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SOVIET WOMAN

A Citizen

With

Equal

Rights



By N. K. KRUPSKAYA

SOVIET WOMAN—A CITIZEN
WITH EQUAL RIGHTS



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Nadezhda Konstantinova

Soviet Woman

A Citizen
With Equal Rights

A Collection of Articles
and Speeches



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Women in Russia



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FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

Lecture Delivered in the Institute of Mass Radio Education

THE POSITION of woman depends entirely on the prevailing social system. In a land of slavery, of serfdom, woman is a slave—a slave to the landlord, a slave to her husband. Nor has she any rights under the law. In the epoch of capitalism, which is actually wage slavery, the working woman is dependent on the employers, on those who hire her and her husband. The fear of unemployment puts the working woman into the power of the employers. In the epoch of capitalism open and concealed prostitution flourishes; family relations are governed mainly by material considerations; the political rights of women are restricted. It is only socialism that can bring women complete emancipation in their work and home life and endow them with equal rights in all fields of activity. This dependence of the position of women on the social system is clearly and definitely set forth in the doctrine of Marx and Engels, and this point of view has always been defended by our Party. Ever since it was founded, the Bolshevik Party has fought for equal rights for women.

In 1899, while in exile, Lenin considered the matter of a program for the Party. At that time the Party had no program as yet. There was only a draft program drawn up by the "Emancipation of Labour" group. In discussing this program in an article entitled "The Draft Program for our Party," Lenin wrote that clause 9 of the practical part of the program, which called for the com-

plete revision of the civil and criminal code, the abolition of "division into estates and penalties incompatible with the self-respect of a human being," should also contain the words: "establishment of complete equality of rights between men and women."

The Party program adopted at the Second Congress embodied these ideas of Lenin's.

In 1907, in his report on the international congress at Stuttgart, Lenin noted with satisfaction that the congress had condemned the opportunist tactics of the Austrian Social-Democrats, who had begun a fight for the franchise for men, leaving the fight for woman suffrage for "later."

The women of our country covered themselves with glory in the fight for their emancipation. They took an active part in all the political struggles of the working class and fought with ardour for Soviet power.

In Russia serfdom existed until the sixties of the last century. While in other European countries it had already been abolished, it still prevailed in Russia. Now there is scarcely an old woman left who could tell stories of the Russian peasant woman's hard lot, of what she had to go through under serfdom. Our young people nowadays learn about serfdom only from literature—from the works of Shchedrin, the poems of Nekrassov, and other classics that give life-like pictures of the position of women under serfdom.

Serfdom was replaced by capitalism. This new system needed "free hands." However, the capitalists strove to keep the workers, who were now no longer serfs, in darkness and ignorance, for it was much simpler and easier to exploit people who were ignorant and backward. The tsar abetted in every way the attempts of the landlords and capitalists to preserve the survivals of the old

system, and made it possible for them to employ the crudest and most barefaced forms of exploitation. The West-European capitalists ground down their workers in a more subtle way. They strove to conceal their robbery of the latter, to deceive them. The flagrant robbery of the workers by the Russian capitalists cut both ways. On the one hand it permitted unlimited exploitation, but on the other hand it opened the eyes of even the most backward workers to the true state of affairs. The forms of exploitation were especially brazen in the Caucasus and in Asia. It was not by chance that in these districts women were oppressed even more than elsewhere.

It was the women of the middle-class intelligentsia (teachers, office workers, nurses, and the like) who were most affected by the abolition of serfdom. They entered on an active struggle for their emancipation, and in many cases joined the revolutionary movements of their time. The intelligentsia was also greatly influenced by the American Civil War (1861-65), which echoed its sentiments in respect to the abolition of slavery.

But while the women intellectuals of Russia were often freer in their actions and more revolutionary than those abroad, the "silence of the ages" still reigned "in the depths of Russia," as Nekrassov wrote, and the peasant women were still slaves in the fullest sense of the word.

The survivals of slavery in the life of a Russian woman are vividly portrayed in Gorky's story "The Conclusion," written in 1895.

The widespread labour movement of the 'nineties drew hundreds of working women into the revolutionary struggle.

On January 9, 1905, the working women marched to the Winter Palace together with their husbands and brothers—and like them were shot down. In the Revo-

lution of 1905 the working women marched shoulder to shoulder with the men.

The World War which broke out in 1914 drew large numbers of women and girls into the factories, and gave a much greater measure of self-reliance to the peasant women on the farms. The women working in the factories developed very quickly. Agitation against tsarism, which had dragged the country into a predatory war, met with a particularly warm response from them. It was no accident that the February Revolution began with a demonstration of working women who marched into the streets on March 8 (February 23, old style) crying, "Down with war!" "Give us bread!"

But the February Revolution, though it overthrew tsarism, did not overthrow the power of the landlords and capitalists, did not liberate the working and peasant women; it merely helped them to find their bearings in the problems that agitated them, helped them to organize.

In the preparations for the socialist October Revolution the working women of Petrograd, the wives of workers who had been driven to the battle-fields, played a part of no little importance. They carried on Bolshevik agitation among the soldiers and took part in demonstrations for Soviet power, closely linking up all their activity with the general revolutionary struggle of the working class.

The chief slogans of the October Revolution, rousing the masses, were: "Peace!" and "Land!" These slogans were close to the interests of both workers and peasants, of working and peasant women.

The socialist October Revolution gave the working and peasant women equal rights with men in all respects, sweeping away all traces of the old inequality before the law. But equality before the law is only half the battle

won. What is most important is the actual emancipation of women. Lenin wrote repeatedly about this.

"The Bolshevik, Soviet Revolution cuts at the root of the oppression and inequality of women more deeply than any party or any revolution in the world has dared to do. Not a trace of inequality between men and women before the law has been left in our country, in Soviet Russia. The particularly base, despicable and hypocritical inequality of marital and family rights, inequality in relation to the child, has been completely abolished by the Soviet government.

"This is only the first step towards the emancipation of women. But not a single bourgeois republic, even the most democratic, has dared to take even this first step. They dare not do so out of fear of 'sacred private property.'

"The second and principal step is the abolition of the private ownership of land, factories and works. This, and this alone, opens the way for the complete and real emancipation of women, their emancipation from 'domestic slavery,' by passing from petty, individual, domestic economy to large-scale social economy."*

The working women fought side by side with the men on the barricades of the October Revolution, and they were victorious. But this was not enough. The conquests had to be defended. The Civil War served to draw the working women into politics to an even greater extent. It opened the eyes of even the most backward peasant women to the true state of affairs. It showed them what they could expect if power were again to fall into the hands of the enemies of the Soviet power.

In the town of Kustanai, Lieutenant-Colonel Tomashvsky, Commander of the White garrison, issued an order on April 22, 1919, stating:

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 500-01, Co-operative Publishing Society, Moscow, 1937.

"I have personally become convinced that in the rebellion of Bolshevik bands in the town of Kustanai and in the neighbouring hamlets not only men but also women actually took part, the latter taking the liberty of firing from behind corners, through windows, from the roofs and attics, on the valorous defenders of our country. Up to the present time these criminals have been left alone and have not received adequate punishment for their treason.

"Holding that shooting and hanging are entirely unsuitable and much too honourable an execution to be applied to such criminals, I hereby give warning that the only method to be applied by me to the above-mentioned persons will be flogging, to death if necessary. I am more than convinced that these domestic means of correction will have the proper effect on this weak-minded crowd, which will then in accordance with its designation devote itself exclusively to cooking and bringing up a new and better generation, and not to politics, which are absolutely alien to its understanding."

The population was extensively informed of this order, and it was actually carried out. While in the Urals in the summer of 1919, I met a young girl whose mother, a teacher, had been flogged to death by the Whiteguards. Facts like these spoke more eloquently than any words, and working and peasant women joined the guerilla detachments and fought actively against the Whiteguards.

The downtrodden and ignorant peasant women were helped by the more enlightened working women of the towns to understand what was going on around them. I remember, for instance, how in the Urals in 1919 working women would go to the villages on their free days to help the peasant women in their housework, washing clothes or nursing the children. Their words were particularly convincing to the peasant women.

Building Socialist Society

Together with their husbands and brothers the working women fought for Soviet power. Together with them they successfully defended it. They took part in demonstrations, fought at the front, suffered every hardship in fighting the Whites. And later, when the necessity arose, they took part in the *subbotniks*,* and carried on a struggle against economic disruption.

Soviet power is the power of the working people, and all that it has given to the working and peasant men it has also given to the working and peasant women.

In our country equal rights are enjoyed by the women of all nationalities—Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Mordvinians, and all others. In every Soviet Socialist Republic of our Union women have equal rights with men.

These rights are not only embodied in the laws, but—what is the main thing—are realized in practice. Soviet working women, peasant women, women intellectuals participate on an equal basis with men in the social, political, cultural and economic life of the country.

Let us take a few figures.**

In tsarist Russia 636,000 women were employed in large-scale industry in 1913. In 1935, 2,563,000 women were employed in large-scale industry in the Soviet Union, and in the entire national economy there were

* From the word "subbota," meaning Saturday, or the Sabbath. A *subbotnik* was voluntary labour performed gratis after regular working hours, originally on Saturday. Subsequently the term was applied to similar work performed on the rest day, or on any other day in the week. The work usually consisted of clearing railway tracks, loading or unloading railway cars, helping collective farms, or of work on construction jobs, such as the Underground Railway in Moscow, which all Moscow helped to build.

** These figures apply to 1935.

7,933,000 women, 33.2 per cent of the total number of working people.

The Soviet trading system employs 282,000 women.

Ninety per cent of the teachers in elementary schools and 50 per cent of those in secondary schools are women. Women constitute 26.9 per cent of the research workers and post-graduate students at the scientific research institutions.

In 1914 there were 1,919 women doctors, and in 1935, 40,023. Nearly half the country's doctors are women.

