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RUSSIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Wilma Rule, Norma C. Noonan

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Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 157



GREENWOOD PRESS
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Russian women in politics and society / edited by Wilma Rule and Norma C. Noonan.

p. cm. — (Contributions in women's studies, ISSN 0147-104X ; no. 157)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-313-29363-5 (alk. paper)

1. Women in politics—Russia (Federation) 2. Women—Russia (Federation)—Social conditions. 3. Women's rights—Russia (Federation) 4. Russia (Federation)—Politics and government—1991–
I. Rule, Wilma. II. Noonan, Norma. III. Series.

HQ1236.5.R8R87 1996

305.4'0947—dc20 96-10766

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 96-10766

ISBN: 0-313-29363-5

ISSN: 0147-104X

First published in 1996

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881

An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America



The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

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For all our Teachers

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Preface

With the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in December 1991, a new nation came into being. Born of a millennium of history and nearly 75 years of authoritarian Communist rule, the Russian Federation began a new capitalistic and democratic course. What measures the new nation will take to achieve its goals depend upon its leaders and its people speaking through its new democratizing institutions. Women — who are 53 percent of the Russian population — have a unique role to play in humanizing, developing, and improving the new nation's policies.

Our book's introduction sets the stage for examining women's roles in politics and society in contemporary Russia. How women fared from the founding of the Bolshevik socialist state in 1917 to their participation in the multiparty elections in 1993 and 1995 follows. The Tsarist and Communist gender culture is presented, and the book then considers why and how, after decades of rule, the Soviet Union disintegrated. The reborn Russia of President Boris Yeltsin is portrayed, followed by women's rights under Soviet and post-Soviet rule and the conclusion.

This book grew from a small article about a dialogue among several Russian women leaders and coauthor Wilma Rule in Moscow at the new Center for Gender Studies in the spring of 1991. A similar discussion took place in St. Petersburg shortly afterward. In both cities, the discussion focused on the impact of various electoral systems on women's opportunity for election in democratic countries. That article in *PS: Political Science and Politics* in June 1992 and a subsequent one led to a publisher's interest

and the eventual compiling of this book. Norma C. Noonan, an expert on Russia, then was enlisted as coeditor.

Rule interviewed women members of the national legislature and leaders in the women's movement in Moscow in the fall of 1993. Her findings are reflected in her contribution with Nadezhda Shvedova (Chapter 4) and in the comparison of Russian women's political recruitment to her general model for democratic and democratizing nations, which is in the introduction.

Norma C. Noonan has published numerous professional articles on Soviet and Russian women and recruited several of the specialists whose chapters appear in this book. She has traveled to Russia many times, and in 1993 she organized and co-chaired a conference in Moscow on women in Russia. In 1995 Noonan gathered additional material in Russia for her two chapters (six and eight) and the book's conclusion. She also compiled the glossaries and bibliography.

Acknowledgments

This compendium is the first to be published on this significant topic. We thank the contributors for their cooperation in abridging and revising their top-notch manuscripts. We are also grateful to Irina Kuprianova of the Institute of USA and Canada of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Department of Political Science at Stanford University, David Blood and Cory Welt, former graduate students in Slavic studies, and to Lynn Doyal, Irving Krauss, Leonard Krauss, and Pamela Ledbetter, for their help in gathering and editing material. Thanks are also due to Tom Noonan, Sr., and Tom Noonan, Jr., for their patience and support, to Boyd Koehler for his perennial help with research, and to our word processor, Trudy Denton, for her preparation of the manuscript.

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1

Introduction: Equal Players or Back to the Kitchen?

Wilma Rule

As the Russian Federation moves into the twenty-first century, it will require the intelligence, work ethic, excellent technical and advanced education, and experience of its women — who are 53 percent of the population. However, the government's "shock therapy" — the quick fix to turn from socialism to capitalism within a few years — has sorely hurt the working women of the late 1990s. This policy — instead of one with a gradual, well-planned economic transition — has left women alone to flounder in a new economy with few jobs for them.¹ Those now working do not get a living wage that matches their technological and professional skills.

This introduction briefly explores political and social developments that affect women in the old and new Russia. After presenting a model of women's political recruitment, we look at favorable factors for Russian women's advance in their national legislature. The reader then is introduced to the chapters that follow.

ENDURING WOMEN THEN AND IN THE NEW RUSSIA

Russian women and their children have endured trials and tribulations and neglect of their problems and wishes under the old Tsars and Soviet Communist leaders (see Chapters 5 and 6). Soviet Communism, with its broad authoritarianism, its favoritism to Russian people, its "glass ceiling," which kept women from reaching the top in management and politics, and its pervasive gender discrimination, at least educated its girls

and took many of them to occupational heights comparable to or higher than those in Western Europe and the United States.²

The percentage of women managers of public agencies was approximately the same — 40 percent — for Soviet and U.S. women in the 1990s,³ and in both, women are denied promotion to top administrative levels. In some fields that require mathematical skill, Russia's women are ahead: in engineering and related technical areas and in chemistry, women are the majority of the profession. By contrast, in the United States as of 1993, they are but 15 percent of their profession. As medical doctors, Russian women are four times the meager 15 percent of women physicians in the United States. Russian women in other occupations include the feminized and gender-segregated ones in most highly industrialized nations: nurses, clerks, teachers, nursery school attendants. Russian women are also in skilled production work as well as toiling in agriculture, like many women still do in industrializing countries. Nevertheless, occupational sex segregation for Russian and other Eastern European women was less than that in other highly industrialized nations.⁴ (For more on women's occupations, see Chapter 5.)

WOMEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL BIAS

Russian women make up the greatest proportion of the unemployed — some 70 percent⁵ (see Chapter 9). Mostly, these are women between the ages of 20 and 45 years.⁶ Few have found jobs in the new privatized industry. Moreover, women who are in the workforce once earned 70 percent of men's wages but now make only 40 percent. Expressions of social bias — fanned by government exhortations for women to return to the home — have worked against women's reemployment. To illustrate, one businessman is quoted as saying, "I see women in business in one role — as an elegant secretary who brings me coffee."⁷ Newspaper advertisements ask for secretaries who are "young, blonde, long legged and without inhibitions." Sexual harassment appears to be on the increase, and the law preventing it evidently is not enforced (see Chapter 11).

Among the most highly trained professional women, 50 percent have been unemployed. In turn, colleges, universities, and institutes are understaffed. It was "ladies first" when Russian governmental agencies were cut back and 80 percent of women managers lost their jobs. The social net for the unemployed is practically nonexistent. Women professors in universities were paid a salary of about \$50 a month in 1995. Research institutes, formerly under the Academy of Sciences of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which employed many professional women, barely survive. For example, some have rented out parts of their research quarters to raise more funds.⁸ Others survive by doing surveys for political parties, which detract from their scholarly research. Sometimes, they

are not paid for their survey work or are paid late, with inflation reducing the money to “dust,” one researcher wrote.⁹ This neglect of the sciences and scientists portends a decline in Russia’s excellence in many fields, including medical, physical, environmental, and aeronautical research. Finally, music and art organizations — including the famed Bolshoi ballet — have met hard times, and the employment of women artists has declined, as well as Russia’s artistic preeminence.

WOMEN SINGLE PARENTS

About 20 percent of Russian women are single parents. They struggle in low-paying jobs as child-care centers become scarce, and many must ask relatives to look after their young ones. In 1987, before the Soviet Union disintegrated, most preschool children were in day-care centers; by 1992, only about 20 percent were. Also, very few new centers were being built to allow women to go to their paid employment.¹⁰

ENTREPRENEURS, CORRUPTION, AND CRIME

The new Russia has spawned a vibrancy in the country as corporations from abroad invest in the free market and Russian entrepreneurs create new enterprises and new jobs in the private sector.¹¹ Inflation has been tamed, and the economy and factory output improved in late 1995. Yet, the vestiges of the old Russia remain outside the glitter of Moscow as Russia’s women and men struggle to adjust to a new economic, political, and social life. About one-third of the populace is below the poverty level, according to the Ministry of Labor. Most of the poor are women, young and old — and there is a growing gap between rich and poor.¹²

Within the former Soviet bureaucracy, patronage politics, bribery, and minor corruption were widespread, particularly in the last years of the Soviet Union (see Chapter 7). Based on loyalty to a patron and political connections, patronage systems with old-boy networks ordinarily do not favor women, even when their qualifications for government positions far exceed their male colleagues’. It appears that the practices of the nonmerit governmental bureaucracy and other negative trends have accelerated in the hard times of Russia’s transition era.

Moreover, there is a growing criminal element, which is largely unchecked, despite laws on the books. For example, Presidential Decree 1226 of June 14, 1994, was promulgated by President Boris Yeltsin to curb criminal activity, but it was never enforced.¹³ In addition to crimes by the *Mafiya* (Mafia) and other criminal organizations, which have revenues of some \$10 billion, there have been unpunished fraudulent crimes against ordinary citizens in which life savings have been lost. This is disconcerting to many Russian women and men and contributes to alienation and

cynicism and the undermining of developing political institutions, including the justice system. It was undeveloped during the Soviet era, which, some scholars of Russia and China maintain, is typical of authoritarian states.¹⁴

“Economic interest groups are now the key players in Russian politics; political parties, by contrast, have been weak and unstable,” said Vladimir Mau, advisor to Yegor Gaidar, the chief architect of Yeltsin’s economic policy.¹⁵ An outstanding example is the oil industry, which is taxed at an unusually low rate, despite the Russian government’s need for capital. The natural gas monopoly, Gazprom, also has a very low tax rate. Prime Minister Viktor S. Chernomyrdin, formerly Natural Gas Minister, helped privatize the industry and is said to carefully guard its interests.¹⁶

RUSSIA’S PROBLEMS AND WOMEN: SOME CAUSES AND EFFECTS

How did Russia’s fledgling democracy come to hard times and extensive corruption in government in only a few years? First, one must consider the breakup on December 21, 1991, of the world’s largest country, the Soviet Union, and the economic and psychological consequences. The USSR was a vast empire of almost 9 million square miles of riches in industrial, agricultural, and natural resources. Now, Russia still stretches eastward, but it has lost some 20 percent of the USSR lands located on its western, northern, and southern boundaries. These former Soviet Republics, long under the cultural and economic dominance of Russia, declared independence in 1991 shortly after the USSR dissolved.

Kazakhstan, one of the new, independent states, is second in population only to Ukraine. It is a large area of 1 million square miles in central Asia north of China and south of Russia. Kazakhstan has a \$10 billion investment in oil by the Chevron Corporation. The country’s financial returns and the \$10 billion oil funds anticipated by newly independent Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan — which have oil reserves equal to Alaska’s — is money Russia sorely needs. It could help pay the costs of its capitalization and its meager unemployment and pension stipends and could keep Russian universities, technical schools, and arts at least functioning.

In the midst of this crisis, Russia has looked to the Western countries, including the United States, for help in financing the conversion to capitalism. The International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and United States Congress promised financial aid and loans of \$43.4 billion, but those promises were met only halfway by 1994. In addition, private investment from the United States has been moderate — stalled primarily because of insecure private ownership rights and widespread corruption.¹⁷

The shrinking of this great empire and the loss of resources coupled with disruption of the socialist institutions has left many Russian women and men unsure of their futures and their nation's (see Chapters 6 and 9). One reaction has been the fueling of nationalist-imperialist sentiment expressed by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party. In 1993, he favored the return of all of the USSR's former territories, including Alaska, which was purchased by the United States in 1867. Another reaction by some has been rekindling of xenophobia toward the West.¹⁸ This is born of Russia's disappointment with Western empty promises and her decline in world prestige, especially when compared with the United States.

Also, an important cause of corruption and conflict in Russia is the flawed constitution put forth by Yeltsin and his aides (see Chapter 10). They created a divided government with a constitutionally powerful president, a weak legislature, and a fragmented party system. The majority election of the Russian president in a year different from the legislature and a president who stands without a party affiliation emphasize personalities rather than parties and issues. Also, the powerful president then stands apart, not helping his preferred party candidates get elected to the legislature. Consequently he does not feel obliged to cooperate with the legislative body. Cross-national research shows that this presidential arrangement is prone to administrative corruption, conflict with the legislature, and government instability.¹⁹

In addition, by electing half of the Duma's representatives from single member districts, the problems of governance are exacerbated. Parties *can* overcome special interests in favor of the national interest. But individual candidates in districts may need to serve special interests to get reelected. Writes one observer in Moscow, "The new banks get special privileges and throw their support to particular politicians."²⁰ Special interest power of this type is less likely when the party-list proportional representation system is used in democratic countries. (This electoral method is discussed later in this chapter.)

The three major causes of Russia's problems — loss of empire, poor government structure, and economic "shock therapy" — affected the parliamentary elections of 1993 and 1995.²¹ In the latter, the Communist Party tripled their gains over 1993. Together with their allies, the Communists constituted over 40 percent of the second Duma, Russia's popularly-elected lower house of parliament. The liberal reform parties, Russia is Our Home and Yabloko, held their own, while the Liberal Democratic Party and others lost seats in the 1995 parliamentary elections (see Chapter 4).

FREEDOM TO ORGANIZE WOMEN'S GROUPS

In the new Russia women now have freedom to form their own organizations and to join with others to improve their lot. New women's organizations include those concerned about violence against women — including rape and physical abuse by husbands and boyfriends. There are also organizations that help businesswomen and women's interests in court, a women's theater for plays written by and about women, and groups seeking the enhancement of women's political power.

Not the least among the new organizations is Women of Russia, noted as one of the victorious groups in the 1993 elections. A political party or bloc, it first won election in the lower house of parliament, the Duma, in 1993. It was Women of Russia in the parliament, the Women's Union outside the legislature, and mothers of soldiers who first called for the end of military action in breakaway Chechnya and were instrumental in bringing about the negotiations for peace in 1995.²²

Ekaterina Lakhova, coleader of the Women of Russia faction and a physician, exemplifies those who hold that women must take a more active part in politics. "Wake up, women!" she exhorts, "There must be more of us women [in the Duma]. . . . Not a majority. We are saying at least a third! A third of women in the place where decisions are made to determine how society lives."²³ Lakhova further explained that more women legislators are needed because other parties in the Duma have not cooperated in putting controls on soaring food prices, in helping education and public health, and in providing rural housing.

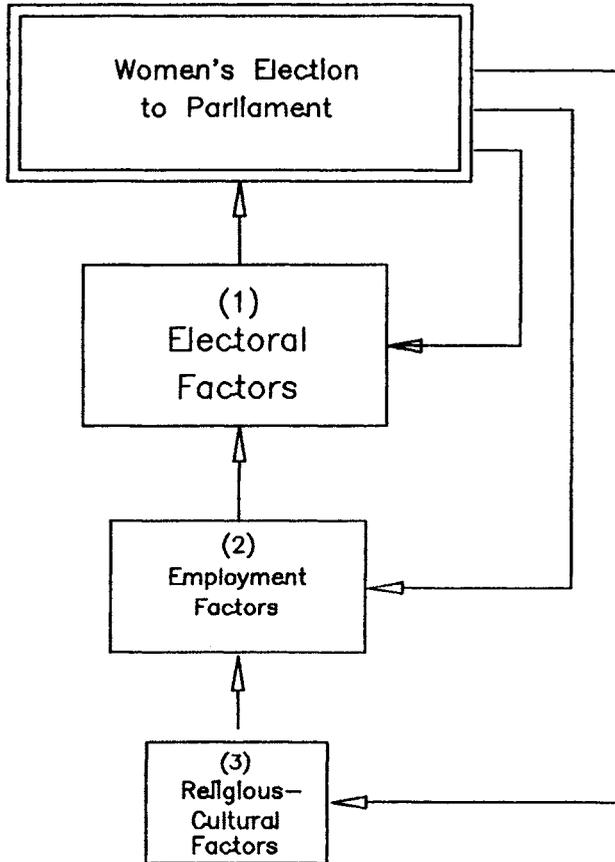
How, then, do women's prospects for more political influence within the Duma appear when compared with other democratic and democratizing countries? The general model below will help give tentative answers to that question.

MODEL OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL RECRUITMENT

Figure 1.1 showing women's political recruitment to national parliaments allows us to compare political and social factors related to women's election in Russia and in other democratic and democratizing nations. Box sizes in Figure 1.1 indicate the degree of significance of each of the three causal factors: electoral, employment, and religious-cultural. Arrows from bottom to top show the causal sequence of the factors that indirectly and directly affect women's legislative recruitment. The arrows on the right show that women's election to parliament in turn affects the major causal factors set forth. For example, as women prove their mettle in politics, they lessen misogynist gender culture, have positive impacts on women's education and employment, and bring about their greater acceptance by the major parties. This circular interaction normally has the

effect of continually increasing the proportions of women in parliament and bringing equal gender representation closer in time. Moreover, election to parliament is the usual first step up the political ladder to national president or prime minister.

FIGURE 1.1
Model of Women's Political Recruitment in
Long-established Democratic Countries



- (1) Proportional representation; women's political organizations; favorable political parties.
- (2) Large proportion of women employed; large proportion of college graduates; full employment
- (3) Pluralistic religions and favorable gender culture.

Electoral Factors Most Important

Electoral factors consist of three optimal variables for women's election to parliament: proportional representation (PR), women's political organizations, and favorable political parties (Figure 1.1). The most significant and nearly essential factor for electing women parliamentarians in greater proportions is election by a party-list PR system (see Figure 4.1).²⁴ It is the most popular election system used by democratic countries because it includes women, ethnic and political majorities, *and* minorities.

Research demonstrates that the more representatives there are in a PR district, the more women are elected. This is illustrated by Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Denmark averaged 35 percent women parliamentarians in 1993 and ten members in a parliamentary district. Women's proportions in parliament also increase when there is an "open list" from which voters may select individual candidates.²⁵

By contrast, the plurality or majority election system with one representative in a district resulted in an average of only 10 percent women in eight democratic and democratizing parliaments, including Canada, France, Great Britain, and the United States in 1993. A mixed system, as in Germany, results in at least two times more women elected on the proportional ballot than on the plurality one. In most PR countries, women's organizations inside and outside parties have been instrumental in gaining the support of left and center parties for greater women's nominations and elections.

Employment and Religious-Cultural Factors

These socio-economic variables — although very important for women's recruitment — are no substitute for a favorable election and party system. For example, both Sweden and the United States have large proportions of women in the paid workforce, numerous college graduates, a good employment rate, and no dominant religions, and each has strong women's movements. However, Sweden, with PR, has three times the women in parliament than the United States — 34 versus 11 percent.

Countries with dominant religions or a less favorable gender culture usually have less education for girls, fewer women college graduates, fewer women employed, and greater unemployment — all ordinarily negative factors for women's political recruitment.²⁶ However, an unfavorable religious-cultural variable can be overcome for women's parliamentary election if the electoral factors are favorable and women are mobilized, as was the case in Italy in the 1980s and 1990s.²⁷

Comparing Russia's Recruitment with the Model

The task of getting elected in Russia is potentially easier by the party-list election system for choosing half of the Duma members. Also, the nationwide list (instead of smaller regional ones) is an immense help for getting women added to the party slates. As the Russian women's movement grows and parties become fearful of losing votes, more women will be nominated for their lists. However, the 5 percent vote that is required for party seats in the parliament should continue to be a barrier for a Russian women's political party as it is in Germany.²⁸

Other Russian favorable factors are the large number of well-educated and employed women, which should bode well unless there is increasing women's unemployment. Pluralism in religion is also favorable, but there is currently some gender bias and corruption that hinders women's political advance. Nevertheless, compared with many other democratizing countries, Russia has considerable potential for increasing women's representation in their national legislature.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Russian Women in Politics and Society presents vital knowledge by experts to give the reader insight into and understanding of Russia's women. Part I opens with Carol Nechemias' chapter setting forth women's political participation in the early days of the Bolshevik regime following the Russian Revolution of October 1917. She relates the rise, fall, and rise again of concerns for women's problems and women's political activities through successive periods in the Soviet Union: Vladimir Lenin's, the civil war, Stalinism, and the post-Stalin Communist leadership. Joel C. Moses then describes in Chapter 3 the participation of thousands of women in Communist organizations throughout the Soviet Union. He presents the image of women's equality and the reality of their power and authority. In Chapter 4, Wilma Rule and Nadezhda Shvedova relate the amazing story of how Russia's women bounced back from 5 percent in the Congress of People's Deputies to 13.5 percent in the new national legislature, the Duma, in 1993. They conclude with explanations for this surprising outcome and, in a postscript, compare it with women's election in 1995.

In Part II, *The Changing Gender Culture and Women's Place*, Marcelline Hutton's Chapter 5 tells about women of all classes in the days of the Tsars. Well-educated women saw men granted the vote, which was denied them. Lower-class pregnant women were fired from their maid's jobs and thrown out on the streets. Hutton relates how the Bolsheviks changed these and other aspects of Russian life. Norma C. Noonan's Chapter 6 then explains the Communist legacy of antifeminism, the

development of the "worker-mother" ideal, and contemporary women's movements.

The economic and social problems that developed in the 1960s and continued into the 1980s are analyzed in Chapter 7 by the Russian economist Alexander Ardishvili. They spawned black market economies and corruption and a redistribution of wealth. Norma C. Noonan's exposition of the Mikhail Gorbachev presidency in Chapter 8 includes the first steps toward democratic elections in Russia. The failed coup and the breakup of the Soviet Union that followed ended his presidency. Chapter 9 presents Luba Racanska's portrayal of President Boris Yeltsin's introduction of "shock therapy" as a capitalistic cure for the severe ills of the Russian economy. She portrays the effect on young and old women in the new Russia.

Part IV, The Changing Constitution and Women's Human Rights, features two chapters that provide essential background for comprehending current politics in Russia. Richard D. Anderson, Jr.'s, "The New Russian Constitution and Women's Political Opportunities," Chapter 10, first outlines events leading to the constitution and then explains the extraordinary powers it gives the president and denies the national legislature. Chapter 11 by Dorothy McBride Stetson examines whether Soviet laws helped women achieve autonomy, equality, and self-determination in their conflicts with men in the family. Abortion, marriage and divorce, rape, and sexual harassment laws in early and contemporary periods are then discussed.

In "Crossroads in Russia: A Brighter Road Ahead for Women?" Norma C. Noonan provides commentary on the aforementioned excellent chapters and scrutinizes future prospects for the women of Russia.

NOTES

1. See Padma Desai, "Beyond Shock Therapy," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (April 1995): 102-12.

2. For gender discrimination, see Olga Voronina, "The Mythology of Women's Emancipation in the USSR as the Foundation for a Policy of Discrimination," in *Women in Russia: A New Era in Russian Feminism*, ed. Anastasia Posadskay et al. (New York: Verso, 1994), pp. 37-56.

3. *Vestnik Statistiki* (Moscow: Finansy i statistiki, 1991), No. 2, pp. 39-40, 65; *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce), pp. 405-7. Although the categories and occupations are not strictly comparable, the data are adequate for purposes of rough comparison. Also see Zoya Khotkina, "Women in the Labour Market: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," in *Women in Russia: A New Era in Russian Feminism*, ed. Anastasia Posadskay et al. (New York: Verso, 1994), pp. 85-108.

4. Jane H. Bayes, "A Crossnational Comparison of Family and Work Policies Affecting Women," paper prepared for the Fifth International

Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, February 22–26, 1993, San Jose, Costa Rica, p. 5.

5. Natalia V. Tchernina, "Unemployment and the Emergence of Poverty during Economic Reform in Russia," *International Labor Review* 133 (1994): 599–611.

6. Nadezhda Shvedova, "Women in Democratic Transitions: Gender Shock — Democratization and Women's Status in Russia," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, August 12–17, 1993, Miami, Florida. Shvedova cites the Russian Federal Employment Service for 1993.

7. "The Feministki Are Coming," *The Economist*, August 25, 1995, p. 46.

8. This was the case for the Gender Center in Moscow, which I visited in 1994.

9. Victor Voronkov and Miles McNall, "Academic Entrepreneurship During Transformation of the Institutions of Science in Russia," *Footnotes* (of the American Sociological Association), November 1994, pp. 5–6.

10. Alessandra Stanley, "Russian Mothers, From All Walks, Walk Alone," *New York Times*, October 20, 1995, pp. 1, 5.

11. R. Gordon Hoxie, "Forming a Government: The Prospects for Democracy in Russia," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24 (Fall 1994): 872–73.

12. Tchernina, "Unemployment and the Emergence of Poverty."

13. Ariel Cohen, "Crime Without Punishment," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (April 1995): 40–41.

14. Minxin Pei, "'Creeping Democratization' in China," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (October 1995): 68.

15. Vladimir Mau, "The Ascent of the Inflationists," *Journal of Democracy* 5, (April 1994): 32–35, quoted in Peter C. Ordeshook, "Institutions and Incentives," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (April 1995): 35.

16. Steven Erlanger, "Russia's Premier: Too Popular for His Own Good," *New York Times International*, June 26, 1995, p. A3; Steven Erlanger, "A Corrupt Tide in Russia from State-Business Ties," *New York Times*, July 3, 1995, pp. 1A, 5A; Anders Aslund, "Russia's Sleaze Sector," *New York Times*, July 11, 1995, p. A11.

17. Padma Desai, "Beyond Shock Therapy," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (April 1995): 109; Aslund, "Russia's Sleaze Sector," p. A11.

18. Dietrich Thranhardt, "The Political Uses of Xenophobia in England, France and Germany," *Party Politics* 1 (July 1995): 323–24.

19. Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 198ff.

20. "Russians Vie for Votes, and Anything Goes," *New York Times*, November 16, 1995, p. 8A

21. See Michael Specter, "Russia's Political Miracle: A Red Comeback," *New York Times*, November 8, 1995, pp. A1, A4.

22. "Chechnya: New Hope," *New York Times*, June 23, 1995, p. A6.

23. "Leader of 'Women of Russia' on Faction's Position," *Russia National Affairs*, March 16, 1995, pp. 25–28.

24. See Wilma Rule, "Electoral Systems, Contextual Factors, and Women's Opportunity for Election to Parliament in Twenty-Three Democracies," *Western Political Quarterly* 40 (September 1987): 477–98; Wilma Rule, "Parliaments, of, by and for the People: Except for Women?" in *Electoral Systems in Comparative*

Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities, ed. Wilma Rule and Joseph F. Zimmerman (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 15–30; Pippa Norris, “Conclusions: Comparing Legislative Recruitment,” in *Gender and Party Politics*, ed. Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris (London: Sage, 1993), pp. 309–30; Pippa Norris, “Women’s Legislative Participation in Western Europe,” *West European Politics* 8 (1985): 90–101; Enid Lakeman, “Electoral Systems and Women in Parliament,” *Parliamentarian* 56 (July 1976): 159–62; R. Darcy, Susan B. Welch, and Janet Clark, *Women, Elections and Representation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), pp. 138–71.

25. Matthew Shugart, “Minorities Represented and Unrepresented,” in *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities*, ed. Wilma Rule and Joseph F. Zimmerman (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 31–44.

26. See Rule, “Electoral Systems”; Norris, “Women’s Legislative Participation.”

27. Marila Guadagnini, “A ‘Partitocrazia’ Without Women: The Case of the Italian Party System,” in *Gender and Party Politics*, ed. Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris (London: Sage, 1993), pp. 168–204; Richard S. Katz, “Electoral Reform and the Transformation of Party Politics in Italy,” *Party Politics*, 2 (January 1996): 31–54.

28. See Eva Kolinsky, “Party Change and Women’s Representation in Unified Germany,” in *Gender and Party Politics*, ed. Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris (London: Sage, 1993), p. 141.

I

WOMEN IN POLITICS: PAST AND PRESENT

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2

Women's Participation: From Lenin to Gorbachev

Carol Nechemias

At a time when U.S. women were struggling to gain the right to vote, the Bolshevik leadership made ideological commitments to women's equality that set the new Soviet state apart as a radical proponent of women's rights. The Soviet Union stood as a pioneer in advancing legal guarantees for women, embracing strong measures in each of a succession of constitutions. The Bolsheviks stressed the ideal of women's right to equality in economic, social, cultural, and political life. Sweeping change did occur, especially with respect to access to education and occupational achievement, but the record of women's political participation from Lenin to Gorbachev suggests that practice fell far short of proclamation.

Women were and remained marginal in leading positions in Soviet life. Despite more than 70 years in power, the Communist Party's program of women's emancipation could not lift women's representation in the party's key decision-making bodies to the level achieved before and during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Indeed, a sharp downturn in women's access to significant positions occurred at the same time that dramatic pronouncements about women's rights were being promulgated in the 1918 Constitution and in new legal codes. We will explore this paradox by tracking women's relationship to the political arena through the prism of Soviet history.

THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR

In the aftermath of the October Revolution in 1917, the Bolshevik Party moved swiftly to embrace legal codes strikingly modern in their conception of gender relations. The 1918 constitution specified the right of women to vote and to hold elective office. New laws granted women equal rights to education, made it easier to secure a divorce than anywhere else in the world, legalized abortion, established equal pay for women performing work identical with men, cast marriage as a civil rather than a religious union, and gave women the right to choose their own place of residence and to use their own last name.

The battle for formal or legal equality, thus, was won at the onset of Bolshevik rule. However, equality before the law does not necessarily translate into equality in fact. In the political arena, a substantial gender gap existed with respect to participation within the Bolshevik Party. Women's share of membership stood at 7.5 percent in 1920. Before the revolution, only one woman, Elena Stasova, had served on the Bolshevik Central Committee, the Party's key decision-making body at that time; Alexandra Kollontai and Vera Yakovleva were added in August 1917 but served only briefly. The proportion of women in positions of leadership during the Bolshevik Revolution did not exceed 6 percent of the total. Moreover, women's membership on the Central Committee fell to zero during the Civil War in 1918–20 between the Bolsheviks and the forces loyal to the former regime.

Earlier in the years following the revolution, the Bolshevik Party had transformed itself from a revolutionary, conspiratorial organization to an administrative bureaucracy, a process already underway during the Civil War. Women activists, who had performed the same tasks as their male counterparts in the prerevolutionary period, gravitated into areas associated with women's traditional roles. These included working with women and nurturing and integrative or expressive functions, that is, sustaining mass commitment to the belief system and the Party. Prominent women activists among the Old Bolsheviks, party members whose activism predated the 1917 Revolution, were not immune from this trend. For example, Alexandra Kollontai served as the Commissar of Social Welfare from November 1917 to March 1918; Nadezhda Krupskaiia, Lenin's wife, worked with youth and in the area of education; three women joined the Commissariat of Health; and Inessa Armand, Kollontai, Konkordiia Samoiloiva, K. I. Nikolaeva, and S. N. Smidovich all served as head of the *Zhenotdel* (the women's section of the Party) during its existence from 1919 to 1930. As the Communist Party solidified its hold on power, prominent women among the Old Bolsheviks failed to move into the Party's key decision-making bodies.

For rank-and-file women party members, and there were more than 50,000 new women who joined during the Civil War, V. I. Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, recommended involvement in small-scale organizational tasks, working in the sphere of food distribution and public catering, helping the army, or carrying on agitation in the army. Many women did serve in the Red Army as nurses, drivers, or clerks, but these were jobs women had held in the Tsarist army during World War I. Women (and men) did break new ground by working as political officers in the military, charged with conducting propaganda among the troops and keeping a watchful eye on former Tsarist officers, who had joined the Bolshevik cause but whose loyalty was suspect. These women frequently were drawn into combat.

The image of the woman commissar or woman revolutionary could have provided the population with role models of strong women leaders who performed as the equals of men. Instead, party propaganda depicted women as politically immature, as less than equal partners in the revolutionary movement. Representations of men and women in official propaganda, avant-garde art, and proletarian culture revealed a world in which women were buxom peasants, farmers, providers, supporters, and nurturers. Women factory workers typically were secondary figures, helpmates of the revolution; rural women served as symbols of the politically suspect village, the world of superstition, wooden plows, and tradition, while men were associated with the city, the active, creative part of society.¹

During this early period, Bolshevik leaders recognized several barriers to women's participation. Lenin pointed to male chauvinism and its attendant underestimation of women's abilities. He also warned that stereotypical female behavior was out of place in the political arena, cautioning women activists not to "twitter like a bunch of chatterboxes, but speak out loudly and clearly like fighters should"; a Party congress was "not a parlour where women display their charm."² Thus, even a firm supporter of women's political participation like Lenin expressed skepticism about women's capacity to measure up to the appropriate, "male" norms of behavior that dominated the political arena. Women Bolshevik activists were more likely to explain women's absence from politics in other terms: their male counterparts' indifference or hostility to women's issues and women's political participation and the obstacles associated with women's familial duties and their traditional labor at home.

THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: 1921-29

The end of the Civil War ushered in the New Economic Policy, a lowering of tension after years of revolutionary excitement and the ravages of

war. The Communist Party initiated a set of economic reforms that permitted considerable private enterprise and an atmosphere in which experimentation flourished. The utopian aspects of the Bolshevik Revolution, the exalted mood of faith and enthusiasm, gave way to the routines of everyday life and a return to conventional attitudes. The tug of war between a mood of innovation and a mood of conformity was evident especially with respect to the "women question." Ideas about women's emancipation confronted an overwhelmingly rural, peasant society, deeply suspicious of any attempt to tamper with traditional understandings of women's roles (see Chapter 6).

The 1920s saw limited success in promoting women's access to political decision making. The proportion of female party members did climb from 7.5 percent in 1920 to 13.1 percent in 1930. Yet, the expansion of women in the general membership of the Party did not lead to a growing role in positions of leadership. In 1928, within the Party's hierarchy of full-time professional politicians — the secretaries of the Party's provincial, country, and district committees — not a single woman served. Women's access to the Central Committee of the Communist Party increased from 0.0 percent in 1920 to 2.9 percent in 1930, an improvement but still far below the 9.7 percent figure attained in 1917. At the bottom rung of the Party, women comprised 2.7 percent of the secretaries of primary party organizations in 1928.³

These general statistics mask significant differences along urban-rural and national lines. In the 1920s, women Communists generally came from the more educated, European nationalities — Jews, Estonians, Finns, Letts, Russians. In Muslim areas of Central Asia and the Caucasus, where extremely conservative views of women's roles held sway, women's political participation formed a distant and secondary goal. Other, more immediate concerns included breaking down cultural norms that forbade women communication with the "outside" world.

Women fared better in the soviets (the local councils and legislative bodies) than in the Party. The percent of female members of rural soviets rose from 1 percent in 1922 to 10 percent in 1925 to 27 percent in 1934; for urban soviets, the comparable figures are 5.7, 18, and 32 percent.⁴ However, elections were noncompetitive, and soviets played a marginal role in policy making in the Soviet regime. All territorial administrative level decision making centered in leading Party institutions, where women made little headway in securing representation.

From 1919 to 1930, Bolshevik women activists committed to increasing women's political involvement possessed an organizational weapon — a women's section (*Zhenotdel*) within the Party's Secretariat. Although the *Zhenotdel* pursued a variety of goals, a central objective involved drawing more women into the Party. To promote women's political consciousness and activism, the women's section organized delegates' assemblies of

ordinary working and peasant women, selecting the more promising women for placement in internship programs lasting several months in state, trade union, or other organizations. By 1928, more than 2 million nonparty women were participating in delegates' assemblies, with interns placed in policy areas connected with "women's concerns" like education, health, and children's institutions.

Along with the *Komsomol* (the Young Communist League), women delegates and interns formed the primary sources for the recruitment of women as Party members. The *Zhenotdel* enjoyed limited success in attracting the financial resources necessary for a large scale paid internship program or for the development of communal institutions like day care that would have facilitated political participation by easing women's homemaking burdens. Nonetheless, the *Zhenotdel* represented a tremendous asset that was lost when the Party declared in 1930 that the "woman question" was solved, abolished the *Zhenotdel*, and turned the country's attention toward dramatic new policy goals (see also Chapter 6).

THE STALINIST PERIOD: 1929-53

The launching of the First Five-Year Plan in 1929 set the Soviet Union on a course of rapid industrialization. Under Stalin, constructing socialism meant building a strong state, fulfilling economic plans, and shifting priorities toward heavy industry and away from social services and the consumer-goods sector. The overriding goal involved a rapid increase in the military-industrial might of the Soviet state. Within this framework, women represented a vast, untapped labor resource essential to an extensive strategy of economic growth that relied on additional infusions of labor and capital.

With slogans like "To the factories," the Soviet state demanded women's labor force participation. In contrast to the earlier stress on the emancipatory effects of joining the labor force, the state now placed an emphasis on women's civic duty to help fulfill production quotas. The 1930s were a watershed decade for women's employment and educational opportunities, but these achievements were not matched by an increase in women's access to political power. Women's participation rates remained largely frozen at the levels reached in the early 1930s until the exigencies of World War II created new opportunities.

Women's share of rank-and-file Party members stood at 13.7 percent in 1929 and rose only to 14.5 percent in 1939. During World War II, the figure increased to 18.7 percent, and more women moved into important positions, only to be replaced by men after the war. At the level of elite Party members, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, women's membership never exceeded 3 percent from 1930 to Stalin's death in 1953.

No women served on the Party's key decision-making body, the Politburo, during Stalin's rule.

Little increase in the proportion of female deputies in local soviets occurred between 1934 and 1955. In 1934, women formed 27 percent of the membership in rural soviets and 32 percent in urban soviets; in 1955, the overall figure for the country stood at 35.2 percent.⁵ The adoption of a new constitution in 1936 established the Supreme Soviet as a directly elected national legislature. In 1937, women held 16.5 percent of the seats in the Supreme Soviet's initial session. The proportion of women rose during World War II and then stabilized, trends that boosted women's representation over the 20 percent mark in the 1950s.

The Stalinist period, thus, did not witness an expansion in women's political authority. Instead, the Stalinist legacy established patterns of women's political participation that persisted for decades. Women's presence in soviets reached impressive levels, but the meaning of these statistics is problematic. Members of the soviets were not elected through a competitive process, the single electoral slate did not reflect popular preferences, and the soviets played a limited role in policy making. In the more important decision-making bodies of the state and Party, women failed to make inroads.

