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## Love, family life, career: Behind the Soviet law limiting abortions and increasing aid to mothers

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# **LOVE - FAMILY LIFE - CAREER**

Behind the Soviet Law  
Limiting Abortions and  
Increasing Aid to Mothers

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## INTRODUCTION

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### Soviet Motherhood a Proud Calling

**D**URING the first years of the Socialist Revolution, when the Land of the Soviets was in the throes of Civil War and was faced by blockade, the press abroad gave wide publicity to what they called "nationalization of women." "Women in Soviet Russia have been nationalized," they cried, calling for a crusade against "a country wrecking the family and morality."

Later, the same papers were compelled to deny their own stories of "nationalization of women," but to this day, talk about socialism destroying the family is still met with occasionally. It is hardly necessary today to refute this slander, for events have already refuted it—the development and strengthening of family ties in the Soviet Union is the best refutation that can be offered.

A new and perhaps most striking illustration of the healthy family relationship existing in the U.S.S.R. is furnished by the discussion of the draft law for the prohibition of abortions and for further assistance to mothers which is being participated in by the entire population of the country. Tens of millions of people are gathering together with the purpose of exchanging their views on the proposed law. The results of the country-wide discussion lead to one conclusion: hearty approval of the essence of the draft.

There can be little doubt that in capitalist countries the great underlying cause of abortions is women's lack of security, their uncertainty over what tomorrow will bring. This is true not only of the unmarried woman, who fears the double burden of economic insecurity and of social stigma upon herself and her child. It is also true of married women, who, faced with the problem of bearing and rearing children, find the odds too heavy against them.

Uncounted thousands find their way out of this dilemma



in abortion, at the risk of crippling themselves for life or even worse.

The connection of these phenomena with an economic structure which fails to afford security to great masses of people is obvious. In capitalist society, with its crisis, unemployment and growing impoverishment of the masses, millions of women are absolutely dependent upon their husbands and their husbands' chances of employment for their own protection and the rearing of their children.

It is this insecurity that makes the position of the unmarried mother so tragic in bourgeois society. The dependent position of woman outside the Soviet Union, her lack of social and economic security—these are the principal causes of abortions.

In the Soviet Union there are no unemployed, and the rise of living standards has made the joy of motherhood and fatherhood accessible to all. Nor can the country complain of a low birth rate. In a remarkably short period, the U.S.S.R. has achieved a striking reduction in its death rate, coupled with a steady rise in the birth rate. "Now every year in our country the net increase of the population is about three million. This means that each year we have an increase equivalent to the whole population of Finland." (Stalin)

The proposed law of the Soviet government aims at the protection of the health of Soviet women, at the rearing of a healthy, happy generation. N. V. Krylenko, People's Commissar of Justice of the R.S.F.S.R., admirably expressed this in the following words:

"It would be a mistake to think that the chief features of the draft of the law consist only in the fact that it prohibits abortions. The draft represents a whole system of measures directed toward a single aim, the aim of protecting the health of more than half of the population of the U.S.S.R., that is to say, the women, and of bringing up a strong and healthy generation of future citizens—people who will continue and complete the great work of building socialism begun by us."

The Proletarian Revolution has made millions of women

economically independent. It has created conditions which have completely changed the basis on which marriage relations are formed.

Abundance, security, confidence in the future—these are the basic conditions which allow Soviet people to approach the questions of motherhood and family relations in a new way. Real love and comradeship between husband and wife, real affection and care for children are given every opportunity to flourish. In such a situation there can be no room for light-mindedness and irresponsibility in sexual relationship—all the more since their consequences bear most heavily upon the children of the offenders—hence the provisions of the new law designed to enforce parental responsibility.

The time is ripe for all of these questions to be raised in the Soviet Union. Through active participation in socialist construction the people of the U.S.S.R. are building the economic and cultural prerequisites for a classless, socialist society. Standards of living and culture are rising with unexampled rapidity. In such a situation it is unthinkable that family relations, too, should not be transmuted to a new and higher plane.

It is characteristic of Soviet life that these problems are being taken up in all their complexity. It is characteristic of Soviet democracy that a law which affects so many people should be presented for thorough discussion and consideration before the entire population of the country.



## **Text of Draft Law \***

### **On Abortions and Aid to Mothers**

#### I.

##### *On Prohibition of Abortions*

1. In view of the proven harm of abortions, to forbid the performance of abortions both in hospitals and special health institutions, and in the homes of doctors and private homes of pregnant women. The performance of abortions shall be allowed only in those cases when the continuation of pregnancy endangers the life or threatens serious injury to the health of the pregnant woman, and only under conditions of hospitals and maternity homes.

