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Changes in the Legal Status of a Woman-Mother in the Soviet Law After the Bolshevik Revolution and in the Stalin's Era (1917–1953)

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The Bolsheviks' coming into power in Russia in 1917 changed the life of every woman significantly, since a new social status was immediately created. It was also defined in law, i.e., the Soviet woman. In the framework of this research, a detailed analysis is provided of one of the social statuses of a Soviet woman – a mother. The status of the mother is especially important, since every change in the social role of the mother in the upbringing of the child changes the entire society. The reforms of Stalin's era turned the mother into a public person in the Soviet state, fulfilling a mission important for the state in improving the demographic situation. At the same time, her rights to choose how to raise a child, how much time to devote to a child, what values to instil were continuously decreased. Mothers who did not conform to the ideology could be deprived of their mother's rights, subjected to repression and separation from their children.

Keywords: Soviet law, women's rights, legal status of the mother.

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Introduction

The Bolsheviks' coming into power in Russia in 1917 changed the life of every woman significantly, since a new social status was immediately created, which was also defined in law, – i.e., the Soviet woman. Latvia was affected by Bolshevism in

1940 when, following the Soviet occupation, the laws of the Soviet Russia entered into force and were accordingly translated into the national language of each republic.¹

The Marxist-Leninist ideology advocated actual equality in society, including gender equality, which determined the Soviet state policy in marriage and family law. In the Manifesto of the Communist Party by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, marriage was clearly described as an institution allowing a man (husband) to exploit a woman (wife), and parents – to exploit children. Quoting the Manifesto: “On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital. On private gain [...] But you Communists would introduce a community of women, screams the bourgeoisie in chorus. The bourgeois sees his wife as a mere instrument of production.² He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women. He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.”³ Besides, Friedrich Engels had initially believed in the “utopia” of both the marriage and the family eventually disappearing in the Communist society of equals. Later, the Marxist classics revised this idea, saying that only the nature of the family would change. It would become a union of two free individuals with equal rights, based on love and mutual respect.⁴ Thus, the essence and social role of marriage and family was revised in the Soviet state, and law conforming with the ideology was developed. Hence, the Soviet policy also changed the status of every woman in society.

In the framework of this research, a detailed analysis is provided of one of the social statuses of a Soviet woman, – that of a mother. The status of a mother is particularly important because it is the mother who, by bringing a child into the world, creates the succession of generations, ensures the natural reproduction of society; at the same time, the scope of this status is enormous, including a number of rights, obligations and responsibility within the family and society in raising a child. A mother performs a socially important work by socialising the child and passing on the cultural heritage created by the particular society, thus ensuring sustainability and continuity of society. The father’s role is also important; this research, however, will focus on the status of a woman.

1. Changes in the family law and legal status of the mother after the Bolshevik revolution

The Bolsheviks set as their objective the creation of a new, equal society without exploitation. To transform the very foundations of a society, the institution of family should be changed first of all. Soon after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia of 7 November 1917, the new government embarked upon introducing regulatory changes in marriage and family law. Before that, marriage in Russia was mainly

¹ *Blūzma, V.* Latvijas inkorporācija PSRS sastāvā un padomju tiesību uzspiešana Latvijai (1940–1941) [Latvia’s incorporation into the USSR and the Imposition of Soviet Law on Latvia (1940–1941)]. In: *Latvijas tiesību vēsture (1914–2000)*. A. Lēbers (ed.). Rīga: fonds “Latvijas Vēsture”, pp. 288–295.

² *Markss, K., Engelss, Fr.* Komunistiskās partijas manifests [Manifesto of the Communist Party]. Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC, [without year], p. 3

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Dekret Centralnogo Ispolnitelnogo Komiteta Sovetov rabochih, soldatskih I krestjanstih deputatov O rastorzeniji braka (16.12.1917) [Decree On divorce, adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies at a meeting on 16 December 1917]. Available: http://www.1000dokumente.de/index.html/index.html?c=dokument_ru&dokument=0002_ehe&object=context&l=ru [last viewed 15.03.2022].

regulated by the church law, whereas family – by the local civil law and common law. The families of country landlords and townspeople lived by the church and civil laws, and those of peasants – by church law and common law. Furthermore, the vast empire itself, with different ethnic and religious groups, made it inevitable that civil law differed from one region to another. The Baltic province (*guberniya*) had its own civil law,⁵ and Finland, Poland and other territories also had some legal autonomy.