These patterns proved long-term and stemmed from several factors: an ideology that called on women to match men's performance in the workplace but at the same time excel as loving wives and mothers who find fulfillment in organizing cozy homes for their husbands and children, the neglect and consequent underdevelopment of the service sector, and a vicious political atmosphere that few women would welcome. For party and state officials, the danger of arrest and execution evaporated after Stalin's death in 1953, but it must be recognized that political participation, especially during the 1930s, involved putting oneself in danger. The purges particularly hit the politically visible. Many women interested in politics may have reached the same conclusion as Suzanne Rosenberg, who relates in her memoirs how her early enthusiasm for political activism gave way to fear of arrest and the desire to marry a man who was not conspicuous in public life. In a totalitarian state, getting married, staying out of trouble, and raising a family loomed as tickets not only for survival but also for the relative freedom associated with the privacy of the kitchen.⁶

THE POST-STALINIST ERA: FROM KHRUSHCHEV TO GORBACHEV

Despite greater personal security, large numbers of professional and well-educated women, and a high level of female political activism in the communist youth organization, the *Komsomol*, the post-Stalinist era saw a

perpetuation of previous patterns. Very few women took part in high-level policy debates, although women registered gains in the less influential soviets. Women's political activism focused heavily in the areas of housing, education, culture and health, social services, and local trade and services. The role of women within the political arena provides a sensitive indicator of their position in the larger society: women's presence fades in the upper reaches of pyramidal structures.

Women's political activism reached relatively high proportions in the soviets. Unfortunately, these legislative institutions did not play an important role in the policy process, though it does appear that the role of the soviets, especially of their standing commissions (committees), was growing over time. Female representation in the soviets shows progressively larger proportions of women deputies over the post-Stalinist period. The proportion of female deputies remained greatest at the local level and decreased at higher levels of the federal system. Moreover, the degree of progress even within these institutions of limited power is less than impressive: the proportion of women deputies in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) Supreme Soviet had reached 27 percent in 1959 and increased to only 33 percent in 1984, the last election held prior to Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power (Table 2.1).

Women's careers as soviet deputies did not resemble those of their male counterparts. Distinctive patterns existed with respect to career paths, turnover rates, and issue participation areas. Deputies elected to

TABLE 2.1
Percent of Women Among Deputies to Soviets, By Level

Levels of Government	1959	1970	1984	1989	1990
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics					
Supreme Soviet	27	30.5	33	15.7 ^a	
Union Republic Supreme Soviets	32	34.8	36 ^b		5.4 ^c
Autonomous Republic Supreme Soviets	32	38.0	40 ^b		
Regional Soviets	40 ^d	44.5	49		
Local Soviets	41 ^d	45.8			

Notes:

^aUnion of Soviet Socialist Republics Congress of People's Deputies

^b1985

^cRussian Republic Congress of People's Deputies, 1990

^d1961

Sources: Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 205; *Zhenshchiny v SSSR 1989*, (Moscow: *Financ i Statistika*, 1989), p. 13; Carol Nechemias, "Democratization and Women's Access to Legislative Seats: The Soviet Case, 1989-1991," *Women & Politics* 14 (1994): 7, 11.

the Supreme Soviet generally fell into two categories: ordinary citizens expected to serve one term and veteran deputies who were more likely prominent Party or state officials. Party membership was closely associated with the latter category, given that Party affiliation represented a virtual necessity for anyone aspiring to leadership or managerial positions in Soviet society. Figures for the 1970 USSR Supreme Soviet are illustrative: 90 percent of male deputies belonged to the Party, compared with only 40 percent of female deputies.⁷

Aside from being heavily concentrated among the nonparty element, women made up a large proportion of the young and freshman deputies. Although veteran members of the Supreme Soviet enjoyed high political and professional standing, the stereotype of women deputies included the proverbial milkmaid and outstanding textile worker. Women frequently served only one term, but men were slated for reelection and multiple terms of office. The selection of women deputies reflected an affirmative effort to provide symbolic representation for more than half of the Soviet population.

As participants in the work of the USSR Supreme Soviet, women were more often seen than heard. Women made up 10.5 percent of the speakers at sessions held from 1966 to 1973.⁸ However, this participation varied across policy areas, reaching substantial levels in areas like health, education, and welfare, in which women constituted 31 percent of the speakers. Discussions of planning, foreign affairs, and budgetary matters drew little female participation.

At the local level, where health, culture, and social services are dominant concerns, participation in local soviets and their standing commissions offered women their best chance to contribute to policy making. During the period from 1967 to 1975, women made up more than 25 percent of the speakers in Russian republic regional soviet sessions on subjects like health, culture, education, trade, housing, and services. Thus, women's political participation in the soviets revolved around health, education, and welfare.

Very few women have served in the more influential state positions associated with the Council of Ministers. At the all-union, national level, it has been rare for more than one woman to hold a ministerial portfolio at any given time; the positions held were ones associated with women's roles, such as culture and health. The paucity of women typically serving in high-level state positions is captured by the following data for 1969: among the 538 members of union-republic councils of ministers, only 21 were women.⁹ Key policy debates within the councils of ministers, thus, largely excluded women.

LIMITED ROLES IN PARTY ELITE

If we turn our focus away from state institutions and toward the role of women in the Communist Party, we find that women never achieved parity in Party membership, a serious handicap in a society in which Party membership served as a prerequisite for advancement to leading positions and potential influence. Despite the upward growth in the proportion of female members, the underrepresentation of women within the Communist Party persisted throughout the Soviet period. Women constituted 19.7 percent of the Party membership in 1956 and increased their share to 26 percent by 1981 and to 29.3 percent during perestroika in 1988 (Table 2.2). One aspect of this male-female imbalance is especially striking: an extraordinarily large gender gap existed between well-educated men and women. About 54 percent of men over age 30 with a complete higher education were counted as Party members in 1973, while only 14 percent of all such women were Party members.¹⁰ Although Party membership increased with level of education, educational attainment did not equalize women's chances to gain Party membership.

TABLE 2.2
Women Members of the Communist Party and of the Central Committee

Year	Women as Percent of Party	Women as Percent of Central Committee
1920	7.4	0.0
1930	13.1	2.9
1939	14.5	2.2
1946	18.7	NA
1952	19.0	3.1
1961	19.5	3.3
1971	22.2	3.8
1977	24.7	3.3 ^a
1981	26.0	3.0
1988	29.3	4.2 ^b

Notes:

^a1976

^b1986

NA, not available

Sources: Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 210–19; David Lane, *Soviet Society Under Perestroika* (Winchester, Mass.: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 220; Carol Nechemias, "Democratization and Women's Access to Legislative Seats: The Soviet Case, 1989–1991," *Women & Politics* 14 (1994): 5.

The gradual increase in women's share of Party membership did not translate into greater representation within the Party elite. Women's share of Central Committee seats remained stagnant in the 3–4 percent range. Moreover, those women who did achieve Central Committee membership tended not to be professional political leaders. In contrast to the male membership of the Central Committee, which was dominated by men with distinguished careers in the state and Party apparatus, the women's contingent included a significant proportion of individuals chosen for decorative or symbolic purposes. These women typically were honored workers or collective farmers, chosen to lend a flavor of rank-and-file membership to the Central Committee meetings.

From the passing of the old generation of Bolshevik women until the Gorbachev era, only one woman achieved a significant role in the Party or government. Ekaterina Furtseva reached the very pinnacle of the Party hierarchy, the Party's Politburo, in 1957, where she served for three years before being dropped from the Party's inner sanctum and demoted from the position of Central Committee Secretary to the lesser post of Minister of Culture. She held that position until her death in 1974. No woman served on the Politburo during the entire 18 years of Leonid Brezhnev's leadership, beginning in 1964.

The major avenue to political influence in the USSR involved upward mobility within the Party apparatus. This was an avenue that few women traveled. As in the case of the soviets, women's presence faded in the upper levels of a pyramidal structure. At the very lowest level of the party apparatus — first Party secretaries of primary Party organizations (Party cells) — women held one-third of the positions as early as 1966. Most of these positions did not, however, involve full-time work for the Party, and only a small percentage of women rose above this lowest rung on the Party ladder. In 1974, women made up less than 4 percent of urban and district first Party secretaries in the USSR; in 1972, participation rates for women in republic and regional Party bureaus stood at 2.2 percent; the comparable figure for regions in the Russian and Ukrainian republics was 3 percent.¹¹

Above the lowest level of the primary Party organization, the Party apparatus was largely a male domain. Women who did serve as regional party secretaries generally had responsibility for ideology, which, in the Soviet context, included culture, education, and the mass media. Compared with their male counterparts, women tended to be "locals," recruited from lower positions within their region of residence, trained in a university or pedagogical institute, older, specialists in indoctrination, and found in rural backwaters lacking in population and political visibility.¹² On the whole, these were the characteristics not associated with promotion to Moscow. Moreover, women's opportunities were greater from 1958 to 1964 than they were after 1965, when Brezhnev introduced

his "stability of cadres" policy, which lowered turnover rates within the Party and state apparatuses and, thus, reduced opportunities for upward mobility for women.

Women's absence from positions of political influence does not denote a lifetime of political inactivity. In school, women were the majority of members of the Komsomol and of secretaries of primary Komsomol organizations. However, with marriage and, especially, with the birth of children, women's participation falls precipitously.

GORBACHEV, PERESTROIKA, AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Reforms instituted by Communist Party General Secretary Gorbachev carried mixed results for women's participation. Glasnost and democratization facilitated a more open discussion of women's issues, the reenergization of an old-line women's organization closely associated with the Communist Party, and the founding of many new, independent women's groups at the grass-roots level. However, women's formal representation in influential state and party institutions remained at low levels. Moreover, the drastic falloff in women's proportion of seats in the newly empowered soviets led some to conclude that democratization was likely to result in a "maleocracy," the removal of women from political life.

Gorbachev's record with respect to the promotion of women to important positions in the Party and state bureaucracies does not suggest an effort to bring significant numbers of women into high level decision making. Within the Party apparatus, women comprised only 7 percent of all regional and county level Party secretaries in 1988. The proportion of women on the Central Committee did edge above 4 percent. One woman, Alexandra Biriukova, gained election to the highest Party organs: to the Secretariat in 1986 and to the Politburo as a candidate or nonvoting member in 1988. Biriukova moved out of the Secretariat in 1988 to become a Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and Chairman of the Bureau for Social Development; she was the sole female member in the Council of Ministers. In 1990, she retired at the age of 61, having served as the lone woman in the male world of top-level Soviet officials.

In July 1990, a major reshuffling of the Politburo resulted in the election of Galina Semenova, the first woman to hold full membership on the Politburo since Furseva. Semenova, the editor of a weekly magazine for women in rural areas, was appointed to fill a newly created slot, that of Party Secretary for Women's Affairs. This appointment could be characterized as a blatant example of tokenism, but its implications remain unclear, given the Party's rapid decline of authority and the wrenching crises associated with the attempted coup against Gorbachev and the ensuing breakup of the USSR. It is interesting, however, that, in a

situation in which the Party was increasingly facing challenges from newly formed political movements, there was some consideration given to a strategy that involved an appeal for women's support.

Women's former strength in the soviets evaporated as political reform began to transform these institutions from pseudo legislatures into organs of power. During March and April 1989, the Soviet Union held its first multicandidate, countrywide elections since 1917. These elections involved fundamental changes in political structures. Constitutional changes carried out in 1988–89 had replaced the Supreme Soviet with the Congress of People's Deputies (CPD). The CPD, in turn, elected from among its members a smaller, standing Supreme Soviet. The CPD included 2,250 deputies, with 1,500 elected from districts similar to those used for the old Supreme Soviet. A major innovation involved the other 750 seats, which were to be filled by all-union public organizations through internal procedures. Most importantly, the Supreme Soviet promised to be a genuine, working parliament, scheduled to meet eight months of the year, rather than for a few days.

Electoral Disaster of 1989

Women suffered an electoral disaster under these new conditions. There was a dramatic downturn in women's level of representation: in the new CPD, women formed 15.7 percent of the membership, compared with 33 percent of the deputies elected in the prereform 1984 Supreme Soviet. Women's earlier inclusion clearly stemmed from Party quotas rather than the preferences of voters or, for that matter, the aspirations of women, who failed to step forward as candidates in significant numbers.

Worst of all, the 15.7 percent figure stemmed largely from a peculiarity of the new electoral law, the election of one-third of the CPD by public organizations. Public organizations accounted for 56 percent of the women deputies. The Soviet Women's Committee alone, which had been allocated 75 seats, accounted for 37 percent of the women's seats. This dependence on public organizations did not bode well for women, because this route to membership in parliament proved so unpopular — so obviously undemocratic — that 13 of the 15 republics abandoned the practice of reserving seats before they held elections in 1990.

Without quotas or special procedures to boost women's access to the soviet legislatures, the number of women deputies plummeted. In the 1990 Russian republic elections, women formed only 7.6 percent of the candidates; the proportion of women deputies fell from 35.3 percent in the prereform era to 5.4 percent. Similar results occurred in other republic elections; the proportion of women legislators in the Moldavian Supreme Soviet fell to 5.4 percent and to 7.4 percent in Kazakhstan. In local soviets,

women's representation, which had averaged 50 percent, fell to 33 percent in Russia and to 23 percent in Estonia.

There are several explanations for this sharp downturn in women's access to the soviets. The demise of the Communist Party's quota system depressed women's chances for success, and popular pressure to increase the numbers of women candidates did not emerge. Across the political spectrum, political parties showed no interest in involving women in public life; whether reform-minded or reactionary, new political parties and movements failed to engage in affirmative efforts to include women. That the victory of reform-minded forces does not necessarily bring more women into the political arena was brought home by election results in Leningrad. In this bastion of democratic reform, women gained only 6 percent of the seats in the 400-member city soviet. In 1990, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's right-wing Liberal Democratic Party advocated sending women back home to their families. None of the parties or movements emerging during perestroika demonstrated an interest in incorporating women's voices into decision making or promoting women's participation.

Household burdens — the endless shortage of goods and endless lines — also prevented women from participating in political life. Society's inability to make women's lives easier, to develop the social sphere and make modern appliances widely available, meant that only very exceptional women could enter political life. For most women, coping with the daily routines of working long hours, cooking, cleaning, and standing in lines eroded the strength or time to commit themselves to political activity.

Yet another reason for the dearth of women deputies lies in Soviet public opinion. Soviet polls suggested that the public preferred male over female candidates, and the country itself seemed caught up in a "send the women back home" refrain that undermined the idea that women belonged in the political arena. The fact that women candidates were regarded as less desirable than their male counterparts provides evidence about the real attitudes toward women in politics. Soviet traditions of patriarchy celebrate male power and accept prominent women only as symbolic tokens.

Finally, the electoral system — the employment of a single-member, winner-take-all electoral procedure — usually does not (unlike a party list, proportional representation system) encourage the election of women legislators.

The performance of women deputies in the USSR Congress of People's Deputies also may have discouraged women's electoral chances in the 1990 union republic and local elections by reenforcing negative images of women political figures as window dressing. Despite the outstanding performance of women deputies like Galina Starovoitova and Elizabeta

Gaer, the image of women deputies during perestroika continued to share much in common with the Soviet legacy.¹³

Perestroika and Women's Activism

Yet, perestroika did lay the seeds for future women's activism. Renewed debate over women's place allowed for the public expression of a greater diversity of viewpoints, though some of the new images of women, like that of a housewife-photo model, had as little resemblance to reality as the old Soviet images of smiling women collective farmers. The reinvigoration of traditional women's groups like the Soviet Women's Committee (later renamed the Union of Women of Russia [UWR]) and the formation of new ones provided a foundation for women's political activism in the post-Soviet period, as the first parliamentary elections held in the newly independent Russian Federation in 1993 illustrate.

The impact of perestroika on the Soviet Women's Committee (SWC) is particularly noteworthy. An old structure formed "from above," the SWC had long served as a propaganda mouthpiece of the Communist Party, representing the USSR at international conferences and hosting foreign delegations. In 1987, however, the SWC's role changed significantly when Gorbachev called for its revitalization. The SWC then reoriented its responsibilities toward the domestic scene, gained a new leader in Zoia Pukhova, and began to engage in greater criticism of women's status in Soviet society. Thus began a metamorphosis that continues today. Distrusted by many as part of the old Communist establishment, the "reborn" SWC enjoyed a head start on independent, newly formed women's groups. The SWC had experienced leadership, state funding until the collapse of the USSR, an excellent facility in Moscow, international contracts, and a network of local women's councils (*zhensovety*).

Alevtina Fedulova became the head of the SWC in 1991 and continues in that capacity with the SWC's successor organization, the UWR. She was a longtime member of the Party apparatus, having climbed the ladder of Komsomol work to the All-Union level before heading the Soviet mass children's organization, the Pioneers. She regarded the 1989 elections as a defeat for women and a wake-up call to the true position of Soviet women. Strongly oriented toward political involvement, Fedulova stressed the idea that women must be included in decision making. In the post-Soviet context, she has managed to shape a new role for the UWR and a new political career for herself.

By stressing movement toward a law-governed state, Gorbachev's reforms also may have laid the groundwork for a greater political opportunity for women lawyers. By the close of the Soviet era, women made up roughly half of the lawyers and 45 percent of the judges. For decades, women have played a prominent role in the legal profession in the Soviet

Union, but legal expertise had rarely figured in the backgrounds of leading Soviet political figures, though two prominent exceptions included Lenin and Gorbachev. During the post-Stalinist period, expertise in industrial or agricultural production and managerial experience constituted the types of qualifications most closely associated with upwardly mobile Party politicians. Even Gorbachev was not exempt from that norm; after acquiring a law degree from Moscow State University, he obtained a degree in agriculture and worked his way up the Party apparatus on the basis of his reputation as an agricultural expert.

The reform process boosted the prestige of the legal profession, and some journalists and political figures have commented unfavorably on the paucity of lawyers in the CPD. Nonetheless, few lawyers emerged as prominent newcomers in Soviet politics. In the USSR, the Supreme Court had no power to judge the constitutionality of laws but was authorized to develop guiding explanations that would assist in the application of laws to specific cases. Citizens had no right to sue a government agency or official until 1988, when an emasculated law "On Procedures for Appealing to the Courts Unlawful Actions by Officials that Infringe the Rights of Citizens" was passed, which severely limited the actions that can be appealed. Whether judges and lawyers acquire a larger role in the policy-making process remains a matter of speculation.

CONCLUSION

Women's political participation during the Soviet era bore striking resemblance to women's overall position in society: women did not participate in "great politics" but in secondary roles that require specialized knowledge. The political elite has been almost exclusively male. Women were well-represented among Soviet professionals normally involved in policy analysis and policy advocacy, as teachers in higher education, as journalists, and as economists and planners, but as managers or decision makers in directional roles over men, they are largely absent.

NOTES

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3

The Communist Era and Women: Image and Reality

Joel C. Moses

Under Soviet Communism, Russian women were politically mobilized and marginalized. This was the reality despite the image of female equality assumed ideologically for decades by Soviet Communist leaders and asserted legally in Article 35 of the Soviet Constitution of 1977.

THE COMMUNIST ERA: IMAGE

The contrast between image and reality before 1990 was most clearly evident in the status and role of women in Soviet mass interest groups, the Soviet government, and the Communist Party. Based solely on the number of women in political offices and their organizations, women seemed to have made real strides toward political equality and influence in Soviet society. Women's influence on national policy making in Russia and throughout Soviet society seemed irrefutable.

Women constituted over half of the entire labor force and held more than one-third of the elected positions in the governing organs of trade unions at various administrative levels in Russia and several other Soviet republics. In the city of Moscow alone, a reported 22,000 female trade union activists participated in their unions' commissions for women by 1984. Mass publications on the commissions for local female trade union activists were distributed in large numbers throughout the country.¹ Specially designated women's commissions at the local, republic, and national levels of the trade unions were charged with the authority to investigate and report on serious health problems and safety hazards

affecting women workers. However, health and safety regulations frequently were ignored through the collusion of industrial managers, union leaders, and labor inspectors, who were unwilling to spend the time and money to correct the hazards and more concerned about meeting production quotas.

The Committee of Soviet Women had branches in each republic. There were tens of thousands of female activists in its local cells or in affiliated women's councils at work and apartment complexes who formed an interlocking interest-group network to promote women's demands and priorities. Also, since 1976, special legislative committees on women's issues had been formed in all republic parliaments and in the national parliament (Supreme Soviet).² These committees were mandated to promote women's interests, draft specific legislation for women, investigate violations of standing Soviet laws affecting women workers, and force compliance with those laws from government ministries and trade unions through committee hearings.

In the last two decades of the Soviet Union, women sociologists, economists, and others in various academic research institutes of Russia and other republics published numerous studies documenting the inequities suffered by Soviet women in the workplace.³ Along with female journalists, these academics helped stir public awareness of these inequities and even a few changes in government employment policies affecting women. Some of these academics, such as Tatiana Zaslavskaya at the Russian Siberian branch of the Academy of Sciences in the city of Novosibirsk, became renowned members of Mikhail Gorbachev's "brain-trust" after 1985. They drafted the specific reforms and provided the critical rationales to restructure the Soviet economy in Gorbachev's program of perestroika in 1986–91 (see Chapter 8).⁴

Underrepresented in the ruling Communist Party, women still constituted 29 percent of the approximately 19 million Party members nationally by 1989.⁵ The 29 percent represented a dramatic increase from the mere 18 percent of female Party members in the late 1950s. The increase resulted from a concerted policy to recruit more women into the Party, especially in industrial factories and plants employing many women. The policy had been supported for the previous three decades at the very highest Party level by all top Soviet leaders from Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev to Gorbachev. Since the 1970s, women made up more than one of every three new Party members and, by the national Party congresses in 1981 and 1986, averaged 25 percent of the approximately 5,000 assembled delegates.

Few Women Political Leaders

In the leadership positions of the Party and government, progress was slower.⁶ Women still at best averaged 3 to 4 percent of the Central Committee elected at Party congresses over the past few decades, and a large majority of these were token model workers and farmers. Only two women (Ekaterina Furtseva in 1957–61 and Galina Semenova in 1990–91) had ever been elected full members of the Party's Politburo. All 109 members of the national government's Soviet Council of Ministers (cabinet) in 1981–85 were men.

Nevertheless, by 1985, individual women in Russia and throughout the Soviet Union had risen to influential leadership positions. The most prominent internationally was Valentina Nikolaevna-Tereshkova. Nikolaevna-Tereshkova had been the first woman in space as a Soviet cosmonaut. Since 1971, she chaired the Committee of Soviet Women. Nikolaevna-Tereshkova also was elected a full member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party at four consecutive Party congresses.

Two others were Alexandra Biriukova and Lidiia Lykova. Biriukova in 1976–85 was a Secretary of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (the national organization of all trade unions in the country) and a nonvoting candidate member of the Party Politburo. Under Gorbachev in 1986–90, she retained her nonvoting seat on the Politburo with her promotion to Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. This position was equivalent to Deputy Prime Minister of the Soviet Union.⁷ Over two decades, from 1967 through 1985, Lykova was Deputy Chair of the Russian Council of Ministers, a post equivalent to Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian republic. She also was a full voting member of the Party's Central Committee in 1976–85.⁸

Ministers of Nurturing Departments

Women like Lykova in ministerial positions on the republic level were still a minority by 1985, but hardly an exception. Over decades, in Russia and other republics, women had been appointed government ministers of departments such as education, health care, and social security. Women seemed to have been singled out for appointment to these particular positions, because ministries like education, health care, and social security closely matched the traditional female function of nurturing and the traditional roles of mother and housekeeper in the family.⁹ Lykova served for six years as the Russian Minister of Social Security before her promotion to Deputy Prime Minister in 1967. Another woman, Domna Komarova, succeeded Lykova as Social Security Minister and remained in that position through the early 1980s.¹⁰

THE COMMUNIST ERA: REALITY

Elections and Women

Despite this image of women's political equality, the reality in the Soviet Union was that they were effectively disempowered under the authoritarian Communist system. Overriding the semblance of equality was an unchallenged paternalistic outlook of the dominant male Communist leadership. Over decades, women were relegated to a status akin to children who were presumed to require special privileges and the defense of their true interests by the male-dominant Communist leadership.

Nowhere was the disparity between the image of political power for women and the reality of their powerlessness more evident than in the composition of deputies elected to the 15 republic parliaments and the all-Union Supreme Soviet every five years. Before 1989–90, specific quotas for women guaranteed them almost 50 percent of the parliament seats in each republic and 33 percent in the all-Union Supreme Soviet. Under the Soviet electoral process, only one candidate appeared on the ballot for each of the deputy seats in the republic and all-Union elections.

The function of uncontested elections, in which 99 percent of all registered adults voted, was to mobilize Soviet citizens and to ensure their political conformity under Communist Party rule.¹¹ Voters were given only the option of crossing out the name of the single candidate for each deputy position. The single candidate was nominated by the Communist Party — the only political party allowed to exist under the Soviet Constitution — or by its affiliated mass organizations (trade unions, women's councils, youth groups, veterans' organizations, and so on). Write-ins on the ballot were forbidden. The only way that a candidate could be defeated was if his name was crossed out by a majority of those voting in the constituency. It was a rare occurrence when a majority crossed out the name of the candidate. Then, a special election with another single candidate nominated by the local branch of the Communist Party, or its adjunct mass organizations, would be scheduled to fill the vacant seat.

Like all facets of political life under Soviet Communism, the nomination process to select the single candidate in each constituency was run and controlled by the corresponding local branches of the Party. Candidates recruited by local Party branches for seats to the local, republic, and all-Union legislatures had to meet specific composite background characteristics. These were designated by quotas sent down by higher Party organs in their republic capitals and in Moscow. A cross section of deputies would be nominated who by background matched the

population in the republics and Soviet society, for example, so many manual workers, collective farmers, and women.

Thus, the Party leadership could claim to have achieved real political equality and democracy through deputies who by background actually represented their constituents. The local Party branches only had to make sure that the specific candidates nominated under these allocations met their republic and all-Union quotas of deputies by social class, gender, age, and ethnicity. Female deputies were just another category to be filled under the quotas. They were chosen from activists in the Communist Party and the Party-dominated mass organizations of unions and women's councils in the workplace. In this way, the quota expected of local Party branches by the electoral commissions was met.

Parliamentary and Other Activities

The specific women elected deputies and their participation in the work of the parliaments were unimportant, if not totally irrelevant. Republic parliaments and the all-Union Supreme Soviet were not supposed to legislate. Their principal role was to legitimate the Party's unchallenged rule by unanimously passing its policy proposals. They did so, meeting briefly for 1- to 2-week sessions a few times each year.

As many as 50 to 80 percent of all female deputies were replaced at each all-Union and republic parliamentary election. The high turnover of many female and male deputies every five years assured total Party domination of the legislative process. The only female deputies reelected were Party-state leaders or top officials in mass organizations, such as Biriukova, Lykova, and Nikolaevna-Tereshkova. Like their male counterparts, these women were continuously reelected to the republic and all-Union parliaments. Their reelection was almost *ex officio*, based on their positions of authority and political status in the republics or the country.

Uncontested elections only capped the many other activities staged every year by the Party and its mass organizations in the workplace, schools, and apartment complexes. Elections and the various activities — such as socialist competition campaigns among work collectives, free workdays on Saturdays, and neighborhood committees — defined the range of “mobilized political participation.” All Soviet citizens were both expected and compelled to participate.¹² These involuntary forms of participation were intended to arouse a high level of civic activeness, generate loyalty and public support for the Soviet system, and socialize citizens into accepting Communist norms and beliefs. They encouraged intolerance by society for any dissenting views or individual forms of political participation considered contrary to Party rule.

Citizen involvement in elections and these other activities allegedly personified the collective unity of all Soviet people for the Communist

Party and for the goals of its leadership. It was essential in the elections and their results to show that a cross section of all citizens by age, social class, ethnicity, and gender had participated and benefitted. For Party leaders, the high percentage of female deputies validated their claim to be governing Soviet society democratically.

For many Soviet citizens, the model of women in politics over decades were these many thousands of female deputies, who dutifully collaborated with men deputies in the charade of staged elections and unanimously voting parliaments. For an increasing number of Soviet citizens after 1985, female deputies resulting from quotas in uncontested elections under Party rule symbolized the very subjugation, conformity, and powerlessness of all Soviet citizens under the Communist autocracy.

Women Politically Marginalized

In the Communist Party itself, women were politically marginalized.¹³ The reality over decades was that the higher the political office and the more powerful the position in the Party and government, the fewer the number of women. Early in their political careers, many women were chosen to lead departments on the local level. They were responsible in various ways for indoctrinating the population in Communist ideology and culture. Stereotyped as a "female" political role by the disproportionate number of women, these positions were marginal by status and mobility in the Party. They disqualified most women from serious consideration for higher republic or national offices.

Higher offices tended to be held by men who qualified for them with lifelong career backgrounds in the more prestigious and mobile functional areas of industry or agriculture. They headed departments overseeing factories or farms throughout their successful rise up the political hierarchy of the Party and government.

The most conspicuous women who did make it to the top were prototypical *apparatchiki* (officials in the Party-state bureaucracy). They were completely loyal and docile supporters of top Soviet leaders and the Communist political establishment. Their image as *apparatchiki* tended to stigmatize all female political leaders in the Soviet Union. They seemed to have succeeded only by accepting unquestionably the paternalism of the male political leaders.¹⁴

One evident example was Furtseva, who was promoted to the Party Politburo in 1957–61 as the Soviet Minister of Culture.¹⁵ It generally was presumed that she had obtained her position only because of her close association with Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, and because of her husband, the deputy foreign minister. Even with Khrushchev's ouster from power in October 1964, Furtseva remained the dutiful cultural minister. She was the only woman in the Council of Ministers under

Brezhnev, the new Party leader, until her death in 1974. By then, Furtseva's reputation had been sullied. There were widely rumored allegations that she had long abused her office solely for personal gain, including appropriating funds from her ministry to build a country home for her daughter.¹⁶

Many women on the local level, heading various departments and agencies the single purpose of which was to socialize the population into accepting Communist attitudes and beliefs, reinforced the negative image of women in national leadership positions. Like Furtseva, these women were viewed as conservative and corrupt Party bureaucrats. Moreover, women in the legislatures of the Soviet republics generally were stigmatized as ineffective legislators and collaborators, because so many had served willingly in their parliaments before 1990.

Women could advance their views on issues or attempt to influence the outcome of debates in their organizations and committees, but only as long as they conformed to the general outlines and assumptions of Party policy set by the male Party leadership. Women's commissions in the unions, the Committee of Soviet Women, and women's councils functioned primarily as part of the overall regimentation and political mobilization in Soviet society under the Party bureaucracy. They tended to be headed by the same kinds of women who oversaw indoctrination in the Party and mass organizations on the local level.

CONCLUSION

The past does affect the present. In Russia, women as a group have been unduly and unfairly stigmatized by the Soviet period. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of women elected to political offices in the Russian Federation has fallen dramatically. Few women have been nominated by the major parties as candidates for the national parliament, and very few have been elected by the voters in their constituencies (see Chapter 4).

Political parties and voters continue to reject female candidates because of the negative association of women with the Communist past. Before 1990, a majority of deputies in Russia and the other republic parliaments were women. They passed laws unanimously in their parliaments by a process intended to legitimize Communist Party rule. On the local level, female Party activists were conspicuous by their number in heading organizations responsible for indoctrinating Communist ideology. Thus, women in Russia have to change a public view of themselves as a combination of ineffective legislators, collaborators, *apparatchiki*, and indoctrinators in the former Communist autocracy.

Yet, the present also may determine the future and Russia's own uncertain progress from dictatorship to democracy over the rest of this decade.

To establish their own political identity free of the Communist past, women organized the Women of Russia party coalition on the eve of the December 12, 1993, parliamentary election. The party was unknown to most Russian voters before the December 1993 election. The Women of Russia candidates won because of their women's party affiliation, their party platform advocating more women in political offices, and their grass-roots Party activists drawn from the many women's organizations of the former Soviet era.

A public opinion poll conducted in July 1994 suggests greater public acceptance of women politicians in Russia than was true in the Soviet era.¹⁷ The success by Women of Russia candidates and that greater public acceptance will likely encourage more women to consider running for both local and national political offices over the rest of this decade.

NOTES

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4

Women in Russia's First Multiparty Election

Wilma Rule and Nadezhda Shvedova

After almost 75 years of one-party rule and a brief try with more than one Communist candidate for legislative office in 1990, Russians at last could vote in a multiparty election in 1993. Almost everyone — except the women themselves — thought that women would disappear from the legislative scene as they almost had in the Russian Congress of People's Deputies of 1990–93, in which women members were only 5 percent. Who would vote for women once quotas mandating their representation were abolished? In fact, there were potential voters who might choose women candidates. They were the multitude of unemployed women and other women worried about their children's future in the painful shift from socialism to capitalism. However, who would organize to get women on the ballot, and who would find candidates sympathetic to women's plight? Who would be women's voice for children's well-being and a future Russia at peace? If candidates were found, would women receive the minimum votes required to allow them to be seated in the new national legislature?

These questions and others relating to women's election to the upper house, the Council of the Federation, and the lower house, the Duma, in 1993 will be addressed in this chapter. Included are the new electoral system, the organization and campaign of the Women of Russia bloc or party (the terms "bloc," "faction," and "party" are used interchangeably in this chapter), women's election from other parties and as independents, backgrounds of women in parliament, and contexts in which Russian women were elected. A brief comparison of their legislative recruitment

with women parliamentarians in other countries will follow as well as a postscript about the 1995 elections.

WOMEN ORGANIZE, CAMPAIGN, AND ARE ELECTED

The New Russian Constitution and Election System

President Boris Yeltsin dissolved the former Russian parliament on September 21, 1993, and ordered the military to storm the parliament building to oust rebellious deputies inside (see Chapter 10). The parliament had been elected three years earlier under rules aiding Communist and nationalist deputies and with the near-exclusion of women members. Before another parliamentary election could be held, Yeltsin wanted a new constitution and new institutions for governing the new nation. His administration worked out the framework, but women were not a major part of the process, nor was there much concern about their political representation, even though they are 53 percent of the Russian population.¹ Accordingly, the 1993 constitution that included electoral arrangements for the bicameral Federal Assembly were only partly “woman friendly” — potentially benefitting women candidates in some respects and disadvantaging them in others.

The upper house, the Federation Council, consists of representatives of the 89 territories in the Russian Federation. (Chechnya did not participate in the 1993 election because it had declared its independence.) Two councilors were to be elected from each area to represent the territories. The lower house, the Duma, was to consist of 450 members, with half elected by proportional representation and half elected in single member plurality districts. Five percent of the party-list vote was required for any bloc to be represented from the proportional ballot, and a turnout of 25 percent of registered voters was needed for a parliamentary election to be valid. Duma representatives’ terms would be four years, with the exception of the first term, which was set for two.²

The Electoral System and Women in the Federal Assembly

Electoral systems — the way government decision makers are chosen — are fundamental to representative democracy or the lack of it. “Woman unfriendly” electoral systems are a significant cause of women’s exclusion and the consequent neglect of women’s and children’s needs. They also can adversely affect minorities. Electoral systems also affect the number of politically effective parties, which may limit voter’s choices and the informal eligibility of candidates. They also affect incumbency and money in politics.

The way that representatives are elected is significant for the gender balance or lack of it in a country's decision-making bodies. Some electoral systems encourage true representative democracy of, by, and for all — women and men; others result in an elected government ruled substantially by male members of a dominant ethnic or political group.

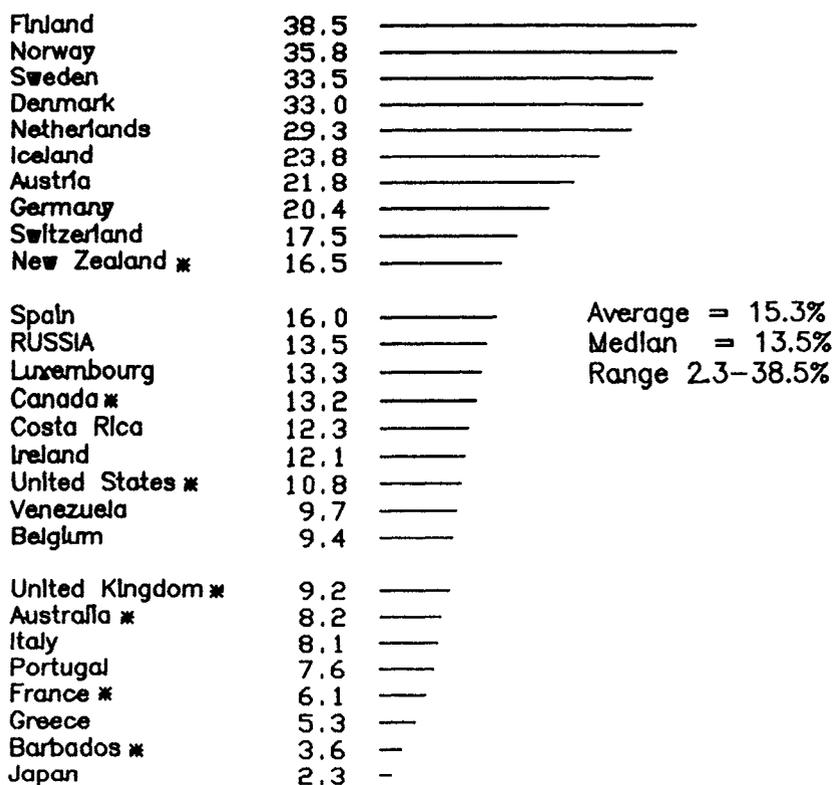
The party-list system of proportional representation (PL/PR) by which half of the Duma was elected in 1993 is the most potentially "woman friendly" election system.³ It is also the most widely adopted election procedure among longstanding multiparty countries. Voters vote for the party of their choice. All or some of the parliamentary candidates nominated for each party are on the parties' lists on the voters' ballot. In many countries that use this election system, the voter may vote for particular candidates on the party list. This "preference vote" or "open list" is especially beneficial to women's election, particularly when women voters are politically mobilized.⁴ Otherwise, the voter selects only her or his party and its "closed list" of candidates, as in the 1993 and 1995 Duma elections.

