National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN RUSSIA AND THE USSR 1860'S TO 1980'S

BY

JANET PHYLLIS CUMMINGS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

EAST EUROPEAN AND SOVIET STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1993

ISBN 0-315-82006-3

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

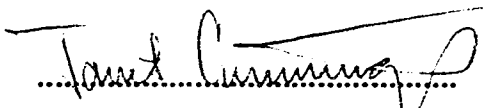
RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: Janet Phyllis Cummings

TITLE OF THESIS: The Status of Women in Russia and the USSR, 1860's to 1980's

DEGREE: Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1993



RR# 1 Sandy Hook Road
Sechelt, British Columbia
VON 3AO

April 21, 1993

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a theisis entitled THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN RUSSIA AND THE USSR, 1860'S TO 1980'S submitted by JANET PHYLLIS CUMMINGS in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in EAST EUROPEAN AND SOVIET STUDIES.

T. Yedlin
Dr. T. Yedlin (Supervisor)

Mark Mote
Dr. M. Mote

Dr. W. Tomm

Date: April 22, 1993

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my Mom and Dad for their constant support, and, to Wendy and Mike for pointing out the humour in my errors.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the status of women in Russia and the USSR for the period from the 1860's to the 1980's. Throughout Russian and Soviet history, the woman question has remained a subordinate issue to the major goals of political, social and economic change. From the revolutionary movements of the 1880's to the dissident movement in the 1980's, women have fought for the realization of these goals. In the struggle for change the woman question was regarded as an issue that would be resolved with the coming of the revolution and with the changes that would occur in the political, social and economic structure of society.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first three chapters analyze the emergence and development of the woman question, women's participation in the various revolutionary movements and the effects state policy had on the position and emancipation of women in Russian society. The last two chapters examine the participation and function of women in the dissident movement. It will be shown that there is a continuing thread rooted in Russian history which determined women's role and position in the dissident movement, and still influences the position of women in the states of the former Soviet Union.

Acknowledgement

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Tova Yedlin for her guidance and wisdom throughout the years. Special thanks must also be extended to Dr. Max Mote for his encouragement in this study, and to Wellington Kwok for his expertise in computers. Finally to Janet Ould, Doreen Hawryshko and Jean Wilman -- a many thanks for your assistance in all University matters.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The initial intent of this thesis was to examine the role and position of women in the dissident movements in the Russian republic from the mid 1960's to the mid 1980's, By examining the information available in the West, it became apparent that the role and function of women in the Russian dissident movement has not been addressed by either Western or Soviet scholars. Joshua Rubenstein's Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights (1985), Ludmilla Alexeyeva's Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights (1985), and Abraham Rothberg's The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime 1953-1970 (1972) are invaluable works for their information on the dissident movement and the Soviet government's reactions towards the dissident community. While sources such as the Biographical Dictionary Of Dissidents In the Soviet Union, 1956-1975 (1982), broadcasts from Radio Liberty, and press releases from the Samizdat Bulletin, Chronicle of Currents Events, and the Current Digest of the Soviet Press have been useful for biographical information and activities performed by dissident women, little information is known about women's perspectives on the dissident movement or the problems they encountered within the movement. Only with the publication of Almanac: Women and Russia (1984), was any reference made to the patriarchal values and attitudes prevalent in the dissident community.

The hostile response to the publication of the Almanac by a large number of dissidents and emigres, as well as the reaction by the Soviet government to expel the women editors indicated that the Almanac touched upon a raw nerve. Issues specific to women were not addressed by the Soviet government or the dissident movement due to several factors. These factors were determined by the historical development of the woman question in Russia and the Soviet Union.

By analyzing the status of women in Russia and the Soviet Union from the 1860's to the 1980's, it will be shown that an historical continuum can be drawn linking the revolutionary movements of the 1800's to the dissident movements of the 1980's. Throughout history the major components of the woman question such as education, work

and family have remained subordinate issues to the question of changing the political, social and economic structure of Russian society. As in the dissident movement, the revolutionary movements of the late 1800's accepted women as peers in revolutionary activities, but women were not accepted as equals in the intellectual spheres of the movement. Moreover, to participate in the revolutionary movements, and later the dissident movement, women were inadvertently compelled to give up all feminist aspirations. In fighting for the liberation of all oppressed groups, and neglecting their own emancipation, women would continue to be victims of state policy.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one begins with the emergence of the women question in Russia, and ends with participation of women in the Russian radical movements. Chapter two examines how the ideas and policies of early Bolshevik power affected the woman question. Chapter three discusses the role women were forced to play in the processes of industrialization and collectivization under Stalin . Chapter four addresses women's participation in both the official and unofficial organizations in Soviet society during Khrushchev's leadership. Finally, chapter five analyzes the role and position of women in dissent.

Sources which proved very helpful for information on the position of women throughout the history of Russia are Richard Stites' The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia (1978), Barbara Engel's, Mothers and Daughters. Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia (1983), and Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar (1987), as well as Linda Edmondson's, Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917 (1984). Women in Russia (1977), edited by Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus contains excellent articles on various aspects of the status of women in Russia and the Soviet Union.

A very good study of the social, political and economic status of women after the Revolution is Gail Warshofsky Lapidus' Women in Soviet Society: Equlaity, Development, and Social Change (1978). Complementing this is Mary Buckley's Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union (1989). Other helpful sources on the position of women in Soviet society during 1970's and 1980's are Barbara Jancar's Women Under Communism (1978), Soviet Sisterhood (1985), edited by Barbara Holland and Women

in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (1980), edited by Tova Yedlin. Buckley's new book Perestroika and Soviet Women (1992) presents an updated analysis of the impact Perestroika, democratization and Glasnost have had upon the status of Soviet women.

There are few Soviet sources which deal specifically with the status of women in Russia and the Soviet Union. Natalia Baranskaya's "Nedelia kak nedelia" (A Week Like Any Other) is an exception. Published in 1969, it was one of the first works to give a Soviet woman's perspective on the woman question, and the double burden. Only recently, under the continued reform movement have articles been published which deal with issues specific to women. Larisa Kuznetsova's article, "What Every Woman Wants," (1989), describes the problems encountered by the modern Soviet woman. It is hoped that with the continuation of the reform movement, the Soviet government will begin to address those issues which have affected the status of women throughout the history of Russia and the former Soviet Union. Only then will women of the former Soviet Union be able to resume their course on the road to genuine emancipation.

CHAPTER I

Volos dolog, da um korotok
(Long on hair, short on brains)

Traditional Russian Saying[1]

This chapter examines the emergence and development of the woman question in Russia during the period from the 1860's to the 1890's. By reviewing the position of women during this time and their participation in the feminist and revolutionary movements, it will be shown that several factors contributed to the development of the woman question, the most significant being the social, political and economic reforms carried out by Tsar Alexander II.

Under Alexander II, the relaxation of censorship allowed Western intellectual thought to reach the Russian intelligentsia. Western ideas on the liberation of all oppressed groups became the focus for discussion within the Russian intellectual circles. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 forced Russian society to change its practice of subordinating one group to another. The status and role of women in Russian society was increasingly looked upon by the radical and liberal wings of the intelligentsia as an example of an oppressed group which needed to be liberated.

In the literature available, a parallel is drawn linking the relationship of a peasant to his owner, and a wife to her husband. Both peasant and wife led a life of oppression. The liberal and radical wings of the Russian intelligentsia believed that equality in all human relations had to be achieved before corruption in society would end. With the

---

[1] V. Dal', Poslovitsy russkogo naroda. Sbornik (Moscow, 1957), 350, cited in Christine Johanson, Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia: 1855-1900 (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 3.

focus of the intellegentisia remaining on the liberation of all oppressed groups, the woman question never achieved an independent status. As shown in the feminist and revolutionary movements which developed in the mid 1800's, women participating in these movements were faced with an obstacle which would haunt them for the next hundred and fifty years; equality among the classes would be a precondition for equality of the sexes.[2] The subordiante status of the woman question to the liberation of all oppressed groups had far ranging implications and continued to determine the future course of women participating in the social, economic and political aspects of Russian society. It is with this in mind that it is now necessary to turn to the development of the woman question and the feminist movement in Russian history.

The woman question emerged in Russia at a time when society just began to recover from the shock and humiliation of the Crimean war and the end of Nicholas I's reign. Tsar Nicholas I began his rule under the stormy cloud of the Decembrist Rebellion. Determined to save autocracy and fight revolution on every level, Nicholas imposed military discipline on all spheres of Russian society. From the establishment of the political police to the strict censorship laws of all publications, Russian intellectual life was severely curtailed. Many members of the educated elite became victims of a policy aimed at the suppression of ideas and were forced to go abroad or into internal exile.

Tsar Nicholas I introduced educational reforms in an attempt to strengthen the patriarchal family. He felt family stability was the cornerstone of a stable autocracy. The reinforcement of the patriarchal family would preserve and strengthen his autocracy. One means of preserving a strong patriarchy was through educational reforms. By the mid 1800's there were twenty five educational institutes accessible to gentry girls and a few merchants' daughters.[3] Established in the name of the dowager Empress Mariia Fedorovna, and under her guardianship, these secondary schools taught girls those subjects

---

[2] Dorothy Atkinson, "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past," in Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, eds., Women In Russia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 36.

[3] Johanson, 3.

deemed most appropriate for future wives and mothers of the privileged class. Educational institutions which had been established prior to Tsar Nicholas' reign were forced to change their curricula to fit the demands of the state educational policy. Studies of literature and of science were replaced by the study of French and music.[4] Rigid discipline with its rules and regulations demanded strict obedience and the proper deportment of pupils. Windows of the schools were greased so that schools girls could not observe the outside world.[5] Through educational reforms Tsar Nicholas strengthened the patriarchal family and the autocracy. It is no surprise then that the graduate of the Smolny institute (the first secondary school open to girls in Western Europe) in the early 1800's was taught that her fate was, "to submit to her husband, and not to command. She (would) only ensure her happiness and acquire the love and respect of others... by strictly fulfilling her family duties." [6]

Barbara Engel, in her book Mothers and Daughters, makes the point that girls' secondary schools sowed the seeds of discontent which would later take root during the reign of Alexander II. The education young women received in these schools had little in common with the reality of life the female graduates would lead. The emphasis on domesticity had little bearing on a gentry woman's life. In the microcosm of a noblewoman's life, domestic chores were the responsibility of the serfs. Child care was left in the hands of an able, experienced peasant nurse. Moreover, the students were removed from their families at the age of eight or nine and were isolated from experiencing family life. Female students had little experience in mother/ daughter relationships and it was difficult for the student to learn how to be a good mother when she had no role model to follow.

Upon graduation female students were ill prepared for the reality they were about to face. Graduates of the gentry class did not know how to find a suitable husband,

---

[4] Ibid.

[5] Barbara Alpern Engel, Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), 25.

[6] Ibid., 24.

manage household serfs or finances. Female graduates belonging to the merchant class were not prepared for a life of employment. As Russian universities and the public service remained closed to the female gender, women seeking an adequate education, expanded employment opportunities and a life of independence went abroad where these avenues were open to them.

The legal position of women, while it was no worse than anywhere else in Europe, offered little solace or help to women who were trapped in a disastrous marriage or family. Autocracy which characterized Russia's political system also shaped family relations.[7] Law and custom subordinated women to men. Family law required unconditional obedience of the wife to her husband and children to parents. Custom reinforced legislation by granting men the right to use force to chastise recalcitrant wives and children.[8] An article from the 1836 Code of Russian Laws emphasizes this point: " The woman must obey her husband, reside with him in love, respect and unlimited obedience and offer him pleasantness and affection as the ruler of the household." [9] The only exceptions to this code were when the husband was branded a criminal, stripped of his civil rights or sent to Siberia. A single woman over the age of twenty one could obtain her own internal passport without the consent of her father, yet there were few opportunities for education or travel open to her.

In the social and legal hierarcy of Russian law, the peasant class as a whole had no group rights. Responsibilities of state owned peasants fell to the village and community, whereas, privately owned serfs were subordinate to their landlord. Within the peasant class the status of women ranked the lowest. Only men of the peasant class made decisions for the village. Taxation and redistribution of communal lands were decided upon according to the number of male souls. Women were directly subordinate to their husbands and fathers, and the treatment many state peasant and serf women

---

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Zhenskoe pravo. Svod uzakonenii i postanovlenii otnosiashchikhsia do zhenskago pola (St Petersburg, 1895), 110, cited in Johanson, 4.

received from their husbands and fathers was horrid. The practice of wife beating was sanctioned in the peasant households long after it had been prohibited in statute law.[10]

With the reign of Alexander II, beginning in 1855, long needed reforms were carried out. A relaxation of censorship, educational reforms and the emancipation of the serfs created an intellectual and economic atmosphere which touched every facet of Russia's discontented society. Intellectual circles, which had long been suppressed under Nicholas, were allowed to discuss freely the precarious situation Russia faced to help find long- needed solutions. One of the most pressing concerns for the autocracy and the intelligentsia was the question of serfdom.

Alexander II and the intelligentsia both agreed on the necessity of emancipating the serfs, although for different reasons. Alexander II and his bureaucrats realized that the growing peasant unrest would continue to threaten Russian autocracy. The Crimean War debacle and the industrialization of Western Europe made Russia's tsar realize the lack of economic efficiency in serfdom. If Russia was ever to compete with her Western counterparts, reforms had to be implemented. Social pressure from within Russia and abroad also questioned the autocracy's integrity in continuing to sanction serfdom. Thus, as early as March 30, 1856 Tsar Alexander II declared that it was better to abolish serfdom from above than to await the day when it would begin to abolish itself from below.[11]

The intelligentsia were concerned with the moral consequences of serfdom. Beginning in the late 1850's the intelligentsia debated the integrity of a system in which one man was the property of another.[12] The radicals and liberals alike felt serfdom was an evil which degraded the owner more than his serfs and ultimately corrupted the entire

---

[10] Linda Harriet Edmondson, Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917 (London: Heineman Educational Books Ltd., 1984), 12.

[11] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 4th ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 371.

[12] Ibid.

society in which it was practiced.[13] Both liberal and radical wings of the intelligentsia believed that equality in human relations had to be implemented in order to end corruption. The relationship of a serf to his owner was only one of many relationships where one person was at the mercy of another. An obvious parallel was made of the subjection of a woman to her husband or father and the family unit to the autocratic state.

The patriarchal family was the cornerstone to the survival of the autocracy. Not only was it enshrined in law and in the teachings of the Orthodox religion, but the family's preservation had been a long established goal by the tsars. The connection between the state and the family remained odious to both the liberal and the Russian radical intelligentsia. The parallel which linked the relationship of a serf to his owner and a woman to her husband or father took on added significance. The personal liberation of women from the patriarchal family and her equality in Russian society would begin the necessary steps in transforming not only the family, but the Tsarist autocracy into a more democratic form of government.

The reevaluation of the patriarchal family and the role of women in the family and society prompted writers to examine other aspects of the traditional roles placed on women. The general conclusion of these writers was that women needed a better education, and that they had to contribute more to society. The most influential proponent of this philosophy was the surgeon and pedagogue N. I. Pirogov (1810-1881).

Pirogov had supervised the first detachment of female nurses in the Crimean War. Surviving the open hostility and opposition by other doctors, high ranking officials and the medical corp, Pirogov and his nurses were decorated for their valour at the end of their tour of duty. Pirogov was greatly impressed by the nurses and wrote the article, "Questions of Life", which was published in 1856. Pirogov felt that Russia had, "completely ignored the miraculous gifts of our women," and if a woman received the

---

[13] Ibid.

proper education and upbringing, she could also construct for herself an artistic, scientific, and social consciousness as highly developed as that of the man.[14]

Pirogov conceded however, that not all women were made to be doctors, but they still deserved a better education than what was available. Education was the first step which would enable women to achieve their emancipation. With their liberation, Pirogov suggested, women might find a greater mission than the pedestrian concerns of domestic life.[15]

Another influential writer concerning the question of women was Maria Vernadskaya (1831-1860). Tutored by her father at home and receiving an education in political economy by her professor-journalist husband I. V. Vernadsky, Maria Vernadskaya was the first female economist in Russia. Being an advocate of free trade, a free labour force and believing in the mechanisms of laissez-faire, Maria Vernadskaya wrote a series of articles beginning in 1858 in which she told women to seek independence by entering the work force. Vernadskaya assured women that there would be sufficient opportunities for them in the economy although she foresaw that women would receive lower wages. Still, lower wages would be better than a life of dependence and strict obedience to men. Vernadskaya passionately wrote, " Mesdames! grow up. Stand on your own two feet, live by your own mind, work with your hands, study, think, work just as men do; and then you will be independent or at least in less dependence on your tyrants than is now the case".[16] Vernadskaya, as the historian Richard Stites points out, went beyond Pirogov in giving specific answers to the unasked question: education for what? Vernadskaya saw that economic independence was just as necessary as education in the emancipation of women.

---

[14] Richard Stites, Women's Liberation Movement In Russia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 31-32.

[15] Ibid., 32.

[16] M.N. Vernadskaya, Sobranie sochinenii (SPB, 1858 -1862) I, 71-146, cited in Stites, 36.

The woman question took another progressive, intellectual leap under the penmanship of M.L Mikhailov. Mikhail Larionovich Mikhailov (1829-65) was first introduced to the woman question when he went to Paris in the summer of 1858. Spending some time at the Hotel Moliere, then the headquarters for the Saint-Simonians and a circle of feminists (including Jenny d'Hericourt who later published La femme affranchie in 1860 [The Enfranchised Woman]), Mikhailov quickly became acquainted with the new publication of the French philosopher P.J Proudhon's La justice dans la revolution et dans l'eglise (Justice in the Revolution and in the Church) .

Proudhon's work La justice dans la revolution et dans l'eglise was a discourse which tried to prove that the physical infirmity of women was directly proportional to her intellectual capabilites. Man was physically larger than women by a ratio of 3:2. According to Proudhon this ratio determined women's capability in initiative, educability and potential relative to men's. "Genius," he wrote, " is virility of spirit and its accompanying powers of abstraction, generalization, creation, and conception; the child, the eunuch, and the woman lack these gifts in equal measure." [17] Together with the publication of L'Amour (Love) written by the French philosopher Jules Michelet, the stage was set for passionate debates on the question of women which was quick to reach Russia.

In a series of articles published from 1859 to 1865 including "Women, Their Education and Significance in the Family and in Society" and "Letters From Paris" , Mikhailov established the woman question as one of the hottest issues in the periodical press.[18] The major components of the woman question (education, work and love) were brought together in these articles to form an anthropological argument which refuted the French works of Proudhon and Michelet. Both "Letters From Paris" and "Women, Their Education and Significance in the Family and in Society" began by describing the origin

---

[17] P.J. Proudhon, Oevres Completes , ed. C. Bougle, 12 v. (Paris, 1923-1946); VIII, 4 (La justice), 183-85, 197, 47, 201-215., cited in Stites, 39.

[18] Johanson, 12.

and current status of the woman question in Europe.[19] Mikhailov explained how the controversy over the woman question originated and began his own polemic with Michelet and Proudhon. Mikhailov believed that women's emancipation would only be achieved if they received a liberal education equal to that of men. Co-educational schools were healthier than private schools as girls would be familiarized with the opposite sex and the real world rather than being shielded from it. Mikhailov viewed educational reforms as a means of improving family relations.

Mikhailov pointed out that the faulty education of women normally resulted in marriage of an educated man to a relatively naive and poorly educated woman. This unequal union tended to weaken the family unit as the poorly educated wife became the poorly educated mother and teacher to her children. A decent education for the woman would improve not only the children's education but increase the respect they and their father would have for their mother and wife. Finally Mikhailov believed that beyond her family role, women should fulfill their maximum potential.

The emancipation of the serfs on February 19, 1861, provided the impetus for a women's movement to develop in Russia. There are two hypothesis as to how this occurred.

The first hypotheses is that the breakdown of the economic system caused by the emancipation of the serfs affected the patriarchal family. Linda Edmondson in her book Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917, points out that the dissolution of the traditional gentry economy required women of the poorer noble families to seek gainful employment. Before 1861, families of the gentry class were usually able to provide economic security for unwed daughters and female relatives. When such families could not offer support, it was not unusual for the unwed female to find employment as a governess in a richer gentry family. Also, with the break down of the serf system the poorer gentry sold their land and moved to rapidly expanding cities. The changes in education and difficult

---

[19] Richard Stites "M. L. Mikhailov and the Emergence of the Woman Question in Russia," Revue Canadienne D'Etudes Slaves 3 (Summer 1969): 187.

economic circumstances of the gentry as a whole, restricted the demand for governesses. Women residing in the cities had little means of support.

The second hypothesis raised in Feminism In Russia 1900-1917, is that the emancipation of serfs had the effect of removing the gentry from the state service in the capital and returning them to the estates. Gentry wives, accustomed to enjoying the responsibility of running the estate and household, found their role reduced upon their husband's return. This led to increasing frustration on the part of female members of the household and stimulated aspirations for independence and social equality. Feminism enabled gentry women to react to the injustices they experienced first hand and provided them with an ideology of how to achieve their own liberation.

It was from the gentry class that the feminists emerged to form Russia's women's movement. The first major concern for the feminists was the problem of unemployment among the genteel population. Recognizing its importance, Maria Trubnikova (1835-1897), one of the most influential and progressive feminists in the women's movement at this time, wrote to the well known British feminist Josephine Butler (1828-1906), to describe that in the middle ranks of Russian society, "men find work and independence by means of intellectual and craft work" but meanwhile "the number is growing yearly of married and unmarried women equally in need of work if they either wish to avoid dying or prostituting themselves".[20]

Like Maria Trubnikova, the first feminists in Russia emerged from the ranks of society whose fortunes were still intact and whose members did not have to earn a living.[21] Women like Anna Filosofova (1837-1912), and Nadezhda Stasova (1832-1895) were well born, educated women past their youth who approached the problems of poverty, gross inequality and ignorance among women, through education and philanthropic work. These feminists were active as early as 1861 creating the Society to Provide Cheap Lodgings and Other Assistance to the Needy Population of St. Petersburg.

---

[20] Vladimir Stasov, Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova. Vospominaniia i ocherki (Spb: 1899) 215, cited in Edmondson, 13.

[21] Edmondson, 13.

While the Society's success was limited in its early years (by 1869 only 400 homeless people were being accommodated), the Society expanded over a twenty year period into a major charity.[22]

The feminists and their Society proved to the public that women could be entrusted with responsibilities beyond the management of their households. The political style of the Russian feminists was moderate, consisting of patient and persistent lobbying among friends and relatives in the government, journalism and quiet organization of influential opinion on behalf of their cause.[23] While the Society raised the consciousness of the public, the politically moderate feminists gained experience in organization and administrative duties. This type of training would become invaluable to them in the suffrage struggle of 1905- 1917.

