

Essay competition

Индивидуальный конкурс эссе

“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World.
Time for Equal Opportunities”

« БЫТЬ ПЕРВОЙ ЛЕДИ. ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ
НАДЕЖДЫ КРУПСКОЙ И КЛЕМЕНТИНЫ ЧЕРЧИЛЛЬ»

“WHAT BEING THE FIRST LADY IS LIKE. SOCIAL
ACTIVITIES OF NADEZHDA KRUPSKAYA AND
CLEMENTINE CHURCHILL”

E.M. PRIMAKOV GYMNASIUM

Выполнила: Вердель Дария Стефановна

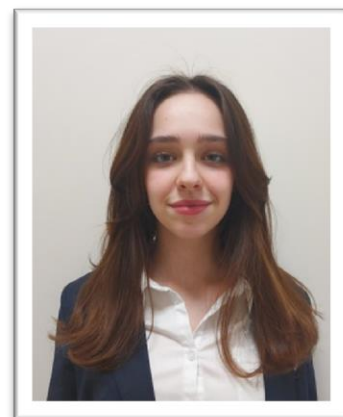
Ученица 9C класса

Руководитель: Дегтярева Олеся Юрьевна

Written by: Daria Verdeil

Grade 9C

Supervisor: Olesya Degtyareva



The position of the First Lady has never been officially defined or codified, yet it would be unwise to claim that it is not real or less significant than that of the president's.

In my essay I strive to answer the following questions related to the position of the First Lady in the political and social life of the nation:

- What does it mean to be the First Lady?
- What responsibilities come with this position?
- What are the positive and negative sides of the position of the First Lady?
- Would I consider this position for myself in the future?

To answer these questions it seemed only natural to focus on and research the lives of the two well-known and highly distinguished First Ladies of their times, Nadezhda Krupskaya and Clementine Churchill.

In the course of my research, I aimed to identify the key similarities and differences these two figures possessed, specifically, their achievements and position in society as role models.

Despite misconceived stereotyping, being the First Lady is far from being an addition to a president or a minister. It is a self-sustained post that is, without a doubt, a highly demanding position. Consequently, if one becomes the First Lady, one also has to be aware that it entails many greater roles: becoming an adviser, a colleague, a trusted friend. Furthermore, one has to be ready to sacrifice personal needs, time, and space for the sake of one's husband. Not to mention, it is a highly important and complicated role. While being the First Lady, one also has to stay a wife, a mother, and a woman that not only one's husband but the whole nation may love, appreciate, and respect. Not surprisingly, few women are capable of taking on such a challenging job. However, there are examples of great women, who were perfectly suited for it, namely, Nadezhda Krupskaya and Clementine Churchill. Let us take a closer look at their roles as First Ladies, their accomplishments, and their perspectives on womanhood.

Nadezhda Krupskaya was a soviet politician, educator, and wife of Vladimir Lenin. She played an essential role in the Bolshevik party, helped to popularise and develop it. Nadezhda was also a chairwoman of the Soviet Union's Education Committee. She kept functioning even without Lenin by her side. Though historians have tended to minimise Krupskaya's importance, she managed to contribute a lot to her country and people, and especially children. To mention but a few, Krupskaya wrote and edited textbooks for school, researched problems of child-rearing, explored theories of progressive American and European education, founded several literature museums, was one of the main figures in the creation of pioneers, "cleaned" libraries from "harmful books" and much more. However, despite her great achievements, she was always diminished to the role of a wife of a great leader.

In terms of her role as a woman to be followed by others, Nadezhda never strived to be a fashion icon. She would never wear either fashionable or

expensive clothes because she could not bear the thought of dressing herself up when the whole country was reduced to destitution. She would usually wear something baggy and plain, together with a pair of old stockings. Nadezhda intentionally made herself unfeminine because she believed that a revolutionary should be concentrated on changing the country, not her looks. However, ridding herself of this status of a woman, Nadezhda inspired the movement of women who believed that all men and women ought to be equal, so wearing feminine or beautiful clothes was of no importance.

Clementine Churchill, the wife of Winston Churchill, his trusted adviser and significant other, on the other hand, was different. Clementine was always beside Winston, supported and guided him when he returned to lead the government in the darkest hour of World War II. Moreover, Clementine was not a revolutionary, she was a humanitarian, who also took part in Red Cross Aid to Russia. This organisation raised more than 1 million £ to aid Russia in recovery from the terrible and devastating war. The Red Cross fund also delivered clothes, food, and medical equipment. She espoused liberal values. Clementine was a keen promoter of social and humanitarian causes, including woman's rights, often in defiance of Winston. However, she was always there for Churchill and helped him to get out of political and personal troubles.

Unlike Nadezhda, Clementine was a real style icon in England at the time. She would always wear something strict but fashionable and beautiful. Like many other British women, Clementine liked to wear different hats. Also, she would often wear jewelry, such as pearl necklaces. She had many outfits and always thought that it was important to stay feminine.