2. For the performance of abortions outside a hospital or in a hospital under conditions violating the above provisions, the doctor performing the abortion shall be criminally punishable to the extent of one to two years of imprisonment, while for the performance of abortions under unsanitary conditions or by persons who have no special medical education a criminal penalty of no less than three years' imprisonment shall be fixed.

3. For compelling a woman to undergo an abortion, a criminal penalty of two years' imprisonment shall be fixed.

4. In relation to pregnant women undergoing an abortion in violation of the said prohibition, to establish as a criminal penalty a social reprimand, and in the event of a repetition of the violation of the law on the prohibition of abortions, a fine up to 300 rubles.

#### II.

##### *On Increasing Material Aid by the State to Women Giving*

##### *Birth and on Establishing State Aid to Large Families*

5. In order to improve the material position of mothers,

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\* Since the printing of this pamphlet, the draft has become a law with some few changes.

both working women and employees insured in the organs of social insurance, to increase the allowance issued from the state social insurance funds for the purpose of procuring the necessary articles of infant care, from 32 rubles to 45 rubles.

6. To increase the allowance issued to the mother for nursing the infant, from five rubles to 10 rubles a month.

7. In relation to uninsured toiling women—members of cooperative artels and enterprises—to establish that the said allowances be issued by the cooperative mutual aid funds on the same basis.

8. To abolish the limitation fixed by the code of labor laws for women employees (Article 132), making them equal to working women in regard to the length of the leave accorded prior to and after childbirth (56 days prior to and 56 days after childbirth).

9. To establish a criminal penalty for refusal to employ women for reasons of pregnancy, for reducing their wages on the same grounds, providing in the law the obligation of preserving for the pregnant woman, while transferring her to lighter work, her former wages based on earnings for the last six months' work.

10. To establish a state allowance for mothers of large families—for those having seven children, an annual allowance of 2,000 rubles for five years for each subsequent child from the day of its birth, while for mothers having 11 children one state allowance of 5,000 rubles on the birth of each subsequent child and an annual allowance of 3,000 rubles for a period of four years following the child's first birthday.

### III.

#### *On Extension of the Network of Maternity Homes*

To instruct the People's Commissariats of Health of the constituent republics:

11. In order to provide medical assistance in special maternity homes for all women giving birth in cities, industrial and district centers, to establish and open by January



1, 1939, 11,000 new maternity beds, of which in addition to the 4,200 beds provided by the 1936 plan, there are to be established: In 1936, 2,000 beds; in 1937, 4,000 beds; in 1938, 5,000 beds.

12. In order to extend medical service to women during birth in rural localities, to provide and put into use 32,000 maternity beds, of which 16,000 beds in the maternity wards of village hospitals shall be at the expense of the state budget and 16,000 beds by organizing collective farm maternity homes, 75 per cent of the cost of their organization to be put at the expense of collective farms and 25 per cent at the expense of the state budget.

These are to include:

In 1936—In addition to the 4,300 maternity beds in village hospitals and the 5,000 beds in collective farm maternity homes scheduled by the 1936 plan, 4,000 beds in hospitals and 4,000 beds in collective farm maternity homes.

In 1937—6,000 beds in hospitals and 6,000 beds in collective farm maternity homes.

In 1938—6,000 beds in hospitals and 6,000 beds in collective farm maternity homes.

13. In order to provide women giving birth who are not served by lying-in hospitals with obstetrical assistance in their homes, to open by January 1, 1939, 14,000 new obstetrical stations of which 2,700 obstetrical stations are to be opened in the villages and 1,370 obstetricians appointed to the new collective farm maternity homes in 1936, 5,000 obstetrical stations in the villages and 2,000 obstetricians at the new collective farm maternity homes in 1937; figures for 1938 are to be 6,700 and 2,000.

#### IV.

##### *On the Extension of the Network of Nurseries*

14. To double by January 1, 1939 the existing network of nursery beds for children in the cities, state farms, workers' settlements and on the railways, increasing their total number to 800,000 beds by putting into service:

In 1936 in addition to the 34,000 beds provided by the

1936 plan, 100,000 new beds; in 1937, 150,000 new beds; in 1938, 150,000 new beds. Total, 400,000 new beds.

