

Borders of Socialism

Private Spheres of Soviet Russia

Edited by Lewis H. Siegelbaum



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PRIVATE SPHERES OF SOVIET RUSSIA

EDITED BY
LEWIS H. SIEGELBAUM

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book originated during a car trip from Toronto to my home in East Lansing, Michigan in November 2003. I was returning from the annual convention of the Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS), where I had been drawn to presentations on family apartments in the Khrushchev era, youth culture, semi-legal markets, and other seemingly disparate topics remote from my own research on the history of automobiles in the Soviet Union. Suddenly, somewhere on that long stretch of road west of London, Ontario, I became aware of the common thread that connected our work. Barely articulated in our respective presentations, it was the everyday sites, practices, and forms of behavior that can be identified with the private sphere.

The realm of the private, variously defined, has been receiving increasing attention from students of Soviet-type societies for some time. One of the reasons for this development may be that so many of the previously dominant narratives about that part of the world suddenly seemed stale and inappropriate in the aftermath of the events of 1989–1991. These narratives, overwhelmingly about public affairs and the state, rarely addressed the private realm, and when they did so, tended to treat it as the beleaguered antithesis of state power. They thus occluded many of the “common places” and practices that gave specific meaning to, if not defined, life in Soviet-type societies. “Doing” private spheres thus adds a vital dimension to the history of such societies. The second reason has to do with disciplinary training specific to Soviet studies. Until not too long ago, 1945 (or at the latest 1953) was the year beyond which historians of the USSR feared to tread. This simply is no longer the case. The result is the challenging of long-held assumptions about what really mattered during the post-Stalin era, and a corresponding reexamination of some of the more reassuring contrasts that used to be drawn between East and West.

It was during that car trip, then, that my companion Leslie Page Moch suggested I try to put together a book of essays reflective of the exciting new scholarship to which I had been exposed at the conference. A few e-mail messages and an announcement in *H-Russia* elicited proposals; common

reading was suggested to help frame the essays; panels were put together for AAASS conventions in subsequent years; and, in the meantime, authors wrote and submitted drafts and revised versions. All this was facilitated by Palgrave Macmillan's editor, David Pervin and his assistant, Heather van Dusen, both of whom responded promptly and helpfully to my queries. I also am happy to express my gratitude to all the contributors for their cooperativeness and good cheer which made our collaboration not only conflict-free but fun; to Yves Cohen, Alain Blum, and Patrick Fridenson for giving me the opportunity to present my ideas and critically engaging with them in their seminars at the Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales; to Yves Charbit and Gabor Rittersporn for taking time away from more important things to attend and offer criticism and advice in those seminars; to my good friends, Ronald Suny and Diane Koenker, for their encouragement and enthusiasm about the project; and, of course, to Leslie Page Moch.

INTRODUCTION: MAPPING PRIVATE SPHERES IN THE SOVIET CONTEXT

Lewis H. Siegelbaum

The Private as a Universal Category of Historical Analysis?

The analytical distinction between the public and the private has been described as a “central preoccupation of Western thought since classical antiquity.” “Pervasive, durable, persistent, and deeply rooted,” this “great dichotomy” nevertheless has frustrated scholars by its “protean,” “inherently problematic, and often treacherous” nature, its “false clarity” and multiplicity of meanings.¹ In an influential attempt to untangle the web of contradictory associations, Jeff Weintraub identified two “fundamental, and analytically quite distinct, kinds of imagery” or axes according to which private and public have been contrasted:

- the hidden or withdrawn versus the open, revealed, or accessible;
- the individual or particularistic versus the collective or general.²

Of course, as Weintraub noted, “there are a number of ways in which each of these underlying criteria can be conceived, and . . . combined to produce the various concrete versions of the public/private distinction.” In fact, it turns out that, as the sociologist Joe Bailey puts it, “there is no essential ‘private’ or intrinsic ‘public,’ no obvious psychological or anthropological constant underlying these concepts.” They are, rather, highly mutable categories that construct each other. Sometimes one has occupied the “high” or favored ground while at other times it has been the residual category.³

If this is true of the modern Western world, could it also be, as Joan Landes recently asked, “a universal feature of human society, with endless variations? Or, conversely, is it a feature of a particular form of social organization associated with the rise of the family, private property, and the state?”⁴ Even if the latter were the case, the question remains whether the distinction has any utility for analyzing societies in which it did *not* figure in political

theory or legal practice. Weintraub notes that because the web of personal dependencies in medieval times attenuated if not totally obscured the public-private distinction, "a significant element in the shaping of modernity has involved the gradual rediscovery of these notions and the attempt to realize and institutionalize them."⁵ Does this mean that the distinction is meaningless or irrelevant to medievalists? Even a nodding acquaintance with recent scholarship suggests otherwise.⁶ Similarly in Middle Eastern studies it has been noted that "public/private dichotomies are difficult to discern in the historical record," at least before the nineteenth century. But, argues Elizabeth Thompson, that is no reason to eschew the two categories. They can be "localized" and used "as lenses of historical analysis" to understand, for example, how gender worked.⁷ The very lack of dichotomies creates rich possibilities for appreciating the ambiguous and overlapping nature of prevailing discourses, practices, and spatial dynamics. Meanwhile, the public sphere in the sense of civil society and in reference to culturally specific institutions and practices has appeared prominently in the works of historians and political scientists writing about China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸

Might the same approach be applied to the Soviet Union, a country where, as one political scientist recently noted, "everything was officially 'public,' privacy was unprotected, and the public sphere was étatisized?"⁹ The leviathan cast a long shadow. During the cold war, many Western scholars considered the absence of a private sphere to have been axiomatic of Soviet-type societies, a characteristic feature of their totalitarian nature. This view has received strong endorsement in post-Soviet Russia. According to the 1991 edition of the *Philosophical Dictionary* published in Moscow, "totalitarianism is the socio-political system (*stroï*) characterized by an all-embracing despotic interference of the state in all manifestations of life or the social organism and the life of individuals." Nor has the notion that the private was suffocated in such a sociopolitical system been limited to the Stalin era. Marc Garcelon, for example, refers to the *generic* "absence of key institutional elements of . . . civil society such as contractual law," "the Party-state's effort to suppress or destroy the 'private sector,'" and "the lack of an independent civil and political society" in Soviet-type societies. He considers the burgeoning clientelist and second-economy relationships of the post-Stalin decades to have been less indicative of "privatization" than a "generalized unregulated particularism" denoting the "gradual corruption of the Leninist order." Oleg Kharkhordin has argued à la Foucault that a "balanced system of total surveillance, firmly rooted in people's policing each other in an orderly and relatively peaceful manner" reached its apotheosis under Khrushchev, and that to the extent a private sphere existed at all it was produced by the practice of dissimulation.¹⁰

By contrast, Vladimir Shlapentokh, writing in 1989, argued that a process of “privatization” had been underway since the death of Stalin, and that it was inexorable. He charted three distinct types of privatization: the growing role of what he referred to as the “totally private institutions” of the family and friends; the expansion of the “unofficial public life” of civil society; and the exploitation of public positions for personal gain.¹¹ It is also worth citing the following statement by two gender studies specialists:

Under state socialism, citizenship and politics were liabilities (or, at best, opportunities for opportunism) rather than something that defined one’s sense of self. Instead, in the state socialist period, the private sphere was the place where you could be who you really were, with family, with friends, with close social networks, with those whom you trusted. The private sphere was the only one that mattered, at least as far one’s “real life” was concerned.¹²

Between these two stark alternatives—the impossibility of a private sphere in Soviet conditions and its exclusive hold on the real “self”—lies the conceptual terrain in which the present volume locates itself. Analogous to a recently published collection of essays on public spheres in Soviet-type societies, our collection insists on thinking seriously about the existence of private spheres, that is, a multiplicity of layers rather than a flat or unitary conceptualization of the private sphere.¹³ It ranges from the intimacy of sexual behavior to the relative “publicness” of friendship circles and the ownership and display of automobiles. But in every case, the private is neither hermetically sealed from nor necessarily in an antagonistic relation to public spheres. Rather, it is understood to be in a dynamic, interactive tension with the public, itself understood as a complex, multilayered category. This means that much of the volume dwells in a “shadow realm” in which state regulations, institutions, and procedures structured relations among friends, neighbors, relatives, workmates, and even life partners but whose force was mitigated by on-the-side deals, informal arrangements, “the unwritten codes of everyday moral economy,” and other such practices.¹⁴ Ideology vouchsafed the total annihilation of private property and privacy in the interests of a Communist way of life, the complete merging of individual and collective interests. But the temporal space in which people lived out their lives fell somewhat short of that goal. Indeed, the goal itself seemed to recede as the ardor for personal sacrifice in the building of socialism cooled and Soviet power “matured.”

The terrain covered in this volume was pioneered by several scholars among whom the culturologist, Svetlana Boym, should be singled out for special mention. In *Common Places*, her *tour de force* excursion through the “mythologies of everyday life in Russia,” Boym observed that “in Russia the history of relations between . . . society and individual [and] public and

private . . . often diverges from familiar Western European or American versions of modernity.”¹⁵ Boym’s reflections on those differences was part of a “mini-boom in private life studies in Russia” that has continued to the present. This upsurge of scholarly interest and the fruits derived therefrom owe a great deal to new research opportunities in Soviet archives as well as the critical adaptation of analytical frameworks developed in reference to western Europe and other parts of the world.¹⁶ Our volume seeks to continue this trend.

Thinking about and attempting to map private spheres in Soviet Russia is complicated by the fact that the very term for private (*chastnoe*) was banished for all intents and purposes from the Soviet lexicon in the 1930s. The discursive conflation of public and social (*obshchestvennoe*), the popular if not always officially acknowledged association of both terms with the state, and the substitution in certain circumstances and contexts of “personal” (*lichnoe*) for private also are part of the linguistic terrain. The approach adopted here offers neither an overarching metanarrative, nor a narrowly conceived definition bounded by local practice. If the former risks imposing dualities claiming universality but actually originating in the constructions of liberal democratic theory, the latter would tend to reproduce the comforting tales that elide ambiguity and contradiction.¹⁷ Most of the contributions in fact start from the recognition of ambiguity and contradiction and proceed to explicate the dynamic tensions contained therein.

The majority of the essays are situated chronologically in the post-Stalin era when broader and more self-conscious personal or private spheres emerged and received official acknowledgment. Indeed, this development, which occurred in all its fits and starts during the 1950s and 1960s, figures centrally in the volume, throwing into relief a period that only recently has come within historians’ purview. Several essays, though, are devoted to the Stalin era. Collectively they perform the critical function of demonstrating that while private spheres were more truncated and inchoate than they would become after Stalin’s death (and, at least in certain respects, were before the rise of Stalin), they were not entirely latent or dormant. The volume is, however, limited to the Russian part of the Soviet Union, essentially the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Studies of other Soviet republics as well as Communist eastern Europe and China unquestionably would help to illuminate what was generic to the Communist experience and what was specific to particular political formations, cultural traditions, and temporal phases. But this is a project for another volume, or several more volumes.

The principal aim of this collection is neither to celebrate nor lament the persistence of private spheres within the borders of Soviet socialism. Rather, it is to contribute to the ongoing reassessment of what Soviet socialism was and how it was experienced in everyday life. It does not seek to impose a uniform definition of the private, but instead to expose differences in the

way that term has been conceptualized and articulated and to work through related issues. It does not assume that private spheres were exclusively sites of resistance to the state; nor does it argue for the inevitability of their expansion at the expense of the state. Rather it provides evidence of symbiosis and hybridity, as well as antinomy. These alternative relationships, it suggests, were possible for two reasons: first, the state was not isomorphic with the public, for much that went on in the state was extremely private, revealed only on a need-to-know basis, if at all. Second, even when the state was at its most ambitious and coercive such as during the 1930s, the gap between its normative statements and institutional structures on the one hand and on the other, social practices based on personalistic ties was enormous.¹⁸ Finally, far from intending the volume to be the final word on the subject of private spheres in the Soviet context, we seek to expand the conversation and invite readers to join it.

The Economic: The Private Sector

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Soviet economy from the late 1920s until the very last years of the USSR's existence was the state's near monopoly over the ownership of the means of production and its centralized planning of production and distribution. If in any sense the private could be said to have disappeared or been shunted to the margins, this would appear to have been it. It turns out that not only during the relatively heterodox years of the Brezhnev administration but throughout the Stalin era (and of course earlier) private enterprise existed both legally and in the form of black-market activities. Transactions of a private nature—that is, outside of the state's institutions and essentially for personal/particularistic gain—were not merely residual but contributed mightily to the survival of millions and at times probably the majority of Soviet citizens. They certainly made life more tolerable, if at times precarious, for those who engaged in them, and it has been estimated that “especially during the hungry years of the First Five-Year Plan, . . . practically every Soviet citizen was involved at some level” in such activities.¹⁹

Aside from the individual household garden plots of collective farmers that are the subject of Esther Kingston-Mann's essay, legal forms of private activity in production included what independent farmers (*edinolichniki*) produced, kitchen gardens (*ogorody*) cultivated by urban residents, subsidiary enterprises of state institutions and collective farms, and individual and cooperative artisanal establishments in both rural and urban areas. Private ownership (*chastnoe vladenie*) of certain kinds of housing—for example, dachas—was legal at least until the Stalin Constitution of 1936 introduced the category of “personal property” (*lichnaia sobstvennost'*), which thereafter

seems to have functioned as “a legitimizing cover for the acquisition of property that was private in all but name.”²⁰ Legal forms of trade consisted of collective-farm markets, secondhand markets, and “out of hand” commerce in manufactured goods.

In the shortage economy over which Soviet officialdom presided, black-market operations were inevitable and ubiquitous. To avoid being branded as speculation, they were also often camouflaged, mimicking legal forms of production and trade. Whether they took the form of extending household plots at the expense of collective farmland, selling goods from household plots before fulfilling state procurement plans and paying taxes, or hiring workers to assemble or repair goods, such activities were as massive in scale as they were difficult to detect. The very mechanisms employed by the state to regulate distribution—ration cards, closed cooperatives and stores, special categories of the population and of cities—were open invitations for forgery, theft, reselling, bribery, imposture, the exchange of favors (*blat*), and other criminal and unauthorized activity.²¹

If the meaning of “private” were extended to include secret deals struck between representatives of state institutions (or, alternatively, among members of the same institution) that either remained off the books or were disguised in some fashion, then it could be said to have involved just about any director of a major enterprise and other highly placed officials. Though frequently condemned by party leaders and occasionally resulting in severe punishment, such deal making, facilitated by “pushers” (*tolkach*), was endemic to the functioning of Soviet industry. Failing adequate supplies delivered on time, it was how factories obtained what they needed to keep running, and how workers were provided with enough to keep them from leaving in search of better conditions.²²

All of this was happening in the 1930s. Writing about those “extraordinary times,” Sheila Fitzpatrick has drawn attention to the importance of personal connections and patronage, which “because of the acute shortage of goods, . . . was probably more important in ordinary people’s lives than the private sector had ever been during NEP (the New Economic Policy of the 1920s), paradoxical as this may seem.”²³ During and immediately after World War II, the scale of illegal private manufacturing and trade and official tolerance of it seems to have expanded, so much so that Julie Hessler has likened the situation in 1946–1947 to a “kind of ‘perestroika,’ involving, among other things, a limited rehabilitation of private enterprise.”²⁴

Most of what we know about the private sector during these years we owe to historians’ research in recently declassified materials at both the central and regional levels. When it comes to the post-Stalin decades, and particularly the Brezhnev era, private, semi-legal, and illegal economic activities were widely reported by Western journalists. Indeed, it would seem that along

with dissidents' travails, "Ivan's" hunger for blue jeans, rock music, and other accouterments of Western pop culture was a story they could not resist.²⁵ The topic of nonofficial economic activity gained academic respectability when Western economists conceptualized it as comprising a "second economy," and when the third wave of emigration enabled former Soviet academics to expand upon their findings.²⁶

The first two chapters, by Kingston-Mann and Andrew Jenks, deal with legal forms of private enterprise, each of which spanned most of the Soviet period. In the case of Kingston-Mann's discussion of collective farmers' household plots, the links backward to the garden plots of the pre-1917 communes and forward to post-Soviet agriculture are drawn explicitly, and underscore her argument that the privateness of these forms of property was defined quite differently by peasants and political authorities. Having been represented as a remnant of pre-socialism in the village or a concession to peasants' deeply entrenched petty bourgeois proprietary nature, these plots have come to be regarded by many entrepreneurial types in post-Communist Russia as an impediment to the full-blown commodification of the land. Kingston-Mann also connects the plots to the gendered division of labor among *kolkhoz* households, suggesting that they performed a vital role in cementing ties among female members of the *kolkhoz* community.

The Palekh "Artel of Ancient Art," founded in 1923, is the subject of Andrew Jenks's contribution. Catering to the desires of both well-to-do Russians and foreigners for a wee bit of old Russia, the Palekh folk artists drew on the "canon of Russianness" developed in the late imperial period—essentially scenes from fairytales and folklore—to decorate black lacquer boxes. Irony piled on top of irony as Soviet officials rejected efforts by artists to introduce new "Soviet" themes in deference to market tastes that included "Western 'bourgeois' demand for Russian exotica." Precisely because debates about Russian tradition and Soviet modernity remained unresolved well into the 1930s, Palekh could become a "privileged site for producing Soviet 'Russianness' " by " 'indigenizing' the Russian heartland and propagandizing 'ancient' Russian traditions." In this manner, the basically private tastes of consumers received the state's seal of approval, a process that Jenks characterizes as "publicization." Though sometimes stormy, this relationship between the state and the artel remained virtually unchanged until state tutelage of the arts collapsed along with the Soviet Union, leaving the Palekh masters to "negotiate the ever-shifting demands of a new era of globalization" on their own.

Charles Hachten's essay analyzes two public discourses from the 1940s about the nature and disposition of state property. During the first years of the Great Patriotic War, "separation" discourses stressing local and household initiative in managing property were evident, and, as Hachten points

out, they appear to have become part of people's own conceptions of their property and inheritance rights. Toward the latter part of the war, publicists reverted to the prewar emphasis on the Soviet state as the economic manager of the population via "discursive tricks" such as use of the first person plural to represent cultivation of gardens as a national campaign, attributing to the state the role of organizer of residents' initiatives to maintain apartment buildings, and even placing ruble values on maintenance done by residents as if it were part of the state's budget. Hachten concludes by provocatively noting that the relationship between such public discourses and social practices was a two-way street, that each was (in)forming the other.

Rounding out the first part, Lewis Siegelbaum explains that even as the state vastly expanded the opportunities for purchasing cars in the 1970s and 1980s, it fudged the question of whether individually owned automobiles constituted "private" or "personal" property. But this was only the beginning of the "Faustian bargain," in that the state's unwillingness or inability to furnish adequate fuel, spare parts, and repair services virtually compelled motorists to engage in frequent illegal, private entrepreneurial transactions. This burgeoning of the second economy was paralleled in behavioral terms by rather significant alterations to leisure-time interests and activities, patterns of sociability, and other changes to private life.