Collectivization Has Liberated the Peasant Woman for All Time

Beginning with the very first days of Soviet government Lenin stressed the necessity of going over from individual farming to social, collective agriculture. There were attempts to organize communes as far back as 1918, when, for instance, Petrograd workers from the Obukhov and Semyannikov Works went to the Altai and organized communes there. But the complete economic disruption of that time and the Civil War ruined their work. Twenty-eight of the commune members were slaughtered by the Kolchak troops, while the rest scattered. These twenty-eight fell, but their work was not fruitless; it did not vanish without a trace. Their friends, wives and children intensified the hatred for the Whites and worked to consolidate the Soviet power.

After we had not only restored industry, but had begun to build new industries, particularly the industries producing tractors and agricultural machinery, when the peasants, taught by the Party's determined struggle against the kulaks and by the development of agricultural co-operatives, collective farms and state farms, became

convinced of the advantages of collective agriculture, they flocked into the collective farms.

We all know what an enormous part collectivization played in changing the whole mode of life in our country.

Individual peasant farming gave rise to a petty-bourgeois, petty-proprietor psychology. "Each for himself," the peasant said. Collectivization has altered the entire aspect of the countryside.

Collectivization meant the victory of socialism in the countryside.

Collectivization drew town and country closer together and increased the might of the whole country.

A single system, the socialist system of economy, began to dominate in town and country.

Collectivization was not carried out by an order from above. "Living socialism is the creative work of the popular masses themselves," Lenin said immediately after Soviet power had been established. And Comrade Stalin combated all attempts to carry out collectivization by an order from above.

Collectivization was carried out in a bitter struggle against the kulaks and against the Right opportunists, who opposed the liquidation of the kulaks as a class and advocated the theory of the "peaceful growth of the kulaks into socialism,"—the very kulaks of whom Lenin had written in 1918 that they were "the most brutal, callous and savage exploiters, who in the history of other countries have time and again restored the power of the landlords, tsars, priests and capitalists."*

On the basis of complete collectivization, overcoming the vicious resistance of our class enemies, we did away with the last exploiting class—the kulaks.

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 130, Co-operative Publishing Society, Moscow, 1936.

Collectivization brought machinery to the fields of the collective farms. The mechanization of agriculture made work more rational and many times more productive; it greatly increased the desire of the collective farm men and women for knowledge.

The collective farms liberated the peasant woman.

The collective farm woman has become a force in the countryside. As soon as the Soviet government was established it gave women equal rights with men and passed a number of laws for the protection of mother and child; but it was only collectivization that laid a solid foundation under these rights and liberated the working woman for all time.

“As for the women collective farmers,” Comrade Stalin said at the First All-Union Congress of Collective Farm Shock Brigade Workers on February 19, 1933, “they must remember the power and significance of the collective farms for women, they must remember that only in the collective farm have they the opportunity of becoming equal with men. Without collective farms—inequality; in collective farms—equal rights. Let our comrades, the women collective farmers, remember this and let them guard the collective farm system as the apple of their eye.”

Our collective farm women are ever mindful of these words of Comrade Stalin's; they see how correct he is and support the collective farms to the utmost. No Whiteguards, no fascists, no enemies of the people from among the Trotskyite-Zinovievite agents of German and Japanese fascism, assassins, spies, wreckers and diversionists, and their allies from among the Right renegades can put back the clock of history now. Our victories in all branches of socialist construction are great. It was with good cause that we could put down as the first article in our

new Constitution: “The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of workers and peasants.” Ours is the only country in which the workers and peasants are in power. Our capitalist neighbours, particularly fascist Germany and Japan, would like to get rid of our Soviet country, or at least to engage it in a war and take away from it the Ukraine and the Far East. Germany and Japan are doing all in their power to start this war and to weaken our fighting capacity. They smuggle spies, wreckers and diversionists across our borders, and employ for this purpose the enemies of the people—the Trotskyites, the former kulaks, gendarmes, officers and so on, who lie in concealment in dark corners. That is why we must increase our revolutionary vigilance and thoroughly examine people. We must get hold of all the enemies of the people, all those who want to deprive us of a free and happy life.

*Socialism Has Liberated Forever the Women
of the National Minorities*

The socialist revolution awakened not only the Russian working women, but also the women of the national minorities, among whom the survivals of the old were still more deeply ingrained. Lenin paid particular attention to the matter of involving in socialist work the women of the national minorities, who were especially oppressed.

Whenever I hear women comrades from Central Asia or the North Caucasus speak at meetings I cannot help recalling one fact. Some time during the session of the Second Congress of the Comintern a women's conference was called to which women from Uzbekistan, Turkmenia and other distant regions came. They had taken off their

veils, but if a man happened to come into their dormitories they would fling themselves flat on the beds to hide their faces—they were still ruled by old custom.

But once when Lenin and I were going from the House of Trade Unions to the Kremlin we encountered several of these delegates from the national minorities. At the sight of Vladimir Ilyich they became greatly agitated. One of the women came up and embraced him. They began to speak, each in her own language, and then burst into tears. Vladimir Ilyich was greatly moved himself. When we went on he said: "The very depths have risen; now the victory of socialism in our country is assured." This shows what importance he attached to drawing women into social work and into Party work.

The development of industry and the collectivization of agriculture is progressing to an ever greater extent in the national minority republics and regions of the Soviet Union. Republics that were formerly backward economically are now among the most advanced. All this has ensured the complete emancipation of the women of the national minorities. Only a blind man can fail to see this. Friendship among the various peoples of our union is growing and becoming stronger; their trust in the Communist Party and their love of and faith in Comrade Stalin, its leader, a true pupil of Lenin, unites them all.

Women Govern the State

The winter of 1935 vividly demonstrated our achievements. Throughout the winter, conferences were held between the leaders of our Party and of the Soviet government and the shock brigade workers of various branches of industry, the shock brigade workers of the collective farms, the representatives of the working peo-

ple of various nationalities. These conferences clearly indicated how the consciousness of the people has developed, how the whole system in our country has changed, how the people have changed, how the position of the working and collective farm women has changed and what active participants in socialist construction they have become. Women beet growers, milkmaids, tractor drivers, stock farm workers, weavers, members and chairwomen of town and village Soviets and district executive committees, and chairwomen of collective farms—women of all nationalities—showed in their impassioned speeches at these meetings what they have now become. Their speeches were particularly enthusiastic, told a great deal and were to the point. They were simple tales of the great work of construction, and this simplicity and conciseness moved all who heard them.

We have recently celebrated the anniversaries of the establishment of various socialist republics. Each republic summed up its achievements. Crushed and downtrodden under tsarism, these republics now told how they were flourishing, how their people were developing, how beautiful was socialist life. And no small part of these achievements is the result of the active work of women in all spheres of socialist construction. In the heat of the Civil War, far back in 1919, Lenin said at the Fourth Moscow Non-Party City Conference of Women Workers:

"This work begun by the Soviet government can be advanced only when, instead of hundreds of women, we have millions and millions of women, all over Russia, taking part in it. When that is the case, we are convinced, the work of socialist construction will be firmly established. Then the toilers will show that they can live and administer without the landlords and capitalists. Then socialist construction will

be so firmly established in Russia that the Soviet Republic will have no cause to fear any external enemies in other countries, or enemies within Russia." *

The women of the Soviet Union have carried out this legacy of Lenin's. Together with the rest of the working people they have built in our country a socialist society, whose economic foundation, as Article 4 of the New Constitution says, "is the socialist system of economy and the socialist ownership of the implements and means of production firmly established as a result of the liquidation of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private property in the implements and means of production and the abolition of exploitation of man by man." Our conquests cannot be destroyed by the fascists, those defenders of the moribund capitalist order, nor by their hirelings—the vile Zinovievite and Trotskyite spies, wreckers and diversionists, who planned to restore capitalism, nor by their friends and allies, the Right renegades.

But we must not forget that the enemies of our country will make attempts to injure us, and we must always be on the alert.

In his greeting to the All-Russian Conference of Provincial Departments for Work among Women, on December 6, 1920, Lenin specially noted:

"The participation of women in Party and Soviet work becomes especially important now that the war is over and peaceful work of organization has come to the forefront, for a long time I hope; in this work women must play a leading part, and they will of course do so."**

Sixteen years have passed since Lenin wrote these lines; and the results are plainly evident.

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 499.

** Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV, p. 516, Russian ed.

Here are a few figures showing the enormous increase in the political and social activity of Soviet women.

Only 43 per cent of the women entitled to vote took part in the elections to the city Soviets in 1926, while the corresponding percentage among the men was 60 per cent. In 1934-35 this percentage of women had risen to 90.4 per cent.

The changes that have taken place in the countryside are still more striking. Only 28 per cent of the women entitled to vote took part in the elections to the village Soviets in 1926, while in 1934-35 the number had risen to 80.3 per cent.

During this same decade the proportion of women members of village Soviets has practically trebled, rising from 9.9 per cent of the total in 1926 to 26.2 per cent in 1934; for city Soviets the figures are 18.2 per cent and 30.4 per cent.

The composition of the Extraordinary Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets shows better than any words the part that the Soviet working woman takes in governing the state. Among the delegates to the Congress which discussed and endorsed the new Constitution there were 419 women, whereas at the Second Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. only 58 women were present.

At the end of 1935 the Stakhanovite Conference was held.

The Stakhanovite movement is a movement of enormous importance. From the feudal and capitalist systems the workers had inherited the habit of regarding work as a burdensome duty, for they had worked for the landowners and capitalists, had been driven to work by hunger. And many years were required to break down this old, slavish attitude towards work, to bring people to regard work as their own concern. Lenin has written a great

deal about this. He welcomed the Communist *subbotniks*. But the *subbotniks* were arranged only occasionally, to accomplish individual jobs. They constituted in embryo the communist attitude towards labour. A long time went by before labour became a matter of honour, a matter of valour and heroism for the broad masses of workers.

The Stakhanov movement is an expression of the new socialist attitude towards labour in the factories and on the collective farms. And in this movement the working and collective farm women have not lagged behind. From the very first day of the Stakhanov movement women whose names have now become a symbol of the fight for high labour productivity came to the forefront. Who does not know Dusya Vinogradova, Maria Demchenko, Pasha Angelina, and the little cotton-grower Mamlakat Nakhangova? And now Stakhanovite women in all branches of national economy are no longer exceptions, they number many thousands.

