

SOVIET WOMEN AND GLASNOST
OPENING UP THE DISCUSSION OF WORK, FAMILY AND POLITICS

by

JULIE LIN WARWICK

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General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev has reinterpreted Marxist-Leninist press theory to allow the press greater openness. His policy of glasnost, originally instated to stimulate economic reform, has also affected foreign policy, social issues and politics. In this thesis, I study the impact glasnost has had on how the press portrays women's work, family and political issues. Each chapter compares the pre-glasnost press coverage to the glasnost press coverage. By studying Soviet women's issues, I hope to provide insight into the effect of glasnost on a social issue.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women in the Soviet Union lead double lives. Daily they must balance the government and societal view of their lives against the reality. When they wake in the morning, they may see double images in the mirror: A woman who runs a factory and serves the party...a woman who is burdened by her job, child care and housework. In the past, this duality was pronounced. Foreign journalists and scholars noted the discrepancies between the official view of women's lives and the reality of women's lives. Today, this duality may be blurring as a result of glasnost.

General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev radically changed the Soviet approach to mass media when he adopted glasnost, a policy of openness toward subjects that previous leaders had deemed off limits. *Glasnost* is difficult to translate into English. It literally means making known, but in the West, the most common interpretation is openness.¹ Under glasnost, the press is stretching the apron strings that have tied it to the party, assessing current issues, reporting on problems, and criticizing poor leadership.

¹John M. Battle, "Uskorenie, Glasnost and Perestroika: The Pattern of Reform Under Gorbachev," Soviet Studies 40 (July 1988): 382.

Gorbachev's rapid changes have challenged scholars to reevaluate the Soviet press. Since the revolution, the Communist Party has applied the teachings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin to guide the press. Marx and Lenin said the press should act to further the goals of communism. Party leaders interpreted this directive to mean the press should reflect one truth -- the ruling party's conception of truth. By reflecting the party line, the press would be furthering the goals of communism.

However, under glasnost, Gorbachev has directed the press to reflect more diversity of opinion. His goal, like that of Marx and Lenin, is to further communism. However, with glasnost, Gorbachev is challenging past precedent with a different means to attain that goal.

Glasnost is not a new concept in the Soviet Union, but its application has caused more change now than at any time previously. As a result, scholars do not agree on a definition of glasnost, its scope, effects or purpose. Because glasnost is relatively new, little research is available to shed light on these questions. Scholars who are studying glasnost approach it from different paths. Their studies range in outlook because glasnost is a continuing phenomenon.

Glasnost is primarily viewed as a tool to promote economic restructuring. However, scholars have also acknowledged its potential to affect culture, social issues,

foreign policy, and Western understanding of the Soviet Union.

What does glasnost mean for Soviet women? It offers Soviet women the potential to see more than just the official view of their lives. But has glasnost provided an open, more realistic portrayal of women's lives in the press?

Outside the official press, many Soviet women have outlined the reality of their lives and the issues that concern them. Some of the issues are working conditions, wages, child care, abortion, divorce, housework, and political participation. Before glasnost, the press presented a singular, official view of these issues. For example, a Moscow News article from 1979 described how fortunate working Soviet mothers are to have nurseries for their children.² Yet a Western journalist's book published in 1976 described the shortage of child care facilities in the Soviet Union.³ Obviously, what women read in the press about child care can be very different from what they experience.

Under glasnost, the press theoretically can eliminate the discrepancies between the official portrayal and the

²Yu. Senin, "Your Working Mothers Are Really Blessed," Moscow News, 10 June 1979, 6.

³Robert G. Kaiser, Russia: The People and the Power (New York: Pocket Books, 1976): 61-2.

reality of women's lives and their concerns. But has glasnost eliminated these discrepancies? In this thesis, I will examine whether glasnost has stimulated the press to provide a more realistic portrayal of women's lives and their concerns.

Although many other Sovietologists are writing about glasnost, none have explored exclusively its effects on the treatment of women's issues. Soviet scholar John M. Battle, in a July 1988 article in Soviet Studies, focuses on glasnost as a component of Gorbachev's reform program. He defines glasnost by example and treats it as a method of reform. His article, "Uskorenie, Glasnost and Perestroika: The Pattern of Reform Under Gorbachev," does not focus on the cultural and societal results of glasnost or the foreign policy implications. He postulates that Gorbachev was forced to institute glasnost to reform the sluggish Soviet economy. He writes that "substantial opposition to the basic goals outlined under the heading of 'economic acceleration' led to the recognition that social, cultural and political reform was a necessary precondition of economic reform."⁴

Battle researches the purpose of glasnost and its hoped-for effects in stimulating economic reform. I will not dispute his theory. Instead, I will explore another

⁴Battle, 368.

vein of glasnost: its effect on a social issue. Whether Gorbachev intended glasnost to affect social concerns, such as women's issues, is debatable, but it is not the focus of this study. I will build upon Battle's and other studies by adding to general knowledge of what glasnost is and how it is affecting Soviet society.

D. W. J. McForan's article, "Glasnost, Democracy and Perestroika," is similar to Battle's. Printed in the International Social Science Review, this article ignores the social implications of glasnost. Like Battle, McForan describes glasnost as a tool to help economic restructuring, or perestroika, succeed. He also contends that glasnost is a domestic policy and its foreign policy results were not Gorbachev's original goal.⁵

Iain Elliot's article, "How Open is 'Openness'?", deals more directly with the foreign policy implications of glasnost. He addresses the limitations of glasnost and notes specific media events since glasnost that have gained international interest.⁶ Both Elliot's and McForan's articles discuss important aspects of glasnost, but neither article focuses exclusively on the impact of glasnost on women's issues.

⁵D.W.J. McForan, "Glasnost, Democracy, and Perestroika," International Social Science Review 63 (Autumn 1988): 165-74.

⁶Iain Elliot, "How Open is 'Openness'?" Survey 30 (October 1988): 1-22.

A interesting approach to glasnost appears in a 1987 issue of Problems of Communism. In an article titled "Glasnost: Roots and Practice," Natalie Gross examines the roots of glasnost historically, from before the revolution to Gorbachev. She explains how various leaders have approached glasnost. In addition, she traces Gorbachev's interpretation of glasnost and places it in historical perspective. Gross discusses the foreign policy aspects of glasnost and its limits. She gives a broad overview of its impact on the intellectuals and society; however, she does not address its effect on women's issues.

Gross includes a case study of glasnost in the armed forces at the end of her article. She describes the changes in military reporting. However, her focus is on how the military tailors glasnost to fit its own needs. In this thesis, I will differ from Gross' focus because I will examine the effect of glasnost on issues, not institutions.

Walter Laqueur is another scholar who looks at glasnost historically. Like Gross, he introduces glasnost as an old idea that Gorbachev has modified to stimulate economic reform. Unlike Gross, Laqueur looks at glasnost in terms of how close it approaches the American idea of freedom of the press. He considers the limitations of glasnost and its prospects for success, and he measures its impact. Laqueur describes a shopping list of content changes under glasnost, including the greater attention to social problems. He

mentions a change in reporting women's issues; however, he does not go into any depth.

Laqueur's study stands out because he concludes that glasnost will have more effect on culture and ideas than on politics and the economy. He concludes that the government can more easily control glasnost's effect on the political and economic spheres than on culture and ideas, because culture and ideas "move in mysterious and often unpredictable ways."⁷ Many scholars have pointed out that glasnost is an insecure policy because the ruling authority could decide to eliminate it at any time. However, if Laqueur is correct, glasnost will leave a lasting mark on Soviet society even if it is revoked, because ideas are not easily suppressed once they are aired.

In this thesis, I cannot judge whether Laqueur's theory is correct. However, I can measure the effect of glasnost on one social issue. I will measure the degree, if any, to which glasnost has affected coverage of women's lives and concerns. To establish an accurate portrayal of women's lives and concerns, I will survey a variety of books and articles by and about Soviet women. Many of these sources also describe how the press covered women before glasnost. The authors range from Soviet feminists to journalists to scholars.

⁷Walter Laqueur, "Glasnost and Its Limits," Commentary 86 (July 1988): 13.

Two press publications are also available for research: Moscow News and Soviet Woman. Moscow News is published by a government body, the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. It is published weekly for audiences at home and abroad. Soviet Woman is a monthly periodical published by the Soviet Women's Committee and the Central Council of Trade Unions. Like Moscow News, it is mailed throughout the world in many different languages. Although Soviet Woman is the only subject-specific publication I will use, Moscow News will show how general news publications have handled women's issues. These publications will also show the effect of glasnost on the coverage of women's issues. In addition to Moscow News and Soviet Woman, I will incorporate articles from Russian-language publications that discuss women's issues.

Before glasnost, coverage of women's issues differed from what Soviet women, journalists and scholars said were the real concerns and issues. The party line on women, like a warped mirror, did not reflect the reality of women's lives. I will show how press accounts have differed from Western journalists', scholarly and feminist accounts of Soviet women. I will explain many of the continuing concerns that Soviet women have raised. Some of these concerns are work, wages, child care, abortion, divorce, housework, and political participation. In this thesis, I

will compare and contrast articles about women's issues written under glasnost with articles written before glasnost. With this research, I will show if glasnost has encouraged the press to mirror reality in its coverage of women's lives and concerns.

CHAPTER 2

WORKING WOMEN

Women are an integral part of the Soviet work force. They drive tractors, work in factories and fly airplanes. Soviet society does not discourage women from working in traditionally male-dominated professions. Unlike Western society, which has been reluctant to incorporate women into the work force, the Soviet Union has welcomed women's labor. Women contribute equally with men, and their contribution gives them satisfaction.

However, women do not always have the same opportunities to contribute as men. Women often find themselves in low-status professions. They are usually the workers, not the managers. Although the Constitution guarantees women equal pay for equal work, many women earn less than their male colleagues because they receive fewer promotions. Soviet women face discrimination in the work place. However, many women choose to forego career advancement because their family responsibilities consume any extra time they might have for managerial work.

Before glasnost, the Soviet press chronicled only the positive aspects of women's labor. They praised the Soviet Union for incorporating women into the work force. The pre-glasnost press wrote about women who were successful workers

and mothers. These "superwomen" workers were offered as role models for Soviet women to emulate. The press told women they had endless opportunities in the work force and could succeed if they worked diligently. According to the pre-glasnost press, Soviet women did not encounter any work-related problems, except isolated incidents of poor working conditions.

However, under glasnost, the press is painting a different picture of Soviet women's labor conditions. Glasnost has allowed the press to recognize the inequalities women face in the work force. Recent articles have talked about women's low-status jobs and, as a result, low salaries. The press has increased its criticism of working conditions to indict Soviet society for a slipshod attitude toward work. Although the press still writes about "superwomen" workers, it recognizes that most women cannot juggle a full-time career and motherhood without help. Under glasnost, the press has opened up its coverage of women's work issues, recognizing both the achievements and the problems.

Women's Labor Issues

To understand how the press coverage of women's work issues has changed, some background information is necessary. Unlike many Western societies, the Soviet Union has incorporated women into the work force deliberately.

After the Revolution, the Soviet Union emancipated women and gave them the opportunity to pursue careers. However women's transition from full-time housewives to full-time workers created some problems and raised issues that the Soviet Union is still trying to solve.

Liberating Women

When the Bolsheviks gained power during the Russian Revolution, they had many bold plans to liberate women. Marxist/Leninist doctrine claimed women would gain equality once they were economically independent of men. Therefore, employment for women was a necessary condition for equality in society and the family.¹ The new Communist government began large-scale education programs for women, along with legal reforms to help them enter the work force.

Soviet scholar Nelya Motroshilova expressed the Marxist/Leninist view when she wrote: "Women must realize that their involvement in socially useful activities is a way of eliminating the age-old inequality of the sexes, and that an active social role for the female population is not only useful for society but also fosters the full development of a woman's personality."²

¹Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, foreword to Moscow Women, by Carola Hansson and Karin Liden (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), x.

²Nelya V. Motroshilova, "Soviet Women in the Life of Society: Achievements and Problems," International Social Science Journal 35 (1983): 733.

During World War II, women's place in the work force was established. Women were needed to keep the economy running while their husbands and sons were in battle. After the war, women continued to work. Many had lost husbands and needed the income to feed their children. Others worked because the country needed the labor of all its citizens. Gail Lapidus said the post-World War II years "strengthened a long tradition of the 'strong woman' in Russian culture by placing a great premium on the qualities of toughness and independence, requisites of sheer survival during these years."³

At the same time, the Russian culture never lost touch with its more traditional image of woman as homemaker and mother. Although women embraced the idea of equality, they also expressed a desire for femininity. Lapidus said the post-World War II period also "enhanced the value of--and nostalgia for--a more traditional feminine role in which family-oriented values occupied a central place."⁴ Many of the current problems women face in the work force boil down to this struggle for equality and femininity.

³Lapidus, foreword to Moscow Women, x.

⁴Ibid.

The Right to Work

The Soviet Union guarantees all its citizens the right to work, eliminating the worry of unemployment. Women are also guaranteed equal pay for equal work, early retirement, and a shorter period of service than men to receive full retirement benefits.⁵ In addition, women receive paid maternity leave. Employers cannot force them to work overtime after their fifth month of pregnancy, or when they are nursing. Many of the Soviet work laws for women are designed to protect their health. Pregnant and nursing women cannot work between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.. Women cannot be exposed to radiation on the job and they cannot be forced to work overtime without an explicit reason.⁶

A Profile of Women Workers

Most Soviet women work full time at a wide variety of occupations. In general, they are better educated and more fully represented in professions than women in previous generations.⁷ Women compose a slight majority in the Soviet work force, holding 51 percent of the jobs. Work gives many

⁵Motroshilova, 734-35.

⁶Carola Hansson and Karin Liden, Moscow Women, with a foreword by Gail Warshofsky Lapidus (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 27.

⁷Jill Smolowe, "Heroines of Soviet Labor," Time, 6 June 1988, 29.

Soviet women a sense of personal satisfaction and status. Hansson and Liden interviewed a young engineer who said, "To cook and clean all the time and never get out--it's terribly dreary. For me working is essential."⁸ A 1979 survey of 10,000 industrial women workers found that 80 percent of the respondents would keep their jobs even if their husbands earned as much as the combined family income.⁹

In the Soviet Union, women are expected to attend school and choose a career. Soviet women are better educated than their mothers, with over 17.6 million women holding higher education degrees in 1981.¹⁰ Peers says Soviet women compose 59 percent of all Soviet specialists with higher or secondary education degrees.¹¹

Long Hours, Low Status

However, women's occupations generally do not reflect their high level of education. Many women are overqualified for their jobs. Women tend to perform service, light industry and low-status jobs, while men tend to hold the higher-level, management jobs. In agriculture, education

⁸Hansson and Liden, 72.

⁹Jo Peers, "Workers by Hand and Womb--Soviet Women and the Demographic Crisis," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 140.

¹⁰Motroshilova, 736.

¹¹Peers, 121.

and medicine, scholars have documented the difference between men and women's positions.

"The same sex roles exist as in other countries; the women perform the service and routine jobs, while the men perform the upper-echelon and management jobs. In addition, the job categories dominated by women are supervised by men."¹² Although Motroshilova says, "many women hold responsible positions in economic management," other scholars disagree.¹³ Janet Chapman says, "Despite the fact that Soviet women are found in large numbers in occupations generally considered 'male' ones in the United States, they are concentrated in the lower levels of those occupations."¹⁴

The largest number of women employed in the countryside work as agricultural laborers. The work is seasonal, changing from winter seed sorting to spring crop weeding to summer hay stacking to fall potato lifting. The work requires low skills and a sturdy back. Although some of the farm work is mechanized, men usually run the machines. "There have been complaints that, whilst the men get honours

¹²Hansson and Liden, 26.

¹³Motroshilova, 736.

¹⁴Janet G. Chapman, "Equal Pay for Equal Work?" in Women in Russia, ed. Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1977), 226.

and rewards, the women are still toiling unnoticed as their grandmothers did."¹⁵

Many women work as doctors and teachers. In 1981, 68 percent of Soviet doctors were women and 72 percent of Soviet teachers were women.¹⁶ These jobs are not high-status and do not pay very well. "Most doctors are women, no doubt in part because men look for better-paying careers."¹⁷ In most fields, women find themselves in the lower-paying, non-managerial jobs. In academics, women rarely head the faculties of higher education, or direct scientific research. "Although over half a million women are engaged in scientific research throughout the country, there are considerably fewer women than men among the top scientists."¹⁸

Dairying is another classic example of the discrimination women meet in the work force. Although more than 96 percent of the country's milkers are women, men usually receive the mechanized positions in the dairying

¹⁵Susan Allott, "Soviet Rural Women: Employment and Family Life," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 183-85.

¹⁶Peers, 119.

¹⁷Robert G. Kaiser, Russia: The People and the Power (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), 137-38.

¹⁸Motroshilova, 741-42.

industry.¹⁹ Women traditionally milk three times a day. Even though they are allowed to go home in between milking, their work days stretch from 3:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.. The pay is good and the work is steady, something that women who work in agriculture do not usually find. However, because of the long work day, many women are turning down milking jobs. Although women do find discrimination in the work force, the government is not oblivious to their complaints. When economically possible, the government has offered women incentives to encourage them to work. In the dairying profession, the government has encouraged farms to adopt two-shift days so workers can milk twice a day and spend the evenings, or mornings, at home.²⁰ In dairying, as in other professions, the government is beginning to respond to women's demands for more time at home.

Equal Pay for Equal Work

The government is also beginning to respond to complaints of low salaries for women. General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev recently raised the minimum wage from approximately \$317 to \$336 a month. This raise indirectly benefits women, who fill a majority of the minimum-wage

¹⁹Myrna Kostash, "Will the Real Natasha Please Stand Up? Women in the Soviet Union," This Magazine 21 (March/April 1987): 29.

²⁰Allott, 181-82.

jobs.²¹ However, pay differences between men and women still exist. For example, a teacher, in a female-dominated profession, makes approximately 100 rubles a month starting salary, while a miner, in a male-dominated profession, makes more than 200 rubles. Although equal pay for equal work is guaranteed in the Constitution, pay differences between men and women exist because many women are located in lower-echelon jobs.²²

Jobs such as mining and teaching reap different salaries because of the nature of the work. "The peculiar development of the Soviet command economy, with its emphasis on heavy industrial expansion, has led to work in these basic economic sectors being rewarded more highly than in others. Some of these heavy and dangerous jobs are closed to women, who are, in any case, concentrated in light industry and services."²³ Women are spared working in these heavy-industry jobs to protect their health.

Working Conditions

Although the Soviet Union tries to be protective of women's health, many women work in hazardous factories and at hard-labor jobs. In many fields, both women and men lack

²¹Jill Smolowe, "Heroines of Soviet Labor," Time, 6 June 1988, 30.

²²Hansson and Liden, 26-7.

²³Peers, 122.

safe working conditions because factory leaders do not enforce safety regulations. Many employers disregard health and safety regulations, deny women protective clothing and assign them to night shifts.²⁴ In a factory that makes prefabricated sections of reinforced concrete, women form a majority of the work force. A visitor described the factory as cold and poorly ventilated in the winter. The women were expected to work long hours at the end of each month to fulfill the factory's quota.²⁵

Economic Necessity

Most Soviet women work for economic reasons. An average family income leaves little room for extras after taxes, rent and food. Items that are not considered necessities often cost exorbitant amounts. Many women work simply because their husbands do not earn enough to support the family.²⁶

Although work gives women a sense of satisfaction, most women do not have career ambitions beyond making enough to support the family. Women would like to be paid more, but they do not express a desire to infiltrate the male-dominated managerial positions that provide the higher

²⁴Kostash, 29.

²⁵Kaiser, 350.

²⁶Hansson and Liden, 41.

salaries. Most Soviet women place their family responsibilities before their careers. "Women are often unwilling to take on work which is very demanding and time-consuming when they are at the same time expected to cope almost single-handed with the demands of their families."²⁷ Although family care often conflicts with career ambitions, women feel a sense of responsibility and even pride from pursuing both. One woman interviewed by Hansson and Liden said:

When they leave school many girls have great plans; they want to reach out, become something, accomplish something. But once they have a family, many settle for what they have. They may want something else, but out of fatigue or a lack of choice most of them adjust to the limited possibilities offered them.²⁸

Even women who want to pursue a career meet discrimination from employers who feel women are inadequate to the task. Employers often shy away from giving women responsible positions because family responsibilities limit a woman's time. "It's so common for children to be sick that employers actually try to avoid hiring women with small children," one artist commented. "Women with small children can still get jobs, but employers avoid hiring them for more responsible positions."²⁹

²⁷Allott, 186-87.

²⁸Hansson and Liden, 60.

²⁹Ibid., 141.

Summary

The Soviet Union offers many advantages to working women, including the guarantee of work, maternity benefits and early retirement. The government has taught its citizens that women can form an integral part of the economy. However, many women find that, although they are integral to the economy, their contribution is somehow not as valuable as a man's contribution. Women encounter lower-status jobs, lower wages, and sometimes poor working conditions. Many women accept these differences as a necessary part of being female. Others accept them because they need the money and choose to put their families before their career goals.