Of course, many issues relating to the economic dimension of the public-private distinction remain to be explored further. Among these, it seems to me, are urban-rural, national cultural, age, and class differences with respect to the kinds of goods and services obtained from state, cooperative, and private enterprises, and the extent to which the balance among these three property forms changed over time. We also need more on the formation of consumer taste and fashion; on forms of private employment, for example, of domestic servants and nannies in the homes of the Soviet elite, and of what at least in the Donbass were called "snowdrops" (workers who were on the payroll but were assigned to take care of the boss's car, run errands, and fulfill other personal needs); on kinship and especially "clan" links in connection with property ownership and the distribution of goods as in the case of the flower and fruit and vegetable trades; and on inheritance as a social and legal institution. Finally, someone should write a history of the category of "personal property" that is sensitive to its multifarious ambiguities, boundary challenges, and changes.²⁷

Controlling Domesticity and Domestic Space

"Has state socialism produced a space of its own?" asked Henri Lefebvre in the mid-1970s, adding that "a social transformation to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on

language and on space.”²⁸ Lefebvre was not sure how to answer his own question, notwithstanding the strenuous efforts that were made in the Soviet Union to produce new spaces. During the years of revolution and civil war, these efforts were expressed characteristically in the martial terms of fronts, storming fortresses, and the like. Things got a little more complicated after the military defeat of the Bolsheviks’ enemies. No sooner had the new regime begun to create institutions ostensibly serving the needs of the working class, then practices associated with that class’ demoralization popped up in the new premises. The migration of “the tavern” to workers’ clubs during the 1920s, the result of trade union activists trying to attract workers by permitting alcohol to be served there, is a good example of how drinking—a publicly condemned form of public (as well as private) behavior—found its way into a new, officially sanctioned public (or “social”) institution.²⁹ The closure of privately owned casinos and clubs following a Sovnarkom resolution to that effect in May 1928 evidently did not lead to the curtailment of card playing as intended, but only its removal from “public” sight. “In the evenings,” writes Natalia Lebina about Leningrad, “card playing was taken up with pleasure in a majority of Piter’s homes” with representatives of the intelligentsia considering it a kind of revival of the “mini-salon life” of the prerevolutionary era.³⁰

Of course, homes hardly remained unchanged. As was recently noted by Susan Reid, “The identification of the home or dwelling with the realm of privacy . . . cannot be taken for granted in the context of socialism.”³¹ The very apartments where Leningrad’s middle class enjoyed sitting down to a game of preference were, in most cases, municipalized after the revolution and subjected to “consolidation” (*uplotnenie*), that is, subdivided to accommodate additional residents on the basis of “sanitary norms” of per capita living space. The reconfiguration of domestic space into house-communes, “living collectives,” and the like was part and parcel of the “revolutionary (u)topography [that] was going to alter radically the commonplaces of culture and the public and private spaces,” producing—at least in architects’ renderings—fabulous palaces of culture, workers’ clubs, and eventually much more.³²

During the cultural revolutionary ferment of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the most radical of constructivist architects were dreaming of urban and anti-urbanist utopias devoid of bourgeois deformations like shops (as opposed to “distribution points”), private apartments, personal property, and tall buildings. This was just before or at the same time as new cities such as Magnitogorsk, the Stalingrad Tractor Factory’s residential zone, and Avtostroï (Autotown, also known as Sotsgorod, or Socialist City) on the outskirts of Nizhnii Novgorod began to take shape. They resembled neither bourgeois cities nor constructivists’ “visionary” town plans, although in their dearth of private space they were undoubtedly closer to the latter.³³

Meanwhile, in the older cities as well as the newer ones communal apartments (*kommunalki*), in which members of different families shared the same kitchen, bathroom, toilet, and interior hallways, became the norm and would remain so for decades to come. Communal apartments were spatial expressions of what Katerina Gerasimova calls “public privacy.” Within them, social interaction “had the characteristics of both public as well as private places” and residents “were in a zone of mutual visibility.” Even the “maintenance of bodily hygiene . . . took place under the ‘supervision’ of the neighbours.” Yet, even in these straitened circumstances, there were “zones of relative privacy” not only in one’s “own” room, but in common places too, and a range of tactics (from depersonalizing neighbors by treating them as part of the furniture to establishing pseudo-familial relationships with them) that minimized the loss of intimate, closed space. It was also possible to manipulate the implementation of consolidation so that longtime residents could remain among “their own” people—often relatives and friends.³⁴

Like so many other things in the USSR, the history of living space cannot be told without acronyms. Implementation of consolidation and all other state housing policies was in the hands of the ZhAKT (*zhilishchno-arendnoe kooperativnoe tovarishchestvo*, the housing lease cooperative society, or more simply, the housing board). It was the ZhAKT that issued residence permits, decided on whether apartments could be partitioned, monitored the sanitary norms, and made other decisions that affected residents’ everyday life. Research in their files would probably yield a treasure trove of information about how the public-private boundaries were negotiated.³⁵ From the ZhAKT in the 1920s and 1930s to the ZhEK (*zhilishchno-ekspluatatsionnaia kontora*, the housing maintenance office), or, alternatively, ZhKU (*zhilishchno-komunal’noe upravlenie*, municipal housing board) of the 1960s and 1970s, things seem to have changed very little. Judging by what came before the Avtozavod (Auto Factory) district executive committee in the very new Middle Volga city of Tol’iatti, the ZhEK was deciding who could live in which apartments, fining individuals through its comrades’ courts if they made too much noise or otherwise behaved in a “tactless” manner, and appointing commissions to investigate counterclaims contained in petitions filed by malefactors, friends, and workmates.³⁶

“Public privacy” might also be an appropriate way of describing the instructions peasant migrants to the cities received about how to live properly, that is, in a “cultured” manner. Socialist realist literature, art, and film were filled with such pointers, formulaically expressed by Catriona Kelly and Vadim Volkov as curtains, lampshade/lighting, and the tablecloth. Kelly and Volkov also cite the Stakhanovite, Aleksandr Busygin’s description of himself reading Stalin’s *Short Course* “in the dead of night, . . . line by line, paragraph by paragraph,” as exemplifying “two vital components associated

with the origins of private life: private living space, and silent reading, intensifying individual reflection.” For our purposes, it is less important what Busygin was reading than that the paternalistic state had given him the opportunity to read in at least what Kelly and Volkov imagine to be “a quiet dark room with curtains drawn and a table lamp casting light on the book,” a situation they characterize as one of “extreme privacy.”³⁷

The female counterpart to Busygin’s reading in terms of representations of domesticity was the “wife-activist” (*obshchestvennitsa*) movement of the mid- to late 1930s, the subject of Rebecca Balmas Neary’s contribution. Neary demonstrates that the movement was a crucial ingredient in the formation of Soviet domesticity, and for that very reason the conceptualization of the domestic sphere can hardly be confined to the private. Very public entities such as trade unions and the army’s political administration sought, via wives’ councils, to mobilize domestic virtues (maternal nurturing, housewifely thrift, cozy homemaking) to serve state priorities. Nor was this blurring of the domestic sphere’s public and private roles a uniquely Soviet phenomenon. Rather, it was both “inherent to the construction of the modern European family” and “a building block of the modern welfare state,” although the forms it took did have particularly Soviet dimensions. Among other domestic-based practices transcending the public-private divide was pet keeping. As Amy Nelson argues, keeping pets initially was stigmatized as “bourgeois” and frivolous, but it survived the obloquy to become an integral part of urban, everyday socialism. Unquestionably a component of private life, the pet fancy caught on in the public realm of state authority as well. The synergy “produced” the celebrity of Laika and other space dogs.

Such opportunities—both for privacy and its public representation—would be vastly expanded after the war when the state embarked on a massive program of housing construction, the main purposes of which were to eliminate the severe shortages in housing and to relocate urban residents from communal to separate, single-family apartments. The most concrete foundation and most vivid symbol of privacy under Soviet state socialism, the separate apartment is the subject of two papers in our volume, by Susan Reid and Steven Harris. How people lived in their new flats remained a highly public matter, for, as Reid points out, a Soviet person began in the “private” space of the home. Alongside voluntary and informal institutions, an outpouring of advice through the media of magazines, radio, and television sought to intervene in the ways people set up home, fitted themselves into its standardized spaces, and lived their daily lives. It set norms of hygiene, efficiency, rational consumption, and “contemporary” taste. But what it could not do was consume what it was feeding. Contrary to the notion advanced by Kharkhordin that a “fine-tuned and balanced system of total

surveillance” had been achieved under Khrushchev, Reid argues that Soviet urban residents negotiated in their practices of domestic consumption, home decorating, and housework both the regime of correct, Soviet, modern living and the highly standardized parameters of industrialized state housing.

Harris, relying mainly on Leningrad data, also questions assumptions in existing scholarship “about the ways in which the balance between the public and the private necessarily played itself out” during the Khrushchev era. In the two instances he presents—letters written primarily by women to the Leningrad city soviet in 1965 seeking restitution of an earlier start to the working day, and the campaign or “war” against noise—residents turned not away from but toward the state in their efforts to realize the promise of greater privacy and enjoyment of leisure time presented by their move to separate family apartments. Harris emphasizes the popular appropriation of tropes within public discourse for the pursuit of essentially private aims, a point echoed in Charles Hachten’s and Susan Costanzo’s contributions.

In the case of hooliganism, a term that covered a multitude of forms of violently antisocial behavior, we have a telling example of an ongoing debate at different levels of the state over where the boundaries of the public ended and the private began. As Brian LaPierre argues in his contribution, local judicial officials’ expansion of the meaning of hooliganism was twofold: first it was used to apply not only to acts disruptive or disrespectful of public order, but also to those involving family members, neighbors, and other close acquaintances, and second, it expanded the realm of “public space” to include the domestic, that is, communal and family apartments. This, he notes, was entirely consistent with a tendency during the Khrushchev years to bring public institutions (e.g., the *druzhina* and comrades’ courts) into the domestic realm and relationships. What makes this instance even more fascinating is that in publicizing the private, local legal workers appear to have been responding to pressure “from below,” that is, by abused wives and aggrieved neighbors. Far from being a sanctuary from the harshness of public life and the depredations of the state (as imagined in a good deal of Western literature), the family increasingly came to be regarded in the Soviet Union as a source of violent crime thanks in part to the proliferation of family hooligan convictions in the 1960s.³⁸

Behavior and Private Life

The overlapping realms of intimacy, familial relations, and friendship are conventionally understood to comprise the core elements of private life. It was here if anywhere that the Bolsheviks’ ambitions to transcend the public-private distinction were bound to come up against formidable obstacles, not so much in the form of conscious opposition as the resilience of old

habits and traditions. Yet, the appeal, particularly to the younger generation, of revolutionary asceticism, of privileging the public and collective over the private and individual, was enormous. Indeed, such was the cataclysmic force of the revolution that even those who felt victimized by it also tended to subordinate the personal to the political in explaining their life course. Hence, as Sheila Fitzpatrick has noted with reference to the period 1917–1941, “the typical autobiography by a Russian woman . . . deals more with public matters than private, familial ones.” Rather than the “personal milestones of marriage, childbirth, divorce and widowhood,” their narratives typically were structured by the “great public events—the revolution, the Civil War, collectivization, the Great Purges, and the Second World War.”³⁹

This might have been because the times were, as the Chinese proverb has it, so interesting. But for people of a certain age and orientation, the excitement of sloughing off the old and creating the new crowded out just about everything else.⁴⁰ Personal relations—for example, between lovers, or parents and children—could suffer, as the object was not to wallow in intimate or petty domestic concerns. Rather, one was supposed to align such relationships with the revolutionary transformative nature of the era. When they conflicted, as in the notorious case of Pavlik Morozov, it was the familial that had to give way, or so generations of Young Pioneers were taught.⁴¹ Even as asceticism went out of favor among Communist officials after the tribulations—but also triumphs—of the first Five-Year Plan, they continued to recommend working on one’s self (*prorabotat’ nad sebe*) as a means of, in Jochen Hellbeck’s words, “making Soviet citizens think of themselves and act as conscious historical subjects.” Autobiographies were one such “technology of the self,” to employ Foucault’s terminology. A more common genre, comprising the core of Hellbeck’s investigations, were diaries.⁴²

Like communism, the construction of the self was a work in progress. Diaries evidently were part of both projects, obliterating the distinction between the public and the private. Still, even the most ardent of young Communists could get caught up in other, older traditions. Raisa Orlova, for instance, recalls that, like Pushkin at the Tsarskoe Selo Lycée, “The cult of friendship reigned supreme” among her and her fellow students at Moscow’s Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature in the late 1930s. “We had our special language, our Masonic signs, and a very strong sense of belonging. Friendships were formed overnight and lasted a long time.”⁴³

No matter how hard some people tried to be good citizens and revolutionary subjects, there was still plenty of work to do. As Lazar Kaganovich noted in a conversation with a Young Pioneer leader in May 1933, “After all, we have to say that in regard to the human psyche 80 percent still survives from the past in our country.”⁴⁴ Trying to eliminate that 80 percent was a

gargantuan task, and, as Nicholas Timasheff argued, the outcome of that struggle was the “Great Retreat” to prerevolutionary values. But the struggle also was part of another syndrome: if virtuous behavior in the private sphere could be invoked to promote public works, then negative actions in the one sphere could also have their corollary in the other. Judging from the examples Larry Holmes cites from Kirov Province, locating or even inventing moral degeneration among those declared as enemies of the people and, by the same logic, correlating the suicides of pupils with teachers’ professional failings and political apostasy were part of a “symbiosis” linking the personal, professional, and political. The symbiosis degenerated, Holmes suggests, once the party began to recognize the autonomy of personal behavior.

Was this a harbinger of the post-Stalin era in which “the coexistence of the first (official) and second (unofficial, civil) societies [became] the most important feature of the Soviet Union as well as of almost all socialist countries which . . . left behind the period of mass terror”?⁴⁵ Perhaps, but it should not be assumed that the two “societies” were locked inevitably in a zero-sum game—that gains in the second, private “society” inevitably meant losses in the first. In Juliane Fürst’s chapter on friendship groups (*kompanii*) among intelligentsia youth of the 1950s, the boundaries between the private and the public again are blurred if not reversed. Precisely because certain public issues were not being addressed publicly by the state, *kompanii* made them subjects of poetical expression and debate in both public and private venues. The insistence of these groups that they were public further confounds common-sensical associations of the public with anonymity and the state and friendship with the private. Public discussion of personal relationships was what Ilya Ehrenburg advocated in an article he wrote for the newspaper, *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, in September 1959. Susan Costanzo’s analysis of the ensuing “*liriki-fiziki* debate” demonstrates that neither the newspaper’s staff nor letter-writers were of one mind about the appropriateness of such discussion. One of the effects of this lack of consensus, she concludes, was that in the longer term the private remained private.

Instead of a Conclusion

One of the main points that the essays in this volume make is that the borders separating public and private spheres were extremely porous and hard to define. It could be argued, as indeed it has been elsewhere, that this was at least partly because party and state officials (especially under Stalin though not exclusively so) refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of spheres of the private and set about attempting to colonize or eliminate them. That is not the main contention of these essays. In each of the private spheres discussed herein—the economic, the spatial, and the behavioral—the

public did not always or unproblematically coincide with the state, and the state was not always or simplistically in an antagonistic relationship with the private. Despite the strictures of ideology (and quite possibly the intentions of the formulators of state policy), the state could just as well promote as encroach on private enterprise, private space, and private life. Whether it was peasants' garden plots or handicraft production, pet ownership or other features of the separate family apartment that afforded residents more control over domestic space, public discussions of private issues or vice versa, car ownership and car repair, the state was an accomplice—and sometimes intended to be one—to the expansion of the private.

A second theme is the extent to which relationships and practices identified with private spheres compensated for the limitations of what was provided by or available in public spheres. This is less surprising—after all, the garden plot, officially characterized as a concession to peasant households, was in actuality a covert acknowledgment that collective farms could not by themselves feed their members—than that public and private often worked in tandem and were intended to do so if not always explicitly by state authorities. Herein may lie the explanation for the state's accommodation and even inculcation of the private.

Finally, the essays are rich in exposing what might be called the social practice of private spheres or their “inhabitation.” I am referring to the ways that individuals, families, and groups of unrelated people exercised discretionary power over the temporal and spatial resources at their disposal, developing repertoires of dispositions and behaviors that were self-generating over time. To better illustrate this last theme and, hopefully, whet the reader's appetite for its elaboration throughout the book, I will cite “A Week Like Any Other,” a short story by Natalia Baranskaia that was published in *Novyi Mir* in 1969.⁴⁶ The story covers a week in the life of Olga Nikolaevna Voronkova, a researcher in a Moscow lab and mother of two, and is told in the form of a diary. Olga is married to Dima, who, as husbands go, is not too reprehensible. He doesn't drink or physically assault his wife, and he does “help” with the children. But there are limits to what he is willing to do, and by Friday the strain of juggling work and domestic responsibilities causes Olga to break down in tears. On Saturday, she and Dima trade barbs about who should be putting the children to bed and whose work is more essential, and on Sunday Dima's casual suggestion that Olga give up work altogether precipitates a climactic row. The story ends with Olga having ironed Dima's trousers after telling him to do it himself and forgetting to sew the hook on her skirt.

Essentially a depiction of the “double shift” that millions of Soviet working mothers performed, the story seems made to order for professors teaching courses on feminism and socialism, gender and sexuality, and women in

Russian society and culture. But aside from the obvious tensions between job and home and male and female gender roles, it exposes an amazingly broad range of issues that cross the boundaries between public and private, in some cases several times. There is, for example, the big "Questionnaire for Women" waiting for Olga when she arrives at work on Monday. It asks all sorts of questions, but "What they really want to know," one of Olga's colleagues tells her, "is why women don't want to have babies" (8). Whether it is a matter of wanting babies or not, the question is both an intensely private one and, insofar as national fertility levels (or, in the words of the demographers who distributed the questionnaire, "an insufficient increase in population growth") are concerned, very public (10). Indeed, the next day Olga finds her colleagues immersed in a discussion of whether "a woman, and, of course, we're talking here about a Soviet woman, [should] be guided by the national interest in such a matter as having children" (19). Olga considers the question "stupid," and sarcastically proclaims while striking "a pose," "Comrades, . . . let me assure you that I gave birth purely for state reasons" (21). But three days later, still not sure "how to calculate the time, to work out what goes on what," she muses to herself, privately as it were, "Who really knows how much time family life needs? And what is it, anyway?" (49).

Olga and her fellow moms discuss each other's personal problems and in other ways treat the work (i.e., a "public") place as intimate ("private") space.⁴⁷ They save some time by the private arrangement of rotating shopping duties, but in so doing infringe on other people's—the public's—time ("You buy salami once, twice and then again . . . And the comments start: . . . 'There she is, buying for the whole apartment block while we stand here' ") (25). Olga relies on public transportation—as, of course, did almost all Muscovites—and is thereby subjected to crowding, queues, and the unwanted attention of a "cheeky" young man; but it is the bus that gives her the time to retreat into a private place where she can "remember this morning again" (15), remember her student days, read an issue of a journal that "everyone else read ages ago" (18) think about the discussion sparked by the questionnaire, and "remember how Gulka was born" (22). Olga and Dima rely on the public creche and kindergarten for child care because Olga's mother is deceased and Dima's looks after his sister's children. The absence of help from relatives means that the couple foregoes any form of public entertainment ("I try to remember when was the last time we went somewhere, and can't") (29).

"A Week Like Any Other" is a story of its time and place. Questions relating to the "negative consequences of women's involvement in work outside the home" began to appear in Soviet sociological surveys within a few years of the story's publication. Sociologists also confirmed the decline in the proportion of grandmothers assisting in the care of grandchildren,

the shortage of day care and its poor quality, the unwillingness of all but a small percentage of Moscow women with two children to give up their job to raise their children full time, the importance women attached to friends as confessors, and so on.⁴⁸ In the story, Olga and her friends contrast themselves to their older colleague, "M. M.," who was in an industrial commune in the early 1930s, had her daughters brought up in a children's home, is only interested in "her work, production figures and the Party," and essentially has no private life (12). To be sure, there is no explicit mention in the story of sex or contraception, though there is of abortion, the war in Vietnam, and Czechoslovakia.

It is difficult, in short, to analyze the public and the private in this story, and in much else that was produced and experienced in the Soviet Union both under Stalin and in the post-Stalin era. It is well worth the effort to do so, however. Whether conceived of as a framework, a lens, a prism, or some other specular device, whether defined in universalistic or culturally specific terms, employing the public-private distinction can shed much new light on the peculiarities of Soviet socialism and, perhaps the ways in which it was not so peculiar. This, at least, is what inspired the efforts of our *kollektiv*.

Notes

1. Jeff Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1–2; Joe Bailey, "From Public to Private: The Development of the Concept of the 'Private'," *Social Research*, 69, no. 1 (2002), 15; Norberto Bobbio, "The Great Dichotomy: Public/Private," in his *Democracy and Dictatorship: The Nature and Limits of State Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Dominique Memmi, "Public-Private Opposition and Biopolitics: A Response to Judit Sandor," *Social Research*, 69, no. 1 (2002), 143.
2. Weintraub, "Theory and Politics," 4–5.
3. *Ibid.*, 6; Bailey, "From Public to Private," 15. The discursive limits of the shift from public to private detected by Bailey are well illustrated in the case of George W. Bush's campaign to privatize Social Security. According to polls and focus groups cited by *The New York Times*, "the public doesn't like to hear the word 'private' when the topic is Social Security." Thus, the President eschewed reference to private retirement accounts in favor of "personal accounts." See *The New York Times*, February 1, 2005, A25; February 3, 2005, A18.
4. Joan Landes, "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction" *Journal of Women's History*, 15, no. 2 (2003), 28.
5. Weintraub, "Theory and Politics," 13.
6. See K. L. Reyerson, "Public and Private Space in Medieval Montpelier: The Bon Amic Square," *Journal of Urban History*, 24 (1997), 3–27; Dominique Barhelemy and Philippe Contamine, "The Use of Private Space," in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Georges Duby (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), vol. 2,

- 395–505; Dianne Tillotson, “Medieval Writing” at <<http://www.medievalwriting.50megs.com/scripts/scindex.htm>>, last consulted September 8, 2004. See also Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978) and Hans Peter Duerr, *Nacktheit und Schamm. Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozess* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988).
7. Elizabeth Thompson, “Public and Private in Middle Eastern Women’s History,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 15, no. 1 (2003), 52, 63. See also Abraham Marcus, “Privacy in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo: The Limits of Cultural Ideals,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18 (1986), 165–183.
 8. Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and David Strand, eds. *Reconstructing Twentieth-Century China: State Control, Civil Society, and National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic, eds., *Civil Society in China* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997); Thomas Metzger, *The Western Concept of a Civil Society in the Context of Chinese History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1998); Gordon White, *In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
 9. Andras Sajo in *Social Research*, 68, no. 1 (2002), vi. Sajo was the convener of a conference on “Privacy in Post-Communist Europe,” held at the Central European University in Budapest in March 2001.
 10. Marc Garcelon, “The Shadow of the Leviathan: Public and Private in Communist and Post-Communist Society,” in *Public and Private*, 303–332; Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 300 and “Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia,” in *Public and Private*, 303–332, 333–363.
 11. Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People, Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), especially 153–159. See also his *Love, Marriage, and Friendship in the Soviet Union—Ideals and Practices* (New York: Praeger, 1984). Shlapentokh’s identification of the private as a subject worthy of study was both pathbreaking and prescient.
 12. Kim Lane Scheppele and Miglena Nikolchina, “The New Private Spheres,” Central European University Summer University <http://www.ceu.hu/sun/Previous%20Years/SUN_1999/99gender.html>, last consulted November 8, 2004.
 13. Gabor T. Rittersporn, Malte Rolf, and Jan C. Behrends, eds., *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs: Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003).
 14. Elena Zdravomyslova and Viktor Voronkov, “The Informal Public in Soviet Society: Double Morality at Work,” *Social Research*, 69, no. 1 (2002), 49–69. See also L. G. Ionin, *Svoboda v SSSR: stat’i i esse* (St. Petersburg: Fond Univ. Kniga, 1997) and Anna Rotkirch, *The Man Question: Loves and Lives in Late Twentieth-Century Russia* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2000).
 15. Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 2–3.
 16. See Rebecca Friedman, “Private Life in Russia: Medieval Times to Present,” *The Journal of the International Institute*, University of Michigan <<http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol4no2/privrus.html>>, last consulted September 8,

