation of marriage regulations creates the illusion that the workers' collective can accept the "couple" with its special, exclusive interests. The stronger the ties between the members of the collective as a whole, the less the need to reinforce marital relations. Secondly, communist morality demands the education of the younger generation in responsibility to the collective and in the consciousness that love is not the only thing in life (this is especially important in the case of women, for they have been taught the opposite for centuries). Love is only one aspect of life, and must not be allowed to overshadow the other facets of the relationships between individual and collective. The ideal of the bourgeoisie was the married couple, where the partners complemented each other so completely that they had no need of contact with society. Communist morality demands, on the contrary, that the younger generation be educated in such a way that the personality of the individual is developed to the full, and the individual with his or her many interests has contact with a range of persons of both sexes. Communist morality encourages the development of many and varied bonds of love and friendship among peo-

ple. The old ideal was “all for the loved one”; communist morality demands all for the collective.

Though sex love is seen in the context of the interests of the collective, communist morality demands that people are educated in sensitivity and understanding and are psychologically demanding both to themselves and to their partners. The bourgeois attitude to sexual relations as simply a matter of sex must be criticized and replaced by an understanding of the whole gamut of joyful love-experience that enriches life and makes for greater happiness. The greater the intellectual and emotional development of the individual the less place will there be in his or her relationship for the bare physiological side of love, and the brighter will be the love experience.

In the transitional period, relations between men and women must, in order to meet the interests of the workers' collective, be based on the following considerations. (1) All sexual relationships must be based on mutual inclination, love, infatuation or passion, and in no case on financial or material motivations. All calculation in relationships must be subject to merciless condemnation. (2) The form and length of the relationship are not regulated, but the hygiene of the race and communist morality require that relationships be based not on the sexual act alone, and that it should not be accompanied by any excesses that threaten health. (3) Those with illnesses, etc. that might be inherited should not have children. (4) A jealous and proprietary attitude to the person loved must be replaced by a comradely understanding of the other and an acceptance of his or her freedom. Jealousy is a destructive force of which communist moral-

ity cannot approve. (5) The bonds between the members of the collective must be strengthened. The encouragement of the intellectual and political interests of the younger generation assists the development of healthy and bright emotions in love.

The stronger the collective, the more firmly established becomes the communist way of life. The closer the emotional ties between the members of the community, the less the need to seek a refuge from loneliness in marriage. Under communism the blind strength of matter is subjugated to the will of the strongly welded and thus unprecedentedly powerful workers' collective. The individual has the opportunity to develop intellectually and emotionally as never before. In this collective, new forms of relationships are maturing and the concept of love is extended and expanded.

From *The Labour of Women in the Evolution of the Economy*

1921

In its search for new forms of economy and of living which meet the interests of the proletariat, the Soviet republic has inevitably committed a number of mistakes, and has a number of times had to alter and correct its line. But in the sphere of social upbringing and the protection of motherhood, the labour republic from the first months of its existence has marked out the right direction for developments to take. And in this sphere a deep and fundamental revolution in morals and attitudes is being achieved. In this country, where private property has been abolished and where politics is dictated by the desire to raise the level of the general economy, we can now deal in our stride with problems that were insoluble under the bourgeois system.

Soviet Russia has approached the question of protecting motherhood by keeping in view the solution to the basic problem of the labour republic — the development of the productive forces of the country, the raising and restoration of production. In order to carry out the job in hand it is necessary, in the first place, to tap the tremendous forces engaged in unproductive labour and use all available resources effectively; and, in the second place, to guarantee the labour republic an uninterrupted flow of fresh workers in the future, i.e. to guarantee the normal increase in population.

As soon as one adopts this point of view, the ques-

tion of the emancipation of women from the burden of maternity solves itself. A labour state establishes a completely new principle: care of the younger generation is not a private family affair, but a social-state concern. Maternity is protected and provided for not only in the interests of the woman herself, but still more in the interests of the tasks before the national economy during the transition to a socialist system: it is necessary to save women from an unproductive expenditure of energy on the family so that this energy can be used efficiently in the interests of the collective; it is necessary to protect their health in order to guarantee the labour republic a flow of healthy workers in the future. In the bourgeois state it is not possible to pose the question of maternity in this way; class contradictions and the lack of unity between the interests of private economies and the national economy hinder this. In a labour republic, on the other hand, where the individual economies are dissolving into the general economy and where classes are disintegrating and disappearing, such a solution to the question of maternity is demanded by life, by necessity. The labour republic sees woman first and foremost as a member of the labour force, as a unit of living labour; the function of maternity is seen as highly important, but as a supplementary task and as a task that is not a private family matter but a *social* matter.

“Our policy on the protection of maternity and childhood,” as Vera Pavlovna Lebedeva correctly notes, “is based on the picture of woman in the work process, which we keep constantly before our mind’s eye.”

But in order to give woman the possibility of par-

ticipating in productive labour without violating her nature or breaking with maternity, it is necessary to take a second step; it is necessary for the collective to assume all the cares of motherhood that have weighed so heavily on women, thus recognizing that the task of bringing up children ceases to be a function of the private family and becomes a social function of the state. Maternity begins to be seen in a new light. Soviet power views maternity as a social task. Soviet power, basing itself on this principle, has outlined a number of measures to shift the burden of motherhood from the shoulders of women to those of the state. Soviet power takes responsibility for the care of the baby and the material provision of the child through the sub-department of the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood (headed by comrade V.P. Lebedeva) and the section of Narkompros (the Commissariat of Education) which deals with social upbringing.

The principle that Soviet power accepts in tackling the problem is that the mother be relieved of the cross of motherhood, and be left with the smile of joy which arises from the contact of the woman with her child. Of course, this principle is far from having been realized. In practice we lag behind our intentions. In our attempts to construct new forms of life and living, to emancipate the labouring woman from family obligations, we are constantly running up against the same obstacles: our poverty and the devastation of the economy. But a foundation has been laid, the signposts are in place; our task is to follow the directions firmly and decisively.

The labour republic does not limit itself to finan-

cial provisions for motherhood and the distribution of benefits. It aims, above all, to transform the conditions of life in order to make it fully possible for a woman to combine motherhood and social labour and to preserve the baby for the republic, surrounding it with the necessary care and attention. From the very first months of the existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, worker and peasant power has been striving to cover the country with a network of institutions for the protection of motherhood and the social upbringing of children. The mother and the child became a special object of concern in Soviet politics. During the first months of the revolution, when I held the position of People's Commissar of Social Welfare, I considered it to be my main task to chart the course that the labour republic should adopt in the sphere of protecting the interests of woman as a labour unit and as a mother.

It was at this time that the board which deals with the protection of motherhood was set up and began to organize model "palaces of motherhood." Since then, Comrade Vera Pavlovna Lebedeva has worked ably and energetically, and the cause of the protection of motherhood has flourished and established firm roots. From the early stages of the working woman's pregnancy, she receives the assistance of Soviet power. Consultation centres for pregnant and nursing mothers are now to be found across the length and breadth of Russia. In Tsarist times only six consultation centres existed; now we have about two hundred such centres, and a hundred and thirty-eight milk kitchens.

But of course, the most important task is to relieve the working mother of the unproductive labour in-

volved in ministering to the physical needs of the child. Maternity does not in the least mean that one must oneself change the nappies, wash the baby or even be by the cradle. The social obligation of the mother is above all to give birth to a healthy baby. The labour republic must therefore provide the pregnant woman with the most favourable possible conditions; and the woman for her part must observe all the rules of hygiene during her pregnancy, remembering that in these months she no longer belongs to herself, she is serving the collective, “producing” from her own flesh and blood a new unit of labour, a new member of the labour republic. The woman’s second obligation is to *breastfeed her baby*; only when she has done this does the woman have the right to say that she has fulfilled her obligations. The other tasks involved in caring for the younger generation can be carried out by the collective. Of course, the maternal instinct is strong, and there is no need to stifle it. But why should this instinct be narrowly limited to the love and care of one’s own child? Why not allow this instinct, which for the labour republic has valuable potential, the opportunity to develop vigorously and to reach its highest stage, where the woman not only cares for her own children but has a tender affection for all children?

The slogan advanced by the labour republic, “Be a mother not only to your child, but to all the children of the workers and peasants,” must show the working woman a new approach to motherhood. There have been instances where a mother, even a communist mother, refuses to breastfeed a baby that is suffering from a lack of milk, only because it is not “her” baby. Is such behaviour permissible? Future society, with its

communist emotion and understanding, will be as amazed at such egoistic and anti-social acts as we are when we read of the woman in pre-historic society who loved her own child but found the appetite to eat the child of another tribe. Or to take another case, examples of which abound; a mother deprives her baby of milk in order to save herself the bother of caring for it. And can we allow the number of foundlings in Soviet Russia to continue growing at the present rate?

These problems, it is true, derive from the fact that the question of motherhood is being tackled but has not yet been completely solved. In this difficult transition period, there are hundreds of thousands of women who are exhausted by the dual burden of hired labour and maternity. There are not enough crèches, children's homes and maternity homes, and the financial provisions do not keep pace with the price rises of goods on the free market. Consequently, working women are afraid of motherhood and abandon their children. The growth in the number of foundlings, however, is also evidence that not all women in the labour republic have yet grasped the fact that motherhood is not *a private matter but a social obligation*. You who work amongst women will have to discuss this question and explain to working women, peasant women and office workers the obligations of motherhood in the new situation of the labour republic. At the same time, we obviously have to step up the work of developing the system of maternity protection and social upbringing. The easier it becomes for mothers to combine work and maternity, the fewer foundlings there will be.

We have already pointed out that maternity does

not involve the mother always being with the child or devoting herself entirely to its physical and moral education. The obligation of the mother to her children is to ensure that a healthy and normal atmosphere is provided for their growth and development. In bourgeois society we always find that it is the children of the well-to-do classes who are healthy and flourishing, and never the children of the poor. How do we explain this? Is it because bourgeois mothers devoted themselves entirely to the education of their children? Not at all. Bourgeois mammas were very willing to place their children in the care of hired labourers: nannies and governesses. Only in poor families do mothers themselves bear all the hardships of maternity; the children are with their mothers, but they die like flies. There can be no question of a normal upbringing: the mother does not have the time, and so the children are educated on the street. Every mother of the bourgeois class hurries to shift at least a part of child care on to society; she sends the child to a kindergarten, to school or to a summer camp. The sensible mother knows that social education gives the child something that the most exclusive maternal love cannot give. In the prosperous circles of bourgeois society, where great significance is attached to giving the children a proper education in the bourgeois spirit, parents give their children into the care of trained nannies, doctors and pedagogues. Hired personnel take over the role of the mother in supervising the physical care and moral education of the child, and the mother is left with the one natural and inalienable right: to give birth to the child.

The labour republic does not take children away

from their mothers by force as the bourgeois countries have made out in tales about the horrors of the “Bolshevik regime”; on the contrary, the labour republic tries to create institutions which would give all women, and not just the rich, the opportunity to have their children brought up in a healthy, joyful atmosphere. Instead of the mother anxiously thrusting her child into the care of a hired nanny, Soviet Russia wants the working or peasant woman to be able to go to work, calm in the knowledge that her child is safe in the expert hands of a crèche, a kindergarten or a children’s home.

In order to protect woman as the reproducer of the race, the labour republic has created “maternity homes” and has tried to open them wherever they are particularly needed. In 1921 we had a hundred and thirty-five such homes. These homes not only provide a refuge for the single woman in this most serious period of her life, but allow the married women to get away from home and family and the petty cares of the domestic round and to devote all her attention to regaining strength after the birth and to looking after her child in the first, most important weeks. Later on, the mother is not essential to the child, but in the first weeks there is still, as it were, a physiological tie between mother and child, and during this period the separation of mother and child is not advisable. You know yourselves, comrades, how willingly working women and even the wives of important functionaries take advantage of the maternity homes, where they find loving attention and peace. We do not have to use agitational methods to persuade women to use the maternity homes. Our problem is that the material re-

sources of Russia are so limited; we are poor, and this makes it difficult for us to extend our network to cover the entire area of labour Russia with such "aid stations" for working women and peasant women. There are, unfortunately, still no maternity homes at all in the rural regions, and in general we have done least of all to help the peasant mothers. In fact, all we have done for them is to organize summer crèches. This makes it easier for the peasant mother to work in the fields without her baby suffering in any way. In the course of 1921, 689 such crèches, providing for 32,180 children, were opened. For mothers working in factories and offices, crèches have been set up at factories and institutions, and also at a district and town level. I do not have to emphasize the great significance of these crèches for the mothers. The trouble is that we do not have enough of them, and we cannot satisfy even a tenth of the demand for such aid centres.

The network of social education organizations which relieve mothers of the hard work involved in caring for children includes, apart from the crèches and the children's homes which cater for orphans and foundlings up to the age of three, kindergartens for the three- to seven-year-olds, children's "hearths" for children of school age, children's clubs, and finally children's house communes and children's work colonies. The social educational system also includes free meals for children of pre-school and school age. Vera Velichkina (Bonch-Bruyevich), a revolutionary to the end of her life, fought very hard for this measure, the introduction of which has as you know helped us a great deal in the hard years of the civil war, and has saved many children of the proletariat from emacia-

tion and death from starvation. The concern of the state for children is also manifest in the provision of free milk, special food rations for the young, and clothes and footwear for children in need. All these projects are far from having been realized in full; in practice we have covered only a narrow section of the population. However, we have so far failed to relieve the couple from all the difficulties of bringing up children, not because we have taken the wrong course but because our poverty prevents us from fulfilling all that Soviet power has planned. The general direction of the policy on maternity is correct. But our lack of resources hinders us. So far, experiments have only been carried out at a fairly modest level. Even so, they have given results and have revolutionized family life, introducing fundamental changes in the relationships between the sexes. This is a question we will discuss in the following talk.

The task of Soviet power is thus to provide conditions for the woman where her labour will not be spent on non-productive work about the home and looking after children but on the creation of new wealth for the state, for the labour collective. At the same time, it is important to preserve not only the interests of the woman but also the life of the child, and this is to be done by giving the woman the opportunity to combine labour and maternity. Soviet power tries to create a situation where a woman does not have to cling to a man she has grown to loathe only because she has nowhere else to go with her children, and where a woman alone does not have to fear her life and the life of her child. In the labour republic it is not the philanthropists with their humiliating charity but the workers

and peasants, fellow-creators of the new society, who hasten to help the working woman and strive to lighten the burden of motherhood. The woman who bears the trials and tribulations of reconstructing the economy on an equal footing with the man, and who participated in the civil war, has a right to demand that in this most important hour of her life, at the moment when she presents society with a new member, the labour republic, the collective, should take upon itself the job of caring for the future of the new citizen.

Russia now has 524 protection of motherhood and social education sections. This is, nevertheless, insufficient. The transitional nature of the dictatorship places women in a particularly difficult situation; the old is destroyed but the new has not yet been created. The party and Soviet power must during this period pay increasing attention to the problem of maternity and the methods of solving it. If correct answers are found to these questions, not only women but also the national economy will gain.

I would like to say a few words about a question which is closely connected with the problem of maternity — the question of abortion and Soviet Russia's attitude to it. On 20 November 1920 the labour republic issued a law abolishing the penalties that had been attached to abortion. What is the reasoning behind this new attitude? Russia, after all, suffers not from an overproduction of living labour but rather from a lack of it. Russia is thinly, not densely populated. Every unit of labour power is precious. Why then have we declared abortion to be no longer a criminal offence? Hypocrisy and bigotry are alien to proletarian politics. Abortion is a problem connected with the prob-

lem of maternity, and likewise derives from the insecure position of women (we are not speaking here of the bourgeois class, where abortion has other reasons — the reluctance to “divide” an inheritance, to suffer the slightest discomfort, to spoil one’s figure or miss a few months of the season, etc.).

Abortion exists and flourishes everywhere, and no laws or punitive measures have succeeded in rooting it out. A way round the law is always found. But “secret help” only cripples women; they become a burden on the labour government, and the size of the labour force is reduced. Abortion, when carried out under proper medical conditions, is less harmful and dangerous, and the woman can get back to work quicker. Soviet power realizes that the need for abortion will only disappear on the one hand when Russia has a broad and developed network of institutions protecting motherhood and providing social education, and on the other hand when women understand that *child-birth is a social obligation*; Soviet power has therefore allowed abortion to be performed openly and in clinical conditions.

Besides the large-scale development of motherhood protection, the task of labour Russia is to strengthen in women the healthy instinct of motherhood, to make motherhood and labour for the collective compatible and thus do away with the need for abortion. This is the approach of the labour republic to the question of abortion, which still faces women in the bourgeois countries in all its magnitude. In these countries women are exhausted by the dual burden of hired labour for capital and motherhood. In Soviet Russia the working woman and peasant woman are

helping the Communist Party to build a new society and to undermine the old way of life that has enslaved women. As soon as woman is viewed as being essentially a labour unit, the key to the solution of the complex question of maternity can be found. In bourgeois society, where housework complements the system of capitalist economy and private property creates a stable basis for the isolated form of the family, there is no way out for the working woman. The emancipation of women can only be completed when a fundamental transformation of living is effected; and lifestyles will change only with the fundamental transformation of all production and the establishment of a communist economy. The revolution in everyday life is unfolding before our very eyes, and in this process the liberation of women is being introduced in practice.

Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It¹

1921

Comrades, the question of prostitution is a difficult and thorny subject that has received too little attention in Soviet Russia. This sinister legacy of our bourgeois capitalist past continues to poison the atmosphere of the workers' republic and affects the physical and moral health of the working people of Soviet Russia. It is true that in the three years of the revolution the nature of prostitution has, under the pressure of the changing economic and social conditions, altered somewhat. But we are still far from being rid of this evil. Prostitution continues to exist and threatens the feeling of solidarity and comradeship between working men and women, the members of the workers' republic. And this feeling is the foundation and the basis of the communist society we are building and making a reality. It is time that we faced up to this problem. It is time that we gave thought and attention to the reasons behind prostitution. It is time that we found ways and means of ridding ourselves once and for all of this evil, which has no place in a workers' republic.

Our workers' republic has so far passed no laws directed at the elimination of prostitution, and has not even issued a clear and scientific formulation of the view that prostitution is something that injures the collective. We know that prostitution is an evil, we

¹ Speech to the third all-Russian conference of heads of the Regional Women's Departments, 1921.

even acknowledge that at the moment, in this transitional period with its many problems, prostitution has become extremely widespread. But we have brushed the issue aside, we have been silent about it. Partly this is because of the hypocritical attitudes we have inherited from the bourgeoisie, and partly it is because of our reluctance to consider and come to terms with the harm which the widespread mass scale of prostitution does to the work collective. And our lack of enthusiasm in the struggle against prostitution has been reflected in our legislation.

We have so far passed no statutes recognizing prostitution as a harmful social phenomenon. When the old Tsarist laws were revoked by the Council of People's Commissars, all the statutes concerning prostitution were abolished. But no new measures based on the interests of the work collective were introduced. Thus the politics of the Soviet authorities towards prostitutes and prostitution has been characterized by diversity and contradictions. In some areas the police still help to round up prostitutes just as in the old days. In other places, brothels exist quite openly. (The Interdepartmental Commission on the Struggle against Prostitution has data on this.) And there are yet other areas where prostitutes are considered criminals and thrown into forced labour camps. The different attitudes of the local authorities thus highlight the absence of a clearly worded statute. Our vague attitude to this complex social phenomenon is responsible for a number of distortions of and diversions from the principles underlying our legislation and morality.

We must therefore not only confront the problem of prostitution but seek a solution that is in line with

our basic principles and the programme of social and economic change adhered to by the party of the communists. We must, above all, clearly define what prostitution is. Prostitution is a phenomenon which is closely linked with unearned income, and it thrives in the epoch dominated by capital and private property. Prostitutes, from our point of view, are those women who sell their bodies for material benefit — for decent food, for clothes and other advantages; prostitutes are all those who avoid the necessity of working by giving themselves to a man, either on a temporary basis or for life.

Our Soviet workers' republic has inherited prostitution from the bourgeois capitalist past, when only a small number of women were involved in work within the national economy and the majority relied on the "male breadwinner," on the father or the husband. Prostitution arose with the first states as the inevitable shadow of the official institution of marriage, which was designed to preserve the rights of private property and to guarantee property inheritance through a line of lawful heirs. The institution of marriage made it possible to prevent the wealth that had been accumulated from being scattered amongst a vast number of "heirs." But there is a great difference between the prostitution of Greece and Rome and the prostitution we know today. In ancient times the number of prostitutes was small, and there was not that hypocrisy which colours the morality of the bourgeois world and compels bourgeois society to raise its hat respectfully to the "lawful wife" of an industrial magnate who has obviously sold herself to a husband she does not love, and to turn away in disgust from a girl forced into the

streets by poverty, homelessness, unemployment and other social circumstances which derive from the existence of capitalism and private property. The ancient world regarded prostitution as the *legal* complement to exclusive family relationships. Aspasia, the mistress of Pericles, was respected by her contemporaries far more than the colourless wives of the breeding apparatus.

In the Middle Ages, when artisan production predominated, prostitution was accepted as something natural and lawful. Prostitutes had their own guilds and took part in festivals and local events just like the other guilds. The prostitute guaranteed that the daughters of the respectable citizens remained chaste and their wives faithful, since single men could (for a consideration) turn to the members of the guild for comfort. Prostitution was thus to the advantage of the worthy propertied citizens and was openly accepted by them.

With the rise of capitalism, the picture changes. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries prostitution assumes threatening proportions for the first time. The sale of women's labour, which is closely and inseparably connected with the sale of the female body, steadily increases, leading to a situation where the respected wife of a worker, and not just the abandoned and "dishonoured" girl, joins the ranks of the prostitutes: a mother for the sake of her children, or a young girl like Sonya Marmeladova for the sake of her family. This is the horror and hopelessness that results from the exploitation of labour by capital. When a woman's wages are insufficient to keep her alive, the sale of favours seems a possible subsidiary occupation. The

hypocritical morality of bourgeois society encourages prostitution by the structure of its exploitative economy, while at the same time mercilessly covering with contempt any girl or woman who is forced to take this path.

The black shadow of prostitution stalks the legal marriage of bourgeois society. History has never before witnessed such a growth of prostitution as occurred in the last part of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. In Berlin there is one prostitute for every twenty so-called honest women. In Paris the ratio is one to eighteen and in London one to nine. There are different types of prostitution: there is open prostitution that is legal and subject to regulation, and there is the secret, "seasonal" type. All forms of prostitution flourish like a poisonous flower in the swamps of the bourgeois way of life.

The world of the bourgeoisie does not even spare children, forcing young girls of nine and ten into the sordid embraces of wealthy and depraved old men. In the capitalist countries there are brothels which specialize exclusively in very young girls. In this present post-war period, every woman faces the possibility of unemployment. Unemployment hits women in particular, and causes an enormous increase in the army of "street women." Hungry crowds of women seeking out the buyers of "white slaves" flood the evening streets of Berlin, Paris and the other civilized centres of the capitalist states. The trade in women's flesh is conducted quite openly, which is not surprising when you consider that the whole bourgeois way of life is based on buying and selling. There is an undeniable element of material and economic consideration in

even the most legal of marriages. Prostitution is the way out for the woman who fails to find herself a permanent breadwinner. Prostitution, under capitalism, provides men with the opportunity of having sexual relationships without having to take upon themselves the responsibility of caring materially for the women until the grave.

But if prostitution has such a hold and is so widespread even in Russia, how are we to struggle against it? In order to answer this question, we must first analyse in more detail the factors giving rise to prostitution. Bourgeois science and its academics love to prove to the world that prostitution is a pathological phenomenon, i.e. that it is the result of the abnormalities of certain women. Just as some people are criminal by nature, some women, it is argued, are prostitutes by nature. Regardless of where or how such women might have lived, they would have turned to a life of sin. Marxists and the more conscientious scholars, doctors and statisticians have shown clearly that the idea of “inborn disposition” is false. Prostitution is above all a *social phenomenon*; it is closely connected to the needy position of woman and her economic dependence on man in marriage and the family. 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.

If the bourgeois academics of the Lombroso-Tar-

novsky school were correct in maintaining that prostitutes are born with the marks of corruption and sexual abnormality, how would one explain the well-known fact that in a time of crisis and unemployment the number of prostitutes immediately increases? How would one explain the fact that the purveyors of “living merchandise” who travelled to Tsarist Russia from the other countries of western Europe always found a rich harvest in areas where crops had failed and the population was suffering from famine, whereas they came away with few recruits from areas of plenty? Why do so many of the women who are allegedly doomed by nature to ruin only take to prostitution in years of hunger and unemployment?