Pre-glasnost Press Coverage

Soviet women have faced these work-related issues before and after the policy of glasnost. Before glasnost, under the traditional Marxist/Leninist press theory, the press picture of working women often differed from the picture that scholars, Western journalists and Soviet women described. According to the Constitution and the press, women had achieved equality with men. Traditional male professions were fully integrated, from manual labor to academics. Soviet society had educated women and given them opportunities for success. Women blossomed in the work

force, adding occupational success to stellar marriages and outstanding community service. The press offered these women as role models for those who were still struggling for achievement in their work, homes and communities.

Achieving Equality

The pre-glasnost press described women's work opportunities as equivalent to men's opportunities. The press noted women's participation in the work force, but it failed to note their concentration in low-status jobs. According to the pre-glasnost press, women's participation in the work force implied equal access to any job.

In the 1970s, Moscow News ran a column of readers' questions. One reader asked: What is the role of women in the Soviet Union's economic development? The paper answered, "extremely great." The article cited some facts about women workers, saying that just over half (51 percent) of all factory and office workers are women, and a majority of educators and doctors are women.³⁰ Although the paper's answer was factually correct, it only told half the story. Tatyana Mamonova, a Russian feminist, wrote in the early 1980s that:

The U.S.S.R. has the highest female labor force participation rate of any modern industrial society. The percentages of women in such professions as medicine, law, and engineering far

³⁰Moscow News, 17 September 1978, 2.

exceed comparable Western rates. Similarly, the percentages of women engaged in agriculture, construction, and metalworking remain high.³¹

However, Mamonova was quick to point out that despite their strides into the work force, women were, and are still, concentrated in the low-paying jobs.

The pre-glasnost press did not evaluate women's equality with men in the work place. Mamonova noted that "propaganda portrayed women shock workers, tractor drivers and housewives as proudly and happily laboring for the motherland; the Soviet Constitution of 1936 declared them already equal. Women had no problems and no need for theory."³² An article in Moscow News from the late 1970s outlined the rights that the Soviet Constitution gives women. In the article, the author quotes salient passages from Article 35 of the 1977 Constitution of the Soviet Union. These quotations reinforce the government's vision of women and work. The article gives the impression that, although the Constitution guarantees rights for women, the legal jargon is unnecessary because Communism gives women equal opportunities with men in the economy.

³¹Tatyana Mamonova, "Introduction: The Feminist Movement in the Soviet Union," in Women and Russia, ed. Tatyana Mamonova (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 3.

³²Alix Holt, "Marxism and Women's Oppression: The Bolshevik Theory and Practice in the 1920s," in Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, ed. Tova Yedlin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 106.

The author writes that, "What the Constitution records is already part and parcel of life. Over half the jobs in the U.S.S.R. are held by women, and certain much-respected professions calling for high qualification have virtually become the domain of women."³³ As examples of "much-respected professions," the author cites teaching and medicine. "Four out of every five teachers, for example, and most headteachers in our country are women."³⁴ However, this journalist, and others, ignores the fact that most women are clustered on the lower rungs of both professions, earning low incomes and little status. Education and medicine do not receive as much status in the Soviet Union as they do in the West.

Other pre-glasnost press articles emphasize women's equality, citing facts and figures. An article for International Women's Day talks about women in the work force as if they had no problems. Lydia Lykova, Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation, writes about "women's great role in our society of advanced socialism." She says that "more than half the work force are women, as are 60 percent of all specialists, 60 percent of all economists and almost half of all our engineers." In addition: "more than half a million women

³³Yu. Senin, "Women's Rights Under the U.S.S.R. Constitution," Moscow News, 11 March 1979, 5.

³⁴Ibid.

head factories, state farms, construction projects, various institutions and laboratories."³⁵

Another International Women's Day article from 1978 extols the devotion and energy of women workers. Women are characterized as "mothers, workers and patriots."³⁶ The article describes women who work energetically for their country because they are "boundlessly devoted to communist ideals." These women have been "working with inspiration to build the society of developed socialism."³⁷

What these two articles and others fail to mention are the vast majority of women who work because they cannot afford to do otherwise. In celebrating women's equality with men in the work place, these articles also fail to mention the discrimination against women. They leave readers with a faulty impression of the opportunities for Soviet women. Although Soviet women have integrated into traditionally male professions, they have not integrated at every level. Women can earn equal pay only if they are given equal work.

³⁵Lydia Lykova, "International Women's Day," Moscow News, 11 March 1979, 3.

³⁶"Honouring International Women's Day," Moscow News, 25 March 1978, 11.

³⁷Ibid.

Superwomen Workers

Another common theme for articles on working women builds upon the myth of equality. This theme presents women as super successful workers. These articles usually focus on one woman who has been successful in her career, community and personal life. By showcasing these "superwomen," the press models an image that Soviet women should strive to emulate. The mass circulation magazines "present the ideal woman who is at one and the same time ordinary and exemplary: ordinary in that she is the type of woman in the type of occupation that the reader might encounter daily; exemplary in that she displays the desired attributes of the 'New Soviet Woman.'"³⁸ The New Soviet Woman is essentially a superwoman worker who succeeds at her job in the community and at home.

A typical superwoman might be Tatyana Silantyeva, a milkmaid who was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor for her milking productivity. Soviet Woman profiled Silantyeva in the late 1970s, saying she milked 2,000 kilograms of milk from each of her 33 cows in 1969. A year later, she had doubled that amount. In addition to her work achievements, Silantyeva "has a good husband -- Alexei, a tractor-driver." In the picture, she looks beautiful,

³⁸Women and Eastern Europe Group, introduction to Woman and Russia: First Feminist Samizdat (London: Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1980), 6.

serious and dedicated. She has two children and lives "in a three-room flat with all conveniences at the main village where there is a kindergarten, a school, a House of Culture and a shopping center."³⁹

Another successful woman is chair of her agricultural industrial cooperative. The author describes Urszula Gontarek as well-groomed and industrious. She became chairwoman after her husband was promoted to a higher position. The author describes what a fine job she is doing: "Here is a flower bed blossoming, there is a freshly painted curb, and over there is a bench where you can rest. You feel the hand of a woman everywhere, of one who is used to order."⁴⁰ Gontarek and Silantyeva both present images of women who are successful workers and leaders. Although their salaries and promotion opportunities are not discussed, they are still considered successful because they are helping Communism succeed. This image of "superwoman" worker is probably the most common image in the pre-glasnost women's press. Maggie McAndrew describes pre-glasnost articles about women workers as "part of a complex ideological structure confronting Soviet women with the image of themselves as the Super-achiever, the New Soviet

³⁹V. Volodkin, "Our Front Cover," Soviet Woman, July 1979, 1.

⁴⁰Natalia Iwaszkiewicz, "Courage Was Needed," Soviet Woman, January 1979, 28.

Woman, which is at some distance from the reality of most women's lives."⁴¹

Veronika Dudarova certainly did not reflect the reality most women encounter in the work place. Principal conductor and art director of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, she found success in a traditionally male profession. She said in a late 1970s interview that "there is hardly any sphere of life that is out of a woman's reach."⁴² Dudarova reiterates the ideal of the Soviet superwoman by making light of her achievements. In her opinion, every Soviet woman has the opportunity to direct the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. Soviet women live "fulfilled lives." Dudarova speaks proudly about the modern Soviet woman: "besides her regular job and her household chores, almost every Soviet woman has important voluntary public duties to perform."⁴³ Dudarova's successful management of work, household duties and community service is praiseworthy, but certainly not reflective of most women's lives.

⁴¹Maggie McAndrew, "Women's Magazines in the Soviet Union," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 112.

⁴²N. Kraminova, "How to be Happy," Moscow News, 11 March 1978, 3.

⁴³Ibid.

Endless Opportunities

Dudarova's comments also demonstrate another common theme of women's articles before glasnost: endless opportunities. Journalists emphasize how fortunate women are to live after the revolution. Dudarova says, "I was born just at the right time, that is after the October Revolution. That meant that from the moment of my birth all roads lay open before me."⁴⁴ She compares her life to her mother's, emphasizing the opportunities that Soviet society has offered her.

One advantage women have gained is education. As Moscow News reported in 1979, 51 percent of the high school students were women.⁴⁵ Many women go on and receive higher education: "Working women, on the whole, have a higher education level than male counterparts: 781 women out of 1000 have at least a complete secondary education."⁴⁶ The education opportunities for women are not a facade. However, the other side of the coin is that women do not necessarily receive jobs that match their educational levels.

Women are expected to work cheerfully for the greater good of society. In some articles, journalists praise women

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Moscow News, 14 January 1979, 4.

⁴⁶Moscow News, 17 September 1978, 2.

who work without complaint. These women do not question their job status. Instead, they offer themselves as role models for younger workers. "Women are offered role models who are super producers; they read multiple repetitions of the need to increase productivity and save resources."⁴⁷ Such a role model is Maria Bryntseva, who exemplified socialist emulation by helping other workers improve and even surpass her own work. Bryntseva said:

This year Ustina Ganusich has won the emulation drive and I'm really glad she has outstripped me. That's how it should be in emulation. I taught her to work on the vines and shared all my secrets with her and I'm glad that my lessons did Ustina, others, and eventually our entire state, good, a lot of good.⁴⁸

Another role model might be Valentina Moroi, a weaver who learned her trade from a mentor and then herself became a mentor. "And young as she is, she is now teaching others the ins and outs of her trade."⁴⁹

According to the pre-glasnost press, Soviet women were blessed with endless opportunities to achieve in the work force. They could study, work and educate future workers. All doors were open, as long as women worked with dedication and selflessness. The pre-glasnost press printed

⁴⁷McAndrew, 110.

⁴⁸Elena Mikulina, "An Inexhaustible Source," Soviet Woman, July 1979, 4.

⁴⁹Yu. Guryev, "When Work Is A Joy," Moscow News, 22 April 1978, 5.

images of superwomen workers who were highly educated, received many opportunities and acted as role models.

Working Conditions

The only negative articles the press printed about women and work dealt with working conditions. However, the press printed articles that illustrated isolated cases of laziness, or bureaucratic mismanagement. Hedrick Smith wrote that "the censors obviously consider blunt charges of sex discrimination on the job taboo."⁵⁰

Some women's magazines would investigate charges of mismanagement by writing articles and informing the proper government body of the complaints. "Many similar breaches of labour legislation or health and safety regulations are reported: women expected to work on their days off; young women expected to work illegally long hours; lack of protective clothing; inadequate canteen facilities; pregnant women expected to work overtime."⁵¹ By printing complaints about working conditions, the pre-glasnost press came closest to reflecting reality.

⁵⁰Hedrick Smith, The Russians (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1976), 135.

⁵¹McAndrew, 98.

Economic Necessity

In many cases, the pre-glasnost press reflected some truth, but not the whole truth about women's work issues. The press emphasized women's desire to work but ignored women's economic need to work. In a column called "The Way Natasha Sees It," Natasha Zemlina wrote about her friend Ira, who quit her job to take care of her family. Once Ira's children were grown, she became dissatisfied with her life. "Ira would do anything for her family. But a modern woman cannot limit her life to housework." Natasha compared her life to Ira's and concluded that being a wife and mother is great, but "if you had taken architecture away from me, life would have lost a lot of its meaning."⁵²

Scholars and Western journalists have confirmed that most Soviet women would choose to work if given a choice. Zemlina's contention that women find work meaningful is not false. However, she makes work sound like a hobby for women. Before glasnost, the press promoted the attitude that "women have jobs and men have careers."⁵³ Although the press praised successful women workers, it also emphasized women's responsibilities to their families.

⁵²Natasha Zemlina, "The Way Natasha Sees It," Moscow News, 6 May 1978, 15.

⁵³Women and Eastern Europe Group, introduction to Woman and Russia: First Feminist Samizdat, 6.

Mother Workers

Motherhood and femininity clashed with employment. The pre-glasnost press intimated that women should handle both with ease. If anything, the press placed more emphasis on a woman's role as worker, rather than as mother. However, the press still assumed women workers were more feminine, nurturing and artistically concerned. One woman worker commented that "There can be no real happiness without interesting work, without creative endeavour, a loved and loving husband, children, a good home, friends, the sense of belonging."⁵⁴ Most of the women who appeared in pre-glasnost press articles were absorbed with work. The articles assumed motherhood and family responsibilities were part of their lives, but not an overriding part.

Summary

The pre-glasnost press did not accurately reflect women's work issues. The press focused on the positive aspects of women's employment but ignored the negative aspects. The pre-glasnost press wrote about women who were educated, productive individuals with endless opportunities for success in the work force. These women served as role models in their work and their personal lives. The only

⁵⁴Natalya Kraminova, "How to be Happy," Moscow News, 11 March 1978, 3.

issue the press raised about women's employment was working conditions. The press admitted that working conditions were occasionally bad, but it left the impression that most women enjoyed good working conditions. In general, the pre-glasnost press reflected a false image of women's employment issues, contradicting the statements of scholars, Western journalists and Soviet immigrants.

Glasnost Press Coverage

Recognizing Inequality

Glasnost has modified the press coverage of women's work issues by allowing journalists to present a more realistic portrayal. Ten years after Moscow News was telling women they had achieved equality, the paper had changed its mind. An article from September 1989 says, "If there is a pay raise, a woman employee gets less, even if she is more experienced than her male colleague."⁵⁵ Another article in a February issue of Soviet Woman acknowledges that women do not receive many management posts. "In all the socialist countries the situation may be described in the form of a pyramid with a broad base. The higher the

⁵⁵Irina Avrutskaya, "Openings for Women," Moscow News, 24 September 1989, 13.

'echelon of power,' the fewer the women represented in it."⁵⁶

The author attributes this discrimination to child bearing. Women who have children are necessarily removed from the work force long enough to keep them out of management posts. However, indicating the push for larger families, the author does not encourage women to forego motherhood. Instead, the author suggests part-time work, or affirmative action for women who can take on leadership roles after their children are older.⁵⁷ This article is extremely forthright about the fact that men usually receive management posts, despite women's education and abilities. It contrasts starkly with the pre-glasnost press articles that assumed women and men had equal opportunities by virtue of communism.

Working Conditions

The glasnost press has also been very open about hazardous working conditions for women. Gazirat Medeubayeva, chairwoman of the Women's Council in Kazakhstan and Secretary of the Regional Executive Committee, is honest about the complaints she hears from women workers. "Women who are tired of their night shifts in production also come

⁵⁶"Modern Woman at Work and at Home," Soviet Woman, February 1989, 6-7.

⁵⁷Ibid.

to Gazirat to ask when will the state and society face the fact that the night shift, apart from being an anachronism, is a cruelty towards women."⁵⁸ Women in leadership positions are fairly critical of the poor working conditions for women. Although the pre-glasnost press also criticized working conditions, its criticism implied the problems were isolated. Today, many journalists are indicating society-wide problems, such as requirements to work night shifts.

Zoya Boguslavskaya, a writer, told Soviet Woman about the situation of women in the Soviet Union. She said many jobs endanger women's health. "Dairymaids who hardly ever see their homes are breaking records milking cows, and women are working night shifts -- all in violation of the law."⁵⁹ Her example is hauntingly similar to the remarks that Allott and Kostash have made in scholarly articles, and a contrast to the pre-glasnost article about Tatyana Silantyeva, the milkmaid who was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor for her milking productivity.

Articles about hazardous working conditions are not limited to charges that women must work night shifts. A long article about the Soviet railway system is highly critical of how women are treated. The author tells about

⁵⁸Vera Kopeiko, "On Women's Power, On Soviet Power," Soviet Woman, September 1989, 7

⁵⁹Nikolai Viskov, "To Know More About Our Women," Soviet Woman, November 1989, 4-5.

Maria Davydova, who has been repairing tracks for 33 years with a pick and a crowbar. A picture shows a old woman, with a scarf around her head, pulling down with all her weight on a crowbar. Davydova works all day, but she is only paid 180 to 200 rubles a month. Women do a majority of the track repairs.⁶⁰ After working a full day, they return home to "rotten barracks." Her town, Skuratovo, has four food shops but lacks a polyclinic, hotels, cinemas, and even asphalted streets. The author comments, "What is socialism without love for the human being?"⁶¹

Economic Necessity

The press has extended its openness to discuss women's economic need to work. Reflecting a shift in societal opinion, some articles are critical of the fact that many women must work to help support their families. These articles emphasize the importance of the family and of raising children. They say women should be able to place their motherhood responsibilities before work. Although Western feminists balk at the idea of women assuming primary responsibility for child care, most Soviet women would not. As Hansson and Liden showed in Moscow Women, most Soviet women would like more time to be mothers.

⁶⁰Yuri Teplyakov, "Moscow, Skuratovo," Moscow News, 25 June 1989, 8.

⁶¹Ibid., 9

One article suggests part-time work for women. "Many believe that today women in the Soviet Union work too much."⁶² In this article, the paper reveals reader response to the question: "Should women work?" Most readers said that women should work because a job gives them outside interests. They said children grow up and do not need their mothers forever. However, readers also said that women should be able to care for their children while they are young and still hold a job. In the pre-glasnost press, articles also emphasized the fact that women should have an occupation. However, these articles ignored the fact that many women need to work. The glasnost press recognizes that economics often forces women to work and says women should work because they want to, not because they need to work.

An article about Valentina Ponomaryova, a Soviet pilot, drums home the point that the state should allow women to incorporate motherhood into their careers. Ponomaryova was the back-up flight choice to Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space. Ponomaryova says:

How had I made up my mind to take this step when I had a husband and a child? Probably, because of "bad upbringing." I say so without a particle of irony: the women of my generation believed it was a matter of honour to rush out of the house instead of rushing home. It was probably quite

⁶²Kirstin Gustafsson, "Zhenshchiny, muzhchiny i gvozdeki," [Women, men and stiletto heels], Moscow News, 12 March 1989, 4.

wrong. But I have lived my life and cannot change it now. And I would not have changed it.⁶³

Although Ponomaryova says she would not have changed her life, she indicates that today's women should spend more time at home. Her opinion, and others like hers, are now expressed in the press. These articles reflect both the government's concern for a falling birthrate and women's desires to stay home.

Conclusion

Comparing today's press with the pre-glasnost press shows a great deal of change in the types of work issues that are covered and the images presented. The press is now acknowledging that women are not equal with men in the work place and do not have as many opportunities. The articles focus more on the negative aspects of work for women, rather than the positive aspects.

Today's press still offers superwomen workers for women to emulate. For example, Elena Dulneva works with lasers in medicine. She is successful in her career and juggles teaching, chairing a community group, and higher education studies. "She feels herself a participant in everything in the world."⁶⁴ She is similar to the superwomen of the

⁶³V. Nesterova, "Valentina -- Valentina's Back-up," Soviet Woman, December 1989, 19.

⁶⁴N. Maximov, "A New Heart for a Laser," Soviet Woman, February 1989, 16.

1970s. However, this article about Dulneva is the exception, not the norm in the glasnost press coverage of women's work issues.

Under glasnost, the press has opened up its coverage of women and work. The articles agree with what scholars have said about the lack of career-advancement opportunities, the poor working conditions and the conflict with motherhood. The press recognizes that many women are forced to work because of economic necessity. Although the press continues to praise the positive aspects of women's employment, glasnost has stimulated the press to approach women's work issues openly and critically.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN AT HOME

As a workers' nation, the Soviet Union has always prided itself on its greatest natural resource -- labor. Labor built the Soviet Union into a superpower, and labor is necessary to keep the vast nation running. Women, as well as men, are an important part of that work force. When World War II deprived the country of millions of workers, women stepped in to fill the gaps. The government encouraged women to work and create future workers.¹

However, as women became an important part of the work force, the birth rate declined. The falling birth rate concerned, and continues to concern, both the government, who needs workers, and the citizens, who value family and children. Many issues that affect women can help explain why the birth rate is falling. Household responsibility, child care, divorce, birth control and gynecological care are all important issues that directly and indirectly explain why women are choosing to limit their family size.

The press has covered the birth-rate issue for many years, both before and after glasnost. But its coverage has

¹Jo Peers, "Workers by Hand and Womb -- Soviet Women and the Demographic Crisis," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 118.

changed under glasnost. Glasnost has freed the press to more openly discuss the facts and causes behind many of the issues that affect women's lives. The press has always recognized the birth-rate decline. Glasnost has enabled the press to move beyond recognition of the problem.

Family Issues

Birth Rate Decline

Currently, workers are not reproducing enough future workers.² Or, to be precise, Russian workers are not reproducing enough future Russian workers. Soviet Russian ethnics have an average of 1.8 children per family, which is not enough to replenish their numbers.³ Moslem Central Asians, on the other hand, are more than reproducing their numbers with an average of five children per family.⁴ In general, ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Balts and Georgians are decreasing the size of their populations by having only one or two children. Soviet citizens from Turkmenia, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kirghizia account for 40 percent of the nations population growth, although they compose only 18 percent of the current population.⁵

²Ibid., 126.

³Dianne Rinehart, "The New Face of Russia," Maclean's, 12 December 1988, 36.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

The birth-rate decline worries Soviet leaders because of its implications for future labor resources. Fewer future citizens means fewer workers, fewer soldiers and less strength. The population increase in the Central Asian republics may offset the population decrease in the European republics. However, as the population figures change, the nation's ethnic make-up is changing. Russians, who currently compose 52 percent of the Soviet Union's population, could be an ethnic minority by the turn of the century.⁶ As ethnic unrest sweeps through the Soviet Union, its leaders worry about the decrease in ethnic Russians, who traditionally have dominated the country.