The mighty Stakhanov movement is one aspect of the impetuous growth of class consciousness among the Soviet working women, the freest in the world.

Another expression of this class consciousness is their internationalism. The assistance the Soviet women are rendering to the Spanish women and children can serve as a vivid example of their international solidarity. The events in Spain lie particularly near the hearts of our women, for they themselves have gone through all that the women of Spain are experiencing now. Having themselves fought against the Whiteguards and lost their husbands, brothers and sons in the Civil War, they can feel with the heroines of the Spanish people, they can understand the speeches of Dolores Ibarruri, that ardent and fearless Communist. She is so near, so dear to them!

But it is not only the Spanish women with whom our working and collective farm women sympathize; they sympathize with the cause for which Spain is fighting.

Active Fighters for Culture

When the labour movement began in Russia, our country was backward and ignorant. But the doctrine of Marx and Engels showed the working class the road it had to follow in order to achieve victory. Our Party made a thorough study of the experience of the revolutions in all countries; it digested and utilized the experience of the struggles of the German, French, English and Italian workers. The doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is profoundly international.

In order to master this doctrine one must be able to read, and possess at least some rudiments of general knowledge.

Those who keep up with life or even read the papers regularly cannot fail to realize what enormous creative forces have risen from below, how great and varied are their cultural demands and how great their initiative in acquiring knowledge. And in this struggle for enlightenment the women of the U.S.S.R. keep pace with the men. The heritage of the past still weighs heavily; we still have illiterates and semi-literates. But in this sphere too the women are fighting stubbornly and persistently.

Illiteracy and semi-literacy are painful heritages of the past. Under the Soviet government many millions of women have become literate; but some are still hindered by the conditions of their home life (too much housework, no one to leave the children with, and so on). Attention to the work of eliminating illiteracy and semi-

literacy had somewhat relaxed of late, and a special decision of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. (January 16, 1936) on completing this work as soon as possible became necessary.

At the Seventeenth Party Congress Comrade Stalin spoke of the increased activity of women. Speaking of the greater activity on the part of the collective farm women, he said:

“Comrades, this fact has enormous significance. It has enormous significance because women represent half the population of the country, they represent an enormous army of labour and their mission is to bring up our children, our future generation, that is to say, our future. That is why we must not permit this huge army of toilers to remain in darkness and ignorance!” *

And the women of the U.S.S.R. are studying persistently. In 1936, 198,500 women, or 39.5 per cent of the total number of students, attended universities and institutes. The corresponding number for secondary vocational schools was 289,000, or 43 per cent of the total, and for the workers' colleges 88,500, or 35.3 per cent of the total.

Among the young women employed in the machine building and textile industries, in the iron and steel industry, and in coal-mining, less than 2 per cent are illiterate. About 30 per cent of these women have already had seven years' schooling.

* *Socialism Victorious*, p. 53, Co-operative Publishing Society, Moscow, 1934.

Soviet Women Enjoy Equal Rights

The Soviet government tries to draw all women without exception into social work. In this respect the wives of business managers and engineers were rather backward, although they in particular could be of great use in improving the living conditions of the workers and their families and in helping them in their studies. The conference of wives of engineers employed in heavy industry acted as an impetus to drawing this group of women into active social work. In doing this work they themselves develop; they get a better understanding of the living conditions of the working people and many of them do very useful work. They must only constantly bear in mind that the success of their work depends on close contact with the masses, on how much they can assist the latter.

Questions of family life and family relations are matters of exceptional importance under our conditions.

Family life can lead to great happiness if it is based on mutual love. But by love we must understand not only the satisfaction of a healthy sex instinct. This feeling, which is a source of much joy, should go together with an ideological kinship, with a striving towards the same goal, with a fight for a common cause.

I remember how once when I was working in the Vyborg district of Petrograd during the war I got to talking with a certain working woman. She said:

“Now my husband is at the front I can't sleep nights wondering if he is alive or not.”

It was evident that she loved him.

“Here is what I often think about,” she went on. “I'm a Bolshevik now, and can't even imagine living without the Party and without being active as a Bolshevik. When

my husband comes back from the front what views will he hold? Maybe he's against the Bolsheviks. Then that will be the end of our life together. How can we go on living together if I am for the Bolsheviks and he's against them? We'll have to split."

And these words of hers are right: love is all very well, but to live together people must have the same points of view. Otherwise there will be no real family life such as can bring happiness to people.

In family life more than in any other phase of life one still meets survivals of the old. Sometimes you have cases when in public life, where every step of a person is public, this person does very important and interesting work, but when he comes home he is a regular tyrant over his wife and children because no one is there to see him. Of course nowadays such cases are becoming fewer all the time. If a collective farm woman's husband beats her, all the members of the collective farm will gather to discuss the incident and condemn the man. But this happens only in cases of crude despotism, whereas family relations are a subtle thing. In the period of transition from capitalism to communism the survivals of capitalism sometimes assume new forms as "protective colouring"; the old is sometimes resurrected in new forms. Under capitalism it was characteristic for family relations to be based not on love, not on mutual confidence and respect, but on material considerations. These family relations were supplemented by an utter lack of responsibility on the part of a man towards women with whom he would live without marriage. The Soviet laws have done a great deal to destroy the basis for family relations of this kind: the freedom of divorce and the alimony law have done much to make family relations more wholesome. But in some cases we still have survivals of capitalism in the

form of an irresponsible attitude on the part of a man towards motherhood, nor is there always the necessary concern for his children. This irresponsible attitude sometimes assumes the disguise of a struggle against the old family relations, which in actual fact serves to conceal an irresponsible and uncomradely attitude towards the woman. She is told to have an abortion, and that's that.

During the transition period from capitalism to communism there are many factors which hinder the elimination of this irresponsibility. The law on the prohibition of abortions which was put up for popular discussion had as its aim to help in eliminating this old, frivolous, irresponsible attitude towards women. The law on the prohibition of abortions increases the responsibility of the father and improves conditions for expectant and young mothers and for mothers of large families. Large numbers of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens intended to increase public care of mother and child are now being built. The number of permanent and seasonal nurseries is to be doubled by January 1, 1939, the number of permanent kindergartens is to be trebled, and seasonal playgrounds are to be provided for all collective farm children.

This public care of mother and child is of enormous importance. Children's nurseries, kindergartens and playgrounds not only serve to take care of the children during certain hours of the day, but also constitute centres for spreading among the parents correct views on the care of children, their health and education. The first years of a child's life are of enormous importance to its subsequent development, and it is essential to know how to take care of children properly; it is necessary to have people who can train children correctly, to show good

examples, to teach the parents the correct way of bringing up children.

In his article "The Great Beginning," written in June 1919, in speaking of the importance of a class-conscious socialist attitude towards labour on the part of the working masses, Lenin wrote:

"Take the position of women. Not a single democratic party in the world, not even in the most advanced bourgeois republic, has done in tens of years a hundredth part of what we did in the very first year we were in power. In the literal sense of the word, we did not leave a single brick standing of the despicable laws which placed women in a state of inferiority compared with men, of the laws restricting divorce, of the disgusting formalities connected with divorce, of the laws on illegitimate children and on searching for their fathers, etc. To the shame of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism be it said, numerous survivals of these laws exist in all civilized countries. We have a right a thousand times to be proud of what we have done in this sphere. But the more *thoroughly* we clear the ground of the lumber of the old bourgeois laws and institutions, the clearer it becomes to us that we are only clearing the ground for the new structure; we are not yet building it.

"Notwithstanding all the liberating laws that have been passed, woman continues to be a *domestic slave*, because *petty housework* crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real *emancipation of women*, real Communism, will begin only when a mass struggle (led by the proletariat which is in power) is started against this petty domestic economy, or rather when it is *transformed on a mass scale* into large-scale socialist economy.

"Do we in practice devote sufficient attention to this question, which, theoretically, is indisputable for every Communist? Of course not. Do we devote sufficient care to the *young*

shoots of Communism which have already sprung up in this sphere? Again we must say emphatically, No! Public dining rooms, crèches, kindergartens—these are examples of the shoots, the simple everyday means, which assume nothing pompous, grandiloquent or solemn, but which can *in fact emancipate women*, which can in fact lessen and abolish their inferiority to men in regard to their role in social production and in social life." *

That was what Lenin wrote in 1919. Now living conditions are being reorganized on a mass scale. All the necessary prerequisites for this have already been created. The U.S.S.R. has become an advanced industrial power, a country of socialist agriculture conducted on a larger scale than in any other country in the world; communism is putting forth its shoots, of which the Stakhanov movement is an example; the masses, in particular the masses of the women, are becoming more class conscious and organized; woman has become an equal citizen of the U.S.S.R. not in words but in actual fact. Solicitude for women on the part of the state is now particularly great.

The Stalin Constitution has recorded one of the greatest victories of the revolution—the final emancipation of woman.

Article 122 of our Constitution states:

"Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life.

"The possibility of exercising these rights of women is ensured by affording women equally with men the right to work, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and education, and by state protection of the interests of mother and child, maternity leave with pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens."

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 440-41.

These words of our great Stalin Constitution apply equally to the women of all nationalities.

Our Constitution has proclaimed the equality of all citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality, race or sex.

The Stalin Constitution has completed the great work of the emancipation of the working woman. All roads are open to the women of our happy, socialist country. The ranks of the builders of communist society are swelling and gaining strength, and in them woman marches as an equal citizen of socialist society.

THE SPLENDID INITIATIVE OF SOVIET WOMEN

Speech Delivered at the All-Union Conference of Wives of Engineers and Business Managers, May 11, 1936

COMRADES! Permit me first of all to greet you, who have with such fervour, with such enthusiasm joined in the great work of socialist construction.