Women candidates for the national legislature in countries having PL/PR are nominated by party members in district or other meetings. They campaign as members of a party team in a large district that elects several representatives. Financial costs are borne by the party, not by the individual and her or his supporters. Legislative seats using the PL/PR election procedure are awarded in the district according to the proportion of the vote that each party gets. (A party that wins 30 percent of the vote in a ten-member district will have three members elected. They will be the first three candidates on the list of nominees.) When women are on the party's list, they increase the party's chances for election by attracting women voters. In turn, women's election success is enhanced, because a small number of voters cannot prevent their election, as is usually true when only one representative is to be elected in a district.

Although half of the Russian Duma was to be elected under this potentially "woman friendly" system, the other half had a "woman unfriendly" election system. When the single member district (SMD) system is used exclusively, the minority — be it a party or an ethnic group — usually is not represented in the district, nor are women. Consequently the SMD system of elections typically constitutes a barrier to women's and minority men's participation in national decision making. However, this may not be the case in Russia's immediate future. Now there is neither a primary election nor a dominant two-party system that is typical in countries with SMDs. In Russia's SMDs no majority is needed. Also, there are many parties, and, therefore, women have more election opportunities than usual.⁵

Figure 4.1 shows the 1993 proportion of Russian women parliamentarians at 13.5 percent. It also includes the proportion of women members of parliament in 26 longstanding multiparty countries. The figure reveals

FIGURE 4.1
Russia and Long-established Multiparty Countries: Percent Women in 27
Single or Lower Houses of Parliament, 1989-93



*Countries that elect a single member in each district by a required majority or plurality of the vote. Russia elects half its lower house with single member district and the other half with party-list/proportional representation. The remaining 17 are party-list/proportional representation countries; Ireland has a single transferrable vote and Japan has a single nontransferrable vote form of proportional representation.

Source: Adapted from Wilma Rule, "Women's Underrepresentation and Electoral Systems," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27 (December 1994): 690; *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, December 28, 1993.

that the proportional representation countries ordinarily have a higher percentage of women in their parliaments than do those with SMDs. New Zealand, the highest among the SMD nations in 1993, had half the women's representation of the Nordic countries. The United States, which also uses the SMD election system, had only 11 percent women in its House of Representatives in 1993. This contrasts to 39 percent women in

Finland's parliament, which is elected by PL/PR. (See Chapter 1 for other political, economic, and cultural variables related to women's legislative recruitment.)

We now turn to why and how Women of Russia's bloc organized and their subsequent campaign for their party list of candidates in the 1993 election.

Organizing the Russian Women's Political Bloc

The women's bloc or party was organized several months before the 1993 election. It was called Women of Russia, and it united three organizations: the Women's Union of Russia, the Association of Women Entrepreneurs or Businesswomen, and the Union of Navy Women. The Union of Russian Women, an outgrowth of the Committee of Soviet Women, was well-organized, with a top-down structure and with networks at the local level. Before forming Women of Russia, activists of the three founding organizations sent a questionnaire on women's issues to 27 political parties that had organized for the election. Only three responded. Also, the other parties had planned to nominate only a few women, and the women who would be nominated had little chance of being elected because their names were at the end of the lists. This dismal prospect brought Women of Russia into being, because they realized women might be grossly unrepresented in the new Federal Assembly.⁶

Women of Russia astonished election watchers by gathering more than 100,000 signatures in several Russian regions in order to qualify for the ballot. The organization's leaders chose well-known candidates for their bloc's first run for the Duma. One candidate, later a member of the Duma, was the president of a 2,000-member children's service organization in Moscow. Others were leaders in government departments and organizations that founded the new women's political bloc. The children's organization leader said she agreed to be nominated in order to help homeless children and to improve education and children's after-school activities.⁷

The Campaign by Women of Russia

"We relied on women's groups all over the country," said Alevtina Fedulova of the Union of Russian Women, telling of Women of Russia's campaign in the 1993 election. She was coleader of Women of Russia with Ekaterina Lakhova, a former advisor to Yeltsin. Fedulova regarded the 1990 Russian elections in which women members of parliament had declined from 15.7 percent to 5 percent as a defeat for women and a wake-up call to the true position of Soviet women. Fedulova stressed the idea that women must be included in political decision making. She explained the strategy of organizing at the grass-roots level for the new bloc or

party. "Even if we fail to win the election, the attempt will encourage women's groups at the local level. Women will become more active," she said before the election.

In addition to activating the women's groups that served as a base for Women of Russia, the bloc had the radio station "Nadezhda" and the newspaper of the Women's Union at their disposal, which gave them media exposure. In addition, two big trade unions (Retail and Textile) supported Women of Russia. It has been estimated that, because of their organizational resources, their cash expenditures were a fraction of what other parties spent during the election campaign.

Women of Russia's campaign themes were very broad so as to appeal to a wide group of voters. Fedulova denied that the program advocated privileges for women. She said Women of Russia wanted to call attention to general concerns, such as the declining standard of living. Women of Russia wanted to present issues from women's perspective, Fedulova maintained.⁸

The party or bloc had three official principles: a lawful Russian state, a socially responsible state, and a state that observes human rights. During the campaign, Women of Russia's leaders became more specific. They drew attention to the high cost of consumer goods and housing and asked for price ceilings on basic goods, including baby food. One analyst noted that their programs conformed to traditional ideas that women's issues concerned only family and child care.⁹ However, from the Women in Russia viewpoint, a minimum level of social protection is required, as well as other policies to improve people's lives.

The Election and Women of Russia

Women of Russia was the party favored by 4,369,918 voters who went to the polls on December 12, 1993, to elect the Federal Assembly and to ratify the new constitution. The overall turnout was just 55 percent — 10 percent less than voted in the referendum of confidence for Yeltsin in March 1993.

For the party-list balloting, the names of the top three candidates of each bloc were put under the party's name, and regional candidates' names also could be listed. Fedulova headed the list for Women of Russia. To everyone's surprise — except Women of Russia's — they won 21 seats in the Duma and 8.1 percent of the party vote. Another 13 women were elected from the other parties' lists. In the single seat elections, 26 seats were won by women out of a total of 219 seats (six seats were vacant because of Chechnya's nonparticipation). Altogether, 60 women were elected to the Duma. Because Russian women comprise over half the population, they were vastly underrepresented, with only 13.5 percent of the members of the 444-seat Duma in 1993.

Table 4.1 shows the parties or blocs, the proportion of women nominated for election on their lists, and the number and proportion of women and men elected from each.¹⁰ The parties were divided into three major economic groups — Liberal Reformers/Radicals, Centrists, and Socialist/Conservatives. These groups correspond to the parties' public positions and generally with polls of the voting public. Most Liberal Reformers prefer a quick transformation to capitalism, that is, private enterprise and a market economy; they generally support the policies of Yeltsin (see Chapter 9). Ironically, the conservatives are socialists who generally wish to retain a state-run public economy, with some privatization, and some advocate a greater Russian empire. The centrists — which include Women of Russia — support some parts of both approaches and a slower pace in dismantling some social benefits and government enterprises.¹¹

Table 4.1 shows that each bloc (except Women of Russia) nominated and elected an extremely small percentage of women. Women candidates'

TABLE 4.1
Women Nominated and Women and Men Elected on
Party Lists in the 1993 Duma Election

	Percent Women Nominated On List	Percent Women Elected On List	Number Women Elected On List	Number Men Elected On List
Liberal Reformers/Radicals for a Capitalist Economy				
Russia's Choice	5	1.0	2	38
Yabloko	10	1.0	2	18
Russian Unity and Accord	0	0.0	0	18
Centrists for a Mixed Economy				
Democratic	7	0.4	1	13
Women of Russia	100	25.0	21	0
Socialist/Conservatives for a Socialist Economy				
Liberal Democratic	8	3.0	5	54
Communist	9	1.3	3	29
Agrarian	0	0.0	0	21
Total from lists		15.1	34	191
Total from single districts		11.9	26	193
Total in Duma		13.5	60	384

Source: *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, December 28, 1993; I. P. Rybkin, ed., *Piataia rossiyskaia gosudarstvennaia дума* (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1994).

names were placed at the end of the parties' list, where they had little chance of being elected. For example, if the Russian parties or blocs had alternated their women's and men's nominees from the top of the list, as some northern European parties do, the result would have brought women's Duma proportions in 1993 to 30 percent or more.¹² None chose to, leaving Women of Russia the only party promoting women in politics and women's issues.

One party that courted women's votes was the far right nationalistic bloc called the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The LDP apparently had a campaign strategy of appealing to some politically neglected groups, including women, young people, and gays. (Appeals to mainstream groups — Russians, Slavs, and the unemployed — were made as well.) The LDP's appeal for women's votes is reflected in its nominations for party-list candidates as well as its support for a few women in SMDs. The Yabloko bloc and the Communists also were among the parties with more women nominees, but none nominated more than 10 percent women. Without the Women of Russia bloc, the overall proportion of women elected to the Duma would have been quite small.

Women of Russia had at least 10 percent of the party-list votes in 32 of the 86 territories participating in the 1993 election. The bloc was particularly strong in northern and other outlying territories of Russia, as indicated in Table 4.2. The territories shown included some areas where textile factories are situated and where a great number of the unemployed were women.

TABLE 4.2
Vote for Women of Russia in Northern and Outlying Territories

Area	Percent of Vote Obtained
Yamalo-Nenetsky Autonomous Region	19.2
Evenkiysky Autonomous Region	17.3
Kurganskaya Province	15.5
Primorye Territory	15.2
Jewish Autonomous Region	14.9
Tyumenskaya Province	14.7
Udmurt Autonomous Republic	14.7

Source: Rossiiskaya gazeta, December 28, 1993.

Reasons for Winning Party Vote

Why, then, did Women of Russia win an unexpected 8.1 percent of the party-list votes? First, they gained a good part of the women's protest

vote against economic and political conditions. These included difficulties in transforming a state economy to a private one, the deteriorating standard of living for almost all strata of society, and dissatisfaction with and distrust of men's conduct and control of the Russian government. Fedulova, who later became one of three vice-chairpersons of the Duma, was quoted in *Solidarnost* (Solidarity) as saying "We don't want to reconcile ourselves any longer to the fact that men are deciding everything for us."¹³

Second, Women of Russia had a residue of favorable public opinion. This was based on the widespread belief of woman's capability as mother to save the country and overcome crises (see Chapter 6). This belief coexisted with another that held that women's prime role was in the family, only secondarily in the larger society, and not at all in politics.

Third, Women of Russia had organizational resources — support by major women's organizations and unions, their own newspaper and radio station and, most importantly, women campaigners at the grass-roots level.

Single Seat Elections of Women

Candidates for the Duma for SMD seats did not have their party or bloc affiliation listed on the ballot in 1993. In the SMDs Women of Russia supported the candidacy of five women and an equal number were nominated by the liberal reform parties, while the remainder were candidates of the socialist conservatives. Only 4 of the 26 women elected ran as independents; the remainder were nominees of party blocs. One candidate from the Moscow University area district with a doctorate in economics was recruited by the Liberal Democratic Party. She said she made a few posters and put them up in her district and was elected one of five LDP candidates from SMDs in Moscow.¹⁴ However, most of the SMD winners were independents who later formed a new bloc oriented to regional issues, called the "New Regional Policy."¹⁵

Women SMD candidates in the Russian capital and nearby areas did not do as well as women who ran as members of a party's list of candidates. None was elected in the Moscow oblast's ten SMDs. In Moscow itself, which was divided into 15 districts, only three women were elected. The 23 other women deputies elected from SMDs came from less populated areas, such as those in the Volga and central regions. Most were elected from areas north of the fifty-fifth parallel, where more voters favored the Liberal Reform parties.¹⁶

Winning Parties in the First Duma

The six parties in the first Duma represented a wide spectrum of ideological viewpoints. Table 4.3 gives the percentages each bloc won

TABLE 4.3
Seats Won in 1993 Duma Election
(in percent)

Liberal Reformers/Radicals for a Capitalist Economy	(23)
Russia's Choice	13
Yabloko	5
Russian Unity and Accord	4
Russian Movement for Democratic Reform	1
Centrists for a Mixed Economy	(10)
Civic Union	1
Democratic	3
Dignity and Charity	1
Women of Russia*	5
Socialist Conservatives for a Socialist Economy	(32)
Liberal Democratic	14
Communist	11
Agrarian	7
Independents	(35)
Total	100

*In addition to Women of Russia nominees, other women elected from party-lists and single member districts brought the total percentage of women elected to 13.5 percent of the Duma.

Note: All figures are rounded. Three parties gained only single mandate seats (the Civic Union, the Dignity and Charity Bloc, and the Russian Movement for Democratic Reform) and had less than 1 percent of Duma seats. Their percentages were rounded to 1.

Source: *Rossiskaya gazeta*, December 28, 1993.

in the 1993 Duma election. It shows the importance of Women of Russia as pivotal swing voters. Women of Russia, in conjunction with other blocs, was able to play a key role in initiating policies and in supporting or opposing the economic and political policies of the presidency and the government. Women of Russia was positioned neither with the Liberal Reformist capitalistic group nor with the Socialist Conservative parties.

Women Elected to Council of the Federation

The Russian upper house, the Council of the Federation, represents 89 regions, republics, federal cities, and territories. Voters were asked to

choose two councilors from their area, and the two highest vote getters were declared elected. Nine women were chosen on a plurality vote in the first Council election in 1993.

The regions represented by the women councilors included the Buryat and Mordovian republics; the Primorye Territory; the provinces of Kamchatskaya, Murmanskaya, and Sverdlovskaya; and the autonomous district of Chukotskiy. These are areas that are distant from Russia's politically liberal reformist center. Except for the Primorye Territory, they also were not areas that substantially supported the Women in Russia bloc.

The vast majority of Council members, women and men, were significant in their own right.¹⁷ It was they who controlled food prices at the local level and the flow of goods into their region. Thus, one result of the Council of the Federation election was the generation of a centrifugal force from Moscow — a kind of “all politics is regional” effect — as well as an emphasis on the Council as a vital institution of the central Russian government.¹⁸

Although women's representation in the Council was only 5.3 percent, the Russian election procedure used is moderately “woman friendly.”¹⁹ It bodes well for increased women's representation. The procedure allows voters to choose two councilors in the same election, instead of voting for one of the two in another election at a later time, as in U.S. Senate elections. By choosing one senator at a time, the impact is the same as in an SMD, where a few biased voters can defeat a well-qualified woman candidate. Because of electing two councilors simultaneously, the Russian Council began in 1993 with a higher percentage of women than was true in the U.S. Senate, in which one or two women served for decades until the 1990s.²⁰

Backgrounds of Women in the Federal Assembly

Women parliamentarians in multiparty countries usually are married with grown children. Their expertise normally is gained through higher education, experience in a job outside the home, and politics.²¹ This was also true for most women elected to the Duma and the Council of the Federation. Most were about 45 years of age, although the range was from 33 to 61 years. They included economists, lawyers, social scientists, writers, engineers, and medical personnel. Among the 60 Duma members were several top government administrators of children's education and health. Some were members of former Soviet or local legislatures. Eighty percent (51 of the 60) were Russians; the others were from German, Greek, Jewish, Komi, Permyak, Tatar, Tuviniian, and Ukrainian ethnic backgrounds.

In the Council of the Federation, seven of the nine women members had held high government positions. Most were regional administrators,

and some were leaders in regional legislatures. (A similar profile was the case for the 162 men elected to the Council.) All the women councilors had a higher education.

No party affiliations appeared on the Council of the Federation ballot; so, women and men candidates had to depend on their name recognition. Half of the women candidates gave no party affiliation; the remainder were either supporters of Yeltsin's policies or part of the socialist opposition.

IMPORTANT CONTEXTS FOR WOMEN CANDIDATES

What were the most important environmental contexts for all 69 women elected to the Duma and the Council of the Federation in 1993? The answer to this question, in part, is revealed in Table 4.4.²² It presents the four contextual variables (among some 26) that can explain 67 percent of the variance in women's election that is statistically significant at less than the .01 level. A significance level of less than .01 means that the chance for obtaining the 67 percent by error is less than 1 in 100. However, one-third of the variance is unexplained. Each one of the variables pertains to different groups of successful candidates for the Federal Assembly.

The variables in Table 4.4 are not related to each other. Under the procedure used to generate the table, the highest correlating item with women's election is selected first, and all other closely intercorrelated items are eliminated from the next step. The computer then selects the second highest nonoverlapping characteristic that varies — increases or decreases — with women's election, and so on. The amount that each dimension contributes to explaining the variation in the entire group of women elected to the Federal Assembly is shown in Table 4.4 under "Amount of Variance Explained."²³

The first explanatory dimension is the "Moscow, other highly populated regions." It explains about half of the variance in women's election to the Federal Assembly. This variable is particularly important for explaining the success of women candidates on the party lists; it applies less to women elected to the Duma in single districts, and not at all to the nine women elected to the Federation Council. The Moscow high population variable correlates with the vote for Russia's Choice, President Yeltsin's favored party in the 1993 election. As one would expect, it is not related to greater votes for the Communist or Agrarian parties of Russia.

"Large university-educated population" is the second key characteristic. It indicates a strong vote for women in areas where there was a large university-educated population. This, again, was a dimension that applied more to women elected from the party lists than to the district winners. "Small populated regions" is the third context from which women

TABLE 4.4
Favorable Contexts for All 69 Women Elected to the
Federal Assembly of Russia, 1993
Stepwise Multiple Regression
(in percent)

Independent Variables	Amount of Variance Explained
Moscow (city), other highly populated regions	48
Large university-educated population	9
Small populated regions	3
Lower district population	7
Total R ² ($p < .01$)	67

The variance explained is derived from the adjusted multiple correlation squared at each of the steps. The list of variables used may be found in the Appendix to this chapter.

Sources: A. Sopianin, E. Gelman, and O. Kaiunov, "Politicheskii klimat v Rossii v 1991-1993 gg.," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnie otnosheniia* No. 9, 1993; Biulleten' tsentral'noi izbiratel'noi komissii Rossiiskoi Federatsii, No. 1 (12), Moscow, 1994; Chislennost' naseleniia i nekotorye sotsialno-demograficheskie kharakteristiki natsional'nostei Rossiiskoi Federatsii, *Gosudarstvennii komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike*, Moscow, 1992; Chislennost' naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii po goradam, rabochim poselkam i raionam na 1 ianvaria 1993 g., *Respublikanskii informatsionno-izdatel'skii tsentr*, Moscow, 1993 II; *Natsional'nii sostav naseleniia SSSR*, *Finansi i statistika*, Moscow, 1991. (English translation in *The First Book of Demographics for the Republics of the FSU, 1951-1990* [Shady Side, Md.: New World Demographics, 1992]); *Russian Government Today* (Washington, D.C.: Carroll Publishing, 1994); *Uroven' obrazovaniia naseleniia SSR, Finansovi i statistiki*, Moscow, 1990.

were elected to the Duma. It applies to Federal Assembly members, especially councilors, who represent areas distant from Moscow.

The fourth condition for women's election is the "Lower district population." The reader is cautioned that this variable is based on the territory's population divided by the number of districts — which could vary in size within and among regions. One study found two extreme cases: Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga River, which had 728,000 people, and Evenki in northern Siberia, with 13,800, had one representative each.²⁴ The smaller districts are moderately correlated with women's election.

The importance of Moscow as a political recruitment context varies among women deputies according to how they are elected. This is demonstrated by separate analyses of women deputies elected from SMDs and by PL/PR. Table 4.5 indicates that 45 percent of the variance in women's election from party lists is explained by the Moscow context, but

TABLE 4.5
Favorable Contexts for Women's Election to the Russian Duma, 1993
Stepwise Multiple Regression
(in percent)

Independent Variables	Percent of Variance Explained
For Party-list Deputies (<i>N</i> = 34)	
Moscow (city), other highly populated regions	45
Large university-educated population	13
More secondary school population	3
Small populated regions	2
Lower district population	9
Total R ² (<i>p</i> < .01)	72
For Single Member District Deputies (<i>N</i> = 26)	
Moscow (city), other highly populated regions	17
Non-heavy machinery region	3
More secondary school population	7
Women in Federal Council	3
Democratic Party of Russia	3
Northern regions of Russia	4
Less Russian people in region	3
Total R ² (<i>p</i> < .05)	40

The variance explained is derived from the adjusted multiple correlation squared at each of the steps. The list of variables used may be found in the Appendix to this chapter.

Sources: A. Sobianin, E. Gelman, and O. Kaiunov, "Politicheskii klimat v Rossii v 1991-1993 gg.," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnie otnosheniia* No. 9, 1993; *Biulleten' tsentral'noi izbiratel'noi kommissii Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, No. 1 (12), Moscow, 1994; *Chislennost' naseleniia i nekotoryie sotsialno-demograficheskie kharakteristiki natsional'nostei Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Gosudarstvennii kometet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po statistike*, Moscow, 1992; *Chislennost' naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii po goradam, rabochim poselkam i raionam na 1 ianvaria 1993 g., Respublikanskii informatsionno-izdatel'skii tsentr*, Moscow, 1993 II; *Natsional'nii sostav naseleniia SSSR, Finansi i statistika*, Moscow, 1991. (English translation in *The First Book of Demographics for the Republics of the FSU, 1951-1990* [Shady Side, Md.: New World Demographics, 1992]); *Russian Government Today* (Washington, D.C.: Carroll Publishing, 1994); *Uroven' obrazovaniia naseleniia SSR, Finansovi i statistiki*, Moscow, 1990.

only 17 percent of women's election from SMDs is correlated with the capital city. Nevertheless, Moscow remained the major political context for women's and men's recruitment to the Duma in 1993. About two-thirds of the parties' male candidates were from the capital, as were

one-third of the women deputies. (See the Appendix for a list of variables and sources used for these analyses.)

There are other variations between those areas that elected women on the party-list ticket and those that elected women from SMDs (see Table 4.5). One difference was the negative context for women SMD candidates in heavy machine-building and metal-working areas where there was considerable unemployment or fear of it. These areas and those in defense voted primarily for the LDP of Zhirinovskiy, whose program included abolishing unemployment.²⁵

Further research on this historic election and later elections will be needed to analyze the differences and similarities among women elected from PL/PR and the SMD ballot.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The number of women elected to the national legislature was significantly greater in 1993 than in 1990. Women's representation gained an impressive and probably unprecedented increase of 170 percent over the previous election. The Russian parties, in contrast to most in contemporary multiparty countries, did not — except for Women of Russia — promote a sizable proportion of women candidates on their parties' lists.²⁶ Nevertheless, on party lists, women won 15 percent of the Duma seats, including 13 women in addition to the 21 won by Women of Russia. Also, 26 women were elected from single mandate districts. Overall, this was a good showing for women candidates in a nation's first multiparty election.

The 1993 parliamentary election of women in Russia was based, in part, on their appeal to the most educated voters, which is usually true of women's political recruitment in the longstanding democracies that are displayed in Figure 4.1. Another factor consistent with other countries' experience was the negative context of unemployment in heavy industry. Although Women of Russia won the unemployed vote in light industry, they had much fewer votes in machine building and metal working.

Finally, the successful formation of the Women of Russia bloc or party was extraordinary. In Russia, as in Iceland, women activists began their own parties, campaigned for election, and succeeded after other parties had largely ignored their demands for women's nomination, election, and policies. Russia, unlike Iceland, requires that parties competing on the party-list ballot must have a minimum of 5 percent of the vote. In the postscript to this chapter the reader will see that this 5-percent threshold provided a formidable obstacle for Women of Russia in the election of 1995.

Russia's women made a very significant breakthrough in the 1993 election. Against great odds and some hostility toward their presence in

politics, they met the challenge of a new election system designed for choosing the new parliament, the Federal Assembly. They are historic groundbreakers for a new era of legislative participation of Russian women.

POSTSCRIPT: THE 1995 ELECTIONS AND WOMEN

The 1995 elections brought a decline in women’s representation to only 9.8 percent (as shown in Table 4.6). This was largely because of the failure of Women of Russia to win the required 5 percent of the party-list vote, although substantial gains were made in women’s nominations and in the

TABLE 4.6
Total Seats Won in 1995 Duma Election

	Percent of Seats	Percent Women Elected	Number Women Elected	Number Men Elected
Liberal Reformers (24.0 percent)				
Our Home-Russia*	12.2	7.3	4	51
Yabloko*	10.0	13.3	6	39
Russia’s Choice	1.8	0.0	0	8
Centrists & Independents (17.8 percent)				
Women of Russia	0.7	100.0	3	0
Independents	17.1	13.0	10	67
Conservative Socialists (50.6 percent)				
Communist*	34.9	10.2	16	141
Liberal Democratic*	11.3	2.0	1	50
Agrarian	4.4	0.0	0	20
Other parties (7.6 percent)†	7.6	13.3	4	30
Totals (N)	100.0	9.8	44**	406

*Denotes those parties that had 5 percent or more votes and qualified for seats on the party-list ballot. All values are rounded.

†Includes deputies elected from 16 other parties.

**Thirty-one women were elected from single member districts and 13 from the political party lists.

Source: *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, January 6, 1996.

SMD races. Women comprised nearly 6 percent of the party-list vote in 1995, while their representation in the SMDs rose to almost 14 percent.²⁷

The liberal reform parties managed to retain about the same representation, but the Communist Party delegates increased substantially — all at the expense of Women of Russia in the party-list elections. Yabloko and Russia is Our Home greatly increased their nominations of women, and the Communist Party placed a woman as second on their party list. This is a typical strategy of left and center parties in proportional representation countries with a minimum vote requirement. It suggests to the electorate that a vote for a women's party is unnecessary and wasted. The LDP, the extreme nationalist bloc, also was among the four parties winning on the party-list ballot. However, in contrast to the other three major parties, the LDP declined in representation and nominated and elected few women on its 1995 list.

In the SMDs, political party affiliation appeared on the multiparty ballot for the first time. Women of Russia won only two district seats (one by coleader Ekaterina Lakhova), while the other parties and independents accounted for the 29 other well-qualified women who were district winners. In the 1995 election there were more than twice as many women elected from the SMDs as from the party lists, a reversal of the 1993 pattern.

This reversal is explained in part by the tremendous multiplication of political parties and their candidates in 1995. Twenty-three parties successfully competed and won representation in the SMDs, which meant that candidates could be elected with a very low plurality vote.

Although women's proportions in the Duma decreased in the 1995 elections, they, nevertheless, constituted almost twice the percentage of deputies in 1990. In the two multiparty elections since 1990, Women of Russia served as a catalyst to awaken women and most political parties to the importance of women's participation in politics. Women of Russia helped substantially to legitimize a place for women in the new nation's politics. The legislative comeback of Russian women in 1993 and 1995 not only encourages future women's political recruitment but also has made a contribution to the democratization of Russia.

APPENDIX: LIST OF VARIABLES USED IN MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSES

- Vote for women of Duma in region
- Vote for women elected to the Federation Council
- Population in region, January 1, 1993
- Urban population, January 1, 1993
- Number of single member districts in region
- Average district population in region

Vote for Yeltsin in region, 1991
 Vote for Yeltsin in 1993 referendum
 Vote to adopt the constitution, 1993
 Percentage of voter turnout in region, 1993
 Vote for Russia's Choice
 Vote for reform parties
 Vote for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation
 Vote for the Communist and Agrarian Parties
 Vote for the Liberal Democratic Party
 Vote for Women of Russia
 Vote for the Democratic Party of Russia
 Russian population, 1989 census
 Slavic population, 1989 census
 Native population, 1989 census
 Percentage of population completing college, university
 Percentage of population completing high or vocational school
 Main industry in region
 Industrial category
 Number of industries in region
 Economy of region

NOTES

1. For the same pattern in former Eastern European countries — Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania — see John E. Hibbing and Samuel C. Patterson, "The Emergence of Democratic Parliaments in Central and Eastern Europe." Paper presented at the International Political Science Association meeting in Buenos Aires, 1991; Vernon Bogdanor, "Founding Elections and Elite Change," *Electoral Studies* 9 (December 1990): 288–94; Wilma Rule, "Parliaments of, by and for the People: Except for Women?" in *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities*, ed. Wilma Rule and Joseph P. Zimmerman (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1994), p. 22.

2. Thomas F. Remington and Steven S. Smith, "The Development of Parliamentary Parties in Russia," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 20 (November 1995): 461.

3. Wilma Rule, "Women's Underrepresentation and Electoral Systems," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27 (December 1994): 689–92; Rule, "Parliaments of, by and for the People: Except for Women?" pp. 15–30; Pippa Norris, "Conclusions: Comparative Legislative Recruitment," in *Gender and Party Politics*, ed. Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1993), pp. 309–30; R. Darcy, Susan Welch, and Janet Clark, *Women, Elections and Representation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

4. Matthew S. Shugart, "Minorities Represented and Unrepresented," in *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities*, ed. Wilma Rule and Joseph P. Zimmerman (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1994), pp. 31–41.

5. In the election of 1993, for example, a candidate was elected with 14 percent of the vote. See Matthew Wyman, Bill Miller, Stephen White, and Paul Heywood, "The Russia Elections of December 1993," *Electoral Studies* 13 (September 1994): 266.

6. Wendy Slater, "Female Representation in Russian Politics," *RFE/RL Research Report* 3 (June 1994): 27–33.

7. Interview with member of Duma, September 2, 1994, in Moscow.

8. Slater, "Female Representation in Russian Politics," pp. 27–33.

9. *Ibid.*; Wendy Slater, "'Women of Russia' and Women's Representation in Russian Politics," in *Russia in Transition*, ed. David Lane (New York: Longman, 1995), pp. 76–90.

10. These data were from election results, whereas those in Slater, "'Women of Russia,'" were calculated from nonbinding preelection lists, some of which changed prior to the election. The seats awarded all parties are greater than their vote proportions would ordinarily warrant. Seats were adjusted upward for parties that won at least 5 percent of the vote. Thus Women of Russia won 8.13 percent of the vote but received 21 seats instead of 18.

11. Wyman, Miller, White, and Heywood, "The Russian Elections," pp. 254–71; Darrell Slider, Vladimir Gimpelson, and Sergei Chugrov, "Political Tendencies in Russia's Regions," *Slavic Review* 53 (Fall 1994): 711–32; Michael McFaul, "Explaining the Vote," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (April 1994): 4–9.

12. Richard E. Matland, "Institutional Variables Affecting Female Representation in National Legislatures: The Case of Norway," *The Journal of Politics* 55 (1993): 737–55. The percentage varies with whether a woman or man heads the party list.

13. Quoted in "The Faction of the Political Movement 'Women of Russia' of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation," *Information Bulletin* #1, Moscow, August 1994, Section 3 (Translation by David Blood).

14. Interview with member of Duma, September 2, 1994, in Moscow.

15. Wyman, Miller, White, and Heywood, "The Russian Elections," p. 260. For other factions formed in the first Duma see Remington and Smith, "Development of Parliament Parties," pp. 468–82.

16. Slider, Gimpelson, and Chagrov, "Political Tendencies," pp. 720–24.

17. Because some regional leaders had been appointed by Yeltsin and had no opposition in the election, the Duma was considering a bill in 1995 requiring that two members be nominated for each council seat in future elections. "Election Law Update," *Election Today* 5 (May 1995): 27.

18. Wyman, Miller, White, and Heywood, "The Russian Elections," pp. 254–71.

19. Rein Taagepera, "The Effect of District Magnitude and Properties of Two-Seat Districts," in *Choosing an Electoral System: Issues and Alternatives*, ed. Arend Lijphart and Bernard Grofman (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 91–102.

20. For a listing of the few women senators elected from the United States from 1922 to 1994, see Rutgers University Center for the American Women in Politics, *Fact Sheet, Women in Elective Office, 1995*.

21. This statement is based on unpublished interviews and biographical data of women members of national parliaments in Finland, Israel, the Philippines, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. Also see Barbara C. Burrell, *A Woman's Place is in the House*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1994), pp. 57–80.

22. A list of variables and data sources used for the statistical analyses is presented in the Appendix.

23. For stepwise multiple regression application to 23 parliaments and women's election, see Wilma Rule, "Electoral Systems, Contextual Factors and Women's Opportunity for Election to Parliament in Twenty-Three Democracies," *Western Political Quarterly* 40 (September 1987): 477–98.

24. Wyman, Miller, White, and Heywood, "The Russian Elections," p. 255.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

26. For negative views of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's quota system for women's nomination to elective office, see Wilma Rule, "Political Dialogue with Some Women Leaders in Moscow and Leningrad," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 25 (June 1992): 308–10.

27. Wilma Rule, "Russian Women's Legislative Comeback in Comparative Perspective," paper presented at the Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, March 14–16, 1996. Election data for 1995 provided by Nadezhda Shvedova and David Blood, *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, January 6, 1996.

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II

THE CHANGING GENDER CULTURE AND WOMEN'S PLACE

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5

Women in Russian Society from the Tsars to Yeltsin

Marcelline Hutton

Continuity and change in women's economic and social lives in Tsarist and Soviet society are the focus of this chapter. In both eras, government policies were male dominated and class oriented, and women were treated as second-class citizens. Tsarist society provided special benefits to upper-class women, while Soviet policies offered more to working-class and peasant women. The general trend from the Tsarist through the Soviet era was progress, but it was a double-edged progress. Women advanced in a variety of careers but paid a high price for their progress in terms of the double burden, even triple burden, of motherhood, marriage, and employment outside the home.

WOMEN IN TSARIST SOCIETY: GENERAL BACKGROUND

Russian society from the time of Tsar Alexander II (1855–81) offered middle- and upper-class women many more privileges than their European sisters possessed. Russian law allowed them to inherit land, retain control of their property after marriage, and vote by proxy in provincial and city elections. However, educational and employment policies were contradictory. Alexander II established provincial secondary schools for young women in the 1860s but inadequately endowed them. He allowed young women to obtain teaching certificates and take special courses in higher education, but he excluded them from regular university study. Alexander III (1881–94) introduced a policy of

Russification in the 1880s. It severely retarded non-Russian girls' and women's education by making Russian the legal and only language of instruction.

Despite limitations, education remained the key factor in Russian women's advancement. By 1900, most daughters of clerical and noble families attended secondary school, and several thousand obtained higher education. In contrast, only 30 percent of girls in the merchant class attended elementary school, and less than 10 percent of female peasants could read.¹ The Tsarist government provided fewer secondary schools and fewer stipends for girls than for boys. Female students had to be highly motivated because of the expense and distance involved in studying. Usually, they had to travel abroad for medical or scientific studies until Nicholas II (1894–1917) allowed the endowment of a medical school for women in the 1890s. After the 1905 Revolution, additional cities offered higher educational opportunities, and during World War I, universities opened their doors to women.

Tsarist regimes tolerated career women in the educational and medical professions because these occupations were not overcrowded. Although local governments hired and paid career women less than men, the national imperial bureaucracy confined women to the lower ranks of the professions. It excluded them from university appointments and other high-status positions. Despite their contradictory status, Russian women managed businesses, factories, and estates and became more financially independent than British or European women. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 and World War I, Russian female doctors treated soldiers at the front. In 1905, Tsar Nicholas II granted the suffrage to millions of illiterate peasant men to enable them to vote in parliamentary (Duma) elections. The Tsar failed to enfranchise educated, upper-class women. Consequently, these women became disenchanted with the regime and joined other disaffected groups in toppling the Tsar in the February 1917 Revolution.

SOVIET WOMEN: GENERAL BACKGROUND

Building upon the Tsarist regime's educational and employment policies, the Soviet government sought equality for women for most classes and nationalities. The Tsarist regime ignored poor women; the Bolsheviks offered them opportunities for upward social, educational, economic, and political mobility. The Soviets introduced the eight-hour workday, paid holidays, a minimum wage, equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leave, child-care facilities, and breaks to feed infants during the workday. Although the government intended liberation for all women, it was usually urban women who became best educated and most emancipated.

Over time, Soviet health care policies and improved diet positively affected infant mortality rates and life expectancy of ordinary peasants and workers. Improved health care and better diet in the Soviet period meant that infant mortality declined from 271 per 1,000 in the Tsarist period (1910) to 24 per 1,000 in 1970 and to 22 per 1,000 in 1990. Likewise, life expectancy rose from 32 years in 1897 to 44 years in 1926, to 72 in 1959, and to 76 in 1988 but declined to 74 years in 1991. Declining economic and ecological conditions in the late 1980s brought an increase in infant deaths and a decrease in female life expectancy.²

One of the most successful institutions that the Bolsheviks developed in the 1920s was *Zhenotdel* (*Zhenskii Otdel* or Women's Department in the Party). Designed to draw women into the party and government, it also facilitated their liberation. It published journals discussing women's liberation, education, employment, and health. In cooperation with the Department of Education, *Zhenotdel* staffed reading rooms in urban and rural areas. With the Ministry of Justice, it created legal advice centers to teach women their new rights. With the Ministry of Health, it organized health clinics and rehabilitation centers to provide shelter, education, job training, and medical care for prostitutes. The Soviets decriminalized prostitution, regarding it as an economic and medical problem, not a moral one. The new Soviet policies and laws did not eliminate sexism but did offer women more equal opportunities in education, family life, work, and politics. Party leaders realized that laws did not immediately transform people; therefore, they also sponsored sociopolitical organizations called *delegatki* (women delegates) to help liberate peasant and indigenous women. Delegates worked as trainees in local soviets, schools, orphanages, and clinics. (For more on *Zhenotdel*, see Chapter 6.)

SOVIET EDUCATION

The Bolsheviks expanded women's educational opportunities in the 1920s by introducing coeducation, adopting quotas for women in educational institutions, and encouraging peasant and working-class women to pursue higher education. The Bolsheviks sponsored literacy classes for rural and urban women, developed special education courses at factories, allowed married and older women to pursue higher education, and genuinely democratized education. Millions of peasant, working-class, and indigenous women gained access to elementary, secondary, and higher education. Whereas female students represented about 20 percent of students in higher education in 1914, they represented one-half of university students by the 1970s. By 1926, the feminization of medicine and education had begun in the Russian Republic.

The Bolsheviks also introduced special Liquidation of Illiteracy programs for adults, which raised the literacy rate among women from 13

percent in 1897 to 98 percent in 1959.³ Soviet educational policies encouraged peasant and working-class girls to replace their low educational expectations with dreams of attainment. Many became career women, paths open only to middle- and upper-class women in the Tsarist era. The government also established special educational programs called *rabfakty* (worker faculties) at plants and factories to help workers realize their dreams.