The birth-rate decline can be linked to a number of causes, from cultural to economical. Many Soviet women simply cannot afford to support more than one child. They lack the food, housing and child care facilities necessary to raise a child, not to mention the additional time.⁷ Central Asian women come from a Moslem background that encourages large families.⁸ Economically, they are able to have larger families because they usually live in rural areas. They can stay home and care for their children as

⁶Ibid.

⁷Myrna Kostash, "Will the Real Natasha Please Stand Up? Women in the Soviet Union," This Magazine 21 (March/April 1987): 30.

⁸Peers, 128.

well as work in the fields. Rural women in general find that motherhood and country living complement each other. Field work changes seasonally, housing is less cramped and relatives and neighbors are more available to provide child care.⁹

Most urban women are not blessed with extra time and available child care. A young Moscow student, in talking about how children changed her life, said:

Women here are overworked. They rarely manage to pursue their careers, especially in research. If a woman wants to get anywhere, she has to loosen her grip on the family. It's either/or. To have a regular job and a family is difficult.¹⁰

Women simply cannot quit their jobs when they have children. The state needs women in the work force. And families need the extra income women earn. "To raise the birth rate one has to raise wages. They're so low now that women can't afford the luxury of two or three children," a Moscow editor commented.¹¹ Another young mother told Hansson and Liden that "the economic situation doesn't permit a family to have more than one or at most two children. If one slaves away at extra jobs and doesn't

⁹Susan Allott, "Soviet Rural Women: Employment and Family Life," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 189.

¹⁰Carola Hansson and Karin Liden, Moscow Women, with a foreword by Gail Warshofsky Lapidus (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 31.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 16.

accept bribes, one child is obviously more than enough."¹² The disadvantages to a large family far outweigh the desire of many women to have more children. Wages are low, housing is tight and child care is not always available. Employers are often unsympathetic toward women who need time off to care for sick children.¹³

The government has tried to reverse the birth rate decline with propaganda and incentives. Authorities have stressed the joy of motherhood and the importance of having at least three children. An elderly woman who holds a doctorate in education says she has noticed a change in the teaching curriculum during her lifetime. She said the government began instructing teachers to emphasize the importance of the family and motherhood.¹⁴

On a more concrete level, the government has extended partially paid maternity leave to one year from the child's birth date. A mother has the option of taking an additional six months of unpaid leave without loss of job or service record. Previously, women were allowed 56 days of paid maternity leave before and after the birth of their child.¹⁵

All Soviet women receive a lump sum of 50 rubles for

¹²Ibid., 64.

¹³Jill Smolowe, "Heroines of Soviet Labor," Time, 6 June 1988, 35

¹⁴Hansson and Liden, 88.

¹⁵Peers, 135-36.

the birth of their first child, and 100 rubles for the second and third child.¹⁶ The bonus payments decrease after three children.

This is clearly an attempt to encourage "optimal" population reproduction -- i.e. to stimulate the birthrate in the direction of the all-important three-child family in those "European" areas of the country where it is considered too low, without overtly discriminating against the populations of the Caucasus and Central Asia, where fertility is so high as to prove disquieting to the authorities.¹⁷

In any case, the bonus payments are not large enough to significantly affect the birth rate because citizens do not earn enough to support more than one or two children. The average national wage in the Soviet Union is only 200 rubles a month.¹⁸

In addition to birth bonuses, the government gives single mothers 20 rubles per month per child until the child turns 16 years old.¹⁹ Women who have seven or more children are awarded the Glory of Motherhood medal. Women who have ten or more children are honored as Mother Heroines.²⁰

But awards do not offer Soviet women enough incentive. Many say that higher salaries, more consumer goods, part-

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 136-37.

¹⁸Francine du Plessix Gray, "Reflections: Soviet Women," New Yorker, 19 February 1990, 79.

¹⁹Peers, 137.

²⁰Smolowe, 30.

time work and more child care would help more than the promise of medals.²¹ Gorbachev has pledged to increase the child allowance for low-income families, to extend preschool care and to expand part-time employment opportunities for women. Many factories have added on-site banks, shoe repair shops, and food shops.²² Although these added and promised benefits should help mothers, they still do not address the issue of time.

In Russian culture, women are expected to run the household and raise the children. Although they have joined the work force full time, their husbands have not shouldered much of the housework and child-care burden.

Most families are dependent on the woman's contribution to their income. But when the impossible is demanded of her -- that she manage to work outside the home as well as take care of the family without her husband's help -- she will refuse to have more than one child, even if this decision goes against her own desires.²³

Motherhood: A Cultural Value

Most Soviet women want children. They perceive their role in society as that of wife and mother. Culturally, motherhood is celebrated and women grow up believing they

²¹Hansson and Liden, 125-26.

²²Smolowe, 30.

²³Hansson and Liden, 125-26.

are incomplete if they do not bear children.²⁴ Russian scholar Gail Lapidus, commenting on Hansson's and Liden's interviews with Moscow women, notes the emphasis these women placed on children:

A number of the themes running through these interviews have a distinctly Russian character. Primary among them is the enormous value attached to children. They are described as a major goal in life, the main satisfaction, and the preoccupation that most distinguishes women from men.²⁵

Although by law women are equal to men, this equality does not extend to the family. At home, women are the caregivers and keepers of the hearth who cook, clean, wash and raise the children. Men earn the family's bread, provide a firm hand for the children and rest while their wives serve them. Of course, this image of family life is an extreme characterization of the cultural beliefs. In many young families, husbands help their wives with household chores and the children. However, the cultural premise still remains that motherhood should be a woman's main job. A female law student said:

There's equality on the social level. Women have the same basic rights and freedoms as men do, including the right to choose their profession. But no laws are strong enough to penetrate the

²⁴Nelya V. Motroshilova, "Soviet Women in the Life of Society: Achievements and Problems," International Social Science Journal 35 (1983): 742.

²⁵Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, foreword to Moscow Women, by Carola Hansson and Karin Liden (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), xv.

family. Our upbringing, habits, and traditions have such deep roots that that kind of equality just isn't possible. And the basic physiological differences between men and women are just too great to allow for complete equality. What there can be is a kind of reasonable equality that acknowledges that only a woman can give birth to a child.²⁶

As the national birth rate has declined, the government has incorporated this cultural emphasis on motherhood into its pronatalism campaign. In education, politics and work, the government emphasizes the importance of motherhood to women. "The idea that gender differences between the sexes are immutable biologically rather than socially created, has become a cornerstone of contemporary Soviet thought."²⁷ Most women do not seem to mind the sexual stereotyping, but it can lead to discrimination. Women find themselves concentrated in low-paying jobs, shouldering domestic chores, and lacking leisure time.²⁸

Although women do not reject the government's pronatalism campaign ideologically, they refuse to cooperate without economic and social changes. "The typical Soviet woman is far less interested in redefining her role than in reordering her life."²⁹ Important issues that directly and

²⁶Hansson and Liden, 174.

²⁷Barbara Alpern Engel, "Women in Russia and the Soviet Union," Signs 12 (Summer 1987): 789.

²⁸Alena Heitlinger, "Marxism, Feminism, and Sex Equality," in Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, ed. Tova Yedlin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 16.

²⁹Smolowe, 30.

indirectly affect the birth rate are housework and employment, child care, the divorce rate, birth control and gynecological care.

Double Burden

Women shoulder a double burden of full-time work and full-time housework. When Marx and Engels envisioned a Communist society, they said women would join the work force and be liberated from the drudgery of housework. Engels proposed socializing housework to free women for the work force. Engels' vision was only partially achieved. Women joined the work force but did not shed the responsibility for housework. "In other words, the creation of equal opportunities in education and employment has led to a multiplication, rather than a redefinition, of female roles."³⁰

Carrying the responsibility for household chores is no simple task. The Soviet Union lacks many of the modern conveniences that diminish time-consuming housework. Washing machines must be filled with water and drained by hand. Vacuums are not very efficient. Refrigerators are small and freezers are a rare commodity.³¹ Because Stalin's

³⁰Heitlinger, 15.

³¹Martin Walker, The Waking Giant: The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev (London: Michael Joseph, 1986), 178.

economic priorities focused on heavy industry and the military, the production of consumer goods and services suffered. As a result, household appliances are inefficient and hard to find. Soviet women spend an average of 40 hours a week on domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, shopping and child care.³² Men spend an average of 15 to 20 hours per week on household chores.³³ Acknowledging their wives' responsibility for the household, many Soviet men simply hand over their paychecks to their wives on payday.³⁴

Shopping is one of the biggest burdens Soviet women bear. Because goods are scarce, shoppers often line up for hours to buy hard-to-find items. Buying food can be extremely frustrating. The stores have separate lines for meat, vegetables, milk and other items. To buy meat, a shopper must first stand in line to place the order, then stand in line to pay, and then stand in a third line to pick up the purchase. "Shopping becomes a daily necessity" because of food shortages and lack of freezers.³⁵

Women are usually responsible for shopping, although many men now share this chore. Soviets do not perceive shopping as a strictly female responsibility, and it is one

³²Kostash, 30.

³³Peers, 123-24.

³⁴Hedrick Smith, The Russians (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1976), 129.

³⁵Smolowe, 29.

of the few chores that men are willing to do. Women whose husbands help with other chores consider themselves lucky.³⁶

Child Care

Soviet society couples child care with housework as a female responsibility. Because most women work, they rely upon state-run nurseries and preschools, or their parents, for child care. After work, women assume primary responsibility for the children. "Most of the day-care centers and other supporting institutions which Soviet propagandists so constantly ascribe to the state's benign solicitude for feminine liberation are actually indispensable requirements for keeping as many women as possible on the job."³⁷ But the state does not supply enough nurseries to meet the needs of working mothers. Approximately 45 percent of all children under the age of seven have a place in a preschool or nursery. Parents who cannot use the state-run child care must find alternative sources.³⁸

Women also complain about the quality and training of child-care personnel. Finding professionally trained people to work in the nurseries and preschools is difficult because

³⁶Hansson and Liden, 55.

³⁷Smith, 131-32.

³⁸Peers, 123.

the job is low-paying and low-status.³⁹ Children are often exposed to diseases in the preschools, forcing their mothers to miss work while they stay home and care for their children. One mother said, "the day care here is so bad that the children are sick all the time."⁴⁰ In addition, mothers often are forced to travel across town from their homes or work places to drop their children off at the preschool.⁴¹

Divorce

The frustrations of child care and the burden of housework often keep women from having more than one child. Troubled marriages are another reason for small Soviet families. Nationwide, one out of every three marriages ends in divorce.⁴² Women initiate seven out of every 10 divorces, often citing husband's alcoholism as the cause.⁴³ Other common reasons for divorce are infidelity, cruelty and incompatibility. Because housing is so tight, many newlyweds are forced to live with one set of parents in a

³⁹Hansson and Liden, 68-9.

⁴⁰Ibid., 44-5.

⁴¹Lapidus, foreword to Moscow Women, xii.

⁴²Joseph L. Galloway and Jeff Trimble, "Male Chauvinism, Soviet Style," U.S. News and World Report, 14 December 1987, 10.

⁴³Smolowe, 35.

communal apartment. In 1977, Soviet sociologists found that in approximately 20 percent of the divorces, the main cause was friction between young couples and their parents or parents-in-law.⁴⁴

Although housing is hard to obtain, the government favors married couples over singles when it assigns apartments. Some couples will marry simply to increase their chances of getting an apartment. Soviet society tends to favor married women. A member of the intelligentsia wrote, "In our country, official or civil marriage is considered a big step for a woman -- perhaps the most important achievement in a woman's life, no matter how educated or independent she is and no matter how successful she has been in her profession."⁴⁵

But despite the real and psychological advantages to marriage, many women opt for divorce. Obtaining a divorce is relatively simple in the Soviet Union. A couple must go to the local registry office, pay a fee and obtain a divorce certificate. If the couple has children, they must go to court. Usually the court tries to reconcile the couple, and, if not successful, gives the mother custody of the

⁴⁴Hansson and Liden, 155-56.

⁴⁵Ekaterina Alexandrova, "Why Soviet Women Want to Get Married," in Women and Russia, ed. Tatyana Mamonova (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 31.

children and requires the father to pay a small amount for support.⁴⁶

Birth Control

A rising divorce rate is one of several social issues that affects the birth rate. Birth control is another. Soviets are puritanical about sex, refusing to discuss it in public. Young people receive little sex education in school, and sometimes even less at home. As a result, "birth control winds up being more a matter of reacting after pregnancy than of planned prevention."⁴⁷ Contraceptives are difficult to obtain and often ineffective. Condoms are either too thick or too thin. Diaphragms come in five sizes, theoretically, but many women say only two sizes are available. Birth control pills are hard to buy and therefore unreliable.⁴⁸

As a result, abortion is the main form of birth control in the Soviet Union. Lapidus says that women have "an ultimate dependence on abortion as a major method of birth control, however traumatic the entire experience proves to be."⁴⁹ While 5.5 million children were born in the Soviet

⁴⁶Peers, 131-33.

⁴⁷Smith, 141.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Lapidus, foreword to Moscow Women, xvi.

Union in 1987, 7.7 million abortions were performed, according to government statistics.⁵⁰ The number of abortions is actually much larger because many women have abortions outside of the hospitals. Officials says that one out of every six first-time abortions results in infertility.⁵¹

Abortions are subsidized by the state. A woman who wants an official abortion can sign up for three sick days at work. Hospital-performed abortions are characterized by their paperwork, lack of anesthesia and indifferent doctors. Many women choose to have an unofficial abortion at extra cost because they are assured quicker treatment, secrecy and anesthesia.⁵² "Women who have the money and the proper contacts try to get the abortion performed privately. That way they needn't be absent from work for the three telltale days that a regular abortion requires."⁵³

Gynecological and Maternity Care

The indifferent care that women receive when they have an abortion often extends to gynecological care. Women who

⁵⁰Rinehart, 37.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Barbara Holland and Teresa McKeivitt, "Maternity Care in the Soviet Union," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 152-53.

⁵³Hansson and Liden, 114-15.

choose to have a child complain about unsanitary clinics, uncaring doctors, lack of preparation for birth and lack of anesthesia. Being pregnant does have its advantages in the work place. Labor laws protect pregnant women and new mothers from working night shifts, overtime and strenuous jobs. Pregnant women receive maternity leave and are not required to go on long business trips.⁵⁴

However, for many women the advantages do not compensate for the frustrations. When a woman is pregnant, she attends a women's clinic regularly for check-ups, nutritional information and birth instructions. At the clinics, women wait for long periods to see the doctor for a few minutes.⁵⁵ The clinic staff encourages women to stay for birth-information classes after seeing the doctor, but the classes are long, and many women must travel across town to get home.

Although two Soviet doctors developed the idea of pain prevention during birth, Soviet women have rarely benefited from this discovery. Psychoprophylaxis is a method of pain prevention that teaches women to overcome anxiety and fear about birth by understanding what is happening to the body. In the classes, women learn about prenatal health, the physiology of birth, and infant care. They also learn how

⁵⁴Holland and McKevitt, 161-62.

⁵⁵Ibid., 153-54.

to breath during birth but do not have an opportunity to practice.⁵⁶

Women give birth in the first available hospital. The doctor that delivers the baby is not necessarily the same doctor who cares for the woman during her pregnancy. Family and friends, including the baby's father, are excluded from the maternity hospital during a woman's stay to lessen the risk of infection. But many women say they do not want their husbands present and enjoy the company of other women.⁵⁷

While in labor, the woman is placed in a large room without privacy curtains. When delivery time nears, she is moved to a smaller room with fewer beds. Although a woman might want pain relief, the doctor decides whether or not to administer it. "Since anesthetics are seldom administered to laboring women in the Soviet Union, the Soviet woman may feel the double burden of little preparation and knowledge that relief through drugs is unavailable."⁵⁸

Women are separated from their infants after birth and only see them at feeding times, three times a day. They complain that the maternity hospitals are crowded and

⁵⁶Jean Ispa, "Soviet and American Childbearing Experiences and Attitudes: A Comparison," Slavic Review 42 (Spring 1983): 3.

⁵⁷Holland and McKevitt, 164-65.

⁵⁸Ispa, 9.

unsanitary. Some women say the nurses are rude and the doctors uncommunicative unless they receive money on the sly.⁵⁹ Mothers worry about the health of their newborns because of the low standards of hygiene and inattention to sterilization.⁶⁰

Horror stories about inadequate sanitation, poor food, overcrowding, and rudeness and neglect on the part of hospital personnel abound; on the other hand, some of the women interviewed expressed complete satisfaction with their experience. Officially, care is entirely free, but most of the women reported that "tips" to nurses and doctors are expected and that women who do not offer money or who have not established personal connections receive inferior care.⁶¹

Giving birth in the Soviet Union can be unpleasant, upsetting and unhealthy. Soviet women's health, in general, is not very good. A 1980 study of pregnant women in Leningrad found that almost one-third of the women suffered toxemia, which can be caused by poor diet, inadequate prenatal care and poor hygiene.⁶² Although the women's clinics give advice about health, many women have trouble finding healthy foods during food shortages. Good hygiene is a problem in cramped, communal housing.

⁵⁹Smith, 142.

⁶⁰Ispa, 10.

⁶¹Ibid., 3.

⁶²Holland and McKevitt, 158-59.

Summary

Unpleasant gynecological care, limited birth control, marital troubles and sexual division of labor all present compelling reasons for why Soviet women choose not to have children. These issues are all important concerns for Soviet women, even without their relationship to the birth rate. However, government concern over the falling birth rate has brought many of these issues before the public, in an effort to increase reproduction.

Pre-glasnost Press Coverage

Birth Rate Decline

Even before glasnost, the press printed articles that expressed concern about the falling birth rate. An article in Moscow News said the state "encourages childbirth in order to achieve a more rapid rate of population growth."⁶³ This article gave statistics on the birth rate, the population and the population density for 1978. The article placed emphasis on the fact that the Soviet Union occupies one-sixth of the world's territory and therefore needs to populate it. From 1960 to 1976, the birth rate fell from 24.9 to 18.4 births per 1,000 people. The article said this drop concerned the government because it needs workers to

⁶³Moscow News, 14 January 1979, 4.

keep the country running. "It is clear that to increase and rejuvenate the population, the state and society must encourage a higher birth rate."⁶⁴ This article was very honest about the situation, echoing figures and concerns that scholars have stated.

To encourage its citizens to raise more children, the pre-glasnost press emphasized the awards and benefits mothers receive. The press often featured Mother Heroines, women who had given birth to ten or more children. "The state has tried to encourage larger families with all kinds of propaganda, including publicity about Mother-Heroines with ten children," Hedrick Smith noted.⁶⁵ In talking about Mother Heroines, the press would emphasize the help mothers had received from the government. The government would even extend such help to families who succeeded in producing more than one or two children:

A year ago, Moscow's Teterev family had a minor population explosion all its own -- three daughters at one go! Mother Tatyana, who is a teacher, and papa Sergei, a chemical engineer, were a bit overwhelmed....But things were made easier by the aid they received from the state. First, the Teterev family was issued a four-room flat in a new apartment house. Second, a nurse came to help them out every day. Then the district's infant food center supplied food for the triplets at no cost. And the district pediatrician comes regularly to give the girls a check-up. The Teterevs also get a monthly family

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Smith, 140.

allowance grant. It's all part of the regulations for large families here in the U.S.S.R.⁶⁶

This article on the Teterrevs gives a brief and to-the-point message: Have children and the state will take care of you. The joy of motherhood is emphasized with a picture of Tatyana Teterrev happily holding her three daughters.

Most articles on the birth-rate issue emphasize the benefits of large families. One Moscow News reader asked the paper what the state was doing to halt the birth-rate decline. The paper replied that while the state was not a money machine, "it spends a great deal of money to raise the living standards of large families: grants, benefits, ...prenatal and postnatal leaves, children's allowances to lower-income families, free vouchers, or vouchers at token price, to sanatoriums and holiday homes for parents and children."⁶⁷ However, the paper admitted that families need more than financial incentives to have children. The paper commented that large families must also be socially desirable.

What this article and others failed to mention was the issues that keep women from having larger families. Although motherhood is a culturally revered goal, many women cannot afford to have more than one or two children. And more importantly, most women do not have the time to raise a

⁶⁶Moscow News, 1 July 1979, 8.

⁶⁷Moscow News, 15 July, 1979, 2.

lot of children. But the pre-glasnost press did not discuss the reasons behind the birth-rate decline. Instead, it limited its coverage to articles about government programs, medals and monetary rewards for mothers.

Joy of Motherhood

The pre-glasnost press also emphasized the joy of motherhood and cultural value placed on motherhood. In the late 1970s, the press presented an idealized vision of motherhood, encouraged femininity and hinted that men and women were not the same. By emphasizing the value of motherhood, the press exercised a more subtle means of encouraging women to have children. The press linked motherhood with femininity, implying that women could only be considered feminine, or complete, if they had children.⁶⁸ Scholar Susan Allott says that many women's magazines would interview successful career women who said their lives would not be successful without their children. She writes that "in line with government priorities the press emphasizes motherhood as a woman's most important function and devotes a good deal of attention to the encouragement of large families."⁶⁹

⁶⁸Allott, 195.

⁶⁹Ibid., 194.