While the feminist movement began with philanthropic work, their small deeds activities were soon eclipsed by what was to become one of the major aims of the Russian feminist movement, namely, to get women admitted to the institutions of higher education, and to obtain for women professional recognition and status. Within twenty years the Society to Provide Cheap Lodgings and Other Assistance to the Needy Population of St. Petersburg work had pressured the government to open advanced high schools for girls of every social class. Moreover, women were finally able to attend universities and medical schools.[24] Women's emancipation had become an issue among the Russian intelligentsia by 1905 and the feminist movement adopted the goals of political liberation and the tactics of political groups to achieve their aims. The Union of Equal Rights which had formed by February 1905, was one of the strongest proponents of women's emancipation, and was open to men as well as women.

The newly organized feminists in the Union of Equal Rights successfully focused their campaign on an audience which the Russian radicals largely ignored: women in the

---

[22] Ibid., 14.

[23] Richard Stites, "Women's Liberation Movements in Russia, 1900-1930," Canadian-American Slavic Studies 7 (Winter 1973): 462.

[24] Edmondson, 18.

universities and women in the factories. By May 1906 the Union of Equal Rights claimed 8,000 members.[25] In early 1907 the Union of Equal Rights set out to mobilize the masses by collecting signatures on a petition to the Second State Duma for "the great principles of freedom, justice and social equality', including of course, women's suffrage.[26] The Union collected 19,984 signatures after three months of campaigning.[27] Nineteen other feminist organizations including the Mutual Philanthropic Society followed the Unions lead and collected 7,000 signatures on a separate petition for women's suffrage.[28] The feminists' efforts however, were in vain. The Second Duma was dissolved on June 3 before the petitions could be presented. Moreover, Stolypin's coup against the Duma and the implementation of his "pacification policy" removed any hope of radical change through constitutional reform. The feminists were left with the decision to continue their work in defiance of the law or to compromise their principles to continue their work.[29] Most feminists chose the latter course and took the small concessions the regime was willing to offer, patiently waiting for a change of events.

The feminist movement had a limited impact on Russian society at large. The movement constricted its activities to the problems experienced by females in the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg whereas the majority of women in Russia remained in the countryside. The focus by the feminists on educational opportunities affected only the minute segment of women belonging to the upper crust of Russian society. Yet, the feminist's political activity influenced the position women held in Russia's revolutionary movements.

While feminists saw liberation as a vague and distant hope, Nihilists saw complete liberation as an urgent and realizable task, though not necessarily through political action.

---

[25] Edmondson, 56. see footnote 42.

[26] Ibid., 79.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 80.

A great number of women who had participated in the feminist movement but found it lacking would increasing turn to the nihilist movement in hopes of achieving their liberation.

Nihilism emerged in the late 1850's and early 1860's. The movement was greatly influenced by Alexander Herzen's Who Is to Blame? (1846) and by Chernyshevsky's novel What Is To Be Done? published in 1863. Herzen's novel equated the oppression of women in marriage to the plight of peasants under serfdom. The protagonist Lyubonka Krutsiferskaya in Who Is To Blame? is unable to attain the ideal of feminine emancipation due to the constricting social conventions of marriage. Chernyshevsky took the emancipation of women one step further by creating Vera Pavlovna, a woman who attains independence from her parents by entering into a purely "legal"(unconsumated) marriage. With her new found freedom Vera becomes an educated, independent and radical intelligentka whose belief in socialism is realized through her creation of a dressmaking artel (communal shop) for poor, freedom seeking women of St. Petersburg. The main message in Chernyshevsky's work is that through the moral regeneration of humanity, equality in society would be achieved. Inadvertently, Chernyshevsky in What Is To Be Done? created a role model for women in Russia to emulate, namely, the nihilistka.

Wearing a plain black dress, sporting a short cropped coiffure, donning tinted glasses and smoking a cigarette, the female nihilist's new style in garb spurned the upper class superfluous women. Impeccable manners and a psyche filled with trivial matters were replaced by an interest in academic and intellectual matters. Frequenting university halls, salons, student meetings and radical circles, nihilist women attempted to reduce the cultural and social differences between men and women.

The nihilist movement was not so much a structured organization based on a specific philosophy (like populism, liberalism, Marxism) as it was a mixture of attitudes, social values and behavioral affectations. Nihilism meant a fundamental rebellion of accepted values and standards. The physical and natural sciences replaced abstract thought. Personal liberation supplanted family control. The young men and women of

the 60's wanted to cut through every veneer to find the truth. In short, nihilism was an ethos.[30]

The core idea of nihilism was the belief in equality of all people without distinction. Total liberation of the person could be achieved by breaking from the clutches of the traditional family. Many young, idealistic women broke away from their households to join the nihilists in their communes and artels .

Equality was the magnet which attracted so many young idealistic women into the nihilist camp. Many young women of the 1860's were tired of the restrictions which Russian society placed on them and found that the pace of liberation was too slow. Many young women turned to the philosophic ideals and the social attitudes of the nihilists who were trying to put into practice equality and social justice.

Personal emancipation in the nihilist camp enabled women to achieve sexual equality. Many women arranged fictitious marriages in an attempt to obtain independence from their families and society.

Nihilism, however, fell short of their expectations and made no specific gains in the emancipation of women. Refusing to destroy or accept Russian culture, the nihilists only alternative was to disobey it. For all the egalitarianism practiced by the nihilists, there was no solid theoretical doctrine of equality. While the fictitious marriages provided some women with personal independence, this arrangement was not relevant to the economic or professional development of the upper class women or to the mass of peasant women.

Women who saw the inadequacy of feminism but found the nihilist outlook wanting in social purpose and too inwardly oriented, turned to the political propaganda and revolutionary activity of the populist movement in the 1870's.[31] The populists belonged to the privileged class in Russia and wanted to repay their debt of benefitting

---

[30] Stites, Women's Liberation Movement, 100.

[31] Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 36.

from the oppression of the peasant class. The chief aim of the populists was to lead the peasants to a better future.[32]

Populism shared with other radical movements a number of fundamental tenets. Believing that the peasantry was inherently socialist due to their communal cultivation of land for centuries, the populists felt that an agrarian revolution was necessary in order for Russia to bypass capitalism on its road from feudalism to socialism. The best way to achieve this plan was for the revolutionaries to go to the people (hence the term narodniki, from the Russian word narod, meaning people).

Many youths did in fact go to the village communes and factories in the summer to try their hand at living and working as the common people did while spreading socialist propaganda. The populist movement was limited in its success. Few peasants were sympathetic to the socialist propaganda while most were bewildered, confused and hostile. Moreover, Russia's lack of civil liberties put the populists at odds with the government. Populists amidst peasants were easy to single out, and the majority of revolutionaries were caught, harassed, questioned or imprisoned by the police.

One of the more successful populist parties was Land and Liberty. Founded in 1876, Land and Liberty was different than its predecessors in the fact that it was a centralized group with a loosely drawn, organized agenda. Land and Liberty's program called for the expropriation of all the land and its redistribution among the peasantry; the break-up of the Russian Empire in accordance with popular aspirations for local autonomy; and self-government through federations of peasant communes.[33] Their program would be achieved through violent revolution.

Land and Liberty had instilled a long range program for the purpose of revolution. Not only did the party adhere to conspiratorial practices such as using apartments and addresses known only to certain people, making false passports and keeping the location

---

[32] Riasanovsky, 382.

[33] Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar, ed. and trans. Barbara Alpern Engel and Clifford Rosenthal, with a foreword by Alix Kates Shulman, (Boston: Allen & Unwin Inc., 1987), xxvii.

of their printing press in the strictest of confidence, but Land and Liberty established colonies in the countryside. Members went as nurses, school teachers, and paramedics for the purpose of winning the trust of the peasants while propagandizing them. The colonies and settlements survived until late 1878, when government harassment and repression made it virtually impossible for the revolutionaries to continue living among the people, let alone conducting propaganda. The revolutionaries abandoned the colonies and Land and Liberty underwent a significant change in strategy. Land and Liberty changed their emphasis from an agrarian revolution to one which necessitated the overthrow of the Tsarist regime.

Opposition within the movement ensued with the changing of emphasis in Land and Liberty. The conflict of the two opposing camps came to a peak however when Alexander Solov'ev (1846-1879), a member of the party, approached Land and Liberty with his plan to assassinate Tsar Alexander II. In August of 1879 Land and Liberty split into two independent parties; People's Will and the Black Repartition. Members of the People's Will were advocates of regicide and abandoned peasant organizing in favour of political revolution. The Black Repartition on the other hand, retained the traditional emphasis on agrarian revolution and believed in the redistribution of all land among peasants.

Feminism had a significant impact on the role and position of women in Russian radicalism. According to Barbara Alpern Engel and Clifford N. Rosenthal in Five Sisters: Women Against The Tsar, the ideas of feminism enabled women to develop their ideas, build sisterhood and act politically before joining a mixed revolutionary movement. Feminism also sensitized Russian radicalism to the importance of equality among comrades.

Women joined Russian radical movements because these movements practiced social equality by admitting members into their groups regardless of gender or social status. Although less than one percent of the Russian population ever participated in

Russian radicalism, of the 5,664 revolutionaries in the 1870's, 12.5 percent were women.[34] Robert McNeal in his article," Women In The Russian Radical Movement", estimates that in the era before 1905, approximately 20 percent of Russian revolutionaries were women.[35] Of this 20 percent, membership of women radicals indicated that approximately 60 percent were from the gentry class, 15 percent were of Jewish descent, 7 percent were from the Orthodox clergy and the lower classes constituted the remaining 16 percent.[36] While the limited statistics should only be taken as tentative and suggestive indicators of the time, it is interesting to note that as personal involvement and extremism increased, so did the percentage of women. Of the fifty persons tried at the Trial of Fifty in 1877, 32 percent were women.[37] One factor causing the high rate of women's participation in extremism was that theortical avenues in the radical movement remained closed to them.

Despite the egalitarian doctrine preached by the radical movements and the participation of women in revolutionary activities, women did not contribute to the theory or ideology of the movements. Men were unwilling to allow women on the editorial boards and did not treat women as equals in the intellectual spheres of the movement.[38] While the woman question assumed a major role in the moral outlook of the radical movements, it did not supplant the liberation of all oppressed groups in importance. Specific concerns of women in regards to the woman question would only be considered after the human question was solved. The women revolutionaries believed that they were equal with their male partners yet, women constituted less than one fifth of the one percent involved in revolutionary activity. Women revolutionaries did set a precedent for

---

[34] Robert Stites, Women's Liberation Movement, 148., cited from (1)Itenberg, Dvizhenie, 375, no. 35; (2) Literatura "Narodnoi Voli," 348.

[35] Stites, Women's Liberation Movement, 144.

[36] Robert McNeal, "Women In The Russian Radical Movement," Journal of Social History 5 (Winter 1971 - 72): 150.

[37] Stites, Women's Liberation Movement, 149.

[38] McNeal, 154.

women in future revolutionary movements to continue, namely, that fighting for the liberation of all was more important than promoting the woman question.

The woman question originated in Russia during the revolutionary years of 1859 - 1869. During the reign of Tsar Nicholas, social policy rested on the tenet that the cornerstone of a strong autocracy was based on family stability. Women's lack of legal rights, social and educational opportunities enforced patriarchal values and the oppression of women. Only with the reforms carried out during Alexander II's rule was the woman question addressed. Literature of this period equated the oppression of a serf to his owner and a wife to her husband. If societal corruption was to end, there would need to be equality in all human relations. The Emancipation Act of 1861 acted as a catalyst in transforming human relations. Many of the gentry class could not make the economic transition, and as a result a number of single women belonging to the lower and middle gentry classes were forced to earn a living.

It was from the gentry class that the first women's movement originated. Begun by rich gentry women, the movement was largely a philanthropic society which addressed the problems of unemployment, poverty, prostitution, ignorance and gross inequality among women. The philanthropic society's greatest success, was getting women admitted to institutions of higher education. The society's largest fault was their moderate stance on women's liberation as a realistic and achievable goal.

Women who saw complete emancipation as an urgent and realizable task left the philanthropic society and increasingly turned towards the various revolutionary movements where they were accepted as equals. In doing so however, women were inadvertantly compelled to give up all feminist aspirations. In all revolutionary movements the liberation of women was subsumed under the larger category of liberation for all oppressed groups. Moreover, while women were accepted as peers in revolutionary activities, they were not accepted as equals in the intellectual spheres of the movement. In future revolutionary movements women would continue to participate, yet their role in those movements would largely remain the same. Women would fight for the human question, and by neglecting their own emancipation they would continue to be victims of state policy.

CHAPTER II

An old family. Ten to fifteen years of life together. The husband is a good worker, devoted to his family; the wife lives also for her home, giving it all her energy. But just by chance she comes in touch with a Communist women's organization. A new world opens before her eyes. The family is neglected. The husband is irritated. The wife is hurt in her newly awakened civic consciousness. The family is broken up.[1]

This chapter reviews the development of the woman question in Russia from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to early Bolshevik rule. By examining the writings of Marx and Engels on the woman question to early Bolshevik policies towards the position of women in Soviet society, it will be shown that the woman question was redefined to suit the needs of a proletarian revolution. Only after the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, and the establishment of the women's department two years later, was the Bolshevik regime sincere in its committment to address issues specific to women. The controversy surrounding the women's department however signified that most Bolsheviks remained deeply divided on the woman question, and that prejudice towards women had not been eradicated in Soviet society.

With the Industrial Revolution beginning in the 1880's the social and economic structure of Russia changed. The industrial revolution marked a process of intensified urbanization and a mass influx of men and women entering the labour force. Both working and living conditions deteriorated in the cities, giving rise to a higher cost of living, and lower wages. Women employed in the factories received between one half

---

[1] Leon Trotskii, Pravda, 13 July 1923, Translated in Leon Trotskii, "From the Old Family to the New," Problems of Everyday Life (New York, 1973), 40, cited in Lapidus, 69.

to two thirds of men's wages in every industry and for every job, even where men's and women's work were identical.[2] From women's nominal wages, fines were levied for real or alleged errors in production, and bonuses withheld for various types of absenteeism which mothers of sick children or new born infants had little control over.[3]

The late 1800's also marked a time when the ideas of Marxism increasingly attracted segments of the Russian intelligentsia. In 1872 the first volume of Marx's Das Kapital was translated into Russian. In less than twenty years the leader of the Party of Social Revolutionaries, V. Chernov, (1873-1952) was to write that the 1890's marked a Marxist craze among the young generation.[4] While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal in length with Marxist theory, and the various circles in Russia whose ideology was based on Marxist philosophy, it is necessary to review the woman question as in appeared in Marxist philosophy.

When Marx and Engels began to formulate their ideas on dialectical materialism in the mid 1840's, the philosophers clearly expressed their concern with the oppression of women in contemporary society. Citing the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, Marx wrote, "the change in a historical era can always be determined by the progress of women toward freedom, for the victory of human nature is most evident in the relation of women to men, of the weak to the strong. The degree of the emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation."[5] Because Marx and Engels concentrated on the class structure as the principle key to understanding the capitalist society, all forms of racial, sexual, national, and religious oppression had to be understood

---

[2] Rose L. Glickman, "The Russian Factory Woman, 1880-1914" in Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, eds. Women In Russia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 69.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Sergei Pushkarev, The Emergence of Modern Russia 1801 - 1917 (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), 192.

[5] Alfred G. Meyer, " Marxism and the Women's Movement," in Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, eds. Women In Russia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 86.

as functions of class relationships, either derived from class conflict or devised to perpetuate the class structure.[6] As the economic base was the primary motivating force in the proletarian struggle for socialism, the woman question was viewed as a secondary issue. The woman question originated from the capitalist system of production, with the first division of labour between men and women, namely, women's exclusive role of giving birth to future proletarians.

Marx and Engels examined the oppression of women, and determined that under capitalism acquisition of private property enabled men to increase their wealth, while a woman's primary role of giving birth and raising children made her economically dependent on men. Marx and Engels asserted that capitalism destroyed the basic family unit. Genuine relationships between men and women were supplanted by commodity exchanges which resulted in the oppression of women, the disintegration of the proletarian family and the problem of prostitution.

Genuine liberation for women could only be achieved with the abolition of private property (along with class rule and exploitation), the participation of women fully and equally in production processes, and the socialization of private domestic work and child care.

With Karl Marx's death on March 14, 1883 Engels continued to write on the subject and used Marx's collection of notes based on the work of anthropologist Lewis Morgan. Engels formulated a theory which linked the evolution of the family to the successive stages of development in the modes of production. In 1884 The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State was published. While the work dealt more directly with the liberation of women than any of the joint writings Marx and Engels did, it offered little in the way of practical solutions for the emancipation of women. Much of what Marx and Engels wrote on the subject of women in the 1840's was reiterated in Engels' publication in 1884. Only when socialism was achieved could women become liberated.

---

[6] Meyer, 99.

From the writings of Marx and Engels on the position of women in society to Bolshevik policy, the woman question was redefined to suit the needs of a proletarian struggle. For the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party and specifically the Bolshevik wing, the German Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) acted as a role model in regards to women's socialist organizations. Emulating the German Social Democratic party, the Bolsheviks formulated a program that opposed feminism at all costs, subordinated the role of women in the Party and acknowledged the woman question only when it suited the needs of the socialist revolution.

Despite its subordinate role in the Party, the socialist women's movement in Germany had gained a significant following on German soil. By 1907 it was recognized as the most successful women's organization promoting Social Democracy. Members of the International Socialist Women's conference in 1907 designated Germany as the seat of the women's International and declared the German paper Die Gleichheit (Equality) as the international organ. Prior to W.W.I, women in the German Social Democratic Party comprised 16.1 percent of the total membership, numbering approximately 175,000.[7] The Free Trade Unions associated with the SPD recorded 223,000 women or 8.8 percent of the total.[8] By 1882 the proportion of women employed in the total working population was between 31 to 36 percent.[9] By comparison, in Russia, the percentage of women in the work force of 1885 was 22.1 percent of the total population.[10] Germany was also the home of leading Marxist theorists and activists who developed and promoted a socialist women's movement. One of the most influential individuals promoting a socialist women's movement was August Bebel.

---

[7] Jean H. Quataert, Reluctant Feminists In German Social Democracy 1885 - 1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 3.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Quataert, 32. See footnote 39 on page 254 for revision on statistics which reflects the inclusion of supplementary labour in agriculture.

[10] Glickman, 66.

August Bebel (1840-1913), wood turner by trade and later an independent manufacturer of metal door handles, co-founded and became leader of the German Social Democratic Party for two generations. Bebel was the first Marxist to deal extensively with the relationship of Marxism toward the woman question. Publishing Women And Socialism in 1879 (five years before Engels published The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State), despite anti-socialist laws in the German Reichstag, Bebel's book was the most authoritative Marxist discourse to date on the subject of the oppression and liberation of women. Many of Bebel's propositions followed and developed those made by Marx and Engels. Like Marx and Engels, Bebel believed women were necessary comrades in the struggle for liberation as he wrote, "right up to the present time, there has not been one important movement in the world in which women have not been present as fighters and martyrs".[11] Unlike Marx and Engels, however, Bebel stressed the necessity of working with the feminists to liberate women from legal, political and societal discrimination.

According to Bebel, as discussed in Women and Socialism, women's lack of legal rights was not only a consequence of capitalism but of men's systemic domination over women. Women had the right and duty to defend themselves and to adopt any method that appeared good to them "in regards to all endeavors pertaining to equal rights of woman under the present social order; that is her right to enter any trade or profession adapted to her strength and ability, and her right to civic and political equality".[12] In the struggle for legal rights however, women " must not wait for men to help them out of this condition, just as workers do not wait for help from the bourgeoisie".[13]

In the introduction to Woman and Socialism, Bebel went as far as to suggest a coalition to be formed between the proletarian women's organizations and the feminist

---

[11] Stites, Women's Liberation Movement In Russia, 235.

[12] August Bebel, Woman and Socialism (New York:Socialist Literature Co., 1910), 6.

[13] August Bebel, Die Frau und der Sozialismus (Die Frau in der Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft), 24th edition, (Stuttgart, 1894), cited in Meyer, 93.

movements in the struggle for political and civic equality. While acknowledging the existence of class antagonisms between these two movements, Bebel saw that the feminist and women's proletarian movements shared more in common than other socialist movements as he stated, "though they (women) march in separate armies they may strike a united blow".[14]

Bebel never envisioned this coalition lasting, but viewed it as a necessary short term arrangement for the achievement of women's civic and political equality. For permanent equality Bebel thought that it would be in the best interest of proletarian women to join the men of her class in the struggle for a socialist transformation of society. The woman question was only one facet of the larger social question . Once the larger social question was solved, all subordination of one human to another would end. Unlike Marx and Engels, Bebel took the liberation of women out of abstract terms and attempted to apply it to the conditions present in twentieth century Germany.

A coalition between the feminist and proletarian women's organizations, however, never progressed beyond an idealistic theory. Lily Braun (1865-1916), a radical feminist who in late 1895 became a member of Germany's women's organization of the SPD, tried unsuccessfully to bridge the gap between the feminist and socialist movements. Braun viewed feminism and socialism as integrally related and mutually supportive elements of a broader movement towards emancipation from all forms of alienation and oppression.[15] Lily Braun refused to subordinate the woman question to the proletarian struggle, and her refusal to do so put her on a collision course with the German Social Democrats' leading theoretician on the position on women, Klara Zetkin (1857- 1933).

Klara Zetkin was the acknowledged leader of the socialist women's movement. A rigid and orthodox Marxist, Zetkin's socialist ideology rested on the basic tenet that class struggle superseded women's struggle for emancipation. Recognizing that women were needed in the proletarian struggle, women's socialist organizations needed to be

---

[14] August Bebel, Women and Socialism, 6.

[15] Alfred G. Meyer, The Feminism and Socialism of Lily Braun (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), xv.

established to aid women workers with specific problems related to their sex, to educate them politically, and to immunize them against the feminists. According to Zetkin there was no such thing as a special woman worker's question nor a special women's question at all.[16] The problem of working women could be understood and solved only as a part of the problem faced by all proletarians.

Zetkin opposed Bebel and Braun's view that a coalition could exist between the feminists and the socialists. Throughout her life Zetkin battled against any form of a coalition between the bourgeois feminists and the socialist women's movement. As editor of Die Gleicheit from 1892 on, Zetkin's views on bourgeois feminists were well publicized and her personal and political hostility toward's Lily Braun was well documented. Zetkin achieved her goal in separating the women's movement in Germany into two distinct camps, namely the Frauenbewegung (Women's Movement), and the socialist women's movement, Arbeiterinnen-Bewegung (Working Women's Movement). Moreover, Zetkin's achievements in the German socialist women's movement set a precedent for other social democratic women's movements to follow, namely, to oppose the bourgeois feminists and to work for revolution. Zetkin's example showed the necessity of paying special attention to the peculiar needs of working women- in particular, their lack of political consciousness, their fear of action, their diffidence around men, and their functions as wives and mothers.[17]

Zetkin's ideas and objectives on the role of women workers in the struggle for socialism reached Russian soil, through Nadezhda Krupskaya's Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa (The Woman Worker), published in 1900.

Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869-1939), rose to prominence in the Bolshevik Party not only through her marriage to Vladimir Illyich Ulyanov (Lenin) in 1898, but through her strong commitment to the proletarian struggle. Combining the functions of wife, personal

---

[16] Ibid., 51.

[17] Richard Stites, "Women's Liberation in Nineteenth Century Russia," in Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, ed. Tova Yedlin, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), 25.

and party secretary until 1917, Krupskaya, with the help of Lenin wrote the first Russian Marxist perspective on the position of rural and working women in Russia. In 1900 a small, twenty-four page brochure entitled Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa was published. Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa dealt specifically with the double oppression placed on working women in Russia. The theme which runs through the brochure is that labour is the emancipating force for women. With the aid of the working class, and women's participation in the labour movement, all types of exploitations and inequality would be erased. Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa was used as propaganda material among factory workers and circulated illegally for years. The pamphlet, however, did little in establishing a Russian Marxist women's movement within the Russian Social Democratic Worker's Party or the Menshevik and Bolshevik factions after 1903.

While the Social Democratic Party program of 1903 established equal rights for women and called for provisions which would alleviate the hardships of working mothers in industrial enterprises, the Bolsheviks ignored the potential force of the female gender until 1910, and opposed any form of separate organization for women until 1917. Between 1905 and 1907 the Social Democratic Party lost women from the ranks of students and intelligentsia to the well organized bourgeois feminists yet, the Bolsheviks in particular did not systematically endeavour to re-examine their position on the woman question.[18] As outlined above, Bolshevik policy reflected the fact that Marxist ideology made no allowances for the establishment of a Marxist women's movement, yet, another decisive factor played a key role in the development of the Bolsheviks' policy towards the women question. That factor was chauvinism.

The widely shared belief in men's superiority to women influenced Bolshevik policy on the woman question. Bolshevik leadership commonly referred to women as the "otstalyi sloi' - the "backward stratum" and women were portrayed as the most politically

---

[18] Beatrice Brodsky Farnsworth, "Bolshevism, the Woman Question, and Aleksandra Kollontai," American Historical Review 81 (April 1976): 293.

unconscious and unorganized segment of the working class.[19]. Lenin was aware of the chauvinistic attitude in his party when he commented to Klara Zetkin at a later date that, "Scratch certain Communists and you find a Great Russian chauvinist.... He sits in many of us and we have to fight him". [20] Special attention was needed to bring women up to the level of men, a timely occupation most Bolsheviks felt they could not or would not afford. Proposals made by women Bolsheviks to organize the working women were viewed as divisive activities and promoted a " harmful tendency towards feminism"[21]. This attitude was difficult to overcome as the Bolshevik Aleksandra Kollontai was to find out.

Aleksandra Kollontai (1872-1952), was among the first within the Russian Social Democratic Party to concern herself primarily with the relationship of feminism to socialism. Kollontai was drawn to the Social Democratic Party because "women, their fate, occupied me all my life: women's lot pushed me to socialism".[22] In the Zetkin tradition, Kollontai joined the Social Democratic Party in 1898 believing that socialism was the surest means to achieve women's liberation.[23]

As a committed Marxist (though switching back and forth from the Menshevik to the Bolshevik wings throughout her early life), Kollontai was critical of liberal feminism and opposed the feminists' efforts to unite women from all social classes and to separate women's needs from the larger question of social re-organization. Kollontai believed that

---

[19] Anne Bobroff, "The Bolsheviks and Working Women, 1905-1920," Soviet Studies 26 (October 1974): 541.

[20] Robert Tucker, Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929 (New York, 1973), 245, quoted in Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, Women In Soviet Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 78.

[21] Stites, Women's Liberation Movement in Russia, 251.

[22] Anna Itkina, Revoliutsutsioner, tribun, diplomat: Stranitsy zhizni Aleksandry Mikhailovny Kollontai (Moscow, 1970), 44, cited in Beatrice Brodsky Farnsworth, Aleksandra Kollontai (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1980), 2-3.

[23] Farnsworth, "Bolshevism, the Woman Question and Aleksandra Kollontai," 293.

the woman question was not just a matter of political rights for women of the privileged class, but of economic rights and social justice for proletarian women.

Noting the increasing success of the feminist movement in 1905, Kollontai saw the necessity of forming a proletarian women's movement to act as counter balance against the feminists. Koilontai urged the Social Democratic Party to establish a special bureau for the recruitment of women into the Party and to emphasize women's liberation as one of its aims in the proletarian struggle. These measures, Kollontai believed, would draw women into the socialist movement and offset the success of the feminist movement. When the [Social Democratic] Party flatly rejected her proposals, Kollontai realized that the Party had little concern over the plight of working women as she wrote, " I was completely isolated with my ideas and demands....My party comrades accused me and those women-comrades who shared my views of being 'feminist' and of placing too much emphasis on matters of concern to women only".[24] Kollontai found herself fighting on two fronts: one against the bourgeois feminist movement and their conceptual errors, and the other against the indifference and hostility within the socialist camp toward women workers.

Kollontai kept on in her struggle against the feminist movement and in 1907, with the aid of the Union of Textile Workers and a few working class supporters, Kollontai established The Society For the Mutual Help of Working Women, the first legal working women's club in St Petersburg.[25] The club was associated with neither the Bolshevik or Menshevik Party, but open to both.[26] The Working Women's club enjoyed initial success and was frequented by 200-300 working women from various industries.[27] A number of members of the Bolshevik faction criticized the club as separatist and, as Vera

---

[24] Aleksandra Kollontai, The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman, ed. Irving Fetcher, trans. Salvator Attanasio, (New York, 1971), 14, cited in Lapidus, Women In Soviet Society, 46.

[25] Farnsworth, Aleksandra Kollontai, 28.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Bobroff, 543.

Zasulich (a Bolshevik by this time) told Kollontai, the Society was a "superfluous enterprise" that divided the strength of the socialist party.[28] Such hostility eventually caused Kollontai to leave the Society.

Kollontai however did not give up in her endeavors to draw working women to Marxism and by 1908 finished her major theoretical work, The Social Bases of the Women Question. Kollontai's work, which savagely criticized bourgeois feminism in Marxist terms also challenged the Social Democratic Party to construct a real women's workers movement. In the same year Kollontai assumed a leading role in taking a group of forty-five female working delegates to the First All- Russian Women's Congress held in St Petersburg. The objective of the delegation was to discredit the feminists and to denounce the notion that the feminist movement could unite women whose class interests were so diametrically opposed. Kollontai portrayed the woman question not as a matter of political liberation or social reform, but symbolically as a "piece of bread" which meant that for women to be truly free, they had to be economically independent.[29] Kollontai was spotted by the police at the Congress and was forced to leave Russia in order to evade a prison sentence.

While Kollontai believed that only a proletarian revolution could enable women to achieve true emancipation, she did not reveal to the feminists her difficulties in convincing either the Bolshevik or Menshevik Parties to include the women question on their agendas, even though women were entering the labour force in increasing numbers.

Between 1901 and 1910 factory owners in Russia hired more women than men in every year but two. The number of workers in the total labour force grew by 141,000. Of this number approximately eighty eight percent were women. Women were chosen for jobs over males because women could be paid less than men, and employers had learned that women were less likely to rebel, to strike, interrupt production, or demand that factory conditions improve. By 1910 however, the female labour force erupted with strike activity. While women's initial attempts in strikes were awkward, and usually

---

[28] Farnsworth, "Bolshevism, the Woman Question and Aleksandra Kollontai," 294.

[29] Ibid.

ended in defeat, their organizational abilities soon developed. Women became active in formulating demands, negotiating with factory administrators and maintaining the strike until real gains had been made. Several articles in the journal Zhivaya zhizn' (Living Life) commented on the 47 day strike in the summer of 1913 at a textile factory that "two thousand workers, predominantly women, are displaying a steadfastness and determination unusual even in the present strike period." [30]

The Bolsheviks were no longer able to ignore women workers in the revolutionary cause but were compelled to seek effective ways of dealing with working women who had proven to be an active and potential revolutionary force. The Bolshevik Party began its new course of action on January 13, 1913, when the Party's paper Pravda (Truth) included a woman's section honouring the first celebration of International Women's Day on February 23 (March 8 in the Gregorian Calender) in Russia. By late 1913 and early 1914, the Bolsheviks made their first official committment to working women by creating the journal entitled Rabotnitsa (Working Woman) as an official organ of the Central Committee. While most Soviet historians credit Lenin as having the original concept for the journal, Inessa Armand, Nadezhda Krupskaya, Frantsevna Kudelli, Konkordia Samoilova and a few other prominent Bolshevik women were in charge of creating, writing, editing and publishing Rabotnitsa.

As mentioned earlier, Nadezhda Krupskaya was an important member of the Bolshevik Party. There is much to support the view that it was Krupskaya who was partially instrumental in having the journal Rabotnitsa started. Krupskaya's former experience in teaching evening and Sunday school for factories workers from 1891-1896 made her well acquainted with the plight of the female factory worker. It was through her conversations with Inessa Armand however, that Krupskaya felt there was a need for a woman worker's journal. As Krupskaya later recalled, " we had long talks together about women's work. Inessa strongly urged that propaganda work be widely developed

---

[30] Zhivaya zhizn',no. 5 (16 July 1913): 3-4, no.6 (17 July 1913): 4, no.7 (18 July 1913): 4, no. 14, (26 July, 1913) 4, cited in Bobroff, 553.

among the women workers and a special women's magazine be published in St. Petersburg."[31]

Inessa Armand (1874-1920), joined the Bolshevik Party in 1904. A well educated and a devoted Party member, Armand became a close friend and assistant to Lenin. Armand first became interested in issues of concern to women in the late 1890's when she joined the Moscow Society for Improving the Lot of Women.[32] Armand's concern for the plight of women workers occurred several years later when in 1912, she became aquainted with Konkordia Samoilova.[33] Samoilova was secretary to the editorial board of Pravda, and part of her job was to collect correspondence from women and to arrange for its publication. Armand and Samoilova discussed the contents and growing numbers of letters sent by women workers to the Pravda office, and developed some ideas on how these letters could be addressed. The two felt a journal specific to women workers would not only provide a forum for the correspondence, but would raise the class consciousness of women workers.[34] The Bolshevik Party flatly refused to fund the project and instead of giving up, Armand successfully appealed to her friends and the Armand family to finance the project. Aside from being an editor and contributor to Rabotnitsa, Armand continued to participate in the women's movement. During the years 1915-1916 she was a representative of the Bolshevik Party at the International Women's Socialist Conference and the International Youth Conference. After the October Revolution Armand headed the Zhenotdel (Women's Department of the Central Committee Secretariat), and contributed to the magazine Kommunistka (Communist Woman). Armand also directed the First International Conference of Women Communists in 1920.

Another member of Rabotnitsa's editorial board was Frantsevna Kudelli (1859-1944). She first became a member of the Bolshevik Party in 1903. A graduate of the

---

[31] Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin, 269-270, cited in R.C. Elwood, Inessa Armand:Revolutionary and Feminist (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 105.

[32] Elwood, 103.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 105.

Advanced Courses for women in St. Petersburg, Kudelli was part of the student revolutionary movement from 1878, and later took part in the People's Will.[35] In 1893 Kudelli began teaching in an evening and Sunday school where she met Krupskaya and Lenin. She maintained her friendship with them all her life.[36] In 1912 Kudelli began working for Pravda and helped organize the first observance of International Women's Day in Russia.[37] In 1914 Kudelli began working on the editorial board of Rabotnitsa. After the February revolution of 1917 Kudelli continued to work for Party newspapers, first Izvestiia (News) and then Pravda. After participating in the October revolution Kudelli became director of Istpart (Institute on Party History) and she remained on the editorial boards of Rabotnitsa and Rabotnitsa i Krest'ianka (Woman Worker and Peasant Woman).[38]

As mentioned earlier, Konkordia Nikolaevna Samoilova (1876-1921), aided in the organization of Rabotnitsa. Samoilova began revolutionary activity in 1897 while attending the Advanced Courses for Women in St. Petersburg.[39] In 1912 Samoilova became the secretary of the editorial board of Pravda and in 1914 joined the editorial board of Rabotnitsa. After the October Revolution of 1917, Samoilova chaired a commission of the Bolshevik Party for work among women workers.[40] In November 1917, Samoilova headed the first conference of women workers, and in January 1918 was one of the organizers of the First All-Russian Congress of Women Workers.[41] Samoilova continued her work among women by becoming a travelling instructor for the

---

[35] Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd ed., s.v "Kudelli, Prasov'ia Frantsevna."

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd ed., s. v. "Samoilova, Konkordia Nikolaevna."

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

Zhenotdel . She also contributed to the theoretical women's journal Kommunistka (Communist Woman).[42]

Other members of Rabotnitsa's editorial staff were Liudmila Stal', Lenin's older sister Anna Il'nichna Ulyanov-Elizarova, Ludmila Menzhinskaia, Elena F. Rozmirovich and Zinoviev's wife, Z. Lilina. [43]

Rabotnitsa maintained a high standard of writing not to be found in contemporary magazines and discussed issues important to working women, such as working conditions in the factories, job safety, sexual harassment, maternity insurance, child care centers, hygiene and family problems. Rabotnitsa also contained a literary section, which contained a short story, poems, or sketches and a section devoted to letters to the editor. The primary function of the journal however was to continue the attack on bourgeois feminism and to lure women in the socialist struggle, as the editorial in the first issue states:

> *Politically conscious women see that contemporary society is divided into classes...The bourgeoisie is one, the working class the other. Their interests are counterposed. The division into men and women in their eyes has no great significance...*
>
> *The "women's question" for working men and women -this question is about how to involve the backward masses of working women in organization, how better to make clear to them their interests, how to make them comrades in the common struggle quickly. The solidarity between working men and women, the common cause, the common goals, and the common path to those goals. Such is the settlement of the "women's question" in the workers' midst ...*
>
> *Rabotnitsa will tirelessly repeat to [women] the necessity for organizing, entering into the workers' organizations....*
> *In a word, our journal strives to help working women become conscious and organized.*[44]

---

[42] Ibid.

[43] Tova Yedlin, " The First Legal Bolshevik Journal For Women: Rabotnitsa, February - June 1914," Unpublished article, 10 -11.

[44] A. F. Bessonova, ed., " K istorii izdaniia zhurnala Rabotnitsa," Istoricheskii arkhiv, 1955, 37-39, cited in Lapidus, Women In Soviet Society, 48.

The Bolshevik Party through Rabotnitsa continued to deny the existence of conflict between the interests of working women and working men. Women workers were to join the Bolsheviks in the revolutionary struggle as women's liberation was ultimately linked to the success of socialism.

Rabotnitsa was the first attempt made by a few Bolshevik women to politicize women workers. The journal also endeavored to bring the plight of women workers to the attention of the Party, the factory management and to the authorities.[45] While the journal only appeared seven times in 1914 due to the government's crackdown, the demand for the journal was large. Copies of Rabotnitsa were widely disseminated. Rabotnitsa received increasing volumes of correspondence from the factory collectives.[46] Comments and letters to the editor poured in from women workers. In its short life span, Rabotnitsa had touched a neglected segment of society and verified the existence of women workers' daily problems. The journal, however, had little effect on changing the traditional attitudes of the Party concerning problems specific to women workers. The Bolshevik Party viewed Rabotnitsa only as an instrument to raise the consciousness of working women to the call of socialism; anything else was considered superfluous and viewed with suspicion. As Klara Zetkin stated, "we have to conduct not agitation concerning specifically women but socialist agitation among women".[47]

World War I had a great impact on the lives of Russian women. In the first five months of the war more than five million men had been mobilized into the armed forces. By March 1917 the number had risen to more than fourteen million.[48] The loss of male workers resulted in a vast increase of women entering the labour force. In industry the

---

[45] Yedlin, 18.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 22, cited in Okhrana XVII folder 1a, in R.H. McNeal Bride of the Revolution' Krupskaia and Lenin (Ann Arbor, 1972), 152, n. 41.

[48] Alfred G. Meyer, " The Impact Of World War I on Russian Women's Lives," 210, in Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine D Worobec, eds., Russia's Women: Accomodation Resistance Transformation (Berkely: University of California Press, 1991).

proportion of women workers rose from 26.6 percent in 1914 to 43.2 percent in 1917.[49] As Russia's domestic situation deteriorated with her continuation in the war, sporadic strikes occurred and women's political assertiveness increased. On February 23 (O.S.) a massive strike launched by the textile workers of the Vyborg district in Petrograd, and the demonstrations carried out by women workers and soldier's wives in celebration of International Woman's Day, culminated in the February Revolution.

The Bolshevik Party was opposed to the strikes and demonstrations, feeling that the timing was wrong for revolution. The Bolsheviks realized however, that they would need the support of the women workers for the success of a future revolution. Moreover, with the emergence of women's organizations being created either spontaneously or through the concerted efforts of the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks were forced to re-evaluate their position on the woman question. By the autumn of 1917 a Women's Bureau in the Petrograd Committee was created.

With the October Revolution occurring later that year, consolidation of power proved more difficult than the Bolsheviks imagined. The Bolsheviks came to power in a country whose economy was destroyed by WWI, and the new regime found it difficult to fulfill their constituents' most basic demands. Supporters of the Bolshevik regime became discontented and critical of the new government, and protests against the new leadership began. The Bolsheviks were compelled to consolidate their power by increasing their authority at every level of Russian society. By November 1917 the Bolsheviks liquidated rival newspapers, and in December set up the Cheka.[50] By June 1918 the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries were ousted from the soviets. The creation of the new Soviet government it seemed, depended on an authoritarian one party system which controlled its constituents through force and repression.

---

[49] Ibid., 214.

[50] The Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution, Sabotage and Speculation. Cheka is a Russian acronym derived from the initial letters of the first two words.

The necessity of reconstructing Russia's ravaged economy and the political mobilization of previously unbridled segments of the population to support the new regime took on more significance for the Bolshevik leadership. As women comprised over 40 percent of the total labour force and had by and large remained outside of Bolshevik channels, winning women's co-operation was crucial to the Bolsheviks in achieving both objectives. In contrast to their pre-revolutionary situation, Bolshevik agitation among women took on a higher priority. New legislation which established equality in marriage, and divorce was introduced in the decrees of December 1918, and political agitation and propaganda became the primary methods for revolutionary change among women in the first years of Communist rule.

The new Soviet Constitution of 1918 gave women full civic and political rights and went beyond the precedents set by the Provisional Government and other contemporary states concerning women. Soviet legislation created a new conception of women's position in society through extending the principles of equality in education, political, economic and family life. Following the Provisional Government's lead of granting women the right to vote in the Constituent assembly, the Soviet regime granted women the right to vote and to be elected as deputies to the soviets. Unlike the Provisional Government, the Soviet regime implemented labour laws which gave women the right to insurance in cases of illness and granted them maternity leave with eight weeks of full pay before and after birth. The principle of equal pay for equal work was adopted which specifically included 'women performing work identical with men in quantity and quality'.[51] While Labour laws were difficult to enforce, their legality established a foundation for traditional patriarchal behavioral patterns towards women to change.[52] Under the new Constitution women would not only have the right to work, but the obligation to work for the creation of a new Soviet society.

---

[51] G Dmitrieva, Mezhdunarodnaia Zashchita Prav Zhenshchiny (Kiev, Vishcha shkola), 1975, 13., cited in Mary Buckley, Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union (Hertfordshire: Harvest Wheatsheaf, 1989), 35.

[52] Buckley, 35.

Legislation regarding marriage and divorce attempted to weaken the traditional family unit and to reduce the dominance of the male as head of the household. The new marriage code in the Code of Laws concerning the Civil Registration of Deaths Births and Marriages of October 1918 placed marriage as a civil union rather than an ecclesiastical one. Restrictions on divorce were lifted with the Decree on the Introduction of Divorce in December 1917 . According to Article 1, " a marriage is to be annulled when either both parties or one at least appeal for its annulment."[53] Freedom of movement, and choice of residence were also obtained in the Code of Laws concerning the Civil Registration of Deaths, Births and Marriages. Article 104 stated that, "change of residence on the part of one of the married parties does not oblige the other to follow."[54]

The new codes were designed to emancipate women from the family patriarchy and attempted to create a new socialist order. In practice however, the legal changes did not transform women's traditional and domestic roles overnight. Financial constraints made it impossible for the Bolsheviks to begin building creches and communal facilities which would free women from domestic labour. Moreover, the new legislation had not sufficiently mobilized women into the new political and social order. Lenin, and the small group of women active in the organization of working women in pre-revolutionary Russia realized that special political organizations were needed in order to reach, enlighten and mobilize women.

Work among women first took form under the Commissions for Agitation and Propaganda. In 1919 agitation among women took on a higher priority and the Commissions were reorganized as the Women's Department of the Central Committee Secretariat (Zhenskii otdel) abbreviated as the Zhenotdel. Inessa Armand was Zhenotdel's first director.[55]

---

[53] Ibid.

[54] Rudolf Schlesinger, Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the USSR (London, Routledge, 1949), 34, cited in Buckley, 35.

[55] Armand remained director of Zhenotdel until her death in 1920 of cholera. She was succeeded by Aleksandra Kollontai who was removed in 1922 due to her activities in the Workers Opposition movement. Kollontai was succeeded in turn by Sophia Nikoaevna

The Zhenotdel had three primary objectives. The first was to expand the influence of the party over a large number of working class and peasant women through enlightening them about life and politics. The second goal of the Zhenotdel was to draw women in the party, trade unions, co-operative organizations and the soviets. The third objective of the Women's Department was to act as a liaison with other organizations such as trade unions to promote the construction of nurseries and public dining rooms necessary for women's liberation.[56] To achieve these objectives three subdivisions and one sector of Zhenotdel were formed. These were: Organizational-instructional work; agitation-propaganda; the press; and work among women in the East.[57]

Local branches of the Zhenotdel were attached to the Party at every level of the hierarchy, and horizontally subordinate to the party committee at their administrative level. Zhenotdel branches were responsible to the Zhenotdel at the administrative level above. At the very top of the Zhenotdel hierarchy was the director who was responsible to the Central Committee.

In order to facilitate the political education, training and recruitment of non-party women, and to initiate them into public roles, Inessa Armand, the first director of the Zhenotdel, created Delegates' Assemblies for Worker and Peasant Women. Modeled after the system of the soviets, delegates were elected to represent women from factories, women in agriculture and women employed in cottage industries. Delegates attended meetings and courses of instruction under Zhenotdel's guidance. Delegates also were assigned to apprentice with a trade-union, cooperative, state or Party agency. The Zhenotdel hoped that the apprenticeship program would enable women to gain experience

---

Smidovich (1922-1924), followed by Klavdia Nikolaeva (1924-1927) and Aleksandra Vasil'evna Artiukhina (1927-1930).

[56] The objectives of the Zhenotdel are taken from Institut Marksizma-Leninizma pri TsK KPSS, Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s''ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, 3 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), 285, cited in Buckley, 66.