It is also significant that in the capitalist countries prostitution recruits its servants from the propertyless sections of the population. Low-paid work, homelessness, acute poverty and the need to support younger brothers and sisters: these are the factors that produce the largest percentage of prostitutes. If the bourgeois theories about the corrupt and criminal disposition were true, then all classes of the population ought to contribute equally to prostitution. There ought to be the same proportion of corrupt women among the rich as among the poor. But professional prostitutes, women who live by their bodies, are with rare exceptions recruited from the poorer classes. Poverty, hunger, deprivation and the glaring social inequalities that are the basis of the bourgeois system drive these women to prostitution.

Or again one might point to the fact that prostitutes in the capitalist countries are drawn, according to the statistics, from the thirteen to twenty-three age-

group. Children and young women, in other words. And the majority of these girls are alone and without a home. Girls from wealthy backgrounds who have the excellent bourgeois family to protect them turn to prostitution only very occasionally. The exceptions are usually victims of tragic circumstances. More often than not they are victims of the hypocritical “double morality.” The bourgeois family abandons the girl who has “sinned” and she — alone, without support and branded by the scorn of society — sees prostitution as the only way out.

We can therefore list as factors responsible for prostitution: low wages, social inequalities, the economic dependence of women upon men, and the unhealthy custom by which women expect to be supported in return for sexual favours instead of in return for their labour.

The workers’ revolution in Russia has shattered the basis of capitalism and has struck a blow at the former dependence of women upon men. All citizens are equal before the work collective. They are equally obliged to work for the common good and are equally eligible to the support of the collective when they need it. A woman provides for herself not by marriage but by the part she plays in production and the contribution she makes to the people’s wealth.

Relations between the sexes are being transformed. But we are still bound by the old ideas. Furthermore, the economic structure is far from being completely re-arranged in the new way and communism is still a long way off. In this transitional period prostitution naturally enough keeps a strong hold. After all, even though the main sources of pros-

titution — private property and the policy of strengthening the family — have been eliminated, other factors are still in force. Homelessness, neglect, bad housing conditions, loneliness and low wages for women are still with us. Our productive apparatus is still in a state of collapse and the dislocation of the national economy continues. These and other economic and social conditions lead women to prostitute their bodies.

To struggle against prostitution chiefly means to struggle against these conditions — in other words, it means to support the general policy of the Soviet government, which is directed towards strengthening the basis of communism and the organization of production.

Some people might say that since prostitution will have no place once the power of the workers and the basis of communism are strengthened, no special campaign is necessary. This type of argument fails to take into account the harmful and disuniting effect that prostitution has on the construction of a new communist society.

The correct slogan was formulated at the first All-Russian Congress of Peasant and Working Woman: “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.” The slogan was proclaimed, but nothing was done. Above all, prostitution harms the national economy and hinders the further development of the productive forces. We know that we can only overcome chaos and improve industry if we harness the efforts and energies of the workers and if we organize the available labour power of

both men and women in the most rational way. Down with the unproductive labour of housework and childminding! Make way for work that is organized and productive and serves the work collective! These are the slogans we must take up.

And what, after all, is the professional prostitute? She is a person whose energy is not used for the collective; a person who lives off others, by taking from the rations of others. Can this sort of thing be allowed in a workers' republic? No, it cannot. It cannot be allowed, because it reduces the reserves of energy and the number of working hands that are creating the national wealth and the general welfare. From the point of view of the national economy the professional prostitute is a labour deserter. For this reason, we must ruthlessly oppose prostitution. In the interests of the economy we must start an immediate fight to reduce the number of prostitutes and eliminate prostitution in all its forms.

It is time we understood that the existence of prostitution contradicts the basic principles of a workers' republic which fights all forms of unearned wages. In the three years of the revolution our ideas on this subject have changed greatly. A new philosophy, which has little in common with the old ideas, is in the making. Three years ago, we regarded a merchant as a completely respectable person. Provided his accounts were in order and he did not cheat or dupe his customer too obviously, he was rewarded with the title of "merchant of the first guild," "respected citizen," etc.

Since the revolution attitudes to trade and merchants have changed radically. We now call the "honest merchant" a speculator, and instead of awarding

him honorary titles we drag him before a special committee and put him in a forced labour camp. Why do we do this? Because we know that we can only build a new communist economy if all adult citizens are involved in *productive labour*. The person who does not work and who lives off someone else or on an unearned wage harms the collective and the republic. We, therefore, hunt down the speculators, the traders and the hoarders who all live off unearned income. We must fight prostitution as another form of labour desertion.

We do not, therefore, condemn prostitution and fight against it as a special category but as an aspect of labour desertion. To us in the workers' republic it is not important whether a woman sells herself to one man or to many, whether she is classed as a professional prostitute selling her favours to a succession of clients or as a wife selling herself to her husband. All women who avoid work and do not take part in production or in caring for children are liable, on the same basis as prostitutes, to be forced to work. We cannot make a difference between a prostitute and a lawful wife kept by her husband, whoever her husband is — even if he is a “commissar.” It is failure to take part in productive work that is the common thread connecting all labour deserters. The workers' collective condemns the prostitute not because she gives her body to many men but because, like the legal wife who stays at home, she does no useful work for the society.

The second reason for organizing a deliberate and well-planned campaign against prostitution is in order to safeguard the people's health. Soviet Russia does

not want illness and disease to cripple and weaken its citizens and reduce their work capacity. And prostitution spreads venereal disease. Of course, it is not the only means by which the disease is transmitted. Crowded living conditions, the absence of standards of hygiene, communal crockery and towels also play a part. Furthermore, in this time of changing moral norms and particularly when there is also a continual movement of troops from place to place, a sharp rise in the number of cases of venereal disease occurs independently of commercial prostitution. The civil war, for example, is raging in the fertile southern regions. The Cossack men have been beaten and have retreated with the Whites. Only the women are left behind in the villages. They have plenty of everything except husbands. The Red Army troops enter the village. They are billeted out and stay several weeks. Free relationships develop between the soldiers and the women. These relationships have nothing to do with prostitution: the woman goes with the man voluntarily because she is attracted to him, and there is no thought on her part of material gain. It is not the Red Army soldier who provides for the woman but rather the opposite. The woman looks after him for the period that the troops are quartered in the village. The troops move away, but they leave venereal disease behind. Infection spreads. The diseases develop, multiply and threaten to maim the younger generation.

At a joint meeting of the Department of Maternity Protection and the Women's Department, Professor Kol'tsov spoke about the science of maintaining and improving the health of humanity. Prostitution is closely connected with this problem, since it is one of

the main ways in which infections are spread. The theses of the Interdepartmental Commission on the Struggle against Prostitution point out that the development of special measures to fight venereal diseases is an urgent task. Steps must of course be taken to deal with all sources of the diseases, and not solely with prostitution in the way that hypocritical bourgeois society does. But although the diseases are spread to some extent by everyday circumstances, it is nevertheless essential to give everyone a clear idea of the role prostitution plays. The correct organization of sexual education for young people is especially important. We must arm young people with accurate information allowing them to enter life with their eyes open. We must not remain silent any longer over questions connected with sexual life; we must break with false and bigoted bourgeois morality.

Prostitution is not compatible with the Soviet workers' republic for a third reason: it does not contribute to the development and strengthening of the basic class character of the proletariat and its new morality.

What is the fundamental quality of the working class? What is its strongest moral weapon in the struggle? Solidarity and comradeship are the basis of communism. Unless this sense is strongly developed amongst working people, the building of a truly communist society is inconceivable. Politically conscious communists should therefore logically be encouraging the development of solidarity in every way and fighting against all that hinders its development. Prostitution destroys the equality, solidarity and comradeship of the two halves of the working class. A man

who buys the favours of a woman does not see her as a comrade or as a person with equal rights. He sees the woman as dependent upon himself and as an unequal creature of a lower order who is of less worth to the workers' state. The contempt he has for the prostitute, whose favours he has bought, affects his attitude to all women. The further development of prostitution, instead of allowing for the growth of comradesly feeling and solidarity, strengthens the inequality of the relationships between the sexes.

Prostitution is alien and harmful to the new communist morality which is in the process of forming. The task of the party as a whole and of the women's departments in particular must be to launch a broad and resolute campaign against this legacy from the past. In bourgeois capitalist society all attempts at fighting prostitution were a useless waste of energy, since the two circumstances which gave rise to the phenomenon — private property and the direct material dependence of the majority of women upon men — were firmly established. In a workers' republic the situation has changed. Private property has been abolished and all citizens of the republic are obliged to work. Marriage has ceased to be a method by which a woman can find herself a "breadwinner" and thus avoid the necessity of working or providing for herself by her own labour. The major social factors giving rise to prostitution are, in Soviet Russia, being eliminated. A number of secondary economic and social reasons remain with which it is easier to come to terms. The women's departments must approach the struggle energetically, and they will find a wide field for activity.

On the Central Department's initiative, an Inter-

departmental Commission for the Struggle against Prostitution was organized last year. For a number of reasons, the work of the commission was neglected for a time, but since the autumn of this year there have been signs of life, and with the co-operation of Dr. Gol'man and the Central (Women's) Department some work has been planned and organized. representatives from the People's Commissariats of Health, Labour, Social Security and Industry, the Women's Department and the Union of Communist Youth are all involved. The commission has printed the theses in bulletin no. 4, distributes circulars to all regional departments of social security outlining a plan to establish similar commissions all over the country, and has set about working out a number of concrete measures to tackle the circumstances which give rise to prostitution.

The Interdepartmental Commission considers it necessary that the women's departments take an active part in this work, since prostitution affects the propertyless women of the working class. It is our job — it is the job of the women's departments — to organize a mass campaign around the question of prostitution. We must approach this issue with the interests of the work collective in mind and ensure that the revolution within the family is completed, and that relationships between the sexes are put on a more human footing.

The Interdepartmental Commission, as the theses make clear, takes the view that the struggle against prostitution is connected in a fundamental way with the realization of our Soviet politics in the sphere of economics and general construction. Prostitution will

be finally eliminated when the basis of communism is strengthened. This is the truth which determines our actions. But we also need to understand the importance of creating a communist morality. The two tasks are closely connected; the new morality is created by a new economy, but we will not build a new communist economy without the support of a new morality. Clarity and precise thinking are essential in this matter and we have nothing to fear from the truth. Communists must openly accept that unprecedented changes in the nature of sexual relationships are taking place. This revolution is called into being by the change in the economic structure and by the new role which women play in the productive activity of the workers' state. In this difficult transition period, when the old is being destroyed and the new is in the process of being created, relations between the sexes sometimes develop that are not compatible with the interests of the collective. But there is also something healthy in the variety of relationships practised.

Our party and the women's departments in particular must analyse the different forms in order to ascertain which are compatible with the general tasks of the revolutionary class and serve to strengthen the collective and its interests. Behaviour that is harmful to the collective must be rejected and condemned by communists. This is how the Central Women's Department has understood the task of the Interdepartmental Commission. It is not only necessary to take practical measures to fight the situation and the circumstances that nourish prostitution and to solve the problems of housing and loneliness, etc., but also to help the working class to establish its morality along-

side its dictatorship.

The Interdepartmental Commission points to the fact that in Soviet Russia prostitution is practised (a) as a profession and (b) as a means of earning supplementary income. The first form of prostitution is less common and in Petrograd, for example, the number of prostitutes has not been significantly reduced by round-ups of the professionals. The second type of prostitution is widespread in bourgeois capitalist countries (in Petrograd, before the revolution, out of a total of fifty thousand prostitutes only about six or seven thousand were registered), and continues under various guises in our Russia. Soviet ladies exchange their favours for a pair of high-heeled boots; working women and mothers of families sell their favours for flour. Peasant women sleep with the heads of the anti-profiteer detachments in the hope of saving their hoarded food, and office workers sleep with their bosses in return for rations, shoes and in the hope of promotion.

How should we fight this situation? The Interdepartmental Commission had to tackle the important question of *whether or not prostitution should be made a criminal offence*. Many of the representatives of the commission were inclined to the view that prostitution should be an offence, arguing that professional prostitutes are clearly labour deserters. If such a law were passed, the round-up and placing of prostitutes in forced labour camps would become accepted policy.

The Central Department spoke in firm and absolute opposition to such a step, pointing out that if prostitutes were to be arrested on such grounds, then so ought all legal wives who are maintained by their

husbands and do not contribute to society. The prostitute and the housewife are both labour deserters, and you cannot send one to a forced labour camp without sending the other. This was the position the Central Department took, and it was supported by the representative of the Commissariat of Justice. If we take labour desertion as our criterion, we cannot help punishing all forms of labour desertion. Marriage or the existence of certain relationships between the sexes is of no significance and can play no role in defining criminal offences in a labour republic.

In bourgeois society a woman is condemned to persecution not when she does no work that is useful to the collective or because she sells herself for material gain (two-thirds of women in bourgeois society sell themselves to their legal husbands), but when her sexual relationships are informal and of short duration. Marriage in bourgeois society is characterized *by its duration and by the official nature of its registration*. Property inheritance is preserved in this way. Relationships that are of a temporary nature and lack official sanction are considered by the bigots and hypocritical upholders of bourgeois morality to be shameful.

Can we who uphold the interests of working people define relationships that are temporary and unregistered as criminal? Of course we cannot. Freedom in relationships between the sexes does not contradict communist ideology. The interests of the work collective are not affected by the temporary or lasting nature of a relationship or by its basis in love, passion or passing physical attraction.

A relationship is harmful and alien to the collec-

tive only *if material bargaining between the sexes is involved*, only when worldly calculations are a substitute for mutual attraction. Whether the bargaining takes the form of prostitution or of a legal marriage relationship is not important. Such unhealthy relationships cannot be permitted, since they threaten equality and solidarity. We must therefore condemn all forms of prostitution, and go as far as explaining to those legal wives who are “kept women” what a sad and intolerable part they are playing in the worker’s state.

Can the presence or otherwise of material bargaining be used as a criterion in determining what is and what is not a criminal offence? Can we really persuade a couple to admit whether or not there is an element of calculation in their relationship? Would such a law be workable, particularly in view of the fact that at the present time a great variety of relationships are practised among working people and ideas on sexual morality are in constant flux? Where does prostitution end and the marriage of convenience begin? The Interdepartmental Commission opposed the suggestion that prostitutes be punished for prostituting, i.e. for buying and selling. They confined themselves to suggesting that all people convicted of work desertion be directed to the social security network and from there either to the section of the Commissariat that deals with the deployment of the labour force or to sanatoria and hospitals. A prostitute is not a special case; as with other categories of deserter, she is only sent to do forced labour if she repeatedly avoids work. Prostitutes are not treated any differently from other labour deserters. This is an important and courageous step, worthy of the world’s first labour republic.

The question of prostitution as an offence was set out in thesis no. 15. The next problem that had to be tackled was whether or not the law should punish the prostitute's clients. There were some on the commission who were in favour of this, but they had to give up the idea, which did not follow on logically from our basic premises. How is a client to be defined? Is he someone who buys a woman's favours? In that case the husbands of many legal wives will be guilty. Who is to decide who is a client and who is not? It was suggested that this problem be studied further before a decision was made, but the Central Department and the majority of the commission were against this. As the representative of the Commissariat of Justice admitted, if it were not possible to define exactly when a crime had been committed, then the idea of punishing clients was untenable. The position of the Central Department was once again adopted.

But while the commission accepted that clients cannot be punished by the law, it spoke out for the moral condemnation of those who visit prostitutes or in any way make a business out of prostitution. In fact the commission's theses point out that all go-betweens who make money out of prostitution can be prosecuted as persons making money other than by their own labour. Legislative proposals to this effect have been drawn up by the Interdepartmental Commission and put before the Council of People's Commissars. They will come into force in the near future.

It remains for me to indicate the purely practical measures which can help to reduce prostitution, and in the implementation of which the women's departments can play an active role. It cannot be doubted

that the poor and inadequate wages that women receive continue to serve as one of the real factors pushing women into prostitution. According to the law the wages of male and female workers are equal, but in practice most women are engaged in unskilled work. The problem of improving their skills through the development of a network of special courses must be tackled. The task of the women's departments must be to bring influence to bear on the education authorities to step up the provision of vocational training for working women.

The political backwardness of women and their lack of social awareness is a second reason for prostitution. The women's departments should increase their work amongst proletarian women. The best way to fight prostitution is to raise the political consciousness of the broad masses of women and to draw them into the revolutionary struggle to build communism.

The fact that the housing situation is still not solved also encourages prostitution. The Women's Department and the Commission for the Struggle against Prostitution can and must have their say over the solution of this problem. The Interdepartmental Commission is working out a project on the provision of house communes for young working people and on the establishment of houses that will provide accommodation for women when they are newly arrived in any area. However, unless the women's departments and the Komsomols in the provinces show some initiative and take independent action in this matter, all the directives of the commission will remain beautiful and benevolent resolutions — but they will remain on paper. And there is so much we can and must do. The

local women's departments must work in conjunction with the education commissions to raise the issue of the correct organization of sex education in schools. They could also hold a series of discussions and lectures on marriage, the family and the history of relationships between the sexes, highlighting the dependence of these phenomena and of sexual morality itself on economic factors.

It is time we were clear on the question of sexual relationships. It is time we approached this question in a spirit of ruthless and scientific criticism. I already said that the Interdepartmental Commission has accepted that professional prostitutes are to be treated in the same way as labour deserters. It therefore follows that women who have a workbook but are practising prostitution as a secondary source of income cannot be prosecuted. But this does not mean that we do not fight against prostitution. We are aware, as I have already pointed out more than once today, that prostitution harms the work collective, negatively affecting the psychology of men and women and distorting feelings of equality and solidarity. Our task is to re-educate the work collective and to bring its psychology into line with the economic tasks of the working class. We must ruthlessly discard the old ideas and attitudes to which we cling through habit. Economics has outstripped ideology. The old economic structure is disintegrating and with it the old type of marriage, but we cling to bourgeois lifestyles. We are ready to reject all the aspects of the old system and welcome the revolution in all spheres of life, only... don't touch the family, don't try to change the family! Even politically aware communists are afraid to look squarely at

the truth; they brush aside the evidence which clearly shows that the old family ties are weakening and that new forms of economy dictate new forms of relationships between the sexes. Soviet power recognizes that woman has a part to play in the national economy and has placed her on an equal footing with the man in this respect, but in everyday life we still hold to the "old ways" and are prepared to accept as normal marriages which are based on the material dependency of a woman on a man. In our struggle against prostitution, we must clarify our attitude to marital relations that are based on the same principles of "buying and selling." We must learn to be ruthless over this issue; we must not be deflected from our purpose by sentimental complaints that "by your criticism and scientific preaching you encroach on sacred family ties." We have to explain unequivocally that the old form of the family has been outstripped. Communist society has no need of it. The bourgeois world gave its blessing to the exclusiveness and isolation of the married couple from the collective; in the atomized and individualistic bourgeois society, the family was the only protection from the storm of life, a quiet harbour in a sea of hostility and competition. The family was an independent and enclosed collective. In communist society this cannot be. Communist society presupposes such a strong sense of the collective that any possibility of the existence of the isolated, introspective family group is excluded. At the present moment ties of kinship, family and even of married life can be seen to be weakening. New ties between working people are being forged and comradeship, common interests, collective responsibility and faith in the collective

are establishing themselves as the highest principles of morality.

I will not take it upon myself to prophesy the form that marriage or relationships between the sexes will assume in the future. But of one thing there is no doubt: under communism all dependence of women upon men and all the elements of material calculation found in modern marriage will be absent. Sexual relationships will be based on a healthy instinct for reproduction prompted by the abandon of young love, or by fervent passion, or by a blaze of physical attraction or by a soft light of intellectual and emotional harmony. Such sexual relationships have nothing in common with prostitution. Prostitution is terrible because it is an act of violence by the woman upon herself in the name of material gain. Prostitution is a naked act of material calculation which leaves no room for considerations of love and passion. Where passion and attraction begin, prostitution ends. Under communism, prostitution and the contemporary family will disappear. Healthy, joyful and free relationships between the sexes will develop. A new generation will come into being, independent and courageous and with a strong sense of the collective: a generation which places the good of the collective above all else.

Comrades! We are laying the foundations for this communist future. It is in our power to hasten the advent of this future. We must strengthen the sense of solidarity within the working class. We must encourage this sense of togetherness. Prostitution hinders the development of solidarity, and we therefore call upon the women's departments to begin an immediate campaign to root out his evil.

Comrades! Our task is to cut out the roots that feed prostitution. Our task is to wage a merciless struggle against all the remnants of individualism and of the former type of marriage. Our task is to revolutionize attitudes in the sphere of sexual relationships, to bring them into line with the interest of the working collective. When the communist collective has eliminated the contemporary forms of marriage and the family, the problem of prostitution will cease to exist.

Let us get to work, comrades. The new family is already in the process of creation, and the great family of the triumphant world proletariat is developing and growing stronger.

Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle

1921

Among the many problems that demand the consideration and attention of contemporary mankind, sexual problems are undoubtedly some of the most crucial. There isn't a country or a nation, apart from the legendary "islands," where the question of sexual relationships isn't becoming an urgent and burning issue. Mankind today is living through an acute sexual crisis which is far more unhealthy and harmful for being long and drawn-out. Throughout the long journey of human history, you probably won't find a time when the problems of sex have occupied such a central place in the life of society; when the question of relationships between the sexes has been like a conjuror, attracting the attention of millions of troubled people; when sexual dramas have served as such a never-ending source of inspiration for every sort of art.

As the crisis continues and grows more serious, people are getting themselves into an increasingly hopeless situation, and are trying desperately by every available means to settle the "insoluble question." But with every new attempt to solve the problem, the confused knot of personal relationships gets more tangled. It's as if we couldn't see the one and only thread that could finally lead us to success in controlling the stubborn tangle. The sexual problem is like a vicious circle, and however frightened people are and however much they run this way and that, they are unable to break out.

The conservatively inclined part of mankind argue

that we should return to the happy times of the past, we should re-establish the old foundations of the family and strengthen the well-tried norms of sexual morality. The champions of bourgeois individualism say that we ought to destroy all the hypocritical restrictions of the obsolete code of sexual behaviour. These unnecessary and repressive “rags” ought to be relegated to the archives — only the individual conscience, the individual will of each person can decide such intimate questions. Socialists, on the other hand, assure us that sexual problems will only be settled when the basic reorganization of the social and economic structure of society has been tackled. Doesn't this “putting off the problem until tomorrow” suggest that we still haven't found that one and only “magic thread”? Shouldn't we find or at least locate this “magic thread” that promises to unravel the tangle? Shouldn't we find it now, at this very moment?

The history of human society, the history of the continual battle between various social groups and classes of opposing aims and interests, gives us the clue to finding this “thread.” It isn't the first time that mankind has gone through a sexual crisis. This isn't the first time that the pressure of a rushing tide of new values and ideals has blurred the clear and definite meaning of moral commandments about sexual relationships. The “sexual crisis” was particularly acute at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, when a great social advance pushed the proud and patriarchal feudal nobility who were used to absolute command into the background, and cleared the way for the development and establishment of a new social force — the bourgeoisie. The sexual morality of the

feudal world had developed out of the depths of the “tribal way of life” — the collective economy and the tribal authoritarian leadership that stifles the individual will of the individual member. This clashed with the new and strange moral code of the rising bourgeoisie. The sexual morality of the bourgeoisie is founded on principles that are in sharp contradiction to the basic morality of feudalism. Strict individualism and the exclusiveness and isolation of the “nuclear family” replace the emphasis on “collective work” that was characteristic of both the local and regional economic structure of patrimonial life. Under capitalism the ethic of competition, the triumphant principles of individualism and exclusive private property, grew and destroyed whatever remained of the idea of the community, which was to some extent common to all types of tribal life. For a whole century, while the complex laboratory of life was turning the old norms into a new formula and achieving the outward harmony of moral ideas, men wandered confusedly between two very different sexual codes and attempted to accommodate themselves to both.