Comrades, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin used to say that the backbone of the building of socialism is organization. He attached enormous importance to the matter of organization. Since the October Revolution our Party has performed vast organizational work, and we can already see the results of this great work, which is now being carried on under the leadership of that great organizer, Comrade Stalin—which is being carried on under the leadership of the Political Bureau of our Party. Now we can see the results of this vast work which our Party has conducted day by day to reorganize all life on a new basis.

We can feel every minute how our entire social system is changing, how collectivization has altered the old character of our countryside. I recently received a letter from collective farm women in distant Omsk, in Siberia. And this letter is simply astounding. These women write about their interests. I knew the old village. I know how petty individual farming restricted the outlook of the peasant men and women, how one could often meet a fifteen-year-old girl who had never even visited a town which was only ten versts from her village. She was not interested;

her only interests lay in her house and her farm. Collectivization put an end to this restricted outlook. Our collective farm women now look at the whole world with open eyes.

What do the Omsk women write about—what do they want to know? They want to know exactly who are real Stakhanovites, because, they write, “we were told in a report, but that’s not enough; we want to read about it ourselves in our Soviet books.” They want to become Stakhanovites themselves. They ask: “We know there are women working in the Soviets, holding various positions in Soviet institutions—what achievements have they to show?”

And you know, when one reads this one feels such a load of responsibility and one asks oneself: what have I accomplished?

When the collective farm women ask whether there are many hungry women in countries abroad and what should be done so that there should be none, and whether there is enough food for all, it is obvious that they have not yet heard about fascism, about what is happening in the Western countries. They do not know why there are so many hungry and unemployed in the capitalist countries. That means that not enough attention is paid to their proper education. They want everybody to lead a happy and joyous life. But they do not know how to achieve this. Remember, these are collective farm women, peasant women, whose ideas never went beyond their own village formerly.

What else do they write?

They are anxious to know: will there be a war or not, will there be a war with the Germans or not? They do not mention the word “international,” but they write:

“Next to us there is a German collective farm, and these Germans are farmers just like us.”

And you can see the feeling of internationalism which wells up in these collective farm women from the remote Siberian steppe.

They also write about their achievements:

“Perhaps you’ll come to visit us. We have such fine wheaten bread.”

How did they achieve this? They write that they worked hard to keep the snow on the ground.

“We took all the manure from the cow-sheds to our collective farm fields. Next year the harvest will be still better and our bread will be still finer.”

This letter from these Siberian collective farm women shows how our life is changing and what achievements we now have thanks to the vast daily work of our Party. These achievements are really tremendous.

Another point is the Stakhanov movement. This is a question about which Lenin felt very strongly. He used to say: Only a class-conscious attitude towards labour can raise labour productivity to a high level, but the workers themselves must take up this matter. And now we are taking part in developing the Stakhanov movement.

One cannot remain unmoved when one hears and reads what is written about the Stakhanov movement. This too is organizational work. The Party is guiding it, but it began among the rank and file. The working masses are reconstructing our entire production; they are really becoming the owners of it. And then in connection with the Stakhanov movement we also see a big movement among men of science, among our engineers. They are caught up by the Stakhanov movement, they are caught up by the progress of events in our great country. And, indeed, it is inconceivable that one should stand aside from

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the mighty movement that is sweeping the whole country.

And we see how our scientists, our specialists, are seeking for contact with the masses, how they attempt to come into closer touch with them.

During the current year, the Stakhanovite year, we have witnessed a number of conferences, a number of discussions between the leaders of our Party and of the government and the shock workers in various branches of work. We have seen tractor drivers and beet growers at these meetings. All these were people of labour, who formerly were lost in obscurity, whose whole life went unnoticed in the old times. And now we see new people constantly coming forward as fighters for the new organization of labour, for the new system of life, and becoming the notables of our Soviet land.

Of course, all this is bound to have its effect on people's personal lives. There is a certain factory of which you have probably heard—the Trekhgorka factory. The Stakhanovite women of this factory offered to take children from children's homes over the October holidays. I was present at a meeting held after the holidays, which was attended by the Stakhanovite women of a number of Moscow factories who had responded to the appeal of the Trekhgorka workers and had treated the children with the love and care of a mother.

It was a remarkable meeting. The heads of the children's homes related what an impression it had made on the children to be taken over the holidays. The youngsters decided: we have new fathers and mothers. But it was not only the Stakhanovite workers who grew fond of their little guests—their children did too. They kept asking when brother and sister from the children's home were coming. The children in the homes, who until then had thought that they were alone, suddenly came to feel

that they had families too. And the stories of what they felt were very interesting. They did not stay long—only three or four days. But after these few days they returned completely transformed. The heads of the homes told us that.

What the working women said was interesting. They said that the children who came from the homes folded their clothes neatly, and knew songs, but did not know real life. So it is our business, the women said, to bring them into closer contact with life. And we all know that often a childhood memory, some early experience, remains with us all our lives.

Such is the care our Stakhanovites show for children who have no families. I should also like to say the following. Children now leave the homes at the age of fourteen and go to learn a trade in the factories. But often they are not properly cared for. And I think that our engineers' wives should keep a motherly eye on them.

It is obvious that the change going on everywhere, the change in our whole life, is bound to affect people's personal lives. Formerly, the wives of engineers and responsible workers were generally out of touch with the working masses; they lived their own, secluded lives. I remember a visit Lenin's sister and I paid to the Khutorok State Farm in the North Caucasus in 1929. We arranged a meeting of the women working on this farm, and asked them to tell us about their life. I was struck by the fact that whatever they talked about they always came back to the director's wife. The things they told about that woman—they said she had sneaked someone's 15 kopeks, and some more of the same kind. I wondered what the matter was, what sort of an awful person this woman was. Then we went to see the director in his home. I saw that his wife was just like many other

wives, a very nice and pleasant person, but living in seclusion, out of contact with the workers, standing aloof from all social work. She lived outside social interests, as we used to say. I could see that she herself felt dreary and bored and did not know how to occupy her time. I was sorry for her and I also realized why people were so much against her: they did not know her, she was too distant. And I thought how strong the survivals of the old still were in everyday life. After all, it was already 1929. So much time had passed since the October Revolution, and these old survivals had still remained.

I once worked in an evening school beyond the Nevsky Gate in Leningrad. There was a textile mill there, owned by Thornton. Thornton tried to keep his workers from associating with the people from the metal works, who were more revolutionary. There were a number of metal works on the Schlüsselburg Highway, as it was then called, while Thornton's mill was on the other side of the river. So in order to prevent his workers from associating with the metal workers, Thornton made all sorts of difficulties about crossing to the other side. The weavers and spinners were told that they might lose their jobs if they went across often. And many of the women never crossed to the other side of the river at all.

In 1930 I went to Leningrad, and of course when you are in Leningrad you must visit the Volodarsky district. I went to this district with a comrade from the district committee. He told me, "Do you know, there are still women in the town who have never been on this side of the river."

You could have knocked me over with a feather. I had worked beyond the Nevsky Gate in the 'nineties, when Thornton had had his factory there. Since then

there had been the Revolution of 1905, and the great socialist October Revolution. So many years had passed since the establishment of the Soviet government, and yet there were still women who had never been across the Neva. I was amazed by the firm hold that old survivals had in everyday life. It is true, of course, that side by side with them we find the new sprouting faster and faster all the time.

I happened to mention this case when speaking at the Sverdlov University. When I was through a student came up to me and asked with some excitement: "Who told you that?" I told her. She said: "Do you know, my grandmother has never been across the river either."

Thus you have the survivals of the old interwoven with the new: the grandmother has never been across the river, while the granddaughter is graduating from the Sverdlov University.

Everyday life, relations between husband and wife, relations between parents and children, the daily round of home life was formerly considered a private affair, and it was here that most survivals of the old could be found.

When we lived in emigration, abroad, we would now and then see how at a meeting a person would speak very radically, with great determination and fine phrases, and when he got home he would be a regular petty-bourgeois: would shout at his wife, treat the children as his property, get drunk—and all this would be considered his private affair. The influence of our bourgeois surroundings made itself felt here. This bourgeois influence greatly affected everyday life.

I remember a remarkable book by John Reed called *A Daughter of the Revolution*. This book tells about a girl, the granddaughter of a fighter for the Paris Commune, the daughter and sister of socialists, who became

a prostitute not through want, not through hunger, but because in home life she saw philistine vulgarity and a disgusting attitude towards women.

In our Soviet country we now have no landlords and no capitalists. In our Soviet country we have no exploitation of man by man. We have built socialist society. We are building a new life and remoulding all our everyday relations; but there are still plenty of survivals of the old in people's personal lives.

The question of remoulding personal relations is now on the order of the day. I remember in 1933 a comrade from the Donbas came to see me and said, "We have received a telegram from some miners' wives; they want you to write an article on how wives should get divorces if their husbands are loafers." I laughed, but I wrote a letter to these miners' wives dealing with the family and with personal relations. I said that it was necessary to create the proper atmosphere at home, to become a real comrade to the husband. If the wife takes an interest in production, if she is interested in her husband's work, if she wants him to be a shock worker and is ashamed if he is a loafer—why, that is a very good thing.

This letter hit the nail on the head, and met with a lot of response. It was sent to a number of districts, and I had a very interesting correspondence on this subject.

What was the characteristic thing about this correspondence? The social attitude that the working women adopted with regard to this letter. They began to take an interest not only in their own homes but also in the living quarters of the young fellows. The young fellows in dormitories often live in great dirt and discomfort. Now the wives of the shock brigaders took this matter up. When I received letters about the social work of the

miners' wives, I would think: that is how social life influences personal life.

Now, under the influence of the Stakhanov movement, we are witnessing an enormous will to learn. There is an enormous demand, but not enough cultural forces. We are constantly receiving letters saying that at some factory or other at which there were supposed to be no illiterates there suddenly turned out to be 500 illiterates and 2,000 or so semi-literates. We begin to press the matter and are told that so-and-so many people "take part" in the studies. But when you begin to check up on the attendance you find that it is poor. Why? Because the elimination of illiteracy is inseparably bound up with questions of home life: nobody to leave the children with, too far to go, and so on. It is very important for somebody to look at things from the point of view of a housewife, to see how the thing is to be organized, to get such obstacles out of the way.