[57] Buckley, 66.

and the confidence to participate in the public sphere. Stalin's report to the Thirteenth Party Congress stated that in 1924 there were 46,000 women delegates in the cities and 100,000 in the villages.[58] By 1928 it was claimed that 2,500,000 women participated in the delegates assemblies.[59]

From its inception the Zhenotdel was officially praised and supported by the Soviet leadership. At the Eighth Party Congress in 1919, party committees were urged to strengthen their work among urban and rural women "in the struggle for communism and socialist construction".[60] The Ninth Party Congress described work among women as "one of the urgent tasks of the women and a necessary part of our general party work".[61] Throughout the early 1920's official blessing and support continued and the Women's Department was urged to increase its activities. The activities recommended by the Soviet leadership, however, were tailored to suit the changing needs of the regime, and did not necessarily coincide with the priorities of Zhenotdel's leadership or their female constituents. In this respect the Zhenotdel functioned as a vehicle for party policy and as a mechanism for extending Party influence to an otherwise inaccessible female constituency. [62]

While the Zhenotdel was accorded departmental status in the Central Committee, its representational and political privileges in the Central Organizational Bureau (Orgburo) were withheld. At the 11th Party Congress V.P. Nogin, reporter for the Auditing Commission, pointed out that representatives of all Central Committee departments except

---

[58] J. V. Stalin, Sochineniia, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1946-1952), 2:194; for 1928, Tolhunov, Pravo zhenshchin 43, cited in Lapidus Women in Soviet Society, 65.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Institut Marksizma-Leninizma pri TsK KPSS, Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s''ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK vol. 2, (Moscow: Polizdat, 1984), 114, cited in Buckley, 69.

[61] Buckley, 69.

[62] Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Sexual Equality In Soviet Policy: A Developmental Perspective", in Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, eds. Women in Russia, 122.

the Zhenotdel participated in the Orgburo meetings. Moreover, Nogin described the situation of Orgburo members addressing the Zhenotdel director when he stated,

> *When it is necessary for the Zhenotdel representative to come to the Orgburo on some business, and if [the Orgburo] has a number of questions... to consider... they hear her problem, they summon her in, but when the discussion of her question is finished they say to her:'And now wait'. She goes out to the waiting room and waits for a long time, frequently for hours, until they summon her again.*[63]

At the lower level of the Party apparatus, suspicion and hostility towards the Zhenotdel was more acute. Local Party organs frequently refused to supply the necessary personnel and resources for the Zhenotdel to operate, failed to implement Zhenotdel policies and in some areas liquidated the local women's sections entirely.[64] By 1923 suspicion and hostility toward the Zhenotdel had begun to erode the Soviet leadership's position on the necessity of the Zhenotdel, and a resolution was adopted that warned of the danger of "feminist tendencies", which "under the banner of improving the women's way of life, actually could lead to the female contingent of labour breaking away from the common class struggle". [65]. The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Congresses further stressed the danger of viewing the woman question in isolation from the common goals of the working class.[66]

Despite the hostility and suspicion surrounding the Zhenotdel, it nevertheless achieved a great deal. The Zhenotdel played an important part in the literacy campaign

---

[63] Kommunisticheskaia Partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza (KPSS), Odinnadtsatyi S"ezd RKP (b), 1922, Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow, 1961), 67, cited in Lapidus Women In Soviet Society, 70.

[64] Mary Buckley,"Soviet Interpretations Of the Woman Question," in Barbara Holland ed. Soviet Sisterhood (London:Fourth Estate,1985), 38.

[65] Institut Marksizma Leninizma pre TsK KPSS, KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh (Moscow, 1954- 1960), vol. 1, 754-55, cited in Lapidus, Women In Soviet Society, 71.

[66] Institut Marksizma Leninizma pre TsK KPSS, KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh, (Moscow, 1954- 1960), vol. 2, 88-89, cited in Lapidus, Women In Soviet Society, 71.

among women. By 1920 the Zhenotdel began publishing the theoretical journal for women entitled Kommunistka (Communist Woman) under the editorship of Nadezhda Krupskaya. Kommunistka was followed by Krest'ianka (Peasant Woman) in 1922 and in 1923 Rabotnitsa was revived.[67] By 1927 eighteen women's journals were being published with an estimated circulation of 386, 000.[68]

The Zhenotdel was also instrumental in mobilising women for medical and welfare work during the Civil War. Women were recruited for paramilitary service and encouraged to take first-aid courses in order to nurse the wounded. The Zhenotdel also began to restore public services by establishing canteens and creches although economic funding for these endeavors was severely limited. In terms of recruiting women into the Communist Party, however, quantitative achievement of the Zhenotdel is difficult to ascertain.

By 1927 three fourths of all villages had experienced no Party activity at all, and between 1922 and 1927 there were still only twenty-five Party members for every 10,000 peasants.[69] Statistics indicate that between 1923 and 1924 the proportion of rural women in the Russian republic increased in village soviets from 1 percent to 2.9 percent, in volost'(township) executive committees from .3 percent to .5 percent, in guberniia (province) executive committees from 2 percent to 3 percent and among candidates for Party membership from 9 percent to 11 percent.[70] The minor increase in the recruitment of peasant women to villiage soviets was due in part to the lack of personnel qualified to conduct political work among women. Another significant factor was that many party

---

[67] Rabotnitsa had been revived in 1917, but was forced to shut down in 1918 due to a shortage of newsprint. See Buckley, 67., citing Carol Eubanks Hayden, "The Zhenotdel and the Bolshevik Party," Russian History, 3, 1976, 154.

[68] Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society, 65.

[69] Stephen Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution (New York: 1973), 443, cited in Lapidus Women in Russia, 68.

[70] Stalin, "Organizational Report of the Central Committee to the Thirteenth Party Congress, May 1924," in Sochineniia, 2:195, cited in Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society, 68.

committees placed the establishment of a local zhenotdel and delegates' meetings low on the list of their priorites. Recruitment among women in the urban areas in the Russian republic met with more success. Between 1920 and 1930 membership among women in the Bolshevik Party increased from 7.4 percent to 13.1 percent.[71]

One area in which the Zhenotdel had a significant impact on women's emancipation was in Central Asia. The Soviet regime encouraged Zhenotdel's work among Moslem women for a specific purpose: to establish Soviet control over Central Asia. Prior attempts made by the Soviet regime to assimiliate Moslem societies into the new Soviet state, and assert Soviet control over these areas had failed. The Soviet regime changed its strategy, and viewed Moslem women as the most succeptible to social and political change. The mission of the Zhenotdel was to enlighten Moslem women of their new rights guaranteed to them by the Soviet regime, and to mobilize them into Party activity.

Zhenotdel sent out Russian propagandists and educators to emancipate, educate and mobilize the Moslem women. The Zhenotdel encouraged Moslem women to initiate divorce actions, to participate in mass public unveilings and to question traditional Moslem law and traditions.[72] The Zhenotdel's activity was met with savage violence from Moslem males. A twenty year old Moslem girl who demonstrated her new liberation by wearing a swimsuit, was sliced alive by her father and brothers who felt they could not suffer the social indignity.[73] An eighteen year old female liberationist was mutilated and then thrown down a well.[74] During one quarter of 1929, over three

---

[71] Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society, 210, using the following sources: T. H. Rigby, Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917 -1967 (Princeton, 1968) 361; I Kapitonov, Kommunist, No. 3, (February 1972): 35, Partiinaia zhizn', no 14, 1973; Partiinaia zhizn', no. 21 (November 1977): 32.

[72] Lapidus, 67.

[73] Stites, "Zhenotdel: Bolshevism and Russian Women, 1917-1913," Russian History 3 (1976), 187.

[74] Ibid.

hundred murders of Moslem women took place.[75] The Soviet regime classified these crimes as "counter-revolutionary" and these were therefore subject to the death penalty. Despite the danger inherent in participating in the Zhenotdel several hundred Moslem women worked as translators and assistants and eventually worked their way up to Zhenotdel administrative positions.[76] Although there were casualties, the Zhenotdel's work in Central Asia initiated the steps for Moslem women's emancipation. Unveilings of several hundred women occurred every year to mark May Day or International Women's Day, an event which would not have occurred if it were not for the work of the Zhenotdel.

In spite of the progress made by the Zhenotdel in educating, mobilizing and liberating women in the 1920's, hostility and suspicion towards its activites continued to surface among the rank and file of male party members. The controversy began in Germany by Braun and Zetkin over the legitimacy of a separate women's organization continued to flourish in twentieth century Russia. Male party members accused the Zhenotdel of promoting "feminist tendencies", and even at the height of its success the Zhenotdel was only accorded marginal status. The Zhenotdel was ultimately destroyed by the consolidation of Stalin's power. The 1930 slogan for International Woman's Day was, "100% Collectivization".[77] Women's issues had no place in the collectivization of agriculture or Stalin's five year plans. In 1930 the Zhenotdel was dissolved. According to official policy, the woman question was solved.

Under Stalin the practical implementation of women's equality would be achieved by increasing women's domestic and economic roles in the Soviet state. Earlier gains made by the Zhenotdel for emancipating women from social, political and economic oppression were not congruent to a stable nuclear family, collectivization or industrialization.

---

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Stites, Women's Liberation Movement in Russia, 244.

Stalin's plans for socialist construction depended on family stability and economic productivity. The family was to serve as the foundation for the new socialist order, and prior legislation which increased women's independence, autonomy, and mobility in marriage were restricted. Women were urged to have large families and to raise their children in the proper collective spirit.[78] Women were also forced to play a key economic role in the construction of Soviet society. From the Bolshevik seizure of power Soviet Constitutions established equality of the sexes, and under Stalin's guidance this meant women's equal participation in the processes of industrialization and collectivization.

From the writings of Marx and Engels on the position of women in society to Bolshevik policy, the woman question was redefined to suit the needs of a proletarian struggle. The Bolsheviks formulated a program that opposed feminism at all costs, subordinated the role of women in the Party and only acknowledged the woman question when it suited the needs of the socialist revolution. From the publication of Rabotnitsa to the formation of the Zhenotdel an uneasy relationship between Bolshevism and the woman question developed. The controversy surrounding the Zhenotdel signified that the Bolsheviks were deeply divided on the woman question. Some Bolsheviks felt that women's emancipation was a desirable objective in itself whereas others party members such as Stalin saw the mobilization of women into the party as a potential contribution to the larger cause. Under Stalin's leadership women were viewed as instruments in the socialist construction of the Soviet Union and the woman question was subsumed under the broader categories of industrialization and collectivization.

---

[78] Anton Makarenko, The Collective Family: A Handbook for Russian Parents, trans. Robert Daglish (New York, 1967), 43-47, cited in Lapidus, Women In Soviet Society, 113.

CHAPTER III

Our feminine hearts are overflowing with emotions," she said, "and of these love is paramount. Yet a wife should also be a happy mother and create a serene home atmosphere, without, however, abandoning work for the common welfare. She should know how to combine all these things while also matching her husband's performance on the job. "Right!" said Stalin.[1]

The abolition of the Zhenotdel in 1930 signified that under Stalin's leadership, the woman question would not be regarded as a subject of ideological or political concern. The Zhenotdel ceased to exist not because women had obtained equality with men but that Party policy and Party objectives towards women had changed under Stalin's totalitarian rule. In the Zhenotdel's stead a new institution was created entitled the Zhensektor. Established in 1931 and disbanded in 1934, the aims of the Zhensektor were "to ensure the successful implementation of the five year plan for socialist construction of industry" and "to build upon the successful achievements of the collectivization of agriculture".[2]

The objectives of the new women's institution clearly showed the exclusive priorities of the totalitarian government. Soviet men and women were to be the builders of the new Soviet Socialist State, and would be exploited accordingly to meet the deadlines set out by the Five Year Plans. Stalinist policies placed a double burden upon women. The regime's concentration of investment in heavy industry was at the expense of the service sector, and the supply of child care and communal dining facilities lagged

---

[1] Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society, 115, quoting F. Panferov, Bruski, cited in Xenia Gasiorowska, Women in Soviet Fiction (Madison, 1968), 53.

[2] P. M. Chirkov Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR: 1917- 1937 (Moscow, Mysl', 1978), 69, cited in Mary Buckley, Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union, 124.

behind the increasing demand. Services for lightening domestic chores were virtually absent. Household and child rearing duties were regarded as women's work and consequently women were required to put in a double shift: one at the factory the other at home. Women's mobility in economic and political life was restricted as there was little time or energy left for professional or academic pursuits. In this respect, women not only subsidized the professional mobility of males, but the rapid development of industrialization in the Soviet Union. It is with this in mind that we must now turn to the years of Stalin's rule, 1928-53 to understand not only the motives and contradictions inherent in his policies towards women, but to understand how women were affected by the various polices dictated and enforced by the totalitarian state.

Throughout the 1920s the conviction that women had to be drawn into the labour force for their emancipation largely remained a theoretical concern. The inauguration in 1921 of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and its reliance on the supply and demand curve resulted in a devastating increase of unemployment which hit women particularly hard. Under NEP large numbers of women were forced to leave their work place as state accounting necessitated entire branches of industry to close down. Many women employed in medical and social welfare institutions, communications, and service industries lost their jobs.[3] By 1922 the Petrograd Bureau of Labour reported that 67 percent of all registered unemployed personnel were women.[4] In Petrograd's textile centre in Ivanov-Voznesensk, a female dominated industry, women accounted for 58.7 and 63.3 percent of all unemployed respectively.[5]

The number of unemployed women continued to rise throughout the mid 1920s although the percentage of unemployed females dropped. This phenomenon was largely

---

[3] Wendy Z Goldman, " The 'Withering Away' of the Family," in Russia In The Era Of NEP, edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch and Richard Stites, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 131.

[4] V.L., "Vliianie novoi ekonomicheskoi politiki na byt trudiashchikhsia zhenshchin," Kommunistka, 3-5 (1922), 15, cited in Goldman, 131.

[5] Carol Hayden, "The Zhenotdel and the Bolshevik Party," Russian History 3 (1976): 169.

due to the increased percentage of peasant men in the cities who were unable to find work. In July 1923 an estimated 154,578 women in Petrograd were unemployed where as by July 1925 the number of unemployed women had risen to 232,422.[6] Many unemployed single and widowed women who had no other means of support turned to prostitution.

With the abandonment of NEP and the implementation of the First Five Year Plan in 1928, the demand for labour in industry began to increase. The authors of the First Five Year Plan initially considered how women's economic and political status would be affected by their participation in the labour force. The economists, however, were aware that the shortage of males available to participate in industry would eventually pose a serious problem if rapid industrialization was to continue. The abundance of unemployed urban women however, provided a solution to the future man power shortage.

The demographic imbalance of males versus females posed a serious problem to Stalin's First Five Year Plan. According to demographers' estimates, if no unnatural interference had taken place between 1914 and 1926, the population of the Soviet Union in 1926 would have been 175 million.[7] The actual results of the December 1926 census put the population at 147,028,000 indicating that the years between 1914 and 1926 cost the Soviet Union 28 million people.[8] As deaths of males exceeded females during this period an acute man shortage was evident. Population losses had only just begun. While the population losses are still being estimated, the forced collectivization of agriculture (1929-35) cost the Soviet Union no less than 6 million people. Millions of others perished in the famine and the political purges, and it is estimated that at least 30 million people

---

[6] G. Pavliuchenko, "Bezrabotitsa i zhenskii trud v Rossii," Kommunistka 5 (1925): 34, cited in Goldman's, "The 'Withering Away' of the Family," 131.

[7] William G. Rosenberg, "Introduction: Nep Russia as a 'Transitional' Society," in Russia In The Era of Nep, eds. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch and Richard Stites. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 4.

[8] Part of this figure represents the loss of territories incurred during the first years of Bolshevik power. Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie, Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1926 g., 56 vols. (Moscow, 1928-33), vol. 17, table 1, 2, cited in Rosenberg, 4.

perished during World War II.[9] The 1926 census revealed that there were only 91 males to every one hundred females and by 1959 the sex ratio was 81 males for every 100 females. In the age category of thirty five to fifty nine, there were only six men to every ten women.[10] The demographic imbalance of males to females also indicated that an increasing number of women were the sole supporters and main bread winners of their families. Unemployment affected not only women but their dependents as well.

Women were increasingly looked upon by the Five Year planners as an untapped labour source which could be utilized. Not only would women's employment in industry counter balance the demographic imbalance and solve the female unemployment crisis, but women constituted an urban source of workers which would not further aggravate the food and housing shortage caused by the peasant migration. Because few women were employed in heavy industry, the economists feared a planned expansion in this area would lead to a decline in the overall ratio of women workers. Quotas for women were established in various trades and professions to offset the anticipated decline, while vocational and technical schools admitted an increasing number of women into their programs.

During the First Five Year Plan, education was one of the few areas heavily invested in which benefitted the Soviet population. Basic literacy continued to be viewed by the Soviet government as essential to the industrial and cultural revolution. Stalin's dictatorship realized that basic literacy was a fundamental requirement for transforming the character of the Russian population and would enable the leadership to communicate

---

[9] Michael Paul Sacks, "Women, Work and Family" in Understanding Soviet Society, edited by Michael Paul Sacks and Jerry G. Pankurst (Boston: Unwin Hyman),1988, 76, citing Norton T. Dodge, Women in the Soviet Economy (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 20, and Mervyn Matthews, Class and Society in Soviet Russia (New York: Walker, 1972), ch.1.

[10] Tsentral'noe statistcheskoe upravlenie pri sovete ministrov RSFSR (Ts.S.U.), 1930., Vsesoyuznoi perepis' naseleniya 1926 goda, vol. 26: Rossiiskaya Sotsialistichskaya Federativnaya Sovetskaya Respublika, otdel 2: zanyatiya, Moscow: Izdanie Ts.S.U. Souza SSSR, Table 1,3: and Ts.S.U. Itogi vsesoyuznoi perepisis naseleniya 1970 goda, vol 2: pol vozrasti sostanyanie v brake naseleniya SSSR, Moscow: Statistika, 1972, 5, cited in Sacks, 77.

to the Soviet people new values, attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Education benefitted women because literacy was a requirement to fully participate in public and political life. In 1928 a second literacy campaign was launched which sought to lower the differential literacy rates between men and women. Between 1926 and 1939 the reported percentage of literate males rose from 71.5 percent to 96 percent while for females it rose from 42.1 percent to 81.6 percent.[11] In rural areas however, female literacy remained low. Among peasant women over the age of fifty only one in four could read.[12]

The heavy investment in education improved the chances of women for better employment, expanded the readership of the Communist press, and strengthened the ideology of supporting women working outside the family. Education also sought to change societal attitudes concerning gender specific occupations. Traditionally male oriented occupations were regarded as employment opportunities where women were equally capable of participating. Newspaper photographs showed women carpenters, lathe operators, construction workers and in rural areas, tractor drivers.

The authors of the first Five Year Plan estimated only a moderate increase of women in industry from 27% of the socialized labour force in 1927-28 to 32.5 % in 1932-33.[13] By the winter of 1929-30 however, unemployment began to decline and by 1930 an acute man power shortage was at hand. By the spring of 1930 economic planners raised the desired amount of women in the labour force to 34%-35%.[14] A new perspective emerged in official documents which focused on the increase of women in industry not in terms of its significance for women's emancipation and self determination but as a necessary step for meeting economic demands set forth by the first Five Year

---

[11] Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society, 136, citing Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie, Narodnoe obrazovanie, 21. Lapidus urges the reader to take extreme caution with the statistics. In 1926 literacy was defined as the ability to read and no standard test was required for proof of this ability either in 1926 or 1939.

[12] Lapidus, 136.

[13] Five Year Plan of Economic Construction of the USSR (Moscow, 1929), vol. 2, 180., cited in Lapidus, 98.

[14] Ibid.

Plan.[15] In 1930 a resolution was passed which stated that, "to insure the fulfillment of the production program for the third year of the five year period" it is necessary "to draw more juvenile workers as well as wives of workers and other toilers into production".[16]

Rapid growth of the proportion of Soviet women workers took place on virtually every level of the labour force. During the 1930's, 82 percent of all new workers entering the Soviet labour force were women.[17] By the end of the decade 71 percent of Soviet women aged sixteen to fifty nine were gainfully employed in a range of jobs.[18] Women became engineers, professors and factory directors. While the reception of newly employed women in male dominated fields was frequently hostile, women in European Russia experienced better conditions than other parts of the Soviet Union. This was due partly to excessive demand for labour and the fact that the majority of women were placed in posts subordinate to men.[19] Women who persevered in such jobs were rewarded by moving out of the peasant and working classes and into the rapidly growing Soviet elite.[20]

The industrialization process did not stop at the city limits but reached the countryside with no less traumatic results. In the 1930's grain was needed to finance industrialization. Through sheer force and brutality, Stalin collectivized the countryside. By 1936, 90 percent of peasants were living on collective farms and, just before the second World War, two thirds of the population in rural areas were women. [21]

---

[15] Lapidus, 98.

[16] Pravda, 3 September 1930, cited in Lapidus, 98.

[17] Sacks, 76.

[18] Norton T. Dodge, Women in the Soviet Economy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 32.

[19] Buckley, 117.

[20] Barbara Evans Clements, "Later Developments: Trends in Soviet Women's History, 1930 to the Present," in Russia's Women, eds. Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 270.

[21] Buckley, 110, and Clements, 271.

Prior to the 1930s, peasant women comprised four fifths of the female population and remained a largely neglected group.[22] With the massive drive for collectivization, beginning in 1929, the Communist Party stressed that women's equality would be brought to the rural areas. Collective farms would provide equal membership and equal earnings per labour day regardless of sex. Women and men over the age of sixteen had a right to membership in the collective farm, and had equal rights to a share in the farm's net income, computed on the basis of hours worked, as well as a share in the household plot income.[23]. Maternity benefits and maternity homes would also be provided.

Ideological statements found in the newspapers emphasized the expanding opportunities for women. Izvestiia on March 8, 1933 published the slogan "Without collective farms - inequality. With collective farms - equal rights".[24] Communist propaganda stressed that only collectivization of agriculture would assure rural women's equality. The mechanization of labour would enable women to be employed throughout the year rather than participating in seasonal bursts of activity.[25] Women were encouraged to raise their skill levels and learn how to operate tractors and combines. Increased productivity was also stressed as guaranteeing women employment promotions, equality with men, and an increase in women's wages. Moreover, women would be able to participate in farm administration.[26]

Realistically, however, women's equality did not reach the countryside. By 1940 women still accounted for two thirds of the population employed in manual work.[27]

---

[22] Dodge, 65.

[23] Dodge, 66.

[24] Buckley, 118.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Roberta T. Manning, " Women in the Soviet Countryside on the Eve of World War II, 1935-1941," in Russian Peasant Women, eds. Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 214, citing Selunskaia, Sotsial'naia struktura sovetskogo obschestva, 118.

Women's work largely remained seasonal, and men continued to occupy the better-paying, year round positions. The collectivization of agriculture largely excluded women from the social insurance system, while provisions for old age pensions and illness as well as maternity benefits were either non-existent or limited until 1965. The benefits women did receive were less generous than those granted to industrial workers.[28] Moreover, entrenched patriarchal attitudes towards rural women did not change overnight nor did the level of participation of women increase in party leadership posts.