An article from Soviet Woman demonstrates Allott's point, telling of Lola Alikulova, an engineer from Tashkent, and her accomplishments as Deputy of the Soviet of the Tashkent Region and second secretary of the Communist Party in her district. The author points out that Alikulova would not talk about herself during the interview. Instead, "she, herself, proudly told us that she is the mother of four girls and a boy and that her eldest daughter 'studies at the same institute from which I was graduated.'"⁷⁰

Although the press emphasis on motherhood benefits the government's pronatalism campaign, it is also reflects society's values. As scholars have pointed out, Soviet women do not find excessive praise of motherhood demeaning. Although they want general equality with men, they do not want to lose the reverence and respect for motherhood. Soviet women believe women are different from men. And they want their differences as women noted and respected. Articles expressing the joy of motherhood and encouraging femininity might seem patronizing to Western women, but they are welcomed by many Soviet women, both now and before glasnost. Therefore, in emphasizing motherhood, the pre-glasnost press was reflecting cultural values as well as encouraging pronatalism.

⁷⁰Elton C. Fox, "In Neither Veils Nor Yurtas," Soviet Woman, February 1979, 2-3.

As the press encouraged motherhood, it also emphasized the importance of femininity and fashion. In a 1978 Moscow News photograph, two women are pictured in parachutes. The caption says they both hold world records for delayed jumps from the stratosphere. "But, like many women, they consider themselves women first of all and, even after jumping from a height of more than fifteen kilometers, they still take great care of their appearances."⁷¹

Fashion stories in the Soviet press are similar to such stories in the West. Generally, the articles are brief, outlining the current style, colors and accessories. The text is illustrated with pictures of young, beautiful women modeling the clothes, posed in unnatural positions. These stories are a subtle reminder to women that they should be concerned about what they wear and how they look. They also reflect Soviet women's interest in fashionable clothing.⁷² One article took pains to mention how much effort the Soviet fashion houses devote to leading new fashion trends.⁷³ Ironically, in the late 1970s, most Soviet women could not afford to buy the latest fashions. Many of them saved for months to buy a new coat or a pair of shoes.⁷⁴

⁷¹Moscow News, 25 March 1978, 4.

⁷²du Plessix Gray, 63.

⁷³Moscow News, 11 February 1979, 9.

⁷⁴Maggie McAndrew, "Women's Magazines in the Soviet Union," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 87.

Although the press in the late 1970s encouraged motherhood and femininity, it also emphasized the importance of work. The Soviet government integrated women into the work force and needed their labor. Although the government wanted a higher birth rate, it also wanted women workers. Therefore, the press in the 1970s lauded motherhood in one paragraph and praised women's career achievements in another. Moscow News told its readers that it wasn't in a woman's best interests to stay home and care for her children. "Right now few women want to dedicate their lives completely to housework, and not only for material reasons. So the state is doing all it can to make it easiest for women to work and have the opportunity to contribute their creative efforts."⁷⁵

Double Burden

During the Brezhnev era, Soviet women had it all and could do it all. The state expected women to work full-time and raise children. In addition, society expected women to run the family household. Although a woman might work as many hours as a man, she was expected to handle a majority of the household chores. The press lauded women who successfully managed both a career and home duties. It ignored the fact that many women could barely manage this

⁷⁵Moscow News, 24 September 1978, 2.

double burden. Typical articles talked about the advantages liberated Soviet women had acquired, or they described all the household help women received from the state.

In a Soviet Woman article from that era, the author described Central Asian women who had been liberated by the Soviet Union. They had thrown off the veil and now held positions of authority. One woman said, "I am the first Turkmenian woman to fly a plane. And in doing that I defied the old tradition that a woman's place was in the yurta."⁷⁶ Yet a woman's place really is in the yurta, or home, in Soviet society. A picture in Moscow News shows a woman's legs, dressed in nylons and heels, holding a bag with milk. The caption reads: "Milk, a traditional morning purchase."⁷⁷ The caption and picture imply that shopping is a woman's job; the shopper as traditional as the purchase. Although the pre-glasnost press tried to imply that women and men shared the household chores equally, it still emphasized the fact that women were ultimately responsible for the household.

One article described a Moscow couple who said they shared equally in the family decisions and chores. However, at the end of the article, the wife described their chores as male or female chores. She said her husband, "naturally,

⁷⁶Fox, 2-3.

⁷⁷Moscow News, 6 August 1978, 9.

does all the usual things that a man does in the home," while she does "the cooking, and the mending and a host of other things women usually take care of."⁷⁸ Even if husbands help with shopping, and other "male" chores, the press recognized that a majority of the work still rested with women.

In the 1970s, the press did not recognize that full-time work, children and household chores might pose a double, or triple, burden for women. As far as the press was concerned, the state had simplified household chores for women. Although the state certainly could improve in a few areas, for the most part Soviet women had easy access to labor-saving devices. An article in a 1979 issue of Soviet Woman illustrates the press attitude that household chores were not really chores. The long article describes a woman who has five children and works at a collective plant. She describes how she manages to raise her children, work full-time and study. She says,

If our society and its services had not taken part of the household chores upon themselves (housewives will understand me perfectly well), it would have been very hard for me and Stanislav. We could have scarcely thought of going to a new play or reading an interesting book.⁷⁹

⁷⁸N. Pavlova, "Who Heads the Family?" Moscow News, 11 March 1978, 10.

⁷⁹S. Bolshakova, "Our Second Home," Soviet Woman, January 1979, 19.

She describes all the services that the plant provides. It has built new apartments for its workers, with shops nearby, cooks meals at the plant and offers a catering service. Some women even sew clothing for the other women workers.

Like a parent, the plant's collective cares for its women workers, making life easy for them.

It has become easier to manage the household. A self-service shop, a laundry, a dressmaking and tailoring establishment have been opened near the Sergeyevs' house. Nearby are footwear, and household electrical appliances repair shops and a rental shop. Today it takes Valentina about 25-30 minutes to buy food.⁸⁰

Most Soviet women would have been jealous of all these conveniences. As scholars and Western journalists contend, most Soviet women did not have access to quick, convenient shopping areas in the late 1970s. This article does not mention the availability of time-saving devices, such as vacuums and dishwashers, to help women at home. Most women did not have access to these conveniences.

Most articles before glasnost do not mention time-saving devices at all. One article, which focuses on a family who had received a new apartment, makes a passing reference to the lack of consumer goods: "The service industry here is still a long way from what it should be and is being correctly taken to task for the shortcomings. But the state is spending a great deal to develop this sector to

⁸⁰Ibid., 18.

relieve people of the drudgery of housekeeping."⁸¹ However, this remark comes after the author has described all the benefits available to a typical Soviet family. The author's typical family has access to "tenant's kitchens," where members can buy semi-prepared meals and find laundries, dry cleaners, and dressmakers. Although it mentions the lack of time-saving devices, this article couches its criticism in such praise that it softens the remark.

Another article paints a different picture, describing all the advantages of a Soviet kitchen. It describes an exhibit on Soviet women that traveled to the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry in 1979. The article describes the exhibit and the American women's reactions. The author says most of the American women were impressed with how wonderful life is for Soviet women:

The exhibit was a fascinating glimpse into the life of Soviet women, with a model kitchen, the table made of ash wood, carvings from birch wood, a setting of hand-painted china dishes with the traditional flowered tea pot, and behind it, an illusion-shattering electric samovar (whoever said the Russians are provincial?), a small "fridge" with openings for holding chilled wines.⁸²

This description of a "typical" Soviet woman's kitchen is foreign to what most Soviet women find in their kitchens. But, like many articles on household chores, it missed the

⁸¹"Family Protection," Moscow News, 25 February 1979, 10.

⁸²Susan Kling, "Soviet Woman in Chicago," Soviet Woman, July 1979, 32.

mark. By assuming women had it all, the press before glasnost could not criticize the lack of time-saving household devices. It could not recognize that women worked twice as hard as men without contradicting its assumption that women were liberated from household drudgery.

Therefore, Soviet women saw only articles that told them how wonderful their lives were. An Ethiopian woman told Moscow News in 1979, "I've seen that Soviet women are able to work, enjoy life, and bring up their children to be really decent human beings as well."⁸³ In the early 1970s, Novyi mir published a story by Natalia Baranskaia that challenged the vision of Soviet women who could handle it all. In "A Week Like Any Other Week," Baranskaia describes the double burden of work and household responsibility that women must shoulder. "Natalya Baranskaya's evocation of 'a week like any other' in the harried life of a young scientific worker, wife, and mother gave fictional expression to the stresses and conflicts faced by millions of her counterparts in daily life."⁸⁴

Olga Nikolayevna, the heroine, lives a harried life. She struggles to stay on top of her research job while caring for two children, cooking, mending, washing and vacuuming in her spare time. Although her husband offers

⁸³Moscow News, 11 February 1979, 10.

⁸⁴Lapidus, foreword to Moscow Women, xiii-xiv.

some help, it is not nearly enough. She expresses her frustration that he has time to read a scientific journal, while she must mend her children's clothes. She is always late to work because she must travel across town to drop her children off at school. Sometimes, she is up half the night caring for a sick child. She is so tired, yet when her husband suggests she quit her job and stay at home full time, she is furious. After studying for five years and obtaining a good job, she doesn't want to throw everything out the window.⁸⁵ Olga Nikolayevna's problem is not her career. She would have time for her career, children and home if her husband helped her shoulder the burden. Instead, society and the press tell her that the household is her responsibility.

At the time it was printed, "A Week Like Any Other Week" was a unusually truthful account of Soviet women's lives. It defied the usual descriptions about the benefits of Soviet living. And it challenged the Soviet press's attitude that women did not shoulder any extra burdens. "It immediately touched off controversy because it so directly challenged the official slogan-image of the New Soviet Woman proudly and happily serving as 'a good mother and a good

⁸⁵Natalia Baranskaia, "Nedelia kak nedelia" [A week like any other week], Novyi mir 11 (1969); reprint, The Massachusetts Review 15 (Autumn 1974): 657-703, trans. Emily Lehrman.

production worker.' It is now out of print but was more daring than what was permissible in the early Seventies."⁸⁶

Child Care

Another myth of the pre-glasnost press was the availability of child care. Like household chores, society assigned child care to women. Although the government provided nurseries and preschools for children of working mothers, space in these facilities was often hard to obtain. Women whose children attended the nurseries and preschools worried about the overworked staff and their children's risk of illness. However, the press did not note any of the shortcomings in the child care system. Articles described how wonderful the facilities were, how kind the staff and how happy the children.

Soviet Woman printed a long article about parents who chose to raise their children at home. The article was written in response to a reader who asked if parents had to enroll their children in the state-run preschools. The author replied that, although child care was not mandatory, most parents wanted to place their children in a preschool because of the advantages. The article made it sound like children who did not attend a preschool were somehow deprived. "Many (children) go to the kindergarten in the

⁸⁶Smith, 136.

mornings, with serious faces, others stay home with their mamas or grannies. Which is best? One is good, and the other is not bad either. It's more interesting in the kindergarten, there are many friends."⁸⁷ This article claimed children would make many friends in the preschools, but if they stayed home, they would be lonely. All the pictures that accompanied the story showed children happily playing together, or learning something as a group.

One mother who chose to raise her daughter at home said she was overly anxious about her child's health. But, she said she and her husband decided to enroll her daughter in the preschool later because the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. "Oh, you can't protect them from children's illness anyway! We associate only with 'home' children -- who have the measles, the mumps and chicken pox.... I think that, on the contrary, they're ill less often in the kindergarten."⁸⁸ This comment directly contradicts the women Hansson and Liden interviewed who said the preschools are unhealthy for children. The possibility of children's illness is a big worry for Soviet women because they are the ones who must stay home and care for the children, missing work and other obligations.

⁸⁷Bella Leonidova, "At Your Own Will," Soviet Woman, February 1979, 7.

⁸⁸Ibid.

This article said many of the women she interviewed were able to quit their jobs and stay home with their children. Many scholars have said that Soviet women must work to supplement their husbands' incomes. Although they might choose to work anyway, most women could not afford the luxury of quitting their jobs and becoming full-time mothers.

Other articles on child care emphasized the availability of preschools and nurseries. Although the Soviet Union did not have enough space in its child-care facilities in the late 1970s, the press ignored that fact and emphasized the towns and factories that could provide clean, new facilities. One article listed the numbers of preschools and nursery schools available to parents. "Approximately 13,000,000 children go to creches and nursery schools. Besides this, there are seasonal creches and nursery schools organized in rural areas that look after about 2,000,000 tots. The state covers 80 percent of the costs."⁸⁹

An article about the Znamya Revolutsii Plant said it had just built two more kindergartens. "There was a time when there were not enough places for all children at the plant's creches and kindergartens. Today this problem has been resolved at the Znamya Revolutsii Plant."⁹⁰ A third

⁸⁹"Family Protection," 10.

⁹⁰Bolshakova, 18-19.

article emphasized the convenience of a new child-care facility in Moscow: "You don't have to rise at dawn to take your sleepy youngsters somewhere far but just step out of the house and there, next to it, is the kindergarten."⁹¹ Although these articles do not claim the government has solved the child-care shortage problem, they do imply that if a problem exists, it exists only in isolated areas. The articles about child care that women read in the late 1970s described the goal, new facilities and happy children, as if it were the reality.

Divorce

Although the press before glasnost shied away from the reality of child care, it was forthright about divorce. Articles about marriage and divorce described the Soviet laws governing divorce and sometimes gave figures. In describing the process of divorce, the pre-glasnost press would emphasize the fact that easy access to divorce liberates women. "Socialist society is a humane society and tries to ensure that families are cohesive and happy. But the state recognizes the right of either of the spouses to dissolve a marriage, and acts on the understanding that

⁹¹Leonidova, 6-7.

whenever the family as such no longer exists the divorce procedure should be as easy as possible."⁹²

Despite the birth-rate concerns, the press did not criticize women who sought divorces, taking the attitude that divorce is a regrettable but necessary exit for unhappy couples. The press before glasnost did not explore the reasons for divorce or raise alarm about the number of divorces. One Moscow News reader asked if Soviet women were faithful to their husbands. The paper replied: "I would not lay so much stress on just one side of the couple. Obviously it's preferable for both spouses to be faithful. Otherwise the family tends not to make up a single whole, which often leads to divorce. Here, divorce proceedings may be instigated by either husband or wife."⁹³

In a column called "The Way Natasha Sees It," Natasha Zemlina describes her friend's divorce. She says her first impulse was to try to mend the relationship. Her friend told Natasha that her husband was a total stranger to her. She said the love in their relationship disappeared a long time ago, especially after her husband had an affair. The article described the process that Natasha's friend followed to obtain her divorce. Overall, the tone of the article was

⁹²"Family Protection," 10.

⁹³Moscow News, 18 March 1979, 2.

supportive of the idea that a woman should seek a divorce if she is not happy with her marriage.⁹⁴

Scholars mention alcoholism and the housing shortage as common stresses that end marriages. Before glasnost, the press skirted around the reasons behind divorce, mentioning alcoholism, but denying the housing shortage. Women could write to magazines with complaints about their alcoholic husbands. Literaturnaia Gazeta printed letters on International Women's Day from women who said it was the indifferent, alcoholic fathers who caused women grief.⁹⁵

However, the press downplayed the housing shortage by writing articles about new apartment complexes. Lack of housing often forced new couples to live with one set of parents. Cramped quarters, and inability to get along with in-laws, placed stresses on new couples who struggled to make their marriages work under hard circumstances. But, according to Moscow News, the housing shortage was a myth. In a 1978 article, the paper criticized a Newsweek article that had described the Soviet housing shortage. The Newsweek article, as described in Moscow News, told the story of a Leningrad family that was forced to live in a tiny, run-down apartment. The author writes that:

⁹⁴Natasha Zemlina, "When There Is No Love," Moscow News, 24 June 1979, 15.

⁹⁵Women and Eastern Europe Group, foreword to Woman and Russia: First Feminist Samizdat (London: Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1980), 7.

The magazine alleges that the District Soviet of People's Deputies forces such couples to wait for a new flat "from three to six years." Is this true? I asked Khristofor Ukhanov, head of the Leningrad Housing Administration, about it. He said: "Give me the address of the family and we'll move them to a larger flat immediately."⁹⁶

The author does make a passing reference to the housing shortage, saying: "I don't want to suggest that all Leningraders live in excellent conditions, because there is still an acute housing shortage in this city that lost over 10,000 houses during the siege."⁹⁷ However, the author follows this remark by criticizing Newsweek for exaggerating the problem.

Most pre-glasnost press articles on housing assumed that housing was readily available. Another article in Moscow News showed pictures of a family moving into their new apartment. The article described how modern and conveniently located the apartment is. This family received a bigger apartment soon after their third child was born. The author writes that "in 1977 alone, about 11,000 people moved to new homes in the neighborhood and there's a lot more housing going up because of the higher expectations."⁹⁸ From this article's perspective, and others, the state

⁹⁶Yelena Doroshinskaya, "Such Families Just Don't Exist in Leningrad," Moscow News, 25 February 1978, 5.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸N. Kocherga, "A Muscovite Moves Home," Moscow News, 28 January 1978, 8.

provides plenty of housing; therefore, cramped quarters and lack of privacy could not be the cause behind small families and high divorce rates.

Birth Control

From the Soviet press's perspective, birth control might be considered a major cause behind the low birth rate. Although it seldom printed articles on birth control, when it did, the press turned the issue of birth control into an issue of birth rate. In 1979, when a Moscow News reader asked if the Soviet Union made birth control available to its citizens, the paper replied that birth control was available but not compulsory. The author then continued by describing the Soviet Union's low birth rate and the government's concern about that decline because of the country's dependence on workers. The author did not describe what types of birth control were available, how much they cost, how effective they were, or how citizens obtained them.⁹⁹ A question about birth control became a question about the birth rate.

Although the press did not say outright that citizens should not use birth control, articles on birth control gave the impression that using it was not in the state's best interests. Another article about birth control linked its

⁹⁹A. Zbarsky, Moscow News, 14 January 1979, 4.

usage to population control. The author stated that only overpopulated Third World countries needed birth control. The author wrote that "families are encouraged to have children in the U.S.S.R."¹⁰⁰ The article blames World War II, along with a rising mortality rate, for the country's relatively small population. And the author repeats the common argument about the country's vast size and labor needs as reasons why its citizens must increase rather than limit family size.

The most common form of birth control, abortion, barely rates comment in the pre-glasnost press. A small article, in response to a reader's question, supports the legalization of abortion in the Soviet Union. The author comments that abortion, legalized or not, will not dramatically affect the birth rate. "Today women have the right to decide themselves whether they want to have children or not. This does not mean that we favor abortions; doctors always try to persuade women not to have them. But if the woman insists, that is her right and no one can deny it."¹⁰¹ This article does recognize subtly that abortion is a form of birth control, a way for women "to decide themselves whether they want to have children or not." However, as in this article, the press did not

¹⁰⁰A. Zbarsky, "Is There Family Planning in the U.S.S.R.?" Moscow News, 18 February 1978, 11.

¹⁰¹Moscow News, 15 July 1978, 2.

mention the dangers of abortion or the complaints of many women about unkind doctors, unsanitary conditions and the lack of anesthesia.

Gynecological and Maternity Care

The pre-glasnost press wrote more about the health care its citizens receive than about birth control. However, specific information about gynecological care and maternity clinics was sparse. An article about foreign diplomats' wives described, among other things, one woman's experience giving birth in the Soviet Union. She said that the doctors and nurses were very kind, gave her medicine and treated her well.¹⁰² As a foreigner, she no doubt received better care than most Soviet women. Another brief article described a new All-Union Mother-and-Child Care Center being built in Moscow. The building is described as modern and well furnished. "This Institute has all the latest facilities for obstetrics and gynecology -- therapeutic and diagnostic rooms, and research laboratories."¹⁰³ The article does not provide any context about how many other centers are available for Soviet women or how modern those other centers might be.

¹⁰²Moscow News, 11 February 1979, 10.

¹⁰³"Mother-And-Child Care Center," Moscow News, 4 November 1979, 9.

Although scholars wrote about the poor health of many Soviet women in the late 1970s, a Soviet Woman article gave just the opposite view. The article describes a health care facility, or prophylactorium, available to workers of one factory. The article says that similar facilities are available to other Soviet workers, leaving the reader with the impression that good health care is readily available in the Soviet Union. At this plant, "700 of the plant's workers undergo protective health treatment at the prophylactorium annually." After five years, the rate of illness for those attending the prophylactorium dropped by 38 percent.¹⁰⁴ Across the nation, the article says the state has built 2,200 prophylactoriums. "Together with sanatoriums, holiday homes and tourist centers, they make up a broad network of the establishments which ensure with real guarantees the right of all citizens of the U.S.S.R. to health protection."¹⁰⁵

The article describes in depth the kind and competent staff, the various treatments, the sun-filled rooms and tasty meals. The health care facility sounds more like a health resort, where workers escape to be pampered for a few days. The descriptions of the staff do not coincide with scholars' descriptions of rude, overworked and uncaring

¹⁰⁴Galina Mogilevskaya, "The Health Centre," Soviet Woman, July 1979, 14.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 14-15.

doctors and nurses. For example, the author writes that one nurse is "meticulous, efficient and a very experienced worker. If she thinks that a prescription is not justified, she will voice her doubts to the doctor."¹⁰⁶

The pre-glasnost press described only the positive side of health care for Soviet women. Like the issues of child care and household duties, health care did not present any problems for Soviet women in the late 1970s, as far as the Soviet press was concerned. Although the press recognized the declining birth rate as a major concern for the state, it did not explore the reasons behind the decline, such as women's lack of time, low salaries, inadequate child care, lack of safe birth control and poor health care.