But in those bright and colourful days of change, the sexual crisis, although profound, did not have the threatening character that it has assumed in our time. The main reason for this is that in “the great days” of the Renaissance, in the “new age” when the bright fight of a new spiritual culture flooded the dying world with its clear colours, flooded the bare monotonous life of the Middle Ages, the sexual crisis affected only a relatively small part of the population. By far the largest section of the population, the peasantry, was affected only in the most indirect way and

only as, slowly, over the course of centuries, a change in the economic base, in the economic relations of the countryside, took place. At the top of the social ladder a bitter battle between two opposing social worlds was fought out. This involved also a struggle between their different ideals and values and ways of looking at things. It was these people who experienced and were threatened by the sexual crisis that developed. The peasants, wary of new things, continued to cling firmly to the well-tribed tribal tradition handed down from their forefathers, and only under the pressure of extreme necessity modified and adapted this tradition to the changing conditions of their economic environment. Even at the height of the struggle between the bourgeois and the feudal world, the sexual crisis bypassed the "class of tax payers." As the upper strata of society went about breaking up the old ways, the peasants in fact seemed to be more intent on clinging firmly to their traditions. In spite of the continuous whirlwinds that threatened overhead and shook the very soil under their feet, the peasants, especially our Russian peasantry, managed to preserve the basis of their sexual code untouched and unshaken for many centuries.

The story today is very different. The "sexual crisis" does not spare even the peasantry. Like an infectious disease it "knows neither rank nor status." It spreads from the palaces and mansions to the crowded quarters of the working class, looks in on the peaceful dwelling places of the petty-bourgeoisie, and makes its way into the heart of the countryside. It claims victims in the villas of the European bourgeoisie, in the fusty basement of the worker's family and in the smoky hut

of the peasant. There is “no defence, no bolt” against sexual conflict. To imagine that only the members of the well-off sections of society are floundering and are in the throes of these problems would be to make a grave mistake. The waves of the sexual crisis are sweeping over the threshold of workers’ homes, and creating situations of conflict that are as acute and heartfelt as the psychological sufferings of the “refined bourgeois world.” The sexual crisis no longer interests only the “propertied.” The problems of sex concern the largest section of society — they concern the working class in its daily life. It is therefore hard to understand why this vital and urgent subject is treated with such indifference. This indifference is unforgivable. One of the tasks that confront the working class in its attack on the “beleaguered fortress of the future” is undoubtedly the task of establishing more healthy and more joyful relationships between the sexes.

What are the roots of this unforgivable indifference to one of the essential tasks of the working class? How can we explain to ourselves the hypocritical way in which “sexual problems” are relegated to the realm of “private matters” that are not worth the effort and attention of the collective? Why has the fact been ignored that throughout history one of the constant features of social struggle has been the attempt to change relationships between the sexes, and the type of moral codes that determine these relationships; and that the way personal relationships are organized in a certain social group has had a vital influence on the outcome of the struggle between hostile social classes?

The tragedy of our society is not just that the usual

forms of behaviour and the principles regulating this behaviour are breaking down, but that a spontaneous wave of new attempts at living is developing from within the social fabric, giving man hopes and ideals that cannot yet be realized. We are people living in the world of property relationships, a world of sharp class contradictions and of an individualistic morality. We still live and think under the heavy hand of an unavoidable loneliness of spirit. Man experiences this "loneliness" even in towns full of shouting, noise and people, even in a crowd of close friends and work-mates. Because of their loneliness men are apt to cling in a predatory and unhealthy way to illusions about finding a "soul mate" from among the members of the opposite sex. They see sly Eros as the only means of charming away, if only for a time, the gloom of inescapable loneliness.

People have perhaps never in any age felt spiritual loneliness as deeply and persistently as at the present time. People have probably never become so depressed and fallen so fully under the numbing influence of this loneliness. It could hardly be otherwise. The darkness never seems so black as when there's a light shining just ahead.

The "individualists," who are only loosely organized into a collective with other individuals, now have the chance to change their sexual relationships so that they are based on the creative principle of friendship and togetherness rather than on something blindly physiological. The individualistic property morality of the present day is beginning to seem very obviously paralysing and oppressive. In criticizing the quality of sexual relationships modern man is doing

far more than rejecting the outdated forms of behaviour of the current moral code. His lonely soul is seeking the regeneration of the very essence of these relationships. He moans and pines for “great love,” for a situation of warmth and creativity which alone has the power to disperse the cold spirit of loneliness from which present day “individualists” suffer.

If the sexual crisis is three quarters the result of external socio-economic relationships, the other quarter hinges on our “refined individualistic psyche,” fostered by the ruling bourgeois ideology. The “potential for loving” of people today is, as the German writer Meisel-Hess puts it, at a low ebb. Men and women seek each other in the hope of finding for themselves, through another person, a means to a larger share of spiritual and physical pleasure. It makes no difference whether they are married to the partner or not, they give little thought to what’s going on in the other person, to what’s happening to their emotions and psychological processes.

The “crude individualism” that adorns our era is perhaps nowhere as blatant as in the organization of sexual relationships. A person wants to escape from his loneliness and naively imagines that being “in love” gives him the right to the soul of the other person — the right to warm himself in the rays of that rare blessing of emotional closeness and understanding. We individualists have had our emotions spoiled in the persistent cult of the “ego.” We imagine that we can reach the happiness of being in a state of “great love” with those near to us, without having to “give” up anything of ourselves.

The claims we make on our “contracted partner”

are absolute and undivided. We are unable to follow the simplest rule of love — that another person should be treated with great consideration. New concepts of the relationships between the sexes are already being outlined. They will teach us to achieve relationships based on the unfamiliar ideas of complete freedom, equality and genuine friendship. But in the meantime, mankind has to sit in the cold with its spiritual loneliness and can only dream about the “better age” when all relationships between people will be warmed by the rays of “the sun god,” will experience a sense of togetherness and will be educated in the new conditions of living. The sexual crisis cannot be solved unless there is a radical reform of the human psyche, and unless man’s potential for loving is increased. And a basic transformation of the socio-economic relationships along communist lines is essential if the psyche is to be reformed. This is an “old truth” but there is no other way out. The sexual crisis will in no way be reduced, whatever kind of marriage or personal relationships people care to try.

History has never seen such a variety of personal relationships — indissoluble marriage with its “stable family,” “free unions,” secret adultery; a girl living quite openly with her lover in so-called “wild marriage”; pair marriage, marriage in threes and even the complicated marriage of four people — not to talk of the various forms of commercial prostitution. You get the same two moral codes existing side by side in the peasantry as well — a mixture of the old tribal way of life and the developing bourgeois family. Thus you get

the permissiveness of the girls' house¹ side by side with the attitude that fornication, or men sleeping with their daughters-in-law, is a disgrace. It's surprising that, in the face of the contradictory and tangled forms of present-day personal relationships, people are able to preserve a faith in moral authority, and are able to make sense of these contradictions and thread their way through these mutually destructive and incompatible moral codes. Even the usual justification — "I live by the new morality" — doesn't help anyone, since the new morality is still only in the process of being formed. Our task is to draw out from the chaos of present-day contradictory sexual norms the shape, and make clear the principles, of a morality that answers the spirit of the progressive and revolutionary class.

Besides the already mentioned inadequacies of the contemporary psyche — extreme individuality, egoism that has become a cult — the "sexual crisis" is made worse by two characteristics of the psychology of modern man:

1. The idea of "possessing" the married partner;
2. The belief that the two sexes are unequal, that they are of unequal worth in every way, in every sphere, including the sexual sphere.

Bourgeois morality, with its introverted individualistic family based entirely on private property, has

¹ In the traditional Russian villages, the young girls would often get together to rent an old hut or a room in someone's house. They would gather there in the evenings to tell stories, do needlework and sing. The young men would come to join in the merrymaking. Sometimes it seems that the merrymaking would become an orgy, though there are conflicting ideas about this.

carefully cultivated the idea that one partner should completely “possess” the other. It has been very successful. The idea of “possession” is more pervasive now than under the patrimonial system of marriage relationships. During the long historical period that developed under the aegis of the “tribe,” the idea of a man possessing his wife (there has never been any thought of a wife having undisputed possession of her husband) did not go further than a purely physical possession. The wife was obliged to be faithful physically — her soul was her own. Even the knights recognized the right of their wives to have *chicheshi* (platonically friends and admirers) and to receive the “devotion” of other knights and minnesingers. It is the bourgeoisie who have carefully tended and fostered the ideal of absolute possession of the “contracted partner’s” emotional as well as physical “I,” thus extending the concept of property rights to include the right to the other person’s whole spiritual and emotional world. Thus the family structure was strengthened and stability guaranteed in the period when the bourgeoisie were struggling for domination. This is the ideal that we have accepted as our heritage and have been prepared to see as an unchangeable moral absolute! The idea of “property” goes far beyond the boundaries of “lawful marriage.” It makes itself felt as an inevitable ingredient of the most “free” union of love. Contemporary lovers with all their respect for freedom are not satisfied by the knowledge of the physical faithfulness alone of the person they love. To be rid of the eternally present threat of loneliness, we “launch an attack” on the emotions of the person we love with a cruelty and lack of delicacy that will not

be understood by future generations. We demand the right to know every secret of this person's being. The modern lover would forgive physical unfaithfulness sooner than "spiritual" unfaithfulness. He sees any emotion experienced outside the boundaries of the "free" relationship as the loss of his own personal treasure.

People "in love" are unbelievably insensitive in their relations to a third person. We have all no doubt observed this strange situation — two people who love each other are in a hurry, before they have got to know each other properly, to exercise their rights over all the relationships that the other person has formed up till that time, to look into the innermost corners of their partner's life. Two people who yesterday were unknown to each other, and who come together in a single moment of mutual erotic feeling, rush to get at the heart of the other person's being. They want to feel that this strange and incomprehensible psyche, with its past experience that can never be suppressed, is an extension of their own self. The idea that the married pair are each other's property is so accepted that when a young couple who were yesterday each living their own separate lives are today opening each other's correspondence without a blush, and making common property of the words of a third person who is a friend of only one of them, this hardly strikes us as something unnatural. But this kind of "intimacy" is only really possible when people have been working out their lives together for a long period of time. Usually a dishonest kind of closeness is substituted for this genuine feeling, the deception being fostered by the mistaken idea that a physical relationship between

two people is a sufficient basis for extending the rights of possession to each other's emotional being.

The "inequality" of the sexes — the inequality of their rights, the unequal value of their physical and emotional experience — is the other significant circumstance that distorts the psyche of contemporary man and is a reason for the deepening of the "sexual crisis." The "double morality" inherent in both patrimonial and bourgeois society has, over the course of centuries, poisoned the psyche of men and women. These attitudes are so much a part of us that they are more difficult to get rid of than the ideas about possessing people that we have inherited only from bourgeois ideology. The idea that the sexes are unequal, even in the sphere of physical and emotional experience, means that the same action will be regarded differently according to whether it was the action of a man or a woman. Even the most "progressive" member of the bourgeoisie, who has long ago rejected the whole code of current morality, easily catches himself out at this point since he too in judging a man and a woman for the same behaviour will pass different sentences. One simple example is enough. Imagine that a member of the middle-class intelligentsia who is learned, involved in politics and social affairs — who is in short a "personality," even a "public figure" — starts sleeping with his cook (a not uncommon thing to happen) and even becomes legally married to her. Does bourgeois society change its attitude to this man, does the event throw even the tiniest shadow of doubt as to his moral worth? Of course not.

Now imagine another situation. A respected woman of bourgeois society — a social figure, a re-

search student, a doctor, or a writer, it's all the same — becomes friendly with her footman, and to complete the scandal marries him. How does bourgeois society react to the behaviour of the hitherto “respected” woman? They cover her with “scorn,” of course! And remember, it's so much the worse for her if her husband, the footman, is good-looking or possesses other “physical qualities.” “It's obvious what she's fallen for,” will be the sneer of the hypocritical bourgeoisie.

If a woman's choice has anything of an “individual character” about it she won't be forgiven by bourgeois society. This attitude is a kind of throwback to the traditions of tribal times. Society still wants a woman to take into account, when she is making her choice, rank and status and the instructions and interests of her family. Bourgeois society cannot see a woman as an independent person separate from her family unit and outside the isolated circle of domestic obligations and virtues. Contemporary society goes even further than the ancient tribal society in acting as woman's trustee, instructing her not only to marry but to fall in love only with those people who are “worthy” of her.

We are continually meeting men of considerable spiritual and intellectual qualities who have chosen as their friend-for-life a worthless and empty woman, who in no way matches the spiritual worth of the husband. We accept this as something normal and we don't think twice about it. At the most, friends might pity Ivan Ivanovich for having landed himself with such an unbearable wife. But if it happens the other way round, we flap our hands and exclaim with concern, “How could such an outstanding woman as Maria Petrovna fall for such a nonentity? I begin to doubt

the worth of Maria Petrovna.” Where do we get this double criterion from? What is the reason for it? The reason is undoubtedly that the idea of the sexes being of “different value” has become, over the centuries, a part of man’s psychological make-up. We are used to evaluating a woman not as a personality with individual qualities and failings irrespective of her physical and emotional experience, but only as an appendage of a man. This man, the husband or the lover, throws the light of his personality over the woman, and it is this reflection and not the woman herself that we consider to be the true definition of her emotional and moral make-up. In the eyes of society, the personality of a man can be more easily separated from his actions in the sexual sphere. The personality of a woman is judged almost exclusively in terms of her sexual life. This type of attitude stems from the role that women have played in society over the centuries, and it is only now that a re-evaluation of these attitudes is slowly being achieved, at least in outline. Only a change in the economic role of woman and her independent involvement in production can and will bring about the weakening of these mistaken and hypocritical ideas.

The three basic circumstances distorting the modern psyche — extreme egoism, the idea that married partners possess each other, and the acceptance of the inequality of the sexes in terms of physical and emotional experience — must be faced if the sexual problem is to be settled. People will find the “magic key” with which they can break out of their situation only when their psyche has a sufficient store of “feelings of consideration,” when their ability to love is greater, when the idea of freedom in personal relationships be-

comes fact, and when the principle of “comradeship” triumphs over the traditional idea of “inequality” and submission. The sexual problems cannot be solved without this radical re-education of our psyche.

But isn't this asking too much? Isn't the suggestion utopian, without foundation, the naive notion of a dreaming idealist? How are you honestly going to raise mankind's “potential for loving”? Haven't wise men of all nations since time immemorial, beginning with Buddha and Confucius and ending with Christ, been busying themselves over this? And who can say if the “potential for loving” has been raised? Isn't this kind of well-meaning daydream about the solution of the sexual crisis simply a confession of weakness and a refusal to go on with the search for the “magic key”?

Is that the case? Is the radical re-education of our psyche and our approach to sexual relationships something so unlikely, so removed from reality? Couldn't one say that, on the contrary, while great social and economic changes are in progress, the conditions are being created that demand and give rise to a new basis for psychological experience that is in line with what we have been talking about? Another class, a new social group, is coming forward to replace the bourgeoisie, with its bourgeois ideology and its individualistic code of sexual morality. The progressive class, as it develops in strength, cannot fail to reveal new ideas about relationships between the sexes that form in close connection with the problems of its social class.

The complicated evolution of socio-economic relations taking place before our eyes, which changes all our ideas about the role of women in social life and

undermines the sexual morality of the bourgeoisie, has two contradictory results. On the one hand we see mankind's tireless efforts to adapt to the new, changing socio-economic conditions. This is manifest either in an attempt to preserve the "old forms" while providing them with a new content (the observance of the external form of the indissoluble, strictly monogamous marriage with an acceptance, in practice, of the freedom of the partners) or in the acceptance of new forms which contain however all the elements of the moral code of bourgeois marriage (the "free" union where the compulsive possessiveness of the partners is greater than within legal marriage). On the other hand we see the slow but steady appearance of new forms of relationships between the sexes that differ from the old norms in outward form and in spirit.

Mankind is not groping its way toward these new ideas with much confidence, but we need to look at its attempt, however vague it is at the moment, since it is an attempt closely linked with the tasks of the proletariat as the class which is to capture the "beleaguered fortress" of the future. If, amongst the complicated labyrinth of contradictory and tangled sexual norms, you want to find the beginnings of more healthy relationships between the sexes — relationships that promise to lead humanity out of the sexual crisis — you have to leave the "cultured quarters" of the bourgeoisie with their refined individualistic psyche and take a look at the huddled dwelling-places of the working class. There, amidst the horror and squalor of capitalism, amidst tears and curses, the springs of life are welling up.

You can see the double process which we have just

mentioned working itself out in the lives of the proletariat, who have to exist under the pressure of harsh economic conditions, cruelly exploited by capitalism. You can see both the process of “passive adjustment” and that of active opposition to the existing reality. The destructive influence of capitalism destroys the basis of the worker’s family and forces him unconsciously to “adapt” to the existing conditions. This gives rise to a whole series of situations with regard to relationships between the sexes which are similar to those in other social classes. Under the pressure of low wages, the worker inevitably tends to get married at a later age. If twenty years ago a worker usually got married between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, he now shoulders the cares of a family only towards his thirtieth year. The higher the cultural demands of the worker — the more he values the opportunity of being in contact with cultural life, of visiting theatres and lectures, of reading papers and magazines, of giving his spare time to struggle and politics or to some favourite pursuit such as art or reading etc. — the later he tends to get married. But physical needs won’t take a financial situation into consideration: they insist on making themselves felt. The working-class bachelor, in the same way as the middle-class bachelor, looks to prostitution for an outlet. This is an example of the passive adjustment of the working class to the unfavourable conditions of their existence. Take another example. When the worker marries, the low level of pay forces the worker’s family to “regulate” childbirth just as the bourgeois family does. The frequent cases of infanticide, the growth of prostitution — these are all expressions of the same process. These are all ex-

amples of adjustment by the working class to the surrounding reality. But this is not a process characteristic of the proletariat alone. All the other classes and sections of the population caught up in the world process of capitalist development react in this way.

We see a difference only when we begin to talk about the active, creative forces at work that oppose rather than adapt to the repressive reality, and about the new ideals and attempts at new relationships between the sexes. It is only within the working class that this active opposition is taking shape. This doesn't mean that the other classes and sections of the population (particularly the middle-class intelligentsia who, by the circumstances of their social existence, stand closest to the working class) don't adopt the "new" forms that are being worked out by the progressive working class. The bourgeoisie, motivated by an instinctive desire to breathe new life into their dead and feeble forms of marriage, seize upon the "new" ideas of the working class. But the ideals and code of sexual morality that the working class develops do not answer the class needs of the bourgeoisie. They reflect the demands of the working class and therefore serve as a new weapon in its social struggle. They help shatter the foundations of the social domination of the bourgeoisie. Let us make this point clear by an example.

The attempt by the middle-class intelligentsia to replace indissoluble marriage by the freer, more easily broken ties of civil marriage destroys the essential basis of the social stability of the bourgeoisie. It destroys the monogamous, property-orientated family. On the other hand, a greater fluidity in relationships between

the sexes coincides with and is even the indirect result of one of the basic tasks of the working class. The rejection of the element of "submission" in marriage is going to destroy the last artificial ties of the bourgeois family. This act of "submission" on the part of one member of the working class to another, in the same way as the sense of possessiveness in relationships, has a harmful effect on the proletarian psyche. It is not in the interests of that revolutionary class to elect only certain members as its independent representatives, whose duty it is to serve the class interests before the interests of the individual, isolated family. Conflicts between the interests of the family and the interests of the class which occur at the time of a strike or during an active struggle, and the moral yardstick with which the proletariat views such events, are sufficiently clear evidence of the basis of the new proletarian ideology.

Suppose family affairs require a businessman to take his capital out of a firm at a time when the enterprise is in financial difficulties. Bourgeois morality is clear-cut in its estimate of his action: "The interests of the family come first." We can compare with this the attitude of workers to a strike-breaker who defies his comrades and goes to work during a strike to save his family from being hungry. "The interests of the class come first." Here's another example. The love and loyalty of the middle-class husband to his family are sufficient to divert his wife from all interests outside the home and end up by tying her to the nursery and the kitchen. "The ideal husband can support the ideal family" is the way the bourgeoisie looks at it. But how do workers look upon a "conscious" member of their class who shuts the eyes of his wife or girlfriend to the

social struggle? For the sake of individual happiness, for the sake of the family, the morality of the working class will demand that women take part in the life that is unfolding beyond the doorsteps. The “captivity” of women in the home, the way family interests are placed before all else, the widespread exercise of absolute property rights by the husband over the wife — all these things are being broken down by the basic principle of the working-class ideology of “comradely solidarity.” The idea that some members are unequal and must submit to other members of one and the same class is in contradiction with the basic proletarian principle of comradeship. This principle of comradeship is basic to the ideology of the working class. It colours and determines the whole developing proletarian morality, a morality which helps to re-educate the personality of man, allowing him to be capable of positive feeling, capable of freedom instead of being bound by a sense of property, capable of comradeship rather than inequality and submission.

It is an old truth that every new class that develops as a result of an advance in economic growth and material culture offers mankind an appropriately new ideology. The code of sexual behaviour is a part of this ideology. However, it is worth saying something about “proletarian ethics” or “proletarian sexual morality,” in order to criticize the well-worn idea that proletarian sexual morality is no more than “superstructure,” and that there is no place for any change in this sphere until the economic base of society has been changed. As if the ideology of a certain class is formed only when the breakdown in the socio-economic relationships, guaranteeing the dominance of

that class, has been completed! All the experience of history teaches us that a social group works out its ideology, and consequently its sexual morality, in the process of its struggle with hostile social forces.

Only with the help of new spiritual values, created within and answering the needs of the class, will that class manage to strengthen its social position. It can only successfully win power from those groups in society that are hostile to it by holding to these new norms and ideals. To search for the basic criteria for a morality that can reflect the specific interests of the working class, and to see that the developing sexual norms are in accordance with these criteria — this is the task that must be tackled by the ideologists of the working class. We have to understand that it is only by becoming aware of the creative process that is going on within society, and of the new demands, new ideals and new norms that are being formed, only by becoming clear about the basis of the sexual morality of the progressive class, that we can possibly make sense of the chaos and contradictions of sexual relationships and find the thread that will make it possible to undo the tightly rolled up tangle of sexual problems.

We must remember that only a code of sexual morality that is in harmony with the problems of the working class can serve as an important weapon in strengthening the working class's fighting position. The experience of history teaches us that much. What can stop us using this weapon in the interests of the working class, who are fighting for a communist system and for new relationships between the sexes that are deeper and more joyful?

The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia

1921

In Soviet Russia there is no independent movement of women workers. In Soviet Russia the proletariat of both sexes are indissolubly united in their struggle to establish and consolidate the dictatorship (of the proletariat — *Tr.*) and to build the new society of working people.

However, precisely in order to ensure this unity, this joint struggle and joint work, the Communist Party had to include among its tasks the special task of involving women actively in the construction of a new future and in the conscious defence of the first republic of working people against its internal and external enemies.

This task was formulated by the Bolshevik Party as far back as the eve of the revolution, the spring of 1917, when the editorial board of the magazine *Rabotnitsa* was set up under the party Central Committee in order to serve not only as a centre of propaganda work among the female proletariat, but also as a centre organizing women workers around the banner of Bolshevism.

At a time when bourgeois chauvinism and Kerenskyism were in full flood and the dangers of conciliation had not yet been finally eliminated, the editorial board of *Rabotnitsa*, responding in early June, 1917, to Kerensky's call for the Russian army to advance, organized a large international meeting calling for opposition to the criminal slaughter of the war and for

worldwide worker solidarity against the common enemy — the capitalists — and their loyal servants, the conciliators. This was the first open international meeting in Russia.

In autumn 1917, with the struggle of the proletariat for Soviet power having intensified, and faced with the threat of an offensive by General Kornilov, the most progressive and conscious section of women workers came out in support of the Bolsheviks and became actively involved in the civil war that had broken out. However, the broad mass of women workers and peasants remained outside the movement, passively bearing the increasing burden of economic collapse, deprivation and suffering that inevitably accompany the clash between two social worlds.

The Great October Revolution and the transfer of power into the hands of the working people gave women in Russia full political and civil equality. A new age opened up before women workers and peasants. An end had been put to their former, age-old lack of rights. From that moment on, women enjoyed total equality in every sphere of the work and life of the state. From the very first days following the October Revolution, the Communist Party hastened to make use of the energies of women communists and women workers sympathetic to Soviet power. Women were appointed Commissars, were given important posts, and even sat on the Council of People's Commissars. They were given work in every section of the newly formed Soviet state apparatus...

The doors of the Communist Party stood open to women of the working class, and the law gave them every opportunity to participate in the work of the So-

viets to reshape their way of life and thus improve their own living conditions... However, the broad mass of women workers and peasants (taken in the majority) looked with fear upon communists and Soviet power, seeing in them only the destroyers of the fundamental order and ancient traditions, "godless" people who separated church and state, heartless people who wished to take children away from their mothers and hand them over to be brought up by the state.