According to one source, the already minute number of rural women in leading cadres actually fell in 1930-31.[29] Female entry rates into the party fell below expected targets and in some districts, women's participation in rural soviets was as low as four percent. [30] The majority of the peasants were against the collectivization of agriculture, and massive protests erupted against the Communist Party's policy. Whether against forced grain requisitions, collectivization, or dekulakization (the regime's process of liquidating the richer peasants), peasant women played a significant role in the protests.

The term bab'i bunty (roughly translated as peasant women's riots) was coined to describe their efforts. The peasant women's protests took on various forms. Some were sparked by rumors about what collectivization entailed, other demonstrations were aimed at specific policies which affected women's every day life. Whether the bab'i bunty intended to break up the collective farm, stop the liquidation of the kulaks (rich peasants) or retake socialized seed and livestock, they accomplished their objectives.[31]

---

[28] Lapidus, 104-105.

[29] A. Nikul'kova, Massovaia rabota sredi kolkhoznits (Novosibirsk: Partizdat, 1932), 16, cited in Buckley, 120.

[30] Buckley, 120.

[31] Lynne Viola,"Bab'i Bunty and Peasant Women's Protest During Collectivization," The Russian Review 45 (1986): 37.

The Communist Party admitted in 1930 that a retreat from collectivization was necessary and certain concessions were made.[32]

Most women escaped punishment for their involvement in the riots due to Communist Party's attitude towards the peasant women. The baba was not considered the fairer sex, but the most backward element in soviet society. While male peasant protests against collectivization were dealt with by increasing degrees of repression, women in the bab'i bunty were often not held responsible for their actions. Only some peasant women were subject to reprimand and punishment.[33] The Communist Party considered peasant women's participation in riots as non-political and the riots arose due to women's ignorance and backwardness rather than any counter revolutionary purpose.

The argument has been made that bab'i bunty were not as disorganized and apolitical as the Communist Party believed. According to Lynne Viola, the anatomy and content of the peasant women's protests contained several consistent features. The bab'i bunty often revealed a relatively high degree of organization and tactics, their protests were frequently based upon opposition to the implementation of policy, and the demonstrations served as a relatively safe outlet for peasant opposition. Unlike the male protests, which were branded as "counterrevolutionary" and prosecuted under article 58 of the criminal code, in late 1929 and early 1930 women in the bab'i bunty were seldom charged. [34]. While the bab'i bunty did not continue beyond the First Five-Year Plan, the protest of peasant women played an important role in the amendment of state policies concerning the open attack on the Church and the socialization of livestock. This was a major accomplishment considering the regime in power.

With the collectivization of agriculture and industrialization underway, a new crisis emerged. Stalin launched a campaign to purge all the "enemies of the people"

---

[32] Viola, 41. In the years 1930-31, the state was forced to compromise. Peasants were allowed to maintain a private plot, domestic livestock and limited direct access of the market. This compromise was maintained in the years following 1930-31.

[33] Ibid., 24.

[34] Viola, 38-39.

supposedly present in Soviet society. No one was exempt from the accusation and those people who had vocally opposed Stalin's policies as well as those who loyally supported him often shared the same fate. Millions of people were arrested, charged and interned in labour camps for "counterrevolutionary" crimes they did not commit. Women were no exception. Wives, mothers and daughters of charged Party members, as well as professional, peasant and working class women equally suffered from Stalin's purge crusade.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn in The Gulag Archipelago Volume Two describes the fate that awaited most women in the labour camps. In prison camps, "women would either be broken or else, by bending and degenerating, adapt themselves". [35] Not only were camp conditions horrid (endemic filth, lack of food, water, and over crowding in the living quarters), but women suffered from, physical torment, sexual degradation and rape. As Solzhenitsyn writes,

> *The initial arrival in camp began with a bath... In the camp bath the naked women were examined like merchandise. Whether there was water in the bath or not, the inspection for lice, the shaving of armpits and pubic hair, gave the barbers, by no means the lowest ranking aristocrats in the camp, the opportunity to look over the new women. And immediately after that they would be inspected by the other trusties....And the trusties decided among themselves who got whom.*[36]

To preserve their lives many women entered into liaisons with the prison officials. Women who had a prison official looking after them usually received better camp jobs, more rations and the like. Those women who became pregnant from the liaisons could abort the child or carry it to term.[37] Those who delivered were not allowed visitation

---

[35] Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago Two (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 228.

[36] Ibid., 229.

[37] Ibid., 242.

rights after the child had been weaned. The child was placed in an orphanage and only upon release from camp could a mother reclaim her child, but as Solzhenitsyn remarks, most children remained at the orphanage.[38]

Women who did not have a prison official looking after them worked as laborers on either mixed brigades where work was a bit easier for them or in all-women brigades where production demands were identical to those placed on male brigades. While there is no data available on the numbers of women interned in the camps, it is estimated that by late 1938 there were 8 million purge victims in labour camps and one million in prisons.[39] The death toll from the purges is still not known, but estimates range in the millions among which, hundreds of thousands were women.

Soviet society was only beginning to recover from the purges when on June 22, 1941, Germany attacked the USSR. The demographic imbalance of males to females was acute and on the eve of World War Two there were only ninety two males for every one hundred females. Stalin's regime needed women to join the war effort and in June of 1941 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a resolution which stated that women were to play a vital role in the mobilization of people and resources. By 1942 the Komsomol (Communist Youth Party) directed 8,476 girls into the Red Army and the Soviet Navy and by December of that year there were three women's battalions.[40] By 1943 there were approximately eight hundred thousand female volunteers serving in the Soviet army comprising eight percent of the military.[41] While most women worked in the medical corps, in transport and in clerical positions, there were women in combat as tank drivers, snipers, sappers and machine gunners .[42] Women also flew in air combat

---

[38] Ibid., 243.

[39] Robert Conquest, The Great Terror: A Reassessment (Oxford: Oxford Universtiy Press, 1990), 485-486.

[40] Buckley, 121.

[41] Clements, 271.

[42] Ibid.

missions, and there were three all women air regiments.[43] Most Soviet women participated in the war effort by fulfilling the jobs men had vacated to join the army. By the end of the war in 1945, women comprised 56 percent of the paid labour force and 59 percent of farm workers.[44]

It was during the Great Patriotic War that women's employment opportunities increased. Some became factory directors and managers, other women worked in mines, factories and it was at this time that women became the majority among physicians in the USSR.[45] While the war years showed some upward mobility for women, these positions were returned to men after the war.

During the decade following the outbreak of W.W. II, 92 percent of those entering the Soviet work force were women.[46] Between 1940 and 1960 the number of women in the labour force increased by more than 30 million while the number of places in child care facilities only increased by 7 million.[47] By 1960, only 13 percent of children aged one to five could be accommodated in child-care facilities.[48] This statistic is especially significant since social policy during the Stalin era demanded that women combine their roles as mothers, housekeepers and workers for the good of Soviet society.

In the 1920's theoretical debates questioned how the family, maternity and domestic labour affected the emancipation of women. It was argued that women could not achieve genuine emancipation through their participation in the work force alone, but that a transformation in family life, and a radical change in the sexual division of labour were needed. As early as 1918 Lenin remarked that a

---

[43] Ibid.

[44] Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie pre Sovete Ministrov SSSR, Zhenshchiny v SSSR: Statisticheskii sbornik (Moscow, 1975), 29, 39., cited in Clements, 271.

[45] Ibid., 272.

[46] Michael Paul Sacks, Women's Work in Soviet Russia: Continuity in the Midst of Change (New York: Praeger, 1976), 43.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid. This statistic is for the USSR as a whole.

> *woman continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery.*[49]

According to Lenin women would achieve emancipation when domestic work would be transformed into a large-scale socialist enterprise. While attempts were made by the early Bolsheviks to expand domestic services, an extensive program to socialize the domestic economy was never developed . Consequently a radical change did not occur in the sexual division of labour. Instead, household chores and child rearing duties remained primarily the responsibility of women. Under Stalin, women's genuine emancipation was not a desired objective in itself, and the leader saw no benefit investing in domestic services when such work could be performed by women at no expense to the state. The double burden placed upon women was a direct and lasting consequence of Stalinist policies.

In the present day, a working women's career is deeply affected by the domestic demands placed on her. Women have less time to pursue educational and academic pursuits, and the double burden adversely affects the general quality of life by reducing women's recreation and even sleep relative to a man.[50] According to one study a Soviet man has as much free time as a woman has housework.[51] In Natalia Baranskaya's novella, "Nedelia kak nedelia" (A week like any other) published in Novy mir (New world) in 1969, the author shows how the double burden affects women and the entire family.

The heroine of the story, Olga Voronka, is a young engineer with a husband and two children. In the format of a diary, Olga describes a typical week. In one entry Olga remarks, "Well, my favorite sport is racing. From home to bus, from bus to metro, bus

---

[49] The Woman Question: Selections From the Writings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels V. I. Lenin, Joseph Stalin (New York: International Publishers, 1977), 56.

[50] Michael Paul Sacks and Jerry G Pankhurst, (eds.), Understanding Soviet Society (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 80.

[51] Ibid.

again. Metro again. To work and back. Shopping. I'm a qualified long distance runner." [52] The week described by Olga is hectic. Sleep is a luxury, nerves are strained and the actual amount of free time available to the heroine after domestic chores are completed, is minimal. Stalin's refusal to invest in domestic services created the double burden for women and in this respect women subsidized the rapid pace of industrialization.

Under Stalin's regime, the advancements made by early Bolshevik legislation in liberating women from the restrictions of family life were also reversed. Stalin viewed the family as the microcosm of his political and social order. With the Bolshevik emphasis on the "withering away of the family" in the early 1920's, repeated divorces, betrayed wives and abandoned children became the norm, resulting in a state of social anarchy. For the planned expansion of industry in the 1930's, however, the family unit would serve as a nucleus for social cohesion, organization, discipline and represented on a smaller scale the authoritarian and hierarchical features representative of the emerging Leviathan.[53] The family provided the foundation for a steady if not increasing birth rate and allowed for a conducive atmosphere where children could be raised with minimum state investment.[54]

The increased emphasis on the family was welcomed by most Soviet citizens. In an era marked by the collectivization of agriculture, rapid nationalization of industry, mass arrests and purges, the family was revered as a safe haven which provided emotional support for its members and temporary shelter from the outside storm.

In order for the family to be representative of the new political and social order, certain changes had to take place. The new socialist family depended on marital stability, and the Family Legislation of 1936 reflected this by making divorces costly and difficult to obtain. According to the 1936 decree, the first divorce would cost Soviet citizens fifty

---

[52] George St. George, Our Soviet Sister (Washington: R. B.Luce, 1973), 235.

[53] Lapidus, 112.

[54] Stites, 385.

rubles, the second 150 rubles and the third divorce 300 rubles.[55] Divorced fathers were obliged to pay one forth of their wage for the maintenance of one child, one third for two children and one half of his wage for three or more children.[56] The 1944 Law on divorce further increased restrictions on divorce and increased the divorce fee to 500-2000 rubles which could be charged to one or both parties upon decision of the court.[57] The 1944 law also discriminated against children out of wedlock. De-facto marriages were not recognized and children born into such unions were not able to obtain paternity rights.[58] The birth certificates of these children listed the father as "unknown".

The Soviet government's effort to promote the stable nuclear family was ultimately related to the overall decline in Soviet birth rates. In the April 27th, 1936 edition of the paper Trud (Labour), Stalin stated,

> *We need men. Abortion which destroys life is not acceptable in our country. The Soviet woman has the same rights as the man, but that does not free her from a great and honorable duty which nature has given her: she is a mother, she gives life. And this is certainly not a private affair but one of great social importance."* [59]

To support and ensure the family's procreative functions the 1920 law permitting abortion was modified in June 1936. Abortions were outlawed except when continuation of pregnancy endangered the life or threatened serious injury to the health of the pregnant woman, or if the unborn child could inherit a serious disease from either parent.[60] Doctors found performing illegal abortions were "criminally punishable with one or two

---

[55] Buckley, 128.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid, 134.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Stites, 386.

[60] Buckley, 129.

years of imprisonment".[61] Those persons found performing abortions without medical training could receive no less than three years of imprisonment.[62] Women undergoing an abortion could expect a social reprimand and a fine of up to 300 rubles for subsequent offenses. [63]

While the abortion legislation of 1920 had been a controversial issue prior to its enactment, the social upheaval caused by the Civil War, the lack of birth control and the early Bolsheviks' committment to women's emancipation made the legalization of abortion a necessary evil. Stalin's dismissed prior legislation by arguing that women's supreme obligation to the Soviet state was motherhood. Moreover, a large propaganda campaign was launched in attempts to inform and convince women of their obligation. Articles appeared in women's magazines entitled " The Tragedy of My Life", " Let Children Live" and "Every Woman Must Have A Child" which portrayed the moral implications of abortions and the joys of motherhood.[64] Other articles were devoted to the health risks of abortion. Finally, economic arguments made their appearance in the press. Accordingly, under capitalism abortion was necessary due to unemployment and exploitation. The Soviet situation was different because "exceptional improvements in well being" had taken place and "the prosperity of the working population was increasing every year in every month". [65] It was argued that unlike women in capitalist societies, Soviet women had access to maternity benefits, financial help, a growing number of maternity homes, and kindergartens. Dissenting views on the abortion policy appeared in the press, but the new law remained intact. Women had no choice but to take matters in their own hands.

---

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 130.

[64] Ibid., 131.

[65] Z. Tettenborn "Materinstvo v sovetskoi strane," Vlast' Sovetov (June 1936): 7-8, cited in Buckley, 130.

The first year of the abortion restriction showed a marked decline (more than three fold in urban areas and four fold in rural areas) in abortions being performed, yet, "the initial effects of the prohibition subsided, and the number of abortions increased rapidly up until 1940". [66] Women with an unwanted pregnancy terminated the fetus through illegal means. To off set the heavy population losses incurred by World War II, the Soviet leadership launched a new social campaign to increase the birth rate. The 1944 legislation increased financial support and maternity benefits for pregnant women, and taxes were levied on childless citizens.

Legislation of 1936 and 1944 which affected marriage, divorce and abortion had an entirely different purpose than the laws enacted by the early Bolsheviks. Earlier decrees had sought to liberate women from past restrictions and to foster women's emancipation in all spheres of public and private life. Under Stalin however, legislation was enacted to impede the emancipation of women. In his work, The Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky concluded that,

> *The Thermidorean legislation is beating a retreat to the bourgeois models, covering its retreat with false speeches about the sacredness of the "new" family. On this question, too, socialist bankruptcy covers itself with hypocritical respectability.* [67]

Living in exile, Trotsky could afford to be critical of the Stalinist regime. For Soviet women living in a political climate where dissent meant personal peril, women had no choice but to comply with Stalinist policies and wait for a turn of events.

Under Stalin the woman question was a non-issue. Past advancements made by the early Bolsheviks in liberating women from social and political restrictions were not congruent with Stalin's objectives or policies. Women's equality meant their equal

---

[66] E. A. Sadvokasova, "Rol' aborta v osushchestvlenii soznatel'novo materinstva v SSSR," in Izuchenie vosproizvodstva naseleniya, ed. T. V. Ryabushkin, (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 209, cited in Sacks, Women's Work in Soviet Russia, 39.

[67] Leon Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going? (London: New Park Publications, 1973), 157.

participation in the labour force combined with their household and procreative functions. The nuclear family was promoted and a cult of motherhood was developed. The lack of consumer goods and services due to the regime's concentrated investment in heavy industry resulted in the Soviet women's double burden. It was during Stalin's rule, however, that a common trend solidified regarding the future of women's emancipation.

Women participating in the bab'i bunty, and those who went against Stalin's abortion policy, shared a common objective. Women would act against the government when its hold on their daily lives became too strong. Participation in the Party was not considered a viable solution to women's problems, but a private network of women sharing common concerns became increasingly important. Only the kitchen table provided a relatively safe place for information exchange, one where alliances could develop, and future actions be planned.

CHAPTER IV

" It turns out that it is the men who do the administrating and the women who do the work."[1]

To analyze the status of women during Khrushchev's leadership, it is necessary to review women's involvement in both Party and government organizations, as well as their participation in dissent. By reviewing the factors causing women's low participation in government organizations, and Khrushchev's inconsistent policies towards the status of women it will be shown that the woman question continued to be subsumed under the larger issues affecting Soviet society. Moreover, the role of women in dissent will be examined and the factors which hindered the dissident community from addressing the woman question will be reviewed. In an era which seemed condusive to the re-emergence of the woman question, little progress was made.

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 marked a new era in the Soviet political leadership. A struggle for political control pitted Malenkov, Beria, Molotov and Khrushchev against each other. In the series of events which followed, Khrushchev came out as the victor and stepped into the leadership position.[2]

If one concept stands out about Khrushchev's ten year term in office, it was his attempt to de-Stalinize Soviet society. De-Stalinization, or the process of removing Stalinist abberations from the social, political and economic spheres of the Soviet Union was begun by Khrushchev. For de-Stalinization to succeed, Khrushchev needed the support of the Soviet population. The new regime launched a recruitment campaign in an attempt to expand the Party base and increase the representation of previously neglected

---

[1] Susan Allot, "Soviet Rural Women: Employment and Family Life," in Barbara Holland ed. Soviet Sisterhood (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 188, quoted in Izvestiia, 26 December 1961, 4.

[2] For a more detailed analysis of the contention for power please see Roy Medvedev Khrushchev, trans. Brian Pearce (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 56-71.

groups. It soon became evident that women comprised the largest of underrepresented groups in the Soviet Union.

In 1956 women made up only 19.7 percent of all Party members and held 3.9 percent of the seats in the Central Committee.[3] It was under Khrushchev that the first woman, Elena Furtseva, sat on the Politburo and had voting capacity. Furtseva served for only three years.[4] Women in the government were more visible at local levels than in the higher echelons of power. In 1959 women constituted 41% of deputies to local soviets but held 27% of the seats in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.[5]

In the report given at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev focused primarily on the new role of the Communist Party, but he made a point of addressing the low political activity of women stating,

> *It should not be overlooked that many party and state organs put women forward for leadership posts with timidity. Very few women hold leading posts in the party and soviets, particulary among party committee secretaries, chairpersons of Soviet executive committees, and among directors of industrial enterprises, collective farms, machine tractor stations and state farms.*[6]

The discussion of women's low participation began by Khrushchev was not taken up by the press or academia until the end of the decade. One factor causing the delay was that the woman question was considered officially solved. Because equality of the sexes

---

[3] The percentage of female Party membership in 1956 is taken from Table 24 in Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society, 210, and percentage of women in Central Committee for 1956 is taken from Table 28 in Lapidus, 219.

[4] Lapidus, 216.

[5] Table 21 in Lapidus, 205. It must be remembered that the government functioned as a rubber stamp institution. Party organizations wielded the power in the Soviet polity.

[6] Nikita Khrushchev, "Otchetnyi doklad TsK KPSS, XX s''ezd kommunisticheskoi partii sovetskogo soiuza, stenograficheskii otchet, vol. 1 (Moscow, Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1956), 109, cited in Buckley, 140.

had officially been regarded as achieved, and socialism had brought "genuine emancipation" to women, the Party was unwilling to analyze the factors which excluded women from participating in politics. The solved status also prevented newspapers or academia from conducting a detailed and theoretical discussion on the range of women's problems. Moreover, since the discipline of sociology was in its infancy, analytic methods for studying groups were limited. Only during the Brezhnev years (1964-1982) was the woman question declared unsolved. The re-opening of the woman question was largely due to the new leader's economic worries about productivity and the future supply of labour rather an an official interest in women's liberation. Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev's leadership the majority of Soviet women remained outside of official organizations as the problems of daily life, or, the double burden, left women little time or energy for political activity. Moreover, during both Khrushchev and Brezhnev's leaderships, discussions on the status of women were deterred by the unshifting focus of Soviet Society on the process of de-Stalinzation.

The process of de-Stalinization began shortly after Khrushchev came into power. The first signal that Khrushchev was committed to this course of action was the lifting of certain censorship restrictions. The Communist regime has traditionally used literature as an instrument for achieving state purposes, and censorship as a means of controlling ideas. The intelligentsia however have used literature as a barometer to gauge the political climate of the time, and the new censorship policy of 1953 signaled that a political and social thaw had begun. The thaw was maintained by the leadership through the Secret Speech given by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Party Congress in the early hours of February 25, 1956.

The purpose of the Secret Speech was to denounce Stalin and his Cult of Personality. The Secret Speech told of the conflict between Stalin and Lenin, and how even after Lenin's "Testament," Stalin came into power.[7] Khrushchev spoke of the many crimes Stalin committed against the party, such as the illegal mass repressions, the liquidation of two-thirds of the Central Committee members who had been elected in

[7] Medvedev, 88.

1934, the tortures of prisoners and members of Politburo, and the doctor's plot Stalin had begun shortly before his death.[8]

It is questionable whether Khrushchev intended the Secret Speech to remain confidential. The main points of the report were known abroad the next day and a few months later the United States State Department circulated the full text of the report in English.[9] At home rumors of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin spread quickly, especially among Party circles.[10] In less than a month after the Twentieth Party Congress convened, the Central Committee declassified the report and the text was circulated to all raions (townships) and gorkoms (districts).[11] The release of 7-8 million political prisoners between 1954- 1959, and their own personal accounts of life in the concentration camps under Stalin's regime, confirmed the allegations made in the Secret Speech.[12] Social and political unrest increased among Soviet society. The older generation who equated Stalin with progress and socialism were now spiritually bankrupt. The younger generation began to equate Stalin with oppression, lies, and despotism.[13] Not only did Soviet society have to face the truth of what occurred during the past thirty years, but the population was haunted by feelings of guilt for their responsibility in the making of that history.[14] Soviet writers were quick to respond to the new social climate, and liberal writers began reflecting that mood in their work. The stage was set for a vicious battle to begin: one in which the government would give their opponents the ammunition and then attempt to control its use.

---

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 92.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Joshua Rubenstein, Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights, with a foreword by Harrison Salisbury (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 6.

[13] Cornelia Gerstenmaier, The Voices of the Silent, trans. Susan Hecker (New York: Hart, 1972), 40.

[14] Ibid.

While Khrushchev viewed the relaxation of censorship as a means of enlisting the support of writers in de-Stalinization, the writers felt that the time had arrived to explore themes which had earlier been off limits.[15] Beginning in 1954, with the publication of Ehrenburg's The Thaw, writers took on topics and themes which explored the many experiences of living under Stalin's rule. Socialist realism and other literary constructs of the past were replaced by a truthful and sincere approach. Writers were determined to confront the reality of Soviet life and in doing so they questioned what society had become and how it became that way. They held the Party and Government accountable and refused to accept that the cult of personality was responsible for everything.[16] As one historian points out,

> *They (the writers) delved deeper, revealing corruption public and private cowardice, apathy and indifference, economic backwardness. They saw Russia in the throes of what seemed to them a congenital disease for which no one had yet offered an adequate diagnosis, much less a prospective cure.*[17]

Women joined in this literary development, and writers such as Anna Akhmatova, Lidia Chukovskaya, Evgenia Ginzburg and Nadezhda Mandelshtam attained prominence for their depictions of how women's lives were affected by Stalin's rule. The majority of writers, however, did not address the tragedies suffered by women under Stalin.