15. To double by January 1, 1939, the existing network of nursery beds both in permanent and seasonal collective farm nurseries in rural localities, increasing the number of beds in permanent nurseries by 500,000 and in seasonal nurseries by four million beds, including:

In 1936, in addition to the 70,000 beds in permanent collective farm nurseries scheduled by the 1936 plan ..... 100,000 beds

In seasonal nurseries in addition to one million beds according to the 1936 plan..... 500,000 beds

In 1937 in permanent collective farm nurseries ..... 200,000 beds

In seasonal nurseries ..... 1,500,000 beds

In 1938 in permanent collective farm nurseries ..... 200,000 beds

In seasonal nurseries ..... 2,000,000 beds

The People's Commissariats of Health of the constituent republics and the territory, province and district executive committees are to supervise the development of the above network of nurseries.

16. To instruct the People's Commissariats of Health of the constituent republics to secure the appropriate personnel for the newly-opened institutions by allotting 15 millions rubles in addition to the appropriations made for the training of the intermediate medical personnel.

17. To instruct the Peoples Commissariats of Health of the constituent republics to build during three years so as to complete by Jan. 1, 1939, an additional 800 new dairy kitchens in the cities, industrial and district centers for the feeding of 1.5 million children under three years of age and to open:

In 1936—30 kitchens of the first category (at an estimated cost of 83,000 rubles each); 100 kitchens of the second category (at an estimated cost of 65,000 rubles each).

In 1937—70 kitchens of the first category; 200 kitchens of the second category.

In 1938—100 kitchens of the first category; 300 kitchens of the second category.



V.

*On Enlarging Network of Kindergartens*

18. To triple the functioning network of permanent kindergartens in cities, factory settlements, and on railways within three years, bringing it up to 2.1 million places by Jan. 1, 1939 (as against 700,000 places in the present network of kindergartens); and at state farms, plants and institutions in village localities, up to 300,000 places, as against 130,000 places of the present network, for which purpose the following must be built and put into operation:

In 1936: in cities, factory settlements, and on railways, in addition to 250,000 places planned according to the 1936 program ..... 150,000 places

At state farms and at enterprises and institutions in village localities, the plan for the increase of kindergartens in 1936 is to be left at the former..... 60,000 places

Total ..... 190,000 places

In 1937: in cities, factory settlements, and on railways ..... 300,000 places

At state farms and at enterprises and institutions in village localities..... 60,000 places

In 1938: in cities, factory settlements, and on railways..... 700,000 places

At state farms and at enterprises and institutions in village localities..... 50,000 places

19. To open permanent kindergartens, with 700,000 places, at collective farms in addition to the existing network of 400,000 places, by Jan. 1, 1939, as follows:

In 1936, supplementary to the planned 150,000 for 1936..... 50,000 places

Total ..... 200,000 places

In 1937 ..... 240,000 places

In 1938 ..... 260,000 places



By the same date to provide all children on collective farms with seasonal playgrounds for children of pre-school age, for which purpose the following must be built:

In 1936 (according to the 1936 plan)	4,500,000 places
In 1937 .....	7,800,000 places
In 1938 .....	10,700,000 places

Supervision of the development of the network of kindergartens and seasonal playgrounds for children of pre-school age in village localities is to be turned over to the Peoples Commissariats of Education of the constituent republics and to the territorial, province and district executive committees.

20. To obligate the Peoples Commissariats of Education of the constituent republics to train, as early as in the second half of 1936, 50,000 teachers for the kindergartens which are to be opened, releasing 35 million rubles for this purpose, according to the budgets of the Peoples Commissariats of Education of the constituent republics.

## VI.

### *On Changing the System of Supervision of Kindergartens*

21. To amend the decision of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the U.S.S.R., of July 6, 1935 (Code of Laws, No. 35, Statute 309), on concentrating the leadership and management of all kindergartens under the systems of the Peoples Commissariats of Education of the constituent republics, turning over to the jurisdiction of the economic Peoples Commissariats, institutions and enterprises those kindergartens which have children of workers and employees of these institutions and enterprises, and leaving under the jurisdiction of the Peoples Commissariats of Education only those kindergartens which serve small institutions and enterprises that do not have their own kindergartens. To place direct leadership of the kindergartens under the administration of the enterprise or institution where the kindergarten is organized, with the participation of the factory and plant

trade union committees and Young Communist League organizations of these plants and institutions. To reserve for the Peoples Commissariats of Education of the constituent republics general pedagogical leadership, control of the correct structure of the network of the kindergartens and the training of pedagogical cadres.

The Council of Peoples Commissars of the U.S.S.R. is to determine the method of transferring and financing the kindergartens, and also the method of construction and financing new kindergartens in connection with the newly-established system of supervision and management of kindergartens.

