

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Some comments on Marianne Ferber's review of Hilda Scott's *Does Socialism Liberate Women?* (*Slavic Review*, September 1975). Ferber is correct in saying that an answer to the question posed in the title really requires "more data on other socialist countries, and a more systematic comparison with nonsocialist countries." Scott essentially assumes that Czechoslovak data suffice to provide an answer. She disregards, among other things, the time factor. The Soviet Union has had nearly twice as much time, and the statistics show that it has made very significantly more progress. I offer Czechoslovak-Soviet comparisons in my book *Soviet Women*, 1975, pp. 317-22.

A socioeconomic system can create only a condition of closed or opened doors: to what degree women pass through those doors and men cease to bar them, if not by law and power then by psychology, is in very large measure a consequence of how long a period both sexes have lived under the new conditions and adjusted to them.

Ferber's criticism of the fact that "the single family persists" in the socialist countries assumes an ideal of liberation that an overwhelming majority of women reject in all countries where studies have been done. Her statement that there "has been *no* transformation of private housekeeping into a social industry" (my emphasis), ignores the very extensive although inadequate establishment of public laundries, dry cleaners, low-cost eating places, and convenience food industries, which are what the Marxist founders specified in that regard.

Her statement that "women are not in a position to avail themselves of the equal opportunities which the law guarantees" hardly jibes with the fact that there are more female engineers in the USSR than in the rest of the world combined, as is also true of physicians.

The emphasis today on increased male sharing in the home (Iu. Riurikov in *Molodoi kommunist*, nos. 10 and 11, 1975; a recent article in *Nash sovremennik*, and so forth) does offer a "plan of action" to eliminate the major remaining inequity.

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PROFESSOR FERBER REPLIES:

The fact that "the single family persists" is not necessarily a criticism. The fact that the burden of the housework associated with it has not declined substantially and that the burden continues to be borne overwhelmingly by women is a criticism. Conditions have not changed significantly since Lenin stated in 1923: "You all know that even with the fullest equality in their labor force participation, women are still in an actual position of inferiority because all housework is thrust upon them." True, this double burden has not prevented women from entering most occupations in the Soviet Union, but it surely is one of the factors that is inhibiting their rise to the top in any.