In 1956 the publication and the intense debate which followed Vladimir Dudintsev's novel Not By Bread Alone signalled that the Soviet regime could not control the discussion Khrushchev had initiated. The Soviet occupation of Hungary in October and November of 1956 indicated that the thaw was officially over. The Soviet regime

---

[15] Rubenstein, 10.

[16] Abraham Rothberg, The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime 1953-1970 (London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 18.

[17] Ibid., 18.

implemented harsher internal measures and a more strict control of censorship.[18] By regaining tighter control over the intellectual community, the Soviet leadership began to use writers as examples of what would happen to individuals not towing the Party line. The Soviet regime's first victim was author Boris Pasternak.

The Boris Pasternak affair altered the course of the social and political history of dissent. Pasternak was a folk hero, for not only had he survived the Stalin era, maintaining his integrity as a writer, but his work was revered.[19] In 1954 ten poems from Doctor Zhivago were published and the public awaited the upcoming novel.[20] The manuscript was finished by 1955 and circulated among numerous magazine and publishing houses in the Soviet Union. The novel was rejected on the grounds that it suggested the October Revolution betrayed the Russian people.[21] Pasternak then sent a copy of Doctor Zhivago to Italy where it was published on November 15, 1957.[22]

There was little response from the Soviet government until 1958, when Pasternak received the Nobel Prize for literature. Soviet authorities quickly launched a campaign against the author. Not only was Pasternak expelled from the Writer's Union, denounced in the press as a "traitor," a " malevolent philistine" and a "decadent formalist," but his companion Olga Ivinskaya was threatened as well.[23] Unable to allow Ivinskaya to suffer again on his account (under Stalin she had been arrested, tortured and sent to a labour camp for refusing to confess that she and Pasternak were western agents), two days after accepting the award Pasternak was forced to renounce it, to plead for his citizenship and abase himself in Pravda, stating that he rejected the award after learning it was politically

---

[18] Rubenstein, 12.

[19] Ibid., 10.

[20] Ibid., 11.

[21] Ibid., 15.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Gerstenmaier, 50.

motivated.[24] Pasternak became a hero due to his courage in challenging the state control of literature.

Other, more spontaneous attempts in challenging the government's censorship restrictions followed, one of the most important beginning on July 29, 1958 at the unveiling of the statue of poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. After the concluding ceremonies of the Mayakovsky unveiling, several unofficial poets read from their works. The crowd was enthusiastic and plans were made for readings to take place once a month. The meetings increased in frequency and the verses of well loved poets as well as those of unknown poets could be heard in the Square. After the readings people lingered, striking up conversations with other poetry lovers and the topics digressed from poetry to literature, philosophy, censorship and at times to politics. After several months the authorities cracked down on the meetings and crowds were no longer permitted to assemble.[25]

The Mayakovsky incident and the regime's treatment of Boris Pasternak widened the chasm between the Soviet regime and the cultural elite. Having tasted a larger portion of freedom, the cultural elite was unwilling to give it up, and instead sought ways to evade Soviet censorship. Artists, poets and writers began to arrange unofficial meetings in private homes to share their work. Many authors followed Pasternak's example, and by using pseudonyms to protect themselves against reprisals, sent their manuscripts secretly to the West for publication. Popular demand for unofficial and forbidden literature among the Soviet population increased and the demand was met by the circulation of samizdat materials.

Samizdat, which literally means, "self published," is a play on the names of all the government controlled publishing houses (gosizdat [State Publishing House], Politizdat [publishing house for political literature] etc.). Samizdat first became important in the late 1950's and early 1960's as a way of disseminating non-official uncensored works. Samizdat content ranged from manuscripts of books and poetry to mimeographed letters,

---

[24] Rubenstein, 12.

[25] Ibid., 17.

and petitions. At first samizdat was circulated among friends, and then to a wider audience. The first samizdat appeared in 1959 when Alexander Ginzburg began publishing the typewritten magazine Syntax.[26] The magazine printed only verse, some by well known poets and other poems by lesser known individuals.[27] Only three issues of Syntax appeared before Ginzburg was arrested and imprisoned.[28] Other samizdat publications soon followed . Boomerang, appeared in 1960 and a year later Phoenix 61 was published.[29]

Fiction also appeared in samizdat form and authors were able to portray contemporary or historic Soviet life realistically. Literary constructs of socialist realism gave way to personal reflections and experience. Much of the early fiction which appeared in samizdat was characterized by a pessimistic and negative tone.[30] The works reflected the mood of the times, and the general disillusionment and bitterness that a generation of people felt. Many of the fictional elements to be found in samizdat novels or poems were fictional in name only. Most of the material was auto-biographical in content as it documented the personal tragedies which occurred because of Stalinism.

Female writers, although few in number, shared in the documentation of the Stalinist era. Unlike their male contemporaries, female writers focused primarily on the crimes committed against the family. These writers described the constant terror and suffering women endured when forced to witness, and unable to stop, the arbitrary repression of loved ones. This theme was taken up by the highly revered poet Anna Akhmatova.

Anna Akhmatova (1899-1966), like Pasternak was one of the few well known poets who had survived the Stalinist purges. Her family was not so fortunate.

---

[26] Rubenstein, 18.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 19.

[30] Ibid., 18.

Akhmatova's husband had been shot in the 1920's and her son was arrested twice, and sentenced to fifteen years in the Gulag Archipelago.[31] During the early 1960's Akhmatova's poem "Requiem", was published in samizdat form. The poem immortalized a mother's anguish over her son's imprisonment and captured the reality women at home faced during the Stalinist purges. Akhmatova begins the "Requiem" by stating in her introductory comments, " By Way of a Preface",

> *In the terrible years of the Yezhovshchina, I spent seventeen months in the prison queues in Leningrad. Somehow, one day, someone "identified" me. Then a woman standing behind me, whose lips were blue with cold, and who, naturally enough, had never even heard of my name, emerged from that state of torpor common to us all and, putting her lips close to my ear (there, everyone spoke in whispers), asked me:*
>
> *-And could you describe this?*
>
> *And I answered her:*
>
> *-I can.*
>
> *Then something vaguely like a smile flashed across what once had been her face.*[32]

"Requiem" was published abroad in 1960 and again in 1963. Only under the policies of Glasnost was it printed in the Soviet Union. Many of Akhmatova's later works were first brought to the public attention through Lidia Chukovskaya, a close friend of Akhmatova's and a literary figure in her own right.

Lidia Chukovskaya (1910-), daughter of the children's writer Kornei Chukovsky, experienced her own anguish when her second husband died in Stalin's purges. Two of her works, The Deserted House and Going Under, deal with the psychological repercussions of living in constant terror. Chukovskaya wrote the Deserted House in the winter of 1939- 1940 but kept it hidden until the appropriate political climate arrived. The plot of The Deserted House centers around Olga Petrovna, a loyal communist citizen

---

[31] Walter Arndt, trans. and ed. Anna Akhmatova: Selected Poems (Michigan: Ardis, 1976), xxxiv - xxxv.

[32] Ibid., 145.

who at first reacts to the Stalin "Purges" as most citizens did: without suspicion. Only when her son is arrested as an "enemy of the people' does Olga begin to question the validity of the Purges and realize the horrible event that were taking place in the Soviet Union. The Deserted House appeared in samizdat form after the Twenty Second Party Congress in 1961 when Chukovskaya felt that the reasons and the consequences of the Stalin era and the suffering which occurred needed to be revealed - in order that the same mistake was never made again by the people or its leaders. Chukovskaya was committed to truth. She later became a dissident activist defending human rights for all. Evgenia Ginzburg's (1896-1980) two volume autobiographical work Journey into the Whirlwind (Krutoi marshrut), and Within the Whirlwind remains one of the few accounts of camp life from a female perspective.[33] The first volume tells of Ginzburg's arrest in 1937 and her sentence of ten years imprisonment to the harshest of labour camps, Kolyma. The second volume describes Ginzburg's last years in prison, her love for and marriage to the prisoner, Anton Walter, and her efforts upon release to build a home near Anton's prison camp. Ginzburg's constant fear of an arbitrary rearrest and new prison term pervade her creation of a new life. Both volumes were widely circulated in samizdat, and have only been published in the USSR under the policies of Glasnost.

Nadezhda Mandelshtam (1899-1980), had her memoirs published in samizdat around the same time. Her first work, Hope Against Hope, concentrates on the fate of her husband, the famous poet Osip Mandelshtam. It is one of the best works of this period which dealt with life under Stalin. Nadezhda Mandelshtam's second work, Hope Abandoned, is no ordinary sequel, but a book of judgement. Not only does Mandelshtam "ruthlessly attack the moral deafness and moral degradation which supported Stalinism, but she celebrates her victory over time and her faith in the abiding value of poetry and its sacramental nature."[34]

---

[33] Victor Terras, ed. Handbook of Russian Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 172.

[34] Ibid., 271.

Poet, journalist and future dissident Natalyia Gorbanevskaya (1936-) had only a few of her poems published in official Soviet journals, although many of her poems were widely circulated in samizdat and were published abroad, beginning in 1969.[35] In 1968 Gorbanevskaya was one of the demonstrators protesting the invasion of Czechoslovakia in Red Square. Gorbanevskaya was arrested and confined for a week in the Kashchenko Psychiatriac Hospital where she was diagnosed as having. " deep psychopathy and possible latent schizophrenia".[36] Gorbanevskaya wrote of her experiences both in the demonstration at Red Square (Red Square at Noon) and her confinement to the mental hospital in her sketch, "Free Medical Care." Gorbanevskaya was also the first editor of the samizdat publication Chronicle of Current Events.

Poet Anna Akhmatova, and authors Nadezhda Mandelshtam, Evgenia Ginzburg, Lidia Chukovskaya and Natalya Gorbanevskaya depicted that human suffering had no boundaries or sexual divisions. Their works subordinated the woman question to the human question because women's suffering was only one aspect in larger category of human tragedy. The works of Gorbanevskaya, Chukovskaya, Akhmatova, Mandelshtam and Ginzburg also hinted at the future course the woman question would travel. Women would continue to participate in unofficial organizations, but their primary concern would be for human rights. Such was the case of Maria Sinyavsky and Larisa Bogoraz Daniel's involvement in their husbands' trial.

Andrei Sinyavsky 1925- was the first prominent member of the Union of Soviet Writers to be arrested after Stalin's death.[37] A professor at the Gorky Institute of World Literature and a respected literary critic, Sinyavsky began his dissident activity in 1956 when he wrote the essay, On Socialist Realism, and the novel The Trial Begins.[38] In

---

[35] Ibid., 179.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Rubenstein, 31.

[38] S.P deBoer, E.J Driessen and H.L Verhaar, eds., Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents in the Soviet Union, 1956-1975 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 523.

December of that year he started sending his manuscripts abroad for publication using the pseudonym Abram Tertz.[39] Sinyavsky continued to write throughout the years, completing the novella Lyubimov, a short story of aphorisms entitled Unguarded Thoughts and the story "Pkhentz."[40] Sinyavsky's works did not appear in print abroad until 1959. For Five years the real identity of Abram Tertz remained hidden. On September 8, 1965 Sinyavsky's luck had run out and he was arrested together with Yuri Daniel.[41]

Yuri Daniel (1925- 1990) was unknown to the public before his arrest. A war pensioner and later a school teacher, Daniel began his career as a writer of verse translations.[42] From 1957-65 Daniel translated some forty collections of poetry from Yiddish, the Slavonic and Caucasian languages.[43] Beginning in 1958 Daniel began writing his own work. His first attempt at publishing an original work in Russia was unsuccessful.[44] In 1960 Daniel asked for help from Sinyavsky in getting his works published abroad. Using the pseudonym of Nikola Arzhak, four stories of Daniel's were published. These were "Atonement", "The Man From Minap", "Hands" and "This is Moscow Speaking".[45] In all Daniel published four stories. Daniel was arrested on September 12, 1965 at the Moscow airport, Vnukovo.[46]

The Trail of Sinyavsky and Daniel began on February 10, 1966 and lasted four days. Both writers were tried under article 70 of the criminal code, "anti-Soviet agitation

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] Rubenstein, 33.

[41] deBoer et al., 523.

[42] Ibid., 98.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Rubenstein, 34.

[45] Ibid.

[46] deBoer et al. eds., 98.

and propaganda". The main evidence against the writers was their published works.[47] It was the first time in Soviet history that fiction was put on trial. Both Daniel and Sinyavsky denied their guilt, but to no avail. Daniel received five years imprisonment while Sinyavsky received the maximum penalty of seven years.[48]

During the trial the defendants wives, Maria Sinyavsky and Larisa Bogoraz-Daniel, sat in the courtroom recording the testimonies of witnesses, defendants and the remarks made by the judge, prosecutor and reactions from the audience.[49] Their efforts proved invaluable, for they produced a partial transcript of the trial. Copies of the transcript were made and reached a great number of individuals both within and outside of the intellectual circles. The transcript also made its way to Europe, where Western Communist leaders condemned the Soviet regime's actions.[50]

The Daniel-Sinyavsky trial altered the course of dissident history. While the trial was meant to intimidate the intellectual community, it in fact had the opposite effect. A new generation had matured who did not directly experience Stalin's terror, while the older generation was determined at all costs not to allow the government to impose Stalinist methods of terror on its people. The trial and the attempt by the Brezhnev leadership (1964-1982) to rehabilitate Stalin provoked an outpouring of mail to the Soviet leader. Letters from the literary circles as well as from eminent scientists, doctors and cultural figures defended Daniel and Sinyavsky, and warned Brezhnev of the danger inherent in the rehabilitation of Stalin and his methods of terror.[51] A literary movement had turned political, and as a result, the Soviet regime was faced with a growing number of individuals who would openly challenge the State to enforce existing laws such as

---

[47] Rubenstein, 38.

[48] Ibid., 40.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 41.

[51] Ibid., 43.

those guaranteed by the Soviet Union's Constitution of 1936 and later, by the laws guaranteed by the Helsinki Accord signed by the Soviet Government in August of 1975.

Dissent developed into a movement when groups formed in the late 1960's and 1970's which specifically defended human rights. A word of caution is necessary in the use of terminology. The term dissident movement is a misleading phrase. As Harrison Salisbury so aptly remarks in the foreword of Rubenstein's book,

> *there is no real 'dissident movement' and that is its strength and its weakness. The dissidents come together from a hundred directions... They are young and old; they represent Moscow and Leningrad and unknown villages in the Urals. If they could be gathered in one room they would create a shouting match such as has never been heard before. They disagree among themselves on everything except the right to be heard freely in their homeland.*[52]

With this in mind, the term dissident movement will be used in this thesis to refer to all dissident groups regardless of divergent attitudes and activities.

Beginning in 1969 with the Action Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR, and ending with the formation of the Working Commission to Investigate The Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes in 1977, human rights groups evolved into an organized movement which maintained their existence depite increasing measures of governmental repression.

The human rights movement in the Russian Republic was the largest of all dissident groups. Basing their activities on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and later the signing by the Soviet leadership of the Helsinki accord in August 1975, human rights groups were concerned with the Soviet government's adherence to the humanitarian provisions set forth by both international documents. Both the U.N. declaration and the Helsinki accords were regarded by the human rights activists as the minimum in obligatory civil rights for all countries that

---

[52] Rubenstein, Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights, with a foreword by Harrison Salisbury (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985),ix-x.

signed these documents. The human rights groups were not acting to expand civil rights, but worked to ensure that these documents were adhered to by the Soviet government.

The methods used by the human rights movements to obtain their goals had a common ideological basis with the dissident movement. Activities were carried out in non-violent struggles within the framework of the Soviet Constitution.[53] It is interesting to note that the first human rights group, the Action Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR, was not an organized, cohesive or ideologically based circle, but a list of signatures on a petition.

The Action (Initiative) Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR began on May 20, 1969 as a reaction to the arrest of former Major General Pyotr Grigorenko.[54] On May 28, 1969 fifteen people, including Natalya Gorbanevskaya, sent a letter to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights complaining of civil rights violations in the USSR.[55] In this letter, the political trials of Daniel, Sinyavsky, Bukovsky, Galanskov, and Ginzburg were mentioned.[56] The letter also referred to the cause of the Crimean Tatars and to the trials of Soviet Jews wishing to emigrate to Israel. Finally, the petition called attention to the confinement of normal persons in psychiatric hospitals due to their political convictions. The arrest of Major Grigorenko was used as one example. Because the plight of women was not considered a political issue, the Action Group did not mention the violation of women's rights.

Thirty nine people supporting the Action Group's initiative signed the petition, not knowing that they would be identified as members of an organization. Without consulting

---

[53] Ludmilla Alexeyeva, Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights trans. John Glad and Carol Pearce (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 17.

[54] Julia Wishnevsky, " The Rise of Dissidence in the Brezhnev Era," in Radio Free Europe- Radio Liberty Research, (hereafter abbreviated as RL) 453/82 (November 15, 1982): 1.

[55] Alexeyeva, 291.

[56] Rubenstein, 123.

their supporters, two of the initial members of the Action Group had added the name of their group to the list of signatures.[57]

While the letter had been a collective effort, it was not intended to a be a declaration of an organized group.[58] Soviet officials however, considered this petition differently than previous testimonies, since the signers called themselves a group- the Initiative for the Defense of Human Rights in USSR. Within half a year of this petition many members had been harassed and arrested.[59] Eleven of the fifteen members were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and psychiatric treatment.[60] Three of the members were forced to emigrate under threat of arrest and one member died of natural causes.[61] Although the Action group helped publicize Soviet abuse of human rights and gave the impression that the human rights movement itself was becoming an organized political opposition, in actuality the group hardly existed as a formal committee.[62] By its success in gaining public recognition, however, the Action group proved to be an important example to future dissident groups. The Action group's early demise made future dissident groups more cautious, organized and hence more productive.

The Committee for Human Rights in the USSR was formed on November 4, 1970 by Andrei Sakharov, Valeri Chalidze, and Andrei Tverdokhlebov.[63] The Committee defined itself as, " a creative association acting in accordance with the laws of the

---

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., 124.

[60] RL 453/82.

[61] RL 453/82.

[62] Rubenstein, 124.

[63] "The Committee for Human Rights in the USSR," in A Chronicle of Current Events (hereafter abbreviated as CCE) 17 (1970): 45.

land."[64] The aims of the committee were to provide "consultative assistance" to the government on human rights problems, "creative assistance" to persons engaged in research into the theoretical aspects of the human rights question, and the specific nature of this question in a socialist society.[65] Another function of the Committee for Human Rights was to provide the populace and government with "legal enlightenment, i.. particular, the propaganda of international and Soviet legal documents on Human Rights".[66]

The Committee declared itself ready for contact with other public and international non-governmental organizations " as long as their activities are based on the principles of the United Nations and are not aimed at harming the Soviet Union."[67] The Committee came to the attention of ordinary citizens who perceived it to be a kind of legal aid society which could help in various manners.[68] The members were constantly inundated with visitors at all hours from cities thousands of miles away, and only a small percentage of the guests (1 in 25) brought a case that was worthwhile pursuing.[69] The Committee took up general questions such as compulsory confinement in psychiatric hospitals, the right to an attorney, and the rights of the Tatars to return to their native Crimea.[70] Individual members also took up cases on their own initiative.[71]

---

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., 46.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Rubenstein, 132.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., 133.

[71] Ibid.

The next major dissident circle to emerge was a direct result of the signing by the Soviet leadership of the Helsinki accords in August 1975. The Group to Assist the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords In the USSR was formed on 12 May 1976.[72]

The founding members of the Helsinki Watch Group were Ludmilla Alexeyeva, Elena Bonner, Mikhail Bernshtam, Alexander Ginzburg, Alexander Korchak, Pyotr Grigorenko, Vitaly Rubin, Anatoly Marchenko, Anatoly Shcharansky, and the group's leader, Yuri Orlov. Malva Landa also joined the group although she was not fully in agreement with the content of the declaration.[73] Other women members included Tatiana Baeva, Tamara Victor, Tatiana Lashkova and Galina Vishnevskaya.[74]

The aim of the Helsinki Watch group was to promote the compliance of the Final Act of the Conference on Co-operation and Security in Europe. The Helsinki group focused on basket three, principle Seven of the Accord headed, "Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief", and on the section headed "Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields', subsections 1. Human Contacts (primarily point b) emphasizing the Reunification of Families", (2) Information, (3) Co-operation and Exchanges in the Field of Culture, and (4) Co-operation and Exchanges in Field of Education.[75]

The primary method of the Helsinki group was to accept written complaints from all Soviet citizens concerning personal experiences relating to violations of these articles.[76] The Helsinki group would then investigate the allegation, analyze the

---

[72] "A New Public Association," in CCE 40, 95.

[73] Ibid., 97.

[74] This information was obtained in a fax from Natalia Pushkarova of Moscow State University in March 1993. The involvement of these women in the dissident movement will be addressed in a forthcoming book entitled Lageria i dissidentsvo v Rossia (Camps and the Dissident Movement in Russia).

[75] Ibid., 96.

[76] Ibid.

information concerning the violation, and then if applicable inform the public, and re-adress the complaint to all the heads of states which signed the Helsinki Act.[77]

There were certain cases where the Helsinki Group would come across concrete information concerning special violations of the Helsinki Accords such as the taking away of children from religious parents who wished to educate their children according to their beliefs, the forcible psychiatric treatment with the purpose of changing people's thoughts, conscience, religion or beliefs, dramatic instances of divided families, and special cases which revealed special inhumanity in regard to prisoners of conscience. In these cases the Helsinki watch group would appeal to the heads of states and to the public to form international commissions to check the information immediately, since the Helsinki Watch Group was limited in being able to conduct its own direct investigation and obtain the crucial and necessary information. [78]

In its six year life span, the Helsinki group issued about 200 documents and was considered the most authoritative of the independent associations in the Soviet Union.[79] The status of women in the Soviet Union, however, was not specifically adressed by this organization. Other Helsinki organizations were established in Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and Armenia, at which point the original group changed its name to the Moscow Group for Furthering the Implementation of the Helsinki Agreements in the USSR. The Moscow group disbanded on September 8, 1982, when seventy-five year old lawyer Sofia Kallistratova, one of the three remaining members of the Moscow group, was threatened with prosecution under Article 190-1 of the RSFSR Criminal code.[80]

The Helsinki Watch Group had several smaller organizations under it which focused on specific human rights violations. One of the most successful Helsinki affiliated organization was the Working Commission to Investigate The Use of Psychiatry

---

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] "The Moscow Helsinki Group Disbands," in RL 362\82, 2.

[80] Ibid.

for Political Purposes. This Commission was specifically concerned with the abuse by Soviet officials of admitting sane political prisoners into psychiatric hospitals because of their beliefs.

