

[1924-1928?]

(From the "Montag Morgen"--left paper-- Communist, or such a tendency, I believe)

THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS BIRTH CONTROL IN GERMANY

At last, practical measures against the scourge of abortion:

In the "M.M." (Montag Morgen) we have often complained against the national danger of the abortion scourge which rages in Germany more than in any other country, and against which the State does nothing--except punish. The scourge of abortion brings as a result--death, life-long illness, denunciation in public, imprisonment. Instead of ~~thousands of~~ abortions, now the broad masses have the opportunity in their hands of securing rigid contraceptive methods. That there are laws that forbid propaganda for contraceptive methods is a lesson to the masses.

Fortunately, "puritanical" America has sent us not only the dancing girl, but it sent us also the woman, Mrs. Margaret Sanger. This clever and energetic woman has shown our prudish gentlemen that a State can afford to give the people contraceptive methods and, when necessary help them prevent conception. In that healthy America, a Birth Control Clinic for women has existed for a long time; here not only is instruction and methods for the prevention of pregnancy given, but they also do research work in the best and most certain methods. The result is: great success in the social and hygienic field. In England also, and of course in Russia, birth control propaganda has led to the erection of birth control clinics. And now--thank God!--at last, generous, warm-hearted men and women in Germany have opened the first birth control clinic in Germany.

Of course they didn't undertake it ~~xxx~~ without the advice of a good lawyer! Because, are there not so and so many paragraphs in the law books about this subject? But fortunately, the law makers have forbidden propaganda of contraceptive methods for business purposes, but at the same time they have not ~~xxx~~ forbidden instruction in this subject, nor the giving of such methods when money is not made on them. Birth control clinics are legally permitted.

---regard left---"Mensch Mensch" and more (evailed i, vonner a such a tendency Communist)

The Birth Control Clinic will, first of all, come to the help of the broad masses who live in furnished rooms and for whom another child ~~is~~ would lead to expulsion; for those whose wages are not sufficient to feed another mouth; for women who work, along with their husbands; in an attempt to keep a roof over their heads; for the ~~most~~ worked-out, sickly woman for whom the joy of ~~the~~ motherhood is a curse. It is just such classes that need instruction the most. The rich can save themselves from ~~unnecessary~~ unpleasantness or additional children,--by the payment of money; this is known to all of us. But here we have a Clinic that serves the masses and saves them from families that are too large for them.

Thus, thanks to the Committee ~~for~~ at the head of which stands Dr. Bendix, Dr. Hodann, Health Commissioner Dr. Schminke, and Frau Dr. Stöcker, the first German ~~express~~ A Birth Control Clinic, ~~xxxxx~~ for the purpose of giving contraceptive methods to women, is opened in Neukölln. The so-called Marriage Bureaus which already exist, have completely failed to meet the needs of women in respect of birth control methods. But now the Krankenkasse ~~(Municipal)~~ (Municipal ~~sick insurance~~) have given free rooms to the Committee, and the Committee hopes to collect enough money to maintain the Clinic as it should be maintained. Women are given very careful examinations and are fitted with harmless and certain contraceptive methods and they are, of course, instructed in their use. The cost to each woman will not be more than M.1.50 to M. 2 each half year.

It is to be hoped that this Birth Control Clinic will lead to the erection of many new ones which will abolish compulsory breeding, and that the present one will lead to many good things in the future.

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Anyway, the sum they worked out, apart from the ~~M. 1,000~~ M. 1,000 to M. 1,500 for full equipment at first, came to about \$75 a month. I told ~~xxx~~ him you had said you might be able to help some, and I would lay this thing estimate before you. Judged from American standards, it is indeed little. For the N.Y. Clinic costs more I am sure.

Then I telephoned with Frau Dr. Wolff. She had a large practice in a great workers section out in Niederschoeneweide. ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ I have not spoken personally with her to ask her what part she personally would take in all this, or if she would not be able to give free time. She is, however, so very active in the Party work and in a literary capacity that it may not be possible to get her.

Dr. Schmiede proposed that we make propoganda in the bourgeois press for money. I opposed it, and told him that if we let it be known in the bourgeois press then the Clinic would be closed, or would have a hard fight because of Catholic and other opposition from such courses as Prof. Grotjahn. He agreed to that. He proposed that I do propoganda in the workers' press, but I told him that this must be done by the physicians and by Germans, for neither my health nor my income would permit me to be very active. Furthermore, it is a German affair and I think they must do most of the work alone. My own plan was to have the proposal put privately before the Neukölln Municipality next year, without anyone talking about it apart from that, and get a substantial appropriation--but this would mean that it should operate until then and show good results, so as to have the right to claim the appropriation; then to lay the same plan before the Communist Party and the Woman's Section--through Frau Dr. Wolff--and ask for money there also. And then before groups of the Socialist Physicians. But all of this I did not mention then, and only discussed it with Jo later.

When I telegraphed you, I thought you would soon get my letter. So I telephoned Dr. Schmiede and Frau Dr. Wolff and asked them if they thought you should come here again. They were both very glad to hear that you might consider it.

As for the name of the Clinic:

It could not be called a Clinic, but an Ambulatorium or such. Dr. Wolff even suggested that it be called the Margaret Sanger Dispensary--but that I oppose because I fear that might mean that you would be expected to finance the entire thing forever and ever. Still, that was not in Dr. Wolff's mind, I believe.

It was in connection with all this that I asked you to come here. So now, after reading this, if you think it ~~xxx~~ necessary, come. By the way, Dr. Schmienke said he would organize a group to manage the Clinic. But as for organization, etc., that I know nothing of and I thought you could help much here, if you came, in putting the whole idea on its feet.

As for Russia--I said in my letter that I would take that up later and do all I can to get an invitation for you to go when you wish to Russia.

Then also I had quite a set-to with Dr. Schmienke on B.C. and Marxism, etc.

I am ill, Margaret. The appendix has come back in full swing the past few days and I made arrangements for an operation. I thought I could pay it off in the future. But they demanded money in advance. Half of the operation fee and M.150 extra just for the room--in advance. Before I would have finished, the operation would have cost me M.600 to M.700. So at the last moment I came away, for the very idea of working for the next year or two just to pay off such a debt was more than I could think of.

Now I am trying to find a physician who will do it for less. I don't think the whole thing should cost more than four or five hundred marks. And I fear I shall have to write to Mr. Slee to help me what he can, as you suggested in a former letter. I am writing him in this and must ask you to give it to him. If I can get money enough, I shall be operated upon within a few days. I feel so very badly all the time that I can't go much longer with this thing. The least little thing sends me off again. I can't walk or work much, and always I suffer from headaches. Combined with the appendix is now another trouble. Because of the chronic irritation, the uterus has swung to the right, and this will also have to be streightened by shortening the band. I had hoped to be operated upon this morning, and had made arrangements; but it was impossible.

Love to you, Margaret. Let me hear if you are coming. Even if I am in the hospital when you come, Jo Bennett knows all about this affair and can be of help to you. Or, if absolutely necessary, if you came here, I would try to postpone the operation a few days so as to interpret for you. But I feel so unspeakably rotten.

Love

Agnes

I will have to take
ether in the operation.
You may know how I
feel about it.

A friend of mine is in
Paris - Mr. Wao - formerly
of the National Sect. He may try to see you.