2004. I am thinking in particular of Jürgen Habermas' bourgeois public sphere and feminist critiques of the ideology of separate spheres.
17. I am indebted to Glennys Young for this insight.
 18. Stephen Lovell, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710–2000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 160–161.
 19. Elena A. Osokina, "Economic Disobedience under Stalin," in *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power & Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, ed. Lynne Viola (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 170–200 (quotation on 192). See also her *Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobil'ia."* *Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii, 1927–1941* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1998). In English: *Our Daily Bread: Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia*, trans. Kate Transchel and Greta Bucher (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000).
 20. Stephen Lovell, "The Making of the Stalin-Era Dacha," *Journal of Modern History*, 74, no. 2 (2002), 283.
 21. Osokina, "Economic Disobedience," and Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917–1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
 22. Most of the best-known factory directors in the country were adept at such wheeling and dealing and would not have been out of place in the board rooms of contemporary western capitalist enterprises. For the fascinating memoir of a *tolkach*, see Gennady Andreev-Khomiakov, *Bitter Waters: Life and Work in Stalin's Russia*, trans. Ann E. Healy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).
 23. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 66.
 24. Julie Hessler, "A Postwar Perestroika? Toward a History of Private Enterprise in the USSR," *Slavic Review*, 57, no. 3 (1998), 516–542 (quotation at 532).
 25. See, e.g., Hedrick Smith, *The Russians* (New York: Times Books, 1976); Robert G. Kaiser, *Russia: The People and the Power* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976); Elizabeth Pond, *From the Yaroslavy Station: Russia Perceived* (New York: Universe Books, 1981); David K. Willis, *Klass: How Russians Really Live* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).
 26. See the series of Berkeley-Duke papers on the Second Economy in the USSR, edited by Gregory Grossman and Vladimir Treml including the extensive bibliography assembled by Grossman (no. 21, 1992). See also Gregory Grossman, "The 'Second Economy' of the USSR," *Problems of Communism*, 26, no. 5 (1977), 25–40 and James Millar, ed., *Politics, Work and Daily Life in the USSR: A Survey of Former Soviet Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Alternative and overlapping terms include "the grey economy," "the shadow economy," "on the side" (*na levo*), "the economy of favors," and "the Little Deal."
 27. For some useful hints about studying personal property, see Lovell, "Making of the Stalin-Era Dacha," 283–288.
 28. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 53–54.
 29. See Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "The Shaping of Soviet Workers' Leisure: Workers' Clubs and Palaces of Culture in the 1930s," *International Labor and Working-Class History Journal*, no. 56 (Fall 1999), 78–92. For Trotsky's complaint along these

- lines see Leon Trotsky, *Problems of Everyday Life* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973), 302–305.
30. Natalia Leбина, *Povednevnaia zhizn' sovetskogo goroda: Normy i anomalii, 1920–1930 gody* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal “Neva,” 1999), 254. See also Aleksandr Chistikov, “Gosudarstvo protiv kartochnoi igry,” in *Normy i tsennosti povednevnoi zhizni: Stanovlenie sotsialisticheskogo obraza zhizni v Rossii, 1920–1930-e gody* ed., Timo Vihavainen (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal “Neva,” 2000), 299–316.
 31. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds., *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 13.
 32. Boym, *Common Places*, p. 126. See also Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); V. E. Khazanova, *Iz istorii sovetskoi arkhitektury, 1926–1932 gg, dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1970) and *Klubnaia zhizn' i arkhitektura kluba, 1917–1941* (Moscow: Zhiraf, 2000).
 33. Anatole Kopp, *Town and Revolution: Soviet Architecture and City Planning, 1917–1935* (New York: G. Braziller, 1970); S. Frederick Starr, “Visionary Town Planning during the Cultural Revolution,” in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*, ed. Shiela Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 207–240; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Vladimir Papernyi, *Kul'tura dva* (Moscow: Novoe lit-noe obozrenie, 1996). In English: *Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Richard Cartwright Austin, *Building Utopia: Erecting Russia's First Modern City, 1930* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2004).
 34. Katerina Gerasimova, “Public Privacy in the Soviet Communal Apartment,” in *Socialist Spaces*, 210, 217, 224–225; Katerina Gerasimova and Sof'ia Chuiкина, “Ot kapitalisticheskogo Peterburga k sotsialisticheskomu Leningradu: Ismenenie sotsial'no-prostranstvennoi struktury goroda v 30-e gody,” in *Normy i tsennosti*, 27–44. See also Boym, *Common Places*, 121–167.
 35. For some examples from Leningrad see Iuliia Obertreis, “‘Byvshee’ i ‘izlishnee’—izmenenie sotsial'nykh norm v zhilishchnoi sfere v 1920–1930-e gody,” in *Normy i tsennosti*, 86–87. Boym (*Common Places*, 129) refers to the Housing Committee as “an important local institution of Sovietization,” and quotes Lidiia Ginzburg's description of it as an “institution of denial of human rights—rights to air, to toilet, to space.”
 36. Upravlenie po delam arkhivov g. Tol'iatti (TGA), f. R-300 (Avtozavodskii raionnyi Sovet narodnykh deputatov g. Tol'iatti i ego ispolnitel'nyi komitet), op. 1, d. 50, ll. 31–44, Protocols of sessions, reports of the standing commission on socialist legality and preservation of public order, 1974.
 37. Catriona Kelly and Vadim Volkov, “Directed Desires: *Kul'turnost'* and Consumption,” in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution 1881–1940*, ed. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 299, 304. Instruction was not only in one direction. As Evgeny Dobrenko has written, “Socialist realism was a contact point and a cultural compromise between two currents, the masses and state power.” Evgeny Dobrenko, “The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste; or Who ‘Invented’ Socialist

- Realism?," in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, ed., Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 160.
38. The increasing ease of divorce and the consequential increase in the divorce rate during the 1950s and 1960s had the same effect. See Deborah A. Field, "Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era," *Russian Review*, 57, no. 3 (1998), 599–613.
 39. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Lives and Times," in *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine (Princeton, 2000), 3–4.
 40. Hence Walter Benjamin's observation in the diary he kept during his visit to Moscow in 1927 that private life was "withering away. There is simply not time enough for it." Walter Benjamin, *Moscow Diary*, trans. Richard Sieburth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 85.
 41. "They're not kith- /They're vipers! /They're not kin- /They're enemies!," shouts Pavlik to his younger brother as he unsuccessfully tries to escape from their grandfather in Mikhail Doroshin, "A Poem about Hate," published in *Pionerskaia Pravda* in March 1933 and reproduced in James von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 152–155.
 42. Jochen Hellbeck, "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts," *Russian Review*, 60, no. 3 (2001), 341. See also his "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931–1939," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 44, no. 3 (1996), 344–373 and "The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response," *Russian Review*, 63, no. 4 (2004), 621–629.
 43. Cited in Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 233.
 44. Cited in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, ed., *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 384.
 45. Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life*, 229.
 46. Page numbers will be given parenthetically in the text to the English-language version translated by Pieta Monks and published by The Seal Press (Seattle, 1990).
 47. When "Dark Lusya" wants to think, she "hides herself so well that nobody can find her." Natalya Baranskaya, *A Week Like Any Other, Novellas & Stories* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1990), 39.
 48. See Shlapentokh, *Love, Marriage, and Friendship*, 175–179, 193–195, 223–224.

PART 1

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND PRIVATE
PROPERTY

CHAPTER ONE

CLAIMING PROPERTY: THE SOVIET-ERA PRIVATE PLOTS AS “WOMEN’S TURF”

Esther Kingston-Mann

Each of the political regimes that held sway in Russia during the twentieth century—tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet—attempted to impose radically different property systems upon peasants who were prime objects of government policy. In 1906, in 1928, and again in 1991, a passion for the private (Stolypin), the public (Stalin), and the private again (Yeltsin-Gaidar) evoked resistance in which women played a key role. In each case, government officials construed “the public” and “the private” as fundamentally antagonistic and incompatible elements of modern economic and noneconomic life. And in each case, the economic actions of women engaged in social labor on behalf of others—in child care and family maintenance—interrogated and profoundly challenged the public/private property distinctions that had been imposed by government fiat.¹

The strikingly different levels of violence and cruelty with which privatization and collectivization were implemented have been well documented, but it is worth noting that these policies also possessed important similarities. Above all, each was a top-down initiative, inspired by a faith in modernity and progress that made wholesale obliteration of preexisting systems of property ownership seem both realistic and necessary.² As a consequence, tenure transformation was frequently experienced by peasants as an arbitrary and intrusive effort to destroy the mix of economic and noneconomic strategies and practices by which—however badly—they previously had managed to survive. It is in light of the difficult encounter between state policy and its recalcitrant objects that I intend to situate this preliminary study of the Soviet-era “personal subsidiary plots” (*lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo*), and the peasant women who fostered their extraordinary contribution to the development of the Soviet economy.³

It should be emphasized that these properties were not simply an anomaly within a collectivized Soviet economy; they represented a core feature of pre-1917 village life. Russian peasant households traditionally claimed rights to use of an *usad'ba* (a garden plot adjacent to the household's dwelling place); its cultivation or use for the raising of poultry and livestock was traditionally considered "women's work." The *usad'ba* belonged to the household as a collective unit, and could not be sold, leased out, or left unused. Its location and size were decided by the peasant commune (*mir*, or *obshchina*) to which the majority of the population belonged.⁴

As a dominant peasant institution in the Russian countryside, the commune was the object of centuries of idealization and demonization by a variety of radicals, reformers, and government officials. Its distinguishing feature was the periodic repartition of a given number of strips of land (the allotment) among member households based on family size, the number of adult laborers per household, or some other collective social principle. Neither wholly collective or private, communes were mixed economies within which individual, household, and communal rights to ownership coexisted in social configurations that varied regionally and changed over time.

In the world of peasant property relations, few ownership rights were unconditional. Commune households claimed exclusive but temporary rights to their allotments. Individual household members owned their personal belongings and could bequeath them to others, but allotments—like the *usad'ba*—could neither be bought nor sold. While peasant households depended upon commune pasture lands for the grazing of livestock, they were nevertheless free to decide how to dispose of their livestock or other products of their labor. The power exercised by the patriarch (*bol'shak*) over the daily life of his household was virtually absolute; however, when he died, the *usad'ba* and other household properties reverted not to individual household members but to the household as a collective under a new head (a son, brother, or sometimes a widow). Disputes over property were decided by a commune assembly (*skhod*) composed of the predominantly male heads of peasant households and elected village elders.⁵

Women were primarily responsible for the peasant household's domestic economy. As in many peasant societies, their preeminently social labor involved—in addition to the production and raising of offspring—the obligation to cook, fetch water, sew, wash clothes, weave cloth, and care for poultry and livestock. Although the patriarchal traditions of peasant life left women with little protection against sexual assault and/or other forms of cruelty and mistreatment, their labor was nevertheless acknowledged as the basis for claims to unconditional ownership of a "woman's box"—the product of weaving, poultry raising, the cultivation of fruits and vegetables on the *usad'ba*, and other gendered activities.⁶ Whatever precarious status and

material security that peasant women could claim depended above all on the capacity to labor on the *usad'ba* and to appropriate some of its products (and to bear numerous and healthy children). It is worth noting that in the early 1900s, few women in Western countries could claim property rights as unconditional as those possessed by Russian peasant women.

In the northern and western regions of the Russian Empire, peasant land was generally held in hereditary (*podvornoe*) tenure, but just as in commune districts, these farms usually comprised scattered strips of land located outside of the village. Here as elsewhere, women were the primary caretakers of a domestic economy. On the eve of World War I, corruption, nepotism, profit seeking, and inequality were widely documented within and outside the peasant commune. To the extent that communes possessed any advantage, it was that they permitted the family's desire for a holding of its own to coexist—in varying degrees of tension—with the desire to guard against the monopolizing of resources by wealthier families/households. Outside the commune, there existed no institutional mechanisms to reconcile these competing interests.⁷

The peasantry's locally determined mix of private and communal systems of possession and ownership was neither rigid nor unchanging.⁸ In the case of the *usad'ba*, communes made decisions about plot size in keeping with changes in the number of adult laborers present in a member household. These complex realities posed a powerful challenge to a succession of Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet policy makers who tended to read variations and cyclical changes as a demonstration of rural chaos, and considered the wholesale domination of one tenure system over another a triumph of Reason and modernity.⁹ Before and after 1917, an overriding concern with the symbolic and substantive significance of tenure obscured the evidence suggesting that levels of innovation and productivity did not significantly differ in *podvornoe* and commune villages.¹⁰ While rural innovation was not widespread either within or outside the commune, evidence of important changes in farming practices was definitely manifest by 1905, when Russia's first twentieth-century revolution erupted.

Revolutions and Tenure Transformation: 1905–1928

In 1905, peasant communes played a leading role in organizing the seizure of landed gentry estates and served as major conduits for demands for the abolition of private property in land. To defuse this revolutionary threat, the tsarist regime's P. A. Stolypin launched a reform program intended to replace the commune with individual, self-contained private farms (*otruby* and *khutora*). As in other times and places, tenure transformation—privatization, in this case—threatened the status and material security of

women who managed and depended on the household's domestic economy.¹¹ In Russia, the Stolypin Reforms played this role by converting the household *usad'ba* into the private property of the *bol'shak*.

Although some peasants were eager to become rural entrepreneurs, peasant women were at the forefront of a decade of violent and nonviolent resistance to the Reforms. Benefiting from the tendency of officials to respond more leniently to women, peasant women openly protested against policies that encroached on their sphere of life and labor—that is, on claims to the *usad'ba* and its products.¹² Even the Reform-minded peasants who abandoned the practice of periodic land repartition were reluctant either to abandon the common pasture lands that communes had traditionally provided or to engage more heavily in rural innovation than their commune counterparts.¹³ On the eve of World War I, peasants returned to the commune in increasing numbers. By 1916, violence against the “separators” became so intense that the Stolypin Reforms were suspended.

Between February and October 1917, peasant men and women took center stage, as commune-based land seizures swept the countryside. In the course of the revolution, they played a leading role—both as peasants and as soldiers—in the All-Russian Peasant Union and in provincial and national soviets of workers, soldiers, and peasants' deputies. Peasant petitions demanded that the Provisional Government prohibit the buying and selling of landed property, decried official preference for the Stolypin Reforms, and denounced the transfer of *usad'by* into the hands of the *bol'shak*. In April 1917, peasant women from Perm province not only submitted letters of protest, but they also demanded the arrest of the “counterrevolutionary” officials they judged “guilty” of supporting the Stolypin Reforms.

At the Bolshevik April Conference, Lenin enthusiastically cited a report that peasants in Penza province were not only converting gentry land and tools into common property but also establishing rules for cultivation intended to raise agricultural productivity.¹⁴ In May, an All-Russian Conference of Soviet Peasant Deputies declared: “All peasants deserve the right to labor on the land; private ownership is abolished.” These and similar demands voiced throughout the summer and fall of 1917 were successfully appropriated by the Bolshevik Party and became a key factor in the Bolshevik rise to power. However, neither then nor later was there any evidence that Bolsheviks were (1) aware of the complex distinctions that peasants drew between rights of possession, use, and ownership of land,¹⁵ or (2) sensitive to the apparent contradiction between simultaneous peasant demands for elimination of private property rights and for retention of the *usad'ba*.

In 1917, such distinctions were particularly lost on Lenin, who sought in vain for evidence of class struggle between kulaks and proletarians and deployed an ill-defined “middle peasantry” or an equally ill-defined “petty

bourgeoisie” to take up the ideological slack as needed.¹⁶ As commune peasants demanded abolition of private property in land, Lenin stubbornly insisted that a revolutionary rural proletariat was leading petty bourgeois peasants to abandon their “love of property.” On the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power, Lenin expressed the optimistic hope that in future, peasants would test their petty bourgeois illusions “in the fire of life” and move toward socialism.¹⁷ In Moshe Lewin’s remarkably understated formulation, “the Bolsheviks did not understand peasants very well.”¹⁸

The Bolshevik Land Decree of October 1917 was not a wholly collectivist document. While it eliminated rights to private property in land and transferred some land to the state or the *obshchina*, it left peasant allotments and garden plots untouched. All male and female citizens were granted rights to land use as long as they relied on their own—or their family’s—labor; the purchase, sale, mortgage, or renting of land was prohibited. According to historian V. P. Danilov, this decree was one of the most revolutionary pieces of property legislation in modern world history.¹⁹ At the same time, it is worth noting that despite its unprecedented assertion of equality for women, the mix of tenure and labor claims enshrined in this statute did not radically challenge the pre-1917 practice of either commune or *podvornoe* peasants.

In its responsiveness to peasant demands, the Soviet Land Decree was profoundly at odds with the Orthodox Marxism espoused by those who issued it, and the document’s flexible stance was short-lived. In 1918, a fragile Soviet government attempted instead to impose the statist doctrines of War Communism upon a countryside rife with competing local land claims, and reeling from the impact of foreign intervention, civil war, and food shortages that drove urban dwellers to the countryside in search of food. When peasants proved reluctant to comply with state demands that they supply grain in exchange for worthless currency and government expressions of gratitude, the new Soviet leadership created the *kombedy* (Committees of the Poor) to mobilize rural proletarians against the “kulaks” deemed criminally responsible for hoarding much-needed grain.²⁰

Confronted by a government prone to demonize them, but incapable—for the time being—of enforcing its will, peasants closed ranks against the *kombedy* and carried out a post-October “anti-Stolypin revolution” that reestablished and strengthened their pre-1917 communes.²¹ Ignoring the government’s repeated invitation to join collective and state farms, 96 percent of the rural population in 39 out of 47 provinces chose instead to join or rejoin the communes by 1920.²² Commune *skhody* once again oversaw the disposition and use of allotments, pasture lands, and *usad’by*. In general, peasant exercise of free choice did not produce increased rural differentiation; according to Soviet statistics for the War Communism era, most peasants

produced no merchandise, sold a fraction of their produce, and reserved most of it for internal family consumption.²³

Despite commune peasants' refusal to comply with the *kombedy's* government-inspired demands, Soviet authorities initially had no choice but to rely on the communes to collect taxes and carry out other administrative tasks. The Land Statute of 1919—which oddly categorized communes as “individual” owners of land—also guaranteed rights to garden plots as the collective property of any household that agreed to enter collective farms. For their part, peasants ignored government prohibitions on private trade and proceeded to construct a black market and systems of barter that rendered the formal organs of state control irrelevant to the process of exchange. By 1920, grain production stood at 60 percent of its prewar level, and Soviet leaders found themselves powerless either to constrain or to mobilize the peasantry. In important respects, the fluctuating gap between the Soviet government's demands and peasant economic behavior would define a major segment of the social history of the Soviet era.

In 1921, as peasant autarchy threatened urban centers with starvation and the Kronstadt uprising challenged the political survival of the October Revolution, an embattled Communist leadership proclaimed the New Economic Policy (NEP). Described by Lenin as a “retreat” in the direction of capitalism, NEP revealed in full measure not only the improvisatory political skills that originally propelled the Bolsheviks to victory in 1917, but also the political ironies that led a self-proclaimed “workers and peasants' state” to argue that responsiveness to the demands voiced by the peasant majority of the population represented “a step backward.”

Between 1921 and 1928, the Soviet government abandoned grain requisitions and permitted greater freedom of trade and choice in forms of landownership. The Land Code of 1922 did not privilege some forms of peasant landholding at the expense of others; individuals were permitted to farm land with their own labor, and to hire labor on condition that employers worked alongside employees. The code restored to women and other members of the peasant household the collective rights to the *usad'ba* abrogated by the Stolypin Reforms; it also challenged patriarchal tradition by declaring men and women equal members of the household, with equal rights to participate in commune assemblies.

NEP legal statutes recognized communes as juridical persons who could acquire property and conclude contracts, hire herdsman and watchmen, pay them out of a budget that came from self-taxation, and enforce greater social obligations by members to the community as a whole.²⁴ In addition, commune assemblies were permitted to retain their pre-1917 power to decide on farming practices, land repartition, the size and location of the *usad'ba*, and arrangements for the use of common pasture land.

Government efforts to impose a measure of nationwide uniformity in farming practices were largely ignored. While peasants took full advantage of the new trading opportunities that NEP provided, they neither abandoned the commune nor ceded local authority to government-supported rural soviets.

Like the Stolypin reformers, Soviet proponents of NEP rested their hopes for the agricultural economy on the superior economic virtues that were presumably fostered by private landownership. While the *usad'ba* did not come in for special attention, Soviet leaders eagerly celebrated the economic achievements of the so-called Red *khutors* of Nizhnii Novgorod.²⁵ As in the past, they remained ideologically blind to evidence that challenged their assumptions, and, as a consequence, they tended to miss a number of significant anomalies:

Between 1921 and 1928, most of the richer peasant households that consolidated their scattered strips of land remained within the commune,²⁶ while the more privatized "red *khutors*" continued to rely on the use of common pasture lands. In addition, communes—from the Marxist perspective, the strongholds of resistance to modernity—reported significant levels of rural innovation in the 1920s. In a single district in Moscow province, 5,204 out of 6,458 commune villages introduced new systems of crop rotation during the year 1926 alone.²⁷ Although the degree of economic change introduced in the Soviet countryside should not be overestimated, it would be fair to say that a no longer wholly backward Russian countryside succeeded in restoring grain production to its pre-1914 level by 1926. In 1927, the total land area sown in grain increased slightly, but adverse climatic conditions produced a harvest six percent lower than the previous year's bumper crop.²⁸

Forced Collectivisation and the "Private" Plots

Who will direct the development of the economy, the kulaks or the socialist state?
—M. I. Kalinin, 1929

Although the Soviet leadership was desperately concerned to revive the agricultural economy, the recovery of the rural populace aroused ambivalence rather than enthusiasm. The specter of a resurgent peasantry aroused fears that either a primitive, consumption-hungry rural populace or a sinister kulak conspiracy might dictate its own terms in the disposal of agricultural output.²⁹ To vanquish the Janus-like threat posed by peasants either too dangerously "medieval" or too dangerously "capitalist," the Communist Party leadership initiated a policy of forced collectivization. After 1928, peasant allotments, *usad'by*, horses, poultry, and even the cow that was the peasant women's mainstay were transferred into the hands of the state.

Labor for the collective became a preeminent claim to livelihood, with all peasants henceforward required to work a minimum number of labor days (*trudodni*) under the supervision of managers who enforced the fulfillment of state directives. A frenzy of "gigantomania" gripped Party zealots, who envisioned entire villages merged in a "solid collectivization" of agriculture, with vast unbroken expanses of land that could be cultivated jointly, and on a rational and scientific basis. In the name of "scientific socialism," the state committed itself to the mission of fostering "bigness" regardless of economic calculations of optimal size or reasonable expectations of economies of scale.³⁰ In the light of such policies, there was no more powerful symbol of the peasantry's limited horizons than the minuscule *usad'ba*.

In 1928, a Soviet government willing and able to deploy levels of coercion inconceivable in 1918 launched an all-out battle for radical tenure transformation, complete with the murder of suspected kulaks, mass killings, deportations to forced labor camps, and the bombardment of peasant villages. In a brutal and brutalizing process, the Soviet state criminalized the peasant complaint that collectivization represented an assault on hard-won individual, household, and commune-based autonomy, and it destroyed the preexisting basis for their material livelihood.³¹ An astonishing one and a half years was allotted by the Party for the wholesale collectivization of the rural population.

