

Letters to the Editor of the Magazine *Die Frau von heute*: “Is the Working Woman a Bad Mother?” (1950)

Abstract

These two female authors of letters to the editor of the East German women’s magazine *Die Frau von heute* [*The Woman of Today*] endorsed women’s work in the GDR. They viewed themselves as role models for their children and rejected the charge that, as working mothers, they were neglecting them. At the same time, however, the second author called for a more equitable division of the burdens of household and family.

Source

Mrs. Gerda Wenzel, Berlin-Lichtenrade, Homburgstr. 20, writes: “No, she is not a bad mother, she is the best mother! I have three boys, 14, 10, and 2. I am gainfully employed and am also active in the DFB [*Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands* or Democratic Women’s League of Germany]. I tell myself that it is important right now to help make the German Democratic Republic solid and strong, and, above all, to attend to preserving the life of our children, which is threatened in the face of the war preparations; otherwise, our children could say one day that we were bad mothers. My boys know how necessary my work is, and if one shows the children that one is learning and creating and that one is joyful and happy despite the work, then they themselves will not shirk work later on.”

Mrs. Doris Nicolaus, Leipzig N24, Lindenallee 9, writes: “It used to be said so often: our daughter does not need to work! Now, when such a sheltered young woman goes through life today with open eyes, she will realize on her own that her participation is needed, but that she also has the duty to educate her children in this spirit, and also to live with them, that is, to address their questions and wishes, and to still have time for them when she comes home. But help should be given to the housewife. How much time is lost to laundry, cleaning, mending, and shopping. Once it has become natural for this burden to be taken from the working mother, she will also have enough time and leisure for her child.”

Source: *Die Frau von heute* 30 (1950), p. 20; reprinted in Ina Merkel, ed., ... *und Du, Frau an der Werkbank. Die DDR in den fünfziger Jahren*. Berlin: Elefant Press, 1990, p. 150.

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