Starvation and deprivation further stimulated the blind resentment of the women, who transmitted to their families ideas and attitudes hostile to communism.

In the autumn of 1918 after the attempt by counter-revolution, with the assistance of the Czechoslovaks, to smash the Bolsheviks and put an end to Soviet power, the party recognized the urgency of the problem of involving women workers in Soviet construction and raising their level of class-consciousness. The women, who had stood aside from the movement to consolidate the Soviets, were already becoming a factor actively assisting counter-revolution.

In the interests of communism, it was necessary to win over the women workers and turn them into defenders of Soviet power. General propaganda of the ideas of Soviet power and communism proved insufficient to draw women into the movement. A special approach had to be found as regards the women workers and poorest peasants; a special method of work among women had to be developed in order to force them to understand and appreciate what their position should be and which power best guaranteed

women's interests — the dictatorship of the proletariat, or a return to the rule of the bourgeoisie.

On the initiative of a group of communist women in Moscow, and with the full support of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, the First All-Russia Congress of Women Workers and Peasants was convened in Moscow in November 1918. It was attended by over a thousand women delegates elected at women workers' and peasants' meetings. This congress was not only of enormous propaganda significance, but also laid the foundations for the creation within the Russian Communist Party of a special, all-Russia apparatus for conducting work among women. The creation of a special apparatus within the party whose purpose was to draw the mass of the female population into the construction of a republic of working people and into the struggle for communism thus received official recognition within the party.

To begin with, responsibility for this work was assumed by the Commissions for Propaganda Among Women Workers, organized under the auspices of party committees. The slogan of the commissions ran: "propaganda in deeds as well as words," which meant that women workers and peasants were to be turned into conscious and active communists via involvement in the creative practical work of the Soviets. With this in view, the commissions created a special apparatus linking the party with the broad mass of backward working women. This apparatus was the council of women delegates. Each enterprise and each workshop was to send one woman delegate for every fifty women workers to the delegate council of women workers. The delegates were elected for three months, and their

attendance at weekly delegate councils, at which they were informed about recent political events, about the work being done in various branches of Soviet construction, and in particular about social education, public catering, protection of motherhood and other areas of state activity directly assisting the domestic emancipation of working woman, was compulsory. The delegates not only attended the councils, but were also charged with a number of practical activities which included membership of the commissions on labour protection, on improving living conditions, on provision for motherhood, etc., operating at their own enterprises, visits of inspection to state institutions in order to become familiar with the methods and systems of work used in various branches of the state apparatus, and also co-operating in various party and state campaigns. As the work done by the party among the women increased, it became necessary to regulate it, make it more efficient and thorough-going. In the autumn of 1919, the party reorganized the Commissions for Propaganda Among Women Workers into departments for work among women. Such departments now form part of every local party committee, from the Central Committee to city, district and uyezdz committees.

The departments for work among women not only involve women workers and peasants in the party and in state construction, turning them into active women communists, but also bring independent initiative into the building of communism, putting before the party and state organs tasks related to the comprehensive and practical emancipation of women. Thus, on the initiative of the departments, abortion was legalized,

and the proposal advanced at the Eighth Congress of Soviets on actively involving women workers in the rehabilitation of the economy and organization of production by bringing women into all the organs of economic management has been adopted. The Inter-departmental Commission on the Struggle against Prostitution, and the commissions to promote the protection of mother and child were also set up on the initiative of these departments. During the elaboration of the law on the obligation to work (April 1920) they introduced a number of clauses relating to the protection of the physical strength, health and interests of mothers. Finally, in April of this year, on the initiative of the women's departments, a law was passed through the Council of People's Commissars on involving women workers and peasants in the practical work of executive committee departments and institutions for a period of two months with a view to infusing new life into the state apparatus and freeing it from bureaucratic elements, and also in order to train state executives from among the women workers.

Over the two and a half years since the creation within the party of the special apparatus to conduct work among women with a view to involving women workers and peasants in the construction of a republic of working people... and drawing them into communism, enormous progress has been made. The former mistrustful or passive attitude among the mass of women to the revolution and to Soviet power is now found only in the most remote areas where the women's departments have not yet begun to expand their activities.

Of the total party membership, 9-10 per cent is comprised of women. According to the latest figures (February-March), there are 3,842 women communists in 12 provinces including:

women workers	2,406
intelligentsia	1,010
peasants	426
total	3,842

The number of delegates in these provinces totals 12,910.

On the most conservative estimates, the number of delegates linked to the women workers' departments, and therefore under the influence of the Communist Party, is more than 70 thousand. These 70 thousand delegates elected from among women workers, housewives and peasant women (the latter elected on a village basis) represent a female population numbering more than 3 million, all linked to the party. Through their deputies, these 3 million women are involved in one way or another in the practical work of state construction either in the sphere of production organization, or in national defence, or in the re-organization of daily life and living conditions on new communist principles. Thus, for example, in the 12 provinces for which we have the most recent figures, 6,930 women workers took part in subbotniks,¹ and 2,975 women workers and peasants worked in Soviet institutions.

Thus, through active, practical participation in the work to rehabilitate the economy, help the Red Army, develop agriculture, provide for children (Children's

¹ A day (usually a Saturday or Sunday) of voluntary unpaid labour for the state — *Tr.*

Week), overcome the fuel crisis and get the transport system working again, etc., the party is gradually moulding out of hundreds of thousands of “non-party” women workers and peasants not only new, fresh forces working for the Soviet system, but also conscious defenders of the republic of the working people and of communism. The broad mass of women workers has already ceased to be the bulwark of counter-revolution. These three years of special work among women have succeeded not only in awakening their political consciousness, but also in accustoming them to active participation in the construction of the new society.

Immediately following the revolution, women were elected as members of the Soviets. However, the election of women was still rare, an exception to the rule. Women were more commonly used to help carry through the designated tasks and it was a rarity for women to be given administrative posts involving decision-making. Even now there are not many women workers and peasants who are members of the Soviets. For example, in the 12 provinces referred to above, there are only 635 women members of Soviets, that is, an average of 52 members for each province. Moreover, in the uyezd Soviets the number of women members is 574, while in the provincial Soviets there are only seven...

Women workers have been particularly active over recent years in the inspection of various institutions, primarily canteens, hospitals and all the children's institutions that form part of the network of social upbringing. A number of abuses in these institutions, mismanagement, incompetence and sometimes a de-

liberately obstructive approach on the part of representatives of the petty-bourgeois elements that poured into state institutions, were discovered thanks to the vigilant eye and conscientiousness of the women workers. In the aforementioned 12 provinces, 3,436 women worker delegates sat on inspection commissions. In Petrograd, around 500 women delegates took part in the inspection of infirmaries. According to the figures of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, up to 25 thousand women workers and peasants were actively involved in large-scale inspections throughout the whole of Russia. When the republic of working people was faced with the problem of looking after wounded Red Army soldiers, Moscow women workers, under the leadership of the women workers' departments, immediately organized groups of 20-50 delegates who visited the army hospitals once a week, inspected them, reported on inadequacies to the appropriate institution and organized subbotniks to clean the infirmaries and mend the clothes of the wounded. When there were not enough medical orderlies, the delegates helped to transport the ill and the wounded, visited them, read them newspapers, wrote their letters for them, etc. According to the People's Commissariat of Health, the women delegates played a not unimportant role in the improvement of conditions in Moscow hospitals.

As regards the involvement of women in military affairs, the Soviet republic of the working people has adopted a completely new approach. The bourgeoisie has always based itself on the view that the woman was and should remain the preserver of the home, while nature has determined that the man should de-

fend it, or, by extension, should defend the fatherland, the state.

“War,” according to the bourgeoisie, “is men’s business.” The idea of taking women into the armed forces appeared monstrous to bourgeois society. It would undermine the “foundations of the family” — an institution essential to private property and the class-based state.

The use of female personnel during the last imperialist war, particularly in England, was significant not so much as a practical state measure, but rather as a particular form of patriotic propaganda.

A very different attitude is developing in the state of the working people to the involvement of women workers and peasants into the army for the self-defence of the republic of the working people. In the transitional period through which we are now passing, the two duties of each member of the state of the working people to work and to defend that republic are fusing together. The great revolution that took place in October 1917, in the organization of production and in the national economy of Russia have had a radical effect upon the lives of women and their role in the state. The communist state, in which all the available reserves of adult citizens are taken into account in order to be put to more rational use and in order to develop the national productive forces more successfully, is already unable to dispense with the part played by women. Just as the basic economic system requires, in the interests of the working class, that the greatest possible number of women be involved in it, so also the self-defence of the working class against bourgeois domination requires that women workers

and peasants be used for the army and the navy. The involvement of women, of women workers and peasants, in military affairs is dictated not by short-term political considerations, such as those that guided the bourgeois governments in the imperialist war, but by the fundamental objectives of the working class.

The broader the participation by the working population in its vital objectives, the more successfully will the workers' and peasants' army be able to defend the revolution.

The Red Army needs the active involvement of women workers and peasants. Women should be used to ensure success at the front precisely because this victory is essential to the women themselves for their total emancipation and the consolidation of those rights which the October Revolution has won for them. Therefore the participation of women workers and peasants in the Soviet class army is to be evaluated not only in terms of the practical aid which women have already supplied to the army and the war front, but also in terms of that inevitable radical change introduced by the question of involving women in military matters. While the October Revolution paved the way for the abolition of the former inequality between the sexes, the active involvement of women on our common basic fronts — the labour front and the war front — will destroy the lingering prejudices that fed this inequality.

Women workers and peasants were involved in the civil, class war from the very first barricade battles in 1917. Just as the Red Guards emerged spontaneously in the workers' districts, so also there arose, just as spontaneously, auxiliary detachments of women med-

ical orderlies, Red nurses and simply groups of volunteer women workers and peasants who assumed one function or another in the Red Guards during and immediately after the October days. However, at that time the involvement of women workers and peasants was not a mass phenomenon, nor was it organized. It was only from the end of 1918 onwards that the women workers and peasants of the Soviet Republic began to take part in military affairs on an organized basis. When the Red Army was formed to replace the Red Guards, the government of workers and peasants did, it is true, appeal for co-operation not only by men, but also by women. However, it did not prove possible at first to find a practical, useful way of making widespread use of women at the front.

The active involvement of working women in the Red Army consists primarily in the formation of an entire detachment of women communists who function as political propagandists in the army, as political workers. Many of these women political workers in the army died alongside their comrades in defence of Soviet power, while others returned decorated with the Order of the Red Banner.

Even in the army Military Revolutionary Councils the number of women members was very small. The political sections of the Red Army are to a large degree the creation of the talented organizer, Comrade Varsenika-Kasparova.

The second way in which women workers are involved in military matters is as Red nurses and medical orderlies. The first trained Red nurses from among women workers who had attended special courses arrived at the front in November 1919, and a number of

documents testify to their selfless work and that of the medical orderlies.

Over a period of two years, up to 6,000 trained women workers, Red nurses and medical orderlies have been sent to the front...

The women workers and peasants serving as Red nurses and medical orderlies have shown cheerfulness and enthusiasm in their work. The Red nurse treats the wounded Red Army soldier first and foremost as a comrade and brother, and does not show that sickly-sweet condescension with which the bourgeois nurse approached the "poor soldier."

The organization of medical assistance to the army has opened before the women workers and peasants a wide sphere of necessary and important work, particularly at a moment when Soviet Russia is experiencing bitter class conflict.

However, the role of women in the defence of the Soviet Republic is not limited to the organization of medical assistance. One only has to remember the critical moments in the struggle, when all the gains of our revolution were in danger, to realize how great and important a role women workers and peasants have played in the self-defence of the republic. Three episodes in the class war over the last three years serve to illustrate this very clearly: the attack by the Whites on the Donbas and Lugansk in 1919, the Denikin threat to Tula and the Yudenich threat to Red Petrograd in the autumn of the same year; Lugansk succeeded in repelling the second attack on the Red city by White Guard bands thanks only to the massive and active participation of working men and women in every sphere of defence. Particularly memorable is the reso-

lute stand adopted by the working women of Tula during Denikin's advance: "Denikin will reach Moscow only over our dead bodies," declared the women workers, who were then fulfilling a variety of roles and carrying out every kind of work for the front, from digging trenches to army communications. The fame of the women workers of Petrograd, who repelled the attack by Yudenich, is too well known to need repetition here. 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 companies, in communications, in sapper companies, and laboured selflessly in the cold autumn weather to dig trenches and surround Petrograd with barbed wire...

Not only in Moscow, but throughout the whole of Russia, the system of universal military training is drawing young women workers and peasants into military matters, thus gradually creating the reserves necessary to defend the republic from international predators.

During the last three years, not one recruitment campaign has been conducted in which women have not taken an active part. Women workers and peasants helped to combat army desertion and to collect the necessary army equipment; they visited infirmaries and concerned themselves about the fate of sick and wounded Red Army soldiers. The appeal from the Red front found a warm response in the hearts of women workers and peasants. The industrial centres in particular sent a large number of women to the front. Her class sense tells the woman worker that the total emancipation of women is indissolubly linked

with each first victory of the Red front.

In May of this year, the first women workers will complete their course in military communications. Over the last few months courses for women telephonists and telegraph operators have become available in various parts of the country; the latest graduates completed courses in Samara and Simbirsk in the summer of 1920, and provided efficient cadres for the Southern and South-Western fronts.

The heroism of the women workers and peasants, their direct involvement in battle and their fearlessness under fire is referred to in dispatches from General Headquarters. The number of Red Army women who have been killed, wounded or taken prisoner is 1,854. Many women have been awarded the Order of the Red Banner: medical orderlies, telephonists, Red Army women soldiers in machine gun detachments, medical orderlies, doctors, etc.

Women workers have also played an important role in organizing the public catering service. They are involved in the organization of public canteens, in food quality control, in the management of canteens and the organization of a special children's food service. Women delegates organize a duty roster for mothers at children's canteens. In some places (for example Kiev, the Moscow province, etc.), women workers took the first steps to organize factory canteens. In the provincial capitals of Russia almost the entire population is now using the public catering service. About five million people now use canteens, which shows first and foremost that, in what concerns the emancipation of women from the slavery of housework, working Russia has managed during the four

years following the revolution to achieve that which no bourgeois country would have dared attempt. Up to 75 thousand women are now employed in the public catering service.

Women workers are particularly active in social education. This area of Soviet policy is the one that even backward women workers can most easily understand and sympathize with. Numerous children's institutions: children's homes, crèches and nurseries — are run by women workers. Women delegates are helping Soviet organs of government to organize new institutions and improve those that already exist. Under the pressure of women communists working in social education, the former charitable "refuges" for orphans — those breeding grounds producing servile and will-less servants of the bourgeoisie — are disappearing, to be replaced by new forms of social education for children in the healthy environment of children's homes, kindergartens and playgrounds where women workers can leave their children with an easy heart. It is true that material obstacles such as the shortage of equipment, textbooks, clothing and a normal supply of food are severely impeding the exemplary organization of "social education." However, the policy laid down by the Soviet government in this sphere is receiving the energetic support of many communist women and the very idea of social education is gradually penetrating the consciousness of broad masses of women workers. A number of women communists — Comrades Nikolayeva (a former woman worker), Lilina, Yelizarova, Dyushen — have made their valuable contribution to this cause and assisted the progress of this difficult and responsible work,

while the names of Comrades Nadezhda Krupskaya and L. Menzhinskaya are inseparably linked with the creation of one, unified school of labour and the organization of widespread out-of-school education.

Not only in the capital cities of Soviet Russia, but also in many provincial towns, courses have been started for children's nurses, kindergarten teachers, women crèche organizers, etc., and women workers are being sent to attend them.

Closely linked to the activities of women workers in the sphere of social education is the work done by women delegates and women communists to ensure protection for mother and child. On the initiative of the women's departments, special Commissions of Support have been organized as part of the subdivision concerned with the protection of mother and child. These special commissions are to assist in the broad practical implementation of those decrees on the protection of motherhood which, for a number of technical reasons, and particularly as a result of the dislocation of the national economy, are in effect only benefiting an extremely small number of working women.

The Commissions of Support, under the leadership of the women's departments, are conducting a campaign to spread the idea of protecting mother and child, and are familiarizing women workers at their place of work with the basic laws on the protection of expectant and nursing mothers at work, and are checking on the implementation of all legislation in this area.

Women workers in the Ukraine are particularly active in the sphere of the protection of motherhood,

and each enterprise has a group concerned with this issue. Women workers are the directors of numerous institutions, crèches, mother and child homes, and themselves run the local departments.

Comrade Moirova, who is in charge of the Ukrainian Department of Women Workers under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, is a tireless worker who shows great initiative. In just one year she has succeeded in raising the work of the women's departments in the sphere of protection of mother and child to the necessary level, having begun this work in the Ukraine under the guidance of one of the leading figures in work among the female proletariat in Russia, Comrade Konkordia Samoiloova.

There is still one major and difficult task to be carried through in the sphere of protection of mother and child. At present, the measures taken to protect and provide for motherhood benefit only women working in factories and plants, and even here they do not cover everyone. In the countryside, even summer crèches are few in number. However, this task has already been set, and will be dealt with as soon as it is materially possible to do so...

The protection of motherhood is impossible without the proper organization of labour protection at factories. Despite the fact that the principle of equal pay for equal work was established in Soviet Russia from the very first moment of the revolution, most women workers in fact continue to do lower-paid work. The fact that women often lack qualifications means that women belong to the lower-paid category of workers. Moreover, very little has been done to im-

prove sanitation and hygiene at factories. Harmful, unhealthy conditions of work seriously affect women workers, particularly if one takes into account the fact that decrees are implemented only under pressure from the Commissions of Labour Protection. Women workers are being brought into these commissions and made responsible for checking that the decrees on labour protection are implemented, for encouraging an improvement in conditions of work (provision of washrooms, cloakrooms, canteens, etc.), and in particular for concerning themselves with the help of the Commissions of Support with the protection of motherhood and the fate of nursing and pregnant women workers.

Over these four years, women workers have also played a major role in eliminating illiteracy. The Communist Party departments of women workers have succeeded in drawing large numbers of working women into this work. In some provinces every enterprise has a woman delegate specifically selected to assist in eliminating adult illiteracy. Women worker delegates give technical assistance to schools, teach or help to organize literacy schools.

In Yekaterinburg, the women workers themselves organized a census of the illiterate. Over recent years, the question of eliminating illiteracy was raised at many conferences of women workers.

Women workers are participating in the administration of Soviet law, both as judges and as members of the jury. In particular it is now becoming customary for women of the Soviet East to take part in people's courts. Here, women are achieving emancipation from their everyday yoke and religious tradition only

thanks to the support of Soviet legislation. In Bashkiria, among the Kirghiz and Tatar women, and in Turkestan, the court is one of the first stages of Soviet work among Muslim women who are only just awakening and becoming conscious of their rights.¹

In order to make more effective use of women workers in the cause of Soviet construction, the women's departments are everywhere seconding women workers to courses. At first, women workers attended mainly courses on the protection of motherhood, organized by Comrade Lebedeva, who was in charge of all the work done for the protection of mother and child in Soviet Russia and who managed to raise this work to the necessary level. Subsequently the women started to attend courses for medical orderlies and Red nurses, and courses on pre-school upbringing.

However, women workers are now being seconded to all courses on Soviet construction and party work. Women delegates from the women's departments have been allotted 10 per cent of all the places available on party courses. In 1920 ten provinces sent 3,484 women workers and peasants to such courses through the women's departments.

On the initiative of the Central Women's Depart-

¹ Work among the women of the Eastern nationalities is still only beginning in Soviet Russia, and Comrade Ye. D. Stassova is one of those who initiated this work. At present women's departments are operating in all the eastern regions of the republic of working people, and in all the provinces that have an Eastern population.

The First All-Russia Conference of Women Communists from the Soviet East was held on 1 April, 1921.

ment, a special section has been set up at the Sverdlov University (the central party school) which introduce the students to the basic methods and forms of work among the female proletariat. In order to ensure that women workers, peasants and housewives are brought up in the spirit of communism, the women's departments have obtained for themselves a certain number of places in schools and on courses and, in addition to oral propaganda of the ideas of communism, are also conducting systematic written propaganda by means of special publications. In Soviet Russia at present local party newspapers publish 74 special *Working Women's Supplements* every week. The Central Department publishes a weekly *Bulletin* which contains all the instructions and resolutions of the department, the study programmes for use both with women delegates and in party schools, the theses that are to serve for propaganda work, and other guidelines and instructions. The department also publishes a monthly political magazine, *Kommunistka* (Communist Woman), and a special pamphlet which provides material for reproduction in the various local editions of the *Working Women's Supplement*.

The Central Department also has a literature board which plans the publication of brochures, pamphlets and appeals. Over the last year the Central Department has issued over 20 brochures, books on the protection of female labour, a report on the First Conference of Women Communists, a number of appeals and leaflets related to political and state campaigns.

The education of the masses in the party spirit completes and resumes the Soviet experience gained by broad masses of women workers — with the active

and direct co-operation of housewives and peasant women — in Soviet construction. At present, the practical communist education of the masses both by the party and by the women's departments is being directed towards the spheres of economic construction and the revival of production.

As one of the urgent tasks now facing the Soviet Republic is the revival of production and the organization of the national economy on communist principles, the active involvement of women in this work is now a matter of particular importance.

The transition in Soviet Russia to universal labour conscription represented a historic turning point in the position of women. The new system of organizing labour based: 1) on a rigorous assessment and rational distribution of all the existing labour reserves of the republic, including women; 2) on the transition from family consumption and individual economic units to collective production and consumption; and 3) on a unified and regulated economic plan — has radically altered the basis upon which rested the former enslavement and dependence of women. The summons of all to the labour front without distinction of sex is changing the entire traditional picture of life and relations between the sexes. The former dependence of women on the capitalist boss and husband cum breadwinner has disappeared. There is now one master, whom the working man and the working woman must both equally obey in the interests of the whole working class — the Soviet Republic of Working People.

The role played by women workers and peasants in the organization of the national economy on communist principles is becoming more and more im-

portant. As the working men have been drawn to the Red front, working women in Russia have become firmly established on the labour front, the economic front. According to the figures of the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions, which are far from complete, of the 5.5 million workers in trade unions, the majority in a number of major branches of industry are women...

At the same time, there is no trade union that does not number women among its members, and no branch of work in which women are not involved. However, despite the fact that female labour is widely used in Soviet Russia, and that women workers outnumber men workers in many branches of production, the number of women workers in the various organs of production management, from factory committees and commissions to the central organs of economic management, is still very small. The plenum of the Petrograd Soviet, for example, consists of 135 working men, but only 25 working women. Of the 194 members of management organs supervising the textile workers' trade union in 38 provinces, only 10 are women. An exception to this rule is Kostroma, where women constitute a majority in the trade union management. In factory management, particularly with the transition to one-man management, women are a rarity, with the exception of the clothing industry and certain textile combines where women workers are members of the management organs. Women are in the minority at trade union congresses and there are even fewer women at national economic congresses, and in central organs of management.

What is the cause of this phenomenon, and what

does it tell us? One of the reasons for this lack of activity on the part of women workers in the organization of production is the fact that the women's departments of the party have only recently set themselves the task of shifting the emphasis of their work from involving women in the construction of Soviet institutions to involving them in the rehabilitation of the national economy. This appeal was launched only this winter, and was clearly formulated for the first time at the Third All-Russia Conference of Provincial Women's Departments in December 1920. It was then confirmed at the Eighth Congress of Soviets with the adoption of the resolution on involving women workers in all organs of management and in the organization of the national economy. There can be no doubt that, with the increasing activity of the women's departments within the trade unions, and with the use of production propaganda not only to raise labour productivity, but also to involve women equally with men in the organization of new forms of production, the number of women workers becoming active builders of the national economy will increase as rapidly and consistently as it is doing in the other spheres of activity connected with the reconstruction of life on new principles.

With the assistance of organizers specifically chosen to work among women in trade unions, with the help of production conferences and the skilful involvement of women workers in trade union efforts to improve working conditions at the factories for both men and women workers, we may confidently hope that the two-million-strong army of women workers can be moulded into steadfast and conscious builders

of communist forms of production.