Summary

In dealing with family issues that affected women, the pre-glasnost press avoided any controversy. It stated the positive aspects of each issue, such as the factories that helped women workers with household chores, or the child-care facilities that were only a step away from home. When it did recognize problems such as the birth-rate decline, it supported band-aid measures, such as the Mother Heroine award, that did not resolve the issue.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 15.

The press served to reinforce cultural values that supported motherhood and women's responsibility for household duties. In supporting femininity and motherhood, the press supported the government's pronatalism campaign without contradicting cultural values that most Soviet women held. Therefore, the pre-glasnost press was able to present family issues that more closely resembled what Soviet women experienced and believed, than it was with women's work issues. The press often presented inaccurate descriptions of reality when the issues were fact-related, such as the amount of child care available, or the amount of time-saving devices available, or the quality of health care. But when the press said women were responsible for child care, or for cleaning the house, it accurately reflected what society believed.

Glasnost Press Coverage

Birth Rate Decline

As with women's work issues, glasnost has affected the coverage of women's family issues. Glasnost has stimulated the press to provide a more truthful exploration of the causes behind many issues, such as the birth-rate decline. Under glasnost, the press continues to reflect cultural values that relate to women, such as motherhood and household responsibility. Therefore, by combining a more

accurate portrayal of family issues with an accurate reflection of cultural values, the glasnost press provides a better depiction of how Soviet women might perceive and interpret some family issues.

On the birth-rate issue, the press is providing more thorough coverage. The press openly recognized the birth-rate decline in the late 1970s, just as it does today. As Peers noted:

The Soviet popular press in the European parts of the country give over a great deal of space to the examination and discussion of the problems arising from population trends. The two-three-child family is advocated very vigorously, and a spate of articles on the undesirability of having only one child has appeared in recent years.¹⁰⁷

The government continues to encourage larger families by offering women awards and benefits, such as the Mother Heroine award. Likewise, the press continues to emphasize the value of having more than one child.

The glasnost press has also pushed the government to make changes that would allow women to have larger families. One change would be to extend the paid maternity leave. The head of the women's council in Irkutsk said women in her region would like to see the maternity leave extended to three years at a minimum.¹⁰⁸ One of the deputies to the Congress of People's Deputies told Soviet Woman that she

¹⁰⁷Peers, 138.

¹⁰⁸"Women's Councils -- What They Can Do," Soviet Woman, November 1989, 2.

also thinks the maternity leave should be extended to three years, along with a monthly allowance of 70 rubles, which is equal to the minimum wage.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the pre-glasnost press, the press today advocates change.

In addition to recognizing the birth-rate issue, the press is exploring the reasons behind the birth-rate decline. "Demographic problems are still very acute and require just as much public attention now as before, if not more. Yet it is no less important to understand the nature of these changes and ascertain the reasons that lie behind them."¹¹⁰ The press still prints articles about Mother Heroines, but the articles are not always complimentary of the Soviet system. One Mother Heroine said her honor is really no "privilege." As a Mother Heroine, she receives four rubles per child a month. She says, "I am concerned for all mothers with many good children. What in my view is a way out? The kind of state allowances that Mother Heroines deserve: a sum equal to the minimum monthly wage per child until coming of age."¹¹¹ Instead of simply lauding Mother Heroines, the press now lauds them and

¹⁰⁹Lyudmila Shulzhenko, "Deputies Speak," Soviet Woman, October 1989, 2.

¹¹⁰Mikhail Tolts, "Family Situation: Not So Bad," Soviet Life, March 1988, 22.

¹¹¹Ibid., 3.

criticizes the government for the shallowness of its rewards.

As this Mother Heroine said, the monetary rewards for having large families are almost nonexistent. The press also recognizes that women are having fewer children because they cannot afford to feed more than one or two children. A Moscow News article questioned why mothers must live worse than single women. The author commented that when a woman has a child, that child absorbs part of her salary, leaving her with less money to live on than she had before. Yet a mother should actually receive more money because raising children is an occupation. A working woman "has to cope with production assignments at her place of work and at the same time take care of her child at home."¹¹² The author criticized the state for underpaying its women workers, implying that women need more money, as well as time, in order to have more children. A decade ago, the press did not recognize that the birth-rate decline was partially linked to the poor economy and high work expectations for women. Now the press prints articles that admit women need more than awards to produce more children. The press also blames the government for women's poor economic state and therefore seeks government funds for mothers.

¹¹²Margarita Belyakovskaya, "The Price of Motherhood," Moscow News, 24 September 1989, 13.

Joy of Motherhood

The press also continues to stress the cultural value of motherhood. Compared with coverage in the 1970s, the press now prints more articles that stress the importance of motherhood and femininity. Perhaps, as the government and the people have become more concerned about the birth rate decline, the press is more interested in emphasizing stereotypical differences between men and women, such as the depiction of women as mothers. Journalist and poet Evgenii Evtushenko wrote a long piece for Literaturnaia Gazeta in which he extolled the virtues of motherhood. He says that women give life to the population and therefore deserve more respect than they receive. In Evtushenko's opinion, the government has enslaved its quietly suffering women by expecting them to work full time. He says that the Soviet Union needs to use perestroika in its relations with women. "With women the population begins. How can we respect humanity if we do not respect women?"¹¹³

Evtushenko's opinion mirrors the opinions of many Soviets. Marina Rakhmanova, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet, commented during a session of the Supreme Soviet that "no one will deny that everything centers on the family:

¹¹³Evgenii Evtushenko, "S zhenshchin nachinaetsia narod" [With women the population begins], Literaturnaia Gazeta, 8 May 1989, 11.

health, culture, the moulding of a personality."¹¹⁴ Rakhmanova said women should receive some compensation for raising children, because motherhood is socially useful work. Many others, like Evtushenko and Rakhmanova, have advocated paying women for their work as mothers. Their advocacy is a change from the pre-glasnost press, which seldom asked the government to change its policies regarding mothers.

Many people whom the newspapers interview express concern that women are losing their ability to be good mothers because they are losing their "womanliness."¹¹⁵ The press, as it did in the late 1970s, continues to give women role models to emulate. However, today's role models are praised more for their work as mothers than their work in some other field. For example, Soviet Woman recently printed an article about Natalia Markova, an artist who has devoted most of the past fourteen years to raising her son Boris. Boris contracted pneumonia when he was an infant and lost his hearing as a result. Natalia's husband left her because he could not handle the pressure of his son's deafness. But she stayed and helped Boris learn to communicate. The author wrote: "Nearly 20 years of work

¹¹⁴Lyudmila Shulzhenko, "My Concern is the Protection of Childhood," Soviet Woman, December 1989, 12.

¹¹⁵Nikolai Viskov, "To Know More About Our Women," Soviet Woman, November 1989, 5-6.

have produced relatively few paintings. I did not ask why, I already knew. But, although no questions were asked, Natalia smiled and looked at Boris: 'This is my best and most important work.'¹¹⁶ The moral of this story for Soviet women is that motherhood is the most important work of all, more important than any career.

Some journalists claim that equality in the work force has actually been bad for women. One journalist said: "When we see women shoveling asphalt, which is then flattened out by a man driving a steamroller, it is a national disgrace. It is almost 50 years since the end of World War II, and there is no need to prove that a woman can drive an excavator."¹¹⁷ Women may have gained equality in the work force by doing traditional male labor, but journalists say they do not need to continue working hard-labor jobs. "The transition to a small family, which was so unexpected and unfavorable for society, coincided with the mass involvement of women in social production."¹¹⁸

Articles today encourage women to return to traditional female-labor jobs, such as motherhood. "Why not reduce their working hours the minute they get married and have

¹¹⁶Sophia Romanova, "The Test," Soviet Woman, December 1989, 23.

¹¹⁷Zoya Boguslavskaya, "What Are We Women?" Soviet Life, March 1988, 16.

¹¹⁸Tolts, 22.

children, counting in part of the time they spend on homemaking as working hours?" one journalist asked.¹¹⁹

The glasnost press contends that Soviet society has fatigued women by expecting them to do too much. But the press offers only one answer to the problem: remove women from the work force and pay them to raise children. This answer reflects the Russian culture, which assigns motherhood and housework to women. As in the late 1970s, women see many articles that reinforce their femininity. In fact, today's press emphasizes women's femininity even more than the pre-glasnost press because that emphasis implies criticism of the government for expecting women to do hard labor. When a woman wrote Soviet Woman to complain about the fact that a man can abandon his child, but a woman cannot, a journalist expressed her dismay. "You see what kind of women have appeared! They want equality in not having to care for the child!"¹²⁰

The press continues to use other ways of emphasizing femininity as well, such as the fashion stories. Fashion stories in today's papers are almost identical to such stories in the pre-glasnost press. The articles emphasize color coordination, style and cosmetics. As in the late

¹¹⁹Boguslavskaya, 22.

¹²⁰Viskov, 5.

1970s, these fashion stories assume that most Soviet women can afford to dress for fashion, even though they cannot.¹²¹

Although a majority of the articles about motherhood support women's return to "womanliness," some journalists balk at this sexual stereotyping. A chairwoman of a women's council commented in Moscow News that women and men are measured by different standards. "Have you noticed that women and men live according to different rules? A woman 'should,' whereas a man 'wants to, or doesn't want to.' Incidentally, today new 'shoulds' have appeared in the code of behavior for women."¹²² Another woman told Moscow News that women lose their social and intellectual lives when they have children because they must focus all their energy on their children.¹²³

By emphasizing the cultural value of motherhood, magazines and newspapers foster pronatalism. However, they also foster sexual stereotypes of women as the weaker sex, the nurturers who stay home and keep the fire burning. Soviet women may experience a strong resurgence of sexism, which is already present in the Russian culture. For example, during an interview on a U.S. television station,

¹²¹"Autumn Fantasy," Soviet Woman, November 1989, 30-1.

¹²²Olga Bessolova, "Women's Movement Must Not Be Reduced to Women's Councils," Moscow News, 23 July 1989, 12.

¹²³Irina Avrutskaya, "Openings for Women," Moscow News, 24 September 1989, 13.

Gorbachev said that he discusses politics with his wife. When the Soviet media replayed the interview, they cut out Gorbachev's admission.¹²⁴ Another example of chauvinism appeared in Soviet Woman. This article gave women advice on how to trick their husbands to buy them a beautiful dress for Christmas. The article advised women to flatter that "miserable, naive baby of yours" to make him feel guilty for his selfishness.¹²⁵ Although articles like this one are few and far between, they demonstrate the inherent chauvinism in the Russian culture and help explain why the press so eagerly encourages women to be housewives.

Double Burden

The press is no longer ignorant of the double burden women bear, working full-time and assuming household duties. Many press articles criticize the society and especially the men who have expected women to shoulder most of the household responsibility. These articles admit that women bear a double burden, working twice as hard as men for less remuneration. Evtushenko also notes women's three "jobs": "You see, a Soviet working woman does not have one, but three jobs. The first -- her job. The second -- the

¹²⁴Joseph L. Galloway and Jeff Trimble, "Male Chauvinism, Soviet Style," U.S. News & World Report, 14 December 1987, 10.

¹²⁵"Some Points on Women's Wiles," Soviet Woman, December 1989, 29.

shopping lines. The third -- her children, house and kitchen."¹²⁶ Another woman, Zoya Boguslavskaya, comments that: "It is almost impossible to combine these roles and perform both well. One always exists at the expense of the other. Life is not a rubber balloon; you can't stretch it or blow it up. A pity The time spent on family is time robbed from your job."¹²⁷

Ironically, Boguslavskaya recognizes the hardship of women's double burden but still maintains that women are responsible for household chores. She says that "young representatives of the 'weaker sex' do not want to be silent, they want an equal amount of work to be done in the home." Yet, when the reporter asks her what she plans to do that evening, she replies: "prepare food for tomorrow."¹²⁸ Boguslavskaya, like many Soviet women, want to keep their role as mothers and housewives, yet they do not want that role to enslave them. Unlike the pre-glasnost press, today's press recognizes the existence of women's double burden. It also openly addresses the troubling contradictions between women's desire to return to traditional female roles and their desire to keep their equality with men.

¹²⁶Evtushenko, 11.

¹²⁷Viskov, 7.

¹²⁸Ibid., 6-7.

Some Westerners have criticized Soviet chauvinism in the Soviet press, but most Soviet journalists do not. American journalist Robert Scheer wrote in Moscow News that "It makes no biological or economic sense that women be held more responsible than men for any family obligations once a child is past the breast feeding stage." He adds that "child care, shopping, cooking and house cleaning are all chores that a man can perform as ably as a woman."¹²⁹ Scheer's point is well taken, but most Soviet journalists would not advocate strongly for equality in the home. Instead, they blame the state for women's double burden. A group discussing women from socialist countries posed the question: "What is hampering women in making full use of their rights?" The response was: "The impediments are many -- lack of everyday amenities, unsatisfactory organization of the work of children's institutions and the shortage of those institutions, shortcomings in the work of the service sphere, and poor shopping facilities."¹³⁰ The women who held this discussion, and the reporter, did not entertain the idea that women should not be expected to shoulder all of the household work.

¹²⁹Robert Scheer, "Where is she, the New Soviet Woman?" Moscow News, 30 April 1989, 13.

¹³⁰"Modern Women at Work and at Home," Soviet Woman, February 1989, 6-7.

When articles do criticize men for not helping their wives, the articles still assume that men should help -- not that men should assume responsibility. One Moscow News reader complained about the men who sit around and do nothing. She said that men cannot be superior to women because they pretend to be active and do nothing, while women silently accomplish many tasks. She said women reap maximum satisfaction from successfully handling the household responsibilities, but men should offer their wives more help.¹³¹

Other articles have also encouraged men to help women with the household duties. An article about the chair of a women's council said her husband helps with the household chores because she is so busy. When she was elected to her position, she and her husband decided that he would help at home because her community service was important.¹³²

Another article in Soviet Woman described a club that promotes men's participation at home. The club described a sewing contest it held for men. "Even though sewing is not a pursuit for a man, representing a family team in the contest for best children's overall is interesting for the father too -- it wasn't just a contest, but a battle!"¹³³

¹³¹Avrutskaya, 13.

¹³²Vera Kopeiko, "On Women's Power, On Soviet Power," Soviet Woman, September 1989, 7.

¹³³"Women's Councils -- What They Can Do," 2.

Although the press is not advocating outright equality at home, it is encouraging men to help their wives.

More male participation at home is one solution the press has proposed to solve the double burden. Although that participation does not imply responsibility, the press is touching on the cultural roots of the double-burden issue. The press has also proposed improving consumer goods and services as another way to help women. The glasnost press has criticized the government for not providing better consumer goods and services.¹³⁴ By recognizing women's double burden, and the need to relieve that burden through better consumer services, more help from men and remuneration for household work, the glasnost press is realistically addressing an issue that women have lived with for many years. The current press coverage of women's double burden contrasts with pre-glasnost coverage. The press now openly admits the double-burden problem exists and is exploring possible causes, although so far it has mainly blamed the government and not addressed the cultural roots.

Child Care

Child care adds a third burden to women's shoulders -- a burden that the press under glasnost now recognizes. Before glasnost, the press wrote articles that praised the

¹³⁴Allott, 194.

government's child-care facilities and ignored their shortage. The press now addresses both the positive and negative aspects of the government-provided nurseries and kindergartens. Many articles admit the shortage of child-care institutions and call for an increase in the quantity and quality of the education preschool children receive. Most of these articles do not deal with child care as a separate issue. Instead, journalists usually include it along with the other household responsibilities women assume.

As with household chores, journalists still place responsibility for child care at women's doorstep. But some articles have encouraged men to help their wives care for their children. The government receives most of the press's criticism for child care. The press criticizes the government for the low quantity and sometimes poor quality of nurseries and preschools. One article comments that "There have also been many complaints against preschool institutions, above all, in connection with children's health. Mothers' absenteeism from work due to their children's illness has been estimated at 150 million worker-days a year in the Russian Federation alone."¹³⁵

This comment contrasts with articles from the late 1970s on child care. The press no longer quotes mothers who

¹³⁵Tolts, 22.

say the preschools are healthy, happy places for children. Instead, as this comment shows, the press is voicing doubts about the health standards of child-care centers. These doubts coincide with the experiences of many women who have talked with scholars and Western journalists. In general, the press is voicing more concern about the welfare of children. Many articles wave the flag of motherhood in the name of children. Journalists quote politicians, workers and mothers who encourage women to devote more time to motherhood for the sake of their children, the nation's future. Likewise, these people criticize the government for not enabling women to devote time to motherhood.

Divorce

The press's pronatalistic approach also encompasses the issue of divorce. The glasnost press is less supportive of divorce than the pre-glasnost press. Articles about marriage and divorce no longer extol divorce as a symbol of women's emancipation. Although the ability to divorce certainly does offer women equality with men, the press focuses on the disadvantages of divorce. An article on the Soviet family said the divorce rate varies from 0.5 to 3.5 per 10 marriages, depending on the region. Women take advantage of their right to divorce, initiating nearly 70 percent of the divorces in the Soviet Union, according to

this article.¹³⁶ It says that "things do not always turn out well for divorced women, as they must face loneliness, financial difficulties (for all their economic independence) and problems in bringing up their children. It is, therefore, hard to say if divorces do more good than harm."¹³⁷

This article also implies that women's free choice is responsible for the rising divorce rate. "The free choice that Soviet women now have probably plays no small part in the growing number of divorces."¹³⁸ The author intimates that perhaps women should not be able to obtain a divorce so easily, because their wishes may run counter to the best interests of society. This author expresses a more conservative view than other articles that discuss the divorce rate. However, the very fact that the author voiced concern about the divorce rate, and suggested tougher restrictions, shows the press's greater openness.

Very few articles address the divorce issue separately. Articles that do discuss divorce talk about its harm to the family. Supporting divorce would contradict the government's and society's new emphasis on motherhood and family life. The family's importance is extolled both in

¹³⁶Lyudmila Arutyunyan, "Job or Family: Freedom to Choose," Soviet Life, March 1988, 21.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid.

written words and pictures. For example, Soviet Woman shows four pictures of the Tereshchenko family in one issue. This family is an ordinary, working-class family that displays great affection for each other. The pictures show the son with a painting of his family, the wife leaning on her husband, and the family playing together. As a group, they give an impression of a peaceful, happy life.¹³⁹

Only one article in Literaturnaia Gazeta connected the housing shortage with the high divorce rate. Many scholars have blamed the high number of failed marriages on the housing shortage, which forces many young couples to live with one set of parents. Evgenii Evtushenko said that cramped living quarters can cause domestic friction. He says many Soviet women divorce because they cannot live with their husbands' parents, or their husbands cannot live with their wives' parents.¹⁴⁰ By recognizing the inability of many newlyweds to find living space, Evtushenko recognizes one of the main causes of divorce. Unlike other family issues, the press has not addressed all the reasons behind the high divorce rate.

¹³⁹"Focus on the Family," Soviet Woman, November 1989, 41.

¹⁴⁰Evtushenko, 11.

Birth Control

The glasnost press is also reticent about birth control, reflecting the cultural puritanism about sex. Dmitri N. Shalin, a visiting scholar at the Russian Research Center at Harvard University, told the New York Times that "premarital sex, contraceptives, abortion, venereal disease, prostitution and like subjects once considered taboo are now open for public scrutiny."¹⁴¹ However, though the subject of birth control may be open, Soviet Woman and Moscow News, at least, have not addressed the topic in depth.

Shalin said Komsomolskaia Pravda, the Communist Youth League newspaper, has written about lack of reliable birth control. Diaphragms come in three sizes, but without spermicidal cream. Condoms are also hard to obtain. "Last year, according to Komsomolskaia Pravda, 'one item' cost 4 rubles, or \$6, on the black market. Now, the price is closer to \$10."¹⁴²

Komsomolskaia Pravda also discussed abortion. The newspaper reported that 6.5 million abortions were performed in the Soviet Union in 1988. "If this figure is right, one out of 10 Soviet women of child-bearing age terminated a pregnancy that year."¹⁴³ Although the Soviet press is not

¹⁴¹Dmitri N. Shalin, "Glasnost and Sex," New York Times, 23 January 1990, A15.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid.

encouraging women to have abortions, printing statistics about the number of abortions raises awareness about its widespread use. Evtushenko gave his support to legalized abortion when he wrote a little about the effect of Stalin's decision to make abortion illegal. He said that many women were forced to obtain illegal abortions from midwives.¹⁴⁴ Although abortion is not a safe form of birth control, legal abortion is safer than illegal abortion. And Soviet women have no other choice.

Moscow News addressed the issue of abortion in an article that described one woman's experience. The author described the complicated bureaucratic process she had to follow before she could obtain an official abortion. On the day of her abortion, the author lined up outside the operating room with other women seeking abortions. The women were shuttled into the operating room production-line style. "What followed was the clinking of instruments and acute pain. The anaesthetic was evidently only enough to make me too weak to moan."¹⁴⁵ After her abortion, the author was placed on a bed with an ice-pack on her stomach. None of the doctors stopped by to see how she was feeling. The author concluded her article by criticizing the Soviet

¹⁴⁴Evtushenko, 11.