The Working Commission was formed under the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group on January 5, 1977 as a direct response to an increase in the use of psychiatric repression at the end of 1976.[81] The premise of the Working Commission was that not all political prisoners confined to psychiatric hospitals for political reasons were unhealthy. While the Commission admitted that there were political prisoners with mentally unsound minds, the purpose of the Commission was to ensure that the laws were being observed in the treatment of those admitted to psychiatric hospitals.[82]

The Working Commission compiled a list of psychiatrists and psychiatric hospitals where political prisoners were, and wrote hundreds of letters to doctors and administrators in attempts to abolish harmful treatment of cures and cruel treatment.[83] In its four year life span, twenty four information bulletins containing an index of political prisoners detained in psychiatric hospitals were published by the Working Commission.[84] The group operated until Feb. 1981 when the last participant was arrested.[85]

Having given a summary of the larger human rights groups in the RSFSR, it is now necessary to analyze the participation of women in these groups as well as the participation of women in Religious and National movements which formed in the 1970's. The majority of women in dissent participated by helping the male dissidents in their lives. While there is much anecdotal evidence suggesting the importance of women in the careers of the prominent dissidents, there has been little research done in this field. Until

---

[81] "Fact Sheet on Public Groups For Furthering The Implementation Of The Helsinki Agreements In The USSR," in RL 44/78, 3.

[82] Alexeyeva, 347.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

further material becomes available, no one will know the extent of women's influence on the dissident movement.

Khrushchev's term in office and the process of de-Stalinization had little effect on the status of women in the Soviet Union. Under Khrushchev, the woman question was considered as solved. While some attention was paid to the underrepresentation of women in Government and Party organizations, little was done to ameliorate the situtation. Discussions concerning problems specific to women such as the double burden and the lack of spare time were limited in scope. With the emergence and growth of the dissident movement, writers such as Lidiia Chukovskaya, Nadezhda Mandelshtam, Evgeniia Ginzburg and poet Anna Akhmatova, explored the fate of women under Stalin, but their works depicted women's suffering as one aspect of human tragedy. As literary dissent turned political, the woman question was considered a subordinate issue in the struggle for human rights. Women participated in the dissident movement but the initial participants did not attempt [illegible] issues specific to women onto the dissident agenda.

CHAPTER V

'Have you met his (the dissident's) mother?'
'Yes. A wonderful woman.'
'And do you know where she worked?'
'Isn't she retired?'
'Yes, officially she is. But so her son can give himself completely to his work his retired mother is still working in a boiler house.'
'Is that because she sympathizes with his views?' asked Valentina.
'I don't know. Probably she's just a good mother, and he's taking advantage of her without even realizing it.'[1]

This chapter examines women's participation in the dissident movement during the 1970's and early 1980's in the Russian republic. It will be shown that women were active in religious, national and human rights dissident groups but neither males or females in these groups promoted the woman question. The dissident community was unwilling to address the woman question, and the woman question remained subordinate to the liberation of all oppressed groups.

To understand why the woman question was not addressed by any of the religious, national and human rights movement it is necessary to analyze the role of women in the dissident movement. This is a complex task. At the present time there is no documentation available in the West which specifically addresses the issue of women in dissent. Sources devoted to the dissident movement have focused primarily on the activities of dissident groups, its prominent members and the forms of governmental repression used against the dissident community. Even though some women attained recognition for their participation in the dissident movement, there is an alarming lack of

[1] Julia Voznesenskaya, The Women's Decameron, trans. W. B. Linton (London: Minerva, 1991), 154.

information about them. Only in 1979, with the emergence of the Almanac:Women in Russia, was any mention made of the involvement of women in the dissident movement.

The female editors of the Almanac, alluded to the fact that women in the dissident movement took on the same role as the revolutionary women of the 19th and 20th centuries in Russia. According to the editors, because of the dissident community's patriarchal nature, issues specific to women were subordinated to the larger cause, and women were required to defend the human question at the expense of the woman question. Barbara Jancar expands on this point by stating that the primary reason women participated in dissent was not to promote feminist issues, but to defend human rights.[2] Injustice from the Soviet regime touched the lives of a potential dissident in a direct and personal manner: A relative or close friend was arrested, a husband was incarcerated, an application for an exit visa to Israel was refused.[3] The issues women in the dissident movement were concerned with were problems of injustice, inhumanity, oppression and suffering.[4]

It is not known for certain how many women were directly or indirectly involved in the dissident movement. According to The Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents in the Soviet Union, 1956-1975 out of 3,383, dissidents, 517, or fifteen percent were women. While women have historically been underrepresented in revolutionary and governmental organizations, this figure seems especially low, but until future material becomes available, it will not be known for certain what the participation rate of women in the dissident movement was. Despite the fact that women's participation in dissent has been largely ignored by both Western and Soviet scholars, women's activity in dissent should not be underestimated in scope or depth. By examining women in the religious, national and human rights movements it will be shown that women made a significant contribution to the movement.

---

[2] Barbara Wolfe Jancar, Women Under Communism (Baltimore: Johhs Hopkins Univeristy Press, 1979), 119.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 120.

The dissident movement in the Russian republic extends beyond the movement for human rights. While the human rights movement maintained a universal orientation for all citizens due to its neutral position on religion, politics, and nationality, other groups formed in the mid-60s and 70s which promoted a specific objective. Religious and national movements defended the right for self-determination, the right to emigrate or the right to practice a specific religion, as guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution, the U. N. Agreement of 1948 and the Helsinki Accords. Both national and religious movements had some success in working out an ideology, in uniting its supporters and in creating an organizational structure. Because religious and national movements focus on a narrowly defined goal, their greatest strength was also their greatest weakness.

Despite their common objectives in obtaining greater freedom, national and religious movements were not successful in unifying ideologically disparate groups. Religious and national sentiments which glued a specific group together, also repelled allegiances between different movements from forming. In this sense, both religious and national movements were less successful than the human rights movment in accomplishing their aims. By examining women in both religious and national movements, it will be shown that women involved in these groups were a different type of dissident than those involved in the human rights movement.

According to one statistic, approximately 25 percent of the population of the former Soviet Union practice some type of religion.[5] Among religious believers, it is women who outnumber men.[6] One survey conducted in several raions of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in 1976 showed 83 percent of the believers to be of the female sex.[7]

---

[5] Ludmilla Alexeyeva, Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights, trans. John Glad and Carol Pearce (Middletown: University Press, 1985), 244, citing Chronicle of Current Events 41, 126.

[6] "Soviet Women--Pillars of Religious Conviction," in RL 466/82, (8 November 1982): 1.

[7] "Soviet Women--Pillars of Religious Conviction," in RL 466/82, (8 November 1982): 1, citing D Danilov and V. Kobetsky, "Obshchestvennoe mnenie i nauchno-ateisticheskaya propaganda," Leningrad, 1976, RSFSR Znanie Society, 13.

Women constitute the majority of believers not only in the Russian Orthodox faith but among other religions as well. A poll conducted in Voronezh Oblast in the mid-1970's showed that 67.3 percent of Russian Orthodox believers and 79.4 percent of the Baptists were women.[8] These statistics are especially significant considering the hostile relationship between the Church and State in Soviet history.

From the Bolshevik seizure of power the Soviet regime has been aggressively atheist but only with the April 8, 1929 resolution passed on "Religious Cults" did the Soviet regime attempt to eradicate all religious organizations. Russian Orthodox members, Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to increasing measures of repression and persecution.

By 1942-43 the Soviet Government needed to mobilize the population in the war effort, and the leadership realized that a new relationship was needed between the state and the Church. Congregations were required to be registered with the Council on Religious Affairs and Cults. The Council acted as a government watchdog agency and placed restrictions on religious practice and doctrine. Tensions soon developed between religious communities and the state and various forms of dissent against state intervention arose. During Khrushchev's leadership, a full-scale campaign was launched against unregistered and official religious organizations and religious dissent increased.

Religious dissent ranged from practicing beliefs outside church walls to establishing non-official, church-run printing presses. A great number of women who participated in religious dissident activity were persecuted. According to The Samizdat Bulletin no. 99, July 1981, there were sixty-two prisoners of conscience, in jails, exile and in psychiatric hospitals. Out of the forty three women named in the article, ten women were from the True Orthodox Church, five women were Adventist believers, eleven were Baptists, two were Roman Catholics and one was a Uniate.[9] Lithuanian Helena Celmina, author of Sievietes PSRS Cietumos (Women in Soviet Camps), estimated that in 1982

---

[8] Soviet Women--Pillars of Religious Conviction," in RL 466/82, (8 November 1982): 1 citing Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie, November 1975, 100.

[9] " On Women, Prisoners of Conscience," in Samizdat Bulletin 99 (July 1981): 1.

there were approximately 100 women prisoners of conscience in the Soviet Union, and approximately half of these women were convicted due to their religious beliefs and related activities.[10] Examples of religious persecution ranged in degree and severity. Zoya Krakhmalnikova, member of the Orthodox Christian religion and compiler and editor of the Christian readings Nadezhda (Hope), was arrested due to her activities and tried on charges of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. " Krakhmalnikova was sentenced to one year in camps followed by five years in exile. When asked if she felt bitterness towards the authorities for her prison term and exile, Krakhmalnikova remarked that what happened to her was " a mercy of God. Only in prison did I understand that I must learn Christianity".[11] Other women experienced more extreme forms of government repression for their religious convictions.

Illiterate Orthodox believer Tatiana Karpovna Krasnova was sentenced to seven years of strict-regime camp and three years of exile for having thrown into mail boxes handwritten poems in which the persecution and abuse of believers was condemned. At the age of 75, having served her prison term, she was sent into exile and died shortly after.[12] Orthodox nun Valeriya Makeeva who made belts with prayers embroidered on them was committed to a psychiatric hospital in 1979 for an indefinite period of time.[13] Lidya Vins, chairman of the Council of Relatives of Christian Evangelical Prisoners was sentenced to three years in camps at the age of sixty five.[14] Christian poet Irina Ratushinskaya was sentenced in 1983 to a seven year term in strict-regime labour camps

---

[10] "The Life of Imprisoned Women Believers in Soviet Camps," in RL 409/82 (11 October 1982): 1, citing Kronid Lyubarsky ed., Spisok politzaklyuchennykh SSSR 4, (Munich-Brussels: May, 1982).

[11]" A Labour of Love: An Interview With Zoya Krakhmalnikova, Moscow, June 9, 1988," in The Samizdat Bulletin 181 (Spring 1989): 19.

[12] "Women in The GULag: Nijole Sadunaite Tells About Her Orthodox Fellow Prisoners," in The Samizdat Bulletin 170 (June 1987): 1.

[13] RL, 466/82, 4.

[14] Ibid.

for her poetry and religious convictions. In camp her health deteriorated rapidly. Only after her case received world publicity was she released in 1986.[15]

Persecution fell not only upon women believers, but their children as well. Often children of religious parents had to endure persecution by classmates, teachers and headmasters. One mother belonging to the True and Free Adventists testified that,

> *Teacher V. B. Burshei told the pupils to tie a Pioneer scarf round my son Vitaly's neck by force and, nicknaming him 'the angel,' asked the pupils to ridicule him. Headmaster N.P. Baido said more than once, 'You eat our bread, breathe Soviet air, but you're worse than all drunkards and chain-smokers.' Often words turned into actions: my children received blows on the face and back from teachers.*[16]

Moreover, mothers were often threatened by the authorities with being stripped of their parental rights. Children could be taken away from them by order of a court and placed in state boarding schools. In May 1977, more than 4,000 mothers from 139 locations addressed an open letter to the Soviet leaders protesting against the fact that several believer parents had their children taken from them.[17] Daughter organizations of the Helsinki watch group were established to police such religious persecution. These included the Christian committee for the Defense of Believer's Rights in the USSR, the group of the All-Union Church of Faithful and Free Seventh- Day Adventists for legally combating and investigating the persecution of Believers in the USSR and the Catholic committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in Lithuania.[18] Another form of dissent women were actively involved in was national dissent.

---

[15] "Irina Ratushinskaya At Liberty," in RL 384/86 (October 13, 1986): 1.

[16] Walter Parchomenko, Soviet Images of Dissidents and Nonconformists (New York: Praeger), 1986, 201., citing selected testimony submitted in the form of collected letters to the Madrid Review Conference of the Helsinki Accords held in 1980.

[17] RL 446/82, 5.

[18] RL 362/82,

Dissident movements promoting national minority rights emerged as a result of the Soviet government's attempt to create the homo Sovieticus. Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Jewish, and Tatar movements emerged to maintain their national culture, language and outlook in the face of the policy of Russification. National dissent differed from the civil rights dissent in that national dissent automatically united all members of a given nationality as long as the person's identity was linked to his or her ethnicity. If a person considered him/herself as a Ukrainian, Tatar, Jew etc. he had a common interest with his co-nationals, and this interest crossed social, political and economic boundaries. While differences existed in demands made by national movements, the minimum aim was to resist national extinction and the maximum aim was to achieve political independence.

Each national movement has had different success rates in achieving its objectives. Of the higher profiled national minority movements, the Jews' appeal for emigration met with considerable success. Between 1971 and 1974 approximately 100,000 Jews were allowed to emigrate to Israel.[19] The mass exodus of Jews to Israel however had an adverse effect on the human rights movement. Considering that 60% to 70 % of the those involved in the Human Rights movement were involved in the Jewish emigration movement, their exodus in the 1970's significantly weakened the Human Rights movement.[20]

Several women have taken an active role as supporters in the national movements.[21] Jewish activist Ida Jakovlevna Nudel who worked at the Moscow State Planning Hydrolysis and Microbiological Institute, was fired after she and her sister applied for exit visas. According to the Soviet Government, Nudel was turned down for emigration due to reasons of state security. Nudel signed several petitions on behalf of Jews wishing to emigrate and other related activities. In 1975 Nudel championed the cause of Jewish women by writing to the U N Secretary General's special assistant for

---

[19] Frederick C. Barghoorn, Detente and the Democratic Movement in the USSR (New York: Free Press), 1976, 110.

[20] Ibid., 106.

[21] S. P. de Boer et al. eds. Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents 1-650.

International Women's Year requesting help for women seeking emigration, and in September of that year wrote the appeal Open Letter to the Women of Liverpool, requesting them not to cease their efforts for human rights after International Women's Year.[22] Other women visible in the Jewish emigration movement were Maria Slepak, Margarita Borcevskaya, Dora Kolyadiskaya, Silva Zalm, and Mira Korenbilt. In the Ukrainian movement Lina Kostenko, Evgeniia Kuznecova, Irina Stasiv-Kalynec and several others participated; and, in the Tatar movement Munire Khalilova played a significant role in dissident activity.

Unlike the religious and national dissident movements, the human rights movement maintained a neutral position on religious, political and national issues. Women's involvement in the human rights movement ranged in scope and depth, and their participation may be put into three broad categories. The first category comprises those women whose primary role was one of support. Women who helped their husbands, family and friends in the dissident movement, mothers who lobbied on their incarcerated sons behalf, supporters of relatives and acquaintances of dissidents all fit into this category. The second category are those women who were dissidents in their own rights. Out of a personal conviction, these women joined the dissident movement and fought for humanitarian concerns for all. Women such as Elena Bonner, Irina Kaplun, Malva Landa, and Sophia Kallistratova fit into this category. The third category of dissidents are the feminists, who created their own samizdat to promote women's rights. Tatiana Mamonova and Julia Voznesenskaya are members of this category.

The first category is probably the largest of groups comprised of women in dissident activity. The main methods involved in this type of activity were letter writing, signing petitions and protest demonstrations. Hundreds of letters were sent to heads of states on behalf of imprisoned husbands, sons, lovers, friends and relatives. One example is Nina Ivanovna Bukovskaya, mother of Vladimir Bukovsky. Nina Bukovskaya wrote several letters on behalf of her son. In these letters she commented on Bukovsky's

---

[22] All information on Nudel from de Boer et al eds. The Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents, 339.

deteriorating health, and the inhumanities he suffered in prison. Nina Bukovskaya pleaded to international organizations and heads of states for humanitarian intervention.[23] Due to world intervention, Bukovsky, was released on December 18, 1976.[24] Valentina Mashkova (Osipova by marriage) wrote an open letter to those actively involved in Christian and humanitarian activities, asking them to voice their support of her imprisoned husband Vladimir Osipov, a long-time editor of the samizdat Veche.[25] Tatiana Khodorovich took up the case of Leonid Plyushch, member of the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR. Plyushch was declared insane and confined to a psychiatric prison. In December 1975 Plyushch and his family were permitted to leave the Soviet Union.[26]

The second category of women in dissident activity were those exceptional individuals who, from their personal convictions, unceasingly strove for human rights.

Elena Bonner is probably the most famous of women dissidents in the former Soviet Union. Elena Georgievna Bonner was born in 1923 to parents who were active participants in the Revolution and the Civil War.[27] Both of Bonner's parents became victims of Stalinist repression and spent many years in labour camps.[28]

From the outbreak of World War II until August 1945 Bonner served in the armed forces, beginning as a first aid instructor and, after being wounded at the front, she was

---

[23] "Letter From Vladimir Bukovsky's Mother," in The Samizdat Bulletin 36 (April 1976): 1.

[24] Rubenstein, 233.

[25] "Help Urgently Needed: An Open Letter from Valentina Mashkova (Osipova by Marriage)," in The Samizdat Bulletin 25 (May 1975): 1-2.

[26] "An Open Letter To Leonid Plyushch From Tatiana Khodorovich," in The Samizdat Bulletin 43 (October 1976): 1.

[27] Andrei Sakharov, "I was Subjected to the Excruciating and Degrading Process of Forced Feeding...," in The Samizdat Bulletin 155 (March 1956).

[28] Ibid.

promoted to the position of head nurse on a hospital train.[29] After the War, Bonner studied medicine, became a pediatrician, and raised two children.

Elena Bonner began participating in dissident activity around 1970 when her nephew Eduard Kuznetsov was sentenced to death.[30] Bonner succeeded in having his term commuted to fifteen years of hard labour, but found that Kuznetsov's friend who had transmitted Kuznetsov's diaries to West was also in need of help, for he too had been charged.[31] Bonner's early years in dissent were marked by various petitions on behalf of prisoners of conscience. Bonner petitioned for admission into the trials of political prisoners, for their release and for the abolition of the death penalty. [32]

In 1971 Bonner married Andrei Sakharov, the renowned physicist and academician who had been involved in dissident activity since 1966.[33] The new couple tirelessly continued their dissident activity despite an increase in repressive measures implemented by Soviet authorities. Sakharov lost his job, Bonner's children were constantly harassed and Bonner was subjected to a massive newspaper campaign of slander launched against her in 1983 and 1984. Articles were printed which revealed Bonner's alleged past crimes, her "immoral character" (she was married twice), her links with foreign intelligence agencies; and, articles were published that claimed Bonner always wanted to leave the USSR, "even over her husband's dead body". [34] In sum, it was a major campaign of disinformation and slander.

In 1976 Bonner became a founding member of the Moscow group to monitor the observation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords, and remained active in the group until it shut down. In May of 1984 Bonner was permitted to go abroad for medical treatment. At the

---

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] "Elena Sakharova Talks with the Journalists," in The Samizdat Bulletin 34 (February 1976):4.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Samizdat Bulletin, 155.

[34] Ibid.

airport she was detained and searched by police. Bonner was driven to her Moscow apartment by the KGB chief who charged Bonner under Article 190-1 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, (disseminating slanderous fabrications known to be false which defame the Soviet State and social system).[35] Bonner could not leave the city of Moscow. Three months later, on August 9 and 10, Bonner was tried and sentenced to five years internal exile in Gorki.[36] In 1986 Bonner and Sakharov were released from their exile.

Bonner continues to be an activist for Human Rights but does not display any interest or support for the woman question. According to Bonner, the woman question should not be addressed until basic rights for all have been attained. Bonner believes that little change has occurred under perestroika, and that people must continue to fight for the democratization of Soviet society together. Upon receiving an honorary award by the Democratic Women's Union, in Paris on March 8, 1990 Bonner stated,

> *I want to say that on the path of democratization in our country, men and women cannot act separately. I believe that we must act together. And perhaps, only later, when we become a normal nation, will we have an opportunity to be concerned about specifically women's problems... I would say that the only ideology which I would like to pursue is that of the defense of human rights. Irrespective of skin colour, irrespective of the continent which one inhabits, irrespective of one's faith.*
>
> *Only in this way, approaching all people as equals, wherever they may live, and with equal concern for their problems, can we save ourselves-us, women-us, men-the people.*[37]

Irrespective of sex, Bonner feels that women and men must join in the struggle together to create a free and democratic society.

---

[35] Samizdat Bulletin, 155.

[36] Ibid.

[37] "Elena Bonner Speaks in Paris on March 8, 1990 After Receiving an Honorary Award," in The Samizdat Bulletin 186 (Summer 1990): 8.

Malva Landa was another exceptional woman in the Human Rights movement. Born in 1918, Landa began participating in the dissident community in 1971.[38] In October of that year Landa published Searches and Interrogation. The Testimony and Reflections of a Witness in the Samizdat Bulletin.[39] Landa also signed the petition of the Action Group for the Defence of Civil Rights in the USSR. Through the years Landa became well known for her samizdat compilations about Soviet political prisoners including biographies of lesser known individuals.[40]

On May 6, 1976 Landa joined the Helsinki group.[41] Less than one year later, Landa was subject to KGB harassment. On December 18, 1976 a fire broke out in her communal apartment. Landa was prevented from extinguishing the fire by "an unknown young man" who appeared on the scene. [42] By Feb. 17, 1977 Landa was informed that she would be prosecuted under Articles 99 of RSFSR Criminal Code (negligent destruction of or damage to state or public property) and article 150 (negligent destruction of or damage to the personal property of citizens). Malva Landa was sentenced on May 16, 1977 to two years of internal exile and fined 2,885.87 rubles for damage caused by fire. [43] Consequently, 40% of her monthly pension was deducted to pay for the fire.[44]

Due to the arrest of Alexander Ginzburg, Landa became one of the new administrators for the Relief Fund for Political Prisoners and Their Families.[45] By March 1, 1978 Landa was released from her internal exile under terms of the amnesty

---

[38] deBoer et al. eds. Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents, 307.

[39] Ibid.

[40] "Mal'va Landa to be Tried Again,"in RL, 120/80 (25 March 1980): 1.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 2.

[44] "A Declaration by Mal'va Landa," in The Samizdat Bulletin 64 (August 1978): 1.

[45] "Two Prominent Dissidents Arrested," in The Samizdat Bulletin 87 (July 1980).

declared in connection with the sixtieth anniversary of the October Revolution. By March 7, 1980 Landa was again arrested in Vladimir under article 201 of the RSFSR Criminal code after the search of her home on December 7, 1979 where personal papers were seized by the authorities.[46] Landa was eventually released and emigrated to the West.

