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The Family in Light of Women's Equality (December 20, 1965)

The new East German Code of Family Law not only emphasized women's equality in marriage and the family; it also liberalized the divorce law and addressed the status of children. It provided a foundation for a socialist family policy that attempted to promote and reconcile women's dual roles in the workplace and the family.

Family Code of the German Democratic Republic of December 20, 1965 [excerpt]

The family is the smallest unit of society. It is based on life-long marriage and the particularly intimate bonds that develop from the emotional relationships between man and woman and the relationships of mutual love, respect, and trust between all family members.

The social conditions in the German Democratic Republic are the firm foundation for the socially secured existence of the family. With the building up of socialism emerged social conditions that lead to liberating family relations from the perversions and distortions caused by human exploitation, the social and legal degradation of women, material insecurity, and other manifestations of bourgeois society.

With the development of socialism in the German Democratic Republic new forms of family relations are emerging. Creative work free of exploitation, human relations based on comradely interactions, equal rights for women in all aspects of life, and educational opportunities for all citizens are important prerequisites for strengthening the family and making it lasting and happy. Harmonious relations in marriage and the family have a great influence on the formation of the younger generation's character and on a person's individual happiness, joie de vivre, and pleasure in work.

The family has great social significance in the German Democratic Republic. It grows into a community that supports and furthers the abilities and characteristics that determine the behavior of a person as an individual in socialist society.

It is the purpose of the family code to promote the development of family relations in socialist society. The family code should help all citizens, especially young people, in consciously shaping their family lives. It serves to protect marriage and the family and the right of each and every member of the family community. It should prevent family conflicts and help to solve emerging conflicts. In this context, it regulates the obligations and tasks of the state organs and institutions.

The family code directs the attention of citizens, socialist collectives, and social organizations to the great personal and social significance of marriage and the family, and to the tasks of each individual and society as a whole in contributing to the protection and development of every family.

Part One Principles

Section 1:

(1) The socialist state protects and promotes marriage and the family. Through various measures, state and society use their influence to assure that the achievements connected with the birth, upbringing, and care of children in the family are acknowledged and duly appreciated. State and society contribute to strengthening the relations between man and woman and between parents and children, as well as to the development of the family. Citizens have a right to state protection of their marriage and family and to the respect of marriage and family bonds.

(2) The socialist society expects all citizens to behave responsibly towards marriage and family.

Section 2:

The equal rights of man and woman contribute decisively to the character of the family in socialist society. They obligate the husband and wife to arrange their mutual relationship such that both can take full advantage of the right to develop their abilities for their own and for society's benefit. At the same time they also demand the mutual respect of each other's personalities and support in developing their individual abilities.

Section 3:

(1) Citizens shall arrange their family relations in such a way as to promote the development of each family member. It is the noblest task of parents to raise their children in trusting cooperation with the institutions of the state and society to become healthy, industrious, and all-around educated individuals who enjoy life and actively work to build up socialism.

(2) Raising children is also the task and concern of all of society. For this reason, through its institutions and measures, the socialist state guarantees that parents can exercise their rights and obligations in raising their children. Special attention shall be paid to assistance for large families and for single mothers and fathers.

Section 4:

(1) The state institutions, especially those responsible for general education, youth services, and the health and social welfare departments, as well as the organs for the administration of justice, are obliged to give spouses the appropriate support in developing their family relations and [are obliged] to help parents in raising their children. Social organizations, work collectives, and parent councils shall participate to the extent they are able.

(2) In cooperation with social organizations, state organs shall establish marriage and family counseling centers in which experienced, informed citizens can offer advice and aid to people who are preparing for marriage or who turn to them in other family matters. The staff of the

marriage and family counseling centers is obliged to treat the matters brought to them confidentially.

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Source: Familiengesetzbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 20. Dezember 1965 [Family Code of the German Democratic Republic of December 20, 1965], *Gesetzblatt*, I 1966, no. 1, p. 1.

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