¹⁴⁵Yekaterina Nikolayeva, "I Don't Want to be Sorry I'm a Woman," Moscow News, 29 January 1989, 10.

Union's high abortion rate. She said that "every year between 600 and 700 women die as the result of an abortion in the Russian Federation alone."¹⁴⁶ The author also blamed her society's puritanical attitude for the lack of contraceptives and sex education.

This article on abortion is unusually frank in its descriptions and criticisms. However, Moscow News downplayed its impact by labeling the problem an isolated incident. In an editorial note, Moscow News quoted an official from the Ministry of Public Health who said, "The Ministry of Public Health utterly condemns such doctors and would like to have them named if we want to change the situation radically."¹⁴⁷ The official also stated that in the Soviet Union "there are many contraceptive methods."¹⁴⁸ Although Moscow News recognized the poor medical care women receive when they have an abortion, the paper did not challenge the cultural attitudes toward sex that prevent women from learning about alternative sources of birth control.

As the press begins to address the deficiencies of birth control, they are giving women a glimpse of reality, unlike the pre-glasnost press, which turned questions about

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

birth control into lectures on the value of motherhood. The glasnost press is beginning to address women's complaints about uncaring doctors and unclean clinics where abortions are performed. But the press generally is reticent about the issues of birth control and illegal abortions, which many women prefer to the legal abortions because they offer privacy and, perhaps, anesthesia.

Gynecological and Maternity Care

Although glasnost has not stimulated much discussion of birth control, it has opened up discussion of gynecological and maternity care. The press has printed articles about the crowded, unhealthy conditions of maternity hospitals, and the lack of preparation women receive before birth. Many articles about maternity hospitals express anger that the Soviet medical system is so poor.

Why is a nation capable of producing the Buran spaceship unable to relieve the pain of childbirth? And what is the good of the slogan, "Give children the best!" if the best building in a city is generally occupied by the Party committee, the best sanatoria belong to the Ministry of Defense or the KGB, and if the best hospital is rarely a maternity hospital?¹⁴⁹

An article about Soviet psychiatry focuses briefly on the state of Soviet hospitals. "The conditions in our mental hospitals can hardly be called ideal. Regrettably, that's

¹⁴⁹Bessolova, 12.

the case for our entire medical system," a Soviet official told Moscow News.¹⁵⁰

A Moscow News reporter wrote a long article about her experiences giving birth in a Soviet maternity hospital. Her comments were very similar to the description of maternity hospital care in Moscow Women, the book of interviews that Hansson and Liden conducted in the late 1970s. She said the medical staff was unkind and overworked. No one had time to even say "congratulations" after her child was born. "The clinic is always overcrowded. There aren't enough nurses or auxiliaries, and the doctors work too hard."¹⁵¹ The hospital did not have enough linens for its patients. The women had to beg for an extra towel or clean sheets. Because the nurses did not have enough diapers for the infants, they changed them only three times a day. Each nurse at her hospital was responsible for thirty-two infants.

"Childbirth is hard work, but why should it be suffering?"¹⁵² The author said her worst experience was the feeling that she had been abandoned during her twelve hours of labor. She criticized the hospital's rule of not

¹⁵⁰Yuri Buksin, "Soviet Psychiatry," Moscow News, 22 October 1989, 7.

¹⁵¹Yevgeniya Albats, "Reporter Gives Birth on Assignment," Moscow News, 8 January 1989, 15.

¹⁵²Ibid., 16.

allowing the husband into the labor room, or even into the hospital during a woman's stay. Receiving good care in a maternity hospital depends on luck and influence. She said she received preferential treatment because of this article but, "if this is preferential treatment, what about run-of-the-mill cases? If this is the situation in one of Moscow's best maternity hospitals, famous for its obstetricians, what can be said about other clinics?"¹⁵³

The author said she requested anesthesia, but did not receive any pain relief during labor. She writes that "an old obstetrician explained that pain relief by anesthetics, hypnosis or electric sleep is expensive and requires permanent attendance, for which there aren't enough nurses."¹⁵⁴ Another Moscow News article confirms the shortage of pain relief and preparation for birth. The article says that Soviet women do not know about the process of childbirth, and therefore are not prepared for the pain. Although prenatal training is available in the clinics, the article says that most women do not have the time to attend. "Very few benefit from prenatal training. The doctor monitoring them is certainly unable to talk to everyone

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

individually, and the group training programs fail to achieve their objective."¹⁵⁵

The glasnost press has been open about the deficiencies of Soviet maternity hospitals and prenatal care. It has questioned the quality and quantity of care that women receive, as well as shortages of medical goods that prevent cleanliness. The press no longer claims that hospitals are sanitary and medical care is good. Women who have given birth in Soviet hospitals will find that the press mirrors their experiences, accurately reflecting the facts.

Conclusion

The birth-rate decline has stimulated press attention on a number of family issues: household responsibility, child care, divorce, birth control and maternity care. Each issue, important in its own right, helps explain why Soviet women have chosen to limit their family size. Each issue also shows how glasnost has affected the coverage of family issues. Before glasnost, the press avoided controversy in its discussions of family issues. The press reported the birth-rate decline but did not discuss the reasons behind the decline. The pre-glasnost press ignored and sometimes contradicted the facts that explained why Soviet families were growing smaller.

¹⁵⁵Marina Rusina, "Do Our Women Know How to Give Birth?" Moscow News, 30 April 1989, 13.

The press told women that the double burden of household chores and full-time work did not exist. Real Soviet women, according to the pre-glasnost press, could handle their household responsibilities and their careers. Although scholars talked about consumer-goods shortages, the press praised the government for making life so easy for women. In addition, the press said child care was really no burden. It depicted healthy, easily accessible preschools and nurseries for children, even though scholars said child care was often hard to find.

Likewise, the pre-glasnost press ignored the issue of birth control and extolled the virtues of maternity care. Although Soviet women told scholars that most birth control was unavailable or unreliable, the press did not address these problems. Instead, it told women they did not need birth control because the country needed babies. Even though women complained to Western journalists about unsanitary maternity hospitals, the press lauded the Soviet health care system.

The pre-glasnost press ignored some family issues, but it recognized others that demonstrated the state's efforts to help women. The press served as a government cheerleader by praising achievements such as divorce rights, and downplaying problems such as child care. The press also reinforced cultural values placed on motherhood and sexually differentiated roles. The cultural reinforcement reflected

society's beliefs, in addition to supporting the government's pronatalism campaign. Although the pre-glasnost press did not accurately portray many family issues, it did accurately express cultural beliefs about motherhood and traditional female roles.

Under glasnost, the press continues to reflect cultural beliefs about motherhood and female roles. However, glasnost has allowed the press to openly address the facts behind many family issues. The glasnost press has begun to question why the nation's birth rate has declined. The press is no longer content to lavish praise on mothers and emphasize the government rewards for large families. As a result, the press is providing a more truthful explanation of the causes behind the birth-rate decline. Sometimes, the press's explanations contradict each other. However, the contradictions show the press can more openly explore various explanations.

The glasnost press has opened its eyes to women's double burden of household responsibility and full-time work. The press has criticized the government for the lack of consumer goods and for expecting women to work full time. It has encouraged the government to let women work part time so they have more time for their children and households. However, the glasnost press has not questioned the cultural values that place responsibility for household work on women's shoulders.

In general, the press now portrays women's personal lives more accurately than before glasnost. The press discusses the problems with Soviet child care, maternity hospitals and household work. The press is giving women a more accurate reflection of their lives. The glasnost press is still reticent about birth control and divorce, two issues that clash against cultural beliefs. Although some press organs mention the problems surrounding birth control, most papers do not. They reflect their readers' cultural reticence toward sex. Likewise, the press no longer touts divorce as a symbol of women's emancipation. Many papers have expressed dismay over the high rate of divorce and the disintegrating family. Divorce contradicts the cultural emphasis on strong family ties, and therefore is not a welcome topic.

Glasnost allows the press to approach family issues more honestly and accurately. Citizens can now openly discuss issues such as the double burden, child care and gynecological care in the press. Although the birth-rate decline remains an overriding concern for the Soviet government and its citizens, the press can now explore the reasons behind the decline. The only wall glasnost has not challenged is the wall that reinforces cultural values. Although cultural beliefs certainly contribute to the state of women's family lives, the press has not challenged those beliefs.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Women do not share equal political power with men in the Soviet Union. Soviet women play a secondary role to men, just as they do at work and at home. When Lenin wrote about women's emancipation, he predicted the barriers to women's political involvement would disappear under Communist rule.

Sustained by the conviction that sexual inequality was rooted in social arrangements, the revolutionary leadership anticipated that changes in economic organization, accompanied by simultaneous efforts to alter expectations and behavior, would ultimately draw women out of the limited confines of private households and into public life. Full political participation for women depended on the political democratization that would accompany the transformation of economic relationships.¹

However, the authoritarian style of government rule that developed in the Soviet Union did not ultimately embrace women leaders. Although interest in women's political involvement surged after the Revolution, it lost its fervor under Stalin, who declared that women had achieved equality with men.

¹Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978), 202-03.

The pre-glasnost press, as with women's work and family issues, ignored women's political issues. It accepted Stalin's premise that women were emancipated and therefore required no special consideration. Many times, the pre-glasnost press skirted around the issue of women's political power. Although the press praised the high number of women involved in state bureaucracy, they were silent about the number of women in the Communist Party. The pre-glasnost press covered women's political issues with rose-colored glasses.

The glasnost press, on the other hand, has begun to question whether communism has really emancipated women. The press has challenged assumptions that women and men hold equal political power. The press has also opened up debate about cultural prejudices against women leaders. As with work and family issues, women's political issues are receiving fresh coverage under glasnost. However, understanding the coverage of women's political issues requires an understanding of those issues.

Political Issues

In general, Soviet women's political issues all relate to the common theme of political impotence. As in other societies, the political system and cultural attitudes mold women's political involvement. In the Soviet Union, women are involved politically, but their political involvement

does not necessarily give them power. Women who choose to seek political power do not have the same access to power as men do. The Soviet political system, intricate and unwieldy, offers women a chance for surface involvement without substantial influence.

The Soviet Political System

The Soviet political system is a complex bureaucracy of committees, congresses and cabinets. Understanding the intricacies of the Soviet political system is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, a brief explanation of the power structure will help place women's political involvement in context. Ronald J. Hill, in his book The Soviet Union, explains in detail how the party and state governing bodies work with each other.

Under Gorbachev, the political system is changing faster than scholars can gather data. Most of the information on women's political participation is based on the system before Gorbachev introduced changes. In this chapter, I will discuss the recent changes and their implications, concentrating on women's political situation before the system began to change because all of the pre-glasnost, and most of the glasnost press articles, were written before the changes.

Since the Revolution, the Communist Party has ruled the Soviet Union as the only legalized political party. Only

party members have access to real political power. However, the party is a ruling, not a governing body. The bureaucracy of the Soviet state administers the decisions of the party.² Political participation ranges from involvement in the party to involvement in the government, or both. Most of the top Soviet leaders hold positions in the party and the government.

The Communist Party organizes its members by committee into various levels of authority. At the local level, members belong to primary party organizations, which organize around the work place or living organization. From the primary party organizations, citizens can climb the ranks of authority. The lower level of party authority is basically divided into provincial committees (obkoms), city and town committees (gorkoms), and urban and rural district committees (raikoms).³ Delegates to these bodies elect delegates to the next highest body. Eventually, a Communist Party member might be elected a delegate to the Communist Party congress, which usually meets every five years. Delegates to the party congress elect delegates to the Central Committee, which theoretically governs the party when the congress is not in session. The Central Committee,

²Ronald J. Hill, The Soviet Union: Politics, Economics and Society, (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1985), 87.

³Ibid., 85.

in turn, elects the members of the Politburo, and the General Secretary, who governs the nation.⁴

The Politburo is the most powerful group within the Communist Party. "As an institution, it defines broad policies, decides priorities and allocates resources, tasks that make it functionally equivalent to the cabinet in a parliamentary system."⁵ Although the Politburo answers to the Central Committee, generally the Politburo makes decisions of broad policy that the Central Committee and party congress retrospectively endorse. In addition to the Politburo, the Central Committee also elects a Secretariat, whose members administer specific areas of policy, such as foreign affairs, agriculture and heavy industry. The membership of the Politburo and the Secretariat often overlap; the General Secretary heads both bodies.⁶ In general, membership in any high-level body in the Communist Party offers political power and prestige. Although membership to the Central Committee and Politburo is by election, the party has its own leadership recruitment system that decides who will be elected to which position.

Communist Party membership is necessary to gain political power, but citizens can be involved in government

⁴Ibid., 80-4.

⁵Ibid., 83.

⁶Ibid., 84-5.

without necessarily joining the party. Although the Communist Party decides the country's course of action, it does not administer its decisions. The job of administration falls to the state bureaucracy, which governs the nation by carrying out Communist Party policies. At the base of the state bureaucracy are the Soviets of People's Deputies. The soviets range from local administration to city, district, regional and national administration. Deputies "are formally elected by the population, but there is no doubt whatsoever that the party authorities effectively control the electoral process."⁷ The Supreme Soviet is at the pinnacle of the state bureaucracy. However, in the past, most scholars have characterized it as politically impotent. It meets twice a year and usually gives rubber-stamp approval to party decisions. The Supreme Soviet elects a Presidium, which is governed by the president. Usually, the Presidium elects the General Secretary to the post of president. The Presidium governs the country when the Supreme Soviet is not in session.⁸ The Presidium also elects Supreme Soviet members to the Council of Ministers, which is responsible for daily administration. Although Supreme Soviet deputies are relatively powerless, "ministers of the Soviet Union are important and powerful

⁷Ibid., 95.

⁸Ibid., 102-04.

individuals, and their office frequently carries membership of the party Central Committee."⁹

Political Participation

Soviet women have been active participants in politics since the Revolution. Although they face many of the same discriminations that Western women encounter, Soviet women have made great strides. Soviet women participate in the preparation, discussion and adoption of decisions affecting all areas of domestic policy. They are active in the legal system, trade unions and Communist Party.¹⁰ The Soviet people accept women leaders, especially on the local level.

However, even though women are fairly politically active, their participation does not always translate to political power. "Although the level of most political participation has increased dramatically as a result of Soviet policy, no comparable successes have been achieved in drawing women into positions of political leadership."¹¹ Women are most active at the local level, where political power is slight. Although political careers at the local

⁹Ibid., 112.

¹⁰Nelya V. Motroshilova, "Soviet Women in the Life of Society: Achievements and Problems," International Social Science Journal 35 (1983): 739.

¹¹Lapidus, 230-31.

level can be stepping stones to national politics, most women do not advance to higher positions.

Women are well represented in the primary party organizations of the Communist Party. They often hold the role of party secretary and lead local party activities. Women are also fairly well represented in district and city-level politics, the raikom and gorkom levels.

But here, where full-time party work begins, there also operates a mechanism which equates authority with maleness. Although the proportion of women in the gorkom and raikom apparatus may be large, within the apparatus itself, the proportion of women decreases as one proceeds from the lowest ranks (clerks, instructors, others) to the highest (secretary, first secretary). At the next administrative level, the oblast, the elimination process is even more effective, and women are virtually absent from the highest ranks there.¹²

In the Communist Party, roughly one-fourth of the members are women.¹³ But, "although intensive efforts at recruitment have brought female party membership up to 25 percent, women are very sparsely represented at the top of the power structure."¹⁴ Increasing membership in the Communist Party is a positive sign because party membership

¹²Bohdan Harasymiw, "Have Women's Chances for Political Recruitment in the U.S.S.R. Really Improved?" in Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, ed. Tova Yedlin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 171.

¹³Jill Smolowe, "Heroines of Soviet Labor," Time, 6 June 1988, 29.

¹⁴Tatyana Mamonova, ed., Women and Russia, trans. Rebecca Park and Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 203.

has always been a prerequisite to positions of authority. However, women's growing membership in the Communist Party has not increased the number of women in powerful leadership roles.¹⁵

Currently, no women serve on the Politburo, the most powerful body in the Soviet Union. In the nation's history, only one woman, Ekaterina Furtseva, has been named to the Politburo. And Furtseva, a Khrushchev protege, held her Politburo seat for barely four years.¹⁶ Less than a dozen of the 307-member Central Committee are women.¹⁷ "Few, if any, women are to be found in positions in the central organs of coercion -- the police, the military -- or within the diplomatic corps. On the other hand, they are found in large numbers in such areas as cultural affairs, health, social security, light industry, and consumer-related service."¹⁸

Scholars focus on women's political involvement in the Communist Party because political power originates within the party.

Because the Party is a selective political elite with a monopoly of power within the Soviet system,

¹⁵Harasymiw, 159.

¹⁶Genia Browning, "Soviet Politics -- Where are the Women?" in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 207.

¹⁷Smolowe, 29.

¹⁸Lapidus, 220.

Party membership is the indispensable condition for a professional political career, as well as for high-level managerial positions in the economic and state bureaucracies.¹⁹

Although the party does not trust many women with political power, it recruits women for leadership roles "as token or symbolic representatives of their sex."²⁰ Of course, not all women politicians are symbols. Many women who rise in the party ranks are educated and administratively talented. However, the party does not necessarily base its recruitment decisions on education and talent.²¹

In the state bureaucracy, women's political involvement mirrors their party involvement. While women's political participation in the lower levels is strong, their numbers dwindle further up the hierarchy. In the local soviets, approximately half the total number of deputies elected in 1982 were women.²²

Women's chances of being elected to the soviets as deputies have visibly and steadily improved. This is important for women because it shows official recognition (since a preselection system, with quotas, is in effect, election in a given social category is a measure of the symbolic importance ascribed to it by the regime); and because the

¹⁹Ibid., 208-09.

²⁰Janet E. Maher, "The Social Composition of Women Deputies in Soviet Elective Politics: A Preliminary Analysis of Official Biographies," in Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, ed. Tova Yedlin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 201.

²¹Lapidus, 226.

²²Motroshilova, 739.

soviets function, at least for men, as a preliminary recruiting ground for political leadership.²³

In the Supreme Soviet, women have made up approximately one-third of the membership.²⁴ On the surface, this figure indicates a stunning achievement. However, the Supreme Soviet has not had any real political power until just recently, under Gorbachev.

The Supreme Soviet, technically the highest organ of state authority, gathers only briefly twice each year and plays a limited, if growing, role in the policy process. It cannot appropriately be compared with the parliamentary bodies of Western Europe and the United States, in which women play a smaller, but potentially more powerful, role.²⁵

Although women deputies to the Supreme Soviet are not unusual, very few women are named to the politically powerful Council of Ministers or the Presidium. Harasymiw has noted that, in the state bureaucracy, women are rarely named to directing bodies, such as the Presidium. This discrimination holds true even at the local levels. "There are relatively fewer women in soviet executive committees than there are as deputies; still fewer become chairmen of executive committees."²⁶

²³Harasymiw, 154.

²⁴Myrna Kostash, "Will the Real Natasha Please Stand Up? Women in the Soviet Union," This Magazine 21 (March/April 1987): 30.

²⁵Lapidus, 206.

²⁶Harasymiw, 157.

Participation in Other Political Bodies

Outside of the Communist Party and state bureaucracy, women are active in the trade unions and the legal system. More than half the members of lower-echelon trade-union bodies are women. Although the number of women decreases in the upper-echelon trade-union bodies, women still hold a sizable membership. In the All-Union Central Trades Union Council, the supreme trade union body, women made up 35.8 percent of those elected in 1982.²⁷ In the legal system, approximately half of the people's assessors, who make routine legal decisions, are women. Approximately one-third of all judges are women.²⁸ However, as with positions in the state bureaucracy, union leadership positions and legal-system positions do not carry as much power as party positions.

Women can also become involved in zhensoveti, political groups that were formed in the 1960s to raise women's political consciousness. Although the government patterned the zhensoveti after the Zhenotdel, an earlier governmental division for women, the zhensoveti are less powerful.²⁹ The original aim of the zhensoveti was to involve more women in

²⁷Motroshilova, 739.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Barbara Alpern Engel, "Women in Russia and the Soviet Union," Signs 12 (Summer 1987): 791.

productive and political life. Later, the zhensoveti became involved in economic, social, political/education and child-care issues.³⁰ However, without much political power, the zhensoveti function mainly to "mobilize women around the economic necessities that have primarily been decided upon by men."³¹

Women Leaders

Despite Soviet women's overall political impotence, some have risen to powerful positions in the Soviet Union. Unlike his most recent predecessors, Gorbachev has taken an active role in recruiting women into powerful political roles. In 1986, he named Alexandra Biryukova to the Secretariat of the Central Committee. After the full members and candidate members of the Politburo, the Central Committee secretaries are the most influential leaders in the Soviet Union.³² Gorbachev has also placed women in important advisory positions. Tatiana Zaslavskaya is a key advisor on economic reform, and Zoia Novozhilova is the Soviet Union's ambassador to Switzerland.³³

³⁰Browning, 214-15.

³¹Ibid., 219-20.

