

SOVIET RUSSIA

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The Emancipation of Woman in Soviet Russia

Some months ago Lenin published a work entitled: "The Great Initiative, a Brochure designed for Study by Labor in Soviet Russia." We give herewith the article devoted to the emancipation of woman:

It is a fact that in the course of these last ten years there has not been a single democratic party in the world, and not a single person among the leaders of the bourgeois republics, that has undertaken for the emancipation of woman a hundredth part of what has been realized by Russia in one year. All the humiliating laws which involved curtailments of the rights of woman have been abolished. For example: those which put an obstacle in the way of divorce, the repugnant formalities for the determination of paternity and other relatives of "illegitimate" children. These are the laws in force in all the civilized states, to the shame of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism. We have a right to be proud of the progress accomplished in this domain. But as fast as we sapped the bases of the bourgeois laws and institutions, we arrived at a clear vision of the preparatory character of our work, designed only to prepare the terrain on which the edifice is to be built.

"We are not yet engaged on the construction of the edifice.

"Woman remains, in spite of everything the slave of the house. The emancipatory laws do nothing for her, since she remains subjected to all the petty drudgeries of the menage, which enchain her in the kitchen, in the children's nursery, and make of her rude and unproductive activity a chain of minute torments which are simultaneously oppressive and stultifying.

"A genuine emancipation of woman, a genuine communism will not exist except when the proletariat, taking the reins in hand, will organize the battle against domestic slavery. Or rather, when society will have been entirely reconstituted on the basis of a general and socialist organization of housekeeping.

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Emancipation

“The practical realization of this program has already begun. The result is as yet scarcely felt. But we should not underestimate these tender and promising buds. The popular restaurants, the children’s gardens are, in their way, new shoots, very far yet from maturity, but nevertheless leading potentially to the practical emancipation of woman, thanks to the suppression of her inequality as compared with man in the domain of social production and life.

“These means are not new. Like all the provisions of Socialism they have been in general organized by capitalism. But under the capitalist regime they constituted only an exception. In most cases, they offered the saddest examples of speculation, cupidity and fraud. Or else they were transformed into institutions of that bourgeois philanthropy which is so justly hated and mistrusted by the best elements of the proletariat.

“We have taken in hand the greater part of these institutions, and they are beginning to lose their ancient character.

“We do not cry them out in the streets, while the bourgeoisie understands thoroughly how to celebrate the merit of its institutions.

“In contrast with the bourgeois press, with its great circulations, which vaunts its enterprises as worthy of exalting the national pride, our journals do not spend their time in celebrating the merits of our popular kitchens.

“It is none the less true that they are based on these principles: to economize work, husband the food supply, to ameliorate the sanitary situation and to liberate woman from domestic slavery.”

—*Le Populaire*, Jan. 10, 1920.