Egalitarian education drew millions of peasant and working-class women and men into elementary, secondary, and higher education. Whereas 500,000 attended institutes of higher education in Imperial Russia in 1914, 3.5 million in various republics of the Soviet Union in 1932–33 and almost 3 million did so in the Russian Federation in 1992.⁴ To promote gender equality, the government introduced quotas of 30 percent women in all higher educational institutions. (Their access to higher education is shown in Table 5.1.) Many who took advantage of educational opportunities at work tended to be politically active Komsomol or Party members.

Soviet education discriminated against specific groups. Children of capitalists and Tsarist officials were excluded from higher education in the 1920s. Children of purge victims and of peasants who resisted collectivization were barred in the 1930s. Anti-Semitism reappeared in the 1930s, and Jews often faced discrimination in university study and career choice. An active policy of Russification resurfaced in the 1930s, when Russian again became the language of university instruction in most republics, which disadvantaged non-Russian youth who did not fully assimilate with the dominant culture. University quotas favored working-class students, and higher education remained more available to urban residents, because universities, institutes, and technical schools were located in big cities. Peasants and indigenous peoples in more remote

TABLE 5.1
Number of Female Students in Universities, 1920s

Country	Women	Percent	Men	Percent	Total
Soviet Union	57,300	28	145,000	72	202,300
Germany	9,400	12	70,900	88	80,300
France	12,200	17	58,500	83	70,700
England	8,400	20	33,600	80	42,000

Sources: Statistique Generale de la France, *Annuaire Statistique* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1936), vol. 52, p. 276; *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 17 dekabria 1926 g. Kratkie Svodki* (Moscow, TSU, 1928), vol. 26, pp. 25–33, 38–56, 122–63; *Perepris' 1926 g.* (Moscow: Statizdat, 1930), vol. 51, pp. 28–61; *Itoqi Perepisi 1959 g.* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat, 1962–63), vol. 8, p. 169.

areas had less opportunity to advance. With new educational opportunities, the number of women in technical and scientific work increased, but women's household and child-rearing responsibilities tended to hamper progress in their careers. Although policies changed, sexist stereotypes survived — for example, female students had to wear their hair in long plaits, because short hair was considered a sign of depravity in the Stalinist period.⁵

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

Continuity and change characterized women's work lives in both the Tsarist and Soviet periods. In both periods, female workers faced sexual harassment, low wages, and the double burden of managing household and paid work. The decline in domestic servants spread the double burden to mid- and high-level women service workers in the Soviet period. Low wages in the 1930s and subsequent decades meant that most wives had to work for their families to survive. Only high-ranking Party, government, or military officials could maintain a household on their wages alone.

The Russian Imperial Census of 1897 as well as Soviet censuses of 1926, 1939, 1959, 1970, and 1989 reveal women's predominance in agriculture and service employment, their clustering in the helping professions, and their concentration in light, rather than heavy, industry. Agriculture utilized the bulk of the female labor force, employing 17 million in 1897, 20 million in 1939, and 11 million in 1989. The service sector employed 1.5 million Russian women in 1897, nearly 6 million in 1939, 11 million in 1959, and 31 million in 1989. Some changes occurred as servants from gentry-class households in the Tsarist era moved to jobs in the public sector in the Soviet era as cooks, waitresses, nursery school teachers, and janitors, but their new jobs continued to yield low status and low pay. Industrial development in the 1930s and subsequent decades provided millions of better-paying jobs in manufacturing, white-collar work, and the professions.

As early as the 1930s, many professionally trained Soviet women realized that they could not have it all: work, family, and political life. Most appeared to choose children over political participation or high ranking positions. The official Soviet mystique included the notion that real women were mothers as well as workers. This meant most women had to work on two fronts: in the economic sector and in the household. With this double burden, few reached the top of their work or occupations.⁶

Agriculture

An enduring employment pattern in Tsarist and Soviet society was the high proportion and number of women working in agriculture. In Tsarist

Russia, female peasants worked long hours in the fields, performed household chores, and augmented their families' incomes by working in handicraft production and selling garden produce and other commodities. Most rural women worked on family farms in the 1920s. When farms were collectivized in the 1930s, new opportunities arose for women. Whereas there were only eight female tractor drivers in 1926, there were 50,000 by 1939.⁷ Women who worked as machine operators and brigade leaders earned relatively high wages and did not have to marry to survive. Collectivization also offered women increased status and wages if they exceeded the work norms, but few peasant women possessed the time and skills to excel.

Most peasant women continued to work as wives, mothers, and unskilled agricultural laborers. Agricultural collectivization in the early 1930s caused the deportation, displacement, death, and starvation of several million peasants in Ukraine, in the Caucasus, along the Volga, in Kazakhstan, and in Central Asia. The campaign against wealthy peasants in 1929–30 resulted in their dislocation and impoverishment. There was massive emigration from the farms to the cities, which intensified shortages in housing and child-care programs. Although women were not treated as harshly as men during the collectivization of agriculture, the death or imprisonment of millions of male peasants produced widows whose plight was precarious. (More on the collectivization of agriculture may be found in Chapter 7.) The numerical decline of women peasants from Tsarist times to 1989 is detailed in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2
Peasant Women's Participation in Agriculture, as a
Percentage of All Working Women

Year	Number	Percent
1897*	1,900,000	30
1926	33,000,000	92
1939	20,000,000	60
1959	19,700,000	41
1970	12,600,000	22
1989	11,300,000	8

*In 1897, there were 1.9 million independent agricultural workers and 15 million were working on family farms, for an estimated total of 17 million agricultural workers overall.

Source: *Obshchii Svod Perepisi' 1897 g.* (St Petersburg: Ministerstva Vnutrennikh del, 1905), vol. 2, pp. 264–67, 296–97, 326–27, 335; *Perepisi' 1926 g.* (Moscow: Statizdat, 1930), vol. 34, p. 10,118; *Itogi Perepisi 1959 g.* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat, 1962–63), vol. 8, p. 168; *Itogi vesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 goda* (Moscow: Statistika, 1973), vol. 6, p. 166; *1993 Year Book of Labour Statistics* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1993), pp. 136–37.

Service Employees

In the 1890s, most women who worked outside the home for pay were in domestic service. They were maids, nursemaids, or cooks. With the demise of the upper classes after the 1917 Revolution, the number of domestic servants recorded in censuses declined to less than 500,000 in 1926 and to less than 250,000 by 1939.⁸ In the nineteenth century, women worked hard as servants for low wages and were sometimes raped by their masters. If they became pregnant, they lost their jobs and usually were not hired for other positions. Some then turned to prostitution.⁹ In both the Tsarist and Soviet periods, domestic servants were primarily young, single women. The designation "domestic servant" almost died out as an occupational category in the Soviet censuses. Many women, however, performed similar tasks in the public, rather than the private, sector; they worked as cooks in canteens at factories and collective farms and in nursery schools.

Industrialization in the 1930s drew millions of women into public service occupations. With the expansion of public services, the number of low-level service employees soared. The number of cooks, waitresses, child-care attendants, janitors, guards, and office cleaners skyrocketed. Table 5.3 shows some of the great changes that took place in these categories.

TABLE 5.3
Low-level Women Service Employees

	1897	1926	1939	1959	1970
Domestics	1,800,000	400,000	150,000	870,000	1,200,000
Child Care	8,000	8,000	241,000	400,000	950,000
Waitresses & cooks	6,500	55,000	590,000	700,000	1,200,000
Percent of all working women	29	1	3	4	6

Sources: *Obshchii Svod Perepis' 1897 g.* (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva Vnutrennikh del, 1905), vol. 2, pp. 236–38, 250–55, 296–300, 325–335; *Perepis' 1926 g.* (Moscow: Statizdat, 1930), vol. 34, p. 97 (Table III-a); *Perepis' naseleniia 1939 g., Osnovnye itogi, Chast' II* (Moscow: Gosplan SSSR, 1941), pp. 11–12; *Itogi Perepisi 1959 g.* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat, 1962–63), vol. 8, p. 186; *Itogi Perepisi 1970 g.* (Moscow: Statistika, 1973), vol. 6, pp. 166–69.

Women in Manufacturing

Manufacturing was a major occupation of Russian women in both the Tsarist and early Soviet eras. One million women were engaged in handcraft and factory production from 1897 to 1930. They constituted 25

percent of the industrial labor force. Both before and after the 1917 Revolution, women workers tended to be 20 to 40 years of age, and many were married and suffered from the heavy double burden of both paid work and unpaid household work.¹⁰

Significant change in working-class women's employment occurred during the rapid industrialization of the 1930s. Two and one-half million mostly young women took employment in manufacturing, construction, and mining. Although still clustered in light industry, their numbers in construction and mining skyrocketed. By 1959, 7.5 million Soviet women were engaged in manufacturing, construction, and transportation, and by 1989, an impressive 25 million did so.¹¹

There were both positive and negative aspects to the increased number of women working in factories. Plant managers in the 1930s replaced skilled male workers with women and automatic machines. This increased the number of female factory workers, but women still earned lower wages than men. Failure to pay equal wages for the same work was contrary to official government policy. However, Soviet managers often preferred women workers because, as unskilled workers, they accepted lower wages than men who performed the same work. Nonetheless, factory wages were higher than earnings in agricultural or domestic work. Sexual harassment, a practice during Tsarist days, continued in the Soviet era, despite official policy. (See Chapter 11 for sexual harassment policy.)

Some capitalist economic and social abuses were lessened by Soviet policies. These included improved hygienic conditions at work and lowered household rents. However, rapid industrialization resulted in shortages in housing and child-care facilities. The Soviet government was more concerned with speeding up industrial production than with meeting the needs of women factory workers, especially during the 1930s.

Office and Professional Work, 1890–1990

As in most countries, lower-paid office work usually was performed by women. This was the case in the Soviet period. About 15,000 women were clerks and bookkeepers in 1897, but by the 1970s, they numbered 3 million.¹² The number of women in the bureaucracy increased more than 17 times by the 1990s.¹³ Bureaucratization that accompanied industrialization occupied several million mid-level service employees. Over 1 million were employed in these categories in various Soviet republics in 1926, 8 million in 1939, and over 7 million in Russia alone in 1989. The number of women in the professions increased greatly from Tsarist times to the present.¹⁴ Table 5.4 reveals that professional women were mainly teachers, engineers, and medical doctors.

TABLE 5.4
Women in the Professions, 1897–1970

Profession	1897	1926	1939	1959	1970
Religion	80,000	1,000	—*	—	—
Education	71,000	200,000	700,000	1,600,000	2,600,000
Doctors	600	20,500	75,000	265,000	420,000
Pharmacists	2,600	13,000	29,000	56,000	98,000
Dentists	600	8,000	12,000	26,000	48,000
Engineers	4	400	32,000	270,000	1,120,000
Judicial	—	1,000	5,500	6,000	41,000
Percent of all working women	3	1.5	14	23	32

*Data not available

Sources: *Obshchii Svod Perepis' 1897 g.* (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva Vnutrennikh del, 1905), vol. 2, pp. 236–55; *Perepis' 1926 g.* (Moscow: Statizdat, 1930), vol. 34, p. 70 (Table III), pp. 95–96 (Table IIIA); *Perepis' naseleeniia 1939 g., Osnovnye itogi, Chast'* (Moscow: Gosplan 1941), pp. 18–19 (Table 37); *Itogi Perepisi 1959 g.* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat, 1962–63), vol. 8, pp. 169–70; *Itogi Perepisi 1970 g.* (Moscow: Statistika, 1973), vol. 6, pp. 167–69.

Both Tsarist and Soviet regimes paid teachers and doctors low salaries, and in both epochs, men predominated at the highest levels of those professions while women clustered in the lower-paid levels. This vertical occupational stratification probably benefitted women in the 1930s. Occupying few top-level positions, fewer women than men were charged with anti-Soviet behavior or perished in Stalin's purges. Despite low pay, many career women found job satisfaction in their professional work.

There also was clustering of nationalities in the professions. Slavic and Jewish women dominated the intelligentsia in both the Tsarist and Soviet eras. In 1926, Russian and Jewish women constituted two-thirds of the teachers, doctors, and political workers in Ukraine, Belorussia, and the central Asian republics. Jewish women often faced quotas and discrimination in trying to pursue education and careers in both the Tsarist and Soviet periods.

By the late 1930s, republics such as Ukraine, Belorussia, Georgia, and Armenia produced significant numbers of educated, professional women. After World War II, the number and percentage of non-Slavic career women increased substantially.¹⁵ Although teachers received modest salaries compared with other professionals in the urban areas, in the countryside, there was considerable resentment among peasants about the salaries and land allotments that women teachers received. In the 1930s, some peasants even denounced female teachers as "enemies of the

people." Even by the 1980s, bias against rural women teachers remained strong.¹⁶

WORLD WAR II WIDOWS AND WOMEN IN THE ARMED SERVICES

Soviets referred to their involvement in World War II (1941–45) as the "Great Patriotic War." Fourteen million widows became heads of households and carried on family life during the war and the reconstruction period that followed. Two million Soviet women who had participated in paramilitary groups for sharpshooting, parachuting, and long-distance flying in the 1930s were prepared for war service. Some women had studied at aviation and engineering academies. The famous aviatrix Marina Raskova (1912–42) convinced Stalin to allow women to form their own air reconnaissance unit, which served in the war.¹⁷

Women became accepted on the front lines as they proved their merit. Many became heroines serving in partisan groups and tank crews and as pilots. Female air forces officers in fighter and bomber regiments often behaved democratically with their crews. They did embroidery with subordinates, shared their officers' rations with the ground crew, and fostered good will in their units.¹⁸ However, their heroic wartime actions did not yield the postwar military careers that men enjoyed.

THE POSTWAR SITUATION OF SOVIET WOMEN

With the return of men after the war, women in rural areas lost their well-paying jobs as machine operators. Despite Communist Party efforts to secure good jobs and training for rural women, sexist attitudes of male collective farm managers and workers excluded women from well-paid employment in the rural areas. By 1970, there were too few women tractor drivers for the census to record. Thus, some of the economic gains women made in the 1930s and 1940s disappeared in the postwar period. In addition to the discrimination that barred their paths, women often rejected machine work because tractors frequently broke down, mechanics were reluctant to fix them, and such work involved long hours away from their homes and children. Inadequate child care on the collective farms meant that few married women could undertake such work.¹⁹

After the war, young girls in rural areas refused to work long hours in low-paid dairy work. Moreover, rural girls began to expect romance as well as companionship in marriage. The rhetoric of equality of the sexes preached in the 1920s had never been accepted in the rural areas. Although divorce rates remained lower in rural than in urban areas, increasing numbers of rural women sought relief from alcoholic and abusive husbands. Young women with secondary education began drifting to the

cities for better lives. Trying to keep young women on the collective farms, the state developed food-processing factories in rural areas. These jobs provided better wages and shorter hours than agricultural work, but the working conditions remained deplorable by Western standards. In the postwar period, women constituted about 80 percent of rural teachers. However, sexist attitudes in the countryside remained, and only 1 in 50 farm managers was a woman. Despite the antagonism that rural career women faced, many farm workers encouraged their daughters to obtain higher education and professional work.²⁰

In the postwar period, Soviet women constituted large proportions of the scientific, professional, and technical personnel. The contradiction they faced was that, despite their good education, they seldom held the highest positions. Contrary to feminist expectations of the 1920s, discriminatory attitudes flourished along with women's improved economic status. For example, women could retire at 55 years of age, five years earlier than men, and receive a state pension. Those in arduous employment could retire even at 45 or 50. Those with five children or more who had worked for 15 years could retire at age 50.²¹ Although progressive on the surface, these policies also meant that women retired with lower pensions than men.

Soviet policy in the postwar period promoted motherhood and women's employment but provided insufficient communal services to ease their household duties. Although men increasingly participated in child care, few took responsibility for household work. Often, the Soviet media encouraged women to overlook men's rudeness, lack of understanding, heavy drinking, and indiscretions. The media portrayed motherhood as the highest expression of femininity, and women were reminded that happiness in the home depended on them. The press also encouraged working women not to neglect their appearance. These pressures resulted in overworked women and high rates of alcoholism, abortion, and divorce.²² Some women decided that husbands required more time than children and invested their energy in children. As a result, family life suffered, which Soviet literature gloomily depicted in the 1980s and 1990s.²³

Modern Soviet women worked for self-realization and self-esteem as well as for wages. For most families, the woman's income was essential, but even when their salaries were not needed, few willingly gave up paid work to become full-time housewives. They found that work offered a link to society, a sense of place in life, and an opportunity to take an active part in the life of the country. Although novelist I. Grekova depicts career women finding fulfillment in their roles as workers and mothers, few writers portray women having happy marriages, doting children, and high positions. Many female writers complained about discrimination in the Writer's Union itself. Feminists like Tatiana Mamonova and Olga

Lipovskaia stated that male intellectuals were cynically indifferent to women's plight.²⁴

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE YELTSIN ERA

In the 1990s, inflation has taken a terrible toll on Russian women and children. Many pensioners can hardly survive, and because of the dramatic devaluation of the ruble, many with jobs can barely afford food for their families or burial for relatives.²⁵ Women's needs in the 1990s still received low priority, sexual harassment in the workplace intensified, and unemployment was greater among women than men. Will women's political activity be deflected by their domestic concerns in the difficult transition to the market economy? Happily, the presence of Women of Russia, a bloc in the Duma in 1993 under the leadership of Alevtina Fedulova, indicates that women's political activism is emerging.

CONCLUSIONS

There has been considerable continuity in women's situation in the Tsarist and Soviet periods. Although women progressed economically and socially in the Soviet era, discriminatory attitudes persisted from the Tsarist days. Most women still clustered in low-status and low-paying occupations. Significant improvements occurred for peasant and working-class women, and many took advantage of educational opportunities to become professionals. However, household responsibilities retarded the advancement of women of all classes in the Soviet period.

NOTES

1. Tsentral'nyi Statisticheskii Komitet, *Pervoia vsobshchaia perepisi' naseleniia rossiiskoi imperii 1897 goda: Obshchii Svod po Imperii rezul'tatov razrabotki dannykh pervoi vseobshchei perepisi naseleniia* (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva Vnutrennikh' del, 1905), vol. 2, pp. xxxvi, xxxvii, 4, 200–307. (hereafter cited as *Obshchii Svod Perepisi' 1897 g.*).

2. TsSU, *Statisticheskii spravochnik SSSR za 1928* (Moscow: TSU, 1929), p. 75; B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics 1750–1970* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); *The Europa World Year Book 1994* (Kent, England: Staples Printers, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 2490–97; Brian Hunt, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p. 381.

3. *Obshchii Svod Perepisi' 1897 g.*, vol. 2, pp. xxxvi, xxxvii, 4, 200–207; TSU pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR, *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 g. SSSR* (Moscow: Gosstatdat, 1962), vol. 8, p. 88 (hereafter cited as *Itogi perepisi 1959 g.*).

4. Ts.SU, *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR za 60 let, Iubileinyi statisticheskii ezhegodnik* (Moscow: Statistika, 1977), p. 575.

5. Yelena Vorontsova, "Women Writers in Russia," *Index on Censorship* 18, (1989): 25.
6. Norma C. Noonan, "Two Solutions to the Zhenskii Vopros in Russia and the USSR — Kollontai and Krupskaja: A Comparison," *Women and Politics* 11 (1991): 77–99.
7. Ts.SU, *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 17 dekabria 1926 g. Kratkie Svodki* (Moscow: TSU, 1928), vol. 26, pp. 25–33, 38–56, 122–63 (hereafter cited as *Kratkie Svodki Perepis, 1926 g.*); *Itogi perepisi 1959 g.*, vol. 8, p. 169.
8. *Obshchii Svod Perepis' 1897 g.*, vol. 2, pp. 206–7, 288, 296–300; *Kratkie Svodki Perepis, 1926 g.*, vol. 34, pp. 58–72; Ts.SU, *Vsesoiuznaia Perepis naseleniia 1939 g.*, part II, pp. 11–12.
9. V. Bronner, *La Lute Contre la Prostitution* (Moscow, 1936), pp. 20–60.
10. TsSK, *Chislennost', i sostav rabochikh v Rossii na osnovanii danykh pervoi vseobshchei perepisi naseleniia Rossiisko imperii 1897 g.*, (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Ministerstva vnutrennek del, 1905), vol. 1, pp. x, xi, 2–3; and *Kratkie Svodki Perepis, 1926 g.*, vol. 34, Table III, pp. 16, 18–38.
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12. *Obshchii Svod Perepis' 1897 g.*, vol. 2, pp. 236–38, 250–55; *Kratkie Svodki Perepis, 1926 g.*, vol. 34, Table III-a, p. 96; *Itogi perepisi 1959 g.*, vol. 8, p. 170; *Itogi Perepisi 1970 g.*, vol. 6, p. 169; *1993 Year Book of Labour Statistics*, pp. 136–37.
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6

The Bolshevik Legacy and Russian Women's Movements

Norma C. Noonan

To understand Soviet and post-Soviet Russian women, one must view them in their political and social context. The complex heritage of the Russian Empire and the Soviet period, together with cultural factors, has created serious obstacles to the search for solutions to women's problems. Russian traditions and the legacy of 80 years of Bolshevism shape the approach to solving women's issues and help to explain the absence of broadly based women's movements to improve women's situation.

This chapter will discuss various efforts to organize women in post-Soviet Russia. It explores cultural and political factors that affect prospects that women can tackle and solve their problems. The chapter will also examine the tripartite legacy that hinders the search for solutions to women's burdens — Bolshevik and Soviet objections to feminist movements, the post-Soviet reluctance to become involved in political movements, and the traditional Russian image of woman as mother.

The early Bolshevik communists thought they understood the *zhenskii vopros*, or woman question, as did their Soviet successors. The term "woman question" referred to all matters pertaining to women and women's issues. On paper, women had full equality with men under Soviet laws and the constitution. In reality, they were not afforded equal status in the family, society, or politics.

The Communist government has been deposed, but aspects of Bolshevism remain in society. Bolshevik and Soviet leaders discredited feminism by labeling it a Western reformist phenomenon that had no place in either the Marxist revolutionary movement or the Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics (USSR). The Bolsheviks believed that the woman question would be solved after the revolution, and they wanted no separate women's organization outside the Communist Party. Eight decades of propaganda against feminism dampened prospects for effective, independent feminist organizations dedicated to improving women's rights and achieving real equality.

A second legacy of the Soviet period is the antipathy toward collective action and organizations. After years of being pushed and prodded into collective activities by the Communist Party and the Soviet government, the people of post-Soviet Russia resist efforts to organize them (see Chapter 3). Reluctance to participate in any organized movement is another factor hindering the full development of feminist organizations in the new Russia.

A third, less tangible legacy is Russia's historical tradition that venerated women but gave women, except for a few Tsarinas, little or no place in public life. In the Russian tradition, woman as mother is an enduring symbol, which also became part of the Bolshevik ideal of woman.¹ There is an image of women's domain and of men's domain that has never been seriously challenged in Russian society.

EARLY BOLSHEVISM AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The early Bolsheviks believed that Marxism contained all the answers to transform society, eradicate class differences, and correct all social problems, including the woman question. Vladimir I. Ulianov, the Bolshevik leader whose revolutionary name was V. I. Lenin, led the Bolshevik faction within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party and the Communist-Bolshevik party after the 1917 revolution. Lenin adamantly opposed rival allegiances, such as feminist movements and independent women's organizations. With his strong-willed messianic approach, he imposed strict discipline upon his adherents. Subsequent Communist leaders demanded absolute dedication and commitment from party members.

Early twentieth-century Russian Marxists were aware of the small feminist movement in Russia. They considered it bourgeois and ineffective because they were certain no reformist group could produce change. One hundred years of attempted reforms, they believed, had been fruitless. Only revolution could transform Russia's Tsarist society. Most women revolutionaries appeared to share these beliefs in the goals and potential of revolution. Even Alexandra Kollontai, a Marxist whose actions and beliefs would have labeled her a feminist in other circumstances, denied feminism in order to live amicably among the Russian revolutionaries-in-exile before 1917. She and Klara Zetkin, however, wanted to focus greater attention on women's issues before the revolution

by organizing a women's bureau within the party. They did not prevail against their male colleagues, who were not especially concerned about issues of gender inequities in Russian society and were opposed to a special women's bureau.²

Russian Marxist attitudes generally were consistent with the views of the founders of revolutionary communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Neither had advocated a women's movement. Engels had addressed women's inequality vis-à-vis men in *The Origin of the Family* but believed inequality would end after the proletariat achieved power and eliminated the division of labor.³ Eleanor Marx, following in the spirit of her father and Engels, believed women should not identify with women's or feminist movements but, instead, focus on the workers' movement.⁴

Lenin included the woman question in his platform. His attitude was influenced by Marxist theory and Russian tradition, which emphasized woman as mother. Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, expressed their apparently shared views in her 1901 essay *Mat-Rabotnitsa* (worker-mother).⁵ Krupskaya's focus on woman as a worker and mother became the core of the Bolshevik Party's position on women. Although Marx had wanted to change the family, as did some Russian Marxists, the idea of woman as mother was central to Russian thinking. Kollontai accepted the concept of worker-mother but also discussed women's consciousness and sense of self in her theory of the "new woman," a person more complex than Krupskaya's worker-mother.⁶

Bolshevik views before the revolution guided post-1917 Soviet policy. In 1918, the Soviet government granted women legal equality with men. However, Lenin, as head of the new government, knew legal equality was only the first step in improving the rights of women as workers and mothers. Unlike his successor, Joseph Stalin, Lenin was willing to devote the Communist Party's resources to help women but continued to oppose a separate women's movement. In 1919, the Communist-Bolshevik party established *Zhenotdel*, a women's department, which was assigned the dual purpose of recruiting women into the Party and addressing women's needs.

In these early years, the Soviet government experimented, often unsuccessfully, with various social arrangements in an effort to break with the past. For example, the desire to free women from the enslavement of marriage did not achieve the predicted results. Told that children were the responsibility of the whole society, men abandoned women and children, and mothers sometimes abandoned their children. By the late 1920s, *bezprizorniki* (abandoned children) were a serious problem. In the light of mounting problems, Soviet leaders gradually reconsidered their views on marriage and the family and reinstated the family structure.⁷

Meanwhile, the women's department of the Party, despite opposition, limited resources, and a volatile social situation, achieved considerable progress for women in the 1920s, working on the assumption that women's needs centered on their roles as worker and mother. The staff members were opposed by Communist Party leaders on almost every front and were ridiculed as *Babi* (old foolish women), but they persisted in their efforts. Most prominent Russian Marxist women were at some time associated with the department, including Inessa Armand, its first leader, who died in 1920 of cholera, Kollontai, who led the department from 1920 to 1922, and Krupskaja, Lenin's wife, who served on the advisory board. In the latter 1920s, the women were less well-known but highly committed.

STALIN'S POLICIES TOWARD WOMEN AND HIS SUCCESSORS' CHANGES

With Lenin's death, *Zhenotdel* lost an important patron, yet it survived until 1930. Stalin, the General Secretary of the Communist Party and dominant political figure after 1927, was not committed to *Zhenotdel*. Once Stalin defeated his immediate rivals, he adopted a strategy for rapid, intensive development of Russia through collectivization of agriculture, state ownership of all industry, and planned development. To implement the new economic strategy, Stalin needed the complete engagement of all workers in society. Policies to conciliate and train women were viewed as superfluous. Stalin announced that the Soviet Union had solved the woman question and *Zhenotdel* had successfully completed its work.

To declare that a policy had succeeded and then abolish it was a favorite Stalinist technique. Stalin's declaration that the *zhenskii vopros* had been solved by the Soviet government became part of Soviet mythology. This myth was formally maintained until the 1980s, even though women continued to endure many problems. Stalin's strategy for developing and perpetuating myths could be found in many areas of Soviet society and did not end with his death.

The Soviet government did not ignore women after 1930. Women were symbolically feted and celebrated, especially on International Women's Day (March 8). Women's heroic efforts were chronicled in books, art, and films, as part of "socialist realism," the cultural policy adopted in the 1930s. Meanwhile, the tightening of marriage laws and the cult of the "socialist family" alleviated the problems of abandoned women and children. Stalin's emphasis on the socialist family moved away from the radical social experiments of the early Soviet period and reemphasized the role of women in the family. This policy tacitly revived traditional patriarchal attitudes toward woman. Stalin's prohibitions against abortion, combined with the absence of contraceptives, further complicated

women's lives (see Chapter 11). During the Stalin era, everyone's life was difficult, and women were no exception.

After Stalin's death in 1953, many laws and practices were relaxed. Additional preferential legislation was enacted to protect working women and to provide maternity leaves and child assistance. Abortion again became legal, and divorce laws were liberalized. The Soviet conception of the worker-mother drove policy decisions so that legislation that helped children was classified with measures on behalf of women. The legislation improved, rather than altered, women's working and social conditions, although some laws were not observed in practice.⁸

Post-Stalin policies and legislation did not, however, address fundamental issues about women's roles in society, although there was recognition of continuing discrimination against women.⁹ Women's burdens remained difficult even though the Soviet standard of living was improving slowly. In the late 1950s, Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Communist Party (1953–64) and Chairman of the Council of Ministers (1958–64), promised citizens that they would catch up with the United States by 1980. That promise, largely abandoned by his successors, appeared increasingly hollow over the years as the Soviet quality of life fell further behind that of other major powers.

BREZHNEV: THE STATUS QUO AND WOMEN'S BURDENS

In 1964, Leonid Brezhnev became First, and later General, Secretary of the Communist Party, and Aleksei Kosygin became Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Their administration discussed enhancing women's roles under "developed socialism," Brezhnev's term for the new stage in Soviet society. This discussion reflected recognition that women were less than full partners in society but offered rhetoric rather than a strategy for change. As in the Khrushchev period, Brezhnev's administration encouraged women to join the Communist Party, and Party organizations were urged to promote women, tacit acknowledgments that women played a marginal role in Soviet public life.¹⁰

During the 1960s and 1970s, while women in many countries, especially the West, questioned gender roles in society and formed women's movements to advance their agenda, similar questions were not publicly raised in the USSR, partly because of the persistent myth that the Soviet Union had solved the women's question, a myth that officialdom was reluctant to abandon. Women's difficulties were regarded as temporary problems that would disappear as the general standard of living improved.

Absence of a Soviet women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s was also partly because of the traditional Bolshevik opposition to feminism.

Access to information about Western feminism was limited to relatively few people, most of whom had achieved success in the Soviet system and were reluctant to tamper with the status quo. Furthermore, very few women traveled abroad in any but severely circumscribed delegations. A third factor accounting for the absence of a women's movement was the reality of women's lives, which left little time for reflection or social action. Soviet women were expected to be workers, mothers, and homemakers. Men were urged to "help" their spouses with children and housework, but the fundamental responsibility remained with women.

Cases of discrimination against women on the job or difficulties at home were discussed as isolated examples of aberrant behavior rather than fundamental patterns of behavior in society. Women coped with their situation as well as possible, given the shortages of basic goods, long lines, and lack of conveniences. One area women could control, at least in part, was whether or not to bear children. Contraceptives remained primitive and hard to get, and abortions became the principal means of family planning. Urban women refused to have more than one or two children, resorting to multiple abortions to limit family size, often endangering their health in the process.¹¹

Complacent in the professed belief that women had been liberated by the revolution, official Soviet spokespersons smugly regarded the Western feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s as a latter-day awakening of Western women to catch up with the achievements of Soviet women in medicine, science, the arts, education, and so on. Although official statistics on women in various occupations tended to validate the Soviet perspective, the reality was that women's careers did not progress at the same pace as those of their male colleagues. This fact usually was dismissed on the grounds that women's concerns for their children made their careers a lower priority. Equally significant was the fact that women rarely were found in the higher echelons of the political and economic leadership, the key sectors of Soviet society (see Chapter 2).

Most Soviet women were insulated from changes in the outside world by the Soviet government's monopoly over information. The USSR emphasized the achievements of its women through statistics that demonstrated that the Soviets were ahead of most countries. Researchers studying women acknowledged some unsolved problems, but achievements were emphasized over inadequacies.¹² Over time, women in major cities with even limited access to foreigners became more aware of women's advances in other countries, but such knowledge probably was greeted with the fatalism that characterized latter-day Soviet society.

Western women's movements, which were helping to revolutionize the status of women, rarely were noted in the USSR. Representatives of the Soviet Women's Committee traveled abroad and met with representatives of Western groups as the counterpart of those groups. These

meetings were more ceremonial than substantive. Official delegations of various types — writers, artists, students, doctors, teachers — also traveled to the West. They could observe the changing status of women abroad and file that knowledge for future reference.

The few dissenting voices who tried to call attention to problems were not recognized or tolerated. A small feminist movement took root in the Brezhnev era, using the name “Almanac.” It published its views through *samizdat*, self-publishing, the underground method used by the dissident intelligentsia in the 1970s and early 1980s. The Almanac group, formed in Leningrad in 1979 and led by Tatiana Mamonova, attempted through its writings to address some basic issues affecting women’s roles and status in society, but its work was cut short by police harassment, arrests, and the exile of some of its members.¹³

The 1970s were a period of relative prosperity for the Soviet Union. Gold and oil sales, tourism, and a brisk trade in armaments kept the economy afloat. The Soviet standard of living began to rise, and people were optimistic about future prospects. During the latter half of the Brezhnev era, 1975–82, Soviet officialdom tried to maintain the status quo and avoid any major change in direction. Brezhnev’s successors labeled the period *zastoi*, or the time of stagnation (see Chapter 7). The attempt to preserve the Soviet system intact involved strengthening and institutionalizing established Soviet practices and customs, including the roles of Soviet women in society.

Basic views on the women’s question, which had evolved only slightly since the early twentieth century, continued to guide judgments about women’s issues as Soviet officialdom clung to the time-worn myth that the woman question had been resolved. The era was marked by complacency, pride in Soviet achievements, and relative disregard for society’s and women’s unsolved problems. By the early 1980s, complacency gave way to fatalism among ordinary people, who believed life could not and would not change.

RETHINKING WOMEN’S SITUATION: GORBACHEV AND AFTER

Brezhnev’s death in 1982 and the gradual passing of the older generation of party leaders in the early 1980s made it possible to question the mind-set that had shaped Soviet policy making. Mikhail S. Gorbachev was the youthful 54-year-old party leader who came to power in 1985. He used *Glasnost* (openness) to initiate discussion of various social and economic problems, thereby shattering numerous myths, in a desire to make the Soviet system work better. *Glasnost* permitted the examination of women’s real situation for the first time in many decades.

The Committee of Soviet Women, normally the voice of Soviet officialdom, broke its long silence at its 1987 Congress. Valentina Tereshkova, who headed the committee, delivered the keynote address, reciting a long list of women's problems. A public dialogue ensued in which women openly discussed their burdens and problems in the media. Gorbachev himself entered the dialogue by addressing women's issues in his book *Perestroika*. Like his predecessors, he alluded to women's achievements under the Soviets and talked of the need to promote women but then directly addressed women's "burdens at home." The most controversial passage was his statement about what society "should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission."¹⁴

The public dialogue on the women's question ranged from affirmation of traditional Soviet views to expressing the belief that women should concentrate on their family roles. Academics, journalists, and other members of the intelligentsia reveled in greater freedom for discussion and research. The origins of post-Soviet feminist movements among academic women may be traced to the *Glasnost* era. Ordinary women were less affected by the dialogue. For them, hard work, low wages, and long lines, rather than intellectual discourse, marked everyday reality.

Optimism that the government could improve women's situation rose and fell with popular attitudes toward Gorbachev's policies. In 1988 and 1989, there was considerable optimism, but it cooled by 1990 because of policy vacillations and the deteriorating economic situation in agriculture and industry (see Chapters 7 and 8). By the end of the Soviet era, there was little hope that women's problems could be addressed or that other social and economic problems could be alleviated.

WOMEN ORGANIZE LOCAL GROUPS

During the Gorbachev period and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was an opportunity for greater interaction with the Western world. It resulted in recognition among the leadership and the intelligentsia that Russia had paid a high price for pursuing a separate course from the rest of the developed world. In the early 1990s, well-educated people often talked about following the customs of the "civilized world," a barely disguised way of referring to the West. Gorbachev had put forward "new thinking" in foreign policy, an approach that had a profound impact on the way the Soviet Union viewed Western society and international relations.

Informal associations of all types spread through the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia in the more liberal climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although Gorbachev tolerated informal organizations, he opposed the formation of political parties until 1990. Meanwhile, women organized informal support groups, clubs, and other associations at the local

level to raise consciousness and tackle immediate problems. Over 1,000 informal women's groups emerged, testimony that women were attempting to solve their problems. The women's groups focused on helping women at the local level in the difficult transition from socialism to a market economy. Some groups functioned as traditional support groups in which women could share problems and insights. Others had clear social welfare functions, working with single mothers, orphans, and other disadvantaged people.

Although women's organizations played useful roles at the local level, a number of obstacles prevented women's social and political movements from making an impact on the national domestic political agenda in the early 1990s. First, the societal political climate was crisis ridden and highly volatile. Women organizing around women's issues within the larger context of a politically divided, poverty-stricken, inflation-ridden society received little attention or resources. There were too many problems in society, and women's issues were submerged in the larger economic crisis. Second, few women occupied positions in which they could effect major changes at the national level, and the political organs themselves were less than stable.

A third deterrent to concerted action by women beyond the small group or local level may be found in another legacy from the Bolshevik era. Women (and men) had little experience of political life except in Soviet-style organizations. The Soviet era had not provided experience in organizing grass-roots movements that did not speak with an official voice. People had not learned basic skills for creating democratic organizations and building consensus and were suspicious of national movements, which could be used as puppets of the government.

Another aspect of the Bolshevik legacy posed more subtle obstacles for women's groups that wanted to experiment with new solutions to problems. Seventy-five years of socialization in Soviet approaches had created patterns of acceptable solutions and outcomes. Despite all its shortcomings, Soviet society had created an economic and social "safety net." No official policies emerged during the Gorbachev and early Boris Yeltsin periods to replace the Soviet approach to women's problems and other social issues. Women were bewildered by the erosion of the traditional safety net and befuddled by the rapid changes occurring in post-Soviet society.