We have a lot of examples showing that when cultural forces join in the work, and when the people are not formal about it, good results can be achieved. You know that there is a special decision of the Central Committee of the Party and the Council of People's Commissars on doing away with illiteracy. Lenin said: "It is impossible to build communist society in a country in which the people are illiterate."*

Just now the comrade from the Krassny Treugolnik Factory said that they had thought that everyone in the factory was literate, but when they started to check up, they found some illiterates. We must make it so that we have no illiterates in our country.

The wives of engineers are a big cultural force, and it

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 480.

was with good reason that Comrade Stalin was present at your meeting yesterday. It is with good reason that Comrade Orjonikidze devotes so much attention to the wives of engineers and technicians. For the wives of engineers can do much good work in eliminating illiteracy and semi-literacy, teaching in schools for adults, opening up libraries for workers and organizing lectures for them, catering to their demands as regards study. And I must tell you that you yourselves will derive a great deal from this work of teaching, this work of adult education. I have had occasion to teach in a Sunday evening school. I worked for five years with illiterates and semi-literates, with workers of varying degrees of education, selling literature and delivering lectures. I taught as best I could; perhaps it might have been done better, but I myself learnt a great deal in the process.

The five years I spent in this Sunday evening school gave me an understanding of Marxism, of living Marxism, an understanding of the workers' needs, a method of approach to the working masses. What Lenin taught us, what Comrade Stalin is teaching us daily, is to examine life carefully. Comrade Stalin attended the conference of Stakhanovites and then thanked them for what they had taught him. He examines, scrutinizes people and life. Most of you live under conditions where you can learn in the process of social work, acquire a lot of knowledge, and pass it on to the workers. In close contact with the working masses, you will yourselves learn a great deal.

Lenin once wrote that in the Revolution of 1905 the metal workers marched at the head of all the other workers. In 1917 he spoke of the miners, of their revolutionary initiative. And so nowadays, when I hear that there are many illiterates at some metal works, I say

to them: Comrades, in the revolutionary movement you were in the front ranks; how is it to be now, in the cultural revolution? Don't you want to march in the front ranks? The metal workers, the miners, must not fall behind. They realize now as never before how greatly they now need culture, knowledge.

And it is no accident that it is the wives of engineers in heavy industry that are the first to take part in social work. Comrades, you can do a great deal. Each of you can do much if she examines life thoroughly, if she lives in close contact with the masses of workers, if she herself studies a great deal.

A knowledge of the doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is necessary to all, to Party members and non-Party Bolsheviks, for it is only by mastering this doctrine that one is able to get a proper understanding of surrounding life, which is often very complex. We are all learning; things don't work out otherwise. Working in the People's Commissariat of Education we have to do homework every night. Life raises some problem or other, and in order to find the solution one has to look over a number of books, familiarize oneself with various documents. Comrades, all of us Soviet functionaries study as hard as our children. And we have to study still more. The more we know, the better our work will be organized.

For instance, I happen to be doing work in connection with libraries. Yesterday one of the delegates came up to me and said with pride:

"I'm a librarian."

Two years ago the Central Committee passed a decision dealing with public libraries. When we started on this work, librarians would often come, complaining

that they did not have this, did not have that, did not have premises. I used to tell them:

“You know, comrades, if we had whined like that, the Party would never have become the great party it is. Our country would never have become the mighty socialist country which now holds the attention of the entire world if we knew only how to complain. Don't complain; fight and get things done yourselves.”

And now when I talk to librarians they start out by telling me what they have achieved and how they achieved it.

I think that the wives of engineers can do a great deal in improving nurseries and children's homes, in eliminating illiteracy, in establishing schools of an advanced nature, and in organizing all cultural life.

We want to raise our children to be a generation that will complete the great task which Lenin began and which our Party is carrying out under the leadership of Comrade Stalin. It is a big and important task: We must bring up our children to be strong and physically fit, with the proper amount of hæmoglobin and healthy lungs. We must raise our children to be people who are both capable of enjoying life, imbibing all of the joy of living, and at the same time are well-educated, serious-minded people who will advance science, who will be able to place it at the service of building communist society—people who will know how to live, work, and enjoy life in a collective way. In order to bring up our children like that, we ourselves have to develop.

I am often visited by the Pioneers. We are great friends. I try to get to know them, to find out how they live.

Once some Pioneers from a children's home in the Ukraine visited me. All of them wore their red ties.

They told me formally about their work at school. So I asked:

“Do you ever play or not?”

They were scared at being asked at the Commissariat of Education if they ever played. Perhaps it was wrong to play? I went on:

“Do you know how to play tag?”

At first they did not understand, for in Ukrainian the game has a different name. When they realized what I meant, we got to talking about what to play, about jolly and interesting games, about what one could learn from playing.

One has to know how to approach children. Most of you have children of your own; you have the mother's instinct and know how to handle children, not formally, but as one really should—to handle children properly and show them by one's own example, by one's own serious attitude towards life, why and how they should study, how they should treat their companions, how they should help each other.

Of course, all this is very complex. It is easy to talk about it from the platform, but much harder to do it in real life. But I think that you have made a start. You have begun to take part in the work of socialist construction, and this will help your development, will help you to learn how to bring up your children properly, to be real friends and comrades to your husbands, to derive more from contact with them and to give them more in return.

In conclusion, let me say what I fear. I am afraid that you may somehow become a narrow organization of engineers' wives.

[Voice: “We will work together with the wives of the Stakhanovites.”]

I very much hope so.

Comrades, permit me to conclude with that and to wish you success in your work, to wish that in doing this work you may harken attentively to the instructions of the Communist Party and the Soviet government, which lead the millions of working people who are building communist society. Under the leadership of the Party, under the leadership of the great Stalin, you will grow to be real organizers.

Greetings, comrades!

THE WIFE—HER SOLDIER HUSBAND'S FRIEND AND COMRADE

*Speech Delivered at the Conference of Wives of Red Army
Commanders*

COMRADES! Permit me in the first place to greet you—the wives of the commanders of our own Red Army.

Our brave Red Army grew up amidst the great hardships of civil war, in which many of you yourselves took part. The might of our Red Army was forged in hard-fought battles. Its strength lies in the organization, unity and profound class consciousness of our Red Army men. The distinctive feature of our Red Army, its difference from the armies of bourgeois countries lies in the fact that it fights for the great cause of Lenin and Stalin, a cause dear to all working people, to the many millions populating our country, to our workers and collective farmers. The Red Army protects what the working people have won in a long and persistent fight. Our Red Army is distinguished by the fact that it is the army of the Land of Soviets, the army of the country where socialism has been victorious.

These victories have been won thanks to the leadership of our Party, to the leadership of Comrade Stalin. These victories are inspiring. The great Stalin Constitution has recorded what has already been won, what has been achieved in our country. It makes possible an even more widespread and energetic struggle of the millions for the

highest stage of communism, for a still brighter and happier life.

That, comrades, is why all of us so warmly greet the Stalin Constitution, why the hearts of citizens of our socialist land are filled with such love for Comrade Stalin and his closest comrades. They took direct part in the Civil War and led the Red Army to victory.

The names of Stalin, of Voroshilov, serve as standards for our Red Army men, and they are your banner too.

You are bound by a thousand ties to the Red Army. You live the life it lives and are filled with love for Comrade Stalin, Comrade Voroshilov, and all the leaders of our Party and government.

You have been trained by the Red Army. You take part in social work. You stand in the very thick of socialist construction. To take part in social life, to stand in its very midst, to be an active worker in socialist construction is a great honour. You do not lead a life of seclusion, but a life of many interests; you feel that your work is producing positive results. The Red Army gives you a great deal; it helps you to become enlightened, active workers, Party or non-Party Bolsheviks.

Every conference in our Soviet Land, if it is properly organized, is a review of what has been accomplished. The present conference is also a review of an enormous amount of work. From this platform we have heard a great many vivid, stirring speeches, in which people told of their personal lives and of their own work and that of their friends. This conference has shown that hundreds of thousands, millions of women are now engaged in the work of socialist construction.

Comrades, I recall the Fourth Conference of Moscow Women Workers, which took place in 1919. At this

conference Vladimir Ilyich Lenin said, in speaking of socialist construction:

“This work begun by the Soviet government can be advanced only when, instead of hundreds of women, we have millions and millions of women, all over Russia, taking part in it. When that is the case, we are convinced, the work of socialist construction will be firmly established. . . . Then socialist construction will be so firmly established in Russia that the Soviet Republic will have no cause to fear any external enemies in other countries or enemies within Russia.”*

And now, comrades, at this conference, we can see very clearly the growth in enlightenment and organization among the masses of women which Lenin foresaw. This increase is a result of extensive and planned work. During the last year many conferences between various groups of working people and the leaders of the Party and the government have been held. There have been conferences with beet growers, with tractor drivers, with Stakhanovites, with delegates from various national republics. When one examines and reflects on all these conferences, one feels what vast work, unparalleled in history, is now being performed in organizing the millions.

All of us know the great role of Comrade Stalin in this work. And let me say that our work, the work of furthering the enlightenment and arousing the activity of the masses of women, was also led by him. Comrade Stalin has time and again stressed the important part played by women in all spheres of socialist construction, particularly in the collective farms; he has constantly given us exhaustive and very clear, specific instructions on the methods of organizing work among the women.

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 499.

Take a look at the whole history of our women's movement. At first we had the Women's Organizations. In their time these Women's Organizations fulfilled a very important function. But when the scope of the work became greater, when it became necessary to start a truly mass movement, they proved inadequate. Other methods of developing this movement arose, and the movement became closely linked up with the entire work of socialist construction.

I should like together with you to express the deepest gratitude to Comrade Stalin for what he has done to further the enlightenment of women, to develop their activity in social work, for what he has done to make women active builders not in word, but in deed.