Sofia Kallistratova became another important member of the Helsinki group. Joining the group in September 1977, the retired lawyer used her skills to defend dissident clients at their hearings. A criminal case was initiated against her based on 120 of the Helsinki group documents'.[47] Kallistratova was formally charged with "anti soviet slander" on Sept. 9, 1982, but charges were dropped when the Helsinki group disbanded in September 1982 in an attempt to forestall Kallistratova's arrest.

Irina Kaplun, founding member for the Working Commission to Investigate psychiatric abuse, was born April 3, 1950. Kaplun showed an early interest in human rights activity. At the age of fifteen she and nine classmates from the Sixteenth Moscow Special Language School posted and distributed about 300 anti- Stalinist leaflets bearing the message, " The terror of Stalin's time must not return; everything depends on us."[48]

The youths were caught in this activity and interrogated. Because of their age, the officials were misled in thinking that an adult was behind the activity. The case was not brought to trial.[49] All the students involved were given official reprimands on their school records, two of their teachers were barred from teaching, other teachers were reprimanded, and the school director was fired.[50]

In 1969 Kaplun was again in trouble. Schoolmate Olga Ioffe and Kaplun were detained by officials for displaying human rights slogans on Mayakovsky Square. Both

---

[46] RL 120/80, 1.

[47] Rubenstein, 275.

[48] "The Death of Irina Kaplun," in RL 268/80 (28 July 1980): 2.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

were later released.[51] On Dec. 1 1969 Kaplun (now a third year student at the Moscow State University, MGU) was arrested with Ioffe and Bakhmin for having prepared leaflets in readiness for the ninetieth anniversary of Stalin's birthday. While the triumvirate had decided at the last minute to destroy the leaflets, they were not quick enough. The authorities conducted a search, found the leaflets and charged the three under Article 70 of RSFSR Criminal code.[52] Having spent seven months at the Lefortovo prison, Bakhmin and Kaplun were later pardoned on September 23, 1970 by The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and both were released the following day.[53]

Upon release, Kaplun was not reinstated at MGU or allowed entrance at a number of other institutes of higher learning.[54] Instead, Kaplun continued her dissident activities by corresponding to political prisoners and signing several petitions on their behalf.[55] Kaplun was repeatedly summoned for interrogations and her premises were searched on several occasions. In 1976 Irina married Vladimir Borisov, and their human rights activities became closely linked. [56]

In 1977 Kaplun helped found the working commission after her husband was twice admitted to a psychiatric hospital for his Human Rights Activities. Kaplun left the commission a year later over disagreements with colleagues and instead Kaplun became involved with SMOT, the Free Interprofessional Association of Workers. [57]

---

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] "Declaration By Vladimir Borisov," in CCE 42, 196.

[55] RL 268/80, 3.

[56] Ibid., 1.

[57] Ibid., 2.

On August 4 and 6 1979, Kaplun, eight months pregnant, was twice beaten up by police, and had to be rushed to the hospital.[58] On July 23, 1980 Kaplun was killed in a suspicious car accident a month after her husband had been forced to emigrate.[59]

In March of 1979 a new category of women in dissident activity emerged. A group of Russian women in Leningrad declared themselves a feminist collective. The Russian women promoted a feminist ideology in the sense that they supported the advocacy of rights and equality of women in social, political and economic spheres, and were committed to the fundamental alteration of women's role in Soviet society. Their ideology differed from Western feminism in that one of the Soviet feminists' main objectives was to recapture what had been taken away from them under Soviet rule; their femininity. As Alix Holt so aptly comments,

> *The modern Soviet woman is intrigued by the image of the feminine woman. This is her model. She strives for elegance in dress and in self-presentation; she aspires to elegance in lifestyle. A well appointed apartment, an abundantly-stocked larder, husband and children competing successfully in their respective spheres- theses are her chief delights.*[60]

At the time of the Soviet feminist's declaration, there were twenty active members and several hundred supporters.[61] Many of the feminist collective were converted members of the Roman Catholic faith who were concerned about the spiritual and personal existence of women in the Soviet Union.[62] After fifty years of imposed silence, the woman question was finally reopened for discussion by an unofficial voice. By autumn of 1979 the feminist collective prepared ten copies of a woman's journal entitled

---

[58] Ibid., 3.

[59] Ibid., 1.

[60] Alix Holt,"The First Soviet Feminists," in Soviet Sisterhood, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate Limited, 1985), 263-264.

[61] Marlene Kadar, "Rights and Wrongs: Soviet Feminism," in Canadian Forum 706 (February 1981): 36.

[62] Ibid.

Almanac:Women and Russia ,and quickly launched it into circulation. [63] It was the first free feminist publication in the Soviet Union[64]. The Almanac discussed questions of concern to every woman. Articles, letters, poems and short stories covered a range of issues. The Almanac had no direct affiliation with the dissident movement because the Leningrad women felt that they needed to create their own movement to serve the needs of women. Less than a year after publication, three leading members of the editorial board were arrested and given twenty-four hours to leave the USSR, or face the quick, sure fate of being charged, deprived of their freedom, and imprisoned.

The three women who created the almanac were familiar with the dissident movement and had at one time belonged to it. Tatyana Mamonova, the editor and creative force behind the Almanac was an unofficial poet and a painter who in the sixties organized the non-conformist painter's union. The second member of the almanac's editorial board was Tatiana Goritcheva. Goritcheva was a Christian fundamentalist who had been involved in the dissident movement when she and her husband had created and published the religious samizdat 37. The final co-founder of the Almanac was Natalya Malakhovskaya. As a dissident novelist and essayist, she took part in editing 37.

These women left the dissident movement, since women's rights were not promoted. Natalya Malakhovskaya described the dissident circle as being "very snobbish" to women members. Moreover, Natalya was once asked what the difference was between male and female dissidents and she replied," Men sit for years and think about how to improve the situation, and a woman starts doing it from the very beginning."[65] Marina Oulianova, a member of the feminist collective commented that, "The dissident movement does nothing to address the needs of women, and they stifle women within their

---

[63] Alix Holt, 237.

[64] "Introduction," Women and Russia, ed. Tatyana Mamonova (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), xiii.

[65] Robin Morgan, "The First Feminist Exiles from the USSR," in Ms, (November 1980): 83.

movement, or ignore them."[66] Tatyana Goricheva joined the feminist movement because "... the situation of woman is the most evident expression of the tragedy of our society."[67] Mamonova promoted her idea of publishing Women And Russia because she felt that feminism represented one of the strongest expressions in the struggle for human rights.

The dissident movement was by and large hostile to the feminists and their samizdat. According to Newsweek, the Soviet dissidents reported the Almanac as, "too petty to be taken seriously".[68] Mamonova described the response of men to the Almanac as being sexist: " The dissident artists present themselves as nonconformists only in their art: in their attitude toward women they are absolutely conformist."[69]

The Soviet government reacted negatively to the feminists as well. The KGB harassed the writers of the Almanac repeatedly. Mamonova states in her article "The Peace March East and West", that the Soviet authorities

> *could not make up their minds to call the material in our Almanac fabrications, although that is exactly the way they define samizdat publications. Instead they called it tendentious and ideological.*[70]

The samizdat publication of Almanac questioned a basic principle of Marxist Leninist theory. As viewed in Almanac Women And Russia, general emancipation of the proletariat did not lead to the emancipation of women, but to further enslavement. Under Soviet rule, women's equality meant combining work at the factory with work in the home. The existence of the double burden in Soviet society disproved Marxist/Leninist theory on the emancipation of women, and this in turn questioned the legitimacy of the

---

[66] Kadar, 37.

[67] Ibid., 53.

[68]"Newsmakers," in Newsweek, 3 November 1980, 76.

[69] Mamonova, "Introduction," xiv.

[70] Tatyana Mamonova, "The Peace March: East and West," Women and Russia, ed. Tatyana Mamonova, trans. Rebecca Park (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980), 265.

Soviet government. The Soviet government could not allow the women dissident's views to influence the general female gender in questioning their role in the preservation of the Soviet government. In order to prevent a dangerous situation from occurring, On July 13, 1980 the Soviet leadership exiled the founders of the Almanac from the country.

Before their exile the feminists had split into two factions. Tatyana Mamonova remained to promote basic women's rights where as Tatyana Goricheva, Natalya Malakhovskaya and Yuliya Voznesenskaya formed the women's movement "Maria". The "Maria" group adopted a religious identity with the Russian Orthodox Church, and promoted the ideals of the Virgin Mary in its activities. Religion divided the feminist movement. The cohesive feminist movement quickly became unglued without government intervention yet the Soviet authorities still felt the need to expel the four women due to their previous small but significant victories on the situation of women in the Soviet Union.

The Almanac had a positive effect on official publications of women's problems. Tatyana Mamonova in the introduction to the Almanac writes,

> *We took an important first step towards our goals in the Soviet Union. The Almanac: Women And Russia forced our authorities to move. The consequences were not solely negative. Yes, there were expulsions arrest, and searches of women. But there was also a transformation of the official press. Within a year of the emergence of the feminist movement in the Soviet Union, many articles appeared in the official press. Often the articles were purely rhetorical, but the questions were nevertheless raised -- and that is the main point.*[71]

The Soviet feminists set out to reach other women in the Soviet Union. To be realistic, the movement fell short of this ideal. Only in existence a year, the feminists did not have enough time to drastically alter the position of women. Moreover, the general Soviet dissident movement did not promote the feminist cause and the four women had to fight their battle alone. Yet a small victory occurred. Questions concerning the

---

[71] Mamonova, "Introduction," Women and Russia, xxiii.

position of women were being raised in the official press. A decade earlier this was not the case. With the present manifestations in the former Soviet Union issues specific to women are being addressed by newly created women's organizations. In 1990 and 1991 conferences were organized in Moscow and Dubna (just outside Moscow) in attempts to the combine the new feminist organizations. As Mary Buckley points out, "Awareness of discrimination against women unites these groups. Different views about suitable strategies to address discrimination divide them.[72] It is likely that under a continuation of the reform movement, the feminist movement will increase in size and scope, but that its aspirations, content and style will retain its distinctive Russian character.

Women made a significant contribution to the religious, national and human rights movements in the former Soviet Union. It is still not known to what extent women participated in the dissident movement. While most women escaped having their names published for their dissident activity, there is much impressionistic evidence to suggest that both women and men were deeply involved in the dissident struggle. The reasons why women became involved in the dissident movement varied. Some participated out of concern for an arrested family member or friend. Others became involved in dissent to defend religious, national or human rights which were guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution, the Declaration of Human Rights or the Helsinki Accords. Only a small group of women participated in the dissident movement to promote the woman question. Because the dissident movement regarded the woman question as a subordinate issue, the feminists created their own samizdat. Despite the fact that the initial feminists were quickly disbanded, their example would influence the development of future feminist movements. While some women, like Elena Bonner, will continue to defend the rights of all, the stage is being prepared for an increasing number of women who will be able to turn to organizations which promote issues specific to women if the present reform movement continues.

---

[72] Mary Buckley, ed. Perestroika and Soviet Women (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 63-64.

Conclusion

When analyzing the development of the woman question in Russia and the Soviet Union, it becomes apparent that a continuum can be drawn linking women's involvement in the Russian radical movement to women's participation in the Soviet dissident movement. Throughout this period in history, the woman question was subsumed by the larger question of liberation for all oppressed groups. For the success of the cause, the Russian radicals, the Bolsheviks, and the dissidents were required to accept women as equals in their movements, but women were inadvertantly compelled to give up all feminist aspirations. By devoting themselves to the human question, and ignoring the necessity of their own emancipation, women's position in society was dependent upon state policy.

From Tsarist rule to Soviet power, the position of women in society was re-defined to suit the needs of the state. Under Tsar Nicholas, the preservation of the autocracy necessitated a stable family, and the oppression of women was entrenched in state policy. For the Bolsheviks, women were needed in the socialist construction of the Soviet state. For Lenin, this meant guaranteeing women's equality in the social, political and economic spheres of society. Under Stalin, however, women were required to participate fully and equally in the industrialization of the Soviet Union while raising the future generation of Soviet workers. The double burden placed upon women financed the rapid pace of industrialization, as investment normally used for social services was diverted to heavy industry. Future Soviet governments would retain women's double burden and continue to invest heavily in non-consumer goods and services. It is doubtful given the present economic crisis in the former Soviet Union that the reform movement will seriously attempt to relieve women from their double burden. It is simply not economically feasible.

Only recently has Soviet society began to address the woman question. Due to the historic intolerance of the feminist movements by the state and the various social and revolutionary movements, the path leading to women's genuine liberation in the former

Soviet Union is much different than it is in the West. Living under Soviet rule has affected women's motives for achieving emancipation. The Soviet woman wants what she has been denied: her femininity. For too long, many Soviet women have felt over-independent and over-liberated. Articles presently being published on the woman question in the former Soviet Union, focus specifically on the re-creation of the Soviet woman's feminine identity. The need for the Soviet woman to have more choices available to her in the political, economic and social areas of her life are also being discussed but as yet little progress has been made by the current Soviet leadership in solving the least complex of these problems.

The road to women's genuine emancipation is like walking across a street in St. Petersburg. In order to get to the other side safely, the pedestrian must always have a strategy prepared in case she encounters a driver unwilling to yield. As the pedstrian's life depends on out manuevering the driver, women's genuine liberation depends on outwitting the patriarchal nature of Soviet society.

Bibliography

Akhmatova, Anna Selected Poems. Edited and Translated by Walter Arndt also with Requiem. Translated by Robin Kemball. and Poem Without A Hero Translated and Annotated by Carl R. Proffer. Michigan: Ardis, 1976.

Alexeyeva, Ludmilla. Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights. Translated by John Glad and Carol Pearce. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1985.

Anderson, Barbara A." The Life Course of Soviet Women Born 1905-1960" in James R. Millar (ed.). Politics, Work, and Daily Life in the USSR:A Survey of former Soviet Citizens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Atkinson, Dorothy, A., Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, eds. Women in Russia. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1977.

Baranskaya, Natalya. "A Week Like Any Other Week." Translated by Emily Lehrman. Massachusetts Review. 15 (Autumn 1974): 657-703.

Barghoorn, Frederick C. Detente and the Democratic Movement in the USSR. New York: Free Press, 1976.

Bebel, August. Woman and Socialism. New York: Socialist Literature Co., 1910.

Bobroff, Anne. "The Bolsheviks and Working Women, 1905-1920." Soviet Studies. 26 (October 1974): 540-67.

Browning, Genia K. Women and Politics In The USSR: Consciousness Raising and Soviet Women's Groups. Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd, 1987.

Brumberg, Abraham, ed. In Quest of Justice: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union Today. New York: Praeger, 1970.

Buckley, Mary. ed.Soviet Social Scientists Talking: An Official Debate about Women. London: Macmillan, 1986.

--------. ed. Perestroika and Soviet Women. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

--------. Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.

Chukovskaya, Lydia. The Deserted House. Translated by Aline B. Werth. London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1965.

Clements, Barbara Evans, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine D. Worobec, eds. Russia's Women: Accomodation Resistance, Transformation. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

--------. Bolshevik Feminist: The Life of Aleksandra Kollontai. Bloomington: Indiana Univeristy Press., 1979.

Cohen, Stephen, ed.An End to Silence. Translated by George Saunders. New York: Norton, 1982.

Conquest, Robert. The Great Terror: A Reassessment. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

de Boer, S.P., E.J. Driessen, and H.L. Verhaar, eds. Biographical Dictionary of Dissidents in the Soviet Union, 1956- 1975. The Haugue: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982.

Dodge, Norton T. Women in The Soviet Economy. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1966.

Dudgeon, Ruth. "The Forgotten Minority: Women Students in Imperial Russia, 1872-1917." Russian History. 9 (1982): 1-26.

Edmondson, Linda Harriet. Feminism in Russia, 1900- 1917. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1984.

--------. "Russian Feminists and the First All-Russian Congress of Women." Russian History. 3, (1976): 123-49.

Engel, Barbara Alpern. Mothers and Daughters. Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Engel, Barbara Alpern, and Clifford N. Rosenthal. eds. Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar. With a Foreword by Alix Kates Shulman. Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987.

Evans, Janet. "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question: The Case of the 1936 Decree 'In Defence of Mother and Child." Journal of Contemporary History. 16 (1981): 757-75.

Farnsworth, Beatrice Brodsky. Alexandra Kollontai: Socialism, Feminism and the Bolshevik Revolution. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980.

--------."Bolshevism, the Woman Question, and Aleksandra Kollontai." American Historical Review. 81, (April 1976): 292-316.

Farnsworth, Beatrice., and Lynne Viola, eds. Russian Peasant Women. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

"Frontline Feminists." Observer Magazine. September 9, 1980, 36-40.

Feldbrugge, F.J.M. Samizdat and Political Dissent in the Soviet Union. Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1975.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila., Alexander Rabinowitch and Richard Stites, eds. Russian in the Era of NEP. Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1991.

Gerstenmaier, Cornelia. The Voices of the Silent. Translated by Susan Hecker. New York: Hart, 1972.

Ginzburg, Evgenia Semyonova. Journey into the Whirlwind. Translated by Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward. New York: Harcourt and Brace World, Inc., 1967.

--------.Within The Whirlwind. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981.

Gorbanevskaya, Natalia.Red S[illegible]are at Noon. London: Andre Deutsch, 1972.

Goricheva, Tatiana. Talking about God is Dangerous: The Diary of a Russian Dissident. New York: Crossroad, 1987.

Hansson, Carola, and Karin Liden. Moscow Women. Translated by Gerry Bothmer, Georde Blecher and Lone Blecher. Introduction by Gail Warshofsky Lapidus. New York: Pantheon, 1983.

Hayden, Carol Eubanks. "The Zhenotdel and the Bolshevik Party." Russian History. 3 (1976): 150-73.

Holland, Barbara (ed.) Soviet Sisterhood. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Holt, Alix A Critique of Bolshevik Policy on Women. Paper presented at "Women in Eastern Europe" Conference, Birmingham, 30 October 1976.

Hopkins, Mark. Russia's Underground Press: The Chronicle of Current Events. Foreword by Andrei Sakharov. New York: Praeger, 1983.

Jancar, Barbara Wolfe. Women Under Communism. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Johanson, Christine. Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1900. Kingston: McGill- Queen's University Press, 1987.

Kadar, Marlene. "Soviet Feminism." Canadian Forum. 50 (February 1981): 36-38.

Kaminskaya, Dina. Final Judgement. Translated by Michael Glenny. New York:Simon and Schuster, 1982.

Kirk, Irina. Profiles in Russian Resistance. New York: Quadrangle, 1975.

Kruks, Sonia., Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young, eds. Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Sociailism. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989.

Kuznetsova, Larisa. "What Every Woman Wants." Soviet News and Views: Press Office of the USSR Embassy. no.1 (January 1989)

Lapidus, Gail Warshofsky. Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Lennon, Lotte. "Women in the USSR." Problems of Communism. 20 (July-August 1971): 47-58.

McNeal, Robert. "Women in the Russian Radical Movement." Journal of Social History. 2 (1971-72): 143-163.

Mamonova, Tatyana. ed. Women and Russia. With a Foreword by Robin Morgan. Translated by Rebecca Park and Catherine A. Fitzpatrick. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

Mandelshtam, Nadezdha. Hope Against Hope. Translated by Max Hayward. New York: Antheneum, 1970.

Medvedev, Roy. "The Future of Soviet Dissent." Index of Censorship. 8, (March- April 1979): 25-31.

--------. Khrushchev. Translated by Brian Pearce. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.

Medvedev, Roy , and Medvedev Zhores. A Question of Madness. Translated by Ellen de Kadt. New York: Knopf, 1973.

Medvedev, Zhores. The Medvedev Papers. Translated by Vera Rich. New York: St. Martin's, 1971.

Meyer, Alfred G. The Feminism and Socialism of Lily Braun. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Morgan, Robin. "The First Feminist Exiles From the USSR." Ms. November, 1980.

Morton, Henry W. and Rudolf L. Tokes, eds. Soviet Politics and Society in the 1970's. New York: The Free Press, 1974.

Parchomenko, Walter.Soviet Images Of Dissidents and Nonconformists. London: Praeger, 1986.

Pushkarev, Sergei. The Emergence of Modern Russia 1801- 1917. Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985.

Quataert, Jean H. Reluctant Feminists In German Social Democracy 1885-1917. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Rimsky, Sofiia. The Women's Movement in the Soviet Union. Boston: Ritz Publications, 1973.

Rosenberg, Suzanne. A Soviet Odyssey. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Rothberg, Abraham. The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime 1953- 1970. London: Cornell University Press, 1972.

Rubenstein, Joshua. Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights. Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.

Sacks, Michael Paul and Jerry G. Pankhurst eds. Understanding Soviet Society. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988.

--------. Women's Work in Soviet Russia: Continuity in the Midst of Change. New York: Praeger, 1976.

Saunders, George (ed). Samizdat: Voices of the Soviet Opposition. New York: Monad Press, 1974.

Shapiro, Jane P. "The Politicization of Soviet Women: From Passivity to Protest." Canadian Slavonic Papers. 17 (Winter 1975): 596-616.

Shlapentokh, Vladimir. Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power. Princeton: University Press, 1990.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr I. The Gulag Archipelago Two. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Stites, Richard. The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism. Princeton: University Press, 1978.

--------."Kollontai, Inessa, Krupskaia." Canadian-American Slavic Studies. 9, no.1 (Spring 1975), 84-92.

--------."M. L. Mikhailov and the Emergence of the Woman Question in Russia." Canadian Slavic Studies. 3 (Summer 1969): 178-199.

-------- ."Wives, Sisters, and Workers: A Review Article." Russian History. 3 (1976), 237-244.

--------. "Women's Liberation Movements in Russia, 1900-1930." Canadian-American Slavic Studies. 7 (Winter 1973): 460-474.

--------. "Zhenotdel: Bolshevism and Russian Women 1917- 1930." Russian History. 3 (1976): 174-193.

Terras, Victor, ed. Handbook of Russian Literature. Hew Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Tokes, Rudolf. "The Dissidents' Detente Debate." The New Leader. March 4, 1974, 11-13.

Trotsky, I. Women and the Family. New York: 1970.

Tukevich, Ludmilla B. "Russian Women." Russian Review. 16 (January 1957): 24-36.

Viola, Lynne. "Bab'i Bunty and Peasant Women's Protest during Collectivization." Russian Review. 45 (1986): 23-42.

Voznesenskaia, Yuliia "The Independent Women's Movement in Russia." Religion in Communist Lands. X (Winter 1982): 333-36.

--------. The Women's Decameron. London: Methuen, 1986.

Yasen, Bohdan. ed. Women's Voices from Soviet Labor Camps. Baltimore: Smolosky Publishers, 1975.

Yedlin, Tova. ed. Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. New York: Praeger, 1980.

--------. "The First Legal Bolshevik Journal For Women: Rabotnitsa, February - June 1914." Unpublished article, 1-23.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Arkhiv Samizdata (Radio Liberty Research)

Chronicle of Current Events

Radio Liberty Research Papers

Samizdat Bulletin