RUSSEFEMINISM IN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE NEW RUSSIA

About the same time as women were organizing at the local level, a quasi feminism developed among some literary and other women intellectuals. This development, which the author has labeled

“Russofeminism,” matured during Gorbachev’s tenure and in post-Soviet Russia.¹⁵ It is a distinctively Russian approach to women’s problems, characterized by an acceptance of the Soviet image of worker-mother. Russofeminism, as expressed in writings of the 1980s, tended to affirm women’s traditional roles. Although some writers endorsed Gorbachev’s 1987 statements on women, the subsequent economic crisis and cost of living all but silenced arguments that women should retire from the workforce and stay at home to fulfill a womanly mission. At best, the belief that women should stay at home was seen as a dream, achievable perhaps only among the “new Russians” in post-Soviet society. (The slightly derogatory term “new Russians” was used to describe newly affluent people, both those in business and those in questionable activities in post-Soviet Russia.)

Russofeminism, as developed in the 1980s and early 1990s, did not directly challenge the entrenched male establishment. With a few notable exceptions, Russofeminists did not seek to join men on the ramparts of political activity but were content to play supporting roles. Although women marched in demonstrations, men were the principal actors in the political drama that began in 1985. Russofeminism sought to define, and focus on, the women’s domain. It is, therefore, compatible both with the Bolshevik legacy and with Russian tradition. Examples of Russofeminism may be found both in literature and among social activist groups.

In the early 1980s, fiction writers of the older generation, especially I. Grekova and Natalia Baranskaia, provided early manifestations of Russofeminism by calling attention to women’s problems and dilemmas. Writers of the middle generation, like Larissa Nikolaievna Vasileva — poet and essayist — expanded the dialogue in the late 1980s. Vasileva, an important spokesperson for Russian women writers, wrote several essays in the late 1980s and early 1990s on her view of *garmoniia*, or harmony, a philosophy that attempted to define women’s spheres and men’s spheres in life. Through her essays, Vasileva was recognized as an effective advocate of *garmoniia*. In addition, she organized women writers into a section of the Writers’ Union in the late 1980s. Younger women writers carried the dialogue further, breaking new ground in their approaches to women, life, and society.¹⁶ Through literature, issues were raised that forced the readers to ponder their situation and to reflect harder and longer than if the same theme were treated in a newspaper article or journal.

Literary Russofeminists appeared to have a tacit understanding that it was best to travel an indirect, nonpolitical path, perhaps influenced by a lack of faith in political solutions. Consciousness raising through articles, newspapers, literature, and media discussion was the vehicle chosen by the *literati*, people of the literary world. The literary Russofeminists conducted their intellectual discourse in the tradition of the Russian intelligentsia, which historically put its faith in the pen rather than the

politician. In post-Soviet society, Vasil'eva was instrumental in organizing the International League of Women Writers (*Liga*), most of whose members came from the Russian Federation.

Prospects for Russofeminism as a literary-cultural development to influence women were limited by the changing status of writers and intellectuals in post-Soviet society. In the Soviet era, the writer was censored, and careers could be curtailed by the authorities. Nevertheless, the writer was an oracle on a pedestal who spoke with greater authority than mere mortals. In post-Soviet Russian society, the status of the writer significantly declined as less importance was placed on intellectual life in the nascent market economy. The Soviet Writers' Union gradually disintegrated during the Gorbachev era because of internal dissension, and its influence evaporated with the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Although individual writers remained important, they had to compete in the marketplace. Their words no longer were sacred. Richard Remnick, the journalist and analyst of Soviet and Russian society, has written a virtual requiem on the influence of the creative writer in Russian society. Although his argument was based primarily on male writers, the influence of women writers on women may be similarly affected, thus limiting the impact of literary Russofeminism.¹⁷

Russofeminism also was practiced outside the literary domain. There were signs of Russofeminism among social activist groups that assisted women and children at the grass-roots level. Some organizations grew out of the old *zhensovet*, or women's councils, in the workplace or community. Others were post-Soviet organizations committed to bringing a new and better life to Russian women. A notable example of the latter was *Gaia*, a multipurpose organization established by the scholars Elena Ershova and Nadezhda Shvedova.

Gaia began in Moscow but had branches in other Russian cities and former Soviet republics.¹⁸ Among other important functions, *Gaia* assisted women in retraining for better jobs. It exemplified a new kind of bootstrap operation in which women were helping women. Their strategy accepted the reality of women's roles in Russia, attempting to find solutions to problems without fundamentally challenging Russian society. *Gaia* was more successful than most groups and was able to receive international funding and gifts for some of its projects. It became a clearing-house among Russian women's organizations and aspired to become the nucleus of a national network. The organization's goals ranged from self-help to human rights to the environment. Its leaders had a firm sense of women's equality and of the need to teach women basic leadership skills. The *Gaia* organization perhaps bridges the gap between Russofeminism, which accepted the premises of more traditional Russian society, and other feminist groups, which challenge the status quo. *Gaia*, the League of Women Writers, and several other women's groups cooperated in a

nonhierarchical team partnership, a league that served as a clearinghouse among the member organizations. The coalition also received some funding from international sources to promote its work.

FEMINISM AND CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN WOMEN

Despite the existence of 700 registered women's groups, no broadly based women's organizations emerged in early post-Soviet Russia. In particular, feminism seemed to hold little attraction for most women and was not a rallying point around which they appeared to organize. Feminism, defined in this chapter as the espousal of women's rights and a striving for equality, was on the agenda of some groups formed by young women intellectuals in the major cities.

A notable example of a new feminist organization was the Moscow-based Gender Studies Center formed by younger women economists, sociologists, and other researchers. The Gender Studies Center, a research organization within the Russian Academy of Sciences, was initially headed by the economist Anastasia Posadskaya. The Center developed a strong international presence among Western feminists. It, like *Gaia*, aspired to be a clearinghouse of Russian women's organizations and, to a great extent, succeeded in this goal. Valentina Konstantinova, a cofounder of the Center, and other staff assisted in the organization of the Moscow Sexual Assault Recovery Center and other projects of importance to women.¹⁹ (refer to Chapter 11). The Center organized international conferences in Dubna in 1991 and 1992, to which they invited Russian and international women's groups.²⁰ Several hundred people, both Russian and foreign, attended these conferences.

In St. Petersburg, a feminist group formed by Olga Lipovskaia and Natalia Filippova identified with some aspects of Western-style feminist theory.²¹ Like the Moscow Gender Center, it cooperated with other women's groups within the country and internationally, organizing conferences and conducting research. It was both a research and an activist organization. There also were research groups focused on women's issues in the major research institutes. Most of these groups had existed earlier but now had greater freedom to do their research.

Freedom to conduct research, however, was tempered now by two severe limitations. In post-Soviet Russia, academic salaries were pitifully low, and many left their positions to seek more lucrative employment. Furthermore, publishing became prohibitively expensive, which became a serious impediment to publishing one's research, despite the freer climate. In post-Soviet Russia, academic publishing subsidies virtually disappeared, and books, when published, were more expensive than earlier. In a society in which the value of the ruble was shrinking daily, ordinary women were unlikely to spend scarce, hard-earned rubles on

books. Nonetheless, feminist movements and research groups at prestigious universities and research institutes could become the nucleus of future feminist movements, or they could remain an isolated phenomenon among Western-oriented intellectuals and be little known outside the academic community.

WESTERN VIEWS, IMPACT, AND BACKLASH

In post-Soviet Russia, the "Atlanticist," or pro-Western, orientation in foreign policy had an impact on women's groups. Originally pursued by Yeltsin and his foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, in 1992 and 1993, it was part of the Russian aspiration to join the "civilized world." New thinking and the Atlanticist view in foreign policy had their counterparts in many areas of life. Among women scholars and journalists with Western contacts, there was especially strong interest in Western women's movements and activities. Although most women intellectuals recognized that Western movements could not be replicated in Russian society, there was, nonetheless, a tendency to emulate specific policies or modes of operation.

The scholarly feminist groups in general tended to blend Western viewpoints into Russian society. They were consciously or unconsciously part of a larger Westernizing trend in post-Soviet Russia. As a result, feminist scholarship shared the fate of other Westernizing trends. Strong nationalist protests in the mid-1990s and nationalist party gains in the 1993 parliamentary elections resulted in a backlash against Western views. Most observable were developments in foreign and domestic policy, in which there was a retreat from the Atlanticist approach and an assertive stance in the affairs of the "near abroad," that is, neighboring countries that had been republics of the former Soviet Union. Within the Russian Federation itself, separatist movements developed. The strongest of these, in the republic of Chechnya, resulted in an outbreak of war in 1994. As a consequence of these nationalist sentiments, Western-oriented leaders of women's movements found themselves as disliked as some of the Western-oriented politicians.

For the majority of Soviet women, the feminist approaches of the Westernizing intellectuals were little known or understood. Ordinary women were likely to be skeptical about feminism. The fear of change was fueled by the heritage of prejudice against women's movements cultivated during the Soviet era. Even among intellectuals, feminism was not universally accepted. Some Russian intellectuals shared the widespread view that feminism was appropriate only in highly developed societies, in which women had a high standard of living and adequate material resources to facilitate their advancement. Some intellectuals sought a Russian solution to women's problems rather than looking to the West for

inspiration. The search for Russian solutions began tentatively with Russofeminism in the Soviet era and has further developed in the new Russia.

WOMEN AND RUSSIAN POLITICS

Ella Pamfilova, the highest ranking woman in the early Yeltsin government, tried to address women's issues but had difficulty getting resources to support her efforts. Meanwhile, politicians engaged in an escalating power struggle, repeatedly arguing over economic and constitutional reforms. In September and October 1993, the political standoff between Yeltsin and parliament resulted in parliament's dissolution, the occupation of the parliament building by legislative leaders, and the military storming of the White House, the parliament building, on orders from Yeltsin in October 1993. In an attempt to normalize the political situation, elections were held for a new parliament in December 1993, and a new Russian constitution was adopted (see Chapter 10).

Some women chose to seek an electoral route to address social issues and competed successfully for seats in the new Federal Assembly in the December 1993 elections. In the popularly elected Duma, the lower house, women constituted 13.5 percent of the deputies, but the upper house, the Federation Council, had only 5 percent women. Although most new Russian political parties were not advocates for women's issues, the coalition party Women of Russia, which secured 5 percent of the vote in the 1993 election, spoke out for the retention of most of the benefits for women and children granted in the Soviet era (see Chapter 4).²² Women of Russia included in its core group members of the Union of Russian Women (the successor to the Committee of Soviet Women). Recollections of the Committee of Soviet Women impeded support for Women of Russia, even though its leader Ekaterina Lakhova was well-respected.

Political life in post-Soviet Russia has reflected an absence of organizational and consensus-building skills and an inability to function well in a democratic context. The stormy relationship between Yeltsin and parliament and the military approach to dealing with the rebellion in Chechnya provide ample testimony to this point. In addition, parliamentary conflicts concerning the transition to a market economy persisted despite the new parties, new elections, and a new constitution. These basic problems at the highest levels suggest that the leaders themselves — as well as women's groups — have to learn how to build democratic consensus and organizational support.

CONCLUSIONS

The history and experience of Russia, which included significant propaganda against independent feminist movements and women's activism, was a difficult legacy for women to overcome in post-Soviet society. Antipathy to traditional feminism was ingrained deeply into the Russian psyche for eight decades, and movements openly advocating women's rights had difficulty being accepted. It may take at least a generation to eradicate the deeply held social prejudices about feminism inherited from the Bolsheviks and the Soviet era.

The Bolshevik legacy, combined with the influence of traditional Russian views of woman as mother and post-Soviet avoidance of political involvement, posed obstacles to the development of effective women's organizations and networks at the national level. The emergence of Russofeminism, which focused on advocacy of selected women's issues and consciousness raising through articles, books, fiction, broadcasts, and social activism, was a positive development. Russofeminists sought to help women achieve quiet gains using strategies unlikely to challenge "the powers that be." This reflected an accommodation to the unique circumstances of Russia, a country that developed its own course for most of the twentieth century. Russofeminists tried to reconcile that course with developments in the rest of the Western world.

Early post-Soviet Russian society was characterized by the lack of clear direction in social policies, periodic crises, and a persistent power struggle between the President and the parliament. Post-Soviet Russian society faced a myriad of problems, including hyperinflation, escalating poverty (especially among the elderly), ethnic unrest, separatist movements, rising rates of crime, a health care crisis, and an overwhelming sense of uncertainty. All of these distracted attention from women's issues. Women were among those most affected by the deteriorating quality of life in post-Soviet Russia, but neither society nor the women themselves seemed able to find a solution and to effect significant improvement in their daily lives.

NOTES

An earlier version of the section on the Bolshevik legacy was presented in the Augsburg College Faculty Lecture Series, 1993–94. Discussion of women during perestroika and afterward was included in Norma C. Noonan, "Does Consciousness Lead to Action?" *Journal of Gender Studies* 3 (1994): 47–54.

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13. See Mamonova, *Women and Russia*; Noonan, "Marxism and Feminism," pp. 40–41.

14. M. S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 117.

15. See Noonan, "Marxism and Feminism"; Noonan, "Does Consciousness Lead to Action?"

16. See Helena Goscilo, ed., *Fruits of Her Plume: Essays on Contemporary Russian Women's Culture* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993). Also see *Glas*, No. 3, 1992.

17. Richard Remnick, "Exit the Saints," *The New Yorker* 70 (1994): 50–60.

18. Elena Ershova, "Social Organizations and Women's Issues in Russia." Unpublished paper presented at the International Studies Association, March 25, 1993, Acapulco, Mexico. The author also consulted materials printed by the *Gaia* International Women's Center. The name of the organization was derived from the Greek goddess *Gaia*, who created the earth and sky out of chaos. The *Gaia* association had broadly based interests ranging from the environment to women's solidarity and international peace, and it is dedicated to equality and democracy. Nadezhda Shvedova and Ershova, cofounders of *Gaia*, may be contacted through the Institute of USA and Canada, Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. *Gaia* has affiliates in the United States.

19. Interview with Valentina Konstantinova, September 7, 1994, as reported to the author by Wilma Rule. See "City Gets Sexual Abuse Center," *Moscow Times*, October 27, 1993.

20. Anastasia Posadskaya, ed., *Women in Russia, A New Era in Russian Feminism* (New York: Verso, 1994).

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III

THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION, THE RISE OF CAPITALISM, AND THE IMPACT ON WOMEN

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7

Before the Fall: Economic and Social Problems

Alexander Ardishvili

When Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985, he inherited a country in serious economic, social, and moral disarray. The new ideologists who came to the political scene with Gorbachev coined the earlier era, which was led principally by Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, a “period of stagnation.” Most Soviet experts agree. It is harder, however, to agree upon the reasons for retardation of Soviet economic growth and the deterioration of the social and moral climate. This chapter will attempt to describe and explain both the process of slowdown and its major causes. It will also discuss the consequences of the economic downturn for the country and its women and how the developments created the preconditions for Gorbachev’s reforms.

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN: CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

Brezhnev and the Stalinist Economy

With the death of Brezhnev in November 1982, the new leadership inherited an economy that had been slowing down for over two decades (Table 7.1). The Soviet Union’s growing difficulty in earning hard currency (especially from oil exports) became apparent at that time. There was an increase of shortages of goods and longer queues at the state-owned stores, noticeably higher prices at *kolkhoz* (collective farm) markets, and informal rationing of such staples as cheese, meat, and

TABLE 7.1
Annual Growth Rates of Gross National Product,
Workforce, and Capital Stock

Year	Gross National Product	Workforce	Capital Stock
1952	5.9	0.5	7.5
1955	8.6	1.6	10.6
1958	7.6	2.0	10.0
1961	5.6	-0.7	8.9
1964	11.0	2.9	8.6
1967	4.6	2.0	7.2
1970	7.7	2.0	7.8
1973	7.3	1.5	8.0
1976	4.8	0.8	7.2
1979	0.8	1.1	6.7
1980	1.4	1.1	6.5

Sources: U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *USSR: Measures of Economic Growth, 1950-1980* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), pp. 15, 42-43; Stephen Rapawy, *Civilian Employment in the USSR* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1980); *Soviet Statistics on Capital Formation: A Reference Aid* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1982).

sugar. Shortages of many industrial products and raw materials led to a number of negative phenomena: hoarding, overapplication for material allocations, production and construction delays. The ministries and enterprises made their own supply and procurement arrangements, and unofficial "expeditors" supplemented the supply system by semilegal deals. Bribes and under-the-counter payments penetrated all spheres of life by the end of the 1970s. All this was accompanied by slackening discipline and a serious decline of worker morale and productivity.

The Stalinist totalitarian model of economic development and resource allocation worked relatively well for several decades. The model stressed ever growing investment in industrial expansion, especially in heavy machine building and natural resources extraction sectors. Necessary for this rapid growth, a workforce was provided by the influx to the cities of millions of peasants displaced by the Stalinist agricultural policy.

Under Stalin's administration, the Soviets became increasingly adept at selecting and mastering relatively unsophisticated technologies. They took advantage of the central allocation of resources and organized mass production on a scale hardly achievable by privately owned industry. The Soviet Union had remarkable achievements in those industrial sectors that required mobilization and concentration of vast resources, such as machine tool building and energy production. Building on the

momentum accumulated during Stalin's rule, the Soviet Union became the world's largest producer of oil and gas by the end of 1970s and produced at least two machine tools for every one made in the United States.¹

However, as the economy grew in size and complexity, the Soviet planning system was ever more difficult to manage. In the early 1980s, Gosplan, the Soviet Union's State Committee for Planning, was drawing up between 2,000 and 6,000 accounts for production of goods and services. Another powerful central ministry — Gosstab, the State Committee for Material and Technical Supply — was responsible for drawing up at least 15,000 material accounts at the second level. There also were dozens of industrial branch ministries, which regulated and planned the operation of hundreds of thousands of enterprises.²

To complicate things even further, the Soviet system called for central setting of prices for all goods and services produced, sold, or offered anywhere in the country. In Stalin's times, when the composition of product lines of companies was relatively stable for many years, minor periodic revisions of price lists were enough to reflect changes in the structure. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, with the emergence of new technologies and whole new industrial sectors and with the increase of variety of consumer goods, central price setting became a virtually impossible task. Prices did not reflect real change in production costs; they were artificially low for some products and materials and too high for other products and materials.

Mid-1960s: Earlier Advantages Turn to Disadvantages

By the mid-1960s, the Soviet system found itself in a situation in which some of its earlier advantages turned suddenly into disadvantages. Not only did the planning process get out of control but also the major growth factors of previous decades — investment in heavy industry and expanding workforce — stopped working. For one thing, an overemphasis on heavy industry led to a total neglect of consumer goods production and underdevelopment of consumer goods industry and services. The State Committee on Statistics' data indicate that the production of shoes, for example, increased between 1940 and 1985 by 2.5 times, whereas production of steel and pig iron increased by seven to eight times.³

At the same time, the pools of new capital and of labor were diminishing. The reduction in economic growth made it harder to set aside resources for capital investment. Although investment grew only by 2 percent in 1984, this was hardly enough to cover the small rate of population growth.⁴ The birthrate had been falling over the years throughout the Soviet Union, except in Central Asia. Moreover, the flow of new workers

into the workforce each year was below that of previous years. In the mid-1980s, the labor force had virtually stopped growing.⁵

These problems were compounded by a deteriorating ecological situation and depletion of natural resources. The drive to industrialize at any price and the propensity to use as many natural resources as possible to build up Soviet industrial strength had disastrous effects on the environment. Once-abundant energy and mineral resources in the eastern part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were depleted. By the early 1980s, the European part of the Soviet Union, once the major source of raw materials and energy, accounted for only 9 percent of the country's energy output, whereas Siberia and the Far East accounted for about 88 percent.⁶ However, oil and gas exploration in remote areas of Siberia was much more difficult because of adverse climatic conditions and lack of roads. As a consequence, Soviet energy output dropped sharply by the mid-1980s.

Finally, agriculture had long-term problems. Before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, Russia was one of the largest grain exporters in the world. After the revolution, its grain exports started to diminish. By the 1970s, the Soviet Union became one of the largest grain importers (Table 7.2). The main reason for the constant maladies of Soviet agriculture can be found in Stalin's policy of prioritizing industry at the expense of agriculture. Agriculture did not receive the necessary investments. The housing, roads, and communication infrastructure in rural areas was, in many instances, at the nineteenth-century level. In addition, Stalin's policy of forced collectivization created a highly inefficient collective farm management system. About 97 percent of arable land belonged to *kolkhozes*, and only 3 percent was allocated to peasants' private plots, but the latter accounted for about 60 percent of the Soviet Union's potatoes and over 40 percent of its fruits, berries, and eggs.⁷

TABLE 7.2
Soviet Grain Harvests, Exports, and Imports
(millions of metric tons)

Year	Harvest	Export	Import
1950	81	2.9	0.2
1960	126	6.8	0.2
1970	187	5.7	2.2
1972	168	4.6	15.5
1973	223	4.9	23.9
1979	179	0.8	31.0
1980	189	0.5	34.8
1984	173	1.0	55.5

Source: Marshall Goldman, *Gorbachev's Challenge: Economic Reform in the Age of High Technology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), pp. 32-33.

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SLOWDOWN

The discussion so far has focused on macroeconomic dynamics of the Soviet system without touching on microeconomic management and organizational implications of the economic slowdown. The key to understanding the problems of the Soviet enterprise management system is its incentive mechanism.⁸ In the 1950s, the state stopped terror against managers and workers and, thus, lost its major instrument of enforcing discipline and productivity, practiced under Stalinism. In its new, milder version, socialism had to find alternative means of enforcing output quotas on producer firms. The only viable alternative was to provide enterprises with subsidies in exchange for meeting quotas. Subsidies took the form of material resources, interest-free credits, wage and bonus increases, price allowances, and high unearned profits.⁹

The subsidies system soon turned into a vicious circle. To provide new subsidies to some companies, the state had to get more output elsewhere, which, in turn, required more subsidies. Producer prices often were revised at the producers' request, which led to the increased costs of outputs — again a vicious circle. Resulting from this were constant price hikes, unlimited printing of additional currency, and inflation. In the period 1970–85, the money supply increased by 3.1 times although the physical output only doubled.¹⁰ Another result of the subsidies-outputs tug of war between enterprises and the state was the reckless utilization and depletion of resources. Soviet steel enterprises used five times as much iron ore as United States firms but produced only twice as much steel. With this steel, the Soviets produced half as many final products, machine tools, and equipment as their U.S. counterparts.

Not surprisingly, this system was highly resistant to technological innovation. Subsidized companies do not need more productive technology. They do not need to reduce costs to be more productive, because subsidies will flow in anyway. They do not need to increase productivity, because that may lead to increased output quotas. It would reduce their ability to argue for increased prices based on increased costs (because new technology is, usually, more cost-effective than the old one). Therefore, high technology had a low priority in most Soviet enterprises.

Another heritage of the Stalinist centralized model was monopolization of industry. The level of monopolization was so high that many of what are the most basic goods in economy — polypropylene, stainless steel pipes, concrete mixers — were produced entirely or almost entirely by a single organization. For example, 100 percent of sewing machines were produced by one industrial combine, Podolsk Shveinaya Association; 90 percent of washing machines by Kirov Elektropribor Factory; 100 percent of refrigerators by the Refrigerator Association in Kishinev and Krasnoyarsk.¹¹

These monopolistic giants had a lot of bargaining power in subsidies and quota negotiations with the state.

Growth of the Alternative Economy

Among major effects of the economic stagnation were growing shortages of inputs and multiple bottlenecks in production and distribution of material resources. This, in turn, forced enterprises and private citizens to resort to illegal and semilegal methods to acquire needed goods and services. Enterprises, to be able to meet their plan targets, had to barter goods and services, deal on the black market, acquire cash by padded payrolls, and collect money from other firms for work not done.¹²

Private citizens, to get access to previously available consumer goods and, increasingly, to many food items, had to barter and deal on the black market, accept and offer bribes. Under-the-counter trading of goods by employees of state-owned stores, sale of "surplus" production by state factory management and workers through private "channels of distribution," moonlighting, and diverse forms of black market activity were used by many to supplement their meager state salaries.

Increasingly, a fair amount of coordination, production, and distribution functions were shifted from the centrally planned system to the "underground sector" of the economy. Some may argue that this shift could be considered a positive change, because gaps created by the inability of the planning system to deal with the increased complexity of the economic mechanism were filled by the informal mechanism. It might be argued that this kind of "decentralization" is a positive trend, because it amounts to a marketizing reform of sorts. However, the dual system of management, production, and distribution that emerged as a result of this latent marketization was highly inefficient. Too much energy was spent producing goods and services that were not needed and creating the appearance of activity where, in reality, there was none. In the black market sector, enormous resources were spent on cover-up operations: bribes, kickbacks, creating and supporting a network of informers and "helpers" in the state apparatus (including law-enforcement agencies).¹³

The inefficient market economy substituted, in most cases, handwork for machine production, contributed nothing to research and development, and produced very little for investment.¹⁴ The country's economy as a whole suffered from a serious distortion of reported and published information and slippage of the effective governance of the economy. Above all, this system resulted in a decline in respect for the law and the official system and a general cynicism and absence of moral values.

Social Implications of the Slowdown: Redistribution of Wealth

It would be naive to expect that, in a highly centralized system, such as the Soviet economy, black market activities would be possible without the silent consent of state and Communist Party officials at various levels. The black market created opportunities for getting rich not only for illegal entrepreneurs but also for a large group of salaried state officials and employees. All those who had access to scarce resources, the ability to produce or provide scarce resources or services, or the administrative power to redistribute these resources in some manner had a potential for becoming part of the "new rich."

Among those who benefitted were those who controlled resources, such as employees of retail and wholesale companies, managers, accountants, and distribution personnel of industrial firms, and Party officials, especially those working in the departments responsible for "directing" the activities of enterprises; peasants who produced meat, fruit, and vegetables on private plots; and skilled craftsmen who, although officially employed by the state, derived the majority of their incomes from moonlighting as private repairmen, auto mechanics, and so on.

Those who suffered were students, pensioners, fixed-wage recipients, and those who had no opportunity or were morally opposed to engaging in illegal activities, including college and university teachers and researchers. Lower income for these groups led to devaluation of the previously prestigious intellectual professions and a decline in enrollment and the quality of student candidates at schools of higher learning. The result was negative on the country's ability to make technological change and research breakthroughs.

EARLY REFORM ATTEMPTS

The growing economic problems discussed above led to a call for reform and to a number of failed attempts to introduce change. These attempts can be divided into large scale reforms, usually industrywide campaigns, and smaller scale experiments. None of the large scale campaigns was bold enough to change the principals of the centrally planned system. Smaller scale experiments, on the other hand, were more daring; however, because of their local scope, they had insignificant impact as a whole.

A widely published industrywide reform attempt was introduced in 1965. The goal was to increase the power of the enterprise management and reduce the orders passed down from the center. Elaborate schemes were developed to relate managerial bonuses and other incentives to profitability and sales. However, this system demonstrated its ineffectiveness.

Success and bonuses depended primarily on plan fulfillment, which meant that it always paid to have a modest fulfillable plan. Subsequently, the new freedoms given to companies were used to strengthen their monopolistic practices.

Among smaller scale experiments were the Schokino method, the Brigade Contract, and the Abasha agricultural market reforms. The Schokino method was expressed by the aphorism "Fewer people — more output."¹⁵ About 1,000 enterprises participated, and in most cases, both physical output and labor production increased significantly. In contrast, the Brigade Contract met with a number of obstacles. The method involved payment to a group on completion of a specific task. Management was not always interested in making the experiment work. It feared increased worker independence and excessive increase in productivity, which could lead to higher plan targets in the future. Workers were reluctant to join brigades because they feared getting lost in the crowd. The most successful regional experiment was conducted in Abasha, a region in Georgia where there was widespread private fruit and vegetable growing and trading. The state supported private cattle farms by low subsidized prices for animal feed and fertilizers. Farmers were allowed to sell 50 percent of meat and other products in free markets and to keep the proceeds. The remainder was sold to the state at fixed prices. The new system was an immediate success. However, only limited attempts were made to try this approach in other places.

INTERIM REGIMES

After Brezhnev's death in 1982, his successor, Yuri Andropov, followed the same path in trying to solve the Soviet Union's economic problems. The Brezhnev policy of organizational modifications within the same basic framework of planning and management was continued, but these modest measures could not reverse the slowdown of the previous decade. Konstantin Chernenko, the Party Secretary who succeeded Andropov in early 1984, was more conservative and cautious than Andropov. Modest reform attempts initiated by Andropov were put on hold. The economic slide continued, and the level of grain produced reached an unprecedented low. It then was necessary to import 55.5 million metric tons of wheat in 1984, compared with 34.8 million in 1980 (Table 7.2).

THE EFFECT OF SOVIET ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ON WOMEN

The economic and social problems described resulted in serious changes in the situation of Russian women. The inflation of consumer

prices and the relative stability of wages forced more women to work full-time. About 65 million women worked in different sectors of the economy, accounting for more than half of the country's employed.¹⁶ Another 18 percent of Soviet women received pensions or student stipends. Consequently, only 31 percent were dependent on members of their families for support. There was, however, no corresponding redistribution of responsibilities within families. A working woman still was supposed to carry a full load at home, and she was primarily responsible for child care.

Soviet labor legislation took consideration of a woman's role in the family and stipulated a series of benefits, including maternity leave of 112 days with full pay; partially paid leave for caring for an infant up to the age of one; seven days of sick leave to care for a child, paying 50 to 100 percent of the mother's wage, depending on seniority; and an option to take an additional unpaid child-care leave with retention of job and seniority.

In 1982, women were spending almost twice as much time as men on household chores (Table 7.3). The lack of modern appliances made women's household duties difficult and energy consuming. Thirty percent of Soviet families had no washing machines at home, and 71 percent lacked vacuum cleaners.¹⁷ Women's domestic responsibilities usually assumed priority over their career considerations. They, therefore, accepted jobs at lower levels of skill and pay in exchange for nonmonetary benefits, such as shorter travel to work, less overtime, and access to shopping or child-care facilities in the workplace.

TABLE 7.3
Distribution of Time Spent per Week on Running a Household

	Men		Women	
	Hours	Percent	Hours	Percent
Total Time	168.0	100.0	168.0	100.0
Time Spent on Household Chores	14.4	9.0	28.3	17.0
Cooking and Washing Up	2.5	1.5	11.5	6.8
Shopping	2.7	1.6	5.5	3.3
House Cleaning	2.1	1.3	4.1	2.4

Source: Ludmila Rzhazhizina, *Female Labor Under Socialism: The Socio-Economic Aspects* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983), p. 160.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis in this chapter indicates that the Soviet Union economy inherited by Gorbachev was in dire need of serious reforms. Numerous

unsuccessful attempts at partial reforms and growing disillusionment of the population showed that a fundamental restructuring of the system, rather than fragmentary experiments, was needed. In addition to macro- and microeconomic problems, the need for reform was accelerated by two external events: the intensified arms race with the United States and the collapse of world oil prices, which was the only significant source of capital for growth of Soviet industry. The question was not whether to start reform again but, rather, whether to venture into a full-scale economic, social, and political restructuring or to limit change to the economic domain only.

NOTES

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8

The Gorbachev Leadership: Change and Continuity

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Historians will remember Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev as the man who began a fundamental transformation of the Soviet Union by introducing new and exciting reforms prior to its collapse in December 1991. People around the world followed Gorbachev's progress, but few understood that, behind the facade of reform, the central infrastructure, and the republic-central, structures were disintegrating. How and why reforms began and progressed, how the system disintegrated, and how these developments affected women will be the focus of this chapter.

Gorbachev came to power as General Secretary of the Communist Party on March 11, 1985. From 1985 to 1991, Gorbachev and his advisers tried to reverse the pattern of stagnation of the preceding years. They did not realize how severe the crisis was or that the entire system was threatened from within (see Chapter 7). Gorbachev introduced seemingly innocuous reforms that proved cataclysmic, unleashing latent forces of discontent, which led to the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Serving as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev resigned his position only after a coup in August 1991. He became president of the USSR in 1988 but never stood for popular election. Gorbachev's resignation from the presidency on December 25, 1991, marked the final collapse of the Soviet political system. The last six dramatic years of Soviet history will forever be known as the "Gorbachev era."

DREAMS AND PLANS FOR REFORM

In 1985, power passed to a new generation of leaders, men in their fifties, who had observed modest attempts at reform in the Nikita Khrushchev and early Aleksei Kosygin–Leonid Brezhnev eras. Gorbachev and a few top advisers, especially Eduard Shevardnadze, his foreign minister, and Alexander Yakovlev, a government adviser, intended only to reform and improve the Soviet system, which they believed was not performing up to its potential. The new leaders came to power with a vision of a revitalized Soviet Union led by the Communist Party. They did not have a concrete plan for achieving their goal. They overestimated the ability of the system to reform and underestimated the gravity of the situation. Over the next few years, they gradually transformed their hopes and dreams into policies. Their initiatives, sometimes timid and occasionally bold, rarely were adopted without compromise. The path of reform zigzagged, earning Gorbachev a reputation for vacillation.

Glasnost (openness) was introduced in 1986, permitting selective revelation of past secrets. Plans for comprehensive reform were adopted as part of the Third Party Programs also in 1986, at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Third Party Program offered few new approaches. The program was reminiscent of Khrushchev's adopted in 1961 to achieve communism in 20 years. It spoke of accelerating the country's socioeconomic development, emphasizing improvement in the economy, science, and technology. Although there was reference to "structural changes in the economy," the economy would remain centralized. The new program made the usual promises of an improved standard of living. There was minimal attention to women's issues. Gorbachev noted the problems of mothers and the family. He stated a need to find "diverse forms of employment for women," including "sliding work schedules, a shorter working day, and work at home" to accommodate "the wishes of women."¹

The 1986 document reflected old-style Soviet thinking about political life. It advocated strengthening the role of the Communist Party and "socialist self-government." There were hints of his later "new thinking" in foreign policy, when Gorbachev called for "normal relations" with the United States and talked about a world without nuclear weapons. The 1986 Program's lack of innovation may have indicated that Gorbachev's control over the Politburo was less secure than believed in the West. By 1987 and 1988, however, more innovative proposals emerged: *perestroika* (restructuring of the economy), *novoe myshlenie* (new thinking) in foreign policy, and *demokratization* (democratization) of politics.

THE ERA OF PERESTROIKA, 1987-91

A year after adopting the new Party program, Gorbachev and his advisers decided a new approach was necessary. The economist Marshall Goldman has referred to the changes as a "mid-course correction."² The new economic reforms of 1987 were incorporated into the Enterprise Law of January 1, 1988.³ The reforms limited the percentage of goods to be delivered to the state to about 85 percent of production to encourage firms to find other outlets for their products.⁴ The reforms put state enterprises on a cost-accounting, self-financing management program, in which firms would have to show a profit. State firms could borrow capital from the state to expand or modernize but had to pay interest on their loans.

Private enterprise had begun in selected businesses, restaurants, and retail stores, but private entrepreneurs had to raise their own money. Private enterprise was a new and fragile flower, and no one was certain of its future. Although the economic reforms of 1987 proved disappointing, the initial excitement they generated suggests that the population, or at least those committed to the Soviet system, believed reform was possible.⁵ Anatoly Sobchak, a law professor and later the mayor of Leningrad, for example, joined the Communist Party in 1988 in the belief that only the Party could lead the reform movement.⁶

An important development in 1987 was Gorbachev's book *Perestroika*. In this work, which captured the imagination of the outside world, one finds Gorbachev's personal philosophy for society and the world. Although his orthodoxy and belief in Marxism-Leninism were apparent, so, too, was his view that ideological and military conflicts would give way to global interdependence. Soviet foreign policy already reflected his new approach to the outside world. For his own country, Gorbachev advocated a humane society that represented the ideals of communism rather than its brutal, Stalinist face. Because of *glasnost*, a freer political atmosphere was emerging within the country, although people feared that the new freedom was temporary. New literature and films brought a breath of fresh air into the stale Soviet political climate. Silence about long-term problems was broken, ranging from the Soviet's military campaigning in Afghanistan to women's problems.

Open discussion of the *zhenskii vopros* (woman question), was a notable hallmark of the Gorbachev era. The Soviet Women's Committee, the voice of the Communist Party and government, broke the silence at its January 1987 conference, describing women's problems in detail and citing many grievances, from the lax observance of Soviet laws protecting women to women's difficult burdens in society (see Chapters 3, 5, and 6). Their statements opened a national dialogue on women's issues. Gorbachev's comments in *Perestroika* that something should be done to alleviate

women's burdens "to make it possible for women to return to the purely womanly mission" fueled the debate.⁷

Gorbachev's words about women returning to a womanly mission, if spoken by a lesser political figure, would have been viewed as another perspective in the national dialogue, but when uttered by the General Secretary of the Communist Party, they acquired special significance. They suggested that Soviet officialdom was trying to limit women's participation in political and economic life, even though Gorbachev also stated that "further democratization of society . . . is impossible without enhancing the role of women, and without their commitment to all our reforming efforts."⁸ On balance, Gorbachev's statements encouraged and supported women. Everyone knew Soviet women had a difficult life. The best-remembered passage, however, was his statement about women's "purely womanly mission."

During 1987, the restructuring that encompassed industry, agriculture, and the retail sector was explained. Each aspect of restructuring had its own problems and pitfalls. As each proposal unfolded, opponents from the left and right tried to shape the reforms. Discussions included not only the industrial reforms but also the possibilities of long-term leasing of land to the peasants. The latter touched a raw nerve among officials, who believed state ownership of the land and collectivized agriculture were essential to the Soviet system.

Gorbachev had to accommodate opposing views among his advisers. Yegor Ligachev, Gorbachev's ally in the perestroika process, opposed land distribution, and believed reform was moving too quickly. Boris Yeltsin, whom Gorbachev had appointed First Secretary of the Communist Party of Moscow, believed Gorbachev's reforms were not progressing quickly enough. Differences of opinion and style between Gorbachev and Yeltsin came to light in 1987, exploding at the October Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. That year marked the beginning of the long Yeltsin-Gorbachev feud, which continued in post-Soviet Russia. As a result of the Central Committee confrontation, Yeltsin was removed as First Secretary of the Moscow Communist Party, given a ministerial position, and dropped from the Politburo.⁹

An important aspect of Gorbachev's reform program, his anti-alcohol campaign, had significant implications for women and for support by women. Shortly after coming to power, Gorbachev focused on alcohol as an enemy of progress. Alcoholism was the USSR's most debilitating social problem. It was a predominantly male problem with serious implications for every family. Drunken husbands drank family income, abused their wives, and did not help to raise the children. High rates of absenteeism and accidents on the job, attributed to alcohol, lowered worker productivity. Alcohol dependence shortened men's life span, which was among the lowest of any developed country.