After the left-wing forces came to power in the Soviet Russia, it was widely discussed whether marriage and family were at all necessary in the new society, which could develop as a society free from shackles. Ideas were expressed on free sexual relationships and on the community of women, which had been mentioned ironically in the Manifesto of the Communist Party... And still, the majority of the revolutionaries stood in favour of preserving, at least temporarily, the institution of marriage, although transforming it substantially in accordance with new ideals – namely, with the vision of a family as a union of equal spouses free from economic interest. The development of the Soviet family law starts with two decrees, signed by Lenin, of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars, proclaiming the new Soviet state's family law policy. This policy was focused on "putting an end to the enslaved position of women and clearing the state of inequality and the remnants of feudalism."⁶

Thus, the freedom of divorce was introduced in Soviet Russia, based on the principle of equality of both spouses.⁷ The initial procedure for divorce established in the Soviet law was revolutionary in its liberalism. Later, it was substantially revised.

On 18 (31) December 1917, the decree "On Civil Marriage, Children, and Introduction of Civil Registry Books" was issued,⁸ whereby the State abolished the church marriage as an official form of marriage and took over from the church the rights to keep civil records. The aforementioned decree envisaged a family as a monogamous, voluntarily formed union of absolutely equal partners, and provided for separate property of spouses to prevent the wife from becoming economically dependent on her husband, – previously, the husband became his wife's guardian and the holder of her property after marriage. The decree emphasised the equality of spouses in personal relationships and in property matters.⁹ By the same decree, extramarital children were given equal rights with the children born in wedlock. Admittedly, this concept made the Soviet law revolutionary for Europe, whose most conservative part arrived at similar legal solutions only in the second half of the 20th century. With the recognition of the equality of a child born outside marriage, the social status of their mother also changed, namely, it was no longer shameful for a woman to bring a child into the world in the absence of a marriage. In connection with the protection of the rights of a woman-mother, it is important to note the decree of 22 December 1917 "On Insurance in the Case of Sickness", defining a physician's

⁵ Svod grazhdanskikh uzakonenij gubernij Pribaltijskikh (Chastj III Svoda mestnih uzakonenij gubernij Ostzejskikh) [The Code of Civil Laws of the Baltic Provinces (Part III of the Code of Local Laws of the Ostsee provinces)]. Petrograd: Pravo, 1915.

⁶ *Vēbers, J.* Ģimenes tiesības [The Family Law]. Rīga: Pēteris Stučka Latvijas Valsts universitātes Juridiskā un filozofijas fakultāte, 1970, p. 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸ Dekret Centralnogo Ispolnitelnogo Komiteta Sovetov rabochih, soldatskih i krestjanstih deputatov O grazhdanskom brake, o detiah i o vedenii knig aktov sostoianiiia (14.11.1917) [Decree on civil marriage, on children and on keeping civil status record books adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies at a meeting on 14 November, 1917]. Available: <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Text/DEKRET/17-12-18.htm> [last viewed 14.03.2022]

⁹ *Vēbers, J.*, p. 13.

assistance and support to women in case of child-birth”.¹⁰ Even now in colloquial Latvian the phrase “leave of decree” is used to denote a pre-natal and post-natal leave.

Another step by the Soviet power to protect women’s rights dating back to this period needs to be mentioned – the decree of 18 November 1920 “On the Protection of Women’s Health”, legalising, for the first time in the world, a woman’s right to choose abortion, which, according to the decree, would be performed free of charge by a physician in a state hospital.¹¹ The Soviet power did not support abortions in principle; however, by this decree it fought against illegal abortions that threatened a woman’s health and life.