Without the participation of women workers and peasants, victory on the labour front is impossible. On the other hand, however, the complete and actual emancipation of the 70 million women of the working republic is equally impossible without the introduction and implementation of the principles of the communist economic system and the transformation of life according to new principles. The great change brought about by the Russian proletarian revolution in the hearts and minds of the workers of both sexes makes it easier to draw the broad mass of women workers and peasants into every sphere of public and economic life. That mustering of forces made necessary by the protracted civil war has steeled the will of the workers of both sexes, and has taught them to follow Marx's behest — that their liberation can only be achieved by their own efforts. 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.

After the peasant woman comes the "last slave", the woman of the East, awakening from age-old slavery. The women's departments are vigorously pursuing their work in every area with the population of the peoples of the East and in all the eastern republics of Soviet Russia, in order to rally the forces of Muslim and mountain women around the banner of com-

munism and Soviet power.

A start has also been made in the work among women engaged in non-physical labour: teachers, office workers, medical personnel, telephonists and telegraph operators.

On looking back over what has been done during these revolutionary years to organize women around the banner of communism, one cannot but note with deep satisfaction the enormous successes achieved in this difficult and painstaking work. There is now no sphere of Soviet life into which women of the working class have not been drawn. Yesterday's woman worker or peasant is today in charge of army political sections, is transport commissar, organizes public catering, heads the Department for the Protection of Motherhood, is in charge of social education, organizes reading rooms, supervises canteens, joins the food detachments and is actively engaged in all political campaigns and all the initiatives undertaken by the republic to combat the collapse of the economy, starvation and epidemics. The woman worker is the soul of the subbotniks, and wherever her duties and obligations call her, she is a full and equal citizen.

During the four years of the revolution, the movement of women workers has changed from being spontaneous, unorganized, amateurish and disunited to become a large-scale, systematic and organized phenomenon. It is increasingly clear and indisputable that, without close co-operation on the part of the women, the proletariat will not be able to fulfil its great class task. The party as a whole must now consider how to make wide-ranging and skilful use of this female force. The departments of women workers

now face the task of enriching the construction of the new society by bringing to the fore those urgent and immediate issues which primarily affect women, and whose solution will deliver the final blow to their recent enslavement by the family and the outdated morals of the bourgeois world.

The proletarian revolution has achieved its objective. All arguments about the inequality of women have been swept into the past. The October Revolution has created a solid basis for the comprehensive emancipation of women...

Make way for Winged Eros: A Letter to Working Youth

1923

Love as a socio-psychological factor

You ask me, my young friend, what place proletarian ideology gives to love? You are concerned by the fact that at the present time young workers are occupied more with love and related questions than with the tremendous tasks of construction which face the workers' republic. It is difficult for me to judge events from a distance, but let us try to find an explanation for this situation, and then it will be easier to answer the first question about the place of love in proletarian ideology.

There can be no doubt that Soviet Russia has entered a new phase of the civil war. The main theatre of struggle is now the front where the two ideologies, the two cultures — the bourgeois and the proletarian — do battle. The incompatibility of these two ideologies is becoming increasingly obvious, and the contradictions between these two fundamentally different cultures are growing more acute. Alongside the victory of communist principles and ideals in the sphere of politics and economics, a revolution in the outlook, emotions and the inner world of working people is inevitably taking place. A new attitude to life, society, work, art and to the rules of living (i.e. morality) can already be observed. The arrangement of sexual relationships is one aspect of these rules of living. Over the five years of the existence of our labour republic, the revolution on this non-military front has been accom-

plishing a great shift in the way men and women think. The fiercer the battle between the two ideologies, the greater the significance it assumes and the more inevitably it raises new "riddles of life" and new problems to which only the ideology of the working class can give a satisfactory answer.

The "riddle of love" that interests us here is one such problem. This question of the relationships between the sexes is a mystery as old as human society itself. At different levels of historical development mankind has approached the solution of this problem in different ways. The problem remains the same; the keys to its solution change. The keys are fashioned by the different epochs, by the classes in power and by the "spirit" of a particular age (in other words by its culture).

In Russia over the recent years of intense civil war and general dislocation there has been little interest in the nature of the riddle. The men and women of the working classes were in the grip of other emotions, passions and experiences. In those years everyone walked in the shadow of death, and it was being decided whether victory would belong to the revolution and progress or to counter-revolution and reaction. In face of the revolutionary threat, tender-winged Eros fled from the surface of life. There was neither time nor a surplus of inner strength for love's "joys and pains." Such is the law of the preservation of humanity's social and psychological energy. As a whole, this energy is always directed to the most urgent aims of the historical moment. And in Russia, for a time, the biological instinct of reproduction, the natural voice of nature dominated the situation. Men and women

came together and men and women parted much more easily and much more simply than before. They came together without great commitment and parted without tears or regret.

Prostitution disappeared, and the number of sexual relationships where the partners were under no obligation to each other and which were based on the instinct of reproduction unadorned by any emotions of love increased. This fact frightened some. But such a development was, in those years, inevitable. Either pre-existing relationships continued to exist and unite men and women through comradeship and long-standing friendship, which was rendered more precious by the seriousness of the moment, or new relationships were begun for the satisfaction of purely biological needs, both partners treating the affair as incidental and avoiding any commitment that might hinder their work for the revolution.

The unadorned sexual drive is easily aroused but is soon spent; thus “wingless Eros” consumes less inner strength than “winged Eros,” whose love is woven of delicate strands of every kind of emotion. “Wingless Eros” does not make one suffer from sleepless nights, does not sap one’s will, and does not entangle the rational workings of the mind. The fighting class could not have fallen under the power of “winged Eros” at a time when the clarion call of revolution was sounding. It would not have been expedient at such a time to waste the inner strength of the members of the collective on experiences that did not directly serve the revolution. Individual sex love, which lies at the heart of the pair marriage, demands a great expenditure of inner energy. The working class was interested not

only in economizing in terms of material wealth but also in preserving the intellectual and emotional energy of each person. For this reason, at a time of heightened revolutionary struggle, the undemanding instinct of reproduction spontaneously replaced the all-embracing “winged Eros.”

But now the picture changes. The Soviet republic and the whole of toiling humanity are entering a period of temporary and comparative calm. The complex task of understanding and assimilating the achievements and gains that have been made is beginning. The proletariat, the creator of new forms of life, must be able to learn from all social and psychological phenomena, grasp the significance of these phenomena and fashion weapons from them for the self-defence of the class. Only when the proletariat has appropriated the laws not only of the creation of material wealth but also of inner, psychological life is it able to advance fully armed to fight the decaying bourgeois world. Only then will toiling humanity prove itself to be the victor, not only on the military and labour front but also on the psychological-cultural front.

Now that the revolution has proved victorious and is in a stronger position, and now that the atmosphere of revolutionary élan has ceased to absorb men and women completely, tender-winged Eros has emerged from the shadows and begun to demand his rightful place. “Wingless Eros” has ceased to satisfy psychological needs. Emotional energy has accumulated and men and women, even of the working class, have not yet learned to use it for the inner life of the collective. This extra energy seeks an outlet in the love-experi-

ence. The many-stringed lyre of the god of love drowns the monotonous voice of "wingless Eros." Men and women are now not only united by the momentary satisfaction of the sex instinct but are beginning to experience "love affairs" again, and to know all the sufferings and all the exaltations of love's happiness.

In the life of the Soviet republic an undoubted growth of intellectual and emotional needs, a desire for knowledge, an interest in scientific questions and in art and the theatre can be observed. This movement towards transformation inevitably embraces the sphere of love experiences too. Interest is aroused in the question of the psychology of sex, the mystery of love. Everyone to some extent is having to face up to questions of personal life. One notes with surprise that party workers who in previous years had time only for Pravda editorials and minutes and reports are reading fiction books in which winged Eros is lauded.

What does this mean? Is this a reactionary step? A symptom of the beginning of the decline of revolutionary creativity? Nothing of the sort. It is time we separated ourselves from the hypocrisy of bourgeois thought. It is time to recognize openly that love is not only a powerful natural factor, a biological force, but also a social factor. Essentially love is a profoundly social emotion. At all stages of human development love has (in different forms, it is true) been an integral part of culture. Even the bourgeoisie, who saw love as a "private matter," was able to channel the expression of love in its class interests. The ideology of the working class must pay even greater attention to the significance of love as a factor which can, like any other

psychological or social phenomenon, be channelled to the advantage of the collective. Love is not in the least a “private” matter concerning only the two loving persons: love possesses a uniting element which is valuable to the collective. This is clear from the fact that at all stages of historical development society has established norms defining when and under what conditions love is “legal” (i.e. corresponds to the interests of the given social collective), and when and under what conditions love is sinful and criminal (i.e. contradicts the tasks of the given society).

Historical notes

From the very early stages of its social being, humanity has sought to regulate not only sexual relations but love itself.

In the kinship community, love for one’s blood relations was considered the highest virtue. The kinship group would not have approved of a woman sacrificing herself for the sake of a beloved husband; fraternal or sisterly attachment were the most highly regarded feelings. Antigone, who according to the Greek legend risked her life to bury the body of her dead brother, was a heroine in the eyes of her contemporaries. Modern bourgeois society would consider such an action on the part of a sister as highly curious. In the times of tribal rule, when the state was still in its embryonic stage, the love held in greatest respect was the love between two members of the same tribe. In an era when the social collective had only just evolved from the stage of kinship community and was still not firmly established in its new form, it was vitally important that its members were linked by mental and emotional

ties. Love-friendship was the most suitable type of tie, since at that time the interests of the collective required the growth and accumulation of contacts not between the marriage pair but between fellow-members of the tribe, between the organizers and defenders of the tribe and state (that is to say, between the men of the tribe, of course; women at that time had no role to play in social life and there was no talk of friendship among women). "Friendship" was praised and considered far more important than love between man and wife. Castor and Pollux were famous for their loyalty to each other and their unshakeable friendship, rather than for the feats they performed for their country. For the sake of friendship or its semblance a man might offer his wife to an acquaintance or a guest.

The ancient world considered friendship and "loyalty until the grave" to be civic virtues. Love in the modern sense of the word had no place, and hardly attracted the attention either of poets or of writers. The dominant ideology of that time relegated love to the sphere of narrow, personal experiences with which society was not concerned; marriage was based on convenience, not on love. Love was just one among other amusements; it was a luxury which only the citizen who had fulfilled all his obligations to the state could afford. While bourgeois ideology values the "ability to love" provided it confines itself to the limits set down by bourgeois morality, the ancient world did not consider such emotions in its categories of virtues and positive human qualities. The person who accomplished great deeds and risked his life for his friend was considered a hero and his action "most virtuous,"

while a man risking himself for the sake of a woman he loved would have been reproached or even despised.

The morality of the ancient world, then, did not even recognize the love that inspired men to great deeds — the love so highly regarded in the feudal period — as worthy of consideration. The ancient world recognized only those emotions which drew its fellow-members close together and rendered the emerging social organism more stable. In subsequent stages of cultural development, however, friendship ceases to be considered a moral virtue. Bourgeois society was built on the principles of individualism and competition, and has no place for friendship as a moral factor. Friendship does not help in any way, and may hinder the achievement of class aims; it is viewed as an unnecessary manifestation of “sentimentality” and weakness. Friendship becomes an object of derision. Castor and Pollux in the New York or London of to-day would only evoke a condescending smile. This was not so in feudal society, where love-friendship was seen as a quality to be taught and encouraged.

The feudal system defended the interests of the noble family. Virtues were defined with reference not so much to relations between the members of that society as to the obligations of the individual to his or her family and its traditions. Marriage was contracted according to the interests of the family, and any young man (the girl had no rights whatever) who chose himself a wife against these interests was severely criticized. In the feudal era the individual was not supposed to place personal feelings and inclinations above the interests of family, and he who did so

“sinned.” Morality did not demand that love and marriage go hand in hand.

Nevertheless, love between the sexes was not neglected; in fact, for the first time in the history of humanity it received a certain recognition. It may seem strange that love was first accepted in this age of strict asceticism, of crude and cruel morals, an age of violence and rule by violence; but the reasons for acceptance become clear when we take a closer look. In certain situations and in certain circumstances, love can act as a lever propelling the man to perform actions of which he would otherwise have been incapable. The knighthood demanded of each member fearlessness, bravery, endurance and great feats of individual valour on the battlefield. Victory in war was in those days decided not so much by the organization of troops as by the individual qualities of the participants. The knight in love with the inaccessible “lady of his heart” found it easier to perform miracles of bravery, easier to win tournaments, easier to sacrifice his life. The knight in love was motivated by the desire to “shine” and thus to win the attention of his beloved.

The ideology of chivalry recognized love as a psychological state that could be used to the advantage of the feudal class, but nevertheless it sought to organize emotions in a definite framework. Love between man and wife was not valued, for the family that lived in the knightly castle and in the Russian boyar’s *terem* was not held together by emotional ties. The social factor of chivalrous love operated where the knight loved a woman outside the family and was inspired to military and other heroic feats by this emotion. The more inaccessible the woman, the greater the knight’s

determination to win her favour and the greater his need to develop in himself the virtues and qualities which were valued by his social class. Usually the knight chose as his lady the woman least accessible, the wife of his suzerain, or often the queen. Only such a "platonic" love could spur the knight on to perform miracles of bravery and was considered virtuous and worthy. The knight rarely chose an unmarried woman as the object of his love, for no matter how far above him in station and apparently inaccessible the girl might be, the possibility of marriage and the consequent removal of the psychological lever could not be ruled out. Hence feudal morality combined recognition of the ideal of asceticism (sexual restraint) with recognition of love as a moral virtue. In his desire to free love from all that was carnal and sinful and to transform it into an abstract emotion completely divorced from its biological base the knight was prepared to go to great lengths, choosing as his lady a woman he had never seen or joining the ranks of the lovers of the Virgin Mary. Further he could not go.

Feudal ideology saw love as a stimulus, as a quality assisting in social cohesion: spiritual love and the knight's adoration of his lady served the interests of the noble class. The knight who would have thought nothing of sending his wife to a monastery or of slaying her for unfaithfulness would have been flattered if she had been chosen by another knight as his lady, and would have made no objections to her platonic friendships. But while placing so much emphasis on spiritual love, feudal morality in no way demanded that love should determine legal marriage relationships. Love and marriage were kept separate by feudal ideology,

and were only united by the bourgeois class that emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The exalted sophistication of feudal love existed, therefore, alongside indescribably crude norms of relations between the sexes. Sexual intercourse both within and outside marriage lacked the softening and inspiring element of love and remained an undisguisedly physiological act.

The church pretended to wage war on depravity, but by encouraging "spiritual love" it encouraged crude animal relations between the sexes. The knight who would not be parted from the emblem of the lady of his heart, who composed poetry in her honour and risked his life to win her smile, would rape a girl of the urban classes without a second thought or order his steward to bring him a beautiful peasant for his pleasure. The wives of the knights, for their part, did not let slip the opportunity to enjoy the delights of the flesh with the troubadours and pages of the feudal household.

With the weakening of feudalism and the growth of new conditions of life dictated by the interests of the rising bourgeoisie, a new moral ideal of relations between the sexes developed. Rejecting platonic love, the bourgeoisie defended the violated rights of the body and injected the combination of the spiritual and physical into the very conception of love. Bourgeois morality did not separate love and marriage: marriage was the expression of the mutual attraction of the couple. In practice of course the bourgeoisie itself, in the name of convenience, continually sinned against this moral teaching, but the recognition of love as the pillar of marriage had a profound class basis.

Under the feudal system the family was held together firmly by the traditions of nobility and birth. The married couple was held in place by the power of the church, the unlimited authority of the head of the family, the strength of family tradition and the will of the suzerain; marriage was indissoluble. The bourgeois family evolved in different conditions; its basis was not the co-ownership of family wealth but the accumulation of capital. The family was the guardian of this capital; in order that accumulation might take place as rapidly as possible, it was important that a man's savings should be handled with care and skill: in other words, that the woman should not only be a good housewife but also the helper and friend of her husband. With the establishment of capitalist relations and of the bourgeois social system, the family, in order to remain stable, had to be based not only on economic considerations but also on the co-operation of all its members, who had a joint interest in the accumulation of wealth. And co-operation could serve as a more powerful factor when husband and wife and parents and children were held together by strong emotional and psychological bonds.

At the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the new economic way of life gave rise to a new ideology. The conceptions of love and marriage gradually changed. The religious reformer, Luther, and the other thinkers and public figures of the Renaissance and the Reformation, understood the social force of love perfectly. Aware that the stability of the family — the economic unit on which the bourgeois system rests — required that its members be linked by more than economic ties alone, the

revolutionary ideologists of the rising bourgeoisie propagated the new moral ideal of a love that embraced both the flesh and the soul. The reformers of the period challenged the celibacy of the clergy and made merciless fun of the “spiritual love” of chivalry that kept the knight in a continual state of aspiration but denied him the hope of satisfying his sensual needs. The ideologists of the bourgeoisie and the reformation recognized the legitimacy of the body’s needs. Thus, while the feudal world had divided love into the sexual act (relations within marriage or with concubines) on the one hand, and spiritual, platonic love (the relations between the knight and the lady of his heart) on the other, the bourgeois class included both the physical attraction between the sexes and emotional attachments in its concept of love. The feudal ideal had separated love from marriage: the bourgeoisie linked the two. The bourgeoisie made love and marriage inseparable. In practice, of course, this class has always retreated from its ideal: but while the question of mutual inclination was never raised under feudalism, bourgeois morality requires that even in marriages of convenience, the partners should practise hypocrisy and pretend affection.

Traces of feudal tradition and feudal attitudes to marriage and love have come down to us, surviving the centuries and accommodating themselves to the morality of the bourgeois class. Royal families and the higher ranks of the aristocracy still live according to these old norms. In these circles it is considered “amusing” but rather “awkward” when a marriage is concluded on the basis of love. The princes and princesses of this world still have to bow to the demands

of birth and politics, joining themselves for life to people they do not care for.

In peasant families one also finds that family and economic considerations play a big part in marriage arrangements. The peasant family differs from that of the urban industrial bourgeoisie chiefly in that it is an economic labour unit; its members are so firmly held together by economic circumstances that inner bonds are of secondary importance. For the medieval artisan, love likewise had no role in marriage, for in the context of the guild system the family was a productive unit, and this economic rationale provided stability. The ideal of love in marriage only begins to appear when, with the emergence of the bourgeoisie, the family loses its productive functions and remains a consumer unit also serving as a vehicle for the preservation of accumulated capital.

But though bourgeois morality defended the rights of two "loving hearts" to conclude a union even in defiance of tradition, and though it criticized "spiritual love" and asceticism, proclaiming love as the basis of marriage, it nevertheless defined love in a very narrow way. Love is permissible only when it is within marriage. Love outside legal marriage is considered immoral. Such ideas were often dictated, of course, by economic considerations, by the desire to prevent the distribution of capital among illegitimate children. The entire morality of the bourgeoisie was directed towards the concentration of capital. The ideal was the married couple, working together to improve their welfare and to increase the wealth of their particular family unit, divorced as it was from society. Where the interests of the family and society were in conflict,

bourgeois morality decided in the interests of the family (cf. the sympathetic attitude of bourgeois morality — though not the law — to deserters and to those who, for the sake of their families, cause the bankruptcy of their fellow shareholders). This morality, with a utilitarianism typical of the bourgeoisie, tried to use love to its advantage, making it the main ingredient of marriage, and thereby strengthening the family.

Love, of course, could not be contained within the limits set down by bourgeois ideologists. Emotional conflicts grew and multiplied, and found their expression in the new form of literature — the novel — which the bourgeois class developed. Love constantly escaped from the narrow framework of legal marriage relations set for it, into free relationships and adultery, which were condemned but which were practised. The bourgeois ideal of love does not correspond to the needs of the largest section of the population — the working class. Nor is it relevant to the lifestyle of the working intelligentsia. This is why in highly developed capitalist countries one finds such an interest in the problems of sex and love and in the search for the key to its mysteries. How, it is asked, can relations between the sexes be developed in order to increase the sum of both individual and social happiness?

The working youth of Soviet Russia is confronting this question at this very moment. This brief survey of the evolution of the ideal of love-marriage relationships will help you, my young friend, to realize and understand that love is not the private matter it might seem to be at a first glance. Love is an important psychological and social factor, which society has always

instinctively organized in its interests. Working men and women, armed with the science of Marxism and using the experience of the past, must seek to discover the place love ought to occupy in the new social order and determine the ideal of love that corresponds to their class interests.

Love-comradeship

The new, communist society is being built on the principle of comradeship and solidarity. Solidarity is not only an awareness of common interests; it depends also on the intellectual and emotional ties linking the members of the collective. For a social system to be built on solidarity and co-operation it is essential that people should be capable of love and warm emotions. The proletarian ideology, therefore, attempts to educate and encourage every member of the working class to be capable of responding to the distress and needs of other members of the class, of a sensitive understanding of others and a penetrating consciousness of the individual's relationship to the collective. All these "warm emotions" — sensitivity, compassion, sympathy and responsiveness — derive from one source: they are aspects of love, not in the narrow, sexual sense but in the broad meaning of the word. Love is an emotion that unites and is consequently of an organizing character. The bourgeoisie was well aware of this, and in the attempt to create a stable family bourgeois ideology erected "married love" as a moral virtue; to be a "good family man" was, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, an important and valuable quality. The proletariat should also take into account the psychological and social role that love, both in the broad

sense and in the sense of relationships between the sexes, can and must play, not in strengthening family-marriage ties, but in the development of collective solidarity.

What is the proletariat's ideal of love? We have already seen that each epoch has its ideal; each class strives to fill the conception of love with a moral content that suits its own interests. Each stage of cultural development, with its richer intellectual and emotional experiences, redefines the image of Eros. With the successive stages in the development of the economy and social life, ideas of love have changed; shades of emotion have assumed greater significance or, on the other hand, have ceased to exist.

In the course of the thousand-year history of human society, love has developed from the simple biological instinct — the urge to reproduce which is inherent in all creatures from the highest to the lowest — into a most complex emotion that is constantly acquiring new intellectual and emotional aspects. Love has become a psychological and social factor. Under the impact of economic and social forces, the biological instinct for reproduction has been transformed in two diametrically opposed directions. On the one hand the healthy sexual instinct has been turned by monstrous social and economic relations, particularly those of capitalism, into unhealthy carnality. The sexual act has become an aim in itself — just another way of obtaining pleasure, through lust sharpened with excesses and through distorted, harmful titillations of the flesh. A man does not have sex in response to healthy instincts which have drawn him to a particular woman; a man approaches any woman, though he

feels no sexual need for her in particular, with the aim of gaining his sexual satisfaction and pleasure through her. Prostitution is the organized expression of this distortion of the sex drive. If intercourse with a woman does not prompt the expected excitement, the man will turn to every kind of perversion.

This deviation towards unhealthy carnality takes relationships far from their source in the biological instinct. On the other hand, over the centuries and with the changes in human social life and culture, a web of emotional and intellectual experiences has come to surround the physical attraction of the sexes. Love in its present form is a complex state of mind and body; it has long been separated from its primary source, the biological instinct for reproduction, and in fact it is frequently in sharp contradiction with It. Love is intricately woven from friendship, passion, maternal tenderness, infatuation, mutual compatibility, sympathy, admiration, familiarity and many other shades of emotion. With such a range of emotions involved, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish direct connection between the natural drive of “wingless Eros” and “winged Eros,” where physical attraction and emotional warmth are fused. The existence of love-friendship where the element of physical attraction is absent, of love for one’s work or for a cause, and of love for the collective, testify to the extent to which love has become “spiritualized” and separated from its biological base.

In modern society, sharp contradictions frequently arise and battles are waged between the various manifestations of emotion. A deep intellectual and emotional involvement in one’s work may not be

compatible with love for a particular man or woman, love for the collective might conflict with love for husband, wife or children. It may be difficult for love-friendship in one person to coexist with passion in another; in the one case love is predominantly based on intellectual compatibility, and in the other case on physical harmony. "Love" has many faces and aspects. The various shades of feeling that have developed over the ages and which are experienced by contemporary men and women cannot be covered by such a general and inexact term.

Under the rule of bourgeois ideology and the capitalist way of life, the complexity of love creates a series of complex and insoluble problems. By the end of the nineteenth century the many-sidedness of love had become a favourite theme for writers with a psychological bent. Love for two or even three has interested and perplexed many of the more thoughtful representatives of bourgeois culture. In the sixties of the last century our Russian thinker and writer Alexander Herzen tried to uncover this complexity of the inner world and the duality of emotion in his novel *Who Is Guilty?*, and Chernyshevsky tackled the same questions in his novel *What is to be Done?*, Poetic geniuses such as Goethe and Byron, and bold pioneers in the sphere of relations between the sexes such as George Sand, have tried to come to terms with these issues in their own lives; the author of *Who Is Guilty?* also knew of the problems from his own experience, as did many other great thinkers, poets and public figures. And at this present moment many "small" people are weighed down by the difficulties of love and vainly seek for solutions within the framework of bourgeois thought.