³²Martin Walker, The Waking Giant: The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev (London: Michael Joseph, 1986), 176.

³³Joseph L. Galloway and Jeff Trimble, "Male Chauvinism, Soviet Style," U.S. News & World Report, 14 December 1987, 10.

However, one woman without a political position wields more power now than any other woman in government. Raisa Gorbacheva, the General Secretary's wife, "enjoys an unprecedented degree of political influence."³⁴ Unlike past General Secretaries' wives, she has not hidden behind her husband's shadow. She is a contrast to other women who have risen high in the party ranks. Unlike Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman cosmonaut and chairwoman of the Soviet Women's Committee, Raisa Gorbacheva appears to formulate her own opinions. "Tereshkova has never dropped the slightest hint of having an opinion that diverges by one iota from what Pravda tells her to think."³⁵

Raisa Gorbacheva, on the other hand, offers women an intellectual, yet fashion-conscious, role model. During the summit meeting between President Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev in Washington D.C. in 1987, Raisa Gorbacheva delighted U.S. audiences with her outspoken behavior. However, her popularity in the U.S. has not guaranteed her popularity at home. "Raisa Gorbachev's high visibility and apparent influence on her husband have fueled criticism of her in the Soviet Union, where wives of prominent men are not expected to play significant public roles."³⁶ The press has

³⁴Walker, 182-83.

³⁵Ibid., 184.

³⁶Donnie Radcliffe, "The Many Faces of Raisa," Washington Post, 13 December 1987, A29.

criticized Raisa Gorbacheva for her famously extravagant shopping trips abroad. Unlike most Soviet women, Gorbacheva has many privileges because of her husband's position. She can afford to buy nice clothes and jewelry. Although she is the first high-profile Soviet woman in many years, she does not represent a very achievable goal for Soviet women.³⁷

However, Raisa Gorbacheva has asserted her ability to participate in politics. She is forging a path for future wives of political leaders, as well as future women politicians. Although some women have criticized her public visibility, others are praising her daring. "It was shortly after Soviet television news had focused on Mrs. Gorbachev's role at the Geneva summit that the first letters began to appear in the Soviet press asking why there were so few women in the top echelons of the party."³⁸

Women's Political Impotence

Several reasons explain why so few women hold powerful political positions in the Soviet Union. First of all, most women do not have the time that politics requires. With full-time jobs, household responsibilities and child care, Soviet women have little time for extra activities. Just belonging to the Communist Party requires a time commitment.

³⁷Alexandra Costa, "Raisa Gorbachev: A Role Model for Soviet Women?" Washington Post, 13 December 1987, M7.

³⁸Walker, 182-83.

Women who do participate in politics often prefer to stay at the local level because local-level politics are less demanding. Women who advance to higher political offices must be mobile, energetic and available. They cannot be tied down by household and child-care responsibilities.³⁹

Even if women did have the time for political participation, many would still not seek high-level positions. Many women are not bothered by their lack of political power. Their culture has taught them that women do not need to be in positions of authority. Their attitude is that "men support equality, therefore it is not necessary to have similar numbers of women in power positions."⁴⁰ Even educated women claim that men are the natural rulers.⁴¹ Ruth Mandel interviewed several women party leaders who said they do not seek equal political power with men. In talking about leadership, they naturally placed women below men because, they said, men have more time to devote to politics.⁴²

Women who seek greater political power must contend with this cultural bias against women leaders. "The

³⁹Lapidus, 225

⁴⁰Browning, 208.

⁴¹Smolowe, 30.

⁴²Ruth B. Mandel, "No Striving for Glory Here: An Essay on Women and Leadership in the U.S.S.R.," Frontiers 9 (1987): 18.

obstacles to leadership advancement for women continue to be male prejudices against women, primary family obligations and the low positive self-image among women themselves."⁴³ Traditional attitudes toward women often lead to sexual discrimination. However, what might be considered sexual discrimination in the West would be acceptable behavior to many Soviet women. "The female politician ... is much less ambitious and career-oriented, and is inclined to play the same supportive role in politics as she plays in the family."⁴⁴

Recent Political Changes

Although women's relative political power has not changed much under Gorbachev, the political system is in a state of transition. The Soviet Union, under Gorbachev's leadership, is strengthening the power of state government at the expense of the Communist Party. On February 7, 1990, the Communist Party's Central Committee voted to end its monopoly on power.

With the change, the whole Soviet political and economic system will be altered; no longer will party decisions be, de facto, the law of the land and no longer will party members by virtue of the constitution be accorded the automatic authority

⁴³Joel C. Moses, "Women in Political Roles," in Women in Russia, ed. Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin, and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1977), 352.

⁴⁴Ibid., 349.

to run everything from local governments to major industries to parent-teacher associations.⁴⁵

The Central Committee's decision opens the way for a multiparty political system to develop. What impact, if any, their decision will have on women's political power remains to be seen.

Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union has already created a new political body called the Congress of People's Deputies. Unlike other Soviet congresses, the Congress of People's Deputies is composed of popularly elected representatives. These deputies were elected in the first openly contested elections since the Communist Party seized power after the Revolution. The Congress of People's Deputies is a step along the path to a parliamentary system of government. It gives citizens a national forum to debate the country's problems and propose solutions. During its twice yearly sessions, the 2,250 deputies have openly criticized the Soviet government for the country's poor economic state.⁴⁶

Women as well as men were represented in the Congress of People's Deputies. However, without the Communist Party controlling the elections' outcome, fewer women were elected to the Congress of People's Deputies than are usually

⁴⁵Michael Parks, "Soviet Communists Give Up 70-year Monopoly," Register Guard (Eugene), 8 February 1990, A1.

⁴⁶Michael Parks, "New Soviet Congress Hailed for Bringing Politics to the People," Los Angeles Times, 11 June 1989, 14-15.

elected to the Supreme Soviet. Masha Hamilton, a correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, noted before the first elections in 1989 that "the new Congress of People's Deputies to be elected by the voters March 26 will contain a smaller proportion of women representatives than the outgoing Parliament, whose members were essentially Communist Party appointees."⁴⁷ Hamilton said that only 20 percent of the candidates who ran for election in the territorial constituencies were women. Soviet women could also gain a seat through their involvement in various national institutions, which were allotted a certain number of seats. The Soviet Women's Committee, for example, received 75 seats.⁴⁸ Although fewer women were elected to the Congress of People's Deputies, election by popular vote may force politicians to pay greater attention to the concerns of female voters.

From its members, the Congress of People's Deputies elected approximately 540 people to serve in the new Supreme Soviet. Unlike their predecessors, this new group of Supreme Soviet deputies have greater authority to make decisions. The Supreme Soviet is now a full-time legislature that debates proposals, rather than giving them

⁴⁷Masha Hamilton, "Soviet Super-Moms Want Changes," Los Angeles Times, 6 March 1989, 10-11.

⁴⁸Ibid.

rubber-stamp approval.⁴⁹ The old Supreme Soviet enacted laws without any debate during the two days its met twice a year.

As political power in the Soviet Union changes, no doubt women's political involvement will change. It is too soon to predict whether women will gain more or lose power in the future. At the present, women's political situation has not changed radically. Women are still located in lower-echelon political positions, and cultural prejudice and lack of time still prevent them from seeking greater political involvement.

Pre-glasnost Press Coverage

Although Gorbachev's reforms have not altered women's political impotence, his policy of glasnost has opened up discussion of women's political issues. Before glasnost, the press did not recognize women's political powerlessness. The pre-glasnost press, like Stalin, treated women's political emancipation as a dead issue.

Unstated Facts

Articles discussing women's political involvement often stated that men and women were politically equal. According to the pre-glasnost press, women held many important

⁴⁹Parks, "New Soviet Congress Hailed for Bringing Politics to the People," 14-15.

leadership roles and led the country along with men. On International Women's Day, Moscow News commented that "Soviet women are directly involved in managing state and social affairs."⁵⁰ The author listed impressive facts and figures to show women's great political involvement: more than half the members of the nation's soviets are women, 27 women hold ministerial positions in the republics, and four women sit on the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. The author also pointed out that one in every three judges is a woman. "I think all this illustrates very well the great part women play in our society."⁵¹

Although the facts and figures quoted in this article are impressive, they do not tell the whole story. The article lists the number of women involved in the state bureaucracy, but it does not disclose the number of women holding high-level Communist Party posts. Moscow News implies that these women leaders receive political power along with their titles. However, only high-level positions in the Communist Party offer real power.

The pre-glasnost press often trumpeted the number of women involved in politics without discussing the importance of their positions. Soviet Woman wrote about the election of new deputies to the Supreme Soviet in 1979 and said

⁵⁰Lydia Lykova, "International Women's Day," Moscow News, 11 March 1979, 3.

⁵¹Ibid.

"nearly a third of the Deputies are women."⁵² But Soviet Woman failed to tell its readers that the Communist Party leadership predetermined who would be elected to the Supreme Soviet. One-third of the Supreme Soviet deputies were generally women because the Communist Party had decided on that figure. In fact, the actual number of women deputies did not matter because the Supreme Soviet did not have any real political power.

Thus, the pre-glasnost press intimated that Soviet women had equal access to political power by virtue of Communism. The press quoted figures to prove its point but did not evaluate the power structure behind the figures. The pre-glasnost press did not talk about the number of women on the Central Committee, the Politburo, the Secretariat, or the Council of Ministers -- the real power-giving bodies. As scholars and Western journalists have noted, Soviet women are underrepresented in these groups. The pre-glasnost press lauded the high number of women in local politics, but it failed to report the low number of women in national politics. Although Soviet women's political impotence was common knowledge, the Soviet press did not acknowledge it. The pre-glasnost press printed only half the story on women's political involvement.

⁵²"Wide Power," Soviet Woman, July 1979, 2.

Women Leaders

The pre-glasnost press wrote about women leaders to demonstrate Soviet women's political activity. Valentina Nikolayevna Tereshkova was a favorite subject for the press. As the first woman cosmonaut in 1963, she climbed through the Soviet political ranks quickly. In the late 1970s, she was a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, chairwoman of the Soviet Women's Committee, Vice President of the Women's International Democratic Federation and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.⁵³

Although Tereshkova was a prominent female political leader, an article in Moscow News did not focus on her political activities. The author wrote mainly about her historic space flight, even though it had occurred 16 years earlier. The author gave a small history of her life and her experiences as a pilot, devoting only a paragraph to list her current political offices.⁵⁴

Other articles on women politicians devoted little space to their political achievements. Instead, the pre-glasnost press praised women politicians for their strong work ethic and happy families. The press did not laud women for political achievements. Women gained political power

⁵³Moscow News, 24 September 1978, 2.

⁵⁴N. Pavlova, "The First Woman in Outer Space," Moscow News, 10 June 1979, 3.

through work achievements, not necessarily because of their leadership ability. Therefore, the press did not expect women to have a political agenda, or goals.

A typical article about women politicians focused on their ability to handle many jobs well. Maria Poleshchuk, a deputy to the Moscow City Soviet of People's Deputies, was able to juggle a full-time job, a family and her political duties. "Throughout the whole of her working career Maria has been actively involved in public work, first in the Komsomol and then in the trade union. In the past 10 years, she was elected deputy to the Moscow City Soviet of People's Deputies four times running."⁵⁵

As a deputy, Poleshchuk worked to improve the city's catering system. Although neighborhoods were expanding, the canteens, cafes and prepared-food shops were not.

Poleshchuk said that "like all other working mothers I can fully understand how important these are."⁵⁶ As a woman deputy, Poleshchuk involved herself in traditional areas of women's concern, such as easy access to food shops.

Scholars have noted that Soviet women politicians often focus on education, health and child care in their political duties. The Soviet people consider these areas appropriate for women because they relate to women's natural concerns.

⁵⁵Andrei Zbarsky, "A Happy Woman," Moscow News, 25 February 1979, 5.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Poleshchuk's work shows how Soviet women politicians receive stereotypical responsibilities. Although she had been elected to her office four times, Poleshchuk was a woman first, not a politician. The pre-glasnost press did not challenge the assumption that women should be concerned about health and child care simply because they are women. Although Western women might cringe at that assumption, most Soviet women, then and now, would not.

Other Political Participation

Outside of governmental politics, Soviet women could also participate in the trade unions, the legal system and women's committees. As scholars have noted, women's participation in other political groups has been strong for the past decade. However, these groups have not offered women much political influence.

The pre-glasnost press did not acknowledge that these groups were politically weak. Instead, the press used women's political involvement in other groups as more evidence of their emancipation. Moscow News wrote a long article about the Soviet Women's Committee, which originally was created to unite women against fascism. The article discusses the committee's involvement in international peace campaigns and its aid to women in developing nations.⁵⁷

⁵⁷N. Pavlova, "Soviet Women's Committee," Moscow News, 8 April 1978, 3.

However, the paper did not question why the group was helping foreign women instead of Soviet women overcome their problems. Although scholars and Western journalists wrote extensively about Soviet women's hardships, the press did not. And the press did not explore why Soviet women did not have a political group to mobilize for their needs. The article said: "The so-called women's question, i.e., the equality of rights for the sexes, has long been settled in our country, and to cater for the interest among women abroad in our experiences, the Committee has organized dozens of international symposiums, seminars and meetings on the subject."⁵⁸

Women's Political Impotence

Because the pre-glasnost press did not recognize women's political impotence, it did not explore why women were relegated to lower-level political offices. The pre-glasnost press could not discuss the cultural prejudice against women leaders, women's lack of time or their low self-esteem without admitting that women and men were not politically equal.

An article in Moscow News from 1978 demonstrates this presumption of equality. In her column, "The Way Natasha Sees It," Natasha Zemlina writes about women's ability to

⁵⁸Ibid.

hold any political office. "What really matters is the knowledge of the job, one's organizing ability, and one's knack of dealing with people. These qualities, not sex or personal charm, should be the main criteria for employment and promotion."⁵⁹ Her message is that, like a job, a political office demands skills and organization. A person's sex should not influence the type of job he or she can do. In the Soviet Union, according to Zemlina, sexual discrimination in politics no longer occurs. "It would take long to list off the women who held executive posts on par with men."⁶⁰

Zemlina's message is heartening, but unrealistic. Her presumption that Soviet women no longer encounter sexual discrimination is false. As Western journalists and scholars have shown, Soviet women have not risen to politically powerful positions because the men who select future leaders routinely pass over women. But many Soviet women would choose not to participate in politics even if they had the opportunity.

The pre-glasnost press ignored the fact that women's work and family responsibilities left them little time for politics. According to Moscow News, Maria Poleshchuk, the Moscow deputy, had plenty of time for politics. She said:

⁵⁹Natasha Zemlina, "Equality on the Ladder," Moscow News, 18 February 1978, 15.

⁶⁰Ibid.

At times, for example, I was confronted with the notion that the Soviet worker, and especially a woman worker, who takes part in public work and in managing state affairs has no private life and does nothing but work or go to meetings. I tried my best to show that this was not the case.⁶¹

Poleshchuk said that her political responsibilities gave her a great deal of pleasure, along with her family and work. The pre-glasnost press used Poleshchuk, and other women politicians, as proof that women did have time for politics.

Summary

The pre-glasnost press coverage of women's political issues is best characterized by the lack of coverage. Although the Soviet political system keeps women on the periphery, in lower-echelon positions, the press did not question why. According to the press, women had achieved political emancipation and had an equal opportunity with men to seek political office. The press painted a rosy picture of women politicians, showing their boundless energy and cheerful ability to manage full-time work, a family and politics. The press offered these women politicians as examples of what Soviet women could do.

The pre-glasnost press did not talk about women's position in the Soviet power structure. By sticking to generalities about political involvement, the press created an image of endless opportunities for women. However, the

⁶¹Zbarsky, 5.

press picture did not agree with what most women experienced.

Glasnost Press Coverage

Under Gorbachev, the press is offering a more realistic portrayal of women's political situation. Glasnost has opened up debate about women's political opportunities. The press now questions how much political power women really have and debates how much power women should have. Cultural attitudes toward women leaders still prevail tenaciously. But the press now recognizes those attitudes and allows people to debate their merits.

Questioning Emancipation

Under glasnost, the press is openly acknowledging women's political impotence. The glasnost press questions whether women's political emancipation naturally results from communism. "It is time to rethink our customary assertion that a woman's problem cannot exist in isolation from other problems -- that it exists merely together with other socio-economic problems and cannot be solved outside this context."⁶² This author questions Marx's and Lenin's assumption that women do not need a separate political agenda because their problems are linked to economic

⁶²Andrei Solovyov, "Later...But Supposing It Never Is?" Soviet Woman, October 1989, 1.

inequality. Under glasnost, this author and others are demanding greater political opportunities for women.

Women are not duly represented in governing bodies....We must work to change the situation essentially, so that the door should be open wide for them to governing bodies at all levels, and that questions directly concerning women's interests would not be solved without their participation and without their decisive judgement.⁶³

Many current articles express disillusionment with the Soviet political system. In an article about a women's peace conference, one woman delegate expressed her disappointment in Soviet women's lack of political power. "We were all concerned about the lack of women in decision-making positions, we felt that in many ways Soviet women had led the way, taken the initial leap forward after the revolution, certainly they are better educated than most of us in the West."⁶⁴ This author expresses a common theme of surprise that, although Soviet women are educated and capable, their political participation does not reflect their capabilities.

The glasnost press is explaining to its readers that women, in fact, have never had much political power. One article blamed Stalin for women's political status. "In 1932 Stalin disbanded the Central Committee's commission

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Joyce Hawkins, "A Fairy-Tale Trip to Reality or Ten Women in Search of Peace," Soviet Woman, December 1989, 12.

dealing with women's affairs. His 'barrack socialism' assigned to women auxiliary, service roles."⁶⁵ This journalist said women's emancipation should have remained an important issue for the communist state. When Stalin asserted that the "women's question" was solved, he stifled any future press discussion of women's political inequality. The pre-glasnost press could only write from the assumption that men and women were equal; thus it was forced to ignore the reality of women's political situation.

Stating the Facts

In reporting women's political participation, the press now distinguishes between powerful and superficially powerful positions. The glasnost press notes the number of women in political bodies and provides context for its figures to help readers understand the implications. An article evaluating the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies noted that less than 15 percent of the deputies were women.⁶⁶ "The election campaign confirmed that the country's policy, essentially, is shaped without women's participation."⁶⁷ This statement contradicts pre-glasnost

⁶⁵Natalya Kraminova, "Politics Not For Women?" Moscow News, 12 March 1989, 14.

⁶⁶Svetlana Polenina, "Discrimination Against Women," Moscow News, 18 June 1989, 13.

⁶⁷Ibid.

press articles that claimed women were leading the country alongside men. Another article also noted that open elections meant women would not necessarily gain their usual one-third of the total seats. In the new Congress of People's Deputies, women's representation reflects the public's response to women leadership, not the Communist Party's preferred response. "The current democratization is likewise producing women leaders, but women are not yet playing their due role in the decision-making process."⁶⁸

In the glasnost press, the public has learned that women are not well represented in the Soviet power structure. Although more than one-third of all engineers in the Soviet Union are women, not a single woman was elected to represent the Union of Scientific and Engineering Societies of the U.S.S.R. in the Congress of People's Deputies. Likewise, women hold 69 percent of the teaching jobs in the Soviet Union, but only one of the four delegates from the U.S.S.R. Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and the Soviet Association of Research-Pedagogues was a woman. These figures, and others, were noted in a Moscow News article about women's political powerlessness.⁶⁹

The press is also scrutinizing women's Communist Party involvement. Of the 100 Communist Party deputies to the

⁶⁸Kraminova, 14.

⁶⁹Polenina, 13.

Congress of People's Deputies, only 12 were women. Those 12 women worked in industry and construction, on collective farms and in schools. None of them held high-level political posts. The men who were elected deputies from the Communist Party had much more political clout. Thirteen deputies were Central Committee secretaries, and some of those thirteen were members and alternate members to the Politburo. Other male Communist Party deputies were editors, writers and scientific leaders. "Based on these facts is there any hope that women will gain an equal footing with men in shaping and implementing the policy of our state during the next five-year period?"⁷⁰ This article recognized that political power in the Soviet Union is tied to Communist Party involvement. Another article noted that "Nearly 30 percent of Party members are women, and only 6 percent of them hold elected positions in it."⁷¹

In general, the glasnost press recognizes that women have little representation in the power structure. Although women are educated, industrious workers, they remain in the low-level political positions. The chairwoman of the Soviet Women's Committee commented that "work on a par with men, even night-shift work, and at arduous jobs, even at jobs that are harmful to their health -- that is permissible for

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Kraminova, 14.

women, but we deny them the chance to take part in deciding the country's future, their own future and that of their children."⁷² Evgenii Evtushenko, a prominent Soviet writer, said "we need women in all echelons of Soviet power and government."⁷³ Evtushenko noted that not one woman is on the Council of Ministers, and not one woman edits a major newspaper. The press, under glasnost, is allowing journalists to demand a policy that "would seek not only for women to perform a reproductive function, but also seek their equal participation in managing all the fields of state and public life in our country."⁷⁴

Traditional Women's Concerns

Women who successfully climb the political ladder may still find themselves in relatively powerless positions. Women politicians are generally assigned to certain areas that society considers female-oriented. Such areas include health care, education, child care and consumer goods. Scholars have noted that women are elected to supervise these areas of society, while men are chosen to run the military, heavy industry and foreign relations. In the

⁷²Solovyov, 1.