The government decreased production of vodka, raised prices sharply, and reduced vodka's availability, selling it in fewer places for shorter hours. Vodka sales also were limited in restaurants and cafes. Juice bars replaced beer counters. Initially, the alcohol policy appeared to work, but it challenged the ingenuity of Soviet drinkers. Within a few years, it was recognized that attempts to limit drinking had resulted in increased bootleg production of alcohol and reduced state revenues without a major effect on drinking habits.

Gorbachev's well-intentioned alcohol campaign had serious, unintended consequences. The uprooting of grapevines to reduce wine production resulted in a shortage of grapes for eating. Bootlegging expanded in the countryside, and deaths from ingestion of wood alcohol increased sharply. The government lost a significant revenue source. Sugar, a vital ingredient for alcohol production, disappeared from stores, and sugar rationing was introduced.¹⁰ The failure of the alcohol policy had parallels in other areas of life — work discipline, economic production, and so on — and may be viewed as a metaphor for restructuring as a whole.

Another issue that affected women was Soviet policy on religion. Initially, the Gorbachev administration continued the traditional official hostility toward religion, although antireligious measures had relaxed. As people searched for meaning in life, many were increasingly curious about religion. Elderly women long had been the backbone of the survival of the Christian religion in the Soviet Union. Now, the elderly were joined by younger women and young people generally. The USSR was unable to provide for people's spiritual needs through political rituals and socialization.¹¹

The celebration of the Millennium of the Christianization of Russia in 1988 was the turning point in Gorbachev's policy on religion. The Gorbachev administration initially ignored the approaching anniversary but then decided to capitalize on the international celebration and shape its official observation. Whatever the government's motivation, the masses interpreted it as a sign of a new attitude toward religion.¹² Although both women and men participated in the new religious freedom, it was a boon for religious women, who had been marginalized by society and ridiculed for their beliefs.

Gorbachev's plans for reform gradually encompassed virtually all areas of social life. Recognizing that resistance would be strongest in respect to economic reforms, Gorbachev courted the Party faithful to obtain endorsement for his plans; accordingly, he convened a Party Conference in June 1988.¹³

19TH PARTY CONFERENCE AND ITS AFTERMATH

In Communist Party tradition, a Party Conference could be convened between Congresses if necessary. The purpose of the 19th Party Conference was to modify the Party Program in the light of events since 1986. Gorbachev's speech to the Conference focused heavily on the economy. He talked about "radical economic reform" and the need for continuing technological progress. Although he argued for "new thinking" in foreign policy, his foreign policy rhetoric had not yet caught up with changes taking place in foreign policy. Gorbachev also introduced one of the most sensitive parts of his overall program, namely, reform of the political process. He touched on democratization, human rights, freedom of conscience, and the demarcation of the party's sphere and the government's sphere in society, an issue affecting the party's power.¹⁴

Support at the 19th Party Conference provided only a temporary respite for Gorbachev. Beset by opposition from liberals and conservatives, Gorbachev tried to find a middle way, which made him unpopular with almost everyone. By 1989-90, Gorbachev's economic policies were foundering hopelessly, and various half-measures were attempted to rescue the reform plans. The Soviet economy was disintegrating slowly.¹⁵ In foreign policy, in which he had more freedom to maneuver, Gorbachev transformed the Soviet Union into a cooperative partner in world affairs. Gorbachev's international popularity was high, especially in Europe and North America, but his prestige in the Soviet Union plummeted month by month.

As the Communist Party sensed its privileged role threatened, right-wing Party opposition sharpened. A letter, attributed to a Leningrad scientist and communist, Nina Andreyeva, summarized the party's objections to Gorbachev's reforms. The carefully constructed letter harshly criticized perestroika. There were suspicions that Andreyeva was part of a group allied to Ligachev; there also was a suggestion that the letter was written either by her husband, an instructor in Marxism-Leninism, or by a group of Leningrad conservative communists who used her as a front. It is, perhaps, indicative of the social bias in Soviet society that her critics would not accept her as the sole author of the letter. Andreyeva was an articulate spokesperson for the opposition.¹⁶ It was ironic that one of the most prominent women who emerged during Gorbachev's tenure was an opponent of reform.

Because opposition was crystallizing, Gorbachev decided to become less dependent on the Communist Party and expand his political base. He was selected as President, a largely honorary position, by the Supreme Soviet in 1988, giving him a government base. He tried to reform the party yet distance himself from the Party hierarchy, which increasingly resisted change. Over the next two years, he restructured government and Party

organs and tried to limit the party's jurisdiction. He reorganized the presidency and relied on the new presidential cabinet rather than the Communist Party's executive body, the Politburo, for advice.

To appeal to the people, Gorbachev also promoted democratization. In 1989, for the first time, contested elections were held in the Soviet Union. The former legislature, the Supreme Soviet, had been elected without opposition candidates. It was abolished in favor of a mostly elected Congress of People's Deputies and a smaller standing body, a new Supreme Soviet.¹⁷ To the surprise of the Party, some of its leading candidates were defeated in hotly-contested elections. Among the winners was Yeltsin, the former Politburo member, who defeated a hand-picked candidate of the Party.

The Congress of People's Deputies was more liberal than Gorbachev had anticipated and more conservative than some reformers wanted. A standing body of 450 members, the Supreme Soviet, was elected by the Congress of People's Deputies. More liberal members of the Supreme Soviet, including the physicist Andrei Sakharov and Yeltsin, formed the Interregional Coalition of Deputies to advance their agenda.

Gorbachev asked the new parliament to establish a reorganized, more powerful Presidency. The parliament elected Gorbachev President, although the official chair position was Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. Aware of his shrinking popularity, Gorbachev chose not to seek a popular election. The new Supreme Soviet functioned as a real parliamentary body. Its televised proceedings attracted popular interest, providing the people's first taste of democracy. Gorbachev resisted attempts of the Liberal Interregional Coalition to end the reign of the Communist Party as the only party and allow other parties to exist. Sakharov, a leading critic, led the battle to permit opposition parties until his death in 1989. Not long afterward, Article VI of the Soviet Constitution was abolished, opening the door to other political parties.

Despite these achievements, the reforms were contributing to polarization of the nation between liberal reformers and conservatives who wanted to preserve the old order. In 1990, Gorbachev's popular ratings further declined, as the economy continued a downward slide. Nevertheless, Gorbachev still had a loyal following of supporters, including a number of prominent women.

WOMEN AND THE GORBACHEV LEADERSHIP

Although Andreyeva symbolized opposition to restructuring, women were among its strongest supporters. One of the most prominent Gorbachev supporters was the social scientist Tatiana Zaslavskaja, whose studies furnished important data about the problems of Soviet society. Zaslavskaja, a sociologist and economist, had completed well-known,

praiseworthy studies of agriculture and Soviet economic development in the early 1980s. Under Gorbachev, she came to Moscow to head the new National Center for the Study of Public Opinion on Socio-Economic Issues.¹⁸ She was elected to the Supreme Soviet but preferred research over politics.

Another supporter was Alexandra Biriukova, the Minister for Social Development and a member of the Communist Party's Politburo. A long-time bureaucrat with expertise in trade unions, Biriukova was the highest ranking woman in the Gorbachev administration until her retirement in 1990.¹⁹ Biriukova was replaced on the Politburo by another woman, the journalist Galina Semenova, who became a Secretary of the Politburo with special focus on women's problems.

The most prominent woman among Gorbachev's advisers was Raisa Gorbacheva, his wife.²⁰ A professor of Marxism-Leninism, she was well informed and a dedicated Communist. Gorbacheva was Gorbachev's partner, giving up her own career in 1985 to travel with him and serve as first lady, unlike most wives of Soviet leaders. She was visible and known to speak her own opinions. Gorbachev publicly admitted he consulted with her on issues. Gorbacheva is believed to have influenced the adoption of the anti-alcohol campaign. While in Stavropol, her survey research on agriculture led to reforms Gorbachev introduced in the region. Gorbacheva was an asset in the Gorbachevs' international travel, because she projected an image of a new Soviet Union, sophisticated and up-to-date.²¹ In contrast, at home, she was perceived as intrusive in affairs of state and was not popular.

Although Gorbachev gave greater attention to women's issues in the Communist Party's Politburo, there were limits to how far the Party would pursue change, whether in agriculture, industry, or women's policy. There were attempts to recruit women into the Party, promote women within the Party, and train them for leadership roles.²² Consequently, the percentage of women in the Party rose, even as Party membership was declining. By the 28th Party Congress, women constituted about 30 percent of the Party's membership. A year later, the Party itself was dissolved.

THE 28TH PARTY CONGRESS AND THE DECLINE OF THE PARTY

As the reforms foundered and Gorbachev's openness policy resulted in revelations about past iniquities, the dreams of reform evaporated. The prestige of the Party fell. Nationalist movements seethed in the republics. Eastern Europe broke away from Soviet rule. Popular disaffection grew because of economic problems. Old guard Party members increasingly blamed Gorbachev for the upheavals. It was, therefore, not surprising

that the 28th Party Congress of 1990 turned into a showdown. The conservatives went on the offensive by attacking liberals, including Foreign Minister Shevardnadze. He was criticized for his conduct of Soviet foreign policy and the loss of Eastern Europe.²³

Gorbachev viewed the 28th Party Congress as a decision point, but the Congress did not produce a clear outcome. Gorbachev obtained the resignation of his former ally Ligachev from the Communist Party's Politburo. Several members of Gorbachev's governmental cabinet also resigned from the Politburo, including Yakovlev and Biriukova. The resulting Politburo was reconstituted as a body primarily representing the parties in the republics of the Soviet Union. It ceased to be the preeminent decision-making body within the political system.

Although Gorbachev functioned primarily as President, he wanted to retain the position of Communist Party Secretary. He asked the party to elect a Deputy General Secretary to run the Party on a day-to-day basis. For this and other positions, Gorbachev nominated conservatives, whom he believed loyal to him and to restructuring. This proved a fatal error of judgment.

An unforgettable moment at the 28th Party Congress was Yeltsin's dramatic resignation. As the Congress drew to a close, Yeltsin, now a member of the USSR Supreme Soviet and Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, resigned from the Communist Party and walked out of the hall. His rising popularity made him almost a cult figure in Moscow. His televised departure was a harbinger of the massive disaffection from the Party that would occur over the next year.

THE COUP OF AUGUST 1991 AND THE END OF THE SOVIET ERA

As the fall and winter of 1990–91 progressed, Gorbachev and his new team in the party and government tried to cope with the mounting problems. Independence movements gained strength, especially in the Baltic. Gorbachev talked to independence leaders about a proposed reconstituted, democratic union and a constitutional process for secession, but these proposals failed to gain acceptance. Meanwhile, Shevardnadze resigned as Foreign Minister, warning that the USSR was on the verge of a dictatorship. Well-known reformers distanced themselves from Gorbachev and began to work for Yeltsin. Under Yeltsin's direction, the Russian Republic scheduled a popular election for the Presidency in June 1991, the first such election in Russian history.²⁴ Yeltsin won, giving him an advantage over Gorbachev, who had not been elected popularly.

In spring 1991, Gorbachev turned away from his alliance with the conservatives and pushed for accelerated reform. The mixed signals caused confusion. Rumors of a coup surfaced but were discounted.²⁵ The

August 19, 1991, coup against Gorbachev was orchestrated by a group of right-wing leaders, whom he had put into their positions. It was a defining moment. The impetus for the coup was a proposed new treaty, due to be signed August 21, that gave more rights to the Soviet republics. The treaty was the last straw for the conservatives. They decided to remove Gorbachev, restore law and order, and rescind those reforms that they believed excessive. It is unlikely the system would have returned to Stalinism or even Brezhnevism, but it would have retreated from the liberalism of the Gorbachev era.

When Gorbachev came back to power, because of the efforts of President Yeltsin assisted by several republic leaders, his power was diminished. Although he appeared to share power with Yeltsin, President Gorbachev in reality presided over a disintegrating Soviet Union while Russia gained strength. The first step toward disintegration was the dissolution of the Soviet Union's Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies. Because Gorbachev had been elected by the parliament, he no longer had an institutional base in the government. Under pressure from Yeltsin, Gorbachev then resigned as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. Yeltsin as President of Russia banned the Party on Russian territory. This effectively dealt the Soviet Communist Party a death blow. (Later, the Russian Communist Party was allowed to participate in elections [see Chapter 4].)

In fall 1991, Gorbachev remained President of the Soviet Union, but it was a hollow title. The republics functioned in an ad hoc arrangement as the Union of Sovereign States. In December 1991, Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia (Belarus) formed the Commonwealth of Independent States, which eight other republics subsequently joined.²⁶ On December 25, Gorbachev resigned, and the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist on January 1, 1992.

The events in fall 1991 constitute a second coup d'état. It was promulgated by the popularly elected presidents of three republics, using their popular base against Gorbachev and the defunct Soviet parliament. The end of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States did not follow any prescribed constitutional procedure, although the constitution always had maintained that republics could secede. The republics seized the opportunity to gain formal independence and to dissolve the USSR. Gorbachev's leadership unintentionally paved the way for his own retirement from politics and the end of the Soviet Union. He wanted to save the Soviet Union but was outmaneuvered, bypassed, and ultimately defeated by the republic leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

From 1986 to 1991, Gorbachev was one of the most famous men in the world. Popular at first in his own country, his popularity steadily declined until, in 1991, his rating fell to about 15 percent. During his years in power, he presided over a remarkable bloodless revolution. A reformer but also a defender of the twin pillars of Soviet power — the Party and the government — Gorbachev could not totally escape the institutions that had shaped him. Although his goal was to reform the system, he was the unwitting instrument of its collapse. In the late 1980s, Gorbachev walked a tightrope between those who wanted the status quo and those who wanted reform.

During the latter days of Gorbachev's tenure, very little changed as far as women were concerned. There was discussion of women's problems, but the failure to adopt major policies reflected lack of consensus among women and policy makers as to the direction to pursue. The inability to come up with a concerted strategy to assist women is reflective of the failure of most domestic policies during the Gorbachev era.

NOTES

1. *The Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow: Novosty Press, 1986), pp. 31, 44, 49, 74–77.
2. Marshall Goldman, *What Went Wrong with Perestroika?* rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 94–127.
3. Reforms went into effect in some enterprises in July 1987 in anticipation of the law. The reform was phased in in about 50 percent of all enterprises the first year and the remainder in 1989.
4. The percentage of goods sold to nonstate customers would increase in stages, in theory providing firms with increased income from nonstate sales.
5. Goldman, *What Went Wrong with Perestroika?* pp. 128–71, chronicles the failure of the 1988 law and the growing problems of the Soviet economy.
6. Anatoly Sobchak, *For a New Russia* (New York: 1992), pp. x–xi.
7. M. S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 117.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
9. See B. N. Yeltsin, *Against the Grain* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), pp. 177–210.
10. The need to import additional sugar and to ration sugar partly was because of fallout from Chernobyl and other causes, as well as alcohol policy.
11. Political socialization began early and attempted to provide a system of values based on Marxist-Leninist ideology. These slogans became increasingly meaningless to the successive generations of Soviet citizens.
12. Interpretations of the government's actions range from a desire to make the millennium a Russian cultural holiday to a desire to send a signal that greater religious freedom would be tolerated.
13. Tatiana Zaslavskaja, "Friends or Foes?" in *Perestroika 1989*, ed. Abel Aganbegyan (New York: Scribners, 1989), pp. 255–78.

14. *The All-Union 19th Party Conference: Documents and Materials* (Moscow: Novosty, 1988), pp. 7, 16, 31–34, 83.
15. Goldman, *What Went Wrong with Perestroika?* pp. 128–71, describes in detail the breakdown of the economy.
16. Zaslavskaja, “Friends or Foes?” p. 268; Goldman, *What Went Wrong with Perestroika?* pp. 180–85.
17. The Congress of People’s Deputies was a large body: 2,250 (3 chambers). Two-thirds of the Congress consisted of elected members; one-third of the seats were reserved for special organizations and institutions.
18. Tatiana Zaslavskaja, *The Second Socialist Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).
19. N. C. Noonan, “A. P. Biriukova,” in *The Soviet Union: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Archie Brown (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), pp. 39–40.
20. In Russia Gorbacheva is the female surname. In English, which has the same male and female surnames, she would be Gorbachev.
21. See Raisa Gorbachev, *I Hope* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Larissa Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives* (New York: Arcade, 1994).
22. In the author’s 1991 interview with Galina Semenova, Gorbachev’s 1990 appointee to the Politburo, Semenova indicated she was working on an important project in leadership training for women. Two months later, the coup occurred.
23. In 1989, most Eastern European states moved away from the Soviet Union. The Berlin Wall came down in November 1989. For party conservatives, these were not moments of celebration. The concepts of a Communist movement and the socialist commonwealth were forgotten as people spoke openly of the loss of empire, a theme often mentioned after the dissolution of the USSR. Soviet ideology masked the fact that the Soviet Union was an extension of the Russian Empire and that Eastern Europe was an extension of the traditional Russian sphere of influence. Many Soviet people, not only conservatives, believed Eastern Europe was rightfully their sphere of influence to compensate for Soviet losses in World War II.
24. His strongest opponent was perhaps Nikolai Ryzhkov, the former Prime Minister (1985–91). Ryzhkov resigned in early 1991 as a sign of the government’s recognition of the economic crisis into which Russia had slid.
25. A coup had been predicted for a long time, but Gorbachev had the situation under control until late spring 1991. Some coup rumors may have been fanned to get foreign support and sympathy.
26. Initially, only Georgia, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States. Georgia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1993.

9

The Yeltsin Presidency, Economic Reform, and Women

Luba Racanska

Boris Yeltsin became president of the Russian republic in June 1991 in the first competitive election ever held for a Russian leader. He emerged shortly thereafter as the defender of democracy and the Russian republic. Yeltsin led Moscow's people in stopping the army tanks that threatened Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist government in the unsuccessful Communist coup of August 19, 1991. The coup hastened the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the resignation of Gorbachev as President on December 25, 1991. In the final days of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Yeltsin declared his support for a radical economic plan, a rapid transition to a market economy known as "shock therapy." This chapter begins with a brief assessment of Gorbachev's legacy, followed by analysis of Yeltsin's economic reforms, their effect on women in Russia, and the role of women in the political and economic life of post-Communist Russia.

THE SOCIALIST ECONOMY AND POLITICAL CRISIS

Gorbachev's major reform was perestroika — a decentralization of the Soviet Union's economic decision making coupled with cost accounting and self-financing at the enterprise level. Hopes were high among all segments of the Russian population for a successful and rapid transformation of the chaotic and collapsing economy. The Gorbachev reforms led to some product shortages caused by monopolistic enterprises. Given an incentive to seek profit in a largely noncompetitive environment,

enterprise managers refused to deliver their products to the state at low fixed prices and instead began selling them at free market prices. Thus, the Soviet government lost control over public enterprises, and it also lost political control over the republics managing them.

By summer 1991, a crisis of governance began to supersede the Gorbachev economic reform program in the Soviet Union. Then, in August 1991, Communist coup leaders sought to take political control in the Soviet Union and to recentralize the economy. The failed coup only accelerated the centrifugal forces present in the country and further limited the political authority of Gorbachev.¹ In the coup's aftermath, Gorbachev found himself with no clear authority to implement reform. He was President but had no power base. Authority shifted from Gorbachev and the Soviet Union to President Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Republic. The other republics and their leaders also took advantage of the power vacuum at the center to increase their power or to become independent countries as Soviet power slowly waned.

Yeltsin and his economic team led by Yegor Gaidar, among others, believed that radical economic reform provided the only hope for future economic recovery in Russia. Strongly influenced by a plan designed by Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard University, the Yeltsin team began to develop plans in fall 1991 for what became known as "shock therapy." By the time Gorbachev resigned as President of the Soviet Union, the economy was in shambles. The gross national product was declining between 20 and 25 percent a year, inflation was skyrocketing at an annual rate of 1,000 percent, and the budget deficit amounted to between one-fifth and one-fourth of the gross national product.²

YELTSIN'S SHOCK THERAPY PLAN AND ITS SLOWDOWN

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin implemented his radical plan for changing the socialist market economy in Russia. It was enacted by his chief economic adviser, Deputy Prime Minister, later Acting Prime Minister, Gaidar.³ The plan included rapid privatization of most of Russia's industrial capacity and service sector with the declared aim of making reform irreversible.

The Yeltsin-Gaidar primary goal was to accelerate the transformation of the centrally planned, state-owned economy into one based on market signals and the privately owned means of production. Other goals included macroeconomic stabilization and private ownership of state property. The legal framework for privatization in Russia was put in place by a law "On the Privatization of State and Municipal Enterprises in The Russian Federation" enacted in July 1991.⁴ These general principles of privatization were followed by a decree of December 29, 1991, which

defined categories of enterprises targeted for privatization in 1992. The Yeltsin-Gaidar reform program in Russia then moved to enact a sweeping price reform. About 80 percent of wholesale prices and 90 percent of consumer prices were freed on January 2, 1992.

The removal or reduction of food subsidies and the high inflation rates that followed price deregulation had an immediate impact on the whole society and especially on women in their roles as household managers and providers.⁵ The price liberalization policy produced the intended result by filling the stores' shelves and reducing the ever present queues. The beneficiaries of this policy should have been women, the principal shoppers in the family. Wages, however, could not keep pace with the rapidly rising prices. Only those with substantial family income could live well while prices were rising rapidly.⁶ Family income had less and less purchasing power.

Along with price deregulation, Gaidar's government slashed defense outlays, state-financing investments, and subsidies to industries. The government imposed new taxes and an austere credit policy in order to reduce the federal deficit to zero.⁷ The swift and negative reaction to the credit tightening and reduction in subsidies to industry came not from women employed in large numbers in the affected industries but from the antireform legislators elected to the Russian parliament in 1990 during the Soviet Union era (see Chapter 2). Unhappy with the radical reform, the conservative and centrist deputies united in early 1992 in a strong anti-Yeltsin bloc in an attempt to oust the government, which they referred to as the "disintegration team."⁸

The state enterprise managers' rejection of radical economic reform found ready acceptance in the Russian parliament. Almost immediately after the reforms were instituted, there were continuing clashes between the parliament and the Yeltsin government. The resulting political paralysis virtually halted the initial economic reform. By the summer of 1992, continuous pressure on Gaidar by the centrist Civic Union bloc to replace the economic shock therapy with a more socially oriented program resulted in a moderation of the initial radical proposals.⁹

Centrists and conservatives in the Russian parliament succeeded in forcing Yeltsin's government to bail out some bankrupt Soviet-era factories. These compromises only postponed some of the expected negative consequences of reforms, such as high unemployment. Instead of a predicted short but painful economic transition hypothesized by shock therapy theorists, the failure to pursue reforms vigorously slowed down the progress toward a market economy during 1992 and 1993.¹⁰ A further showdown in parliament in December 1993 resulted in the replacement of Acting Prime Minister Gaidar with an economic moderate acceptable to Yeltsin and to the parliamentary deputies. The new prime minister, Victor Chernomyrdin, had a long career in industrial management and was

regarded by centrists and others in parliament as more experienced and reasonable than the youthful Gaidar.

THE PACE OF PRIVATIZATION

Yeltsin's decision to proceed with mass privatization was intended to speed up the process in large and medium-sized firms, build political support for the program, and improve equity through the widespread distribution of shares to the general populace. The mass-scale redistribution of property and the legitimization of ownership rights in Russian society was adopted to minimize social conflict and prepare for the second stage of privatization when property was transferred to new owners.¹¹ The second stage of privatization, which began in July 1994, focused on restructuring and investment in business and industry.

As the Russian government continued to put public enterprises into private hands, the new owners focused increasingly on profitability. Unemployment was expected by the government to rise significantly. Although the first phase of the reforms was accepted by the population at large with remarkable patience, the next phase of economic reforms had to address the unemployment problems arising from the Yelstin-Gaidar industrial restructuring. In late 1994, the unemployment rate in Russia ranged between 6 and 7 percent, amounting to between 4.7 and 5 million jobless people.¹² Although the industrial output in Russia plummeted 50 percent, the official unemployment rose more slowly, reaching 7.7 percent by mid-1995.¹³ Unemployment rose partly because of increased pressures on employers to reduce the size of the workforce as state subsidies dried up and demand remained slack.

THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CHANGE ON WOMEN

Russian women were the first to find themselves unemployed. According to the Russian Labor Ministry, they are over 70 percent of the unemployed.¹⁴ Their high unemployment rate can be explained in part by the layoff of workers from industries and sectors traditionally dominated by women, such as the textile industry and state bureaucracies.¹⁵ Adding to the escalating cost of living and deteriorating conditions of daily life, fears of mass unemployment now loom large on the horizon for women in Russia. Women will continue to be unemployed in the future, because they are presumed by many to have a solely domestic purpose in life, and they cost business more in benefits, such as paid sick-child leave.¹⁶

The social tensions inherent in the economic restructuring surfaced in the early stages of perestroika. There were calls for women to return to their "natural predestination," meaning home and motherhood¹⁷ (see Chapter 8). This argument was embraced by Yeltsin's government. These

leaders argued that the proper sphere of activity for women is the home rather than the labor market. Alexander Kochenko, head of the Department of Market Policies, said that women should be cut from the workforce because, as he put it, "We think a democratic society should concentrate on family policies. That means it's better if we decrease the number of women in the labor force so they can stay home and take care of their families."¹⁸

The fact that the return-to-the-home movement has received support from some Russian women may appear contradictory to their interests. Russian women base their emancipation on the choice of whether to work. The Soviet Union's guarantee of full employment was viewed by some as a compulsory duty that gave the government cheap labor.¹⁹ If some women perceive working outside the home as a state-imposed obligation, rather than a right, then they may not necessarily wish to defend women's right to work. The choice of staying at home is a key concept for women, because it represents a right they lacked during the Soviet period. However, economic necessity in Russia today makes this choice an unrealistic dream for the vast majority of Russian women.²⁰

In the present economic restructuring period, when workers seek second or third jobs to make ends meet, few households can afford to forgo the salary of one member, regardless of convictions about women's proper role.²¹ Because women as a group traditionally receive less money as wage earners, pensioners, and heads of single-parent households, they particularly have been affected negatively by economic reforms. Low income was cited by 64 percent of Russia's people as the biggest contributor to difficulties in their family life, well ahead of the second factor, bad health, mentioned by 27 percent.²²

WOMEN'S JOB BENEFITS AND THE NEW ECONOMY

Women are not leaving the labor market voluntarily. Polls indicate that less than 10 percent of Russian women would give up working, even if their husbands earned enough to provide an acceptable standard of living for their families.²³ An explanation for high female unemployment can be found in the socialist legal entitlement that now handicaps women's employment in Russian's capitalist-type marketplace. Among regulations designed to protect families with small children and to allow the working mother time for child care was a broad range of protective legislation. Laws prohibited the dismissal of pregnant women and provided workload concessions for them and for child care. In the Soviet system, all of these benefits were provided by state-run enterprises.²⁴

Confronted with legal entitlements for women, some employers hire men only. Others cover the cost of benefits for women by requiring them to work longer days for lower pay. If the cost of benefits is provided by

the employer rather than the government, this could continue to pose obstacles to female employment.²⁵ On the other hand, transferring the responsibility for child care from state enterprises to governments could improve women's chances for retaining their jobs or finding new employment.

The transition to a private market economy involved elimination of some social benefits from women's employment as firms moved from a state-subsidized to a private economy. The Yeltsin government, in turn, reduced child and family benefits, including subsidized day-care centers. In September and October 1995, however, family and child legislation was passed by the Duma that restored some of the previously cut benefits.²⁶

WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONS AND LOWER SALARIES

Another explanation for women's lower pay and higher unemployment is linked to the high concentration of women in certain fields, to their levels of skill and income, and to the career structure in the former Soviet Union. As a result of educational and employment practices, women dominate certain occupations, such as economics, law, education, and medicine. In 1989, 71 percent of all physicians were women; in economics, 77 percent of all employees with university training were women; and in culture and arts, 68 percent of all workers were women.²⁷ Regardless of women's educational levels, feminized occupations such as these pay lower salaries.

The preponderance of women in some professions reflects the fact that the female labor force is highly educated. A higher percentage of women (47 percent) than men (34 percent) have completed higher or secondary specialized or technical education. Women attain higher educational levels because they need a better education than men to receive equal pay. Despite higher education, women tend to occupy positions of lower skill than men. This *de facto* on-the-job discrimination explains, in part, the overall lower salaries for women. Second, women combine wage work with family work — the double burden — and, therefore, prefer white-collar jobs. These require higher education because they offer benefits compatible with family life, such as flexible working hours and convenient job location.²⁸

Because of the changes in the economy since 1992, unemployment has affected disproportionately professionals and white-collar workers, such as economists, educators, engineers, and scientists, careers in which women are concentrated. Thus, the first casualties of the new economy were those persons with higher or specialized secondary education, and seven out of ten are women.²⁹ In the contraction rather than expansion of

the employment opportunities in the Yeltsin era, women have had greater difficulty in obtaining new employment than have men.

Aside from dominating certain fields, women work in a relatively narrow range of sectors: 30 percent are employed in industry, 13 percent each in commerce and education. Within industry, for example, women dominate the textile and sewing sectors (70 and 89 percent female), baking and pastry making (72 percent female), and shoe manufacture (69 percent female).³⁰ In some branches of industry with heavy concentrations of women, such as textiles, women are unemployed, are working reduced shifts, or are released on administrative leave, suggesting that women in the latter groups may be unemployed in the future.

WOMEN AND POVERTY

Poverty in Russia has been strongly skewed toward women, and the current economic crisis has intensified this tendency. Four types of households are most vulnerable to poverty: pensioners, single-parent households, households with many children, and student households.³¹ Women are represented heavily among these groups. Women outnumber men close to two to one among pensioners. According to the 1989 Russian census, there were 15,570,350 women over 60 years old, compared with 6,945,932 men, because of the very large wartime losses in the male population and the lower life expectancy of men.³²

Older women especially are prone to poverty for two major reasons: in the Soviet Union, women could retire at 55, five years earlier than men, which resulted in their receiving lower pensions, and women's salaries average about two-thirds of men's, which also had a negative impact on their pensions. With the estimated 72 percent women among pensioners in Russia, a large group of women has been pushed below the poverty line by low pensions and a rapid rise in consumer prices. Because women in Russia live approximately 13 years longer than men, reforming pension benefits to reflect the new economic reality is especially important for women pensioners.³³ In the post-Soviet era, women aged 55 and over receive pension benefits, even though they may continue to work. Pension benefits, however, are modest, and one cannot survive on a pension alone. Those elderly pensioners without families have been reduced to abject poverty in inflation-ridden post-Soviet Russia.

GUARANTEED EMPLOYMENT ENDS, NEW STAGE BEGINS

Under socialism in the Soviet Union, guaranteed employment was the primary form of social insurance. Workers counted on wage and nonwage benefits of employment regardless of demand for labor or

productivity. An unemployed automobile factory worker described the disappearing system best: "Life used to be simple, but we had a deal. We worked hard, and the company took care of the rest."³⁴ The rest included nonwage benefits. A significant part of workers' compensation took the form of payment in kind distributed to employees regardless of their job performance. Food packets, garden plots, health care subsidies, preschool, and subsidies for children were among benefits that employees received from an employer.³⁵

One of the most permanent features of the Soviet economy was overemployment and underutilization of labor at the enterprise level, factors that strongly affected labor motivation. Enterprises created extra jobs and hired unneeded employees, who were satisfied with low wages because little was expected of them. Society's adherence to a principle of full employment dictated a low price for manpower, and low wages were the economic equivalent of unemployment compensation for the surplus workers. Thus, the choice for Russia with its inefficient industrial structure was either to continue supporting industries that cannot survive and, thus, fuel inflation or to let those industries die and watch unemployment surge. When the second stage of privatization moves ahead, employment change for millions of workers will be inevitable.

In the shorter term, Russian market reforms are characterized by the bankruptcies of old industries rather than investment in new branches, by the closure of child-care facilities, and by a dearth of retraining programs specifically geared to women's needs.³⁶ The former inclusion of nearly all adults in the labor force has given Russia an exceptionally high female labor force participation rate of 84 percent. Because the majority of workers still are women and sectors dominated by women appear to be the first casualties of bankruptcies and privatization, their unemployment is a key challenge to the government. In the transition to a market economy, women will need to be retrained and reintegrated into the new economy.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The political participation of women during Yeltsin's presidency underwent considerable change. During the Soviet era, a quota system for representation gave women numerical representation in their ineffective legislatures. This representation was largely symbolic.³⁷ Women in contemporary Russia sometimes equate political participation with the sham of democracy practiced during the Soviet era. However, some do campaign for increased women's political representation in the new parliament. At the same time, there is no indication that women are more politically active in Russia than men.

Political participation based on voting in parliamentary elections of 1993 indicates that a voting group composed of women 30 and over was

interested in seeing other women, no matter what their political leanings, take office on an equal footing with men.³⁸ One beneficiary of this sentiment among women voters was the Women of Russia bloc, which campaigned for the preservation of benefits for women and support for light industry dominated by women workers.

The Women of Russia candidates, nevertheless, had to overcome opposition to a visible role for women in politics. This is illustrated by the electrician Volodya Tyomushkin: "A woman shouldn't take part in politics; a women's place is in the home. She should raise the kids, and not only raise them, but bear them too. If a woman is involved in politics, her husband would have to wash the dishes and take care of all the household things. Their marriage would fall apart. We don't need that."³⁹

Alevtina Fedulova, the coleader of Women of Russia, expressed a different view: "If we continue to make government policies without the participation of women and taking into account the interests of women, we will never build a civilized democratic society."⁴⁰ The emergence of strong, articulate female leaders suggests that women could gain more political power in the future (see Chapter 4).

CHALLENGES TO YELTSIN

President Yeltsin's popularity plunged sharply in 1995 even though the Russian economy appeared, at least temporarily, to be stabilizing. The long downward slide of 1992, 1993, and 1994 had adversely affected a large segment of the Russian population. A presidential poll in mid-1995 ranked Yeltsin in ninth place among national political leaders.⁴¹ Yeltsin's position was weakened further by his deteriorating health that removed him from the public eye for several weeks in July 1995 and for over a month in the fall of 1995. Attempts to impeach him were initiated by the Communists in the parliament in 1993 and 1995, but they failed.⁴² Under the constitution adopted in 1993, it would be difficult for the parliament to impeach a sitting president, because most of the governmental authority rests with the presidency (see Chapter 10).

THE NEW RUSSIANS

With privatization, there has emerged a new class of affluent Russian entrepreneurs and businessmen who saw opportunities in the transition and took advantage of them. Called the "New Russians" by their compatriots, this group is changing the profile of Russian life. There always were social differences within Soviet society, but the elites, except in the past two decades, were careful to hide their affluent life-styles behind closed doors. The New Russians have no such inhibitions. Amid the social upheaval and declining standard of living of most Russians, the New

Russians are an anomaly. They conspicuously drive Mercedes, dine at expensive restaurants, and build large homes called *kottedji* (cottages).⁴³ Although the future of the New Russians is uncertain because of general uncertainties in Russian political life, this new class has a vested interest in maintaining and promoting the economic changes that have occurred.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Under Yeltsin's economic transformation, the reality is that a temporary economic deterioration is inevitable. The initial price deregulation resulted in higher inflation and increased unemployment, as competition became part of the economic practice.⁴⁴ In the short term, the cost of the Russian economic transformation has fallen more heavily on women because women outnumber men 53 to 47 percent in society and because the initial changes occurred in women-centered industries. In the long run, women have the capacity to play a positive role in the economic reform process and in the rehabilitation of industry because they are concentrated in sectors of potential growth, such as commerce and trade, banking, and social services.⁴⁵

The Yeltsin administration has faced the challenge of trying to sustain economic transformation under relatively democratic conditions as more groups, including women, press for benefits particular to their needs. The best future scenario includes continued economic transformation in Russia in a democratic environment in which women can have a positive and productive role. In the new political system, women are poised to play a larger part in the formulation of economic policies. However, it is unlikely that most women will have a choice of working or not working outside the home in the foreseeable future.

NOTES

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2. Marshall I. Goldman, "Needed: A Russian Economic Revolution," *Current History* 91 (October 1992): 315.

3. Gaidar was never formally ratified as acting prime minister by the parliament.

4. *Russian Economic Reform: Crossing the Threshold of Structural Change*, p. 85.

5. For Russian women, housework commands a substantial share of their time. Women spend, on average, 35 hours per week on household and child-care duties, in addition to 38 hours in paid employment. See Monica S. Fong, *The Role of Women in Rebuilding the Russian Economy* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1993), p. 16.

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17. Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 103.
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19. Larissa Lissyutkin, "Soviet Women at the Crossroads of Perestroika," in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 275.
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21. Irina Demchenko, "A Second Job as a Means of Subsistence and Self-Assertion," *Moscow News*, April 15–22, 1994, p. 14.
22. "MN Express Poll," *Moscow News*, July 30, 1993, p. 1. The question read as follows: "Which of the factors listed below makes the biggest contribution to difficulties in your family life?" The responses include low income (64 percent), bad health (27 percent), difficult conditions of life (20 percent), housing problems (20 percent), lack of perspective in life (19 percent), fatigue (18 percent), fear of losing one's job (16 percent), and lack of free time (13 percent).
23. Elizabeth Waters, "Finding a Voice: The Emergence of a Women's Movement," in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 292.
24. Fong, *The Role of Women*, p. 16.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
26. "New Child Benefit System Goes Into Effect," *Open Media Research Institute Daily Digest* (Prague), No. 180, Part 1, September 15, 1995, p. 4 and No. 207, October 24, 1995, p. 4.
27. Fong, *The Role of Women*, p. 13.
28. *Ibid.*

29. Sergei Zhdakayev, "A Job No Longer Lasts Forever," *World Press Review*, November 1992, p. 11.
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42. Yevgeny Yuryev, "Boris Yeltsin is the Record-Holder for Impeachment," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 47 (August 2, 1995): 13.
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IV

THE CHANGING CONSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

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10

Russian Constitution and Women's Political Opportunities

Richard D. Anderson, Jr.