But the key to the solution is in the hands of the proletariat. Only the ideology and the lifestyle of the new, labouring humanity can unravel this complex problem of emotion.

We are talking here of the duality of love, of the complexities of “winged Eros”; this should not be confused with sexual relations “without Eros,” where one man goes with many women or one woman with a number of men. Relations where no personal feelings are involved can have unfortunate and harmful consequences (the early exhaustion of the organism, venereal diseases, etc.), but however entangled they are, they do not give rise to “emotional dramas.” These “dramas” and conflicts begin only where the various shades and manifestations of love are present. A woman feels close to a man whose ideas, hopes and aspirations match her own; she is attracted physically to another. For one woman a man might feel sympathy and a protective tenderness, and in another he might find support and understanding for the strivings of his intellect. To which of the two must he give his love? And why must he tear himself apart and cripple his inner self, if only the possession of both types of inner bond affords the fullness of living?

Under the bourgeois system such a division of the inner emotional world involves inevitable suffering. For thousands of years, human culture, which is based on the institution of property, has been teaching people that love is linked with the principles of property. Bourgeois ideology has insisted that love, mutual love, gives the right to the absolute and indivisible possession of the beloved person. Such exclusiveness was the natural consequence of the established form

of pair marriage and of the ideal of “all-embracing love” between husband and wife. But can such an ideal correspond to the interests of the working class? Surely it is important and desirable from the proletariat’s point of view that people’s emotions should develop a wider and richer range? And surely the complexity of the human psyche and the many-sidedness of emotional experience should assist in the growth of the emotional and intellectual bonds between people which make the collective stronger? The more numerous these inner threads drawing people together, the firmer the sense of solidarity and the simpler the realization of the working-class ideal of comradeship and unity.

Proletarian ideology cannot accept exclusiveness and “all-embracing love.” The proletariat is not filled with horror and moral indignation at the many forms and facets of “winged Eros” in the way that the hypocritical bourgeoisie is; on the contrary, it tries to direct these emotions, which it sees as the result of complex social circumstances, into channels which are advantageous to the class during the struggle for and the construction of communist society. The complexity of love is not in conflict with the interests of the proletariat. On the contrary, it facilitates the triumph of the ideal of love-comradeship which is already developing.

At the tribal stage, love was seen as a kinship attachment (love between sisters and brothers, love for parents). The ancient culture of the pre-Christian period placed love-friendship above all else. The feudal world idealized platonic courtly love between members of the opposite sex outside marriage. The bour-

geoisie took monogamous marital love as its ideal. The working class derives its ideal from the labour co-operation and inner solidarity that binds the men and women of the proletariat together; the form and content of this ideal naturally differs from the conception of love that existed in other cultural epochs. The advocacy of love-comradeship in no way implies that in the militant atmosphere of its struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat the working class has adopted a straitjacket ideology and is mercilessly trying to remove all traces of tender emotion from relations between the sexes. The ideology of the working class does not seek to destroy “winged Eros” but, on the contrary, to clear the way for the recognition of the value of love as a psychological and social force.

The hypocritical morality of bourgeois culture resolutely restricted the freedom of Eros, obliging him to visit only the “legally married couple.” Outside marriage there was room only for the “wingless Eros” of momentary and joyless sexual relations which were bought (in the case of prostitution) or stolen (in the case of adultery). The morality of the working class, on the other hand, in so far as it has already been formulated, definitely rejects the external forms of sexual relations. The social aims of the working class are not affected one bit by whether love takes the form of a long and official union or is expressed in a temporary relationship. The ideology of the working class does not place any formal limits on love. But at the same time the ideology of the working class is already beginning to take a thoughtful attitude to the content of love and shades of emotional experience. In this sense the proletarian ideology will persecute “wingless

Eros” in a much more strict and severe way than bourgeois morality. “Wingless Eros” contradicts the interests of the working class. In the first place it inevitably involves excesses and therefore physical exhaustion, which lower the resources of labour energy available to society. In the second place it impoverishes the soul, hindering the development and strengthening of inner bonds and positive emotions. And in the third place it usually rests on an inequality of rights in relationships between the sexes, on the dependence of the woman on the man and on male complacency and insensitivity, which undoubtedly hinder the development of comradely feelings. “Winged Eros” is quite different.

Obviously sexual attraction lies at the base of “winged Eros” too, but the difference is that the person experiencing love acquires the inner qualities necessary to the builders of a new culture — sensitivity, responsiveness and the desire to help others. Bourgeois ideology demanded that a person should only display such qualities in their relationship with one partner. The aim of proletarian ideology is that men and women should develop these qualities not only in relation to the chosen one but in relation to all the members of the collective. The proletarian class is not concerned as to which shades and nuances of feeling predominate in winged Eros. The only stipulation is that these emotions facilitate the development and strengthening of comradeship. The ideal of love-comradeship, which is being forged by proletarian ideology to replace the all-embracing and exclusive marital love of bourgeois culture, involves the recognition of the rights and integrity of the other’s personality, a steadfast mutual support and sensitive sympathy, and

responsiveness to the other's needs.

The ideal of love-comradeship is necessary to the proletariat in the important and difficult period of the struggle for and the consolidation of the dictatorship. But there is no doubt that with the realization of communist society love will acquire a transformed and unprecedented aspect. By that time the "sympathetic ties" between all the members of the new society will have grown and strengthened. Love potential will have increased, and love-solidarity will become the lever that competition and self-love were in the bourgeois system. Collectivism of spirit can then defeat individualist self-sufficiency, and the "cold of inner loneliness," from which people in bourgeois culture have attempted to escape through love and marriage, will disappear. The many threads bringing men and women into close emotional and intellectual contact will develop, and feelings will emerge from the private into the public sphere. Inequality between the sexes and the dependence of women on men will disappear without trace, leaving only a fading memory of past ages.

In the new and collective society, where interpersonal relations develop against a background of joyful unity and comradeship, Eros will occupy an honourable place as an emotional experience multiplying human happiness. What will be the nature of this transformed Eros? Not even the boldest fantasy is capable of providing the answer to this question. But one thing is clear: the stronger the intellectual and emotional bonds of the new humanity, the less the room for love in the present sense of the word. Modern love always sins, because it absorbs the thoughts and feelings of

“loving hearts” and isolates the loving pair from the collective. In the future society, such a separation will not only become superfluous but also psychologically inconceivable. In the new world the accepted norm of sexual relations will probably be based on free, healthy and natural attraction (without distortions and excesses) and on “transformed Eros.”

But at the present moment we stand between two cultures. And at this turning-point, with the attendant struggles of the two worlds on all fronts, including the ideological one, the proletariat’s interest is to do its best to ensure the quickest possible accumulation of “sympathetic feelings.” In this period the moral ideal defining relationships is not the unadorned sexual instinct but the many-faceted love experience of love-comradeship. In order to answer the demands formulated by the new proletarian morality, these experiences must conform to three basic principles: 1. Equality in relationships (an end to masculine egoism and the slavish suppression of the female personality); 2. Mutual recognition of the rights of the other, of the fact that one does not own the heart and soul of the other (the sense of property, encouraged by bourgeois culture); 3. Comradely sensitivity, the ability to listen and understand the inner workings of the loved person (bourgeois culture demanded this only from the woman). But in proclaiming the rights of “winged Eros,” the ideal of the working class at the same time subordinates this love to the more powerful emotion of love-duty to the collective. However great the love between two members of the collective, the ties binding the two persons to the collective will always take precedence, will be firmer, more complex and organic.

Bourgeois morality demanded all for the loved one. The morality of the proletariat demands all for the collective.

But I can hear you objecting, my young friend, that though it may be true that love-comradeship will become the ideal of the working class, will this new “moral measurement” of emotions not place new constraints on sexual relationships? Are we not liberating love from the fetters of bourgeois morality only to enslave it again? Yes, my young friend, you are right. The ideology of the proletariat rejects bourgeois “morality” in the sphere of love-marriage relations. Nevertheless, it inevitably develops its own class morality, its own rules of behaviour, which correspond more closely to the tasks of the working class and educate the emotions in a certain direction. In this way it could be said that feelings are again in chains. The proletariat will undoubtedly clip the wings of bourgeois culture. But it would be short-sighted to regret this process, since the new class is capable of developing new facets of emotion which possess unprecedented beauty, strength and radiance. As the cultural and economic base of humanity changes, so will love be transformed.

The blind, all-embracing, demanding passions will weaken; the sense of property, the egoistical desire to bind the partner to one “forever,” the complacency of the man and the self-renunciation of the woman will disappear. At the same time, the valuable aspects and elements of love will develop. Respect for the right of the other’s personality will increase, and a mutual sensitivity will be learned; men and women will strive to express their love not only in kisses and embraces but

in joint creativity and activity. The task of proletarian ideology is not to drive Eros from social life but to re-arm him according to the new social formation, and to educate sexual relationships in the spirit of the great new psychological force of comradely solidarity.

I hope it is now clear to you that the interest among young workers in the question of love is not a symptom of “decline.” I hope that you can now grasp the place love must occupy in the relationships between young workers.

Sisters

1923

She came, as so many others like her had come, for advice and moral support. I had met her briefly at delegate meetings. She had a fine, expressive face and eyes that were lively, though rather sad. On the day she visited me her face was paler than usual and her eyes wider with unhappiness.

“I’ve come to you because I have nowhere to go,” she said. “I’ve been without a roof over my head for over three weeks now. I’ve no money, nothing to live on. Give me some work. Otherwise the only alternative for me is the street.”

“But I thought you worked; I thought you had a job?”

“Yes. I did have work. But I left over three months ago... because of my baby... my baby fell ill. So I had to give up my work. Three times I managed to save my job, but in August I was made redundant. Two weeks after that my baby died. But I couldn’t get my job back.”

The woman sat with her head bowed, her eyes hidden behind their lids. Maybe tears were hidden, too.

“But why did you lose your job? Were they dissatisfied with your work? “

“It wasn’t my work that was questioned; they thought I didn’t need the job. My husband earns well, he’s in a company. He’s an important person, a business executive.”

“How is it then that you are without money or a place to go? Have you separated?”

“Not formally. I simply walked out on him and I haven’t been back, I’d do anything rather than go back to him...”

She could no longer hold back the tears.

“Forgive me. This is the first time I’ve had a cry. I couldn’t before, but when someone offers sympathy, it’s difficult to stay dry-eyed... I’ll tell you my story and then you will understand my position.”

The woman, it turned out, had met her husband in 1917, at the height of the revolution. They were both Bolsheviks and they both ardently longed to put an end to the exploiting class and begin building a great new world. Both of them firmly believed that their dreams would be realized. During the October days they were both at the barricades.

They came together in the heat of battle; there was no time to register their relationship. They continued to live their own separate lives, meeting only occasionally, when work permitted. But these meetings were full of light and joy; in those days they had been real comrades. The following year the woman became pregnant. The couple made their relationship official and began to live permanently together. The child did not keep her long from her work. She got a crèche organized in her area. Her work was more important to her than her family. From time to time this used to make her husband frown. She used to let the housework go, but then he was never at home either. And when she was chosen as delegate to some conference he was proud of her. Now, she had joked, you won’t make a scene when you get a cold supper, will you? “What does a meal matter?” he laughed. “It’s love that mustn’t be served up cold. You’ll see all kinds of

people at the conference. Keep your eyes open.”

They laughed together, and it seemed that nothing could destroy the feelings they had for each other. They weren't just a husband and wife, they were comrades. They faced life hand in hand; they shared the same aims. They were engrossed in their work and not in themselves. And this suited their child; she grew up a healthy little girl. But then all this changed. How had it happened? The trouble seemed to have started when her husband had been appointed to the company.

At first they had both been pleased. It had been hard enough trying to keep her body and soul together. And there had been the worry that the crèche might close. Her husband was very pleased that he could now arrange his family in the proper fashion. He suggested that she give up her job, but she hadn't wanted to lose the companionship, and the work itself was important to her. Working made one feel more independent, and she had been used to earning her own living since childhood. At first things went fine. They moved into another flat where there were two rooms and a kitchen. They employed a young girl to see to the house and look after the child. The woman devoted herself to political work in the area. Her husband was busy too. They only used the house for sleeping in. Then her husband had to go on a business trip for his group of enterprises. For three months he was off travelling for the Nepmen.¹ When he got back

¹ Under the New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1921, a degree of private enterprise, particularly in trade, was re-introduced into the economy; the “Nepmen” were the layer of businessmen who sprang from this policy.

she immediately sensed that it was a stranger who had returned. He didn't listen to her. He hardly gave a glance in her direction. He began to dress smartly and even to use scent. He was never at home for as much as five minutes. Then he started to drink. He had never been one to drink, except on special occasions. In the years of the revolution there had been so much to do and no time to think of such things. But those times were past. The first time he had come home drunk it had frightened her rather than upset her. She was concerned at the harm it might do — it would certainly do him no good. The following morning she had tried to talk things over with him. But he drank his tea and was silent; he left the room without a word, she was hurt. But she thought it was because he felt guilty. However, three days had not gone by before he came home drunk a second time. This time she was very worried. That night she had had to attend to him in his drunkenness, which was hardly pleasant, even though he was dear to her. Next day she tried to bring up the subject but before she could begin he gave her such a look of enmity that the words died on her lips.

The drinking didn't stop. Her anxiety increased. She would stay behind in the morning, wait for him to sober up and try to talk things over. She told him that they could not carry on as they were, that they were no longer comrades if all they had in common was the bed they shared. She broached the subject of his drunkenness and gave him a warning; then she felt ashamed of herself and started crying. He said nothing until she had finished. Then he spoke, and at first he tried to justify himself. She didn't understand what it was like organizing a company with the Nepmen, and

they were used to that kind of life. If you didn't play their game, you couldn't get anywhere. But he was thoughtful for a moment and said that it wasn't the kind of life he would have chosen. He pleaded with her not to get upset and admitted she had been right. He came and said goodbye, took her hand in his, looked into her eyes and kissed her like old times. She felt much happier. That day she went about her work with a will. Before the week was out, however, he came in drunk again. When she mentioned it afterwards, he banged his fist on the table. It's nothing to do with you, he shouted, that's how everyone lives. And if you don't like it, nobody's forcing you to stay.

He went out, and she spent the day wandering around feeling dejected. Had he really stopped loving her? Did this mean she would have to leave? But her husband came home unexpectedly early that evening. He was sober and apologetic. They talked all evening. She came to see the situation in a different light. She understood how difficult it was to hold one's own in a company like that. They had so much money and one had to play along with them. He told her about the Nepmen, about their wives and girlfriends. He talked about things in general and about how difficult it was for the proletariat to keep an eye on these sharks. Their conversation depressed her; she had not felt such uncertainty since before the revolution.

It was about this time that she found that staff reductions at her workplace would affect her. This was really a blow. She talked about it with her husband, but he treated the matter with indifference and even went so far as to say that it would be a better arrangement, since she would be at home more and the house-

hold would be kept in better order.

“Our flat always looks like nothing on earth. You can’t entertain a respectable person here.”

She was surprised at this attitude and started arguing. “It’s up to you. I won’t stand in your way if you want to go on working.” He said this and left the room.

It hurt her that her husband didn’t understand. He seemed offended that she wanted to work. She decided, nevertheless, to fight to keep her job. She went to see her colleagues over the matter and argued that she was necessary to them. She succeeded in saving her job, but troubles never come singly. She hadn’t got over this worry when her baby daughter fell ill.

“I was sitting one night with the sick child,” the woman went on, “and I was feeling so lonely. The bell rang. I went to open the door for my husband, pleased that he had come. I hoped that he would be sober and I would be able to share my anxieties with him. I opened the door. At first I could not grasp why he was with someone. A young woman was with him. She had had something to drink and her face was flushed. ‘Let me in, woman,’ my husband said, ‘I’ve brought along a girlfriend. Don’t nag, I’m no worse than other people. We’re going to enjoy ourselves. And don’t you interfere.’

“I could see that he was so drunk he could hardly stand up straight. I let him into the dining-room and hurried to where the child was. I locked the door and sat there trembling and in a daze. I didn’t even feel anger. After all, what kind of behaviour can one expect from a drunken man? But I felt hurt. I could hear everything that was going on in the next room. I would

have liked to have sat with my hands over my ears, but I had the child to look after. Luckily they were both very drunk and were soon quiet. Before it was light my husband went out with the woman to see her home; he got back and went to sleep again. I didn't fall asleep till morning. I lay there thinking things over.

“The next evening my husband got home earlier than usual. We hadn't seen each other all day. I hardly said hello, and he started sorting out his papers. We were both silent. I could see he was watching me. First he'll be aggressive, I thought, then he'll ask for forgiveness, and then he'll go his own way again. I can't stand it anymore, I thought. I'll go away. My heart was heavy; I had loved him and I loved him even then, and there was no use hiding from it. Now it's different: something has finished, and the emotions have died. But at that time I still loved him. My husband saw me reach for my coat and at this he went into a rage. He seized my arm so violently that I've still got the bruise. He snatched the coat from me and flung it to the floor.

“‘There's no point in throwing a fit of feminine hysterics. Where do you think you're going? What do you want me to do? Just you try finding another husband as good as me. I feed you and clothe you and give you everything you want. Don't you dare stand in judgement over me. If a man wants to get anywhere he has to live as I do.’

“He talked and talked without stopping. I couldn't get a word in edgeways. He seemed to want to bring into the open everything that was on his mind. He reproached me and himself as well. Then he suddenly began justifying his actions and proving his point as if he were arguing with someone. I could see he was suf-

fering. He looked almost ill. I began to feel so sorry for him that I forgot how insulting he had been and actually began to comfort him, saying things were not that bad and it was the Nepmen who were to blame, not he.

“By evening we had made it up. Mind you, I felt bitter that he should think I had nothing to get worked up and offended about. He said I should not expect anything different from a drunkard. I started asking him to stop drinking. I told him that I hadn’t been so upset by the fact that he had brought a prostitute home as by the fact that he had grown coarse and unfeeling.

“He promised to exercise some self-control and to avoid bad company. But although we had made peace I could not forget what had happened. And what can you expect from a drunkard? Perhaps he genuinely remembered nothing. But from that day on something had changed in my heart. I would sit and think that if he loved me like he had done before, during the days of the revolution, he would never have gone after another woman. I recalled how a friend of mine had tried to attract him. She was a better and prettier woman than I, but he hadn’t even wanted to look at her. Why though, if he no longer loved me, did he not say it outright? I tried to talk to him about this. He got angry and started shouting and complaining that I pestered him with my ‘woman’s foolishness’ when he had more important matters on his mind. All women, myself included, he said, were not worthy even to be spat upon. And with that he walked out.

“And things got even more difficult. The question of my job was raised again. My little girl had been ill

all this time, and I was frequently absent from work. Once more I begged and persuaded. And once more they allowed me to stay. I was even more reluctant than before to become dependent upon my husband. It got more and more difficult living with him. We seemed to be strangers. It is possible to live in the same flat with another person and know nothing about them. He hardly ever even so much as glanced at the little girl. I had dropped my political work in the district so that I could look after our daughter. My husband wasn't drinking so much and would come home sober, but it was as if I didn't exist. We didn't sleep together. I slept in one room with the child, and he slept on the divan in the dining-room. Sometimes he would come to me at night, but that gave me no joy. It only made things more complicated. It was just a further insult to add to the others. He would kiss me but my thoughts and feelings didn't interest him. So we lived our separate lives and didn't even speak to each other. He had his own cares and I had mine. But our cares were of the petty kind — until the little girl died. To make matters worse, I had just finally lost my job. I thought that my husband would turn to me now that we had grief to share. But nothing changed. He did not even come to our daughter's funeral because of an urgent meeting.

“So I was left at home alone without a job and with nothing to do. I found some political work; there's plenty to be had in our area. But it was more difficult finding another job. And somehow I felt uncomfortable asking when there are so many unemployed, and everyone knows my husband is an executive and an industrial executive at that. Anyway, it's

impossible to find work at the moment, however hard one tries. I did my best to cope with the situation. It was hard being so dependent on my husband, especially as we had become so estranged. But what else could I do? I was waiting and hoping something would change. Women have foolish hearts. I could see that my husband no longer really loved me and I felt sad and resentful about what had happened. But I hoped that the bad times would pass and love would return and things would be fine again as they had been before. I used to wake up in the morning with these hopes and return home from my work in the district thinking that he might be at home and alone. But even when he was there, for all the notice he took of me he might as well have been out. He would be busy with his work, or his Nepmen friends would drop round.

And I sat there waiting for things to change, for something to happen. This went on until something finally did happen, which made me leave him. I've left him for good. I won't go back.

"I arrived home one evening after a meeting. It was after midnight; I wanted some tea, so I started to heat up the samovar. My husband was not yet home, but I didn't feel obliged to wait up for him. Then I heard the door open in the hall which meant my husband had returned; he had his own key so as not to have to wake me. While I was busy with the samovar I remembered that someone had brought him an urgent parcel and that it was lying in my room. So I got the parcel and went to give it to him. And just like the time before, I didn't understand anything at first. A tall, slender woman was standing by my husband. The two of them turned towards me. My eyes met my hus-

band's. I saw straight away that he was sober. That made it worse somehow. I was so upset I wanted to cry out. The woman looked embarrassed.

"I don't know how, but somehow I managed to put the parcel on the table and explain calmly that it was urgent. Then I went away. As soon as I was alone I began to shake all over as if I had a fever. I was afraid I would hear them in the other room so I lay down on my bed and covered my head with the blanket. I didn't want to hear anything or know anything or feel anything. But my thoughts jumped around and tormented me.

"I could hear them whispering. They weren't sleeping. The woman's voice was the louder and it sounded reproachful. Perhaps she was his girlfriend and he had deceived her and told her he was single? Or perhaps he was at this very moment promising to give me up? I imagined every conceivable possibility and suffered as if every possibility actually were a reality. The time he was drunk and brought back the prostitute I had not felt so bitter. Now I had to realize that he did not love me. Not even as a comrade or as a sister. If he had felt for me as a friend, he would have been more considerate and not have brought his women to our home. And what women! Women off the street. The woman he had there now was most likely of that category, otherwise she wouldn't have stayed the night like that. I felt such a hatred toward that woman. I was prepared to rush into the other room and throw her out of the house. I thought these kinds of thoughts till dawn. I didn't sleep at all. Everything was quiet, and then suddenly I heard steps along the corridor. The steps were careful, as if the

person did not want to be noticed. I knew that it was the girl. The kitchen door was opened and then all was quiet again. She didn't come back. I got out of bed and went into the kitchen. She was sitting on a little stool by the window, hunched up and crying her heart out. Her fair hair was long and beautiful; it hid her face. Then she looked up, and there was so much distress in her eyes that I was frightened. I went up to her and she rose to meet me. 'Forgive me,' she said, 'for coming to your house. I didn't know that he wasn't living alone. I'm very upset about everything...'

"This surprised me. I began to think that she must be his girlfriend, not a prostitute. I managed to ask her if she loved him. She looked at me with such surprise. 'We met for the first time yesterday,' she said. 'He promised to pay me well, and it's all the same to me so long as they pay well.'

"I'm not sure how it happened but she started to tell me her story: how she had lost her job three months ago, how she had sold everything, gone hungry, been without a roof over her head; how she had been in despair because she could no longer send money to her old mother, who wrote that she too was dying of hunger. Then two weeks before she had gone on the street. She had been lucky straight away, had acquired 'good friends' and was now well-fed and clothed and able to send her mother money.

"'And I'm educated,' the girl had said. 'I've got a certificate. And I'm still very young. I'm nineteen. To think I've fallen so low.'

"You won't believe it," the woman went on, "but as I listened to her my sympathies shifted completely. I began to feel sorry for the girl. I suddenly realized

that if I had no husband I would be in exactly the same position as this young woman. That night as I lay in bed and suffered, I had hated the woman; and now, suddenly, all my hate was turned against my husband. How dare he take advantage of a woman's misfortune. And he is supposed to be a politically conscious and responsible worker. Instead of helping a comrade who is out of work, instead of coming to her aid, he buys her. He buys her body for his own pleasure. Such behaviour seemed to me so repulsive that there and then I decided I could not stay and live with a man who acted like that.