It can be concluded that the Bolsheviks, since coming into power, normatively tried to ensure the equality of women and men and to expand women’s rights, by, first of all, supporting a woman-mother and also by ensuring a woman’s right to make decisions regarding her own body, i.e., the right to decide whether to bring the conceived child into the world or not. Before the Bolsheviks came into power, Russia was a traditional society with high birth and mortality rates. Namely, at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries, one woman in her lifetime on average gave birth from 7 to 9 children.¹² In the Soviet state, freely available abortions changed this situation, and, with the number of abortions increasing, the number of newborns decreased year by year. Initially, this was explained as the consequences of the war and the ensuing poverty. The Bolshevik Party believed that, with growing prosperity in society, women would choose to give birth and to raise children.¹³ However, in reality, with the decriminalisation of abortions, the high number of abortions remained unchanged. Moreover, with parents perishing or disappearing during the First World War and, later, the Civil War, as well as by the Soviet power “dismantling” the traditional patriarchal family, still fewer children were born.¹⁴ However, a multitude of orphans and abandoned children – homeless children – appeared, which presented a huge problem for the new Soviet state because, to survive, these children were begging, formed gangs and engaged in criminal activities.¹⁵ At a conference in 1924, dedicated to this topic, it was concluded that addressing

¹⁰ Dekret o strahovanii na sluchaj bolezni, prinjatij Centralnim Komitetom Soveta Rabochih, Soldatskih i Krestjanskih Deputatov v zasedaniji 22 dekabnja 1917 goda [Decree on health insurance adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies at a meeting on December 22, 1917], in: Sobranije uzakonenij i rasporzazhenij pravitelstva za 1917-1918 gg. [Collection of legalizations and orders of the government for 1917-1918.]. Moskva: Upravlenije delami Sovnarkoma SSR, 1942, pp. 199–206.

¹¹ Postanovlenije Narkomnadzora RSFSR Ob ohrane zdorovja zhenshchin ot 18 nojabrja 1920 goda [Decree of the People's Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR of 11/18/1920 "On the protection of women's health"] Available: <http://lawru.info/dok/1920/11/18/n1205637.htm> [last viewed 11.02.2022].

¹² Denisov, B., Sakevich, V. Oчерк istoriji kontrolja rozhdajemosti v Rossii: bluzhdajushchaja demograficheskaja politika. [An Outline of the History of Birth Control in Russia: A Wandering Population Policy], in: Razvitije naselenija i demograficheskaja politika [Population development and demographic policy]. Moskva: Maks Press, 2014, p. 187.

¹³ Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁴ Sociologists of the Soviet time also subscribe to this, mentioning that decrease in the number of concluded marriages also contributes to decreasing birth rate. Vishnevskij, A. Demograficheskaja revoliucija [The Demographic revolution]. In: Izbrannije demograficheskije trudi. Tom 1. Demograficheskaja teorija i demograficheskaja istorija [Selected Demographic Works. Volume 1. Demographic Theory and Demographic History]. Moskva: Nauka, 2005, p. 150

¹⁵ The statistics of the time show that, in 1921/1922, the number of children suffering hunger and being vagrant was 7.5 million. Epshtain, M. Borjba s bezprizornostju [The fight against homelessness of children]. In: Trudi Pjatogo Vserossijskogo sjezda zavedujushchih otdelami narodnogo obrazovanija 27 maja – 2 ijunja 1926. goda [Proceedings of the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Heads of Departments of Public Education. May 27 – June 2, 1926]. Moskva: Directmedia, 2014, p. 305.

the issue of homeless children was not a matter of charity but a matter of public health.¹⁶ “A life on the street leaves a harsh stamp on a child’s personality,” Nadezhda Krupskaya wrote, urging the state to establish structures that would assume care for homeless children, first of all, setting up a system for appointing a guardian for them, which would be a substitute for the parental care.¹⁷ Seeking a solution, the Soviet state, first of all, developed a network of children’s homes, in addition urging pioneers and komsomols to get involved in working with homeless children,¹⁸ so that the children would be raised ideologically correctly, as proper Soviet people. However, of course, neither the state’s care nor life in a children’s home, nor activities of komsomols and pioneers could replace the care of the family and, in particular, of a mother, for a child.

2. Changes in the legal status of a woman-mother in the Stalin’s era

The consolidation of Stalin’s power, the formation of a totalitarian state, and the beginning of a regime of terror, marked a significant change in Soviet state policy; the rights and freedoms of the population were drastically reduced. The state assumed an increasingly extensive responsibility for people’s lives, which meant strict regulation on social relationships and wider restrictions. Women’s rights also changed, primarily, the legal status and the social prestige of a woman-mother.