By all accounts, women played a leading role in peasant resistance to forced collectivization. In 1930 alone, 3,712 mass disturbances (total 13,754) consisted almost exclusively of women; in the other cases, women constituted either a majority or a significant proportion of the participants. A contemporary Soviet report noted that "in all kulak disturbances the *extraordinary activity of women is evident*."³² In the words of *Pravda*, "petty bourgeois instincts" were regrettable manifestations of the "individualistic female spirit."³³ However, it is instructive to recall that women were also in the forefront of opposition to Stolypin's privatization reforms of 1906. As in earlier times, women resisted appropriation of the household garden plot upon which a measure of their income and household status depended. Deploying strategies of resistance that turned the prejudices of their oppressors to the victims' advantage, they sometimes succeeded in reclaiming their "socialized" livestock by joining with Party functionaries in what historian Lynne Viola has brilliantly described as a "conspiracy of stereotypes." In keeping with the practice of pre-1917 Russian officials, coercion was less frequently used against allegedly "backward" and "irrational" women. For their part, women were quite willing to repent loudly, publicly, and at length, and they enjoyed official leniency as a consequence.³⁴

By 1930, when state repression and peasant rebellion created a level of chaos in the countryside that threatened the spring planting season, Stalin called a temporary halt to the collectivization process. In a stunning reversal,

he denounced his functionaries as “sworn enemies” of socialism who “falsely” claimed that Soviet policy required that houses, livestock, poultry, and household plots be socialized.³⁵ Peasants reacted to this shift in policy with a flexibility born of a centuries’ long history of coping with arbitrary coercive authority. With extraordinary rapidity, they moved to reclaim their communes; in March 1930 (before Stalin’s cease and desist order), the level of collectivization stood at 57 percent, but by June, the percentage had fallen to 24.8 percent.³⁶

But the peasantry’s “breathing space” was brief. When state violence resumed and rates of collectivization once again began to climb, they were not able to halt the government’s onslaught. However, rural resistance—above all, by women—succeeded nevertheless in winning an extraordinary and rare concession from the Stalinist state. Even as the state set itself to criminalize and target private claims, a Model Collective Farm Statute of 1935 legitimized peasant demands for household allotments that resembled the pre-1917 *usad’ba*. Although the statute’s Preamble promised “a full victory . . . over the backwardness of small-scale private farming,” the law itself legalized the peasant household’s exclusive and permanent use of homes, domestic livestock, barns, tools, and implements for the cultivation of exceedingly small-scale garden plots.³⁷ The “socialization of livestock” that had driven peasants to destroy their own farm animals rather than transfer them to the state was replaced by intricately detailed official permission for permanent household rights to one milk cow, two calves or heifers, one sow and piglets, four sheep, and an unlimited number of chickens. While avoiding the use of the pejorative word “private” (*chastnyi*), the statute even promised that—for a price—horses belonging to the *kolkhoz* could be used to meet the personal needs of their members. The size of plots for a household’s “personal subsidiary farm” (hereafter, PSF), as well as the permissible number of livestock per *kolkhoz* household were set according to the level of household participation in the work of the collective farm.

In important respects, the PSF was anything but “private.” It belonged to farm households rather than individuals. As in the pre-1917 communes, garden plots could neither be bought, sold nor rented. Households were in turn dependent on the collective for seeds, farm implements, and hay from the *kolkhoz* meadow and for rights to use *kolkhoz* pasture land for livestock. State restrictions on plot size prevented peasants from growing enough grain for themselves and enough fodder for their livestock; the latter were provided by the *kolkhoz*. Yet despite these conditions and constraints, the new legislation nevertheless legitimized—on however minimal a level—a traditional peasant notion of mixed economy within the brutally dichotomized, “all or nothing” policies of the Stalin era. As in the days of the commune, women continued to bear primary responsibility for labor

on the PSF. For their part, Soviet officials downplayed both the magnitude of the state's capitulation and the women's agency that triggered it; Stalin himself took care to trivialize the conflict as "a little misunderstanding with collective farm women. This business was about cows."³⁸

Although Stalinist policy makers described the household plots as a "temporary" concession, these properties proved to be extremely significant both for peasants and for the economy as a whole. At a time when collective farm wages were paid only after the state appropriated its share and peasant laborers frequently received no wages at all, the assiduously tended PSF became for many households the only source of material support and guarantee against starvation. Between 1928 and 1938, income from the sale of privately raised produce came to represent 40–50 percent of the household's total income from all sources (both wages and in kind income).³⁹ The slow agricultural recovery that began during the second half of the 1930s was disproportionately fueled by these supposedly "subsidiary" holdings; by 1938, 45 percent of Soviet agriculture's total farm output was being produced on 3.9 percent of the land (plot size approximated to .49 hectare per household).⁴⁰ On this predominantly women's "turf," women turned out to be the most productive and efficient—but by far the least acclaimed—economic actors in the Soviet countryside.⁴¹

In the late 1930s, an ever-ungrateful Soviet state, frustrated because the tiny PSF outperformed the collective farms which presumably represented a "higher" form of socioeconomic organization, launched a new campaign against private greed. A special set of bureaucrats was charged with the task of returning illegally acquired private lands to the collective farms.⁴² These measures bore most heavily on women, who constituted more than two-thirds of the able-bodied rural populace on the eve of World War II.

World War II and Its Aftermath

In 1941, when European Russia was overrun by Nazi forces, state planning gave way to desperate ad hoc measures intended to meet the requirements of the front. The central authorities—unable to assume responsibility for feeding the civilian population—appealed to the peasantry to provide for their urban compatriots. In a stunning contrast to the behavior of their parents and grandparents of the War Communism era, peasants did so. Although their exclusion from the food rationing system forced them to rely on the private plots to meet household needs, they also—with sometimes tacit and sometimes explicit government approval—expanded the PSF and transformed them into the nation's only wartime source of meat, eggs, milk, and sometimes even potatoes.⁴³ This was primarily women's work, since the wartime mobilization of adult males left women as 93 percent of the able-bodied rural population.⁴⁴ Adapting quickly, they

created more efficient local production and distribution networks, and brought a greater measure of what little money and goods were available in wartime conditions into the rural sector.⁴⁵ Despite the long-term German occupation of the best agricultural land, peasant women, children, and older people were able—against all odds—to succeed where the centralized state authority had failed.⁴⁶ The details of this achievement by the least literate and most politically marginalized elements of the Soviet population deserves more attention from Western scholars than it has thus far received.⁴⁷

In 1944, as the war began to turn in favor of the Soviet Union, the central authorities began to take steps to retrieve the power that had temporarily been ceded to the civilian population. A rising tide of official denunciations once again targeted the peasantry's "unhealthy aspirations" to increase the size of "private plots" at the expense of collective farms. In 1946, a decree "On Measures for Liquidating Breaches of the Kolkhoz Charter" ordered peasants to return all property "unlawfully" seized during the war, including the farm animals and kolkhoz land incorporated into the PSF. In response to "suspect" economic activity—and to postwar fiscal requirements—the authorities increased taxes on the sale of vegetables, meat, milk, and eggs from the private plots and introduced a currency reform that was deliberately crafted to wipe out peasant savings.⁴⁸ Unsurprisingly, these policies disproportionately affected women.

To speed the pace of postwar reconstruction, *kolkhoz* work requirements (*trudodni*) were increased. After 1946, noncompliance was decreed punishable by a term of forced labor, and repeated offenses by deprivation of the right to a PSF. Because their domestic responsibilities for child care and other activities were relatively inflexible, peasant women could not easily adjust to increased demands for labor on the *kolkhoz*; they comprised the majority of those who fell afoul of the new legislation. However, in keeping with Soviet (and pre-Soviet) tradition, women were not as harshly punished as men, and many apparently escaped the penalty of deportation visited on their male counterparts.⁴⁹

In less extreme cases, government-imposed restrictions on supplies of fodder or lands available for pasturing "privately owned" livestock evoked what Kimitaka Matsuzato described in another connection as a "judo-like" response. When state decrees restricted the number of milk cows that households could raise on the PSF, peasants responded by selling their cows and turning to goats as a source of milk (since goats were cheaper and not subject to taxation). As this strategy unfolded, the number of goats in peasant hands rose to a record 16.4 million (twice the 1940 level) by 1951; the number of peasant-owned milk cows fell below the 1940 level. By 1951, there were more peasant-owned goats than there were milk cows in the Soviet Union. However, in 1953 when Stalin died, government constraints were

rescinded, and an ever flexible and resilient Soviet peasantry began to sell goats and buy cows.⁵⁰ Matsuzato's words, intended to describe the peasant response to the Stolypin Reforms, remain apt: "If the government pushes the peasantry, the peasantry recedes but, hooking its leg over the rival's, it tries to circumvent the government; and vice versa."⁵¹

The Post-Stalin Era

Stalin died in 1953. While his successors were no less suspicious of autonomous social institutions and small-scale economic activity, they turned out to be notably unwilling to preserve mass murder and deportations as core instruments of state policy. Although the reforms introduced by Nikita Khrushchev dramatically increased the size of state farms and reduced the size of the PSF, the economic reversals that ensued did not set off a new wave of purge trials or executions. Instead, productive investment in agriculture doubled between 1953 and 1958, as the rural sector became—for the first time in Soviet history—a recipient of significant large-scale economic and noneconomic investment by the state.

The "gigantomania" of the early Khrushchev years was epitomized by the Virgin Lands campaign for the cultivation of vast territories in Siberia and Kazakhstan. In 1956, this ambitious initiative produced the largest ever grain harvest in Soviet history, and rather too easily convinced Khrushchev that the age-old Russian/Soviet grain problem had finally been solved. The Virgin Lands program was hailed not only as a triumph for large-scale socialist agriculture, but as proof that the small-scale subsidiary plots had become superfluous from an economic point of view.⁵² Reform enthusiasts contended that Reason and Progress—in the form of top-down, large-scale collectivist economic policies—had inflicted a decisive blow against backward and narrow "private interests."

Although the PSFs produced one-half of the nation's fresh vegetables and potatoes and a substantial proportion of its meat during the 1950s, officials nevertheless set themselves to contrast their "backwardness" with the achievements being registered on the Virgin Lands. The use of the term "private" in reference to the PSF signaled a government shift in the direction of harassment. While "shirkers" were excoriated for neglecting their collective farm obligations in order to devote themselves to their private interests, honest peasants were exhorted to sell their livestock to collective or state farms. Some local officials—heirs to the Stalinist legacy of encouraging peasants to collectivize at gunpoint—used coercion to engineer compliance with the new decrees.⁵³ In the early 1960s, when the initial successes of the Virgin Lands program gave way to a series of disastrous agricultural harvests, these government pressures triggered a sharp decline in the output of foodstuffs.⁵⁴

It should be emphasized that in the 1950s, the permanent abandonment of Stalinist terror was not a foregone conclusion. To peasants who had survived the Stalinist choice between compliance or obliteration, it remained to be seen whether 1930s-style coercion might yet be visited on the PSF and its devotees. For his part, Khrushchev repeatedly assured the rural populace that the disappearance of the PSF would take place gradually. In his words, "Once [the collective farmers] are convinced of the advantages [of the communal vegetable garden] they will relinquish their private plots of their own free will."⁵⁵ On the other hand, Khrushchev and his supporters also made clear that the PSF was a retrograde and always potentially "anti-Soviet" institution. The ideological discourse that framed Khrushchev's reforms reflected a dichotomized and hierarchical distinction between "the private" and "the collective" that was no less rigid than Stalin's.

The Private and the Social: Property, Public Welfare, and Questions of Gender

In the 1950s and 1960s, the restrictions placed upon the PSF stood in stark contrast to the extraordinary expansion in public guarantees of a higher living standard for the rural population. Abandoning the prohibitions of the Stalin years, the Khrushchev government extended pensions, sickness and maternity benefits, and a minimum wage to collective farm workers. Between 1953 and 1967, the average income of collective farm workers increased by 311 percent in real terms;⁵⁶ in the RSFSR between 1963 and 1968, the difference in average monthly pay of employed women and employed men *decreased* by one-third.⁵⁷ Within the domestic sphere of predominantly female labor, peasant women continued to bear primary responsibility for child care, household tasks, and the PSF; however, at the same time, government welfare guarantees began to lighten a measure of the burden of women's social labor by providing maternity and other social benefits. In the 1960s, contemporary observers noted as well that it was the woman who defined the family's lifestyle and took the lead in deciding how the household's time and money should be spent. Although educational advances were rapid, with women frequently achieving higher literacy rates than men, their newly acquired skills did not gain them access to positions of leadership within the collective/state farm system.⁵⁸ In a 1961 speech to a farm conference in Kiev, Khrushchev sarcastically observed:

You are well aware of the enormous role which women play in all aspects of the building of communism. But for some reason there are few women in this hall. You can take a pair of binoculars if you like to make them out. How do you explain this? It may be said that it is mainly managers who are present

here. It turns out it is the men who do the managing and the women who do the work.⁵⁹

During the 1950s and 1960s, the PSF continued to outperform the public sector. However, as wages and other collective farm benefits began to exceed income from the private plots, the latter became less crucial to the survival of the rural populace.⁶⁰ Able-bodied women continued to invest over half of their collective farm labor on the PSF, but rural priorities were nevertheless beginning to change.⁶¹ Earlier commitments to the PSF as the peasant woman's mainstay were now challenged by the prospect of a more varied, materially secure, and less physically arduous life in the new "agrotowns" and in the cities. Seeking freedom from the extraordinary demands of the rural domestic economy, women—particularly in the western regions of the RSFSR—became notable contributors to an accelerating rate of rural out-migration.⁶²

In the 1960s, fears of rural depopulation and the specter of looming food shortages generated new and greater acknowledgments of the PSF's importance to the Soviet economy. Although traditional Marxist denunciations of the peasantry's "primordial" obsession with "archaic survival[s] of the pre-Soviet era" still remained the norm, the journals *Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta* and *Kommunist*⁶³ began to publish articles which defended the PSF on economic grounds. Social scientists and a variety of *kolkhozniki* argued in increasingly forceful terms that the public (collective and state farm) sector was incapable of meeting the food needs of the urban population.⁶³ Economist G. I. Shmelev argued that multiple forms of tenure coexisted in Soviet rural life because they were mutually dependent. According to Shmelev, peasants could no more survive without the tractors, draft animals, tools, transport, seed, and fodder for livestock provided by the collective than collectives could manage without the produce grown on the PSFs.⁶⁴ Sociologist Tatiana Zaslavskaiia contended that the latter was not a relic of the capitalist past but a new social formation that reconciled the socialist interest of the collective with the personal interests of those working in agriculture. In her words, the "existence [of plots] was a condition for the successful development of the *kolkhozy*."⁶⁵

In 1963, a disastrous harvest—together with the impact of the Cuban Missile Crisis—helped to drive Khrushchev from office. In keeping with the persistent ironies of Russian and Soviet agriculture, the year 1964 saw the best harvest ever recorded in the history of the Soviet Union.⁶⁶ Within a month of Khrushchev's departure, the RSFSR, Ukraine, and Estonia abrogated all previous decrees limiting farming activities on the PSF.⁶⁷ When Leonid Brezhnev came to power, his first agricultural decision was to eliminate "unjustifiable limits" on plot size; at the Twenty-Fourth Party

Congress, he declared in no uncertain terms that the private producer was “indispensable.”⁶⁸

Looking Forward, Looking Backward

During the waning years of the Soviet era, a new set of reformers emerged to demand a profoundly revolutionary and anti-collectivist policy for tenure transformation. In contrast to economic experimenters like Zaslavskaja and Gorbachev, reforming officials like Yegor Gaidar and Anatoly Chubais were prophets of neoliberalism who viewed unrestricted private ownership as the triumph of Reason over backwardness. While refraining from the massive coercion that had so scarred and disfigured the Soviet era, Russia’s shock therapists happily dismissed expressions of caution, criticism, and all alternative perspectives as “backward” and “Stalinist.” In the 1990s, they imposed a top-down strategy for wholesale privatization that triggered an economic decline even greater than the 224 percent fall in productivity caused by forced collectivization in the 1930s.⁶⁹ As a consequence, per capita monthly income fell by 47 percent between 1992 and 1996.⁷⁰ As in other societies that experienced “structural adjustment,” rural women were among the hardest hit by policies that celebrated private interest but nevertheless required women to continue to engage in the fundamentally social labor of child care and family maintenance.

Initially, women were quite visible in opposition to measures that—like earlier efforts at tenure transformation—sought to eliminate material supports for their labor in the domestic household economy.⁷¹ In addition, as the government reneged on its role of employer and provider of salaries for teachers, nurses, and agricultural specialists, many who had left the collective farms in the 1970s and 1980s began to return to their home villages. By the mid-1990s, some 14 million private garden plots were established (or reestablished) in the countryside.⁷² As a percentage of total output, the share of private plots in the agricultural economy rose from 26.3 percent in 1989 to 47.9 percent in 1997.⁷³ In one of the many paradoxes of Russia’s late-twentieth-century embrace of “the private,” the village’s prodigal sons and daughters returned to claim (or reclaim) their private plots in hopes that the Soviet-era *kolkhozy* would reassert an earlier public obligation to members of the collective, namely, the provision of material support in the form of free seeds, fuel, and access to farm machinery.

In important respects, farm women represented in its most extreme form the challenge that the rural populace had always posed to would-be reformers and tormentors throughout the twentieth century. Opposed to the single-minded privatization measures of the Stolypin era and to the incomparably more brutal collectivism of the 1930s, they were notably wary of the 1990s

neoliberal demand for an unconditional, “either/or” choice between “the public” and “the private.” Adding insult to injury, rural women—despite their 60-year record of primary responsibility for the extraordinarily productive Soviet-era PSF—were not targeted as potential entrepreneurs either by local officials, by aid agencies, or by leading reformers on the Russian national scene.⁷⁴

In the course of the twentieth century, Russian and Soviet policy makers failed to demonstrate to their peasant “objects” that projects for tenure transformation held the key to prosperity and economic advancement for rural men and women. After 1991, wholesale privatization failed to win the hearts and minds of the Russian people because (1) the new system provided so few benefits to the majority of the population, and (2) it has turned out to be quite difficult to distinguish economic success stories from adventures in crime. In recent years, ordinary men and women have attempted to reestablish the Soviet-era plots within the surviving vestiges of Soviet-era collective farms. However, the time-honored appeal of mixed economies to nonelite segments of the Russian population remained lost on the zealots of the post-Soviet era. And to bring us full circle, there is evidence that in 2003 peasants apparently created new forms of the pre-1917 *obshchina* (*mir*) in sparsely populated regions all over Siberia.⁷⁵

Notes

My work on this project owes a great deal to the work of Moshe Lewin. Thanks also to Lynne Viola, Charles Lev, Rochelle Ruthchild, Elizabeth Wood, and Jim Mann who now understands more about the Soviet-era private plots than any poet in the world.

1. This dilemma is explored by Karen Hansen, “Rediscovering the Social: Visiting Practices in Antebellum New England and the Limits of the Public/Private Dichotomy,” in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 292–296. See also Joseph William Singer, “Property and Social Relations: From Title to Entitlements,” in *Property and Values: Alternatives to Public and Private Ownership*, ed. Charles Geisler and Gail Daneker (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000), 3–21; Franz Benda-Beckman, “Introduction,” in *The Changing Properties of Property*, ed. C. M. Hann, Melanie Wiber, and Franz Benda-Beckmann (Oxford: Berghahn, 2005); and discussion in Esther Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics and Problems of Russian Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 183–184.
2. Kingston-Mann, *In Search*, 166–180; and Esther Kingston-Mann, “The Romance of Privatization and its Unheralded Challengers: Case Studies from England, Russia, the Soviet Union and the Russian Republic,” in *Changing Properties of Property*.

