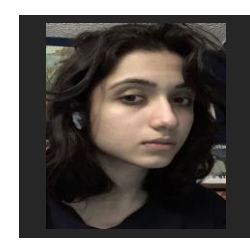


(Re)Creating the Soviet Family

Material Realities of Utopian Family Law



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The 1918 and 1926 Family Law Codes of the Soviet Union were landmark moments in the law and feminism, but “failed.” Why?

METHODOLOGY



INITIAL FINDINGS

- Continuation of “old” patriarchal family structures among peasantry until at least collectivization (1929-)
- Interviewees did not conceive of the new family structures (although they did perceive them as new and as “progress”) as “feminism” or “women’s liberation.”
 - Objected to this interpretation from interviewers
- Interviewees expressed ideological mixture between 1926 Code values and 1930s propaganda re: “the socialist family.”

Image from Mother (1926), directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin, USSR

“Women’s Liberation” from the family in early 20th century Russia was not instituted by the law, or a utopian vision of cultural transformation (that was soon abandoned), but new material opportunities.

DISCUSSION AND NUANCES

- Historians excessive focus on 1920s discourse at the expense of reality.
- Moving beyond a binary of “sexual conservatism” versus “sexual liberation”
- Ethnic focus of study predominantly Russian women, with a minority of ethnic Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Polish women living in the Soviet Union
- Chose to exclude Central Asian women from study - family law of the USSR excluded region, among other major differences in gendered policy

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