The 1936 Constitution was of great legal importance; in it, the Soviet state undertook to guarantee its citizens broad fundamental rights, while simultaneously establishing the citizens’ obligations to the State and, thus, also restrictions on freedoms.¹⁹ This Constitution formed a totalitarian state, proclaiming the principle of the authority of the people, which consolidated the leading and directing role of the Communist party in Soviet society. In the Soviet doctrine, the period following the adoption of the 1936 Constitution was referred to as the stage of “Victorious Socialism”.²⁰ At present, historians characterise this period (until Stalin’s death in 1953) as a totalitarian State’s terror against its own population. The decrees issued during the Stalin’s era introduced radical changes into the rights of a woman-mother, *inter alia*, restricted the choice to become a mother, i.e., to give birth to a child. In 1937, the party activist Aaron Soltz wrote in the newspaper “Trud”: “We need people. Abortions, which destroy life, are unacceptable for our state. The Soviet woman is equal to man in her rights, but that does not release her from the grand and honourable duty imposed by nature: she is a mother, the giver of life. This, definitely, is

¹⁶ Rozhkov, A. Bor'ba s bezprizornostju v pervoje sovjetskoje desjatiletie [The fight against homelessness of children in the first soviet decade]. Available: https://etargentuma.myl1.ru/load/stati/istoricheskie/borba_s_besprizornostju_v_pervoe_sovjetskoe_desjatiletie/35-1-0-231 [last viewed 04.11.2021].

¹⁷ Krupskaja, N. Obshchije voprosi pedagogiki. Organizacija narodnogo obrazovanija v SSSR [General questions of pedagogy. Organization of public education in the USSR]. Moskva: Directmedia, 2014, p. 195.

¹⁸ Goldman, W. Z. Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life: 1917–1936. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 314.

¹⁹ Konstitucija (Osnovnoj zakon) SSSR (05.12.1936) [Constitution (Basic Law) of the USSR as amended on December 5, 1936]. Available: http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussrfsr/1936/red_1936/3958676/ [last viewed 22.03.2022].

²⁰ Kohanova, T., Aleksejeva, T. Istorija Rossijskoj gosudarstvennosti [History of Russian statehood]. Moskva: MGIU, 2008, p. 310.

not a private matter but a matter of great social importance.”²¹ These words expressed the course chosen by the party in a nutshell. Instead of free sexual relations and unregistered co-habitation, the Soviet family was built by a strict hand, a husband and a wife were united in it, equal in the absence of their rights, but a special status was created for the mother because the Soviet state “needed people.”²²

As regards normative consolidation of these trends, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics of 27 July 1936 “Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions, the Improvement of Material Aid to Women in Childbirth, the Establishment of State Assistance to Parents of Large Families, and the Extension of the Network of Lying-in Homes, Nursery Schools and Kindergartens, the Tightening-up of Criminal Punishment for the Non-payment of Alimony, and on Certain Modifications in Divorce Legislation”²³ needs to be mentioned first of all. This decree marked the beginning of the state’s comprehensive involvement in the family life, which, previously, traditionally had been the area of private law with minimal state’s impact on the development of relationships between the family members. The preamble to the decree declared: “In no other country in the world a woman, as a mother and a citizen with great and important mission – giving birth to and raising citizens, is respected as much and protected by law as it is in the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics.”²⁴ Namely, in addressing the Soviet woman, the status of the mother was placed first and the status of a citizen came next, thus emphasizing that the woman as a citizen had the duty to become a mother. This decree included an extensive state support programme for women and families with children, for example, mothers with numerous children, who were in registered marriage and who at the moment when each subsequent child was born had six children, were disbursed a monetary grant in the amount of 2000 roubles annually for 5 years. If she had ten children, then a one-off grant was disbursed for the birth of each subsequent child in the amount of 5000 roubles and, starting from the second year in the life of a child, the family received 3000 roubles per year.²⁵ At the same time, a woman was deprived of the right to choose not to give birth to the conceived child. An exception, when abortions were allowed, were cases where pregnancy threatened a woman’s life or significantly threatened her health (Article 1(1). Without engaging in more detailed analysis of this comprehensive regulatory enactment, we want to underscore that

