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

Abstract

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.

Source

Family Code of the German Democratic Republic of December 20, 1965

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 buildup of socialism [*Aufbau des Sozialismus*], social conditions arose that lead to the liberation of family relations from the perversions and distortions caused by the exploitation of man, the social and legal degradation of women, material insecurity and other phenomena of bourgeois society.

With the socialist development in the German Democratic Republic, new forms of family relations are emerging. Creative work free from 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 family have a great influence on the character formation of the younger generation 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 qualities that determine the behavior of a person as an individual in socialist society.

The purpose of the Family Code is 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 rights of each 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. The state and society shall take a variety of measures to ensure that the achievements associated with the birth, upbringing, and care of children in the family are recognized and appreciated. State and society contribute to strengthening the relations between husband and wife 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, to respect from marital and family bonds.
(2) The socialist society expects all citizens to behave responsibly towards marriage and family.

Section 2
The equal rights of men and women decisively determine 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 require respecting the personality of the other and supporting him or her in the development of his or her abilities.

Section 3
(1) Citizens shall form their family relations in such a way as to promote the development of all family members. It is the noblest task of parents to educate their children in trusting cooperation with state and social institutions to become healthy and cheerful, capable and well-educated people, active builders of socialism.
(2) Raising children is also the task and concern of society as a whole. 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 organs of the state, especially the organs of national education, youth welfare and health and social welfare services, as well as the organs of the administration of justice shall be obliged to provide appropriate support to spouses in the development of their family relationships and to assist parents in the raising of their children. Social organizations, labor collectives, and parent councils shall participate to the extent that they are able.
(2) Marriage and family counseling centers shall be established by state organs in cooperation with social organizations. There, experienced, knowledgeable citizens shall provide advice and assistance to those who are about to marry or who otherwise turn to them regarding family matters. The staff of the marriage and family counseling centers are obliged to treat the matters brought to them confidentially.

[…]

Source: Familiengesetzbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 20. Dezember 1965, *Gesetzblatt* I 1966, no. 1, p. 1. Available online at:
http://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/familiengesetzbuch65.htm

Translation: Allison Brown

Recommended Citation: The Family in the Context of Women's Equality (December 20, 1965), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/two-germanies-1961-1989/ghdi:document-1096> [October 12, 2024].