3. Although scholars have long been aware of the numerical preponderance of women in the countryside—noticeable well before 1917—it is a peculiarity of contemporary and later discourse on the peasantry that the word “peasant” usually takes a male gender pronoun antecedent. This semantic inaccuracy is particularly problematic in discussions of the private plot, because a gendered division of labor was so central to the latter’s management and use. See Norton Dodge and Murray Feschbach, “The Role of Women in Soviet Agriculture,” in *Russian Peasant Women*, ed. Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 236–270.
4. See, e.g., the contemporary ethnographic research study by A. I. Efimenko, *Issledovaniia narodnoi zhizni* (Moscow, 1884), 76–122, and a discussion of available data on the inner workings of the commune in Esther Kingston-Mann, “Peasant Communes and Economic Innovation: A Preliminary Inquiry,” in *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia 1800–1921*, ed. Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 23–51.
5. Esther Kingston-Mann, “Transforming Peasants in the Twentieth Century: Dilemmas of Russian, Soviet & Post-Soviet Development,” in *Cambridge Modern History of Russia & the Soviet Union*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
6. See Ethel Dunn, “Russian Rural Women,” in *Women in Russia*, ed. Dorothy Atkinson, David Dallin, and Gail Lapidus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 169; and discussion of available data in Esther Kingston-Mann, “Statistics, Social Science and Social Justice: The Zemstvo Statisticians of Pre-Revolutionary Russia,” in *Russia in the European Context, 1789–1914: A Member of the Family*, ed. Susan P. McCaffray and Michael Melancon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 125–157.
7. Kingston-Mann, “Peasant Communes and Economic Innovation,” 35–36.
8. Oddly, the contention that communes disregarded the changing demographics of member households has persisted despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. See, e.g., Zhores Medvedev, *Soviet Agriculture* (New York: Norton, 1992), 8. In contrast, see Steven Grant, “Obshchina and Mir,” *Slavic Review* 35, no. 4 (1976), 636–651; and Kingston-Mann, “Peasant Communes and Economic Innovation,” 23–51.
9. Esther Kingston-Mann, “The Return of Pierre Proudhon: Privatization, Crime and the Rules of Law,” *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* forthcoming, 2006.
10. In widely distant regions of the empire, communes apparently devised strategies to reward individual innovation—the consolidation of scattered strips, e.g.—while limiting the growth of rural differentiation. In *podvornoe* districts, rates of innovation were marginally greater, but accompanied by dramatically higher levels of economic polarization. See Kingston-Mann, “Peasant Communes and Economic Innovation,” 36–39.
11. The precipitous decline in the status and material well-being of African women in the wake of World Bank-sponsored privatization campaigns in the 1980s has been widely documented. See, e.g., Peter Gibbon, Kjell Havnevik, and Kenneth Hermele, *A Blighted Harvest: The World Bank and African Agriculture in the 1980s* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1993), 103–110; and Jane Humphries’s

- discussion of the negative impact of England's enclosure movement on women: "Enclosures, Common Rights, and Women," *Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 2 (1990), 17–41.
12. *Krestianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii v gody pervoi mirovoi voyny, iul' 1914 g-fevral' 1917 g: Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. A. M. Anfimov (Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka, 1965), 152–153, 232–234, 251–256; Judith Pallot, *Land Reform in Russia, 1906–1917: Peasant Responses to Stolypin's Project of Rural Transformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 181–183 and 193–194.
 13. Peasant "separators" from the commune rarely abandoned the traditional practice of strip cultivation. See O. Khauke, *Krest'ianskoe zemel'noe pravo* (Moscow, 1914), 355.
 14. *Sed'maia (aprel'skaia) konferentsiia RSDRP Petrogradskaia obshchegorodskaia RSDRP (bol'shevikov): Protokoly*, ed. M. D. Orakhelashvili (Moscow, 1981), 111–112; see also Esther Kingston-Mann, *Lenin and the Problem of Marxist Peasant Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 149–151.
 15. See discussion of peasant demands and land nationalization in Kingston-Mann, *Lenin*, 150–151, 200–201.
 16. Bolsheviks had always been at pains to deny that peasants possessed social institutions that fostered rural solidarity, or traditions that enforced economic and noneconomic obligations between individuals and broader social networks. See Esther Kingston-Mann, "Deconstructing the Romance of the Bourgeoisie: A Russian Marxist Path not Taken," *Review of International Political Economy* (2003), 93–117.
 17. V. I. Lenin, *Pol'noe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo polit lit-ry, 1958–1965), vol. 35, 27, 328–329 (cited hereafter as pss).
 18. Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 270.
 19. V. P. Danilov, *Sovetskoe krest'ianstvo* (Moscow, 1970), 37.
 20. Unlike his Bolshevik colleagues, Lenin was quite willing to confess that in 1918 "we actually took from the peasants all their surpluses, and sometimes even what was not surplus but part of what was necessary to the peasant. We took it to cover the costs of the army and to maintain the workers. . . . Otherwise we could not have beaten the landowners and the capitalists." Lenin, *pss*, vol. 43, 219–220.
 21. See S. Maksudov, *Neuslyshannye Golosa: Dokumenty Smolenskogo Arkhiva*, book 1, *Kulaki i Partiitsy* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 23.
 22. Dorothy Atkinson, *The End of the Russian Land Commune, 1905–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 209, 254.
 23. Lewin, *Making*, 51.
 24. *Sbornik dokumentov po zemel'nomu zakonodatel'stvu SSSR i RSFSR, 1917–1954*, ed. N. D. Kazantsev and O. I. Tumanova (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo iurid. lit-ry, 1954), 155–183.
 25. It is also worth noting *khutorizatsiia* did not necessarily reflect a willingness to reject the individual's right to common pasture land.
 26. Whether or not rural economic disparities actually signified a looming capitalist threat, or were—as scholars like A. V. Chaianov argued—a cyclical feature of the peasantry's household economy, advancing cyclical arguments became increasingly dangerous to the physical survival of scholars like Chaianov.

27. Hiroshi Okuda, "The Final Stage of the Russian Peasant Commune: Its Improvement and the Strategy of Collectivization," in *Land Commune and Peasant Community in Russia*, ed. Roger Bartlett (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 259–262.
28. Atkinson, *End*, 250. On subsequent revisions of the data, see S. G. Wheatcroft, "The Reliability of Russian Prewar Grain Statistics," *Soviet Studies* 26, no. 2 (1974), 157–180.
29. See Kingston-Mann, "Transforming."
30. Atkinson, *End*, 361.
31. See discussion in Caroline Humphrey, "The Domestic Mode of Production in post-Soviet Siberia," *Anthropology Today* 14, no. 3 (1998), 5.
32. Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 183–185.
33. Atkinson, *End*, 367.
34. Viola, *Peasant Rebels*, 202.
35. J. V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), vol. 12, 197–205.
36. R. W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture 1929–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 442–443.
37. *Istoriia kolkhoznogo prava: Sbornik zakonodatel'nykh materialov SSSR/RSFSR, 1917–1958* (Moscow: Gos. izd. iurid, 1958–1959), vol. 1, 427–430.
38. Quoted in Lewin, *Making*, 178–179.
39. Nancy Nimitz, *Farm Employment in the Soviet Union, 1928–1963* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation Memo RM4623-PR, 1965), 22, 90–94.
40. Lewin, *Making*, 180–183.
41. Susan A. Bridger, *Women in the Soviet Countryside: Women's Roles in Rural Development in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 14.
42. Davies, *Socialist Offensive*, 128.
43. It should be noted that during the war, urban workers were increasingly permitted to claim PSFs. This government concession to wartime necessities and the government's postwar effort to reacquire the urban PSFs is documented in Jean Levesque, "Part-Time Peasants: Labour Discipline, Collective Farm Life, and the Fate of Soviet Socialized Agriculture after the Second World War, 1945–53," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2003.
44. S. L. Seniavskii and V. B. Tel'pukhovskii, *Rabochii klass SSSR 1938–1965* (Moscow: Mysl', 1971), 101. Between 1940 and 1944, the number of women who were heads of livestock farms increased from 16.1 percent to 49.2 percent. V. P. Danilov, *Sovetskoe krest'ianstvo: Kratkii ocherk istorii 1917–1970* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), 373.
45. William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR During World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 111–112.
46. See general discussion in V. S. Murmantseva, *Sovetskie zhenshchiny v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine* (Moscow: Mysl', 1974); and I. V. Arutiunian, *Sovetskoe krest'ianstvo v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), especially 408–410.
47. See M. A. Vyltsan, "Prikaz i propoved: Sposoby mobilizatsii resursov derevni v gody voiny," *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 3 (2005), 69–80; M. A. Vyltsan and

- V. V. Kondrashin, "Patriotizm krest'ianstva," *Voina i obshchestvo 1941–5* (Moscow: Nauka, 2004), vol. 2, 50–77; and V. F. Zima, *Mentalitet narodov Rossii v voine 1941–1945 godov* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii, 2004). I am indebted to Jean Levesque for calling my attention to these sources.
48. See discussion in Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middle Class Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 226–229; and Franklyn Holzman, *Soviet Taxation: The Fiscal and Monetary Problems of a Planned Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955).
 49. Although these actions reinforce Viola's findings for the 1930s, further research on this topic would deepen our understanding of the gender dynamics of Stalinist deportations. See I. M. Volkov, "Kolkhozy SSSR v gody chetvertioi piatiletki," in *Razvitie sel'skogo khoziaistva SSSR v poslevoennnye gody (1946–70 gg)*, ed. I. M. Volkov (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), 60–61.
 50. See discussion in Medvedev, *Soviet Agriculture*, 156–157.
 51. Kimitaka Matsuzato, "New Dimensions in the Study of Russian Agrarian History," unpublished paper, AAASS National Conference, 1988, 23.
 52. According to Khrushchev in 1959, "Livestock belonging to workers and employees is no longer of importance from the economic standpoint, that is, from the standpoint of satisfying the requirements of the state for meat and milk," N. S. Khrushchev, *Stroitel'stvo kommunizma v SSSR i razvitie sel'skogo khoziaistva* (Moscow, 1962–1964), vol. 4, 24; G. A. E. Smith, "Agriculture," in *Khrushchev and Khrushchevism*, ed. Martin McCauley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 98–100.
 53. Karl-Eugen Wadekin, *The Private Sector in Soviet Agriculture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 277–283.
 54. See discussion in Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture: The Virgin Lands Program 1953–64* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers), 94.
 55. Quoted in John DePauw, "The Private Sector in Soviet Agriculture," *Slavic Review*, 28, no. 1 (1968), 66; and see also Wadekin, *Private Sector*, 233–264.
 56. Gertrude Schroeder, "Rural Living Standards in the Soviet Union," in *The Soviet Rural Economy*, ed. Robert Stuart (Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), 243.
 57. Dunn, "Russian Rural Women," 179.
 58. Susan Allott, "Soviet Rural Women: Employment and Family Life," in *Soviet Sisterhood*, ed. Barbara Holland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 188–192; Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 166–171; and Melanie Ilic, "Women in the Khrushchev Era: An Overview," in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Melanie Ilic, Susan Reid, and Lynne Atwood (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 5–28.
 59. Quoted in Bridger, *Women in the Soviet Countryside*, 81.
 60. Basile Kerblay, *Modern Soviet Society* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 87.
 61. The comparable figures for men stood at slightly more than 1/8. Alistair McAuley, *Women's Work and Wages in the Soviet Union* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 112.
 62. See discussion in Bridger, *Women in the Soviet Countryside*, 25–42.

63. See especially the April 11, 1964 issue of *Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta*; R. Nazarov, "Podsobnoe khoziaistvo i ego rol' i mesto v sel'sko-khoziaistvennom proizvodstve . . .," *Kommunist*, November 16, 1965; M. Makeenko, "Lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo v SSSR," *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, no. 10 (1966), 62–63; and E. Manevich, "Vseobshchnost' truda i problemy ratsional'nogo ispol'zovaniia rabochei sily v SSSR," *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, no. 6 (1965), 23–30.
64. G. I. Shmelev, "Ekonomicheskaiia rol' lichnogo podsobnogo khoziaistva," *Voprosy Ekonomiki* no. 4 (1965), 27–37.
65. Tatiana Zaslavskaiia, *Raspredelenie po trudu v kolkhozakh* (Moscow: Ekonomika, 1966), 63.
66. McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture*, 97.
67. *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, November 25, 1964, 1, cited in DePauw, "Private Sector in Soviet Agriculture," 68–69.
68. Wadekin, *Private Sector*, 364.
69. Paul Gregory and Robert Stuart, *Soviet and Post-Soviet Economic Structure and Performance* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 105.
70. Paul Caskie, "Back to Basics: Household Food Production in Russia," *Journal of Agricultural Economics* 51, no. 2 (2000), 206.
71. Myriam Hivon, "Local Resistance to Privatization in Rural Russia," *Cambridge Anthropology*, 18, no. 2 (1995), 13–22.
72. Caskie "Back to Basics," 207.
73. Nimitz, *Farm Employment in the Soviet Union*, 12.
74. Louise Perrotta, "Divergent Responses to Land Reform and Agricultural Restructuring in the Russian Federation," in *Surviving Post-Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Susan Bridger and Frances Pine (London: Routledge, 1998), 164.
75. P. Gray, "Volga Farmers and Arctic Herders: Common (Post)Socialist Experiences in Rural Russia," in *The Postsocialist Agrarian Question: Property Relations and the Rural Condition*, ed. C. M. Hann (London: Transaction, 2003), 293–321.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ART MARKET AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOVIET RUSSIAN CULTURE

Andrew Jenks

According to Central Committee reports from 1951, organizations administering public buildings (including movie houses, houses of culture, and theaters) typically waited until the end of the year to purchase decorative art, which “for some reason comes out of the budget for capital investment.” If there was money in this budget at the end of the year, the organizations spent all of it on art, which meant “a real boom in art salons.” It was catch as catch can: in November and December various clubs, factories, institutes, and universities purchased whatever was in the stores to decorate the gray interiors of Soviet public life. The vast body of artistic work that ended up in private interior spaces or in the many public spaces created during postwar reconstruction thus remained beyond the purview of state planners. As one Central Committee report lamented, most of the art in a Soviet person’s life had “a random” character—mostly clichéd Russian landscapes, folk themes, still lifes, and very rarely anything with explicitly Soviet content.¹ Such was the reality of Soviet cultural construction, which was anything but planned.

The aforementioned example suggests that comprehensive planning and state control was more an ideal than a reality.² Much to the chagrin of many cultural officials, the process of culture building was far more chaotic. It involved a tangled nexus of market forces, consumer tastes, informal patronage, and the dictates of ideology. Within this nexus for producing culture, private and public concerns, as well as state planners and market forces, constantly intermingled. A cultural landscape thus emerged in which private tastes and concerns frequently became a part of the state’s “official” public culture. The outcome was paradoxical: while Soviet ideology equated the “public sphere” with state control, and considered it superior to

the “private sphere,” private tastes and non-state structures nonetheless played a vital role in shaping Soviet culture. This essay addresses the slippery and porous boundaries between Soviet public and private realms through an examination of the market for Soviet art. It focuses in particular on the famous artists of the village of Palekh from the 1920s to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Palekh in Soviet Russian Culture

Inevitably, every visitor to Russia encounters Palekh’s art—either in Russia’s many museums or from aggressive hawkers of Russian exotica. The “classic” Palekh lacquer boxes of the Soviet era featured Russian folk motifs, fairytales, troikas, and firebirds—all done in the various styles of Russian Orthodox religious icons. While this art form was in fact a product of the 1920s, few are aware that Palekh was a celebrated center of Russian national culture before the Bolshevik Revolution. During the nineteenth century, the peasants of Palekh were famous as folk painters of Russian religious icons. Amazingly enough, Palekh’s art not only survived the Revolution, albeit in a new medium (the miniature lacquer box) and with new subject matter (folk motifs instead of holy saints); it also thrived. Beginning in 1923, the Palekh masters gained a new life as producers of Soviet folk art. They filled the old forms of Russian Orthodox icon painting with various folk themes, most of which they borrowed from the market for Russian exotica that had emerged in the last half of the nineteenth century. Building on these successes, the Palekh artists in late 1924 formally registered “the Palekh Artel of Ancient Painting,” which was integrated in the state-run system of artistic cooperatives.

While Palekh became an important economic and cultural phenomenon in the 1920s and early 1930s, the hamlet also stood at the forefront of attempts to create a new revolutionary culture. The process of culture building was fraught with contradictions. The classics of Marxism-Leninism were largely silent on the relationship between markets and state planning and between national and class-based identities. Thus, despite rhetoric about creating a workers’ state, Soviet cultural policies in the 1920s encouraged identities with an explicitly national rather than class-based orientation. In line with the policy of “indigenization”—the Bolshevik policy of evoking national sympathies to gain support for revolutionary policies—officials attempted to construct Soviet communities that would be, as the slogan went, “national in form but socialist in content.” For many cultural activists in the Russian heartland, this policy applied to Russians as well as to other national groups, a point overlooked in the literature on “indigenization” in the 1920s and early 1930s, which tends to emphasize the anti-Russian cultural stance of early Soviet policies.³ From the perspective of Palekh, the

anti-Russian position of official policies is overstated: Palekh artists received political patronage at precisely the time when Russian national culture was supposedly suppressed.

As the campaign of “indigenization” unfolded in the 1920s, it became a testament of faith that socialist and proletarian content would ultimately prevail over national form—and eventually create its own forms.⁴ Yet from the very start, party leaders could not agree on the precise nature of this synthesis—or even if such a synthesis was possible. What distinguished socialist content from national form? What were the telltale signs of a genuinely socialist culture? As Martin Malia points out, the Soviets knew socialist culture would not be capitalist; but since no one had created socialism before, they were less sure what socialist culture would and should actually look like.⁵

The absence of a clear party line created an undefined space in Soviet culture, a kind of cultural vacuum into which an astonishing array of forms and ideas presented themselves for party inspection. Within this vacuum, many forces outside party control began to influence Soviet Russian identity, including consumer tastes and especially the legacy of late imperial Russian culture and its canon of romantic Russianness. The lack of ideological clarity on the problem of socialist identity thus allowed for the development of a surprisingly diverse and retrospective culture—notwithstanding the regime’s obsession with ideological purity, state control, and with escaping the constraints of the historical past. Equally important, the lack of ideological clarity in cultural matters encouraged participation “from below,” and from the market, in the interpretation of Soviet Russian culture. Culture producers very often had to determine their own themes and approach, relying as much on the direction of consumers and their own personal tastes as on the dictates of cultural planners, since commands from the center were frequently vague or nonexistent. Consequently, creators of Soviet culture, such as the Palekh artisans, became accomplices in the project of cultural construction rather than mere fulfillers of party commands. They believed that Soviet Russian culture was as much their own culture as it was the regime’s.

This chaotic process of cultural formation and the doubts it constantly raised about the revolutionary nature of the new society certainly troubled many Soviet ideologists. For many of Palekh’s party overseers in Moscow, the village’s art embodied everything Soviet culture was not—the world of the Russian *muzhik* (peasant bumpkin), his icons, rustic ways, superstitions, “unenlightened” private tastes, and inefficiency. Palekh therefore continued to incite political controversy. Its art eluded the firm grasp of many party cultural officials, whose intense desire to control Palekh’s art and purge it of “bourgeois” and religious influences was matched only by their inability to agree on its precise purpose and content. Especially troubling was Palekh’s

pantheon of Russian folktales and peasant motifs, which seemed to reject a technocratic anti-peasant system of values—even during the first Five-Year Plan, when industrialization and the modernization of the countryside were rallying calls of Soviet propagandists.⁶

To their great surprise, the Palekh masters found a receptive audience for such a vision, including important high-level officials, who frequently intervened to save the village from its foes, and foreign consumers, who provided valuable foreign currency the Soviet government could use to buy tractors and machine tools. In addition, Palekh attracted a growing domestic market for its repertoire of rural motifs and *bogatyri* (folkloric heroes)—despite the high cost of its products.⁷

Through the 1920s, domestic political support constantly followed the lead of foreign consumers. The first recorded state order came in May 1926, a 3,000-ruble transaction from the Supreme Council of the National Economy. In a letter confirming the order, the vice chairman of the Ivanovo Executive Committee wrote: “I am not familiar with you, comrades. But based on rumors about your work, which drew attention with its elegance at the Paris exhibit [held in 1925 in Paris, for which the Palekh artists received a ‘Grand Prix’], you should be given as much support as possible.” In 1927 the Commissariat of Education ordered nearly a dozen Palekh boxes to honor the Revolution’s tenth anniversary. Along with the famous sculptor Vera Mukhina (who did a statue of a peasant woman), the Palekhians received the top prize of 1,000 rubles at the exhibit. Lunacharskii, the exhibit’s main organizer, dismissed attempts by city artists at “proletarian” art, reserving his greatest praise for the Palekhians. “This is an immense treasure in our midst, and it is high time to acknowledge this fact loudly and come to the aid of the amazing masters of Palekh, who without our help could be swallowed completely by the river of time.”⁸

Even as some Bolsheviks viciously attacked the hamlet’s artists, other party officials, encouraged by the positive reception of Palekh’s art by foreign consumers, staged exhibits of Palekh’s art in Shuia in 1926 and again in 1927 for a regional conference of Soviets. Moscow exhibits displayed Palekh art in 1928 and 1929, in addition to the permanent exhibit of Palekh lacquers at the Moscow Crafts Museum.⁹ Simultaneously, Palekh lacquers starred at Soviet exhibits in Paris, Leipzig, Copenhagen, Milan, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Tokyo, and New York. When the Soviet Union trumpeted its cultural and economic successes before the American public in early 1928, Palekh stole the show, as it had three years earlier in Paris. Palekh items on sale were almost immediately sold out. A year later, as the campaigns of collectivization and industrialization were getting underway in the Soviet Union, Soviet authorities capitalized on the success of the previous exhibit in New York City, sponsoring the “Soviet Russian Art and Handicraft Exposition” in the

city's Grand Central Palace. A Soviet brochure called Palekh "a significant factor in raising the cultural level of the peoples of the Soviet Union," one that "mingled the refinements of the Byzantine influence with the vivid colors of the native Volga engravings." The *New York Times* reviewer proclaimed that shifting from religious to secular subjects "for milady's dressing table does not seem to have interfered with the artistry or skill of the workers."¹⁰ A review in the *New Republic* waxed ecstatic, noting the

exquisite Byzantine charm of line and color . . . adapted to modern, sylvan and fantastic subjects. These little [Palekh] boxes are probably the loveliest things being made by unselfconscious artists anywhere in the world. That this ancient tradition should have survived, through war and revolution, in one small village, is a most singular and arresting fact.¹¹

Palekh and the Great Break

Stalin's Great Break and the institution of the system of planning foreshadowed immense new challenges for Palekh; yet it also revealed that the goal of comprehensive planning in culture remained an elusive and unrealizable objective. The Soviet Union had caught its breath during NEP and was now preparing for an all-out sprint toward socialism. The mad dash to socialism materialized in the First Five-Year Plan, forced collectivization and the "liquidation of kulaks as a class." What all this meant for Palekh was unclear. On the one hand, Palekh provided valuable foreign currency. On the other hand, many believed that Palekh's art had nothing to do with the creation of a revolutionary culture.¹² Palekh's marching orders were thus contradictory from the very start of the First Five-Year Plan.