Another thing I should like, comrades, would be to express my warmest greetings to Comrade Voroshilov, who is so close to the Red Army men and puts so much care and energy into the work of supplying them, organizing them, raising their class consciousness.

The work of raising the cultural level in the Red Army is carried on on a very high plane. There is nothing even faintly resembling it in other countries, where they try to deceive the soldiers, to fool them. In our country, on the contrary, everything is done to enlighten and raise the cultural level not only of the Red Army men, but also of their wives and of all with whom the Red Army comes into contact.

Comrades, a lot of work is still necessary to live down the survivals of the past. This work is proceeding and is steadily spreading. Why, such a meeting as yours shows how the narrow, restricted, petty-bourgeois home is being replaced by the new home, in which the wife is her husband's friend and comrade, his closest companion. Comrades, you too are daughters of the revolution, but

of the socialist revolution. Your meeting will undoubtedly greatly affect public opinion as regards the nature of the socialist home.

Finally, there is one more thing I wanted to say. You have spoken a lot here about your various kinds of work, have given very interesting accounts of your work with adults and with children. But I should like to draw your attention to one other sphere, where your work and assistance are greatly needed. You, who are so closely connected with the Red Army, who are imbued with its fighting spirit and realize the necessity of organization, conscious discipline and strong will-power, everywhere, in all our work and in our entire life—you are the very people to help the Young Communist League in its work with the Young Pioneer organization.

A great deal of attention is now being devoted to schools, and to children's leisure and recreation. That is very good. But you know by your own children what an interest children take in all that is happening around them. If you take part in this work, if you help the Pioneer leaders in their work, if you watch with your mother's eye what goes on in the Pioneer organization, you will help it to become imbued with that social consciousness, that fighting spirit without which we shall never train real Leninists, real Stalinists.

Of course, our children are the future fighters. But fighters are not made at the last moment; they have to be trained for years.

And we still have a great deal of work before us. We see how strong the bourgeoisie still is in the capitalist countries.

In 1916 Lenin taught the working women to bring up their children as fighters for socialism, to say to their sons:

"You will soon be big. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn all about military matters. This science is necessary for the proletarians, not in order to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as is being done in the present war, and as you are being advised to do by the traitors to socialism, but in order to fight against the bourgeoisie of your own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, not by means of good intentions, but by a victory over the bourgeoisie and by disarming it." *

That is what Lenin said twenty years ago to the most advanced women of our country. In our Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the bourgeoisie has been finally vanquished in the ceaseless struggle of the working people against their enemies. There is no place for the bourgeoisie in our country. We have no place for poverty and exploitation. There is no place in our country for the traitors to the socialist fatherland, for those who want to restore capitalism, for those assassins, spies and diversionists—the Trotskyite bandits and their accomplices, the Right renegades. We will sweep our beautiful Soviet land clean of all this filth.

It is necessary for you comrades, wives of Red Army commanders, to take the Pioneer movement under your care, to help the Young Communist League in this work. War nowadays is a very complicated thing. Enthusiasm alone will not be enough. It is important not only to know how to shoot—that is indispensable; it is important to know many other things as well. It is important to be a good scout, to get one's bearings quickly, to know modern technical means, to be skilful with one's hands, to be profoundly, consciously disciplined, to be trained in organized action.

* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, "The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution," p. 328, Russian ed.

Our children want to be like that. Help them through the Pioneer organization to become genuine Leninists, Stalinists. Then conscious discipline will be greater in the schools too, and school work will go better. The children are our future.

Comrades, let me wish you success in all your work. Let me wish that your social work may bring you the utmost joy, that your daily, often unnoticed, but important work may do all the good that it can do.

Let us once more together express our heartfelt greetings to Comrade Stalin, to Comrade Voroshilov, to the whole Political Bureau of our Party, to the commanders of our own Red Army.

A STRONG SOVIET FAMILY

Preface to the pamphlet "The New Law on Mother and Child," 1936

AFTER widespread discussion at meetings and in the press of the draft decree "On the prohibition of abortions, increased material assistance to young mothers, the establishment of government aid for large families, the extension of the network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens, increased penalties for failure to pay alimony, and certain alterations in the divorce laws," this decree, with certain additions and amendments, has been passed by the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R.

The carrying out of this decree will entail great expenditures on the part of the Soviet state. But our Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has become so strong that it can afford to take them upon itself.

Why does the government undertake these large expenditures? Because it considers the measures comprised in the decree to be of great importance in remoulding people's personal lives, in actually emancipating the working women, in establishing proper family relations.

It was just because the law now adopted is of such great importance that it was first put up for discussion by the people.

Such discussion is of the greatest importance. In the first place, *the universal discussion of the draft decree has called it to general attention*, has brought it home

to the broadest masses. Everyone made his suggestions. Of course, only a small number of these suggestions—the most important, the most essential—could be included in the decree. *But these suggestions raised a number of serious questions which will help in the carrying out of the decree.*

People working in the People's Commissariats of Justice, Health and Education will time and again read over these suggestions from various strata of people, in order to be able to carry out this decree in the proper Soviet way, as Lenin would have wanted it carried out, as Stalin demands.

The universal discussion of the decree will help its correct application. *The universal discussion of the decree will arouse public attention and help to establish public control over this work.*

Lenin spoke many times about the necessity of drawing every cook into the work of governing the state. *The universal discussion of the decree teaches the masses to govern.* In order to govern, *knowledge of the matter in hand* is essential. And the discussion of the decree furthers this knowledge, fills the decree with living, practical matter. The discussion of the decree made it possible to accumulate enormous quantities of practical material about the living conditions and personal life of our working people. The sub-committees of the Soviets will themselves be able to engage in organizing everyday life on a new basis, without entrusting this work to their bureaus. *The work of the sub-committees of the Soviets in the remoulding of everyday life will now become much more extensive and thoroughgoing.*

The problems dealt with in the decree vitally concern every family and they particularly agitate the women.

Women took an especially active part in the discussion of the decree, and, of course, this is of extreme importance.

It is common knowledge that Lenin attached enormous importance to the matter of emancipating women, furthering their enlightenment and drawing them into social work.

A great deal of work to this end has been going on all the time, but Lenin's principles could be properly applied only after the necessary prerequisites for their realization had been created.

Ten years ago, could the state have assigned such funds for maternity homes, nurseries, kindergartens? Ten years ago, would it have been possible to arrange such widespread discussion of the decree, to draw the villages into this discussion? Would the peasant women's voices have sounded so loudly at that time?

Especially heated discussion was provoked by the clause on the prohibition of abortions, which had been legalized in 1920.

Looking over some old articles of mine, I found one in which I dealt in detail with the question of abortions. The article was printed in the *Kommunistka*, No. 1-2, for 1920. It was called "The War and Childbirth."

"The war," I wrote in that article, "has brought the country to the extreme of poverty and ruin. *And poverty as a rule is the grave of all human relations.* Poverty forces women to sell their bodies, forces women who are not prostitutes making a trade of it, but mothers of families, who often do it for the sake of their children, for the sake of their old mothers."

The Soviet laws have changed the nature of marriage, transforming it from the purely commercial deal

that it often was before the socialist October Revolution into a union on the basis of mutual sympathies. But the Civil War, constant evacuations, the break-up of old habits that were established in the course of centuries, made marital ties very unstable.

This instability of marriage and the material hardships—the Civil War, the ruined state of the country, the food shortage—led to the fact that in many cases the entire burden of rearing and training her child fell on the mother alone.

"How is one to help the mother, breaking under the burden of childbirth and the rearing and upbringing of children?" I wrote in my article. "The answer is clear—the state must not only undertake the protection of mother and child, must not only care for women during pregnancy, and during and after confinement, but must set up tens of thousands of nurseries, kindergartens, children's colonies and dormitories, where children would receive care and food, where they would live, develop and study under conditions ten times better than even the most loving mother could provide for them by her own unaided efforts."

The Soviet government did away with the old homes that took the children away from their mothers forever; it shut down the "establishments for the manufacture of angels" which had existed under the old regime and had in reality been institutions for concealed infanticide. It set up children's homes, kindergartens and nurseries, but at that time all this was but a drop in the ocean.

The situation was especially grave in the countryside, where the kulaks were active in agitating against the nurseries. In 1919 we still used to receive petitions signed with crosses by illiterates, begging that the children should not be put in the nurseries, not be taken away from their parents forever. Children's homes were often ma-

terially exploited by "teachers" who had no connection whatever with pedagogy, with the teaching and raising of children.

So in 1920 this matter of abortions became acute. Up to that time abortions had been punishable by law. But the penalty descended not on those who compelled woman to have abortions, nor on those who performed illegal abortions under extremely insanitary conditions, and by methods which for a long time after impaired the health of the women concerned—it was the woman who was held responsible. At that time I wrote:

"The fight against abortions must be carried on not by persecuting the mothers, who resort to abortions often at great risk to their own lives, but must be directed towards eliminating the social causes that have made it necessary for women to resort to abortions.

"... Of course, impunity with respect to abortions cannot rid the mother of the depression produced by an abortion. Her whole organism has, as it were, entered on the path of childbirth, the organism has begun to adapt itself to nourishing the embryo within it, and the mother usually feels the interruption of this process to be a crime against herself and her child. The nervous excitement and yearning that can often be seen in the eyes of a woman who has resorted to an abortion are enough to show at what price the mother buys her freedom.

"It was only bitter want that compelled the working woman to reject motherhood.

"Improvement of general living conditions, and particularly the protection of mother and child and the public education of children, will remove this main cause which at the present time *forces women to violate their natural instincts, renouncing motherhood, that greatest of joys.*

"Those who really want to remove from the order of the day all these horrible questions of infanticide, of abortions, of

contraceptives, must work without pause to build the new life in which motherhood will take the place due to it."

Fifteen years have passed since that article was written. Now the question of abortions appears in a new light. Our country has become rich, mighty and prosperous. Our people are better educated and more enlightened. Women have become a force in the collective farms. They have become active in social work. Many of the women are Stakhanovites. They are studying hard.