⁷³Evgenii Evtushenko, "S zhenshchin nachinaetsia narod" [With women the population begins], Literaturnaia Gazeta, 8 May 1989, 11.

⁷⁴Polenina, 13.

Soviet Union, the path to political power has not included social concerns.

However, both women and men accept the notion that women should be more concerned about family-oriented activities. Likewise, the Soviet press, before and after glasnost, has not questioned this stereotype. A recent article in Soviet Woman said: "Inadequate living conditions, the shortage of child-care facilities, defects in the services and trade -- all this affects women in the first place."⁷⁵ The article maintained that these problems would disappear if women were given political power. Implied in that line of reasoning is the message that female political leaders are mainly concerned with living conditions, child-care facilities and consumer goods.

The glasnost press, though it questions how many women gain political authority, does not question what women do with that authority. Following cultural mores, the press continues to assert that women should focus on traditional women's issues. One woman leader, Gazirat Medeubayeva, chairs the women's council in Kazakhstan and holds a political office. She often spends days listening to women's problems and trying to find solutions. "Far from disappearing, women's problems have grown more complex, as

⁷⁵Solovyov, 1.

has life itself," she told Soviet Woman.⁷⁶ The article praises Medeubayeva because she has integrated women's issues into Soviet power by combining her roles on the women's council and in government. The magazine does not question why Medeubayeva focuses on child care instead of the factories in her town, or, perhaps, the transportation system.

Mobilizing Women

In fact, the Soviet press encourages women like Medeubayeva to focus on women's issues. The glasnost press supports separate groups for women that work to improve women's lives. The press has given a lot of coverage to the women's councils that were created under Gorbachev. These women's councils are a modern form of the women's councils that were created in the 1920s. However, the 1920s councils worked for emancipation, while today's councils work to improve women's condition.⁷⁷

In supporting women's councils, the glasnost press does not differ much from the pre-glasnost press. The press still prints articles showing the good works and progress that local women's councils achieve. A general article

⁷⁶Vera Kopeiko, "On Women's Power, On Soviet Power," Soviet Woman, September 1989, 7.

⁷⁷Olga Bessolova, "Women's Movement Must Not Be Reduced to Women's Councils," Moscow News, 23 July 1989, 12.

about women's councils described the many activities these groups support. One women's council lead a fund-raising drive to build a retirement home; another formed meeting groups for women with similar interests.⁷⁸

But the glasnost press does not limit itself to blanket support of women's councils. It has also printed criticism of the women's councils. One journalist said the women's councils should continue to work for women's emancipation because women do not have political equality with men. Women's councils should focus on the personal development of women, not just the improvement of their working conditions, child-care facilities and housing. "It is far more important for the women's council to bring women together, to help them acquire new information, work out independent views, compare these views with other views -- in short, to develop."⁷⁹

Women Leaders

Although few women succeed in climbing the political ladder, the press recognizes those who do. It writes articles about women political leaders, describing their lives and activities. Similar to articles in the pre-glasnost press, these articles discuss women's achievements

⁷⁸"Women's Councils -- What They Can Do," Soviet Woman, November 1989, 1-2.

⁷⁹Bessolova, 12.

without discussing their sacrifices. However, unlike past articles, the press under glasnost now points out that these women leaders are unusual because of their achievements. The glasnost press recognizes that most women who want to participate do not have the opportunity to play politics.

In writing about Bayan Iskakova, who was elected Vice Chairman of the Soviet of the Union, a chamber of the Supreme Soviet, Soviet Woman said, "we must give women a chance. There simply is no other way to expand their circle among the leaders."⁸⁰ The article criticized someone who said Iskakova was not ready to hold such a responsible post. The magazine pointed out that she is educated, experienced and willing to do the job.

Other articles on women leaders also emphasize their political competence. Glasnost press articles do not focus on women politicians as mothers and workers, unlike the pre-glasnost press. Instead, women politicians are evaluated for their political work. An article about the chairwoman of the Executive Committee of the Polotnyany-Zavod Village Soviet of People's Deputies described her energy and intelligence. The article said Lyudmila Guseva is someone who is making perestroika happen through her job as chairwoman. Under her picture, the caption read: "We are sure that the person you see in the photo will inevitably

⁸⁰Solovyov, 1.

receive full power, political and economic, which only the votes of the Polotnyany-Zavod can give her."⁸¹

Although many current articles focus on women's political abilities, some still perpetuate stereotypes. An article about Marina Rakhmanova, a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, listed her numerous political and labor achievements. Since 1975, she has served as faculty head of the Orenburg Medical Institute. She has a doctorate degree in science and anchors a monthly television show about children. After this long list of accomplishments, the author said she wondered what Rakhmanova was like in real life. "Had she her own feminine charm or (God forbid!) was hers a 'typical-leaderlike' image?"⁸² As this journalist indicates, Soviet society still teaches women that they should be feminine, not "leaderlike."

The glasnost press reflects the cultural belief that women and men are inherently different and therefore have different leadership styles. An article about Yevdokiya Gaer, a people's deputy, said: "She is no accomplished politician or diplomat, of course. But she has some precious qualities: a heightened sense of justice, and the ability to deny herself everything for the sake of

⁸¹Andrei Solovyov, "All Power to the Soviets," Soviet Woman, February 1989, 12-13.

⁸²Lyudmila Shulzhenko, "My Concern is the Protection of Childhood," Soviet Woman, December 1989, 10-11.

others."⁸³ As a woman, the press implies, Gaer is more socially conscious than her male counterparts. This characterization is common to both the pre-glasnost and glasnost press. However, today's press recognizes the need for women leaders. Though it stereotypes women, the press calls for their participation in government.

Barriers to Participation

The glasnost press has opened up the discussion of women's political impotence. By recognizing women's powerless position, the press can ask why. The pre-glasnost press, on the other hand, did not explore the reasons behind women's political impotence because it did not recognize the problem. It claimed women and men were political equals. Today's press recognizes that discrimination, stereotypes and cultural values prevent women from sharing political power with men.

A woman politician from Uzbekistan said she could not have accomplished anything without the cooperation of her husband. When she graduated from college, the rector of the academy thanked her husband for giving her the time to study. She said, "I remember those times and wonder how it would have been if my menfolk had said 'No'? What would I have done? And I don't know the answer, because the family

⁸³Natalya Kraminova, "New Person at the Top," Moscow News, 2 July 1989, 16.

is the most important thing in a woman's life."⁸⁴ She recognizes that women have less time for politics because of their family responsibilities. Her comment also shows that most women believe family responsibilities should come first. As scholars have noted, women's family and work responsibilities often leave them with little time for politics.

Even if women did have time for politics, many would not become involved. The glasnost press has recognized that women's low political consciousness also prevents them from seeking political office. "The Congress of People's Deputies, where good women speakers were extremely few and far between -- where no deputy representing women's councils spoke at all -- showed that women's level of consciousness can hardly be called advanced."⁸⁵ Another article called on women to be politically assertive. The author said that although women were submissive in the past, they must learn to act on their ideas. "The typically feminine, accursed rejection of one's self, the proverbial self-sacrifice of motherhood, even today holds our women back from firmly expressing their needs. But let us remember that history is being made now, and not later."⁸⁶ These articles recognize

⁸⁴"First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee," Soviet Woman, December 1989, 4-5.

⁸⁵Bessolova, 12.

⁸⁶Solovyov, "Later...But Supposing It Never Is?" 1.

that many women choose not to become involved in politics because they believe politics is a male responsibility.

Chauvinism is a major impediment to women's political involvement. Many Soviet men do not believe women have the ability to lead. One Soviet journalist said this belief perpetuates "manocracy," a society ruled by men. "Our society has for many years been ruled almost exclusively by men of advanced years. There can be no democracy under 'manocracy' because it disregards the opinions of women and young people."⁸⁷ Moscow News wrote about a group called LOTOS, the League for Society's Liberation from Stereotypes, that fights chauvinism. "LOTOS invites women to think about the crucial question: Why is society unfair to them? How will women go on being regarded as second-rate citizens?"⁸⁸ The article notes that Soviet citizens associate power with middle-aged, male Party members. "What needs to be changed is the stereotype of power."⁸⁹ This article is unusual because it criticizes the stereotypes that keep women from political power. Although many articles have noted women's powerless state, few have dared to name chauvinism the root cause. And few have dared to challenge the presumption that women are less qualified to rule than men.

⁸⁷Kraminova, "Politics Not For Women?" 14.

⁸⁸Natalya Pavlova, "Stereotypes and Reality," Moscow News, 18 June 1989, 13.

⁸⁹Ibid.

The glasnost press has revealed the debate in Soviet society about the capabilities of women leaders. While some articles denounce chauvinism and stereotypes, others perpetuate them. An article in Moscow News denounces women political leaders as power-hungry tyrants. "Female bureaucracy is more horrible than its male counterpart -- a male bureaucrat can still be moved to pity by one's belonging to the fair sex, whereas a female bureaucrat can't be moved by anything."⁹⁰ The author of this article, a woman, said female leaders are merciless. She said a poll found that women favored "shooting dishonest sellers, pedestrians who cross streets on a red light, teenagers who smash public telephones or make too much noise with their motorcycles."⁹¹ The journalist commented that: "Women in the West always ask why so few women in our country hold government and other leading posts. They don't imagine how many women tyrants have made themselves comfortable in these posts and are tormenting both sexes."⁹² This journalist fears the thought of women gaining greater political power, a direct contradiction to the article on LOTOS, which said

⁹⁰Tatyana Tolstaya, "In a Land of Conquered Men," Moscow News, 24 September 1989, 13.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

"democratization is unthinkable if a larger part of the nation is not quite full-blooded socially."⁹³

Although this negative article about women politicians is unusual, it underlines the debate in society over women's political power. The glasnost press has not offered any pat solutions to the debate. Instead, it has allowed all sides to debate their beliefs in print. Unlike the pre-glasnost press, the press today is not compelled to project one message to its readers. The glasnost press has opened up the debate of women's political impotence, recognizing the problem and exploring the causes.

Conclusion

Under glasnost, the press offers women a realistic look at their political situation. In addition to printing the facts about women's political representation, the press provides analysis. It traces the paths to political power and evaluates how far women have traveled. The press under glasnost has revealed that women are concentrated in low-level political positions, where they focus on traditional areas of female concern. In the real power-giving bodies, such as the Communist Party, women have little influence.

The press now explores why women are politically disadvantaged. It has printed articles that discuss women's

⁹³Pavlova, "Stereotypes and Reality," 13.

lack of time and low consciousness. It has recognized that many women do not seek political involvement. It has also challenged society's chauvinism toward women leaders. Reflecting society's indecision about women's role in politics, the press has not chosen sides. Instead, it has printed articles that both denounce and support chauvinism. Unlike the pre-glasnost press, today's press does not pretend that women have complete access to power. Glasnost has stimulated the press to cover women's political situation honestly and openly.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Glasnost has stimulated a wealth of change in the Soviet media. Under glasnost, the press may discuss problems as well as successes, conflicts as well as solutions. General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev has reinterpreted the Marxist-Leninist press theory. Instead of reporting the Communist Party's interpretation of reality, journalists may now question the party and offer alternative views. Gorbachev has directed the press to report facts, investigate problems and question solutions.

Although Gorbachev instituted glasnost to stimulate economic reform, the press policy of openness has affected far more than economics. Glasnost has challenged the media to honestly assess society, reflecting the positive, negative and controversial aspects of Soviet life. It has affected the coverage of social issues, as well as economics and politics.

Glasnost has encouraged the press to describe Soviet women's lives more realistically. Before glasnost, the press acted as a government cheerleader. In its coverage of women's issues, the press emphasized the successes and ignored the problems. The press lauded women's entry into the work force but ignored their concentration in low-status

professions. Similarly, the press touted women's political involvement but failed to mention their lack of political power. As a party cheerleader, the press did not criticize the government nor question its policies. Debate and controversy never surfaced in the press because the party line was indisputable.

However, under glasnost, women's issues are receiving different coverage. The press is openly recognizing topics that it previously ignored. Under glasnost, stories about women's issues are more factual and complete. The press does not hesitate to criticize the government for problems, or debate controversial issues. The only area glasnost has failed to penetrate is cultural values. Although glasnost has opened up coverage of women's issues, it has not stimulated much debate about the underlying cultural influences.

Factual, Complete Reporting

The most noticeable difference between glasnost and pre-glasnost press coverage is the depth of reporting. Under glasnost, the press provides more factual, thorough reporting of women's issues. The press now describes work, family and political issues that Soviet women recognize from their own experiences.

In the work force, Soviet women are usually relegated to lower status positions than men. Although they are

educated and capable, women do not receive the same opportunities as men. Before glasnost, the press ignored women's low status and thus, low salaries, in the work place. The press focused only on the positives, praising the Communist Party for integrating women into the work force. Although the press was not necessarily dishonest, its shallow coverage implied that women had equal employment opportunities with men. Under glasnost, the press has broadened its coverage of women's work issues to include greater detail. It has printed labor statistics that show women are usually the workers and men -- the managers. The press now recognizes the discrimination women face in the work place.

The glasnost press also recognizes that women work for more than just job satisfaction. As scholars discovered much earlier, most Soviet women work full time because they cannot afford to do otherwise. Although job satisfaction is definitely a reason why women work, it is not the only reason. Glasnost allows the press to print more than just the party vision of women's employment situation. The press tells its readers that women are dedicated, happy workers. And the press tells its readers that despite their hard work, women are promoted at a lower rate than men. Women are clustered in low-status professions that society considers women's work.

Coverage of family issues has also benefited from glasnost. The press now portrays women's personal lives more accurately. Its coverage of child care, household chores and health care reflects what Soviet women experience. Before glasnost, the press printed positive stories about women's personal lives: child care was healthy and free, women managed household duties and full-time jobs without a problem, and gynecological care was top quality. Under glasnost, the press has offered its readers a more factual account of family issues. Today's press describes child care that is hard to obtain, unhealthy and overcrowded; household chores that drain women's energies; and gynecological care that is insensitive and impersonal.

Under glasnost, the press has extended its coverage of the birth-rate decline to question why women are having fewer children. Glasnost has allowed the press to address family issues thoroughly. Although the pre-glasnost press had noted the birth rate decline, it did not discuss potential reasons. The glasnost press is able to question the characteristics of Soviet society that encourage smaller families.

Likewise, glasnost has encouraged a more open assessment of women's political opportunities. The press now recognizes that Soviet women hold very little political power. Although they are involved in politics, their involvement is usually limited to lower-echelon positions.

Whereas the pre-glasnost press boasted about women's political involvement in general, the glasnost press describes that involvement in depth. The press now distinguishes between the powerful and the superficially powerful political positions. By providing more thorough and factual coverage of political issues, the press gives its readers a more accurate assessment of women's political involvement. In its coverage of work, family and politics, the glasnost press offers readers more realistic stories. The press discusses the many facets of women's issues, rather than the one-sided, party interpretation of women's issues.

Criticism

Glasnost also allows the press to critically evaluate the government and the Communist system. Before glasnost, the press was not free to criticize government programs and policies. The press criticized only small groups of workers, factories or politicians who violated the Communist ideal. Problems, as they appeared in the pre-glasnost press, were isolated incidents. Although women encountered poor working conditions, long shopping lines and political powerlessness, the pre-glasnost press was silent. Sometimes, the pre-glasnost press would voice criticism about a problem facing women, such as poor working conditions. However, the press criticized only individuals,

not the societal institutions that were at the root of the problem.

Under glasnost, the press now recognizes that women encounter poor working conditions. The press is able to question why working conditions are unsafe, rather than dismiss complaints as isolated incidents. The press voices its doubts about the Communist system, turning its cheering into muckraking.

Today's press is also critical of the government's lack of support for mothers. According to recent articles, the government does not give mothers enough respect or funds to raise more children. The press has advocated giving women more flexible work schedules. Although the pre-glasnost press idealized Soviet mothers for their ability to work, raise large families and run their households, today's press understands that image is a myth. Under glasnost, the press has criticized the government for empty motherhood awards, consumer goods shortages and poor maternity care.

In addition, the press has extended its criticism to women's political power. Although Communism theoretically emancipated women and gave them equal political power with men, today's press is questioning that theory. Observing that women are located in low-level political offices, the press has challenged the Communist Party's claim that women are emancipated. This type of criticism challenges the validity of Communism. Before glasnost, the government

would not allow the press to question Communism, the party or the government.

Open Debate

Some issues attract criticism because they lack a solution. People debate issues that hinge on cultural beliefs because their beliefs differ. Before glasnost, the press did not air public debate over controversial women's issues. The pre-glasnost press printed the Communist Party line on every issue. It could not raise controversy in its pages because controversy would imply doubt about the Communist Party's answers.

Under glasnost, the press has opened its pages to debate. The press no longer feels constrained to print one view of reality. Most debate about women's issues centers around women's role in society. The issues of household responsibility, full-time work and political power have all stimulated public debate in the glasnost press.

Women's responsibility for family care is one issue that society is debating. Although most Soviets believe women should assume primary responsibility for raising the children and running the household, some journalists are questioning that assumption. The press has allowed both those in the majority and minority to air their views. Most articles support the traditional view of women as mothers and homemakers. However, the few articles that do

advocate a different view of women show that glasnost has opened up the press to debate.

Women's political involvement has also provoked debate. The glasnost press has recognized the discrimination women face in politics. Many articles denounce this discrimination and call for greater equality. However, some articles have supported the traditional view of women as followers. These articles claim women are not fit to hold the reins of authority. Society is also debating, through the press, whether women should mobilize for greater political power. Although cultural beliefs do not endorse women's political involvement, some citizens are questioning those beliefs.

Unlike the Marxist-Leninist approach, glasnost allows the press to print the debate as well as the solutions to issues. The press is able to write about unsolved issues. Under glasnost, the press can open its pages to debate rather than constrict its coverage to party rhetoric.

Cultural Values

Although glasnost has stimulated the press to debate certain issues, others remain so ingrained in cultural value that they are beyond debate. The cultural endorsement of motherhood is one value that the press has not questioned. For the most part, Soviet citizens believe motherhood is a woman's greatest joy. Career opportunities and political

involvement should be secondary to motherhood. Although a few journalists are questioning women's household and child-care responsibilities, none of them doubt women's responsibility and desire to have children. Therefore, articles promoting motherhood today are not very different from articles before glasnost.

The Soviet culture endorses strong family ties. In the press, women are encouraged to focus on their families, placing children and home life before work and politics. Although the press has questioned the amount of time women spend shopping and caring for children, it has not questioned their responsibility to do this work. The glasnost press is reticent about divorce, which contradicts the image of happy families. Like the pre-glasnost press, today's press mentions divorce but does not provide much detail.

The press is also reticent about sex and birth control. Although Soviet women lack easy access to birth control, few articles discuss this problem. Before glasnost, the press turned questions about birth control into discussions of the birth rate. Under glasnost, the press is more open about the birth-control shortage and has discussed the fact that Soviet women substitute abortion for birth control. However, the coverage of birth control has not been as great as the coverage of other, less culturally ingrained issues.

Although cultural values strongly affect family issues, they also influence women's work and political issues. In the work force, women often select careers in traditional areas of female concern. The glasnost press has criticized Soviet society for not promoting women into management positions. However, the press has not questioned why women are segregated into certain careers or certain jobs within a field. Likewise, in politics, the press has not questioned why women usually supervise social issues. Although the press has criticized women's lack of power, it has not explored whether that lack of power develops because of cultural attitudes toward women's political interests.

Measuring Glasnost

Glasnost has modified the press coverage of women's issues. Under glasnost, the press is more critical, factual and thorough. It recognizes many issues that, because of their controversial or critical nature, the pre-glasnost press could not discuss. The glasnost press also debates issues that defy an easy solution. No longer obligated to print the party line, the glasnost press is able to explore various solutions to women's issues. However, glasnost has not changed the press promotion of cultural values.

Glasnost has stimulated the press to revise its coverage of women's issues. Articles about women's work, family and political issues reflect women's lives, not the

Communist Party's vision of their lives. In the short run, this open coverage will give women an opportunity to discuss the benefits and disadvantages of their lives. Glasnost has opened a window for women to honestly view how they live. In the long run, the effect of glasnost on women's work, family and political issues is uncertain. Gorbachev's government instituted glasnost and therefore has the power to revoke glasnost. Future research on women's issues in the press should focus on what legacy glasnost will leave women. Glasnost may be the impetus to change women's employment situation, family responsibilities and political involvement. However, the Soviet Union is changing rapidly under Gorbachev's leadership. Evaluating the impact of glasnost, and of his other policies, will require more time and research.

Although the future impact of glasnost is uncertain, its immediate effect on the coverage of women's issues is clear. Glasnost offers women a chance to communicate their issues and concerns with society. Soviet women have made much progress since the Revolution. As the pre-glasnost press reported, Soviet women have much to celebrate. However, by refusing to print the bad with the good, the pre-glasnost press denied Soviet women a balanced look at their lives. As a cheerleader, it mixed fact with fantasy and gave women a picture of their lives they could not understand. Today, women no longer need to sort the fact

from the fantasy. Glasnost has enabled the press to evaluate women's lives more honestly in hopes that, with facts, the Soviet people can find solutions to their problems.

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