“We talked for a long time. We lit the stove and made coffee. My husband was asleep all this while, but suddenly she was in a hurry to be gone. I asked her if she had been paid.

“She blushed and assured me that after our conversation she could not possibly accept any money. She would not dream of taking anything. I saw that she wanted to be gone before my husband woke up. It may seem strange to you, but although I didn't try to persuade her to stay, I didn't want her to go. She was so young and unhappy and alone. I got dressed and went to see her on her way. We walked along for some time and then sat talking in a square. I told her about my own problems. I wanted her, though, to accept my last wage-packet. She tried to refuse, but eventually she took the money. First, she made me promise that I would turn to her if ever I were in financial need. We parted like sisters.

“All feeling for my husband had died. I felt neither resentment nor pain. It was if I had never loved him. When I got home he tried to explain himself but I

didn't need explanations. I didn't cry or reproach him. And the next day I moved to friends and started looking for a job. That was three weeks ago and I've found nothing, and there is no reason to hope that my luck will change. A few days ago, when I saw that it was inconvenient to go on staying with my friend, I went to see the girl as I had promised, but it turned out that she had been taken into hospital the day before. So now I'm wandering around without money or work or a place to go. And I ask myself whether my fate will be the same?"

The woman talked. Her eyes seemed to question life. You could catch in her look all the despair, all the horror of being a woman alone and faced with unemployment.

Here was a woman trying to be independent and trying to fight the old way of life. She went, but her look of despair haunted me. It demanded an answer... it demanded action... it demanded struggle.

Marriage and Everyday Life

1926

Comrades and Citizens,

The great interest which the draft of the new marriage code has aroused, the fierce debates which have unfolded at VTsIk¹ sessions devoted to discussing it, and the extraordinarily serious and careful approach our republic is taking to the solution of this question, are not accidental. "Being determines consciousness," according to the old Marxist maxim, and an understanding of this fact has, to a considerable degree if not entirely, determined the tone, the content and the legislative essence of the new code which is currently under general and heated discussion. In 1918 or 1919 a draft marriage code would not have provoked such controversy and disagreement. At that time there would have been no grounds for such an intense debate. Only with the course of time (as a period of large-scale economic construction rapidly develops, the cultural level of the population rises and economic relations within the country are stabilized) is the problem of marriage and the legal relationships connected with it posed in all its importance and magnitude...

In fact, alongside the stabilization of economic relations a parallel process of the stabilization of property relations can be observed, the importance and complexities of which the law-makers, when confronting these questions and drawing up the marriage code,

¹ All-Russian All-Union Central Executive Committee.

could not but keep in view. The present debate is, in the main, over the concrete issue of whether to approve or oppose the marriage code, the fundamental question of the new way of life and the old psychology, and of whether the code corresponds to the conditions and specificities of the new way of life that lies at the basis of all disagreements.

Certain clearly-defined groupings have emerged during the discussion: these can be divided into three main groups.

The first is the conservatives, who hanker after the strong and legally entrenched family. The second is the liberals who dream in the long term of establishing stable marriage, but who are prepared to make some concessions to the new lifestyles. Finally, there is the left tendency which demands that the new law recognizes the social changes that have already taken place and openly adopts them in the future. There is no doubt that the class contradictions in our society, which we have obviously yet to outgrow, are at the root of these groupings.

On the one hand the petty-bourgeois way of life and its ideology is swamping us and on the other the new lifestyles, the new views and the ideology of the working class are making themselves felt. Petty-bourgeois ideology proclaims that vice is rife and is frightened by the fact that its traditional norms are not always observed.

But what constitutes vice and depravity?

We are well aware that everyday life frequently overtakes ideology. We can observe this happening in our country: although the way of life is already different, the ideology has changed very little. And when re-

lations between a man and a woman are not those of established morality, the petty-bourgeois is ready to see vice.

In Western Europe and America, the principle that the only correct form of relationship between a man and a woman is monogamy is firmly upheld. But the “ideologists” forget that besides monogamy, so dear to their hearts, there is polygamy practised by the Muslims and there are countries where women are fighting for monogamy. There are Negro tribes where only marriages between brother and sister, son and mother are considered legal. In other tribes it is held that a wife need only be faithful to her husband three days a week and so long as these conditions are observed, vice does not occur.

In the upper classes it was considered essential that a girl remain a virgin until marriage. This can perhaps be explained by the system of class and property relations which existed at that time, the system of inheritance and the sum of factors influencing and moulding the environment. But we, after all, live in other times, in other conditions: we have completely different aspirations and a completely different way of looking at things. If everything is not yet as it should be, we must take measures now to explain the ideas in which we believe and for which we are fighting.

People say that the communists, Komsomol members and the students at the workers’ faculties are too free in their sexual relations. Quite clearly one must expect some abnormalities in the behaviour of people working in the plants and factories, who have to live in extremely difficult and cramped conditions. A certain abnormality will be inevitable until the conditions

of daily living improve for this enormous category of workers. But when people say that sexual relations are too free, they forget that young people today hardly ever turn to prostitution. Which, we have to ask, is the better solution? The philistine sees the new relationships as depraved, while a defender of the new way of life sees them as an improvement in human relationships.

If we compare youth today with students before the revolution, the latter emerge as the more "sinful." No sweeping allegations, however, were ever levelled against them. Everything thus depends upon one's point of view, and petty-bourgeois ideology is still having difficulties trying to arrive at a correct viewpoint. We can understand why the question of the new marriage code has been so hotly debated. We have still not worked out a definite viewpoint on these questions; we have not realized that although we may not have class relations, group relations do exist.

The debate has centred on the new code; can such a debate entirely satisfy us? The marriage code has had a strange fate: it has been criticized both from the right and from the left. The laws of the bourgeois capitalist state regulating the relations between the sexes, while making concessions to the times, strive to fulfil their main purpose, which is the strengthening of property relations. What is the approach of the new code?

At a first glance it seems it has gone a long way and made great advances on the old marriage law which was issued in the first days of Soviet power. What are the important aspects of the new code? Most important of all is the elimination of article 52 of the

old code, according to which only civil (secular) marriage registered at the ZAGS¹ is recognized as involving conjugal rights and responsibilities and is protected by the law. Paragraph 10 of the new code declares registered and unregistered marriage to be equal, i.e. de facto marriage is given the same status as de jure marriage, and this would seem to be a great step forward. Finally, paragraph 12 of the new code states that within the marriage relationship the partners are obliged to support each other, and if one is unable to work or is out of work, he or she has a right to the support of the other. Paragraphs 26 and 27 deal with the alimony which is to be paid in the case of both registered and unregistered marriages, and it seems that here too progress has been made. But how has the fundamental reasoning behind this provision been reached?

In order to answer this question we have to look back and trace the development of the debate. We should note that during the broad discussion on the new code at the second session of VTsIk it was, on the whole, the peasantry who spoke in favour of registered marriage and in particular those peasants who were not secure in their holdings. From one point of view they might be said to be right in their stand, for they approached the question not so much from a moral as from an economic point of view. The workers, male and female, spoke in favour of equalizing unregistered with registered marriage. In so far as we still do not have a genuine and thoroughgoing construction of new lifestyles, for the working man and work-

¹ The Civil Registrar's Office.

ing woman the family is a consumer unit; but the strengthening of this consumer unit is for them of little or no importance. But we can now see clearly that a certain section of the population, first and foremost the peasantry, is in favour of strengthening marriage by registration; they demand some official formula that makes personal relations and economic rights clear. Such aspirations, which may exist for a long time to come, are completely understandable. Petty-bourgeois ideology, on the other hand, also criticizes the new code, but from the angle of the struggle against depravity and the fight for the purity of relationships. They support stable, registered marriage and ought logically also to favour a ban on divorce, to protect society from that general chaos to which their ideology is so opposed.

Can marriage, however, be made as strong as it was a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago? Do laws exist which, in the absence of inner impulses, could help to strengthen marriage and prevent its disintegration? In the middle ages people were buried alive for adultery, but morality was not improved. The Napoleonic code, which came into force when the feudal system was giving way to capitalist relations, ruled that the murder of an unfaithful wife was not punishable by law, and forbade the mother of an "illegitimate" child to seek out the father. However, even under these harsh laws vice did not disappear. The code, it transpired, could not save the situation, and despite its cruel provisions marriage was a less stable institution in France than elsewhere. What does this show? It shows the impossibility of establishing certain kinds of relationships by means of a code when life is push-

ing in another direction. If we thought to use such methods to combat the negative aspects of marriage, we would have to organize “extraordinary commissions” for the struggle against immorality. Could we even then guarantee that our aim would be achieved? No, for harsh laws have only one effect — people learn to get round them.

Let us look into the question further. Does registration or the exclusive recognition of *de jure* marriage benefit the woman? It might seem that registration gives the woman more security, if, of course, the husband is in a position to be able to provide for her. But the *de facto* wife has the same security. Our law states that she also has the right to alimony. Our new law is guilty of considerable inadequacies, for it strengthens rather than eliminates the main defect of the law by the vagueness of its provisions on alimony. The new law is designed to suit the *Nepmen*, the wealthy and the rich peasants. Paragraph 12 states that every married man or woman who is unable to work has the right to demand alimony from his or her partner. But from what husband shall the woman receive assistance? From the *de jure* or the *de facto* husband? When the husband is able to support his wife, when he is a specialist or a rich peasant, his wife will get something, and everything is fine. But how can a man support his wife if he has not enough or only just enough to live on himself? Or how can a peasant give his wife alimony when he lives on bread and kvass for six months of the year? How can he support a divorced wife when he has only one cow, one house and four children? Or what about the worker whose wages are hardly sufficient for himself alone? What can he be ex-

pected to contribute? And if, to add to this, he has a de facto wife with children — can he support two families? Of course not. Take another case. The wife has worked for many years on the same peasant plot as her husband; when she divorces him, she must receive half of the property they have accumulated. But what will she receive if they have no property? Alimony, it follows, can only be received when the husband in question is at hand and has a sufficiently full purse. Is it right that we should base our norms on the position of some one hundred thousand or so well-off people?

We have seen what the law gives the de jure wife; let us turn now to the case of the de facto wife. The de facto wife is to be made equal with the de jure wife. But who is the de facto wife? Which one is she? I doubt whether there is anyone among you who did not have at least three de facto wives before you were thirty. [Laughter.] Who exactly are Comrades Krylenko and Brandenburgskii supporting? They say that the court tackles this problem, discovers how long the couple lived together, whether or not they had a joint household; whether, in a word, they were man and wife. The court decides these complex questions. Comrade Krylenko maintains that we are taking a step forward when we do not punish a person for having a de jure and a de facto marriage at the same time. But on the other hand, our code makes it illegal to register a de jure marriage if a de facto marriage already exists. This is one of the inadequacies of the code.

The provisions on alimony are not new. Such laws have been passed in bourgeois Europe and in America. In Norway, for example, a law on alimony has existed for ten years; young people in that country turn

to prostitution in order to avoid the petty-bourgeois regulations.

The economic situation of the worker, of course, plays a considerable role here. For what alimony can in fact be taken from him? He has so little money he could not pay the third of his wages that the law justly demands. It frequently happens that when a factory worker finds out that part of his wage is threatened by an alimony order he throws in his job and transfers to another factory, and so on. In such cases there is no one from whom the woman can receive money.

Let us now consider the question of alimony for children. Provision for the welfare of both legitimate and illegitimate children is not peculiar to our law, for such provision exists in Western Europe as well. But what have our provisions meant in practice? Comparatively few such cases come before the courts. According to the statistics given by Comrade Kurskii at the VTslk session, out of seventy-eight cases only three are alimony orders concerning the welfare of children. This is evidence that the women themselves do not believe that the fathers of their children can be found. [Laughter.]

But it is not only a sense of the hopelessness of the search that holds women back. There are other reasons. One woman does not want to beg and humiliate herself; another is afraid of speaking out about her relationship because the father of her child has a *de jure* wife, a third is simply ashamed, etc. As a result, the situation is far from bright. Alimony was introduced to ease the position of the mother, but this aim has not been achieved; either there is no one from whom to receive alimony, or the woman does not want to fight

for her rights. As a result children are often thrown out on to the streets, the number of homeless children increases and the healthy development of the future generation is endangered.

The laws on alimony have been in effect for eight years, but have they in practice helped anyone? Alimony does not solve the social problems nor does it guarantee "morality." Is this not the best answer to those who say that if we change the law on alimony we will have "Lord knows what"? One Norwegian judge told me of a case where, in the course of one month, four orders for alimony from four different towns at some distance from each other were filed on one worker. Asked by the judge how he could have managed to have been in all four towns in the space of one day, the young man solved the riddle by explaining that during the summer he had a motorbike. Since it is impossible to maintain four families on one wage, I would recommend to comrades and citizens that in order to secure the implementation of the new marriage code they refrain from using motorbikes.

To designate certain individuals as responsible for the unemployed and unemployable, knowing them to be incapable of the task, is simply to wash one's hands of a difficult question that needs solving. The new draft creates three types of wife: the registered, the unregistered and the casual. Whereas the first two now have equal rights, the third has no rights at all. But who are these "casual" wives? They are the peasant women who have no land and drift to the towns looking for work, the working women living in the dreadfully cramped and impossibly hard conditions around the plants and factories. The law refuses to defend the

rights of these women.

From all that I have already said, it is clear that the provisions of the new marriage law designed to guarantee the interests of the mother and child cannot satisfy us. For the code strengthens petty-bourgeois tendencies and fails to take into consideration the perspectives of our socialist construction. The code must therefore be changed. The new code is as unsatisfactory as the old in that it does not guarantee the welfare of children and mothers with small children. That is why it is essential that we consider the matter seriously and approach the reworking of the code carefully.

I must make one other point. Some people believe that our alimony system is workable because the majority of men called upon to pay are merchants, Nepmen and, on the whole, well-off persons who are able to bear the financial burden. But this is not the case. For it is necessary to grasp certain specificities of our society. There are de facto wives who are never seen with their husbands and whose existence no one even suspects. Brandenburgskii has very rightly drawn attention to this fact. This category and the others I have mentioned are not provided for, and are not in a position to seek help from anyone. Who should take upon themselves the support of these women? The collective should be responsible for their welfare. We consider that the law has approached this question in the wrong manner. The peasants, as we have already noted, are dissatisfied with the new law. They demand the registration of marriage and they are right in their way. Can we offer them any help? Can we go any of the way towards meeting their demands? Yes, there is a way we can help. As far as the union is concerned, it

is the regulation not of the personal relations of the two parties involved but of the property norms of their household economy that is important. We would consider the replacement of the registration of marriage relations by a new form as being in the best interests of the peasantry and a section of the urban population. What do we mean by this contract? It is not in general possible to strengthen marriage, and registration, with its artificial levellings and divisions, will in no way help to achieve the aim.

It does not even protect the interests of women and children of the working sections of the population. And there is no reason why we should worry ourselves about the Nepmen. The peasant who still needs to make his family official as an economic unit should be given the opportunity to do so by the provision of special marriage contracts, which can vary in accordance with the given conditions and the specificities of the households of those concerned. Such contracts would, on the one hand, be to the complete satisfaction of the peasantry, and, on the other, they would eliminate the harmful aspects of mechanical registration. It would simply not be profitable, in view of the conveniences it offered, to fail to conclude such a contract, and such a practice would end the division of wives into various categories. According to paragraph 10 of the code, any kind of property-economic contracts may be concluded at marriage. We consider that it would be sensible, rather than introduce such contracts and dispense with any kind of registration, to establish various kinds of marital economic contracts which would be suited to the different groups and would lay down detailed norms for the regulation of the property and

economic relations of the parties. Not the mechanical registration of cohabitation, but a clear and exact formulation of intent, leaving no room for incorrect interpretations.

These contracts are important not only for the peasantry but for working women too, who will thus have the chance to know and feel that their domestic labour is also in some way valued, and is recognized to be as important as work in the factories and plants. For while consumer units exist in the form of the worker's family, it is essential that the labour of the woman in this unit be taken into consideration in a definite way and valued. This would lead to the real and not merely verbal equality of the parties within the unit.

The conclusion of a marital economic contract would improve the position of both sides; there would no longer be *de jure* and *de facto* wives, registered and unregistered. The positive aspects of such a practice would persuade women of the need to register their relations with men in these contracts.

In the towns, the contracts would secure a whole series of advantages for the working woman, establishing her privileges and her equality before the government and before the law. The contracts would introduce absolute clarity into relationships; they would give the non-party husband the right to say to his communist wife; "Despite the fact that you are a communist and have responsible work to do, my buttons need sewing on." [Laughter.] I do not want to make an analogy with the accommodation contract, but the benefits and conveniences offered are very similar. It is of course possible to live in a flat without a specially

negotiated contract, but the contract undoubtedly means that misunderstandings and debatable points can be more easily resolved, since all or most of them are dealt with in its terms. This circumstance is of considerable importance, and should not be lost sight of. But there is the question: what will happen to those women who have not considered marital economic contracts? Who is to provide for them? They are to be provided from the maternity and insurance funds to which all adult and employed persons make contributions. [Voice from the hall: "Collective responsibility." Laughter.] Women who are alone will be supported by the money from this fund. They will be pleased with this arrangement, for it frees them from the humiliating position of waiting for hand-outs from the men and rescues them from the necessity of having to beg for what is legally theirs by right. And such an arrangement will be much more efficient. How should this fund be run? Both men and women should pay into the fund, so that in a time of need their child does not find itself homeless. The size of the contribution should correspond to the size of income. If contributions are made obligatory for all, it should be possible to provide for both mothers and children. Greater financial resources would be necessary if the plans were to be comprehensively carried out. Taking the annual birthrate to be over four million and the majority of peasant children to be covered by marital economic contracts, one million children at the most will come under the scheme. These for the most part will be the children of single mothers, of landless peasant women, of working women, of young girls and students. And as it will cost ten rubles a month to provide for each

child, even if the figure is as high as one million, that will mean an annual sum of 120 million rubles is needed. If we divide this sum equally among the sixty million adult citizens of the USSR, the result is a tax of two rubles per person per year. This is not a large sum, and as the tax will be progressive, those with low incomes will not even have to pay this much. The fund will also provide for the general protection of motherhood and childhood. We can take the first step. Alimony contributions will be paid into a general fund, and the mother and child will receive the help they need from the collective.

This is a perspective and a method that springs from the socialist way of life and from the socialist approach to the solution of this complex problem. Of course, I can see the objections. The Commissariat of Finance will not be enthusiastic. The question, however, is very important, and it therefore demands serious thought and careful discussion. It is time we recognized that every woman in the Soviet Union giving birth to a child is fulfilling a social function, and that every woman has the right to desire and strive to be free from anxieties when bringing up her child, and to be free from the fear that someday she and the child will find themselves in need and without any means of sustenance. It is essential that we take all measures possible to save the rising generation from prostitution, homelessness, etc.

Our material position is not rosy, and I am well aware of the difficulties that we would inevitably face in trying to carry out this scheme. But all the same, things are not so desperate that we cannot find ways of achieving our aim. After all, our economy is im-

proving, production is expanding and our budget is growing every year. In two- or three-years' time we shall be able to see that this fund is less of a burden on the country's budget. Aside from these purely financial objections, I can foresee various others. It will be said that such a scheme would free men from all restraint and that vice would spread, in the long run destroying the family. But is it true that the alimony system prevents vice? If we look around us, we can see that the alimony laws do not reduce vice, and so we cannot talk of laws corrupting or restraining. If it is possible to "restrain," it is not by passing severe laws but by creating normal living conditions. This is the best way to promote the victory of morality over vice. While we still have inequalities, terrible overcrowding and lack of space in the factories and hostels, we cannot expect these problems to sort themselves out.

There is one question to which I would like to turn your attention, and that is the question of birth control. Expressed very briefly, the essence of what I want to say is this: let there be fewer children born, but let them be of better "quality." Every child should be wanted by its mother. It is vital that the interests of each child be defended not only by its mother and father but also by the whole collective. [Remark from the floor: "The struggle for productivity of labour and the quality of the finished product." Laughter.] It is necessary to raise the consciousness of the population correspondingly, to conduct a campaign to explain the importance of these points and to develop agitational work on a broad scale.

We must establish a situation where the fund can provide for children whose fathers are unable to pro-

vide for them. This is of great importance in drawing young people away from prostitution; the old reasoning that by paying for a prostitute the man was insuring himself against the trouble of paying alimony would no longer apply. The fears that our young people are beginning their sexual life too early are not groundless. And we are not closing our eyes to the abnormalities and the extremely disturbing incidents that sometimes take place. But we would argue that in order to struggle against the negative aspects of the situation we should act by raising consciousness and conducting propaganda, and not by issuing statutes of various kinds. Laws will not achieve our aims. Whatever age we established as that at which a man and a woman might legally live together, our decree would not be effective. Measures of a different nature are called for: agitation on a mass scale, the dissemination of scientific knowledge and general cultural work. For the energy of young people must be preserved and not wasted. We should encourage young people not to begin their sexual lives at too early an age and we should fight the negative aspects of early sexual life.

People waste their time when they slander the Komsomol, accusing its members of engaging in vice. If the accusers took it upon themselves to think a little, they would see that favourable conditions for depravity do not exist, and they would understand how false their allegations are. For the Komsomol members work all day at the plants and factories and all evening for the party, and carry a mass of weighty responsibilities for the party and for Soviet power and society: what time do they have for a personal life? Then again, what is this "vice" under discussion? Our Komsomol

members, in contrast to the old pre-revolutionary students, do not frequent the brothels. And in relationships between the young men and women of the Komsomol, which by no stretch of the imagination could be described as depraved, we have an equality which humiliates and compromises no one. This is what the ideologists of "vice" forget. We do not, of course, intend to argue that we have completely normal relations between young people. As yet, we still have no new ideas in this sphere; but we must remember that it is essential to inspire young people with scorn for the philistine bourgeois family idyll. We have to explain to them the harm of becoming so entirely engrossed in love that fundamental tasks are forgotten. I remember talking to a girl I knew in the Komsomol who mentioned that Ivan had not been re-elected to the presidium of some commission. I asked if Marusya had been elected and was told that she had not. I asked why, when both were good active people and their work satisfactory. "How can we vote for them when they are in love and sit looking at each other the whole day? What kind of activists does that make them?"

Or here is another instance. I do not recall exactly which year it was, but at a congress of working women where a very important question of principle was under discussion, one of the delegates kept on asking us for permission to go to Tula as her husband, whom she had not seen for three years, was there. When we pointed out that she could easily postpone her trip until the end of the congress the woman even cried. I do not remember if we let her go, I rather think we did, but she was removed from responsible work soon af-

ter, and her conduct was taken into consideration when assigning her to other work. What does this mean? It means, not that we reject love, but that we put it in its place, where it does not overshadow what is important in life.

Comrades and citizens, I will bring my remarks to a close. We have put forward the idea of a marriage contract, we have suggested the creation of the necessary insurance fund and have brought up the question of birth control. If these demands are taken up, this will give us a guarantee that the new socialist lifestyle will be built, the most important part of which must be socialist construction.

Down with all hypocrisy and all fear of speaking out over the question of marriage. Many of our revolutionary comrades are afraid to be frank. The old forms of marriage are dying out, and life is bringing forward new forms which correspond to the new conditions. Make way for the future; a future based on healthy comradesly relations, free from negative tendencies and guaranteeing the correct development of the rising generation. We greet the collective that educates the younger generation and raises its cultural level. We have no need of the kind of "family" where the husband and wife are united only with each other and are separated from the collective. We greet the new conditions of life that give joy and happiness to the new labours of humanity.

What Has the October Revolution Done for Women in the West?

1927

What the October Revolution has achieved in terms of the emancipation of working women in the Soviet Union is well known to all, is clear and indisputable. However, what effect has the Great October Revolution had on the movement for the emancipation of women in other, bourgeois countries abroad? What has it contributed to the creation of the “new woman” involved in the tasks and aspirations of the working class?

World war, which, in Europe and North America, drew enormous numbers of women from the poorer sections of the population, and those with *moderate means* into the whirlpool of production and state administration, undoubtedly served to advance considerably the cause of female emancipation. The rapid growth of female labour brought with it unparalleled changes in family life, and in the overall mode of life of women in bourgeois countries. However, this process of female emancipation would scarcely have advanced any further without the powerful example of the October Revolution. The October Revolution helped to bring about a new evaluation of women, to reveal and confirm the view of women as socially useful labour units. From the very first days of the October Revolution it became clear that women’s energies are needed not only by the husband and the family, as had been thought for thousands of years, but also by

society, the whole social collective, the state.