Crafted in a moment of triumph for President Boris Yeltsin over his Communist and nationalist enemies in the legislature, the new Russian Constitution that took effect in December 1993 consolidates the supremacy of the executive over the legislative branch in Russia. The new Constitution culminates five years of transition from authoritarian institutions still in place as recently as December 1988. A hybrid of democracy and authoritarianism lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, bringing a new electoral order. Although establishing a new electoral government, the triumph of the democrats over their authoritarian opponents paradoxically has diminished the power of representative institutions.

For women in Russian politics, now located almost exclusively in the legislative branch, subordination of the legislative branch to the executive in the new Constitution carries along the danger of a renewed diminution of their role. At the same time, democratic politics presents Russian women with opportunities that were not available in authoritarian Soviet politics.

This chapter traces Russian Constitutional development as a part of the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1989, through transitional constitutions as the first reforms were instituted to the new Russian Constitution adopted in 1993.¹ Throughout, attention will be given to women's political participation and the impact of the various changes on their past and future roles in Russian government.

THE SOVIET POLITICAL SYSTEM 1929-89

Politics exists to make societies' collective choices, which conventionally are divided into legislative and executive acts. In the Soviet Union until 1989, responsibility for legislation lay in the hands of a bicameral legislature, called the Supreme Soviet (a Russian word meaning "council"). It was supervised by a collective presidency, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Its chairman — always a man — was chosen from the ranks of the Supreme Soviet, and he acted as head of state when protocol demanded (for example, on the occasion of visits by foreign heads of state).

The Supreme Soviet consisted of two chambers: a Soviet of the Union and a Soviet of Nationalities. The members of each chamber, who were called "deputies," were chosen by regularly scheduled elections in which all adult citizens were eligible to vote. The legislature delegated executive responsibility to a Council of Ministers, composed of the heads of large administrative bureaucracies. This Council, acting on orders from its Chairman (again, always a man), administered virtually all economic and social activity in the Soviet Union.

Although the combination of Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers formally resembled a democratic electoral government, albeit one with complete public ownership of all productive property, in reality, the Soviet Union was nothing of the sort. Candidates for the Supreme Soviet ran without opposition, having been nominated by citizen assemblies handpicked and conducted by the local staff of the Communist Party. The Supreme Soviet (legislature) met only twice a year, for a few days each time, and approved all proposed laws by unanimous votes. The main activity of deputies was what students of the U.S. Congress would call "case work": intervention with government agencies on behalf of constituents. In contrast to U.S. members of Congress, however, Soviet deputies conducted most of their case work to aid not individual voters but state organizations located within their districts — for example, government-owned factories and farms (see Chapter 3).

Women comprised approximately one-third of the deputies in the Supreme Soviet, a significantly higher proportion than is found in most democratically elected parliaments. The Supreme Soviet's legislative powers consisted simply of ratifying decisions made previously by committees composed almost exclusively of men, and the main activity of deputies was running errands for local organizations normally dominated by men. The visible representation of women in the Soviet legislature tended to confirm rather than disrupt stereotypes of women as approving handmaidens for male authority.

Although women enjoyed a high degree of public visibility in the Supreme Soviet, Russians commonly understood that they were

powerless. The near exclusion of women from the centers of real power — the Politburo and the Council of Ministers — encouraged cynicism among Soviet citizens, both male and female, concerning women's participation in politics.

Communist Party and the Politburo

The real political system of the Soviet state was located not in the legislature but in the Communist Party. Despite its name, one should not confuse this organization with a political party. It began as a clandestine organization of revolutionists trying to incite a mass uprising against the Russian empire. Soon after defeating its rivals, the Communist Party evolved into the key administrative agency of the new Soviet government. The Communist Party's bureaucrats appointed all officials, including the candidates for deputies of the Supreme Soviet legislature and all personnel of the Council of Ministers. Party bureaucrats also acted as the supreme administrators in each locality.

The most powerful organization of the Communist Party was called the Political Bureau (Politburo). It normally consisted of 10 to 15 men (one woman once became a full member, and two others became alternate members). The people sitting in the Politburo could and did make decisions on any matter that they chose to consider. Their decrees were binding on every official of the Soviet government on pain of discharge from office. The decrees bound every citizen of the Soviet state on pain of penalties that began with loss of employment or educational opportunities and ended with arrest or execution. The Politburo sometimes decided such specific questions as whether to issue visas for foreign travel to particular citizens, whether to provide or deny a country vacation home to someone's daughter, whether to indict and whether to convict someone of a crime regardless of the person's guilt or innocence, whether to equip the army with single-action or automatic rifles, whether to build a factory in a particular town, or whether to sow wheat or corn in particular fields.

The Politburo was self-constituting. The existing members of the Politburo nominated new members. Nominees were chosen from the membership of a subordinate body called the Central Committee, which eventually numbered about 300 members. The membership of the Central Committee included the heads of the largest administrative and economic bureaucracies together with other prominent citizens — authors, scientists, model workers. When the Politburo nominated a Central Committee member for promotion to the Politburo, the Central Committee ratified the nomination in a vote kept secret from the public. Although it has been reported that some votes were not unanimous, no Politburo nominee ever lost in the Central Committee.

General Secretary of the Politburo

Although the Politburo members were formally equal and bore joint responsibility, Politburo sessions met under the chairmanship of a General Secretary. He exercised an informal right to convene or refrain from convening the Politburo, to decide what issues it would consider and to summarize its consensus, and to issue decisions in its name between sessions. Successive General Secretaries used these informal powers to exercise great, although not absolute, control over Politburo decisions. The General Secretary was chosen in the same manner as other Politburo members: nominated by the Politburo and ratified by the Central Committee. He could be removed at any moment on recommendation of the Politburo, ratified by the Central Committee. One General Secretary (Nikita Khrushchev) was so removed, but the four others who held office before 1985 remained in place until their deaths.

Of course, the 10 or 15 elderly men in the Politburo could not possibly decide every behavior in a country with 280 million citizens by 1989. Of necessity, they delegated virtually all decisions to subordinates. Citizens enjoyed some considerable latitude of personal behavior within constraints banning any organized association or mass communication not supervised by the Party. Politburo members could not effectively monitor whether officials and citizens were complying with their decisions. The excessive concentration of power in their hands and the incapacity of such a small body to know whether subordinates were carrying out their will contributed to the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union.

While excessive concentration of power impaired the functioning of the state, denial of human dignity aroused hostility from society. In contrast to democratic polities, which affirm the personhood of males but often have done so at the expense of denying the personhood of women, the Soviet polity denied full personhood to both men and women. There was indignation among citizens of both sexes at suffering arbitrary constraints on personal behavior imposed or relaxed at whim by a few men whom the citizens had no role in choosing. Women were discontented by their public prominence but actual powerlessness. All these discontents multiplied the forces undermining Soviet rule. Before the collapse, however, the General Secretary of the Communist Party and Politburo, Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, attempted reform by breaking the Politburo's stranglehold on decisions.²

TRANSITIONAL CONSTITUTIONS, 1989–91 AND 1991–93

Congress of People's Deputies Formed

Gorbachev's reforms, known as *perestroika* (restructuring), began with his accession to power in 1985. His reforms of political institutions reached fruition only in March 1989, when elections were held for a new body called the Congress of People's Deputies. These elections differed from elections to the Supreme Soviet in that several candidates were allowed to contest each seat in the Congress of People's Deputies. This congress was, however, a hybrid between a democratic legislature and the appointive Supreme Soviet. Two-thirds of the 2,250 deputies were elected to represent territorial districts; the other 750 were chosen by an officially approved list of organized associations, which ranged from the Communist Party (100 deputies) to the Temperance Society (1 deputy). Among the functions of the Congress was the election of deputies from its own ranks to serve in the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet. These chambers met in permanent session, actively debating, amending, and, in some instances, rejecting draft laws or government appointments sent from the Council of Ministers.

Paradoxically, the undemocratic procedure of electing one-third of the deputies from unrepresentative associations, whose leaders were nominees of the Communist Party, had the effect of strengthening the democratic, anti-Communist element in the Congress. Many citizens were indignant at the Communist Party dominance of the election. In most parts of the country, local Communist administrators used their power over access to meeting halls and their control of the police to monopolize the nominating process. Consequently, except for some larger cities, where street demonstrations succeeded in protesting Communist Party control of candidacies, most deputies were loyal to the Party. In Moscow and a few other cities, democratic slates managed to defeat Communist candidates. Because the headquarters of the public associations were located in Moscow, street demonstrations by democratic citizens also could pressure the associations into nominating democratic candidates. This increased the representation of democrats in the Congress. Nevertheless, the Congress was controlled by what one democratic deputy aptly characterized as a "passive-aggressive majority" obedient to the Politburo.³

Quotas and Women Deputies

Primarily because deputies were no longer chosen according to quotas, only 5 percent women were elected to the Congress of People's Deputies.

Their representation declined greatly relative to 35 percent in the old Supreme Soviet. Public bias against women candidates was another reason for the decrease. This bias was offset partially by the presence of the Soviet Women's Committee on the list of associations with the right to elect deputies. At the same time, because the Congress and the Supreme Soviet now wielded real powers, some of the women who succeeded in the electoral process used their debating skills and talents for committee work to become influential politicians. Galina Staravoitova developed a reputation for expertise on the crucial issue of non-Russian ethnic minorities, while the Leningrad deputy Marina Sal'e was a leading spokesperson for the minority of democratic deputies. Among deputies who voiced increasing concerns about the looming breakup of the Soviet Union along ethnic lines, Sazhi Umalatova (a woman of the Chechen minority from the Caucasus Mountains) and the Siberian Tatiana Koriagina became prominent figures.

To some extent, the activities of prominent women in the new, more democratic politics reinforced rather than challenged gender stereotypes. When antireform Communists took the floor of the Congress of People's Deputies to stage attacks on General Secretary Gorbachev or on democratic deputies, they scheduled women deputies to begin the attacks. Reproducing the stereotypical assignment of reason to men and emotion to women, Umalatova would passionately denounce Gorbachev and her opponents for engineering the dismemberment of the Soviet state. Against the background of her oratorical fury, male deputies equally passionate in their distaste for democracy then would appear more reasonable when they more calmly voiced equally unbalanced accusations.

DEMOCRATIC GROUPS AND GORBACHEV'S RESPONSE

Even with the diminution of women's presence in the new electoral institutions and the use of the Congress of People's Deputies to reproduce gender stereotypes, the more open politics created opportunities for women as well as men to assume leadership. As street demonstrations became the main weapon of democratic politicians, people who could speak or organize came to the fore.

The saint of Russian democracy was the physicist and champion of human rights, Andrei Sakharov. After his death, his wife, Elena Bonner, who had shared his exile and become a force in the underground democratic movement in her own right, assumed his place as the intellectual and moral voice of Russian democracy. The Tom Paine of Russia was Valeriia Novodvorskaia. Her vivid speech and prose clarified democracy for others who may have longed for it nearly as much but whose vision

was more clouded. She led the Democratic Union, a tiny organization of committed democrats whose vehemence against the Communist Party and willingness to suffer retaliatory beatings and arrests by the police protected other prodemocracy demonstrators by making their movement seem more moderate. Behind the scenes, Vera Kriger made herself the indispensable organizer. She kept records for and sustained ties among the fractious male orators whose mutual competition continually endangered the cohesiveness of the executive council of Democratic Russia, the umbrella organization of prodemocracy citizens' groups.

Against the background of rising pressures from the citizenry, Gorbachev, as General Secretary, secured the Politburo's agreement to his election as President of the Soviet Union by the Congress of People's Deputies. Gorbachev used his new post to transfer his staff from the Central Committee complex on Moscow's Old Square (where the Politburo's staff met) down the street to the presidential offices in the Kremlin. He then pleaded the burden of his responsibilities as President as a reason to avoid convening the Politburo. Recognizing that Politburo members could not convene to grant requests for increases in budgets or powers, bureaucrats in the government stopped going to Old Square and began currying favor instead with the presidential staff in the Kremlin.

Gorbachev's moves, thus, deprived the Politburo of its authority among Soviet bureaucrats. In June 1990, he was able to gain agreement for expansion of the Politburo's membership and reduction of its powers. The Politburo then became a management council for the Communist Party rather than the ultimate authority in the Soviet state. As the Politburo became both larger and weaker, another woman, the editor of the women's magazine *Krest'ianka* (Peasant Woman), Galina Semenova, assumed responsibility for Party policy toward women's concerns.

Yeltsin Challenges Gorbachev

A significant reason for Gorbachev's ability to crowd the Politburo out of politics was the enthusiasm of citizens for Yeltsin, a former alternate Politburo member whose demands for more radical reforms had led to his exclusion from politics in 1987. Yeltsin began in March 1989 by winning election from Moscow to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies with more than 89 percent of the vote. Then, in March 1990, he won election from his home city (now Ekaterinburg) to the Russian Congress of People's Deputies.

Under Soviet rule, Russia was one of the 15 constituent republics, formally equivalent to states in the United States or to *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany. In practice, the subordination of all politics to the unitary Communist Party meant that the republics wielded little independent power. Each republic had its own Supreme Soviet. When

Gorbachev began constitutional reforms at the Soviet Union level, similar constitutional reforms followed in Russia. After Gorbachev engineered his own election as President of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin was able to persuade the new Russian Congress of People's Deputies to create the position of President of Russia. In contrast to Gorbachev, however, who was elected President by the obedient majority of the Soviet Union's Congress of People's Deputies, Yeltsin organized a Russia-wide direct popular election for the presidency. Running against five other candidates in June 1991, Yeltsin received 60 percent of the vote.

Yeltsin Endorses Secession

Yeltsin's election as President of Russia, combined with ethnic separatist movements in other republics, raised the specter of the fragmentation of the Soviet Union. In the ethnically diverse periphery of the Soviet Union, many candidates had used the new electoral freedoms to campaign less for seats in the national Congress than for secession from the Soviet Union. Independence movements were particularly strong in the three republics neighboring the Baltic Sea (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), in three republics bordering Turkey, and in Ukraine and Moldova near the Black Sea. Recognizing that a weakening of Gorbachev's presidential authority over the ethnic republics also would weaken Gorbachev's powers over Russia, Yeltsin and his Russian followers endorsed the movements for secession. Gorbachev responded by negotiating a new Union Treaty that would redefine the powers of the republics and the central government.

COUP D'ÉTAT AND DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION

Preparing to return to Moscow for the signing of the Union Treaty in August 1991, Gorbachev found himself under house arrest in his Crimean vacation home on the orders of his subordinates. Senior officials of the central government constituted themselves a "State Committee for the Emergency Situation." They feared the loss of the Soviet Union's power over the republics, as well as the democratic reforms. Members of the "State Committee" failed, however, to order the prompt arrest of Yeltsin (probably because they could not trust anyone to obey the order). Yeltsin then made his way to the seat of the Russian parliament, a white skyscraper that had acquired the nickname "White House" because, as Yeltsin's headquarters, it symbolized democracy. Tens of thousands of Russian civilians promptly assembled in a live ring around the White House, vowing to throw their bodies in front of armored vehicles that were threatening to assault the White House and capture Yeltsin.

Although participants in the live ring urged women to go home with the excuse that women might die in a military assault, many Russian women simply refused to leave. (The imprisoned Novodvorskaia demanded that, if the authorities intended to kill democrats, they should begin by executing her.) Army and police units, pleading that civilian casualties would be high, rejected orders from the "State Committee" to attack Yeltsin. Within three days, popular resistance forced the "State Committee" to surrender.

Although freeing Gorbachev from his Crimean captivity, Yeltsin immediately made it clear that he, rather than Gorbachev, would be the power in the new state. In December 1991, Yeltsin joined with the heads of the other Slavic republics, Ukraine and Belarus, to declare a new Slavic confederation in place of the Soviet Union. When the non-Slavic republics responded with declarations of independence, Yeltsin declared the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

CONFLICT BETWEEN YELTSIN AND CONGRESS

Legally, the powers of the new Russian government were unsettled. To enable decisions while a new Constitution was prepared, the Russian Congress empowered Yeltsin to rule by decree. Despite granting these rights to Yeltsin, however, the Congress was anything but supportive of his decisions. Yeltsin had come to power promising dissolution of central government control over economy and society. That meant permitting private businesses to form, transferring ownership of existing farms and industry from government to private hands, and lifting restrictions on personal conduct by tightly reining in the police. Nearly two-thirds of the deputies in the Russian Congress supported Yeltsin's drive for Russian independence but opposed his other promises.

To many deputies in the Congress, Russian independence meant replacement of the Soviet government by the Russian government, not loss of Moscow's supremacy over the ethnic border regions. These deputies were either conservative Communists who had backed Yeltsin in the hope of unseating Gorbachev or Russian nationalists. They wanted to restore the empire and construct an anti-Western and anti-Semitic way of life for Russia. In addition to their racism and xenophobia, the nationalists had some valid complaints about the consequences of Yeltsin's politics. During the Soviet period, many Russians had resettled in the other republics. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ethnic majorities in these newly independent states had begun to retaliate for Russian discrimination during the Soviet era.

Newly independent Estonia, for example, deprived most Russians residents in Estonia of the right to vote in national elections. Civil war in Tajikistan and Moldova and discrimination against the use of the Russian

language in other republics drove a mass of Russian refugees back into Russia itself. The nationalists, themselves anything but feminist, drew attention to abuse of women by pornographers and pimps to stress the social harm of Yeltsin's policies. One consequence of newfound freedoms was the spread of pornography, which, along with all forms of erotica, had been forbidden during the Soviet period. Prostitution, which had been concealed from public view in the Soviet era, began to be overtly advertised, and women seeking jobs found themselves compelled to state in their advertisements whether they would accept sex work, which virtually all rejected.

If under Communist rule nearly all citizens (as opposed to privileged officials) had lived on low but approximately equal incomes, the burgeoning private market rapidly produced much greater disparity of incomes than is usual in industrial countries. For Russians, even though they were accustomed to poverty, the sight of elderly women eating crusts discarded by customers of Pizza Hut, which had opened on Moscow's main shopping street, was both novel and sickening.

The conflict between Yeltsin and the Communist-nationalist majority in the Russian Congress was exacerbated by provisions in the constitutional amendment that had created the office of President. This amendment provided for *impichment* of the President by a two-thirds majority of the Congress, but although the English word "impeachment" had been borrowed, the procedure had not. Impeachment in the United States refers to an indictment of the president by the House of Representatives for specific crimes. The impeachment of the U.S. president precedes a trial by the Senate at which the president may defend his conduct. The Russian impeachment referred simply to removal from office, for any reason or none at all. By skillfully combining concessions, threats, and appeals to public opinion, Yeltsin managed narrowly to stave off attempts by the Communist-nationalist majority to end his Presidency. The cost of these continual attempts at impeachment, however, was neglect by both executive and legislative branches of the need to cooperate in resolving urgent social and economic problems facing Russia.

On September 21, 1993, Yeltsin declared the dissolution of the Congress of People's Deputies. Because he lacked any constitutional authority for this action, many of the deputies occupied the White House and, despite the absence of a quorum, dismissed Yeltsin as President and elected the Vice-President (Alexander Rutskoi) in his place. When Yeltsin refused to accept dismissal, on October 3, 1993, his opposition in the Congress mounted an armed attack on the central television station. They intended to use the broadcasting facilities in an appeal for a nationwide revolt against Yeltsin. While a small band of riot police loyal to Yeltsin defended the television station, 10,000 Muscovites dedicated to democracy gathered in the center of the city outside the Kremlin and the

Moscow City Council. Once again, women were discouraged from attending the demonstration but took part anyway, joining militia units formed from volunteers among the demonstrators. Other women encouraged male friends and relatives to join the demonstration or — making a contribution that does not seem small to someone who has stood guard all night in the cold — brought food and hot tea to the volunteers. By threatening to seize weapons and attack the White House themselves, the men and women in the Moscow volunteer units forced the hand of army commanders. Military officers had been reluctant to keep their public promise to intervene in Moscow in the event of any fighting. Under the Muscovites' pressure, army units near Moscow entered the city, assaulted the White House, and captured the ringleaders of the anti-Yeltsin revolt.⁴

THE DECEMBER 1993 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

Yeltsin scheduled new legislative elections for December 12, 1993, and decreed that the elections would include a plebiscite on a new Constitution. Yeltsin decreed that half the lower house of parliament, the Duma (225 seats), would be elected by proportional representation according to the share of the nationwide vote the parties received. Only those parties that received at least a 5 percent share would receive seats in the parliament. The other half would be elected in single-member territorial districts, with the winner being the candidate collecting the most votes as long as one-fourth of the eligible voters participated. Thirteen party lists qualified to participate in the election by collecting 100,000 signatures each, with not more than 15,000 coming from a single region. Of these 13 party lists, 8 received 5 percent or more of the Party votes cast and received the right to name deputies of the Duma from their lists.

Among the successful lists was Women of Russia, a party formed by the deputy head of the Soviet Women's Committee, Alevtina Fedulova, in alliance with Yeltsin's advisor for family, motherhood, and children's issues, Ekaterina Lakhova. Relying on campaign work organized by the local branches of the Women's Committee and by Lakhova's bureaucratic subordinates in each regional government, Women of Russia won 8 percent of the vote and the right to name 21 deputies. Fedulova advocated adoption by the government of policies that protect citizens against the impact of the transition to private property. In addition to Women of Russia, which presented a list composed exclusively of women, various other lists contained some women, and other women won on their own in the single-member contests. In total, women took 13.5 percent of the seats in the Duma (see Chapter 4).

Notable among women in victorious lists is Ella Pamfilova, a veteran of the popular movement Democratic Russia, who served as Yeltsin's minister for social issues until her recent resignation. Pamfilova ran in the party

list called "Russia's Choice," organized by veterans of the democratic movement who advocated a rapid transition to the market. Irina Khakamada, the daughter of a Japanese communist who became codirector of the most successful private trading house in Russia, used her extraordinary personal magnetism, intelligence, and energy to win a single-member seat after her party list failed to gather the necessary signatures. Khakamada, who enjoys a reputation as the single most effective deputy in the Duma, calls herself an advocate of *laissez-faire* free enterprise but openly favors policies such as government funding of day-care centers, nutrition for children of poor families, paid maternal leave, and payments to ease workers' transition from the state-owned economy. At the same time, the requirement for accumulation of 100,000 signatures blocked participation in the elections by one party list that included members of the left-feminist Women's League. Another party list that failed to get on the ballot included members of the nationalist (and antifeminist) Union of Patriotic Women.

The Council of the Federation, the upper house of the parliament, includes one representative from the executive and one from the legislative branch of each region. For the December 1993 election, however, in most regions, the legislative branch was a regional Soviet, which Yeltsin abolished. Consequently, for this election only, each region was declared a territorial district with the right to elect two representatives to the Council of the Federation. Several regions, however — notably Tatarstan, which rejects the authority of the Constitution, and Chechnya, which was then in revolt against Russia — failed to elect any representatives to the Federation Council.⁵ The remainder of the regions participated, and seven women were elected, constituting 5 percent of the council membership.

THE NEW RUSSIAN CONSTITUTION, DECEMBER 1993

A new Constitution took effect in Russia despite the later discovery that, by the rules, it probably had failed approval in the election. Yeltsin had decreed that the draft Constitution would enter into force if approved by a majority of voters, subject to the condition that more than half the eligible voters participated in the plebiscite. However, an official analysis of the election returns concluded that slightly less than a majority of voters actually cast ballots.⁶ However, by the time of this discovery, the new legislature was already in place, and the Constitution not adopted in December was, nevertheless, in effect.

Yeltsin and his advisors designed the new Constitution to guard against a resumption of the conflict that had poisoned relations between legislative and executive branches during 1992 and 1993. The safeguards consist of a number of special powers for the chief executive and

corresponding limits on the legislature, coupled with a particularly complex procedure for impeachment of the President.

Separation of Powers

The new Constitution preserved the presidency of Russia; strengthened presidential powers; and renamed the Council of Ministers (now called the "Government") and added to its powers. The Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet were abolished. In their place, the Constitution established the bicameral legislature called the "Federal Assembly." The Constitution imposes severe restrictions on the Duma and the Federation Council.⁷

Rights of the Presidency

Like the U.S. president, the President of Russia serves for four years with a two-term limit. The President is the head of state and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Unlike the U.S. president, in case of actual or threatened aggression against Russia, the Russian President can decree a state of war. This decree is subject to later confirmation by the Federation Council. Presidential authority over the military is limited by the Federation Council's exclusive right to authorize use of the armed forces outside Russian territory. Because the secessionist state of Chechnya remained constitutionally part of Russian territory, these provisions of the Constitution afforded the Federal Assembly no power to challenge Yeltsin's decision to reconquer Chechnya in December 1994. Shifting coalitions among the political parties further immobilized the Duma. Some of Yeltsin's erstwhile democratic allies coalesced with his Communist opponents against the invasion. Some of his erstwhile nativist enemies coalesced with his allies from the regions in support of the invasion. Common agreement that Chechnya should not be allowed to secede frustrated efforts to block or stop an armed resolution of the crisis.

Like the U.S. president, the Russian President wields the right to veto laws passed by the Duma and Federation Council. However, he or she has four additional powers that make the Russian President much stronger than the U.S. president. First, the President of Russia can issue decrees with the force of law, as long as they do not contradict either the Constitution or existing federal legislation. Second, he or she can suspend the operation of laws passed by 89 regions (which are equivalent to states in the United States), pending review of their constitutionality by the Constitutional Court. The Russian President also mediates disputes between regions or between the federal government and regions. Third, he or she can force consideration of draft legislation by the Duma and

Federation Council. Fourth, under certain restrictions, he or she can compel the members of the Duma to run for reelection ahead of schedule.

In contrast to the president of the United States, the President of Russia is not head of government; instead, he or she stands apart from and above the government. Just as the U.S. president makes appointments with the advice and consent of the Senate, the President of Russia nominates the chair of the government for approval by a majority of the Duma. However, the President of Russia does not require Duma approval of appointees to posts in the government, in contrast to the U.S. president, who must obtain Congressional consent. The Constitution also entitles the President to occupy the chair at meetings of the Government — a crucial right that the President can use to control what decisions are considered and who speaks about them.

Like George Washington, Yeltsin has refused to join any political party, attempting to stand above politics as a symbol of national unity. Under present circumstances, in which the very preservation of a unified Russian state is at risk, Yeltsin's conduct is understandable and probably appropriate. Like Washington's behavior (which encouraged antidemocratic intrigues by political figures, such as Alexander Hamilton), Yeltsin's refusal to identify himself firmly with Russia's democrats has undermined their popular appeal. His aloofness from the democrats has helped authoritarians in the legislature, such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky, head of the misnamed Liberal Democratic Party.

Rights of the Government

Formation of the Russian government begins with the President's nomination of a candidate for Chair of the Government for approval by the Duma. In the legal limbo attending adoption of the Constitution, however, President Yeltsin circumvented the constitutional procedure by naming Victor Chernomyrdin to continue as chair of government. The Duma did not object, because Chernomyrdin would have received its approval for the post in any case. The chair of government then nominates for presidential approval the deputy chairs and the ministers. The confinement of powers of appointment to an interaction between the Chair and the President was intended to prevent a reoccurrence of the conflicts between the former Congress of People's Deputies and Yeltsin. These conflicts concerned certain controversial ministers, particularly those conducting privatization, and the allocation of government credits to Russian industry, which is seriously in debt.

The government remains in office subject to the President and to votes of no confidence by the Duma. The President can unilaterally dismiss the government, or he or she can accept or reject a resignation by the government. A majority of all members of the Duma also may express

no confidence in the government, but if they do, the President can either reject or accept the vote of no confidence. Should the Duma repeat the vote of no confidence within three months, the President must either accept the vote or dissolve the Duma and hold new parliamentary elections.

The main function of the government is to propose an annual budget for ratification by the Duma and to spend money authorized under the budget. The heritage of public ownership of the production of virtually all goods and services has shaped the Russian government's activities since 1991. Two of its main functions have been to administer enterprises still in public hands while they await privatization and to conduct the privatization of public property. Because privatization of state enterprises and farms raises complex issues of distribution of wealth among the citizens, the formation of a private sector has been intensely controversial in Russian politics. Objections to privatization, particularly of farmland, were the main justifications given by nationalists and conservative Communists in their bid to unseat Yeltsin. Although privatization of industry has advanced rapidly, most farmlands remain in public ownership to this day.

A crucial power of the Government is its right to block consideration by the Duma of any law that affects taxes or government borrowing or spending. Such laws can be considered only if accompanied by a certification issued by the Government. By failing to certify a proposal concerning taxes or government borrowing or spending, the Government can prevent the deputies from considering the proposal. This provision of the Constitution is intended to preclude recurrence of a maneuver by Communist and nationalist opponents of privatization. They used the taxing and spending authority of the old Congress of People's Deputies to compel the issuance of subsidies to publicly owned enterprises. By compelling expansion of the money supply and enlarging the budget deficit, the opponents of privatization blocked government efforts to control inflation. It reached an annual rate of nearly 2,500 percent during 1992 and 1,000 percent during 1993. Hyperinflation, in turn, increased public dissatisfaction with Yeltsin's economic program. The Constitution blocks the Duma from repeating this maneuver.

Restrictions on the Powers of the Federal Assembly

The Duma and the Council of the Federation constitute the legislative branch in Russia, but as is already evident, the legislative power is shared with the President. As noted previously, he or she can issue decrees without consulting the Assembly, and the Government can issue regulations and block consideration of any legislation on taxation and expenditures.

Further limiting the legislature's powers, the Constitution places steep obstacles to the passage of laws by the Duma and Council.

As the designation "lower house" implies, bills must begin in the state Duma. The state Duma adopts a law by majority vote. However, in contrast to the practice in the U.S. Congress, in which a majority of a quorum can pass a law, a law is passed by the state Duma only when a majority of the full membership votes for it. Because of this requirement, opponents of a bill can defeat it simply by staying away from the floor when it is scheduled for consideration. Thus, they can avoid casting votes that might draw criticism from the public. Although the public can pay attention to deputies' attendance as well as their voting records, the costs to the public of monitoring legislators' conduct are greater because of this rule.

A law passed by the state Duma goes to the Federation Council, which can approve it by simple majority of its full membership. Should a bill passed by the Duma fail to gain approval by the Federation Council, the Duma can override the Council's rejection by a vote of two-thirds of all Duma deputies. The bill then goes to the President, who can sign it or reject it. If the President fails to sign the bill within 14 days, an override requires a favorable vote by two-thirds of all the members of both houses. If supporters of the President can amend the bill during reconsideration, the President receives the opportunity to veto it again.

The combination of requirements for majorities of the full membership, rather than of a quorum, and of two-thirds majorities of the full membership for overrides of vetoes or of disagreements between houses poses exceptional difficulties for the passage of laws, especially laws opposed by the President. Because society requires legal regulation, the difficulties faced by the Federal Assembly in adopting laws magnify the importance of the President's decree power and of the Chair of the Government's authority to issue executive regulations.

Under the new Constitution, the state Duma and Federation Council retain the right of the former Congress of People's Deputies to remove the President from office, but an extraordinary series of procedural obstacles has been placed in the path of any such decision. Impeachment of the President cannot begin unless at least 90 deputies of the Duma propose an investigation. The Duma then must form a special committee to investigate the President. The Constitutional Court (whose membership was not approved until 1995) must certify that the constitutional procedure has been followed, and the Supreme Court must agree that the investigation has uncovered *prima facie* evidence of a grave crime by the President. The Duma then must vote to approve the impeachment by two-thirds of its membership. After that, within three months of the Duma vote, two-thirds of the full membership of the Federation Council must uphold the indictment.

Long before a Federal Assembly could reach agreement to impeach a Russian President, he or she presumably would have already used his powers to dissolve the Duma, forcing new elections. The Constitution provides that the President can dissolve the Duma at any time except within the last six months of its term. In order to dissolve the Duma, the president must obtain either three rejections of his or her nominee for the chair of government or a vote of no confidence in the government. Because the Russian President can dismiss the government at any time, he or she always could force new elections by nominating a new head of government unacceptable to the Duma majority.

CONCLUSION

Designed to preclude a recurrence of Yeltsin's confrontation with the Communist-nationalist coalition in the legislature in October 1993, the new Russian Constitution frees him to govern by obstructing legislative action and by ruling by decree. The right to issue presidential decrees previously was limited by revocable legislative consent. Unfortunately for the democratic prospect, in freeing Yeltsin from legislative controls, the new Constitution also limits the ability of the Russian voter to use representative institutions for influence on President's actions. The Constitution achieved by the democrats' triumph renders the Russian state less, rather than more, democratic. Paradoxically, given the authoritarian inclinations of some of the candidates most successful in the December 1993 elections for the Duma, concentration of powers in the President's hands may be the sole reliable safeguard for democracy in the short run. In the longer term, the question remains what someone else might do with those powers after winning a future presidential election.

Although diminishing the proportion of women in the legislature, the new democratic politics has freed Russian women of the taint of a quota system that made them, and many men as well, publicly visible in the role of rubber stamps to the Communist Party hierarchy. Democratic contests have opened opportunities for individual women of exceptional talent, like Khakamada or Pamfilova, to secure real influence by office holding and by public acclaim. At the same time, women's success in politics has encountered new obstacles. Barriers erected by Yeltsin to obstruct candidacies by his opponents had the side effect of preventing some women from competing. Establishment of winner-take-all, single-member districts had the effect, in 1993, of reducing other women's chances, because, in such districts, the presence of even a few biased voters usually can make election of women candidates improbable. Russian democracy combines both new chances for women and new hindrances to their realization of the opportunity.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws on interviews conducted during fall 1992 and fall 1993 with women politicians in Russia during travel funded by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, the Center for German and European Studies of the University of California, and the Center for European and Russian Studies of the University of California, Los Angeles.

2. A valuable study of Soviet political institutions is Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

3. *Pervyi Sezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR: Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1989), p. 224.

4. On the night of October 3–4, 1993, I joined the Nineteenth Barricade Battalion of the Moscow people's militia. Later, I interviewed the Moscow cochairman of Democratic Russia, who had summoned supporters to the demonstration by telephone, persuaded the vice-premier to appeal over television for volunteers, and negotiated the entry of military units into Moscow. I counted the demonstrators at the City Council and spoke to two participants in the Kremlin demonstration.

5. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Research Report* 3 (1994): 3.

6. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Daily Report*, May 6, 1994.

7. The Constitution was printed in a number of Russian newspapers, including *Izvestia*, December 28, 1993.

Law and Policy: Women's Human Rights in Russia

Dorothy McBride Stetson

Leaders of the international campaign for women's human rights charge that conventional human rights guarantees do little to advance the status of women. They point to the international human rights regime — an array of human rights organizations and activities with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its center. The commission has set forth a list of rights founded on a philosophical foundation that excludes protections for women.¹ The women's human rights campaign aims to transform what is meant by human rights to include a new feminist standard.

The goal of this chapter is to apply this new standard of women's human rights to the pattern of laws in Russia during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The chapter looks at abortion, marriage, divorce, and rape laws. The central question is, How do the Russian laws measure up when compared with the new feminist standard of women's human rights?

WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL THEORY

It may be surprising to readers to learn that laws based on Marxist political theory, such as those in Russia during Soviet rule, may be more likely to further women's human rights than laws based on liberal democratic theory. The conventional human rights approach, seen as ineffective for women, is based on the assertion in liberal democratic political theory that there is a dichotomy between the public sphere of the state

and the private sphere of the family. This dichotomy sets up a barrier around the family, and the state's laws may interfere in a limited way.

This human rights approach fosters dignity, safety, and equality for citizens *only* in the public sphere. Thus, it fails to consider that subordination in the family makes it impossible for women to exercise their civil and social rights. Women's human rights leaders, on the other hand, evaluate the state's actions to insure equality for women in the private sphere of the family. Such actions will further women's rights if they provide resources of autonomy, equality, and self-determination for women in their intimate relations with men.

Marxist theorists, in contrast to liberal democratic theorists, are not burdened with assumptions about the separation between public and private spheres. Instead, they condemn the dichotomy. They believe that the patriarchal family, based on father or husband's absolute rule, is fundamental to the maintenance of capitalism.² The Marxists have held that the end of capitalism would mean the end of patriarchy and the separation between society and the family. Thus, it follows that a regime based on Communist revolutionary ideology, rather than classical liberal ideology, could lay the foundation for new family relationships. In Russia, the Marxists envisioned laws that could extend to intimate family relationships and emancipate women from patriarchal constraints (see Chapter 6).

ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

A women's human rights approach directs attention to laws affecting relationships between women and men in their personal lives. The objective of this chapter is to see to what extent Russia's laws in reproductive rights, marriage and divorce, and sexual violence were affected by Communist ideology. It examines to what extent the laws legitimated the use of state power to help women achieve autonomy, equality, and self-determination in their conflicts with men in the family.

This chapter focuses on women's human rights in Russia during four periods: after the 1917 Revolution that brought the Bolshevik Communists to power and through the 1920s, under Stalin's rule to his death in 1953, during the post-Stalin reforms, and during the post-Soviet transition. We will see the effect of the major changes in the power structure and direction of government during the four periods. The conclusion will consider whether Russia's laws, based on Communist ideology, are more compatible with women's human rights than laws in liberal democracies.

This chapter focuses on law codes and decrees, not the actual lives of women in Russia. Such codes and decrees set forth the nation's formal position on a policy issue. They grant powers and resources to

government institutions as well as place limits on their actions. They are important indicators of the parameters of state action and the rules of relationships between citizens and government. They do, however, constitute only a partial picture of policy. For a full picture, it also would be necessary to examine how these laws and policies work in practice.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS: ABORTION LAW

Aborting a fetus is a procedure that women can do alone or with the help of other women, and they have done so for eons. However, the costs of such self-determination have been a risk to health and even death. Medical advances in the nineteenth century created safe abortion procedures, but in Russia as elsewhere, these new techniques came only into the hands of licensed doctors. Technology, thus, gave the medical profession the power to decide who gets the procedure and who does not. If the medical profession is predominantly male, such power can reinforce women's subordination.