²¹ Ukaz Prezidiuma Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR ot 27 iyunja 1936 goda N. 65/1134 O zapreshchenii abortov, uvelicheniji materialnoj pomoshchi rozhenicam, ustanovleniji gosudarstvennoj pomoshchi mnogosemejnim, rasshirenii seti roditel'nykh domov, detskih jaslej i detskih sadov, useliniji ugovornogo nakazaniya za neplatjuzh alimentov i o nekotorykh izmenenijah v zakonodatel'stve o razvodah [Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 27 June 1936 N 65/1134 On the prohibition of abortions, the increase in material assistance to women in childbirth, the establishment of state assistance to multifamilies, the expansion of the network of maternity hospitals, nurseries and kindergartens, the strengthening of criminal penalties for non-payment of alimony and on certain changes in divorce law], in: *Sobranije zakonov i rasporjazenij raboche-krestjanskogo pravitel'stva Sojuza Sovetskikh Socialisticheskikh Respublik* [Collection of laws and orders of the workers' and peasants' government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], 1936, № 34, p. 309.

²² *Vasiljeva, L. Osobennosti razvitiya semejnogo prava SSSR v oblasti ohrani materinstva i detstva v 1930-40e godi* [Peculiarities of the development of the family law of the USSR in the field of protection of maternity and childhood in the 1930–40s.]. In: *Izvestija Saratovskogo universiteta* [Izvestia of Saratov University], Vol. 7, issue 2, 2007, pp. 67–69.

²³ Ukaz Prezidiuma Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR ot 27 iyunja 1936 goda N. 65/1134.

²⁴ *Sakevich, V. Chto bilo posle zapreta abortov v 1936 godu?* [What happened after the abortion ban in 1936?]. In: *Demoskop*, 2005, № 221/222, p. 7. Available: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2005/0221/reprod01.php> [last viewed 10.11.2021].

²⁵ Ukaz Prezidiuma Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR ot 27 iyunja 1936 goda N. 65/1134.

it comprised the idea that a woman, a full-fledged Soviet citizen, had to give birth to children. The period following the coming into force of this decree is marked by a very high number of women who died at birth or as the result of an illegal or a self-performed abortion.²⁶

At the same time, raising children was not a sole concern of a Soviet woman-mother. She would give birth to a child (the decree enshrined guaranteed medical assistance and material support), breast-feed the child, provide an upkeep for the child (also in this respect the decree provides for additional guarantees in the form of a state support and more effective collection of alimony payments), however, it was also envisaged that she should return to work while the child was still an infant. The leave related to child-birth, in accordance with this decree, was 35 days before the child-birth and 28 days following it. Breast-feeding of a child for a working woman was regulated by labour law, establishing breaks for breast-feeding. Raising of a child was the task of the entire society, the implementation of which was facilitated by expanding the network of nurseries and kindergartens for older children and increasing number of boarding schools. Kindergartens were established in any locations, among others, at factories, collective and soviet farms, cooperatives and other institutions, where mothers worked. Namely, mid-1930s in the USSR saw significant changes in the understanding of child-rearing. Raising of children and their re-education was institutionalised, i.e., entrusted to special state institutions.²⁷

Moreover, the Decree clearly outlined that, following dissolution of the parents' marriage, children lived with their mother because the norms that regulated collection of alimony payments provided that these amounts were to be transferred to female workers and collective farm workers, i.e., women-mothers. Namely, by formalising the procedure of divorce, providing that an entry regarding divorce had to be made in a person's passport, the state presumed that following a divorce the children would remain with their mother.

The current research will not delve deeper into Stalin's policy of subjecting to repressions the wives and children of "the enemies of people" or "traitors of the homeland", defined by the Order of 15 August 1937 by the Minister for the Interior N. Yezhov No. 00486 "On the Operation for Repressing Wives and Children of Traitors of the Homeland".²⁸ Both the wedded wives and those living in actual cohabitation, as well as divorced wives of the traitors of the homeland were subjected to repressions, i.e., serving the sentence from 5 to 8 years in camps. They were separated from their children who, in turn, ended up in children's homes that were specially set up for children of the traitors of the homeland. The term "a socially dangerous child above the age of 15" appears in this order, which legally allows subjecting this child to repressions as an adult.²⁹ This matter deserves to be studied in its own right.