At times, Vsekopromsovet, Palekh's new Moscow overseer in 1929, suggested that Palekh should focus on exports and forget about the socialist content. Yet even as Vsekopromsovet drove the export whip, it shrilly demanded greater attention to "Soviet themes" and condemned "a lack of ideological control."¹³ A late 1931 meeting at Vsekopromsovet typified the impasse. The chairman of the meeting, a certain Koval'skii, believed Palekh's stubborn refusal to transform the religious artistic forms proved the style was not yet proletarian. Koval'skii asked: "So do we bury [Palekh] or do we restructure and reeducate it?" While many foreign bourgeois artists were "becoming revolutionary, everything is just the opposite with us. This is unnatural." The old Bolshevik I. S. Unshlikht was even less sanguine about Palekh's relevance. The "broad sweep" of Soviet reality, its "power" and "strength," could not be captured "in miniature." However, he realized Palekh earned foreign currency, and for this reason Palekh should be left alone. Furthermore, since copiers of the Palekh style had already emerged in

the West, only by preserving Palekh could they protect “the lucrative brand name that the Palekhians have acquired.” The comments confused other attendees: so was Unshlikht for or against Palekh? A certain Aristova interjected: “That means you deny that Soviet themes can be represented in miniature?” Unshlikht: “You can’t build the future from dregs.”¹⁴ As a result of conflicting signals from Moscow, the masters, in the words of the artel chairman Zubkov, “became confused.”¹⁵

A constant stream of conflicting signals from Vskekokhudozhnik, the Moscow committee responsible for reviewing Palekh’s art, only reinforced Palekh’s confusion. One attempt by a young master in late 1933 to paint an airplane in the countryside produced a harsh rebuke for the artel leadership, which was told that henceforth all artists contemplating new themes should present sketches for preliminary approval. Given the constant production pressures faced by the artists, and their own need for money to buy essential yet expensive goods in the quasi-private kolkhoz markets, securing preliminary approval greatly increased the already tedious and time-consuming process of producing a finished painted lacquer box. And there was no guarantee that the sketch would be accepted. To survive as an artist producing originals rather than copies, a master had to produce at least two high-quality originals a month, a near impossibility given the demands of the Palekh technique and the need for preapproval of sketches and themes (a process which was itself unclear). The artist Pavel Parilov, in October 1933, complained that “in order to create something unique one has to risk spending a lot of time, but living requires rubles. A vicious circle is created and there is no exit.”¹⁶ It was easier, and safer, to simply reproduce the same old folkloric themes that in addition, seemed to be most in demand, and thus most likely to help the artists meet the plan for foreign currency.

As a further disincentive to innovation, boxes on new themes frequently evoked the critique of “*dvusmyslennost*” (double entendre), the belief that the figures or events portrayed, due to the archaic Palekh style, did not clearly convey the proper revolutionary meaning. A review of a box called “Reprisal (*Rasprava*)” (one of Palekh’s few attempts to show revenge against the kulak) said, “there is no justification for the represented image. The subject speaks more in favor of the enemy than of the Revolution.” One review did find a box of an “Airplane Saving the Peasant from Wolves” interesting “but not entirely successful. One gets the impression that not only the wolf, but also the peasant is running from the airplane.”¹⁷

Palekh responded to Moscow’s confusion by largely reverting to the tried and true (which was itself a product of the canon of Russianness from the late imperial period): Pushkin fairytales, *bogatyri*, *byliny* (traditional heroic poems) and rural idylls. A survey of Palekh’s production in the mid-1930s thus reveals little change from the earlier years. Palekh’s iconography continued

to banish the proletariat and the urban milieu to the margins of utopia. While there were Palekh lacquers approximating the theme and style of the 1930s poster art, they appeared almost exclusively in a handful of state exhibits.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the sheer momentum of Palekh's production infrastructure, accelerated by the dictates of "plan" overfulfillment, projected the hamlet's contested canon further into foreign hands—and increasingly into the domestic cultural front. In 1927, Palekh's overseers had intended to increase sales from 15,000 rubles in 1928 to 47,000 rubles in 1933, and the membership of the artel from 15 artists to 25. In reality, annual sales grew in 1933 to an astounding 300,000 rubles (excluding under-the-table orders), and the artel membership to nearly 100 artists. Nearly all the former icon painters around Palekh were now employed as miniaturists—and their sons (and even a few daughters) were assiduously studying the style of the Russian religious icon in preparation for careers as Soviet decorators.¹⁹

Despite a policy of cultural and economic autarky, of building socialism in one country, the style and thematic content of much of Palekh's work was therefore forged in the crucible of Western "bourgeois" demand for Russian exotica. To the extent that Palekh introduced new socialist themes into its art, these efforts were almost always onetime orders for exhibits, and the new topics rarely entered the mainstream canon. Even when the artel switched almost exclusively to domestic markets in the mid-1930s, the legacy of the bourgeois market lived on in the Palekh canon, which remained largely unchanged from a decade earlier (and in many respects from the canon of Russianness developed in the late imperial period). With Palekh in the role of intermediary, foreign consumers thus participated in the "invention" and imagining of Soviet Russian culture, just as Western engineers and capital had helped design and finance Soviet industrialization.

Domestic private tastes were also crucial in Palekh's success. For Palekh's patrons and consumers, the village was a safe haven from monumental art and the depersonalized aesthetic experiments of the avant-garde. Palekh brought out the romantic in its political supporters, who integrated the masters into a broader policy of cultural preservation in the 1920s. These romantic tendencies seemed incompatible with the vehemently anti-peasant and urban-based spirit of Soviet modernization, especially during the First Five-Year Plan. Yet doubts about Palekh's art were never sufficient to convince party leaders to shut Palekh down. Partly, this was a result of Palekh's ability to generate foreign currency. Yet Palekh's successes also reflected a soft spot in certain party circles for Russian national traditions—even those associated, if only stylistically, with Russian Orthodoxy.

The masters, for their part, played an active role in the hamlet's triumph. They were hardly the instinctive, unconscious "peasant" artists of later Soviet propaganda. Long before 1917, Palekhians had catered to the aesthetic and spiritual needs of Russian elites. They quickly adapted to the demands of new domestic patrons, who were inspired by many of the same romantic inclinations that had intrigued Palekh's prerevolutionary customers. The masters also had little of the Russian intellectual's disdain for the business of artistic production. Before 1917, Palekh's icon studios nurtured a thriving entrepreneurial environment. This entrepreneurial spirit survived the Revolution, and along with the ambitions of the artists, it played no small role in reestablishing the Palekh brand name.

All these factors—foreign market demand, romantic strivings, and local ambitions and entrepreneurial traditions—ultimately made Palekh a privileged site for producing Soviet "Russianness." Notably absent in the story of Palekh is any hint of a coordinated cultural policy, much less one that discriminated against Great Russians for their "dominant-nation chauvinism." On the contrary, Palekh flourished in the first 15 years of Soviet power, propelled as much by markets and the growing momentum of its production infrastructure as by any party directive. At least so far as Palekh was concerned, there was no active anti-Russian cultural stance in the early Soviet era. Instead, the village encountered a party leadership that was fundamentally confused on issues of national culture and identity, for which the classics of Marxism-Leninism provided little guidance. By the mid-1930s, when official policies seemed to suggest a more explicit embrace of certain aspects of Great Russian culture, Palekh already had more than a decade of experience "indigenizing" the Russian heartland and propagandizing "ancient" Russian traditions.²⁰

As this analysis suggests, conventional notions of Soviet cultural and national development have little explanatory power in the Russian heartland. According to the accepted scheme, the Soviet state in the 1920s and early 1930s actively discriminated against Great Russian culture and encouraged non-Russian "indigenization." By the late 1930s, the Soviet regime abandoned its earlier policies and promoted a revival of patriotic Russian culture. This explanation will not work in Palekh. With state support, and buttressed by the tastes of private consumers and the demand of the market, the hamlet thrived in the 1920s, producing many of the images of Russian folk culture and heroic myths typically associated with the supposed shift to Great Russian chauvinism a decade later. Moreover, from the late 1930s to the 1960s, the village faced frequent attacks for its focus on Russian folklore and epics and its inability to develop new "Soviet" style and content. If the Soviet cultural landscape was increasingly "Russified" after 1935, one would expect such demands to disappear, above all, in the Russian heartland. They did not.

An Alternative Interpretation

In place of the more conventional chronological boundaries and concepts, this essay proposes an alternative picture of Soviet cultural construction. Party leaders were fundamentally confused on issues of national culture and identity. The resulting ideological crisis, which emerged with the Revolution itself and lasted well beyond the death of Stalin, created a constant stream of conflicting signals for culture producers in the Russian heartland. Beyond the vague commandment to fill national forms with “socialist” content, the lack of clarity set the tone for the production environment in Palekh. Palekhians constantly had to weigh the risks and potential benefits of this or that image or style—as well as their own need for money. True, they knew that the national cultural heritage provided legitimate inspiration, and was also supported by most consumers, but which aspects of that heritage were “progressive” and which were “reactionary” and “bourgeois” were often unclear. More often than not, they would have to decide for themselves—that is, if they wanted a paycheck. One result of this system of production was that the market decided issues of cultural identity that the party itself could not resolve. Another result was that the artists became active participants in cultural construction rather than mere fulfillers of “the plan.” Each new lacquer box added to the ongoing project of socialist cultural construction—whether it was an original work or an interpretation of a troika, firebird, or Pushkin fairytale already in the Palekh canon. Forced to create the images that ideological overseers could only vaguely define, the artists of Palekh, along with the market, unexpectedly assumed the role of chief cultural architect in the Russian heartland.

While Palekh suggests the critical role of the market in creating Soviet Russian culture, and the myriad of private preferences expressed in its operation, the hamlet also illustrates the danger of drawing too rigid a division between the public and private. If the formation of the Soviet Palekh art form was driven by the private tastes of consumers and producers, it was also sanctioned by the state—and eventually co-opted. In this sense, the private sphere was “publicized.” So if some scholars speak of the “privatization” of public life and assets—a theme central to Vladimir Shlapentokh’s discussion of the role of the private sphere in post-Stalinist Soviet life—one can also speak of the “publicization” of private life.²¹ This process of publicizing and co-opting private tastes began in the early years of the regime, driven both by the economic value of Palekh and the romantic strivings of many party leaders, and it continued until the very end of the Soviet period.

At the same time, co-opting private tastes did not mean that the party felt this choice was proper or appropriate. These doubts were expressed in periodic attacks on Palekh’s art as reactionary and bourgeois and they suggest

the continuing importance of ideological imperatives that equated state control with the superior “public” sphere and the market with the inferior and corrupting “private” sphere. As one artist in Palekh put it in January 1953: “The stimulus in our work is the ruble and not the high consciousness of satisfying the growing demands of the people. We have sullied the great glory of Palekh.”²² Another artist in October 1955 reflected this suspicion of the market, made even more dubious because of its perceived alliance with uncontrolled private tastes. “I do not agree . . . that the artist should paint according to the dictates of his soul. Supporting this view we might find ourselves in a situation where there would be no one left to represent a modern theme.”²³

To counter the influence of the market following World War II, the state attempted to impose its influence on Palekh’s art through a two-tiered system of production. This system manipulated the social category of “artist” to achieve its goal of increased control. For instance, by the end of the war the hamlet’s production studios formally distinguished between “creative work” (*tvorcheskaia rabota*) and all other art, known by the pejorative term “*massovka*.” For Palekh’s overseers, the master copyist represented the ignorant peasant, while the creative artist, working on supposedly more modern and relevant themes, was a fully conscious and cultured Soviet citizen, an *intelligent*. Creative artists, who received honorific titles from the state and exhibit opportunities, had to submit preliminary sketches and apply for consultation and up-front money from overseers at Moscow, thus ensuring (in theory) that the “creative” energies of the collective were subject to active party influence. By contrast, the vast majority of masters focused on *massovka*, the copying of the “classics” of the Palekh canon from the 1920s and 1930s, for domestic and foreign consumers.²⁴

The challenge, from the standpoint of Moscow experts, was to raise artists who focused on *massovka* to the level of creative artist. Achieving this task was complicated by two factors, both of which highlight the central thesis of this essay: the limits of state control over cultural production. First, Palekh remained very much tied to “*massovka*” and the market that sustained it, both to generate revenues for the state and to provide work for the majority of artists. Second, Palekh could not escape the logic of the broader system of production, which favored quantity over quality. The system of pay was based largely on square centimeter of output. Desperately in need of money, even creative artists spent most of their time painting variations on the “classic” fairytale themes for their “creative” works (which took far less time) rather than produce completely new topics on modern themes.²⁵ Calls for Palekh’s restructuring, and the entire edifice of official social status, thus struggled mightily against the economic logic of the broader Soviet system of cooperative production.

The regime's suspicion of the market as a dangerous source of contamination was reflected in a crackdown on quasi-private economic activity. In the system of retail trade, this crackdown in mid-1947 meant an end to a critical wartime practice in Palekh: the use of independent "agents." Palekh had three such agents on its payroll in 1947, who helped grease the mechanisms of distribution for Palekh by seeking out retail and wholesale customers. The cooperative received more business, while the agents secured lucrative commissions ranging anywhere from 2 to 8 percent of the price of goods sold. Some individual consultants in the first half of 1946 made as much as 40,000 rubles. "The earnings of these individuals," went one irate Central Committee report, "have grown to immense proportions." The Central Committee, which said such a distribution system "has nothing in common with Soviet art," finally abolished the practice of using middlemen in early May 1947.²⁶ The move, however, did not sever Palekh's reliance on the market—nor did it prevent the regime from finally and unambiguously embracing Palekh as "Soviet" in the late Khrushchev era. Unable to replace the market and consumer tastes, the regime simply integrated them into the Soviet project and declared them socialist. Willy-nilly, economic realities thus transformed and weakened ideological imperatives—though they did not eclipse them entirely.

The "Soviet" Work Space

Tensions between the private and public in Palekh were also reflected in the environment in which the Palekh masters produced their art. Mikhail Shoshin, a prominent writer from Ivanovo and a longtime Palekh aficionado, captured the new ethos of Russian patriotism that emerged during World War II. The Palekh style, he wrote, was "in blood and body connected . . . with life in the countryside." The war, in particular, had brought out the best in Palekh, which was guided by "determined creative strivings, . . . daily artistic labor, enchantment, most original talent, domesticity [*domashnost'*], and simplicity."²⁷ The emphasis on "simplicity" and "domesticity" reflected a growing nostalgia for the idealized comforts of home and family, which was greatly intensified by the deprivations of the Nazi invasion. These longings encouraged a continuing transformation of the "private" sphere of family into the primary social unit of Soviet Russian public life, a trend that had begun to emerge in the late 1930s. In a surprising policy reversal, party leaders during the war endorsed private family cottages as the ideal work environment for the Palekh master. In August 1943, the Palekh district party remarked that the masters' cottages, rather than the communal cooperative building, were most likely to give flight to the artists' creative muses (though the artists still worked for the one and only state-run organization allowed to

produce Palekh art). The endorsement of cottage-based production was especially striking given the substantial resources devoted in the mid-1930s to a new cooperative building for the artists, not to mention a constant emphasis on overcoming the supposedly reactionary nature of cottage-based production. This shift downplayed the superiority of public and industrialized work spaces, a central principle of Soviet Marxist ideology.²⁸ Thus just as the regime was unable to create a viable alternative to the market that Palekh served, and eventually declared it “Soviet,” so too did it reconceptualize the family-controlled cottage, and the Russian folk artists who labored within it, as a uniquely Soviet public institution.

Soviet officials, meanwhile, continued to pump resources into the village, giving it the required visage of plenty and comfort befitting a Russian rural utopia. First on the agenda was a new production studio. For those who viewed cottage industry as a quasi-private and hence doomed system of production, a new studio was essential for preserving a linchpin of the communist system: the exertion of state (and in the Soviet view “public”) control over the means of production. The first studio in Soviet Palekh, used from the 1930s to the early 1960s, was situated in a building built by Palekh’s prerevolutionary icon moguls, yet it was too small to accommodate the entire collective. Stymied by scarce resources, local party officials, as already noted, had sanctioned the painting of lacquers in private homes during World War II, setting a precedent that the regime was unable to reverse. By 1960, nearly half the artists did most of their work at home—an environment many masters preferred, given the opportunity to avoid the oversight of party officials and their obtrusive gaze.²⁹ Hand in hand with the privatization of housing in the USSR, the collective communal ideal thus kept losing ground.

Nonetheless, the regime would not give up its attachment to supposedly “higher” forms of production. At the insistence of Prime Minister Kosygin, work on the new studio began in the 1970s and dragged on through the beginning of the Gorbachev era. An immense structure made from quality Estonian brick, an extreme rarity in the Russian provinces, the new studio was to be the defining structure of the village. It incorporated a new hotel (to replace the old hotel built in the 1960s), workspaces for the more than 200 masters, a conference center devoted to folk art, and a fitness center.³⁰

Meanwhile, the KGB kept close tabs on the Palekh artists, scrutinizing them on trips to Moscow, Leningrad, and abroad to make sure that they did not sell their work privately. The fulfillment of orders on the side threatened, as Vladimir Shlapentokh put it, “the withdrawal of human energy and emotion from work for the state and the absorption of people in their private interests.” Economic motives were also critical, for Palekh had become a veritable cash cow for producing foreign currency. By the 1980s nearly 500 Palekh

masters were earning the regime 1 million annually in convertible “gold” rubles. Upscale shops and department stores in New York City, such as Macy’s and Brentano’s, ran full-page ads in the *New York Times* pitching Palekh’s lacquer boxes. “An Art of the Past Makes a Perfect Present,” went one such ad placed by Brentano’s on Fifth Avenue. Boxes featuring Pushkin themes at Brentano’s were on sale for \$425—a bargain compared to prices charged to foreigners for some lacquer boxes at the Moscow GUM department store, which were retailing for as much as \$600 in the late 1970s.³¹

An incident in 1982 represented a last gasp of enforced Soviet communalism in the hamlet. Amidst Yurii Andropov’s crackdown on corruption, the artist Valerii Konstantinovich Bokarev was arrested in late 1982 on trumped up charges of speculation and sentenced to eight years in prison. Bokarev was not just any artist. The son of a prominent Communist master from Palekh, he frequently participated in state exhibits and traveled abroad. Perhaps his biggest sin was being too explicit about his private consumption habits. Palekhians remember Bokarev before his arrest as the first Palekhian to have all the latest electronic gadgets and household amenities. He fulfilled orders for private clients abroad, especially in Spain. Luckily for Bokarev, the authorities cut his sentence in half at the beginning of *perestroika* and released him. But by then, the single Soviet cooperative organization in which all masters were forced to work since the 1920s had already collapsed. It was abandoned as masters took advantage of new opportunities for private business to launch their own lacquer-box operations.³²

Ironically, the collapse of the state-run cooperative in 1989 coincided with completion of the new state-run studio—intended to serve as the showcase of the new era of communal labor in the Soviet Russian heartland. The single cooperative had divided into numerous competing organizations after one Palekh artist, traveling abroad for an exhibit, learned that the value of his boxes sold to foreigners far vastly exceeded his own paycheck. In the spirit of *glasnost*, he complained loudly and publicly about the theft of his labor, causing an acrimonious split (*raskol*) among artists into mutually hostile private business enterprises and the collapse of the state-run enterprise that had existed in Palekh since 1924. Almost immediately, Palekhians began their own process of privatization, securing bricks from the newly completed artistic studios for the many fancy new cottages (*kottedzhi*) that began sprouting up around Palekh like mushrooms after the proverbial rain. Like the ruins of Rome in the Dark Ages, the new studio served as building material for the new order. It stands today as a fitting tribute to the Soviet era: a cannibalized skeleton, covered with graffiti and expletives in grammatically incorrect English. Palekhians call it “the Coliseum.”³³ On the other side of town, the studio in which masters had reluctantly worked since the 1960s—also a large two-storey stone structure—is completely

abandoned. Its windows are mostly broken and the weeds and garbage grow high around its edges. The material foundations for communism had been decisively and irreversibly abandoned.

By 1990, the Soviet system of production in Palekh had collapsed. Rather than the “publicization” of Palekh’s artistic system, just the opposite seemed to have occurred: the Soviet Union was now being aggressively privatized. Thus the “Coliseum” was simply looted before it even opened for socialist business.

The Tangled Nexus of Private and Public Spheres in Russian Culture

In the chaotic process of Soviet cultural construction comprehensive planning and control was more an ideal than a reality. Due to ideological confusion at the center over issues of national and Soviet identity, party planners could provide no alternative to visions of Russian culture that emerged from the market and private tastes, denigrated in Soviet ideology as part of the inferior “private” realm. The regime was also desperate for the foreign currency that Palekh’s art generated. As a result, consumer tastes and the preferences of the artists often played a decisive role in the creation of Soviet Russian culture—from the first years of the Soviet regime to its very end. The non-state-directed sphere was thus a key factor in shaping Soviet culture—and it constantly challenged the regime’s bias toward state control as a superior form of “public” cultural organization.

At the same time, it would be wrong to conclude that the private sphere was opposed to, and ultimately, won out over the public sphere. The Soviet regime engaged in a relentless process of co-opting private tastes and market preferences and declaring them part of the state-directed Soviet public realm, just as it had transformed the family into the primary unit of Soviet public life.³⁴ Thus, if the Soviets tolerated private tastes and the role of the hated market, they did so selectively and only on the condition that market-driven elements of culture, such as Palekh, serve the officially celebrated public realm. Moreover, the regime, at least until 1989, never retreated from its ideologically driven bias against markets and non-state-directed forces. The process of co-optation “publicized” private consumer tastes, making them part of the official public culture. Ultimately, then, the Soviets continued to privilege the public sphere as superior (equated with state control), even as it paradoxically condemned the non-state structures and tastes upon which Soviet Russian culture depended.

Surprisingly, the tense relationship between public and private has endured. Following the Soviet Union’s collapse, many Palekh artists continued to identify state direction as a necessary form of public control—a first line

of defense of Russian culture against the supposedly contaminating influences of markets and uncultivated private tastes. Simultaneously, they condemned the market forces and private consumer tastes upon which they had always depended. The complaint, a common refrain in the post-Soviet village, suggests the extent to which the artists had internalized Soviet conceptions of the private and public spheres. Since the part of their identity that was linked to the state had collapsed, undermined by the sudden breakdown of state authority, Palekh masters now found themselves standing naked before a market system they had learned to vilify.

Outraged, a number of artists have demanded the reimposition of state (and, in their view, public) control over the cultural sphere. The post-Soviet situation is thus characterized by a kind of schizophrenia. On the one hand, artists are engaging in a relentless theft ("privatization") of public assets, literally securing from the state "Coliseum" the materials for their new private homes, which are also financed by private market exchanges of their art. On the other hand, they are experiencing a renewed nostalgia for the Brezhnev era, which many Palekh masters now see as a golden age of social harmony when Russian traditions were protected from the vagaries of the market by state authorities.