## VII.

### *On Financing the Above Measures*

22. In accordance with this decision, to assign, over and above the sum allocated for 1936 in the state and local budgets and the social insurance budget (1,481,300,000 rubles for maternity homes, midwife stations, nurseries, dairies and kindergartens), additional for 1936, 692,800,000 rubles for the construction and development of the network of these institutions, increasing the general amount assigned in 1936 to 2,174,100,000 rubles as against 875 million rubles in 1935.

From the above-mentioned 692,800,000 rubles to use on the construction of:

(a) Maternity beds in cities.....	22,200,000 rubles
(b) Maternity beds in villages.....	23,800,000 rubles
(c) Children's nurseries in cities.....	320,000,000 rubles
(d) Kindergartens in cities .....	221,000,000 rubles
(e) Dairy kitchens .....	9,000,000 rubles
Total for construction .....	596,000,000 rubles
On operating expenses:	
(a) For the maintenance of the newly-opened maternity beds and midwife stations .....	5,000,000 rubles



(b) For maintenance until the end of 1936 of newly-built children's nurseries.	11,800,000 rubles
(c) For the extension and improvement of the net-work of functioning kindergartens by means of utilizing and transforming into kindergartens new sites, porches and other light types of buildings in existing kindergartens, and small repairs to buildings taken over. . . .	30,000,000 rubles
Total . . . . .	46,800,000 rubles
On training cadres:	
(a) For training midwives and nurses of the Peoples Commissariat of Health.	15,000,000 rubles
(b) For teachers for town kindergartens of the Peoples Commissariat of Education . . . . .	17,000,000 rubles
(c) For preparation of teachers for village kindergartens of the Peoples Commissariat of Education. . . . .	18,000,000 rubles
Total . . . . .	50,000,000 rubles

23. To assign 70,500,000 rubles for increased maternity aid in accordance with Par. 5, 6, and 8 of this decision.

24. The Council of Peoples Commissars of the U.S.S.R. to guarantee the necessary materials for the projected construction in order that the Peoples Commissariats can begin construction by July 1 of this year.

25. To amend, for the purpose of establishing a uniform fixed system of financing kindergartens and children's nurseries, the decision of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the U.S.S.R. of July 6, 1935 (Code of Laws, No. 35, 1935, Par. 310), "On obligatory dues of undertakings and institutions for the maintenance of children's nurseries and kindergartens," to one-quarter of one per cent of the wage fund, to fix direct allocations of 300 million rubles for 1936 for this purpose from the state budget, and to make the corresponding changes in the finance plans of the economic organs and institutions, and also in the income and expenditure sides of the state social insurance budget.



*On More Severe Penalty for Non-Payment  
of Alimony and Alterations in the  
Legislation on Divorce*

26. To amend the existing laws on marriage, family and guardianship, with the aim of combatting light-minded attitudes toward the family and family obligations, and to introduce in divorce proceedings the personal attendance at Z.A.G.S. (Civil Registry Bureau) of both divorcees and the entry into the passports of the divorcees of the fact of divorce.

27. To increase the fees for registration of divorce as follows: 50 rubles for the first divorce, 150 rubles for the second, and 300 rubles each for the third and subsequent divorces.

To allot in court judgement on alimony one-third of the wages of the defendant for the maintenance of one child; 50 per cent for the maintenance of two children, and 60 per cent of the wages of the defendant for the maintenance of three or more children.

29. Payments to collective farm women to be made in workdays on the same basis.

If the mother receiving alimony is a collective farm woman and works with the defendant on the same collective farm, the management of the collective farm in calculating the workdays shall directly enter the corresponding share of the workdays earned by the father (if there are children) to the account of the mother. If the mother works on another collective farm, this entry in favor of the mother of the corresponding share of the workdays earned by the father shall be deducted on behalf of the mother in the final accounting of the workdays, by the management of the collective farm where the father works.

30. To raise to two years imprisonment the penalty for non-payment of funds awarded by court for the maintenance of children, the search for persons refusing to pay alimony to be made at their expense.

## What Have You To Say—

About this draft law?

About the needs of mothers in our country?

About measures that will assist mothers and children in our country?



The WOMAN TODAY will publish opinions for and against the draft law or sections of it.

The WOMAN TODAY will publish excerpts from letters and discussions of parents, teachers, workers, students and others recently conducted in the Soviet Union around this draft law, if it receives enough requests to do so.

WHAT IS YOUR WISH?



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