Returning to the regulation on supporting a woman-mother, the decree of 21 November 1941 needs to be mentioned. It introduced the childlessness tax to be

²⁶ Goldman, W., p. 267.

²⁷ Kelli, K. *Deti gosudarstva, 1935–1953* [Children of the state, 1935–1953], in: *Neprikosnovennij zapas*, 2008, № 2. Available: http://www.intelros.ru/readroom/nz/nz_58/2390-deti-gosudarstva-1935-1953.html [last viewed 04.04.2022]. Goldman, W., p. 314.

²⁸ *Operativnij prikaz Narodnogo komissara vnutrennih del N. Jezhova Nr. 00486 Ob operacii po repressirovaniju zhon i detej izmennikov rodini SSSR (15.08.1937)* [Operational Order of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR N. Ezhov No. 00486 "On the operation to repress the wives and children of traitors to the homeland USSR" 08/15/1937]. Available: <https://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/1009101> [last viewed 04.04.2022].

²⁹ *Ibid.*

paid by single citizens and childless couples. The tax had to be paid by men between the age of 20 and 50, and by women aged between 20 and 45. An individual had to pay the tax until the birth of his/her child.³⁰ The funds collected were intended to be used for the state care of war orphans and as state support to large families.³¹ The childlessness tax, under various conditions, remained in place in the Soviet tax system until the very collapse of the state in 1990/1991.³² Namely, an additional financial burden was imposed upon women who were not mothers to reallocate the collected money as benefits to those women who were mothers, as well as for the child care in state institutions.

The decree of 8 July 1944 “On the increase in state aid to expectant mothers, mothers of large families and unmarried mothers, on the strengthening of protection of motherhood and childhood, on the institution of the honorary title of Mother-Heroine, and on the establishment of the Order of the Glory of Motherhood and Motherhood Medal” expanded the childlessness tax to include those parents who had one or two children. However, the rate payable was differentiated. People without children paid 6% of their income, parents with one child paid 1%, and parents with two children paid 0.5%. In turn, mothers of at least 3 children were receiving substantial state aid. Simultaneously, this decree ended the legality of actual cohabitation as a form of marriage, its Section 19 providing that only a registered marriage gave rise to those rights and responsibilities of the spouses which were guaranteed by laws. The decree encouraged the couples living in actual cohabitation to register their marriage, indicating the actual time of their life together. Section 20 of the decree revoked the right of a mother to apply to court to establish paternity and to recover child support funds from a person she was not married to. The new term “lone mother” was introduced to denote a mother who has given birth to a child while being unmarried. If a child’s mother was not married, the child, being registered in accordance with the decree, received his or her mother’s surname.³³ The state established special support for a mother who performed the task, important for the state, of rising a child alone “by organically aligning the raising of a child with social upbringing, to instil loyalty to one’s homeland, communistic attitude towards work to prepare the child for building communism”, which was later enshrined in the foundations of the marriage and family law of the USSR in 1968.³⁴

³⁰ Ukaz Prezidiuma Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR O naloge na kholostiakov, odinokikh i molosemeinykh grazhdan SSSR (21.11.1941) [On the tax on bachelors, single and young-family citizens of the USSR, Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council from 11/21/1941]. In: *Vedomostji Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, 1941, № 42, p. 1.

³¹ *Djachenko, V. Istorija finansov SSSR (1917–1950)* [History of Finance of the USSR 1917–1950]. Moskva: Ripol Klassik, 1978, pp. 408, 409.

³² Really the tax existed until 01.01.1992. *Parigina, V., Tadeev, A. Nalogovoje pravo Rossii* [Russian tax law]. Moskva: Litres, 2022, pp. 56, 57.

³³ Ukaz Prezidiuma Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR “Ob uvelichenii gosudarstvennoi pomoshchi beremennym zhanshchinam, mnogodetnym i odinokim materiam,, usilenii okhrany materinstva i detsva, ob ustanovlenii pochetnogo zvaniiia “Matj – geroinja” i uchrezhdenii ordena “Materinskaia slava” i medli “Medal materinstva”” ot 08 ijulja 1944 goda [Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of July 8, 1944 “On increasing state assistance to pregnant women, mothers of many children and single mothers, strengthening the protection of motherhood and childhood, establishing the highest degree of distinction – the title of “Mother Heroine” and establishing “the Order of Mother's Glory” and medals “Medal of motherhood””]. In: *Vedomostji Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, N. 37, 1944, pp. 1, 2.