The Party and the government surround the children with public care; they make their childhood a happy one. It is with good cause that millions of working women are so devoted to Stalin—they see his solicitude for the working woman.

Under these new conditions the question of the family and of abortions appears in a new light. The new decree will play an extremely important part in remoulding people's modes of life.

It is essential to carry out this decree on the widest possible scale, to fight for good maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens. There is much work ahead.

WOMAN—FRIEND, COMRADE AND MOTHER

Article in the "Krestyanka" Magazine, No. 17, 1936

BESIDES its other tasks, the Young Communist League is faced with the most important task of carrying to completion the work of emancipating women throughout the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—a task that is so persistently being carried out by our Communist Party.

There is no need to talk about the enormous achievements that we have won in the sphere of the emancipation of women and the growth of their class consciousness. They are common knowledge.

In this article I want to deal with certain specific tasks now facing the Young Communist League, and particularly the women's *active* of the League.

We must never forget that the *active* must lead in its wake all the young women in the cities and in the countryside. We have a splendid *active* of Young Communist girls, but if we look at the masses of young women as a whole, we see that there are still a lot of survivals of the past in life, in people's modes of life. And in this connection a lot of everyday work is essential.

One of these survivals of the past is the cultural backwardness of women. This backwardness greatly hinders our women and girls in their work and their social activities. They could not go to school before because they were overburdened with housework and caring for the children. Girls used not to be allowed to go to school,

since they were wanted at home to help with the housework and to nurse the children.

Universal compulsory education is playing a part of exceptional importance in this respect. Only we must see that it is really applied, that girls are not kept home for all kinds of "weighty" reasons, that their school work is not interfered with by housework, and so on.

But the question does not touch on the schoolgirls alone—they live under conditions which are already incomparably better than those of previous times.

The problem of disseminating knowledge is still an acute one as regards our young women, especially in the countryside.

Every girl knows the words of Lenin to the effect that every cook must learn to govern the state. But one must study how to do this; one must know how to do it; one has to know a great deal, much more now than formerly.

We must do away with illiteracy. But merely to be literate no longer satisfies the masses. At the level of economic and social life which our Land of Soviets has now reached, the masses need knowledge that will open up the road to independent creative work, that will raise their qualifications.

Large-scale socialist production, the collectivization of agriculture, planned state economy call for a high degree of culture among the working people, call for profound knowledge on the part of the millions who are actively participating in the building of socialism. The meaning of semi-literacy has become broader. A person who does not know geography and the chief stages in the development of mankind, who does not understand the phenomena of nature, who is incapable of understanding what is going on around him, who does not know how to use science in the interests of transforming work and life, or

where to draw on the knowledge he needs, is semi-literate.

The Young Communist League must work to develop schools for adults on the widest possible scale—not only schools of an advanced type, but all kinds of schools for adults. The League must see to it that all young people attend schools for adults.

Particular attention must be given to those young people who up to now have remained illiterate or semi-literate. All young people, and particularly the girls, particularly the young people in the collective farms, must learn all that is taught in the seven-year schools. This is a big and important matter.

We must pay special attention to teaching youngsters who did not go to school at the proper time. We must pay attention to work among these “over-ages.” There are a lot of them among the girls, and it is very important to work among them.

Our changing life has confronted us point-blank with the problems of the family, the relations between husband and wife, between parents and children; it has confronted us with the problem of bringing up the new generation.

These are the problems that particularly concern our young people now. The correct solution can be found only on the basis of communist morality. Here we meet with great difficulties, and the chief difficulty is that very often the old views dress up in new, fashionable attire. We need great vigilance in this respect, especially against petty-proprietor morality, petty-proprietor views of the family and the upbringing of children.

Marx and Engels wrote that only in the depths of the proletariat could new marital relations be born—marriage based not on material considerations, but on mutual

attraction, mutual love, mutual confidence and common views.

In the Soviet Union the conditions for emancipating women from the burdensome old forms of marriage relations have been created.

But there are still survivals of the old in personal life. Petty-proprietor psychology often attempts to creep in through all sorts of cracks, disguising itself in new attire.

Women are still sometimes regarded as playthings. Philandering, dissoluteness, an irresponsible attitude towards women—do we not find these even among League members? We'll fool around and have a good time, but it's not time to get married yet—that is the attitude. A girl is made pregnant—well, what of it? Let her have an abortion. This is not love; it is the old way of regarding a woman—not as a human being but as a toy, a plaything.

As long as petty-proprietor individual farming persisted—with its seclusion and its isolation from social life in the village—the survivals of the old had a particularly tenacious hold on everyday life, and it was only very slowly that they were eliminated. The collectivization of agriculture, the radical change in the organization of labour, freed the woman. In the collective farms women have become a force, and this has brought in its train a change in the relations between men and women as well; family relations began to change radically.

In our country socialism has already been built, and the working people are becoming more enlightened daily and hourly. The Party, the Young Communist League, the trade unions and the Soviets devote special attention to raising the cultural standard of the entire population. The material prerequisites for altering the entire system of life have already been created (new hous-

ing conditions, the increasing number of dining-rooms, nurseries, kindergartens, clubs, parks of culture and rest, and so on). Thus it is that every day new strength is gained by the new family based on profound mutual confidence, on a similarity of ideas, on a natural attraction which develops into the boundless joy of love.

And finally, the question of upbringing.

Every woman is a mother or a potential mother. She has a strong maternal instinct. This instinct of motherhood is also a great force and a source of great joy.

The mother is the natural person to bring up her children. Her influence on her children, particularly when they are still young, is very great. And we know that a person's whole character, his whole development bears the impress of his earliest years. The whole point is how children are to be brought up.

One may bring one's daughter up in slavish obedience, one may make her a petty-bourgeois young lady who takes no interest in the seething events of life around her; or one may make her a collective-minded, active builder of socialism, a person who takes joy in concerted labour, in the struggle for our great goal—one may make her a real communist.

It all depends on what the mother is like, what her views are.

Frederick Engels, the friend of Marx and one of the great founders of Marxism, wrote: "But if the ideas are true for which we, children of new times, are struggling, then the time is not far off when women's hearts will beat for the ideal of modern times as ardently as they now beat for the religious faith of their fathers—and the new spirit will be victorious only when the younger generation imbibes it with their mothers' milk."

Nowdays, looking at our working and collective farm

women, one can see how ardently their hearts are beating for the achievement of socialism, for the doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and one feels the enormous importance of this fact for the upbringing of the new generation.

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin all devoted much attention to questions of upbringing. Our institutions for children of pre-school age, our Soviet schools must show the mothers how to bring up their children to be people of a new kind—builders of socialism. The combination of the public upbringing that is provided by our kindergartens and schools with the upbringing in the family, when the mothers' hearts beat ardently for the cause of socialism, creates a marvellous generation of people. Our Young Communist girls and the Young Communist League in general must develop the work in this direction on a broad scale.

THERE ARE NO "STRANGE" CHILDREN FOR US

*From a Speech at a Conference of Active Housewives,
"Rabotnitsa," No. 16, 1936*

COMRADES, life in our Union of Soviet Socialist Republics differs more and more with every year from the life in capitalist countries. The first steps in the struggle for socialism were very difficult, but now we have already built socialism. The working men and women of all countries are particularly anxious to know what is being done in our country and how it is being done.

In 1937 an international exposition is to take place in Paris. Working people from all countries will come to see it, and we must show them everything that distinguishes our life from life in capitalist countries.

The other day I was talking about this to a number of comrades. They said:

"We must show the great plan of our construction work; we must show that we build everything according to plan."

I said: "That's so; we must show this."

But we must also show something else—we must show what Lenin spoke of and what is now being carried out: we must show that the plans we draw up are being carried out by the millions of working people, who do this consciously and develop in the process. That is what distinguishes our country from other countries.

Take the plan of electrification. We must show how

propaganda for electrification was carried on among the masses.

And then we should also show how our factories have been reconstructed: what they were like before and what they are like now with respect to equipment, the distribution of labour and the entire organization of labour in general.

We must show what our cities are like now. And most important of all, we must show how our mode of life is changing, how people are changing. And in this respect our active housewives must be given no little credit.

Formerly every housewife thought only of herself: Here is my child, and as for the other children, they don't concern me. Now things have changed. Your meeting speaks of the change. The comrade from Podolsk said here that not only is her own child dear to her, but other children as well. This social work of our housewives and mothers is of great educational importance for all our children.

Another housewife told us here how she helped a homeless boy to find his feet.

The mothers have changed, and their attitude towards their own children and "strange" children has changed too. The working women of the Trekhgorka Factory offered to take formerly homeless children from the children's homes into their families over the holidays. I was present at a meeting after the holidays, where they told how things had gone. In the first place, the children were very happy; they were proud that now they too would have fathers and mothers, and when they were fetched would run up to them crying, "My daddy, my mummy!" They also told about how the children behaved—what care they would take to fold their clothes neatly, how gaily they sang, and so on.

One of them said:

"I took a little girl, a nice little girl. Perhaps she didn't understand everything I told her. But I tried to tell her how I work in Stakhanov fashion in my factory. She may not understand now, but she will remember all her life what her new mother told her about the way she tried to work."

The woman who said this had looked deeply into the life of a child. She realized how important it is for the mother to talk about her work, about her attitude towards her work.

At the Paris Exposition it is also important to show how our Stakhanovite women are taking care of their own children and of all children in general, how our housewives have come to take an interest in all children. This is a question of prime importance.

I lived a long time in emigration abroad and saw what restricted lives people lead there: "My family, my child, my home."

We have a great achievement to record in this respect. It is what Lenin wanted—the change in everyday life. Now the housewives themselves are changing it.

At the exposition we must also show how in the very first years of its existence the Soviet government planned to reorganize our peasant country on a collective basis, how this work was started under the guidance of the Party, under the guidance of Lenin, and how it continued to develop under the guidance of Stalin. We must show what a happy, prosperous and cultured life our collective farms are beginning to lead.