Access to medical resources, however, is just one of the areas in which men can restrict women's self-determination over whether to continue a pregnancy. A husband, lover, or father, using superior strength or financial resources, also often constrains a woman's choices. The state with its laws and resources can enforce such male authority or intervene to redress the balance in favor of women, individually or as a group.

In medieval Russia, canon law of the Orthodox Church not only prohibited all abortion and punished the woman who had one but also gave her husband the right to punish her if he discovered it. Early Tsarist laws provided for the death penalty, but punishment softened under Peter I. The nineteenth-century codes continued to define abortion as murder and to punish the woman who consented to it or performed the abortion on herself. The codes did not give special authority to the husband, and doctors were excused of the charge of murder if the abortion was necessary to save the life of the mother.³ At the same time, there was a high rate of illegal abortions and consequent health problems for women. Between 1900 and 1917, medical societies considered alternatives for liberalizing the law.⁴

The Bolshevik early Communist government issued a decree in 1920 that gave doctors permission to perform abortions.⁵ This was followed by a series of regulations limiting women's access to the procedure. Abortions could be performed only in hospitals by medically trained doctors, many of whom were opposed to the new law. Women had to pay for the procedure unless they could show that they had no funds. To find the money, a woman might have to ask for help from her husband, lover, brother, or father. To find a place in a hospital — a scarce commodity in the wake of the revolution and brief civil war — a woman had to apply to

a local commission. The commission members wanted proof that difficult circumstances justified the woman's request. A married woman with her first pregnancy had little hope of a favorable response. Women with medical problems took first priority; then, preference went to single women and women with many children.

The 1920 decree legalizing abortion was not passed to give women any right to reproductive freedom; rather, the official motive was to alleviate health problems and extreme deprivation caused by the revolution and brief civil war that followed. The policy left men, not women, in control of access to safe medical abortions. Doctors, a majority of whom were men in the 1920s, along with token representation from the women's councils, had the power to determine who got the procedure and who did not. The government gave them a list of priorities that emphasized social goals encouraging childbirth. Also, although the state did not give husbands direct veto power over their wives' decision, the need to find the money to pay for the abortion might tip the scales in many families in the man's favor.

The overall impact of this law on gender politics was to keep women subordinate to men in matters of whether to continue their pregnancies or not. The ideological justification for this situation was that abortion was a social evil, tolerated only because of dismal social and economic circumstances. The official declaration that those circumstances had ended set the stage for the criminalization of abortion.

In 1936, with Stalinism in full sway, the Decree on the Prohibition of Abortions banned abortion except for a narrow set of medical conditions: when pregnancy endangered the woman's life or when the child might inherit a serious disease such as hemophilia or schizophrenia. Medical commissions, with no representation from women's councils (which were abolished in 1929), determined if a woman's case met the law's conditions. There were jail terms and fines for those who performed abortions outside this framework. To enforce the decree, doctors were supposed to report women who seemed to be suffering from the aftereffects of illegal abortion.

The preamble to the 1936 decree boasted that "in no country in the world does woman, as a mother and a citizen who bears the great and responsible duty of giving birth and bringing up citizens, enjoy the same respect and protection of the law as in the USSR [the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics]." ⁶ Thus, in prohibiting legal abortions, Stalinist policy makers were motivated by their alarm over the decreasing birthrate. The law, and the array of social programs for mothers and children that accompanied it, came from this pronatalist motive: healthy women were needed to produce healthy babies who would grow into strong workers. Policy makers asserted that Soviet women had the right to maternity in good conditions. With this right, they had no need for abortions. In fact,

some argued that criminalizing abortion actually enabled women to resist husbands who, to avoid paternal responsibilities, would force them to have abortions against their will.⁷

Regardless of the rhetoric, the 1936 law dramatically changed women's options with respect to their reproductive rights. The police power of the state replaced both doctors and husbands in exerting control over women's access to safe abortion. Women still had the option to seek abortions outside the law, and the rate of illegal abortion increased dramatically after 1936.⁸

On November 23, 1955, the Presidium, the executive committee of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, issued a decree, "The Repeal of the Prohibition of Abortions." There was little press coverage. Most women were unaware that the law had changed. Officially, the state was still pronatalist, that is, in favor of increasing the birthrate. The government's explanation for this abrupt change in abortion policy was that social conditions had so improved and women were so well-integrated into society that there was no fear that they might seek abortion to such an extent as to endanger their health.⁹ In fact, the 1936 prohibition had serious consequences for reproductive health because of increased illegal abortions performed in unsanitary conditions.

In a way, the new law was a tacit recognition that, despite the restrictions and consequences, women would act to terminate pregnancies. Later articles reveal that the experts recognized a variety of motives for women seeking abortions, including no wish to have children, inadequate child care, and marital difficulties.¹⁰ The decree legalizing abortion and the commentary about it in Soviet publications demonstrate a more sophisticated approach to demographic problems in the post-Stalinist era. It was, no doubt, informed by a growing body of social science research findings: that birthrates would not be increased by draconian criminalizing approaches and that abortion would be eliminated by contraceptives, education, and better living standards.

The 1955 decree also included official acceptance of women's self-determination in reproduction: "In order to give women the opportunity to decide for themselves the questions of motherhood, as well as to prevent the harm which is inflicted by non-hospital abortions, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decrees: Article 1 on the prohibition of abortions, is repealed."¹¹

Despite this clause, subsequent administrative regulations on the delivery of abortion services limited women's access. Only abortions performed by doctors in hospitals were legal. Thus, once again, medical personnel had the authority to deny women entrance to these hospitals. In addition, rules required doctors and midwives to confer with each woman and to try to dissuade her from the abortion. This hierarchy of

authority over abortion decisions was not gender based, however, in that the majority of these medical personnel were women.

RIGHTS IN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The first civil laws on marriage in Europe upheld traditional male-dominated patriarchal families. Husbands and fathers owned and controlled the property and were given legal authority over wives and children. Correspondingly, one of the first goals of European feminists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to demand more equality for women in the marriage. Civil marriage soon required civil divorce, but divorce reform always has been more problematical for women's human rights than marriage law reform. Clearly, an absolute prohibition on divorce or unequal rights to divorce by wives and husbands trapped women in abusive marriages. On the other hand, easy access to divorce with inequalities in the economic status of husbands and wives dooms many women to poverty. Economically dependent wives and mothers must look to the state for help in asserting their rights to family property and compensation for the economic sacrifices they made to fulfill expected domestic and maternal roles.

Bolshevik-Communist ideology in early Soviet Russia, in contrast with religious traditions in the rest of Europe, promised a more egalitarian basis for marriage, with both husband and wife fully integrated into the economy. Throughout the Soviet period, official policy sustained the theme that protections must be provided for the worker-mother to enable her to contribute equally with men to society (see Chapter 6).

In 1918, the Bolshevik government issued its first family law. The decree on Civil Registration Of Deaths, Births, and Marriages declared marriage a civil union based on mutual consent and promised a transformation of the family. Under the Tsarist Russian civil code, a wife had been "obliged to obey her husband as the head of the family; to abide with him in love, honor, and unconditional obedience; to render him all satisfaction and affection as the master of the house."¹² Under this Tsarist law, the wife had no right to live in her own residence or to work without her husband's permission. Divorce, although not absolutely prohibited, was difficult to obtain. Such civil laws pertained only to the small minority of urban elite. Most people were subject to a combination of family custom-law and canon law that was equally, if not more, patriarchal.

The 1918 decree, in contrast, made marriage a civil matter based entirely on mutual consent. Husband and wife were legally autonomous, and the wife had full freedom of movement, including the right to work regardless of her husband's wishes. Divorce was granted on the application of one spouse only or by mutual consent. At the same time, husbands and their families were responsible for alimony and child support.

Despite a contentious debate, the 1926 Marriage Code extended the provisions of the 1918 decree to unregistered or consensual unions.¹³ It also established community property in marriage and easy divorce procedures, even divorce by mail, called "postcard divorce." These marriage and divorce laws during the first period of Soviet government in Russia conformed with standards of women's human rights. They struck a balance between equality and autonomy for women during marriage and in access to divorce with protection to compensate for social and economic dependency developing from their domestic and family responsibilities. In practice, however, the formal law apparently had little effect on providing help to women. Records in some areas indicate that men filed for divorce much more frequently than women, abandoned de facto wives, and had little reason to fear enforcement of child support and alimony laws.¹⁴

To crack down on delinquent and irresponsible husbands, Stalin's government included provisions in the 1936 decree (the one that also prohibited abortions) increasing penalties for nonpayment of alimony and child support and eliminating postcard divorce procedures. A much more fundamental shift in family law came with Stalin's 1944 Family Edict. By compelling women to have children, this new law was to be a means of overcoming the disastrous loss of life in the 1930s and 1940s. The nuclear family became the keystone of this pronatalist policy. Deviations from the Soviet family of father, mother, and (it was hoped) many children would bring lower status and rights.

Stalin's 1944 Family Edict repealed the provision of the 1926 law that gave protection in alimony and child support to women in unregistered de facto marriages. Such unions were labeled illegitimate. Mothers were prohibited from seeking support from fathers, and fathers were forbidden to pay support for their illegitimate children. The new law also made divorce very difficult by requiring large fees and a two-step legal process.

The Stalin-era government used both family law and abortion law to increase the birthrate. This demonstrated the close relationship between the reproductive rights of women and their status in marriage and divorce. By prohibiting contraceptives (or just not producing them), criminalizing abortion, shoring up the nuclear family with its gender-based division of labor, and impeding divorce, the government tried to force women to have children by limiting their autonomy and self-determination in the family.

The ineffectiveness of these Stalinist laws in increasing the birthrate may explain the shift in policy in both abortion and marriage and divorce laws that characterizes the post-Stalin period in Soviet Russia. The debate about reform still was framed in terms of how best to increase the birthrate. The temptation to maintain authoritarian regulatory approaches died hard. Thus, it was not until 1964 and the ouster of Nikita Khrushchev, the

Communist Party General Secretary and Soviet leader, that the debate produced a reform of marriage and divorce laws. The divorce reform of 1965 and Family Code of 1968 represented a midpoint between the extreme liberation of the early revolutionary government and the draconian regulations of the Stalinist era.

According to these reform laws, which remain in effect, women and men are equal and autonomous in marriage. Both own and manage community property and are mutually responsible for each other's support. Thus, the law retains the equal status conferred in the 1920s. Divorce has been simplified again, if not quite the postcard approach. On the other hand, unregistered marriages still are not recognized; only legal marriage establishes these mutual obligations. Women's rights and responsibilities as mothers, special as they are from the pronatalist view, are retained in the reformed laws. Fathers are responsible for child support in divorce, and mothers are guaranteed social and family support. A husband cannot seek divorce from his wife during pregnancy or if the child is less than one year old. In general, the marriage and divorce laws combine legal equality of husband and wife with protection for women based on their special family roles.

RIGHT TO SECURITY AND DIGNITY: RAPE LAWS

There are three interrelated criteria for evaluating the effect of criminal rape laws on women's human rights. First, how serious is the crime? This usually is determined by the punishment attached to the offense. Second, what sort of crime is the rape? Is it a crime against the dignity of the individual victim or against her family? In some countries, the crime has been considered serious only if it robs a family of the daughter's virginity or violates a husband's right of exclusive access to his wife's body. Thus, raping a woman who is not the property of a man is not considered very serious. Third, the criteria involve whether a husband can be prosecuted for raping his wife. If not, they indicate that the state does not consider the wife to be autonomous but, instead, subordinate as the husband's sexual property. If there is no such marital exclusion, on the other hand, the status of a married woman is enhanced through her ability to bring a criminal complaint against her husband's abuse.

The first criminal law code in Soviet Russia, enacted in 1922, made rape a crime. The definition of rape combined the same elements that characterized the law in Tsarist Russia: sexual intercourse through force. However, although the Tsarist law explicitly excluded marital rape, the Soviet law code of 1922 did not, defining rape as "sex relations by means of physical violence, threat, or by intimidation or making use, through deception, of the helpless condition of the victim, was unlawful."

There were two levels of punishment for rape: five years in prison if it met the minimal definition of the law (what we will call ordinary rape) and eight years if the rape led to suicide, if the victim was a minor, or if more than one person committed the assault. These punishments indicated that rape was considered nearly as serious as murder, which was punished by up to ten years. Eight years in a Soviet prison was certainly no minor punishment. Horrendous conditions meant *de facto* death sentences for many. However, the government considered *personal* crimes, like rape and murder, to be less serious than *public* crimes that involved political and economic threats. Public crimes could bring life sentences or capital punishment.

The next section of the 1922 criminal law code included a crime of sexual harassment. It reflected new thinking on the part of the Russian revolutionaries. Upheavals of revolution and building the new Communist economy had forced many women away from their families and required them to work among men for the first time. These women were especially vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. Thus, the Bolshevik leaders established the following crime: "forcing a woman to enter in a sex relationship or [to] satisfy sex passion in some other form by a person on whom said woman was financially dependent or to whom she was in a subordinate position." This crime could lead to five years in prison. Apparently, there were few convictions in applying this early form of sexual harassment policy.¹⁵

The Stalinist period did not bring fundamental changes in the definition of criminal rape laws as it had in abortion and family laws. The government did, in 1949, formally establish two degrees of rape and increase the punishment. Those convicted of ordinary rape, still defined as sexual relations by violence, deception, or because of the helpless condition of the victim, were to receive from 10 to 15 years in prison. Aggravating circumstances — rape of a minor, by a group, or leading to suicide — led to punishments of 15 to 20 years. The two-tier rape law had implications for the victim as well. The state would prosecute a man for ordinary rape only upon complaint of the victim. For a crime with aggravating circumstances, the state would prosecute regardless of the wishes of the victim.

Does a provision requiring the complaint of the victim enhance the rights of women? The answer depends in part on how rape is viewed in the culture. The provision may protect the privacy of the woman. She need not be required to testify about an incident that may be embarrassing to her or threaten her standing in her family. In a culture in which the rape victim is considered ruined, aggressive action by the state on her behalf may be disastrous to her. On the other hand, the state, by failing to treat all rapes as serious crimes, trivializes the significance of sexual assault. Such a provision, thus, places a heavy burden on a woman to

pursue a case and convince police and prosecutors that she has no complicity in the rape. In addition, this arrangement perpetuates the cultural view that, unless the woman complains, rape could be an accepted path toward marriage.

During the post-Stalinist period, reforms of Soviet criminal law in 1962 and 1980 also produced an enhanced section on rape.¹⁶ The division of the law into ordinary and aggravating degrees remained intact, with prosecution for ordinary rape still requiring the complaint of the victim. The definition of ordinary rape also remained unchanged, but the punishment was reduced to three to seven years. Aggravating circumstances were classified in grades to coincide with degrees of punishment. Rape with threat of death, causing serious injury, or committed by a recidivist (that is, someone previously convicted of rape) resulted in a sentence of 5 to 10 years; group rape or rape of a minor resulted in a sentence of 5 to 15 years. Rape committed by "an especially dangerous recidivist or resulting in especially grave consequences, or the rape of a child" was to be punished by 8 to 15 years or by death. The next article, No. 118, contains a sexual harassment provision similar to that inserted into the penal code in the 1920s. It was punishable by "deprivation of freedom for a term not exceeding three years."

For the most part, the basic outlines and definitions of rape law in Russia have met criteria for women's human rights during the three periods of Soviet rule. Rape is defined as a crime against the individual woman and is part of a section of the law code labeled crimes against the freedom, health, and dignity of the person. Wives can bring a complaint for criminal prosecution against their husbands. A special provision protects women from sexual exploitation by superiors at work. What has varied is the seriousness of the crime. Penalties were comparatively moderate in the early years but increased in severity during the Stalin regime. The post-Stalinist law set several degrees of the crime with varying levels of penalty. Officially, a rapist could receive the death penalty.

What we have reviewed here, of course, are just the formal definitions and provisions of the code. These set forth the state's official position on the subject and establish the limits of the relations between the individual and the state. How the crime is treated in the criminal law system by police, prosecutors, and the courts will determine the security and dignity of women who live in Russia. Peter Juviler, a scholar of Soviet law, sees a continuity in the state's reinforcing women's sexual autonomy through these laws. He writes, "Present provisions protecting women's freedom of choice as sex partners date back to the earliest Soviet practice and the first Soviet criminal code. If anything, the 'special apparatus of coercion' applying those provisions has struck harder than ever to enforce legal protection in recent years."¹⁷

POST-SOVIET RUSSIA AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Beginning in 1985, the processes associated with glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) eventually led to the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the establishment of a new constitution for the Russian Federation in 1993. These momentous changes have opened up wide-ranging debates on aspects of society, economy, and politics rarely discussed under Soviet Communist rule. In this time of transition, some ideologies competing for attention threaten women's legal status. For example, the end of Communist rule has been hailed as a victory for international human rights from the conventional perspective, not a feminist one.

Conventional human rights ideology emphasizes the need to limit the state's powers in society. This ideology, associated with Western forms of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism, is the one feminists have criticized for subordinating women to men in private life. In addition, the liberal ideal of freedom of religion from state control has revitalized the Russian Orthodox church, which some Russians hope will mean a return to the patriarchal traditions of the Tsarist era. These traditions are antithetical to an equal, autonomous role for women. Contemporary debates over abortion are not framed in terms of its legality, although some right-to-life groups exist, but in terms of the way the health care system has treated women.

Evidence has mounted documenting the cruel way many doctors performed abortion in the Soviet time, ranging from testimony of assembly line procedures to assertions that doctors punished women by denying them anesthesia for the procedure. Because of the conditions, many women preferred illegal abortions to the legal ones, but they resent the narrow choice forced on them by the state's unwillingness to provide contraceptives. Thus, despite the legality of abortion, the Soviet state placed women's health at very low priority.

Free-market reforms have increased the number of private clinics available for abortions as well as bringing, at last, effective means of contraception to the country. However, like everything else, the costs of private services are high and beyond the reach of many women. At the same time, the public services have continued to deteriorate. Thus, although abortion is not criminalized and policy provides for social services through a public health system, in practice, many women have not noticed a difference between legal and illegal abortion in their dependency on this procedure as a means of family planning.

Although the 1993 Russian Federation Constitution provides for equality of mother and father in bringing up children, there have been attempts to bring back a Stalinist-like policy that legalizes the traditional nuclear family, not the individuals who comprise it, as the basic unit of society. In

1990, a bill to this effect entitled "Protection of the Family, Mother, Father and Child" circulated but was not adopted by the Soviet Union's national legislature, the Supreme Soviet.

Meanwhile an International Day of the Family has been instituted in post-Soviet Russia. At the same time, attempts by the government of President Boris Yeltsin to set up a department devoted only to the family and excluding women's problems as a focus were thwarted in 1994. Women of Russia's faction of the national legislature has called, instead, for a Committee on the Affairs of Women, the Family and Demography.

Making the family a legal entity protected by the right of privacy from state intervention threatens the autonomy of women in the view of women's rights advocates. They are concerned that elevating the motherhood role and making women primarily responsible for childrearing would lead to lower earning power and inferior status for women in comparison with their husbands. Indeed, women are, by far, the highest percentage of unemployed. Although proposals to strengthen the family are popular with some people desperate for a safe and secure haven, feminist critics argue that the family often has not been such a haven for women.

Work is underway on a new criminal code for the Russian Federation. The proposed code on rape is unchanged from the current law except to add another type of aggravated rape: giving victims AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁸ The proposed criminal procedure retains the requirement that the state will prosecute for ordinary rape only upon the complaint of the victim. Absent from the section on sexual offenses in the proposed code is the section that probably was the most innovative after the Bolshevik revolution — the law making it a crime for sexual harassment, that is a man compelling a woman who is economically dependent on him to engage in sexual intercourse or other sexual acts. Although very few cases were ever brought under this law, it would be a step away from women's human rights to abolish it. Governments in Western democracies just are beginning to enforce sexual harassment policies that challenge the sexual privileges of men in corporations, the government, and the military.

CONCLUSION

Have provisions in abortion, marriage, divorce, and rape laws in Soviet Russia been more consistent with women's human rights than those in liberal democracies? Yes, if we look only at the laws enacted by the new regime that took power after the Bolshevik Revolution. Influenced by revolutionary ideals of Marxism, the new regime put in place laws that formally advanced women's equality, dignity, and autonomy, empowering them in dealing with men. Russia was the first country to legalize

abortion, and instead of going to the church or police for permission, women appealed to special commissions that included members of the women's councils. Most liberal democracies did not permit abortion until the 1970s.

The new laws gave women equality and autonomy in marriage after centuries of subordination under Tsarist and Orthodox Church rule. In the early Soviet government, divorce was accessible, and the state declared a woman's right to alimony and child support from her former husband. Such egalitarian laws did not appear in Europe or the United States until decades later. Rape was declared a crime against dignity in Russia in 1922, whereas rape laws in other countries remained unchanged since medieval times. Also, a new crime to protect women from sexual exploitation at the hands of employers anticipated sexual harassment policy in the United States by 50 years.

These guarantees were abridged during the Stalinist years. Motivated by pronatalism, the belief that government power should be used to increase the birthrate, leaders cracked down on women's autonomy by prohibiting abortion, penalizing women who gave birth outside marriage, and forcing women to remain married. Although post-Stalin reforms took place in a more progressive intellectual environment, policy continued to be directed toward increasing births, not by authoritarian prohibitions but through services for mothers and children. Thus, the post-Stalinist reforms restored some of women's human rights of the 1920s, but not for feminist purposes. Nevertheless, considering post-Soviet laws of abortion, marriage, divorce, and rape together, they represent, in a formal way, more guarantees of women's human rights than most Western democracies during the same period.

In 1960–80, many Western nations still had restrictions on legal abortion, inequalities in marriage and divorce laws, and rape laws unchanged for centuries. The leaders of the new Russian government in the 1990s have inherited laws that are comparatively progressive with respect to feminist standards of women's human rights. How such laws will fare, in light of democratic reforms, resurgent traditional and nationalist ideologies, and the backlash against the Soviet legacy will depend on whether advocates for women's human rights can gain access to make their case to the new political elite in the government and the Russian parliament.

NOTES

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12

Crossroads in Russian History: A Brighter Road Ahead for Women?

Norma C. Noonan

The contributors to this volume have presented multifaceted perspectives on the history of Russian women in the twentieth century. It is a story of achievements and frustrations. Hutton discussed patterns of continuity and change between the Tsarist and Soviet eras that suggested that labels may change but many tendencies remain the same. Noonan described the persistence of the traditional view of woman and mother in modern Russia's saga. Moses described the images and reality of women in Soviet society, while Nechemias analyzed the paradoxes of women's status. Nechemias and Stetson note that, in the early days after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russian women achieved unparalleled formal rights. Hutton, Nechemias, and Noonan, among other contributors, observed that those rights often were flawed in their execution. Although women's status improved in the twentieth century, it never met the promises made by political leaders.

Anderson, Moses, and Nechemias pointed out that, in the Soviet system, women were never a high priority. Although the Soviet system paid lip service to women's contributions to society, Nechemias and Moses have observed, in varying ways, that women's participation in politics actually was limited and women were far less equal than described in society's official documents. Women rarely were represented at the highest levels of Soviet power. The quota system guaranteed women's presence in the Supreme Soviet and local soviets, but the Central Committee and Politburo of the Communist Party, the real decision-making bodies, had few women.

Women were represented in the Soviet political system according to predetermined formulas. In the mature Soviet Union prior to the 1989 competitive election, 30 percent of the seats in the Supreme Soviet were reserved for women. The quota system gave women symbolic, but little real, power, according to Moses and Nechemias. When quotas were abolished in the first Soviet competitive elections in 1989, women made up less than 16 percent of the newly created Congress of People's Deputies. In parliamentary elections a year later in the Russian Republic, women won less than 6 percent of the seats. Most of the political parties of post-Soviet Russia have not been kind to women. Only the electoral bloc Women of Russia, as Rule and Shvedova have discussed, has directly offered substantial opportunity for women to serve in the parliament. Rule, furthermore, holds there will be greater opportunity for women to be elected to the Federal Assembly in the future. Her conclusion is derived from favorable Russian political and socioeconomic factors, which correspond with her comparative model of women's legislative recruitment.

Moses and Anderson have described the political systems under which women have operated in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. The Soviet system was highly centralized and authoritarian, allowing little opportunity for independent participation, a legacy that, Noonan notes, has handicapped all political participants in the post-Soviet era. As Anderson and Rule note, the independent Russian Federation has been established with a strong executive and a weak parliament. Stetson and Anderson have chronicled in detail the legal and constitutional status of Soviet and Russian women. Their formal legal and constitutional status in the Soviet era, once the envy of many around the world, was superseded by more recent gains in other countries.

Soviet women had formal equality, but reality never equaled the paper rights of the constitution and legal documents. At the same time, Soviet women enjoyed legal preferences, such as protection from certain types of harmful employment, generous maternity leave policy, and other benefits. Although Stetson observed that some of the protective legislation was not enforced, nonetheless, women benefitted from most of the preferences. Among the unresolved issues of post-Soviet Russia is the debate over whether to reinstate the legal preferences and special benefits for women that were a hallmark of Soviet society. Some family and child benefits have been reinstated, which may be a harbinger that other benefits also may be renewed or reinstated.

Women have not been, and are not, resigned to their fate. Dismayed by the failure of the new political parties during perestroika and in post-Soviet Russia to deal with women's issues, some women's organizations formed their own political coalition and competed in the first elections of the Russian Federation in 1993. Rule and Shvedova describe the success of

Women of Russia in achieving seats in the Duma in December 1993, a success that stunned observers and political rivals. Several authors, including Nechemias and Noonan, describe the work of Women of Russia as one that had earned considerable respect in the Duma. As Nechemias, Racanska, and Noonan argue, Women of Russia and other women's groups actively pursue issues they consider appropriate to their society.

Women's role in the Soviet and Russian economy to some degree parallels their experience in the political life of the nation. At all levels of Soviet society, women were the workhorses of the system. Hutton and Racanska have pointed out that, in the service occupations, women constituted the majority of Soviet employees. At the same time, Ardishvili and Hutton document the fact that women, regardless of their specific work, seldom were represented in the leadership positions in economic management. Although the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics formally was committed to equal pay for equal work, in reality, women were clustered in lower-paying service and white-collar occupations. Men tended to hold the higher-paid positions in heavy industry and the higher-status, and better-paid, positions in the bureaucracy, professions, and industry.

The Soviet economy, on the surface, appeared to improve during the Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev eras, as Ardishvili has shown, but the improvements were flawed, masking the defects of the slowly deteriorating system. Noonan discusses the Mikhail Gorbachev reforms, which tried to address the economic problems with Soviet-style solutions that no longer were workable. Gorbachev could not improve the economy or the situation of women in society, despite numerous efforts during his six years in power.

The economic life of society has not improved in the post-Soviet era. Rule has noted that the gap between rich and poor is growing, and Racanska discusses the emerging, moneyed elite — the New Russians — and their conspicuous consumption in a society in which most people have had to tighten their belts. In Russia's difficult transition to a market economy, women have struggled perhaps even more than other groups in the population. Women still are most likely to be clustered in lower-paid, salaried occupations, which have suffered greatly because of inflation and the devaluation of the ruble. Women still staff most service positions and, as Racanska notes, also have been among the first casualties of workforce reductions as attempts have been made to streamline the number of employees in the professions and services.

Women aged 20 to 45 are the group most adversely affected by employee cutbacks and layoffs. Racanska argues that older women living on pensions perhaps have suffered most, but workers in the professions and service occupations have fared little better. Russia's millions of single mothers faced special difficulties as they endeavored to survive in the transitional economy.¹ To some extent, predominantly male occupa-

tions were better able to keep up with the currency devaluation than occupations staffed by women, often with far more education. In post-Soviet Russia, women's salaries, including those of women professionals, average about 40 percent of the wages of men.² Rule has reported that more than one-third of the population live below the Russian-defined poverty line. Furthermore, Russia's teachers, who are predominantly female, went on strike for the first time ever in September 1995 to protest their meager salaries, which ranged from \$44 to \$66 a month.³

In post-Soviet society, some women have become entrepreneurs, but the rough-and-tumble atmosphere of the fledgling market economy demands significant risk taking from entrepreneurs. As one reads of murdered bankers and entrepreneurs and of government corruption and Mafia payoffs, one realizes that the market economy has not been a hospitable climate for most women.⁴ Women constitute only about 25 percent of the employees in the private sector, partly because of the general economic climate. The paucity of women also is because of unchecked discriminatory hiring practices and sexual harassment on the job.⁵ At the same time, those few women who have joined the ranks of the New Russians enjoy a lavish life-style.⁶

The future of Russia's women remains an indecipherable riddle. Whether women are able to overcome the problems that face them will depend on many imponderables. The fate of Russia's women is intertwined with the fate of the nation. Russia is poised at the crossroads of history. Her future is clouded, but signs of optimism exist. The economy shows sign of stability. Amid the myriad of parties, there are glimmers of hope that the parties can find a middle road appropriate for Russia. Younger people are adapting to the new ways, but post-Soviet society has been traumatic for the elderly, who want to reverse some of the reforms.⁷ Women seem determined to extricate themselves from their plight. In their respective chapters, Rule and Shvedova, Nechemias, and Noonan offer hope that women's organizations will find a way to elevate both the society and their position in it. Women's growing concern for women's issues and problems and for the development of a new and better society in Russia, combined with the traditional will and determination of Russian women, provide the best signs of hope for the future.

NOTES

1. Alexandra Stanley, "Russian Mothers, From All Walks, Walk Alone," *New York Times*, October 21, 1995, pp. 1, 5.

2. Mary I. Dakin, "Women and Employment Policy in Russia," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 3 (Summer 1995): 258.

3. Associated Press, "Russian Teachers Walk Off Jobs to Protest Pay, Staff Shortages," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), September 27, 1995, p. A2.

4. See Sergei Boskholov, "Organized Crime and Corruption in Russia," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 3 (Summer 1995): 270–74.
5. Dakin, "Women and Employment Policy in Russia," p. 257.
6. Malcolm Gray, "The New Russians," *Maclean's* 106 (February 15, 1993): 22–24; Viktoria Tripolskaya-Mitlyng, "The New New Russians," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 50 (September–October 1994): 18–19.
7. Lee Hockstader, "If I Had a Hammer and a Sickle: Older Russians Plan to Vote to Turn Back the Clock on Reform," *Washington Post Weekly Edition*, November 20–26, 1995, p. 17.

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Glossary of Russian and Soviet Leaders

- Biriukova, Alexandra: Trade union leader and member of the Politburo (1988–90); Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers, (1988–90).
- Brezhnev, Leonid. I.: First, then General Secretary of the Communist Party Soviet Union (exact title: Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) (1964–82).
- Chernomyrdin, Victor: Prime Minister of Russia (December 1992–); leader of the party Russia Is Our Home.
- Fedulova, Alevtina: Coleader of the electoral bloc Women of Russia and a leader of the former Soviet Women’s Committee and its successor, the Union of Russian Women; Vice Chair of the Duma (1994 –96).
- Furtseva, Ekaterina: Member of Politburo (1958–60); Minister of Culture in the Nikita Khrushchev era.
- Gaidar, Yegor: One of the principal economic reformers in early post-Soviet Russia, Acting Prime Minister in 1992; leader of the party Russia’s Choice.
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S.: General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1985–91); President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1988–91).
- Grekova, I.: Soviet writer (a.k.a. Elena Ventsel) who expressed women’s perspectives in her novels.
- Khakamada, Irina: Codirector of a successful private trading house in Russia; elected to the Duma in 1993.
- Kollontai, Alexandra M.: Bolshevik feminist who held several important positions in the early Soviet period, including leader of the *Zhenotdel*

- (1920–22); Soviet Ambassador to Scandinavia.
- Krupskaya, Nadezhda: Wife of V. I. Lenin and prominent educator in the early years of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
- Khrushchev, Nikita S.: First, then General Secretary of the Communist Party (1953–64); Prime Minister (1958–64).
- Lakhova, Ekaterina: Coleader of the electoral bloc Women of Russia and leader of their bloc in the Duma (1994–95).
- Lenin, Vladimir I.: First leader of the Soviet Union (1917–24); Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars; leader of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; disabled after 1922.
- Mamonova, Tatiana: A feminist leader in the Brezhnev era who was forced to emigrate to the West. She continued to speak out as a Russian feminist.
- Pamfilova, Ella: A member of the popular movement Democratic Russia who served in the early Boris Yeltsin administration as minister for social issues; associated with the party Russia's Choice.
- Pukhova, Zoia: Leader of the Soviet Women's Committee (1987–91); member of the Congress of People's Deputies (1989–91).
- Raskova, Marina: Soviet woman pilot who held a record for women's long-distance flying.
- Rutskoi, Alexander: Vice-president of Russia (1991–93); elected with Yeltsin in 1991, broke with Yeltsin in 1993, and was a leader of the September–October 1993 insurrection; later granted amnesty and formed a political party *Derzhava*.
- Semenova, Galina: A member of the Politburo in charge of women's affairs (1990–91) in the last year of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
- Stalin, Joseph V.: General Secretary of the Communist Party (1922–53); Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (1941–53).
- Staravoitova, Galina: Russian activist on behalf of Armenian rights; member of the Congress of People's Deputies (1989–91); adviser to Yeltsin on nationality policy (1971–92); leader of the party Democratic Russia; member of Duma (1996–).
- Vasileva, Larissa: Russian writer and activist on behalf of women.
- Yavlinsky, Grigory: One of the principal theorists of market reform during perestroika; a leader of the political party Yabloko; a member of the Duma (1994–).
- Yeltsin, Boris N.: President of the Russian Republic (1991–); president of the independent Russian Federation (1992–).
- Zhirinovskiy, Vladimir: Leader of the conservative, nationalist Liberal Democratic Party.
- Zyuganov, Gennady: Leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and member of the Duma (1994–).

Glossary of Russian Terms

Apparat: The bureaucracy, especially the party bureaucracy.

Apparatchik: A bureaucrat. A term used originally to refer to Soviet party bureaucracy but now used to refer to any bureaucrat.

Bolsheviks: The party that led the revolution of October 1917. It was later V. I. Lenin's wing of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, later renamed the Communist Party/Bolsheviks, then the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). This is the party that led the revolution of October–November 1917.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: The larger national party decision-making body. The Committee had about 400 members in the later years of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and ratified nominees to the Politburo.

Commonwealth of Independent States: The cooperative union of 12 former Soviet republics.

Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF): Successor to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Led by Gennady Zyuganov.

Congress of People's Deputies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: The reformed large parliament selected and elected in 1989. The new Supreme Soviet of 450 was elected from the membership of the larger Congress of 2,250.

Council of Ministers: The cabinet of the Soviet government, which had about 100 members. In the late Mikhail Gorbachev era, the council was renamed and reorganized as the Cabinet of Ministers.

- Council of the Federation: Upper house of the Russian national legislature comprised of elected representatives from 89 regions, 1993– .
- Demokratizatsiia (democratization): A movement to reform and democratize Soviet government and the governments of the 15 republics (1988–91).
- Derzhava (power): Political party formed in 1995 by former Vice-president Alexander Rutskoi.
- Duma: Popularly elected lower house of the Russian national legislature, 1993– .
- Federal Assembly: The national Russian legislature, comprising the Duma and the Federation Council, 1993– .
- Glasnost: Openness; a policy of revealing secret decisions and policies from the past (1985–91).
- Komsomol: Communist Youth League, which most youth joined at age 14 in the USSR.
- Liberal Democratic Party: Extreme nationalist party associated with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.
- Near Abroad: Russian term for the former republics of the USSR.
- New Thinking: A new approach to Soviet decision making; used to describe new approach to foreign policy under Gorbachev (1987–91).
- October Revolution: The revolution of October 25, 1917, in the Russian calendar, which brought the Bolsheviks and Lenin to power.
- Perestroika: The policy of restructuring the economic and political system (1987–91).
- Politburo: The top decision-making body of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; made up from the top elite of the party, government, military, policy. Averaged about 11 to 15 members, usually men; only twice in history were there women in the Politburo.
- Reform from Above: Reform that originated in the government or Party top leadership, such as Peter the Great or Gorbachev's reforms.
- Republic: One of the 15 major subdivisions of the USSR, of which the largest was the Russian Republic.
- Russia Is Our Home: New party formed for the 1995 Duma election. It was associated with Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin.
- Russia's Choice: Party of Yegor Gaidar; identified with Yeltsin in the 1993 election.
- Russian Congress of People's Deputies, 1990–93: The Russian legislature.
- Russian Social Democratic Labor Party RSDLP: The Russian Marxist party in the early twentieth century with numerous factions, of which the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks are the most famous. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the successor of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.
- Secretariat: The central bureaucracy of the CPSU.

- Soviet:** Literally counsel, advice, or council; term used to describe legislative branch of USSR government from local to national level.
- Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 1924–91:** The Soviet national legislature; tended to function as a rubber stamp until 1988. It was a working parliament, 1989–91, when it became the smaller chamber of the Congress of People's Deputies. It was dissolved after August 1991 coup.
- Union of Russian Women:** An association that is an outgrowth of the Committee of Soviet Women.
- Westernizer:** A nineteenth-century intellectual who looked to the West for models for Russia to follow. In post-Soviet Russia, the term is used to describe pro-Western reformers.
- Women of Russia:** An electoral coalition of women that competed in the 1993 parliamentary election and gained 8 percent of the seats. It is composed of several groups, of which the largest is the Union of Russian Women.
- Yabloko:** A liberal reform party led by economist Grigory Yavlinsky and others.
- Zastoi (period of stagnation):** Soviet code word for the Leonid Brezhnev era, especially the latter part of the Brezhnev era.
- Zhenotdel:** The Women's Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1919–30.
- Zhenskii Vopros:** Woman question, a nineteenth-century term used to refer to women's issues, which became the principal way Bolsheviks and later Soviets referred to women's issues.
- Zhensovety:** Women's councils, which existed intermittently in the Soviet era. The councils, normally found at the workplace, were social action groups. Some of these were the nucleus of post-Soviet charitable groups.

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