³⁴ *Zakon SSSR N 1968 N 2834-VII “Ob utverzhdenii Osnov zakonodatelstva Sojuza SSR i sojuznih respublik o brake i semje”* ot 27 ijunja 1968. [Law of the USSR of 27 June 1968 No. 2834-VII “On approval of the fundamentals of the legislation of the USSR and the Union republics on marriage and family”] Available: <http://museumreforms.ru/node/13898#ref-3> [last viewed 04.04.2022].

Since the reforms of Stalin's era, the mother, in a way, turned into a public person in the Soviet state, fulfilling a mission important for the state in improving the demographic situation. At the same time, her rights to choose how exactly to raise the child, how much time to dedicate to the child, which values to instil were constantly decreased. The mothers who did not conform to the ideology, were influenced by social means, for example, comrades' court, but those who openly held other opinions lost their rights of a mother, were repressed and separated from their children. Although this façade of a mother as value of state importance was created, it devalued a mother's role in the private life of a family and significance in the upbringing of children. The Russian researcher Anzhela Vavilenko, assessing the role of the Soviet woman, concludes that the Soviet state perceived the woman not as "an unreasonable childbearing machine" but rather as "an effective labour resource that gives birth conscientiously."³⁵

Summary

1. The Marxist-Leninist ideology advocated actual equality in society, especially – gender equality. The Bolsheviks' coming into power in Russia in 1917 changed the life of every woman significantly, since a new social status was immediately created, which was also defined in law. The essence and social role of marriage and family was revised in the Soviet state, and a legislation conforming with the ideology was developed. Hence, the Soviet policy altered the status of every woman in the society.
2. The status of the mother is especially important in every society, since every change in the social role of the mother in the upbringing of the child changes the whole society. From the very first days of its existence, the Soviet state changed the role of the mother in raising a child. The patriarchal family, in which both the wife and the children were under the control of the pater familias, was dismantled. The upbringing of a child was transformed from a private family relationship into a duty of the whole society. After the revolution, the woman was given the free choice to have sexual intercourse, terminate her pregnancy, and give up raising a child. The effects of the war and new Bolshevik policy after the war led to a sharp decline in the birth rate in the country and a huge number of homeless children.
3. By creating totalitarian control over the nation, Stalin radically revised the Soviet state policy, including imposing restrictions on women's freedom to have abortions, because "state needed people". The decree of 27 July 1936 marked the beginning of the state's comprehensive involvement in the family life, which, previously, traditionally had been the area of private law with a minimal state's impact on the development of relationships between the family members. A Soviet woman, as a citizen, was obliged to become a mother, give birth to a child, and the state was ready to bring this child up as a new Soviet citizen.
4. Since the reforms of Stalin's time, "the mother" turned into a public person in the Soviet state, responsible for the future of the nation. At the same time, her rights to choose how exactly to raise the child, how much time to dedicate to the child, which values to instil were consistently decreased. The mothers who

³⁵ Vavilenko, A. Aborti v SSSR, osobennaja neobhodimostj ili politicheskij proshot? [Abortion in the USSR, perceived necessity or political miscalculation?]. In: Materinstvo i otcovstvo skvozj prizmu vremeni i kultur. Tom 2 [Motherhood and fatherhood through the prism of time and culture. Volume 2], Smolensk-Moskva: Smol-GU, 2016, p. 20.

did not conform to the ideology, where influenced by social means, whereas those who openly were of other opinions or “the enemies of the soviet people” lost their rights of a mother, were repressed, and separated from their children.

5. Increasing support for the mother, raising her social status, honouring mothers with many children, including the support to mothers raising a child in absence of the child’s father, dismantled the traditional family model in which the father and mother were equally responsible and respected. A side effect of the Soviet “Mother Heroine” cult was the diminishing role of the man as a father in the family and society. This has had consequences for post-Soviet society, which will be explored in the next study.

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