The dilemma extends far beyond Palekh; it reflects a broader challenge for the legions of professionals (and nonprofessionals) in Russia, whose status for decades was derived from official privileges and awards rather than from the market. The widespread popularity of President Putin's attacks on Russia's most successful entrepreneurs is but one reflection of how deeply ingrained these anticapitalist attitudes had become. At the very least, such attitudes run counter to post-Soviet attempts (increasingly halfhearted) to valorize non-state-controlled areas of Russian cultural life. As one Palekh artist put it following the collapse of the Soviet Union: "Unhealthy competition has begun. Some say this is all quite natural . . . Maybe. But that does not mean it will always be this way. Everything, good and bad, will pass. That is life. The present chaos will also pass and a normal life will develop again." By normal, the artist meant a world where state-controlled organizations established public monopolies in all spheres of economic and creative life, and where "the desire to own one's own business" and "make money" had not "destroyed talented artists" and "corrupted the souls of our children."³⁵

Notes

This essay is adapted from my book, *Russia in a Box: Art and Identity in an Age of Revolution* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005). The author thanks Northern Illinois University Press for permission to use these materials.

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CHAPTER THREE

SEPARATE YET GOVERNED: THE
REPRESENTATION OF
SOVIET PROPERTY RELATIONS IN
CIVIL LAW AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Charles Hachten

In studying social life, we face a difficult choice when deciding which analytical terms to apply. Should we apply universal concepts which maintain their definition across diverse fields of inquiry? Should we establish provisional definitions for the purpose of our study in order to provide a lens through which to describe the sphere of social life we are examining? Or should we limit ourselves to “native” analytical terms that the subjects of our study used to describe social life in their own time and place? There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach. Universal definitions allow comparison across space and time, but inevitably impose models of thought not suitable for many, if not all, of the cases under question. Provisional definitions permit deeper insight into the case at hand, but make intercultural comparisons difficult. Native categories give great insight into the self-understanding of historical subjects, but using such categories frequently leads us to accept myths people tell about themselves.

In the larger project upon which this essay is based, I apply the notion of “property relations” as a provisional lens through which to highlight Soviet economic and social organization. In this essay, which considers two veins of discourse regarding the nature of the border between local economic organizations and the central government, I take the “native” discourse approach.¹ I show that in Soviet Russia during the 1940s we see two contradictory representations of the relationship between local economies and the central government. The first part of the essay highlights the rise during the war of rhetoric highlighting the “separation” of local economies from the central government. The second part shows that publicists

responded to successes in the war effort after 1943 by reviving a prewar representation of economic life in which local economies were shown to be part of a larger highly coordinated project of central economic governance. I consider how and why these seemingly contradictory representations (which coexisted in varying degrees throughout the 1940s) evolved by pointing to concrete circumstances and dilemmas that publicists, lawmakers, and regular people faced in social practice.

While the essay is about discourse, my goal is to highlight the relationship between discourses and social practice in everyday life. My conclusions are based upon observations about the interests of individuals embedded in local economic organizations (*khoziaistva*) and the costs of managing resources in daily life. While a dictator, an official, a manager, or a mother might want to control the fate of some useful good, while any individual might express a formal claim with regard to that good, any organization hoping to take something “as their own” must be willing to expend scarce resources in order to acquire, use, and maintain real control over its disposition. As individual citizens (acting as officials, directors, or as members of households) decided how and where to allocate their time, energy, and resources, the borders between the central government, local state agencies, economic enterprises, and households were drawn. While it might be possible some day to use such an approach to draw a border between the “private” and “public” more generally, my goal in this essay is to apply the perspective provided by such an analysis to highlight the factors that shaped how Soviet propagandists, lawmakers, and citizens conceived of the borders between local economies and the central economic management.

“Separation” Discourses

War, publicists declared, was not the time for “dependent moods.” The problems local managers, officials, and citizens faced in procuring consumer resources were now of no concern to the government. These were “their” problems (and no one else’s) and they had to solve them on their own, with their own means (*svoimi silami*), outside of work, on their own time (*vneurochnoe vremia*). “Why push the problems under the rug?” one journalist asked. It is wrong “to sit and wait until the dough [*galushki*] throws itself into our mouths.”²

Local Managers and Officials

It was the responsibility of every manager, union leader, and local official to “care for the needs of the home front laborers!”³ Soviet publicists used such discourses in order to deflect blame for failures on the ground to lower officials

and managers. Throughout the war, for example, publicists blamed local managers and officials for showing a “heartless” and “uncaring” attitude toward their dependent constituents. In highly critical articles, journalists regularly named names, faulting managers and officials throughout the country for their failures to provide for their workers and their families. Officials and managers who failed to take every possible effort to produce or procure the resources for their constituents took the blame. Local bosses (*khoziaistvenniki*) were described as if they were private entities deserving public rebuke, comparable to deadbeat fathers or cruel slave owners. One journalist, for example, declared that “resourceless bosses [*bezrukie khoziaistvenniki*] permit themselves to cite all possible difficulties, but they do not always pay sufficient attention themselves to the trifles of material life.” While in theory these bosses had little formal discretion over the disposition of material resources, journalists frequently criticized them for privileging production over consumption, for paying more attention to state orders than to human needs, for thinking more about the Soviet “bottom line” than about the petty concerns of daily life.⁴

Collective Self-Help

In order to duck criticism that the central government might be to blame in failing to meet the needs of the public, they emphasized how citizen and worker collectives had managed to care for themselves. In the popular press, journalists daily told of the fantastic achievements of worker collectives in Rostov, Vladimir, Red October machine factory number 34, upright citizen in city N. They produced gorgeous vegetables with self-made tools in newly renovated apartments on self-made furniture.

In order to promote collective self-help, journalists revived a populist vein of socialist discourse, one more reminiscent of the early utopian and “democratic” days of the October Revolution than anything that had evolved under Stalin. Now dorm residents in factories were no longer client-beneficiaries of the Stalinist welfare state (heading off to well-furnished dining rooms, dropping their children in fully staffed day-care centers in which a portrait of Stalin could be found). Instead they were rugged, self-sufficient youthful “activist collectives.” In such renditions, the possessive pronoun gained new ground. Instead of “the plan,” we now read about “our plans,” instead of labor (*trud*), we now see “our work” (*nasha rabota*), instead of the “unified land fund,” we see “our gardens,” instead of state housing, we read about apartment “proprietors” (*vladelets* or *khoziaika*, both words implying a degree of ownership).⁵

Propagandists treated Soviet collectives as if they were organic units integrated by nothing more than a national Soviet moral character. Rising

in strength throughout the 1940s, these discourses treated the collectives not as if they were state creations or the objects of governmental regulation, but as if they were private entities bound by a personal ethical charge. While after the war, the paternal figure of Stalin reappeared in such constructions with new vigor (implying that Stalin was actually the source of this moral unity), during the war, propagandists stressed the individual moral qualities of the people. Officials and bosses, factory workers, neighbors in the next town overdid whatever they could for their fellow citizens left in need of help, destitute, or orphaned by the war. They helped not because the Central Committee ordered them to or because the state instructed them to do so, but because they responded to internal feelings of patriotism and brotherhood.

They particularly relied on images of local organic unity, for example, to convince factories to adopt orphanages into their economies. The image they presented was not so much of charity (though one can find notes of charity as well) as it was an image of adoption. Factories, for example, took on the title "father factory." According to these representations, inviting an orphan into their economy meant more than merely providing them with limited material help under social pressure from local officials; it meant "bringing them up" as full-fledged members of the enterprise "economy." They would work in the gardens, socialize with the workers, share food, and learn from their fatherly patrons.⁶

Household Self-Help

Journalists used similar rhetorical steps when describing the work of home front families, but they stressed far more frequently and much more emphatically the self-sufficient and self-organizing nature of the Soviet family. The need to show that the Soviet household had not been abandoned gave push to a flurry of self-sufficiency discourses, many of which belonged more to the American frontier than to Soviet socialism.

Needing to represent wartime kitchen gardening as something other than private agriculture to avoid starvation, for example, propagandists often described the "individual gardener" as the patriarch (the individual worker gardener was usually treated as male, even during the war!) of a self-sufficient family estate. His wife remained in the kitchen, transforming the fruits of the family's labor into traditional Russian dishes for guests who might happen to drop by. Meanwhile, the gardener directed his children in the morally uplifting work of vegetable production. They worked with love and ate the "juicy gifts" of "the dutiful and responsive earth." Such families never complained about the state or relied on anyone else but themselves. In such strong "worker families," "adults and children were taught to do things

with their own hands.”⁷ A self-sufficient peasant ethos also seemed to drive the urban family to produce vegetables. Journalists regularly cited earthy prerevolutionary peasant maxims: “Lay on the fertilizer thick, the barn won’t be empty!”⁸

Journalists and officials likewise constructed an image of organic domesticity in their efforts to convince residents of state housing to care both for the space within their apartments and public areas. One cared for one’s housing, kept it in ideal condition, because it was in these rooms that one was born, grew up, came to consciousness, and became a citizen. For the resident, the state-owned apartment was his “home sweet home.” “Home” was a place one decorated with personal items, doilies, lampshades, figurines, home was where one expressed one’s civility, culture, graciousness, and good taste by maintaining one’s own room and the public space surrounding it.⁹

Thus perhaps it should not be surprising that people’s conception of their property rights and obligations was based not so much on the formal property status of any given thing (though they might tell you that something was owned by the state), but by who used and maintained the resource in daily life. Regular people recognized a separation between their household and the state not because propagandists were publicizing it, but because this discourse described practice. Many indeed took pride in the self-sufficiency of their family. Memoir material shows that many gardeners experienced a certain joy when harvesting their vegetables and collecting berries and mushrooms in the forest. R. Neratova, for example, described her family allotment as follows: “From the very beginning father said to mother, that all the work we will do on our own as a family, and that he would never ‘hire’ help. Why else does he have a father (mama and two daughters, that turned out not to be sons, but of course for this they are to blame!),”¹⁰ Gardeners often expressed pleasant surprise at their success and, likewise, admired the success of others. It is common, for example, to find praise of gardens during the war years, “His garden is phenomenal a square verst, and it has everything, [even] cucumbers.”¹¹

Reports on local notary practice show with remarkable frequency, in fact, that citizens asked to notarize sale or transfer of their rights to land allotments. Poorly educated notaries persistently satisfied their requests. Memoirs of people who were children during the war casually recount how parents “purchased” gardens.¹²

The “majority of people” likewise treated the state housing they lived in “as their own.” Few needed prodding to do necessary work on their apartments that local housing departments would not. Local officials in Moscow oblast claimed as much after inspecting citizen’s apartments and finding most of them well maintained.¹³ Journalists too implicitly recognized this when

complaining that people were not giving the same kind of care to communal areas in apartment buildings as they were to their own space.¹⁴

Some citizens clearly saw their limited material independence as the basis for resisting the demands of local officials. During periodic bond subscription campaigns, for example, local officials frequently complained that so-called well-off citizens (usually those with two wages or rations, a kitchen garden, and a cow or goat) were refusing to shoulder their burden by subscribing to the state bond at the expected level.¹⁵

When personally confronting the loss of their rights, citizens often expressed a profound sense of personal injustice. After the war, for example, citizens who had held the rights to their garden allotments for decades could hardly believe that upon their return they had no rights to reclaim them. A. Ts. Raikhman, for example, a resident of Gorky until 1941, wrote the following petition: Having voluntarily enlisted in the army, he served until April 1946. The Germans shot his parents and confiscated their property. Only the garden, he wrote, remained intact. Having returned to Gorky in 1946 to document his rights as heir to inherit the remaining garden, Raikhman ran into numerous "bureaucratic obstacles." "With a fight," he wrote, "I was able to procure a certificate from the local city soviet regarding the execution of my parents and a certificate stating that the garden belonged to my father." Only the notary stopped him. "By her face," he remarked, "I saw she was not a sufficiently juridically literate girl [*devchonka*]." She refused his request on the grounds that gardens cannot be transferred by inheritance. "She was completely helpless," he claimed, "when asked to defend her decision."¹⁶

Legal Recognition of the Household Economy

The influence of practice on discourse extended beyond temporary propaganda campaigns or everyday discourse. Practice often strongly influenced formal legislation. Even though formal law by its nature would seem to extend the influence of the state over people's lives in one direction, legislative working papers reveal to the contrary that lawmakers implicitly recognized a degree of separation between the government and local economic organizations.

Consider, for example, the problem of redefining what Soviet jurists called the "family circle." Since 1918, jurists had been debating the problem of defining the Soviet family. The central question was whom to define as a member of a family according to law.¹⁷ Jurists revisited this problem throughout the war years as they rewrote welfare and inheritance legislation in light of wartime exigencies. These draft proposals are enlightening, because they show that jurists were very sensitive to the ideas soldiers had

about their household economies, ideas which in turn were largely shaped by social practice. These papers also show, however, that jurists refused to allow members of economic households outside of the abstract "family" into the legal "family circle."

The working papers to the 1941 decree on the "Procedure for establishment and payment of subsidies to families of rank and file soldiers and private or junior officers during wartime" show how lawmakers defined who would be legally defined as a member of a household and therefore eligible for government welfare payments.¹⁸ Responding to soldiers who had expressed concern about members of their household who were not part of their nuclear family, jurists considered broadly expanding the circle of people legally eligible for the welfare payments. "In order to meet the requirements of real life," the project permitted oblast' officials in certain circumstances "to include in the circle of non-able-bodied members of the soldier's family certain people who were formally not included in the family circle according to the rules of existing law." "In practice," the working paper explained, "there are cases when a soldier has an able-bodied mother or four or more minor brothers and sisters." They had been living off the earnings of the older brother, yet by law they had no right to subsidies from the government upon his mobilization into the army because they had an able-bodied mother. Likewise, soldiers were sometimes raised by their grandparents who later became dependents of the soldier and had no other relatives obliged by law to support them. Such grandparents had no formal right to subsidies or pensions. The project allowed such grandparents under "exceptional circumstances" to receive subsidies.¹⁹ In the promulgated decree, however, only siblings made it into the list of possible subsidy recipients and the provision for exceptional circumstances was removed.

In drafting the 1945 inheritance law, lawmakers ultimately did expand the family circle beyond the nuclear family. According to prewar legislation, only descending relatives had the right to receive an inheritance. Lawmakers, however, stressed that the war made the task of changing inheritance law a pressing matter. The USSR Commissar of Justice N. Rychkov, for example, explained, "If the question of a general revision of our inheritance law had been considered before the war, the war in particular raised the question with regard to soldiers with new urgency [*s osoboï ostrotoi*]." Law professor, M. Gordon, echoing the previous rationale, made a similar claim: "There are many problems that in the light of the protection of the interests of soldiers' families have become highly relevant and require speedy solutions."

The legislative working papers reveal that lawmakers objected to existing legislation on the grounds that it did not correspond to popular conceptions of the family. "Young people," Rychkov explained, "who often have no

wives and children, but have monetary savings from their labor and some other personal belongings, are unconditionally demanding that other people by law and by will be admitted as heirs, including parents, adopted children, sisters, brothers, grandfathers and grandmothers." He also noted that "the definition of belongings left by soldiers who died at the front as escheated [property] and the transmission of these belongings into state revenue is naturally seen by close relatives of the deceased to be unfair (*nespravedlivost'*)."²⁰

Gordon strongly believed that parents should be included in the family circle: "Of all the people that might be considered," Gordon explained, "parents are the least controversial (*besspornye*) candidates for being including in the circle." Gordon reasoned that social practice shows the need to recognize the rights of parents. "First of all, parents are connected to children with mutual kinship support obligations: parents brought up and partially provided for the material needs of their sons and daughters; the property of children is significantly connected with the belongings of the parents, even when the parents were not living under the complete dependence of their children." Gordon also cited a series of other wartime administrative rules (e.g., welfare, aid, housing, pensions, etc), all of which included parents of soldiers as part of the legal family.²¹

The legislative working papers show that lawmakers were concerned about the popular conception of the family among soldiers. In turn, the papers also show that soldiers clearly understood the family in terms of their own household economies (which generally included "... parents, adopted children, sisters, brothers, grandfathers and grandmothers"). Having no compelling reason not to broaden the circle of heirs, lawmakers decided to satisfy soldiers' demands to increase the boundaries of the family circle. The final draft of the inheritance decree, "On heirs by law and will," promulgated in 1945, established a complex schedule for determining how to divide an estate based upon three-tier classification of dependents, which included parents, grandchildren, and in the absence of all other possible heirs, siblings.²²

Despite the complexity of the final legislation, in practical terms it (still) left the disposition of estates to the household (except when conflicts arose between heirs). The difference is that lawmakers no longer expressed any desire to control or redistribute household belongings (as long as these things stayed within the household). Before the war, jurists had justified inheritance from leftist critique on the grounds that it was "a surrogate form of social welfare." Now, lawmakers and propagandists described inheritance as if it were naturally "derived from the constitutional right of personal property."²³ As many lawmakers declared in public and in private, "The government as a rule is not interested in receiving the household effects, objects of daily life, and other belongings that the deceased possessed

[*vladel*], while parents of the deceased may have significant material and moral interest in these things.”²⁴

Economic relationships in daily life thus clearly influenced the legal definition of the Soviet family for the purposes of welfare and inheritance law. In recognizing the role of households in managing their own resources, in providing for their own dependents, and in disposing of their own estates after death, lawmakers were implicitly acknowledging the general economic autonomy of households in everyday life. This fact no longer needed any justification. But there were limits. While lawmakers altered the legal definition of the family to meet the expectations of soldiers who believed that the law should recognize their economic relationships within their households, Soviet lawmakers refused to extend their definition beyond the modern notion of the “family.” While the final product of their deliberations may appear to be governmental intrusion into the household (both directly and through categorization), the legislative working papers reveal the degree to which economic practice influenced these laws as they were being written.

“Governmental” Discourses

While “separation discourses” continued throughout the 1940s, a prominent prewar discourse regained ground later in the war, especially after it became apparent that the Red Army would emerge victorious. Publicists and lawmakers began to revive a dominant prewar discourse about Soviet property relations—the Soviet state as the economic manager of the population. Publicists appealed to this discourse throughout the 1940s to represent the role of the state in light of the substantial devolution of administrative control throughout the decade. They represented nearly all economic activity as if it were part of a highly coordinated premeditated state campaign for victory and reconstruction. In order to maintain the image of centralized state rule in the context of wartime disintegration, propagandists thus placed the “stamp of the state” on everyday practice even when practice preceded codification and representation.²⁵

Various legislative bodies from the highest level (the USSR Council of People’s Commissars and the Politburo) down to the lowest level (*raisoviets*) published countless decrees formally instructing local officials and individual citizens to engage in myriad activities for state ends. Publicists and lawmakers at all levels utilized statist language (i.e., “should,” “oblige,” “necessary,” “immediately check,” “prepare,” “allocate,” “secure,” “use for the prescribed purpose”) that gave the impression that their *advice* was part of a coordinated state campaign obliging individuals to take concrete actions. Reading these texts carefully, however, one sees that they did not in fact outline any formal

obligations. These were not bureaucratic instructions at all. Instead of representing what were essentially voluntary activities in terms of personal interests, they represented this advice as evidence of the state's guiding hand in the people's fight against the fascists.

The job of publicists and propagandists was thus to represent emergency food production, ad hoc housing maintenance, and the devolution of administrative control so as to give the impression that Soviet leaders stood behind the everyday work of individual managers, activists, and citizens. Publicists generally succeeded in this endeavor by employing a number of discursive tricks that framed all work and economic life (even the construction of primitive dugouts and shanties) in terms that made it consistent with the picture of pervasive state coordination.