It is clear, that there a lot of differences, as well as similarities, between Nadezhda Krupskaya and Clementine Churchill. On the one hand, both of them were their husbands' colleagues and supporters, furthermore, they achieved many great things for their countries, both were ambitious and hardworking. On the other hand, Nadezhda and Clementine took different approaches to

femininity. Nadezhda was unfeminine while Clementine was. They dressed opposite and thought about clothes very differently. However, these differences make them truly unique.

Based on the above mentioned, one can assume that there are certain disadvantages of the position of the First Lady, such as seen from the example of Nadezhda Krupskaya, being reduced to the role of a wife by media and critics, despite obvious extraordinary achievements. However, there is a positive side to this job as well. For instance, it is possible to follow one's strong inclinations towards certain ideas and make a significant contribution to the development of one's country. Therefore, Nadezhda was able to pursue her political vision, and Clementine stayed committed to her liberal ideas. In addition, the position itself is decent and well-respected, and also entails many privileges, such as having access to politics, educational societies, charity organisations, fashion, etc. Furthermore, one is to become a role model for many women, e.g. Clementine Churchill was a style icon and Nadezhda was an inspiration for the new movement of women.

The only question that remains unanswered is whether I would consider this position for myself if I had an opportunity in the future. Taking into account all the facts presented in the course of my research, I honestly believe that I am not yet ready to answer this question. However, working on this research helped me look critically at the obligations and the social role of a First Lady.

To sum up, I would like to say that both Nadezhda Krupskaya and Clementine Churchill, although they were so different, were great examples of what the First Lady is supposed to be. Both of them had many important responsibilities and played various social roles: politicians, wives, and public figures. What is noteworthy, however, is that I see more advantages of this job, rather than disadvantages. Studying the social lives of these two grand ladies, gave me a new perspective of how amazing but also responsible and hard this

job is. I am curious to discover even more about this important job, being the First Lady, in the future.

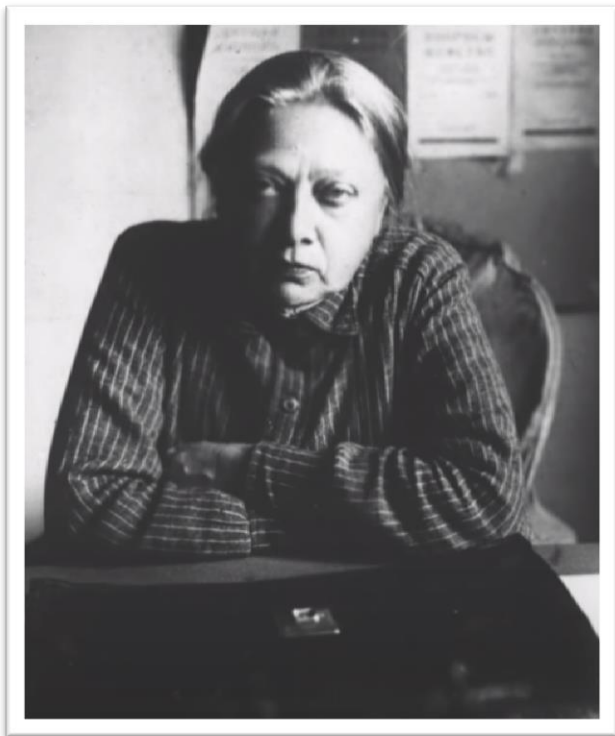
Bibliography

1. <https://biography-life.ru/country/1905-nadezhda-krupskaja.html>
2. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nadezhda-Konstantinovna-Krupskaya>
3. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/first-lady-United-States-title>
4. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/russian-soviet-and-cis-history-biographies/nadezhda-konstantinovna-krupskaya>
5. <https://www.history.com/news/meet-the-woman-behind-winston-churchill>
6. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/books/review/clementine-the-life-of-mrs-winston-churchill-by-sonia-purnell.html>
7. <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/31/461480007/how-clementine-churchill-wielded-influence-as-winstons-wife>
8. https://www.rbth.com/arts/2017/05/18/revolutionary-first-lady-the-life-and-struggles-of-lenins-wife_765659
9. <https://russiainphoto.ru/photos/15853/>
10. <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/life/family-man/clementine-and-winston/>
11. <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/war-leader/1943-1945/clementine-churchills-aid-russia-fund/>
12. <https://womans.mirtesen.ru/blog/43349280644/Klementina-CHerchill—zhenagenialnogo-politika,-bez-kotoroy-mi>

Annex



Retrieved from video exhibition
“Krupskaya-Lenina. The First Lady
of the Soviet nation”, 1915-1916.



Krupskaya suffered from Graves' disease, an incurable illness at that time. This disease affects the thyroid gland in the neck, causing the eyes to bulge and the neck to tighten. Source: Mary Evans Picture Library/Global Look Press



Mrs. Winston Churchill, with her daughters Mary and Sarah, after her investiture by the Queen at Buckingham Palace, where she became a Dame of the British Empire, 1946. (Credit: Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)



Lady Churchill in April 1965

Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images