We must show how our social spirit has increased, and how our whole life has changed, show what the children were like before and what they are like now, show the care for children in our Soviet country.

But of course we must not close our eyes to the fact that we still have certain survivals of the past. We must exert ourselves especially as regards cultural work, must make particular efforts to leave no illiterates, no foolish beliefs, no absurd superstitions. We must guard against any alien influence that may affect our children.

We must make our children's life so interesting that it will fascinate them, assist them in their studies and help them to understand correctly what is going on around them. In this respect our housewives can do extremely important work.

One of the comrades who spoke here told us about her work in a kindergarten. You know that a person's childhood affects his entire life. We all remember our childhood years all our lives. In the kindergartens we must have mothers who are fond of children and who will watch like real Bolsheviks how things are going in the kindergartens, to see that the children are brought up as they should be. Our housewives and working and collective farm women must be in close contact with the schools, must help our children to grow up to be enlightened citizens of our great country. We must have collective care for our children, who will constitute the generation that will carry the cause of Lenin and Stalin to completion.

Allow me to express the wish that each of you do the utmost possible good in the work of building socialism.

TO BE A TEACHER IS AN HONOUR

Article in "Za Kommunisticheskoye Prosveshcheniye,"
No. 151, November 7, 1936

OUR SOVIET women teachers, who constitute the great majority of all our teaching forces, are faced with the task of bringing up the generation that will carry to completion the cause of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The training of the new generation is a work of vast importance.

The teachers are doing this work under the guidance of the Party. One need only ponder on the decisions of the Central Committee regarding the schools—the political directives they give, their specific organizational instructions—in order to understand the importance attached to the schools by the Central Committee.

The schools are assisted in their work by the Young Communist League, which the Party is charging with ever greater tasks as regards the schools. The decision about the appointment of Young Communist League organizers in the schools is of great importance.

The Soviets are helping the People's Commissariat of Education to build dozens of new schools.

Our teachers are carrying on their work not in secluded educational establishments, apart from the work of socialist construction, but in the very thick of it. Our teachers are carrying on this work not in a poor and backward country, but in a country of enormous natural wealth, in a country where large-scale industry is grow-

ing and becoming stronger every day, where farming has been transformed into large-scale agriculture based on collectivization, in a country where the millions of the population are becoming conscious builders of socialism, collective-minded organizers, where every day they are learning to work better and more efficiently.

The teacher's profession is now one of the most responsible and one of the most thankful. And the part played by this profession and its importance will continue to grow more and more.

But for the teacher actually to carry out this truly great task that now faces him he must first of all work ceaselessly to improve himself, to acquire knowledge in a Leninist way, to learn to work as Lenin taught and as Stalin teaches us. He must train himself to be a collectivist organizer, a real communist.

But it is not only the teachers who are confronted with this most responsible work. The whole country must render our schools greater assistance, real assistance, in all phases of their work; it must give our schools, our school children and teachers proletarian attention and help. The Soviet public is a great force and it must do its best to help the schools.

If we look back on the road traversed by our Soviet country during the eighteen years that have passed since the October Revolution, we see how we advanced step by step, the efforts of the millions overcoming incredible difficulties. By overcoming these difficulties on the military and economic front we provided a new foundation for cultural work. New and better working conditions have been created in every sphere of socialist construction. We cannot even compare the conditions of work during the early years of Soviet government with those existing now.

Now we have only to make the best use of our economic achievements, of the changes in human psychology, of the growing collective spirit and organizational ability of the masses, of the changes that have taken place in work and in everyday life. We have not yet learned how to do that as well as we should.

But the younger generation is growing up in conditions that are so new that the children can hardly imagine what existed only a quarter of a century ago. Every teacher knows this. And we shall not succeed in bringing up enlightened citizens if we do not teach them to understand the past.

The Young Communist League, the teachers, the Soviet writers must make every effort to tell the children, to show them as vividly as possible what the struggle was about, why the masses rose in struggle, why the Bolshevik Party acquired such enormous influence; to show them what Soviet government means, and how it grew and became strong. To give the children a clear and simple picture of the great October Revolution is an essential part of the communist education of our children.

WE MUST HAVE UNIVERSAL LITERACY AND CULTURE

Article in the "Krestyanka" Magazine, No. 24, 1935

THE COLLECTIVE farm women have become enlightened and active now. Our papers and magazines are filled with reports about the new way in which they work, and the tremendous results they are achieving. We all know what solicitude and attention the Party and the Soviet government lavish on our active women comrades. The times are past when one had to convince the peasant women that the Soviet government was good. Now their hearts are filled with love for their country, love for Comrade Stalin, who is doing so much for the final emancipation of the working women.

But our collective farm women are often hindered in developing to the full by a lack of education and knowledge, that heritage of the past. The Soviet government has introduced universal compulsory education—everyone is studying; our young people are growing up well-educated and well-informed. The old ignorance has been uprooted.

It is not only the young women, but the middle-aged women, and even the old women, who are fighters for a new and brighter life, shock-workers and active social workers in our collective farms. Take the beet growers who have been awarded the Order of Lenin. Are they all youngsters? Those who have a rich experience in life, but who did not get the chance to study

when they were young, feel at every turn how they are hampered by the lack of education and knowledge.

Forty years ago, in 1895, Lenin, in the first article he wrote for the workers, "What Are Our Ministers Thinking Of?"—showed what efforts the tsar's ministers made to keep the working people away from knowledge. The article closed with the words:

"Workers! You see how mortally our ministers fear the union of the working people with knowledge! Then show them all that there is no force capable of depriving the workers of their class consciousness. Without knowledge the workers are defenceless; with it they are a force." *

At that time this article failed to reach not only the peasant men and women, but even the city workers. It was confiscated when Lenin was arrested by the tsar's gendarmes, and it was only after the revolution, after Lenin's death, that it was found in the files of the secret police and given publication.

Many years have passed since then. Who does not know nowadays that knowledge is power? The Soviet government has done a great deal to do away with illiteracy and semi-literacy. Over 40,000,000 people have been taught to read and write during these eighteen years, but even so the work is not finished: in the villages and hamlets of our country there are still not only semi-literates, but people who are totally illiterate, especially among the women.

Before he died, Lenin said: we must do away entirely with illiteracy and semi-literacy, but we shall be able to do so only when the illiterates and semi-literates themselves get down to this work.

* Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. I, p. 421, Russian ed.

Twelve years have passed since then. Much has been done, but not everything. People are ashamed if they are illiterate now; but they should not hide it—they should get rid of it. The honour of every collective farm is at stake in this matter of totally eliminating illiteracy and semi-literacy among the women on the collective farms. This must be done as soon and as thoroughly as possible. We must root out ignorance, illiteracy and semi-literacy. The village Soviets, the collective farm women in the Soviets and executive committees and the managements of the collective farms, the young collective farm women must get down to this work, must check up every woman on the collective farms to find out if she is literate, and do everything to help those who are backward in this respect.

There is a decision of the Party to eliminate illiteracy and semi-literacy completely by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan period. We must check up on how this decision is being carried out, must work to have it carried out in its entirety in every collective farm.

But mere literacy is not enough; "in addition to literacy, we need cultured, enlightened, and educated toilers." (Lenin.)

When the Stakhanov movement arose in town and country as the result of our achievements, when the workers and collective farmers set out to achieve the best possible organization of labour in their sphere of activity, they all, and especially the collective farm women, began to feel more acutely than ever how insufficient their knowledge was.

For one must be able to write business documents briefly, clearly, sensibly, to make calculations, to read books on natural science, on the care of plants and animals, on labour organization, on technical questions. One

must be able to draw information from books, that can be applied immediately to the work, to the organization of work in the brigade, to life in the collective farm. Mere literacy is not enough. We must organize adult schools in the state and collective farms for literate people too, so that they may continue their studies without giving up their work. This matter brooks no delay.

The Party and the government are devoting special attention to adult education. All that is necessary is to see to it that it is properly organized locally, that public control is exercised over every school for adults by the collective farmers, that they do all in their power to secure the co-operation of people on the spot—teachers, agronomists, bookkeepers, engineers.

On November 14, 1920, Lenin visited the village of Kashino, in which the peasants had built an electric power station by their own efforts. He was present at the opening of this station, and acclaimed the peasants' initiative; he talked to them a great deal about the importance of technology and electrification, about culture and the need for the masses to acquire knowledge. Now there is not a single individual peasant or a single illiterate in Kashino.

At the Eighth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, in December 1920, Lenin said:

“We must see to it that every factory and every electric power station shall become a centre of enlightenment.”

Now there are many such centres. We must see to it that the adult schools should make use of all our achievements in order to impart knowledge to the collective farmers, that the adult schools should be capable of

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 278.

using the forces and achievements of all the state farms in their neighbourhood.

Close contact between the work of the adult schools and practical activity, the tasks facing our collective farmers in organizing their work and their life, will help our Land of Soviets to reach first place with regard to culture as well, to become a model for the working people of the future socialist Europe, Asia and America. Lenin called upon us to do this; Stalin, the Party and the Soviet government are leading us towards it. We have no doubt that the collective farm women will be in the front ranks in the fight for literacy, for knowledge, for culture.

I WISH YOU SUCCESS IN YOUR WORK!

*Greetings Addressed to the Congress of Young Working Women
in the National Minority Republics, "Komsomolskaya Pravda,"
September 30, 1935*

MY HEARTFELT greetings to the congresses of young women in the national minority republics of the U.S.S.R.

Dear comrades! You are young and full of vitality. You are living in the epoch of the building of socialism, in which the chief prerequisites for its completion have already been created. You are living under conditions in which you can study, can absorb all the experience accumulated along the path that has already been traversed. More than anybody else, you are interested in completing the cause of Lenin and Stalin. You all know that socialism alone creates the conditions for the final emancipation of women from the age-old heritage of oppression.

There is much work before you—to get rid of the old prejudices in the mode of life and in people's minds, to fight for the world revolution, to give children a communist upbringing.

I sincerely wish you strength; I wish you profound joy in the collective work of socialist construction; I wish you success in your work!