However, that this phenomenon is an inevitable historical fact, that the formation of a new type of woman is linked to a general shift towards the creation of a new, working society, is something that the bourgeoisie cannot and does not wish to recognize. If it were not for the October Revolution, it would still be generally believed that the woman earning her own living is a temporary phenomenon, and that the woman's place is in the family, standing at the back of her husband breadwinner. The October Revolution changed many concepts. This radical change in the evaluation of the tasks and vocation of women in the Soviet Union has affected the attitude to women far beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. We can now meet the new woman everywhere, in every corner of the world. The new woman is a mass phenomenon, with the exception, perhaps, of women in the semi-colonial and colonial countries, where the development of the productive forces is impeded by the predatory rule of the imperialists. However even there, given the struggle for national self-determination and against imperialism, the new woman is being moulded in the very process of struggle. It is impossible to succeed in the struggle between social groups and classes without the co-operation of women.

The new woman is essentially an independent labour unit whose energy is used not to serve the interests of a private family economy, but to perform socially useful and necessary labour. She is being liberated from those inner moral characteristics which marked the woman of the past. Female triviality, conservatism and restricted range of ideas, her envy and

malice towards other women as rivals in the hunt for a provider — all these characteristics are no longer necessary in that sphere where she is now struggling to survive. As soon as the woman starts to live by her own work, she needs to develop different qualities and acquire new habits, and millions of working women throughout the world are hastening to morally rearm themselves.

It is interesting to observe how, not only in our country but also abroad, women are learning to be efficient and workers whose labour is necessary. They are fully aware that their own well-being, and often also the existence of their children, depends directly on them, on their work and qualifications. Externally and internally they are adapting to the new conditions in which they live. Internally, psychologically, they are ceasing to be those patient, obedient beings who gave themselves wholly to husband and family. Now women have no time to be “sentimental,” and even less can they be “obedient” and patient. It is more important that they be sure of their own strength, resolute in their actions and not distracted by their emotions...

In addition to their efficiency and their attempts, by raising their *qualifications* and improving their *health* and physical strength, to increase their value on the labour market, the new working women differ from the women of the past also in their strong feelings for and consciousness of their links with their class, with the collective. Women are involved in politics and, once again, if war drew large numbers of women into the political struggle, it was only the October Revolution which recognized publicly, by its

laws, by the entire practice of the new Soviet system, that once the woman is working in and for society, she should be recognized as an active citizen. The enormous shift in the position of women in the Soviet Union has encouraged contending social groups to attempt to draw women onto their side. Everywhere, in every country, the political activity of women has shown unprecedented growth over the last ten years. Women are becoming members of government (Bang in Denmark — minister of education; Margaret Bondfield in the Ramsay MacDonald cabinet in Britain), they are entering the diplomatic corps and becoming the inspirational force behind major revolutionary movements (as for example Sun Tsin-lin, the wife of Sun Yat-sen). Women are learning to head departments, to take charge of economic organizations, to guide policy.

Would this have been possible without the Great October Revolution? Could the new woman-citizen and socially useful worker have emerged without the great whirlwind that blew across the world? Could the working women of other countries have taken such giant strides towards their own comprehensive emancipation without the October Revolution? Anyone who pauses to think realizes that the answer is clearly no. This is why working women throughout the world cannot but feel that this tenth anniversary of the October Revolution is the great festival of workers of the world.

The October Revolution affirmed the importance of working women. The October Revolution has created those conditions which will ensure victory for the “new woman.”

The New Morals

1930

Editor: *Can you tell us a little about the new morals in Soviet Russia and about the family in the future? Will it always exist, or do you believe that a new social and economic basis of society will fundamentally change the present form of family life?*

Kollontai: What is there still left of the family? The family was strong and needed by humanity at a time when the family unit was itself a producer (the farmer family even now, for instance under the capitalistic system), when the parents were the sole educators of the young generation, when private household in towns was an economic necessity, in short, when the community had not yet overtaken the functions which in former days represented the family functions.

All countries are at present going through an era when the family in the old conception of the world is getting more and more unnecessary, more useless. Society, the state, the municipalities overtake the burden of children's education and instruction. The municipalities or co-operatives build houses that suit the modern needs of a very restricted or even not private household at all. Women go more and more into business, into salaried work and employments of all kinds.

If the diminishment of family bounds is an undeniable tendency even in capitalistic states, the more this tendency exists in the Soviet Union with its thoroughly different economic and social construction. Divorces have become very common all over the world. Yet fingers are pointed at Soviet Russia only

because this country has laws that permit to all married couples, not only those who have sufficient money, to end the hypocrisy which in other countries is suffered to exist because of the outworn laws and church prejudices. We work to develop a new psychology. The relations between the sexes have to be built up on real and true comradeship. We stand for free relations between the sexes, relations based not on economic speculations, but on real comradeship and love. But that does not diminish the duties that a mother or a father has towards his child. Soviet laws are very strict and clear about this, there is no difference between a couple that has not registered its marriage and those who live in an unregistered union. But the law demands from the father to pay alimony for his child. The man cannot forsake the woman and the child. He is bound to pay alimony. And not only the law, but the community where he lives, his own comrades will insist to make him fulfil his duty towards the child and the women. It is a moral pressure that sustains the legal pressure. The state renders social and economic help to mother and child, the community bears the chief responsibility for the children's education. A whole system of social and pedagogical institutions have the task to guide the entire cultural development of the youth. The physical and moral health of the children in the Soviet Union is under social control and the whole community bears in an organized way the moral task for the growing up generation. "Be mother not only to your own children but to all the children of the labouring community" was our motto from the very beginning of the revolution.

But as long as the social community cannot pro-

vide the financial resources to overtake the whole burden of bringing up the generation, it remains the duty of the parents to take part in the supporting of the children. It is a bad joke to speak of "equality" in a case when the man forsakes the woman, his comrade, and leaves all the economic burden for their children on her shoulders. We are not for "equality" in this sense. We are for real good comradeship, where the partner in love and in marriage bears his part of responsibility.

Editor: *But does not the feverish tempo in the Soviet Union make women more irresponsible towards life and its obligations?*

Kollontai: What do you mean by "irresponsible"? If you mean their household duties and home, then women are just trying to eliminate the many unnecessary factors of life that keep them back and hold up inequality. Freedom does not mean laxness, nor detachment, nor irresponsibility. Freedom from the useless drudgeries of domesticity, freedom from abject devotion, but above all, freedom for development. Our new social system gives freedom to millions of women, but until they are practically free from domestic shackles the freedom of a woman will never be on the level of a man's. But we work to educate both men and women and to organize their lives after the socialistic principles that are the foundation of our Soviet state.

The Soviet woman does not regard her private home as the centre of her life. If she has to choose between her obligations to the state and community or her private household, she will certainly neglect the last and not the first. But it is not the purpose to ne-

glect either, as long as one has it, a private home. The aim in our socialistic world is to organize life in a way, so as to avoid such collisions, by restricting the household and home duties and by developing all sorts of social ways to liberate the women from the tiresome toil of housework and to help mothers to bring up their children. That is the problem.

But if you think that the Soviet Union is educating its population in the moods of irresponsibility, then you are very mistaken. It is absolutely the reverse. In no country of the world is responsibility so highly cherished. Take one of the latest brilliant speeches of Stalin. Responsibility to the state and community first of all, and at the same time responsibility to those to with whom you are connected personally — the woman you love and the man you love.

I should say people in Soviet Union have a much greater consciousness than before. They think more about their relation to society than ever before. And their social responsibility has not diminished but grown. [Today women, even in the Eastern part of the Soviet Union and in the far-off villages do not marry at 14 or 15 and start bearing children from then on. Today women rationalize more about the advent of children.] Under the Tsarist regime the number of children deserted by their mothers was quite appalling. Was that “responsibility” to life? Today both men and women, although they know that the state will assume a great amount of responsibility towards the child, are educated not to forget their personal obligations towards their children. Women are trying therefore not to assume motherhood obligations until they feel they can fulfil them. Is this attitude condemn-

able?

Editor: *Does not the facility of divorce laws create a psychology in the woman wherein she does not adapt herself to married life in a serious effort?*

Kollontai: Marriage laws have never really kept up marriage if the union is not held together by other bonds — love and comradeship. Is it not so in all other countries that the majority of marriages exist on mere tolerance and continue out of habit or from mere practical and economic views? And still, you can see it from statistics, you can see it from the modern literature — every country in the world is experiencing a divorce era. Even under the capitalistic regime. Yet fingers are pointed to the Soviet Union as though she were the only country in the world which permitted divorce. But divorce, as I told you already, does not free a man or a woman from mutual obligations or economic and moral duties towards the child. If there is a country where moral duties towards not only the community in its whole, but duties to each other (parents to their children and children to old or sick parents) — are kept high, so that is the Soviet Union.

Editor: *What is, or what should be the prime interest of the Soviet woman: love for a man or for the state, the community?*

Kollontai: Society must come first. Love? — ah, yes. It has its place in the life of woman, just as in the life of a man. But when a woman has diverse interests, when she has work she cherishes, then love does not control her life. And if love has disappointed her — and it often does — she can never break down if she has her work and her obligations to the community to which she resides. Therefore, we women of the Soviet

Union, give our first and enduring love to the socialistic society, that we are building up with enthusiasm and energy and that gives us the opportunity to be a free soul and to do useful work that we cherish. That is the only way to outgrow the antique Evos of the past and to remodel the woman into a valuable and complete personality adapted to a better and progressive world of tomorrow.

On the New Abortion Law

1936

Editor: *How do the women in the Soviet Union stand towards the new abortion law?*

Kollontai: I would like to first point out the fact that it is an error to place the question of abortion in the foreground in the assessment of the June 27 law. The new law has another and very particular purpose: to give women an even greater possibility than before of combining motherhood with an occupation. Seven out of the eight articles of the law deal with the increased provisions for mother and child. With this law the Soviet state emphasizes once again its principled position towards motherhood. Motherhood is not a private affair but a natural social function of women. From the first day of the existence of the Soviet state, Soviet legislation always emphasized the view that women have two primary tasks in the new society: to be active citizens of the state and at the same time not to neglect motherhood. But so that women can fulfil their occupation and citizen's duty without disadvantage to motherhood, the state must make sure that motherhood is made easier in all possible ways, on the one hand by a broad network of social institutions for children's welfare (nurseries, kindergartens, children's colonies, homes for mothers, etc.), on the other hand by state material support for the mother, and finally by detailed legislation that governs the question of child support. The new law of June 17 is really a logical extension of this principle.

With this law the Soviet government takes on a

huge material obligation in its budget in order to accomplish the expansion of the institutions for the well-being of mothers and children and make accommodations for women, so that they can fulfil their two tasks without disadvantage to the one by the other.

Editor: *But what does Article 1 of the law mean, which abolishes the former law for the permissibility of abortions and forbids abortions?*

Kollontai: The law about the *permissibility* of abortions was approved in 1920 in the Soviet Union under the pressure of specific unfavourable conditions that prevailed in the country at that time. The civil war was not yet over. Severe economic living conditions prevailed and the main task for the country fighting for its freedom consisted in using all forces for the building of a new social order. Women as active citizens of the state had to take part, even if their maternal duties were thus left behind.

Although the government legally recognized motherhood as a function of women of equal value as their work for the state, the state could not yet sufficiently guarantee women as mothers. Thus, under these conditions the law permitting abortions was approved.

Now the population of the Soviet Union is living under completely different, more favourable and more fortunate conditions. The well-being of people in the city and particularly in the countryside has been greatly improved over the last years. The position of women as a work group has been strengthened. The time has come for the state and society to do all they can and must to give women the opportunity of not only having an occupation but also of being mothers.

Editor: *But the old law on abortions did not prevent women from becoming mothers. There was no compulsion for abortions?*

Kollontai: Yes, of course there was no compulsion. But there is a psychological factor here, against which the new law will fight strenuously. That is the psychology of men. As I already said, in the family law of the Soviet Union there is a provision about the payment of child support. But it must be said that much too often men have tried to avoid fulfilling their obligations. In many cases it was particularly the man who urged the woman to get an abortion, so that he would not have to pay child support. I would like to particularly point out that the first article of the law contains a very strong provision against anyone who influences a woman to have an abortion. Such an action is considered criminal.

The fight against abortion in the law of June 27 has a very particular purpose: to educate men to a greater responsibility towards their comrades, the women. In Article 8 of the new law the question of child support is heavily stressed. Also, the non-payment of child support is considered criminal. The law establishes a series of measures to lighten the economic load of motherhood for the woman, while on the other hand the law imposes a much greater obligation than before on the man towards his children,

Editor: *How does the new law make life easier for women?*

Kollontai: First of all, we increased the amount of state support for the mother. Second, it is punishable to refuse employment to a woman due to her pregnancy. Also, the legal pregnancy leave is increased by

law to 56 days, also for office workers. Every family that has more than 6 children gets an annual state contribution. The number of nurseries is being greatly increased, as well as the number of kindergartens and other institutions. And finally, the financial support by the state for all these institutions will almost double.

I would also like to emphasize that the law logically carries through the social policy of the Soviet Union regarding the family and marriage relations. The law leaves only a certain part of the economic burden to the parents. The state takes on more and more of the moral and economic duties towards the children. The law of June 27 is an indication of the broader development of social institutions for provisions for small children.

Women in the Soviet Union are in the first place independent and equal citizens who participate actively in the building of the new society. And if at the same time they fulfil their maternal duties, then the state stands on their side with all available assistance.

Editor: *Don't you believe that the abolition of the old law, which freely provided for abortions in the Soviet Union, will lead to an unfavourable reaction in the other countries, where the radical women are leading a courageous fight for the right to abortion?*

Kollontai: I believe that if one judges the law in the correct light, then it can have no negative influence on this courageous fight and will give the opponents of abortion no new weapons.

One cannot compare the conditions under which women in the Soviet Union live and work with the conditions in other countries. As long as the state in

the Soviet Union was not able to provide complete, broad and effective assistance for motherhood, and as long as economic prosperity for the broad masses of the population in the Soviet Union was not assured, abortions in the Soviet Union were permitted by law.

In no other country are there such guarantees as those in the Soviet Union that make motherhood easier for women. As long as women or men live under the pressure of unemployment, as long as the level of wages is not sufficient for a family, as long as housing conditions are unfavourable, and as long as the state does not make motherhood easier for every woman in various ways and does not provide social services for mother and child, it is clear that the women must stand up for free abortions.

Editor: *In what cases and under what criteria is abortion permitted in the Soviet Union?*

Kollontai: Under point 1 of Article 1 of the new law, the performance of abortions is permitted in cases where pregnancy is a threat to the life of the woman or causes severe consequences to the health of the pregnant woman. Abortions are also permitted if the diseases of the parents could be transmitted to the children.

Editor: *You have not yet given me a direct answer to my first question: how do women in the Soviet Union stand towards the new law?*

Kollontai: The law of June 27 in the Soviet Union was approved after an extremely democratic action of the Soviet government. The draft of this law was freely discussed for a whole month in the factories, offices, in the countryside, etc. Thousands of letters were sent in from the women themselves and also from men.

The press had discussions for and against the law and many of the proposals for the draft were taken into account in the approval of the law. The majority of the women spoke out in favour of the new law, principally because the law would have a certain effect on the psychology of the men; it should increase the feeling of responsibility of the men for children and women. The women are warm supporters of this law. But it seems to me that the men were somewhat more reserved. This particularly shows the usefulness of the law, that men should be trained to more comradely relations towards women.

Soviet Woman — Citizenship with Equal Rights

1946

It is well known that the Soviet Union has achieved exceptional successes in drawing women into the active construction of society. Even our enemies do not dispute this fact. Soviet woman is in her country a citizeness with equal right. Our government has given women access to all spheres of creative activity, and at the same time has guaranteed all the conditions necessary for woman to fulfil her natural duty — to be a mother, the educator of her children and the mistress of her home.

Soviet legislation recognized from the very first that maternity is not a private matter, but the social duty of the active and equal citizeness. The constitution has strengthened this position. The Soviet Union has thus solved one of the most important and complex problems: how to introduce female labour into all spheres of the economy without women having to sacrifice maternity. Great attention was paid to the organization of public canteens, kindergartens, pioneer camps, children's playgrounds and crèches — to those institutions which, as Lenin wrote, would in practice liberate woman and in practice make her more equal with man. More than seven thousand medical centres for women and children were set up in the USSR, one half of this number in the rural areas. Over twenty thousand crèches were established. One should remember that in Tsarist Russia in 1913 there were only nineteen crèches and twenty-five kindergartens, and

that these were maintained not at government expense but by philanthropic organizations.

The Soviet government proffers an ever-increasing amount of help to the mother. Women receive benefits and a paid holiday at the time of pregnancy and birth. They are able to return to their old job when this leave comes to an end. Single women and women with large families receive government benefits to help them bring up and provide for their children's welfare. In 1945 the government paid out more than two billion rubles in such benefits. In the RSFSR alone more than ten thousand women have the honorary title of "mother-heroine," and over 1,100,000 women have been awarded the order of "motherhood glory" and the "medal of motherhood."

Soviet women have justified this trust and care on the part of the government. They showed great heroism in the time of peaceful, creative work before the war and during the years of armed struggle against the fascist invaders, and now they are in the forefront in the work of carrying out the glorious tasks of the new five-year plan. Many sections of industry where female labour is predominant are ahead in plan fulfilment. The Soviet peasant women have rendered great services, bearing the main burden of agricultural work on their shoulders through the war years. Our women have mastered professions which for centuries have been considered the province of the male. We have women working as machine operators, mechanics, turners, tool-setters; we have working women with high qualifications in charge of complex machinery. On a level with men, the women of the Soviet Union are making progress in science, culture and art; they

have established a prominent position in education and the health service.

In a country where thirty years ago, out of 2,300,000 working women, 1,300,000 were servants in the towns and 750,000 were landless peasant women in the villages, and in a country where there were hardly any women engineers or scientists and where women working as teachers had to accept conditions insulting to their human dignity, there are now 750,000 women teachers, 100,000 women doctors and 250,000 women engineers. Women constitute one half of the student body at higher educational establishments. More than 30,000 women work in scientific laboratories, 25,000 women have higher degrees, 166 women have been awarded the honourary title of laureate for outstanding achievements in science and labour. Women in the land of the Soviets are realizing their political rights in practice. In the Supreme Soviet of the USSR alone there are 277 women deputies. 256 women have been elected to village, urban, regional and republican organs of Soviet power.

It is well known there was never a so-called women's movement, and that the Russian woman did not go through the phase of feminism and the struggle with the suffragists. She never viewed the battle for equality as being separate from the basic task of liberating her country from the yoke of Tsarism, because she understood that the woman's question is inseparable from the social and political problems of which it is a part...

In all countries women are now struggling heroically for their rights, meeting sharp resistance from their male competitors and in particular from bour-

geois governments. But nowhere in the world have they been able to achieve those rights which all citizenesses of the Soviet republic exercise naturally. Women in the Soviet Union do not have to demand from their governments the right to work, the right to an education and the protection of maternity. The state itself and the government draw women into work, opening wide all the avenues of social endeavour to them, assisting and rewarding mothers.

At the time of the nazi invasion Soviet women and the women of the democratic countries were filled with the conviction that an unremitting struggle with fascism had to be waged. Only in this way, they believed, could they free the world from the danger of new wars. The fight for democracy and a stable peace, and the struggle against reaction and fascism, are still the fundamental task today. The isolation of women from the fundamental questions, attempts to lock women in "purely women's" feminist organizations, can only weaken the women's democratic movement. Only the victory of democracy guarantees women's equality.

We, the women of the land of the Soviets, devote all our energies to creative labour and to the fulfilment of the glorious projects of the five-year plan, knowing that in this way we are strengthening the world's stronghold of peace — the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. At the same time we must keep a sharp watch on the intrigues of the reactionaries, to expose their plans and schemes and their attempts to divide the ranks of democracy. The unity of all democratic forces is our truest weapon in the struggle against reaction and in the fight for peace and freedom in the

world.

The 8th of March

1947

The International Women's Day — March 8, is coming, the celebration of female achievements and the Day of struggle of women of all nations and nationalities for women's equality, and hence for the victory of democracy and peace.

When at the International Conference of Socialists in Copenhagen in 1910 Clara Zetkin made a proposal to establish March 8 as International Women's Day and to celebrate it every year under the banner of struggle for equality and emancipation of women, all delegations unanimously adopted this proposal. But Clara Zetkin put forward at the same time also the second task of the 8th of March: namely, the joint struggle of women in all countries of the world against the policies of imperialist governments, leading to the inevitable bloody clashes between the nations.

In those years, the war seemed to us far away, we could not imagine that in the next 40 years, humanity will survive the horror and shock of the two imperialist wars. But a clear mind and a strong Marxist thinking allowed Zetkin to foresee that the tasks of the 8th of March are not limited to the issues of women's rights, and will inevitably be intertwined with the fight for democracy and against the warmongers.

For the second year, women of all countries celebrate March the 8th in peaceful conditions, but the wounds left over from the nazi atrocities and invasions are still fresh. Still, in all countries, there is feverish work ongoing for restoring the economy and cul-

ture after severe post-war turmoil and destruction. Acute wounds are still aching, caused by the loss of our heroic husbands and sons.

Democratic women of all countries were able to show themselves to be good patriots, selflessly fighting for the freedom and independence of their countries, bravely fighting and dying for the great ideals of humanity.

And now, after the two imperialist wars, in almost all the countries of Europe, America, Mexico, China — women received political equality; however, in the colonial countries and among national minorities (e.g. Negroes in the U.S.), women still have no rights.

If the self-sacrificing struggle of the British suffragettes, if the wildest dreams of Olympe de Gouges in France, Suzanne Anton in the United States, Frederick Bremer in Sweden, Camilla Caleta in Norway, Mary Wollstonecraft in England and of thousands of other fighters for women's political rights are finally realized, in a number of other areas demands of women for their rights are far from being realized. Therefore, on March 8, 1947, the demands remain in force, such as equal pay for equal work, closely linked to the right to education and to the highest qualifications, elimination of the inequality of women by marital code of laws in most bourgeois countries, and finally, the organization of living conditions so that each woman could combine her professional work and motherhood.

Only in the USSR all of the above requirements are not on the agenda for women. They were made a reality by the Stalin Constitution and entered into effect. From the first days, the Soviet power recognized

in full the equality of its citizens of all Soviet republics, whether it is a woman or a backward nomadic nation or an Eskimo woman of the hunting tribes of the far north. The Soviet Union achieved at the same time the most difficult task — after having given the rights to women, it has provided her the opportunity to fulfil their social responsibilities, created a widely developed network of institutions to provide maternity care for the family and children.

And that is especially important and significant, while in all other countries, women had and even still have to fight for the right to participate in politics and in government, in the USSR Soviet government from the first days of its existence, not only did everything to involve women in politics and to put them in positions of responsibility, but also managed to raise the masses of women in Russia, workers, peasants, intellectuals, and to prepare them for the state positions, for the following functions, from small roles (organization of nurseries, health centres) to high government positions (ministers, ambassadors, members of the Supreme Soviet).

Today in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR there are women elected.

The Soviet state involves women not only in all areas of work as full and equal citizens, but also seeks to use the talents of women in science, administration, technology and even in military affairs.

It is not necessary to repeat here the role heroic Russian women have played in the struggle against fascism and the victory over the German invaders. Their role is well known and recognized by all democrats of our planet. During the Great Patriotic War

various orders were awarded to 119,789 women, and 47 women received the high title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

The Stalin Constitution, which asserts the full equality of women, puts women in a special position in the USSR. It seems that March the 8th loses its significance here. But do not forget about the second task of the 8th of March — on the joint struggle of women in all countries for the policy of peace, for the fight against warmongers.

The Soviet Union in its international policy is doing everything to root out the remnants of fascism, to curb the imperialist tendencies of violence against the will of other countries and nations.

In this difficult goal of the struggle for the strengthening of the policy of peace the hearts of Soviet women are united with the wishes of all democratic women of all countries on the day of March 8, 1947.

Our goal is the friendship between the peoples, the fight against warmongers in all countries. This task can be done effectively if women will rely on international women's solidarity and support of the International Democratic Federation of Women.

The victory of democracy provides women with equal rights and removes the threat of war.

The fight against the remnants of fascism, support of the political line of the Soviet Union in the United Nations for the consolidation of peace — this is the slogan of March 8, 1947.