"The Gardening State"

Each year from early in the spring to the summer, Soviet publicists promoted enterprise auxiliary farms and individual worker gardens in decrees, instructions, books, and the press. They promoted wartime gardening not as a choice for the individual gardener but as an imperative for the country's economy. It was not enough to rely upon the interests of the individual citizens to sign up for gardens. "It would be an unforgivable mistake to think that the development of gardening could go by of its own accord (*samotekom*)," articles explained, for "in this business as in any other a strong organizational arm is necessary."²⁶

Newspaper articles advised party activists to visit apartment buildings to speak with wives and family members. The press criticized factory committees who were satisfied with signing up those who wanted to work on a garden. "Other leaders of the unions are happy to compare this year's sign-up results with years past and are satisfied with their 'successes' " sarcastically remarked one journalist. "In fact this growth in gardeners is often not sufficient to secure true mass participation of workers, employees, engineers and technicians in the development." It was far from sufficient to limit the registration to those "desiring" to participate. To speak with each worker and employee, to inspire literally everyone to energetically fight for the development of gardening—this is what constituted the very first obligation of all professional organs and their leaders.²⁷

From as early as February until late October, the central press each day presented quarter- and half-page collections of articles designed to promote the gardens. The articles demanded that managers, union and local government officials, and individual citizens play an intrusive role in both co-ordinating the garden campaign and supervising other gardeners. Decrees, for example, instructed factory committees and garden commissions

to resourcefully (*po khoziaiski*) control the realization of the planned measures. If a union committee member noticed in due time the negligence of one or another gardener which threatens to leave even one patch (*klochok*) of land unworked, one can get involved early enough and prevent such a threat.²⁸

Speaking in the global “we,” headlines regularly appeared promoting the national garden effort using the same language used to promote production in collective farms.²⁹ Union organizations were to play an active role in promoting the garden campaigns through socialist competition. The Secretariat of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) on May 26, 1943, for example, instituted a “Traveling Red banner” and two awards to be given to the central committees that best organized the garden campaign, 500 merit awards, and 50 money prizes for committees.³⁰

The ultimate effect of these governmental declarations was to give the sense that gardeners were part of a “state-run” campaign to produce food for the war effort. Terms such as “food supply” (*prodovol'stvennaia baza*), for example, gathered household produced potatoes into metaphorical state “funds.” Union decrees frequently cited national gardening statistics (all of doubtful accuracy and provenance) that gave the false sense that a single agency measured garden production and gauged policy to increase production.³¹ Publicists likewise represented the “labor” that citizens invested in their garden allotments in state terms. G. Aslanov, head of the central committee of the trade union of workers from the shoe industry, for example, explained that a Leningrad factory committee had received a 5,000 ruble award for its high yields. He added with a certain pride, “it should also be noted that our enterprises were located in a part of Leningrad where there was frequent artillery bombardment, and we know of facts, when the artillery shells fell onto to gardens, but despite this the gardeners worked their allotments.” For Aslanov, this was not a story about abject need, it was a story about the dedication of Soviet workers to labor and the Soviet government’s role in organizing it.³²

Gardeners produced goods for the country’s workers and for the government. “Everyone understands the significance that the diet of workers and employees has in the future growth in the productivity of labor,” wrote one journalist. “The idea in the back of the mind of those people signing up for gardens,” remarked a representative of First Moscow Model Printers, “is not merely about their own ‘welfare,’ but primarily about the prosperity of the motherland.” Articles claimed that workers did not mind the work. “Care for producing vegetables had once been the government’s concern, but in wartime workers and employees not wanting to burden the government took it upon themselves to add to the food supplies of the country.”³³

Placing the gardens in the frame of the national economy, publicists discussed myriad aspects of the garden campaign as if the government had considered the collective economic significance of nearly every private decision a citizen might make. This was especially true with regard to all questions concerning seeds. Articles explained that workers should not allow any extra seeds to be used: "... extra pinches might not mean anything to the individual gardener, or his garden, but they can lead to great harm to the seed balance of our country."³⁴

Maintaining the State Housing Fund

From the summer to the fall, journalists promoted a campaign to prepare the country's housing stock for the winter. The country's leaders were very concerned about the gaps in housing maintenance. Managers in the main were only interested in providing key capital repairs necessary to keep the structures standing in the short term; residents in general were most interested in maintaining their own personal rooms. Public spaces were a no-man's land. In theory, local departments of communal economy were responsible for maintaining both the rooms and public spaces in city housing, but the People's Commissariat of Communal Economy received no resources from the central planning organs and so played little role in regular housing maintenance.³⁵

During "prepare for winter campaigns" central officials used the national press to mobilize the residents to ensure regular maintenance of the housing stock. To motivate residents, they advocated "voluntary Sundays," (*subbotniki*), socialist competition, and "medals of honor (and shame)." The express goal of these campaigns was not merely "to procure free labor," but also "to inculcate [*vospitat'*] a feeling of personal responsibility for the safeguarding of the buildings".³⁶

Central officials represented tenant self-help maintenance as a "popular initiative" coordinated by the state. Spontaneously appearing in Leningrad in the summer and fall of 1944–1945, central authorities promoted so called "Committees for the Assistance of State Housing" (often called "komsody").³⁷ The rhetoric associated with the komsody exaggerates the role of the "state" in constituting these ad hoc committees, which in practice worked only when members cared about housing maintenance for their own purposes.³⁸ Even when residents worked entirely on their own initiative, publicists "brought the state back in" by describing their activities in the state lexicon. Here is how one journalist described such a collective: "In the house of railroad workers the residents on their own initiative created a de facto 'workshop for domestic services' [*kombinat bytovogo obsluzhivaniia*], although it does not go by that name and is not part of any industrial syndicate or artel."³⁹

Throughout the period, journalists regularly faulted social organizations, activists, and residents for failing to mobilize tenants. "The industrialists are not the only ones to blame here," wrote journalists in countless articles during and after the war. Local organizations were obliged to "mobilize" their dependents for housing maintenance and took the blame when they failed to do so.⁴⁰

After the war, house managers reported on the ruble value of the maintenance work done on their buildings. In their reports they included both the work conducted by local state workshops as well as the work conducted by citizens for their own housing space. The informational data contained in these reports had little substantive meaning. Because the responsible officials in the local government were essentially reporting on their own performance, they naturally had a strong incentive to pad their reports. Nobody controlled or audited their figures. Even had some house managers wanted to provide meaningful data, the data were plagued by various problems of measurement. In Orel, for example, housing administrators did not have access to Gosplan price lists, and so they used local price lists instead.⁴¹

Once compiled, however, specialists and journalists used these figures in their published analyses on housing maintenance after the war. They placed these data under subtitles, such as "Maintenance of the Soviet Socialist State Housing Fund."⁴² In their analyses, they did not make any distinctions between work done by state employees from work done by its citizens. Given the prominence of self-help, the numbers in these analyses actually represent rough estimates of the work that citizens put into their own housing space! Readers, however, are (mistakenly) left to assume that the state co-ordinated this maintenance.

After the war, the government further formalized what had long before become de facto tenant maintenance practices in its "Rules for use and maintenance of residential housing."⁴³ The rules stipulated that residents were legally responsible for regular maintenance of their own rooms and common spaces. In 1946 and 1947, the Ministry⁴⁴ of Communal Economy charged the komsody and house managers to procure signatures from every tenant in municipal and departmental housing on lease agreements containing the newly drafted rules. The ministry also required house managers to inspect every apartment, to draft documents (*akty*) assessing the condition of the apartment and to instruct residents what work would be required of them.

Entitlements under Socialism

After the war, publicists promoted the notion that there was a direct and causal link between a worker's contribution to the state and the material

rewards he received. During the war, however, local managers and officials actually wielded broad discretion over the disposition of consumer resources and disposed them in their own interests as they saw fit. Yet propagandists represented distribution as if it were highly planned and centralized.

As the country settled into new and rebuilt residential housing, for example, "homecoming" articles in the public press seemed to imply that citizens with formal status and culture were the first to get the new housing. Throughout the postwar period, propagandists represented the economic logic of distribution under socialism as a state-sponsored system of rational, centrally coordinated, and meritocratic distribution that gave the productive and the talented the best of everything because they contributed most to the state.⁴⁵

These discourses recognized the independent nature of the individual's decisions (to improve one's qualifications, to increase educational achievement, etc.), but the individual subject acted only in relation to the "state" and its system of rewards. The country's leaders thereby shepherded the "economy" by mobilizing its supposed control over the disposition of the "means of consumption" to determine the choices of individual subjects about how to work. Thus while work was a legally defined "duty" and a personal "matter of honor" for every able-bodied Soviet citizen, publicists nevertheless claimed that the "state" exerted powerful, indirect control over labor by strategically allocating consumer resources.

In petitioning for housing, a garden, or some other form of material assistance, citizens ritually engaged in a process of constructing their own relationship vis-à-vis the state. When petitioning for housing space, for example, petitioners nearly always appealed to their contributions to the state (either through labor or through the participation of family members in the war). Petitioners formulaically catalogued their work history and mentioned anyone in their family who was currently fighting or had fought in the Great Patriotic War. They might also express their general faith in the state, Stalin, and the socialist motherland.⁴⁶

While these petitions are ubiquitous in the archives, one might point to the poignant cases when citizens appealed to get their housing back after the war. Shortages and destruction left many homeless with no legal claims on their former housing. Many expressed disbelief that the formal rules that left them homeless might trump their personal contribution to the Soviet state. One petitioner to the Commissariat of Justice, for example, rhetorically asked:

Does there exist a law in our country by which people evacuated in 1941 and returning in 1945 to their city, where they lived all their life, studied, and worked, cannot receive their housing space only because they did not pay

their rent from the moment of liberation of the city, without regard to whether or not they lived in Siberia, worked the entire time, and left people to live on their space, people having the entire time wandered and continued to work during occupation, during the war, having returned to their home city and still working, living without cover, spending the night wherever they might be received.⁴⁷

"After forty years of life at labor," petitioners wanted to "peacefully live the rest of their days with their family in their own corner."⁴⁸ Petitioners always expressed their faith that the state made such decisions based upon their contribution to the national economy.

Conclusion

It is common in contemporary social science to take the nominalist position in conceptual matters, to argue that what matters is how people perceive and describe what they are doing. In Soviet history, for example, some argue that while ideology or policy goals did not determine practice, the desire to establish a given set of norms, institutions, or even a new social order (e.g., the Soviet person, state planning and management of the economy, communism, etc.) nonetheless shaped the environment in which people acted.⁴⁹ As convincing as this argument is, it fails to take into account the fact that over time there is a necessary and inevitable relationship between how people represent social relations and their personal and collective experience. People, for example, will make conclusions about whether something is separate or governed based not only upon what they hear from others, but also upon what they see in practice. Even propagandists, who by definition do not restrict themselves to "true" representations, cannot stretch the truth so far as to write complete fictions. Much of the propaganda described earlier, for example, can be seen as an attempt to "spin" a new interpretation of facts that everyone, even the propagandists, recognized—that households, local officials, and industrial managers had to take care of their own needs during the war. While I have focused on the 1940s, one can find examples of such rhetoric both before and after the war.

Aside from those who believed that Soviet statements regarding property were pure falsehoods, scholars who have studied Soviet property relations tended to presume that property was a tool of central economic governance, a state-sponsored institution designed to help planners manage the population and economy. Harold Berman, for example, wrote in 1947 that "behind Soviet property relations is the plan."⁵⁰ Berman argued that as the Russian Revolution "settled down" the initial opposition between property and planning gave way to a synthesis of the two, a synthesis comparable to the fusion of private and public law that one could find in most other modern

nations. The Soviet state used property relations as an instrument in the larger system of national economic administration. "Planning," he concluded, "gives new content to Soviet property relations, continually replenishing them."⁵⁰ This essay suggests, however, that Berman gave too much weight to public sources promoting the discourses described in the second part of this essay.

Before we accept "native" frameworks in our analysis, we need to consider who is speaking and what they are trying to represent. While it may be true, for example, that Soviet ideology, aspirations, and discourses played an important role in shaping the universe of choices available to people in daily life, it is frequently possible to argue the converse point as well. While social practice may not determine how people describe their society, social practice nonetheless plays a formative role in shaping the universe of possible representations.

Notes

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1. One of my goals in the larger project, currently titled, "Law, Economy, and the State in Soviet Russia: Property Relations in Discourse and Practice, 1941–1948," is to uncover the substantive meaning of the Soviet conventions of "state" and "personal property." My approach is generally to look past formal legal representations toward the social relationships that shaped people's rights and obligations in everyday practice. Having come to some concrete conclusions about how rights and obligations vis-à-vis everyday resources were defined in practice, I turn to the question of formal law and discourse in this essay.
2. See, e.g., "Pobol'she initsiativy i smekalki," *Trud*, March 26, 1942.
3. "Povsednevno zaborit'sia o byte truzhenikov tyta," *Trud*, September 2, 1941.
4. "Za chistotu v obshchzhitiakh," *Trud*, January 28, 1945.
5. "Rodnoi dom: V obshchzhitiakh molodykh rabochikh," *Trud*, March 14, 1945.
6. Ben Zajicek, "Children's Homes and the State: Soviet Orphanage Policy, 1941–49," Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, 2002.
7. "Khoresh' imet' ovoshchi—khorosho vozdelai' svoi ogorod," *Trud*, April 19, 1942; "Poslushnaia zemlia," *Trud*, February 12, 1942.
8. ("Kladi navoz gusto, v ambare ne budet pusto!").
9. Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Moskovskoi Oblasti (TsGAMO), f. 7461, op. 1., d. 19, l. 27.
10. Rimma Neratova, *V dni voiny: Semeinaia khronika* (Saint Petersburg: Zvezda, 1996), 25.
11. Maria Tsvetaeva, *Sem'ia, istoriia v pis'makh* (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1999), 424.
12. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. a-353, op. 14, d. 807, l. 26; d. 809, l. 16ob; d. 814, l. 9; d. 816, l. 6; d. 817, l. 81; d. 819, ll. 10–11.

13. TsGAMO, f. 7461, op. 1, d. 20, l. 57; d. 21, l. 62.
14. "Eto—nashe!," *Severnyi rabochii*, July 18, 1945.
15. Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Obshchestvennykh Dvizhenii goroda Moskvy (TsAODM), f. 23, op. 7, d. 29, l. 19. For more on the bond campaigns, see chapter 8 of my dissertation.
16. All land within the Soviet Union was formally owned by state. GARF, f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1671, l. 92.
17. P. Charles Hachten, "Mutual Rights and Obligations: Law, Family, and Social Welfare in Soviet Russia, 1917–1945," Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, 1997.
18. "O poriadke naznacheniiia i vyplaty posobiia sem'iam voennosluzhashchikh riadovogo i mladshogo nachal'stviushchego sostava v voennoe vremia," ed. K. P. Gorshein *Spravochnik po zakonodatel'stvu dlia ispolnitel'nykh komitetov sovetov deputatov trudiashchikhsia* (Moscow, 1947), vol. 2, 314–316.
19. GARF, f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1616, l. 26.
20. Ibid., f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1614, l. 77; f. a-5446, op. 47, d. 3319, l. 12. See also ibid., f. a-9492, op. 1, d. 1615, ll. 1–60 for legislative discussion.
21. Ibid., f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1614, l. 73.
22. "O naslednikakh po zakonu i po zaveshchaniu," *Vedomosti verkhovnogo soveta SSSR*, no. 15, March 25, 1945, 2.
23. Ibid.
24. GARF, f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1615, l. 43.
25. In this section, I have been strongly influenced by Timothy Mitchell's, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics," *The American Political Science Review*, 85 (1991), 77–96.
26. GARF, f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1614, l. 71.
27. "Kazhdyi rabochii i sluzhashchii dolzhen imet' svoi ogorod," *Trud*, April 11, 1942.
28. Ibid.
29. For example, "Massovoi sev na ogorodakh," *Trud*, May 22, 1945; "Tshchatel'no ukhazhiva' za posevami na ogorodakh," *Trud*, June 13, 1945; "Predupredit' poteri urozhaia v podsobnykh khoziaistvakh!" *Trud*, July 4, 1945; "Organizovanno vstreim urozhai na ogorodakh," *Trud*, July 29, 1945; "Uborku v podsobnykh khoziaistvakh—pod obshchestvennyi kontrol'!" *Trud*, September 13, 1945; "Brat' urozhai na ogorodakh vovremia i bez poter'," *Trud*, September 22, 1945; and "K dal'neishemu razvitiu ogorodnichestva i individual'nogo zhivotnovodstva," *Trud*, December 14, 1945.
30. *V pomoshch' FabZavMestKom*, no. 12 (1943), 45–46.
31. See, e.g., *Trud*, August 11, 1945.
32. GARF, f. r-5451, op. 24, d. 225, l. 156.
33. "Vo-vremia obespechit' ogorodnikov zemlei," *Trud*, March 27, 1942; "Poslushnaia zemlia," *Trud*, February 12, 1942.
34. "Ogorody—bol'shoe i vazhnoe delo," *Trud*, March 25, 1942.
35. GARF, f. a-314, op. 2, d. 1482, ll. 75–77.
36. Ibid., f. r-5451, op. 30, d. 4, l. 30; d. 12, l. 7; TsGAMO, f. 7461, op. 1, d. 2.
37. Ibid., f. a-259, op. 6, d. 5568, ll. 4–34.
38. I make this argument in chapter 3 of my dissertation.
39. "Nachinaniia zhil'tsov odnogo doma," *Trud*, March 31, 1943, 4.

40. "O podgotovke obshchezhitii rabochikh prom pred i transp k zime," *Vpomoshch' FabZavMestKom* no. 9 (1944), 22.
41. GARF, f. a-314, op. 2, d. 1517, l. 1, 18, 24; Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), f. 6, op. 6, d. 154, l. 222.
42. See D. L. Broner, *Ocherki ekonomiki zhilishchnogo khoziaistva Moskvy* (Moscow: NKKKh, 1946), chapter VI. This practice was common before and during the war. See, e.g., "Berech zhilishchnyi fond," *Trud*, February 5, 1941.
43. For text of the "rules," see T. D. Alekseev, *Zhilishchnye zakony: Sbornik vazhneishikh zakonov SSSR i RSFSR, postanovlenii, instruktsii i prikazov po zhilishchnomu khoziaistvu po sostoiianiiu na 1 maia 1946 goda* (Moscow: NKKKh, 1947), 105–108.
44. In 1946, the People's Commissariats came to be called Ministries. See T. P. Korzhikhina, *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i ego uchrezhdeniia* (Moscow: RGGU, 1995), 222.
45. For a good example, see "Novosel'e," *Ogonek*, no. 1 (1951), 19–20.
46. Lewis Siegelbaum makes a similar point in his essay, "'Dear Comrade, You Ask What We Need': Socialist Paternalism and Soviet Rural 'Notables' in the Mid-1930s," *Slavic Review*, 57, no. 1 (1998), 130–132. Siegelbaum ties the same discourse discussed here to an argument made by Fehér, Agnes Heller, and Gyorgy Markus in their *Dictatorship over Needs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983). Quoting Fehér et al., Siegelbaum writes, "The paternal authority metes out punishments or disapproves of its children's behavior: those who behave well will be rewarded, even decorated." Importantly, however, Siegelbaum cautions the reader not to assume that the state acted as a single coherent entity. He writes, "The state under Stalin, however, was not a unitary entity, nor did 'it' exhibit much consistency about the criteria of behavior according to which punishments and rewards were distributed." My larger project tries to resolve the paradox implicit in Siegelbaum's comments. How are we to square the paternalist rhetoric with our observations that state economic management was extremely uncoordinated?
47. GARF, f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1671, l. 27.
48. *Ibid.*, f. r-9492, op. 1, d. 1671, l. 155.
49. This argument is ubiquitous in the literature, but it has been most effectively advocated in recent years by Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
50. Harold J. Berman, "Soviet Property in Law and in Plan," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 96 (1948), 324–353. For a similar argument, see John N. Hazard, "Soviet Property Law: A Case Study Approach," in *Soviet Society: A Book of Readings*, ed. Alex Inkeles and Kent Geiger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 201–209.

CHAPTER FOUR

CARS, CARS, AND MORE CARS: THE
FAUSTIAN BARGAIN OF
THE BREZHNEV ERA

Lewis H. Siegelbaum

“Curiously,” wrote Hans Koningsberger in 1968, “the Soviet Union is now a highly industrialized country, but in its private sector is only on the threshold of the gasoline age.” Consequently, “the Westerner in his own car . . . moves in an odd way back through time.”¹ Curious this was because moving back through time was not what one was supposed to be doing in the Soviet Union. Stalin himself famously had said that the Soviet Union had to catch up to and overtake the advanced capitalist countries or else it would go under. The Soviet Union did do a lot of catching up over the next several decades, but not so much in terms of passenger cars.

Koningsberger’s sense of moving back in time was among his strongest and, ironically, most positive impressions of the Soviet Union. “Aesthetically,” he remarked, “the rareness of gas stations is a boon . . . Roads without billboards and without gas stations show how our world once looked, how it was supposed to look, one would be tempted to say. . . . It is marvelous to visit a carless landscape in your own car.” Carlessness in the case of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe should not, he insisted, be attributed to just backwardness, “for there are very much more backward countries nonetheless crowded with the Western web of roads, gas stations, and cars.” In contrast to the cities of Koningsberger’s adopted country, the United States, those in Russia “are not only still free from smog, they are also, still, less hurried, less eager, less atomized.” In Red Square, on a spring evening, “there was a hushed luminosity, a silence stemming from the absence of all engines, such as we have almost forgotten exists.” But it was in the countryside, “on those quiet roads” where one was “still on the far side of that time fence.” There, one could experience the full force of retro-topia, returning “by chance to a childhood nostalgia of innocence.”²

What else was curious was Koningsberger's reference to the "private sector." Cars, after all, inherently (and often quite negatively) impinge on the anonymous public; moreover, they typically require massive state expenditures, regulation, and personnel. Yet, even (or especially?) in a society where the ruling ideology was so unreceptive to the ownership of private property, cars became objects valued precisely because they afforded a degree of privacy and personal autonomy. Writing shortly after the end of the Brezhnev era, the journalist David Willis noted that "the Soviet automobile is many things: a status symbol, a problem to operate and maintain, an export item exploited to earn foreign exchange, an instrument of Party control, a staple of the black market, and a symbol of individual independence."³ What he did not explain was how it got to be all those things, and what sort of work, ideological and otherwise, was involved in their creation.

Half a century after automobiles had profoundly transformed American society and its culture, they began to insert themselves into the lives of Soviet citizens, thrusting the country willy-nilly into the "gasoline age." This essay, part of a larger project on the history of the Soviet automobile, explores the progressive intrusion of passenger cars into everyday Soviet life. It focuses in particular on the conflicts and adjustments that were part and parcel of the radical expansion of automobile ownership during the Brezhnev period, and the ways that these struggles and compromises blurred the boundaries between the private and the public (or, in Soviet terms, personal and social), a theme that has already figured prominently in other essays in this collection. A preliminary excursion into the social history of the late Soviet era, it suggests that in expanding opportunities for car ownership but leaving the provision of infrastructure and services to semi-legal or illegal "second economy" activity, the state under Brezhnev was engaged in a Faustian bargain over a notoriously individualistic mode of transportation.

Cars as Property

The Soviet motor vehicle industry was developed under Stalin mainly for utilitarian purposes, namely, to increase the mobility of military personnel and equipment, and to facilitate the movement of produce from collective farms to railheads and of freight within urban areas. Truck production correspondingly outpaced that of passenger cars by a large margin.⁴ The vast majority of cars went to Soviet institutions that had their own garages, drivers, and mechanics. In 1935, to cite one year for which we have data, the Commissariats of Heavy Industry and Agriculture possessed between them some 56,000 cars, or 40 percent of the total number held in state ownership.⁵ Members of the party and state elite could expect to have cars assigned with chauffeurs for their personal use as part of the perks of their

office, which might help to explain why institutions were loath to part with fleets and garages.⁶ More exceptionally, the state would bestow cars as special gifts on especially “notable” (*znatnye*) individuals, or permit them to be purchased. Their ownership theoretically was sanctioned by Article 10 of the Soviet Constitution which guaranteed citizens’ right “to own, as their personal property . . . articles of personal use and convenience.”⁷ But what the state could give, it also could take away. Analogous to the exchange of party documents in 1936, a state-mandated exchange of cars in Moscow became the occasion for separating undeserving owners from their privileges.⁸ Also in 1937 the state sought to prevent its garages from servicing individually owned cars, but apparently without much success.⁹

The first cars available for purchase by individuals were produced shortly after the Great Patriotic War. These were the Pobeda (GAZ-20), an authentically Soviet-designed vehicle with a swooping, aerodynamic body-shape, and the Moskvich-400, a Soviet version of the German Opel-Kadett. The Pobeda sold for 16,000 rubles; the smaller and lighter Moskvich, for 9,000 rubles.¹⁰ Enormous though these sums were, it was the elaborate procedures required to get to the head of the queue as much as the price that restricted ownership to a select few. “Car ownership itself is being cheered,” wrote Vera Dunham in reference to the “Big Deal” that the Stalinist state offered the “Soviet middle class” after the war. But the cars she cites as moving “in an unending column, bumper to bumper” along a Moscow thoroughfare are in the realm of socialist realism where the future was supposed to represent the potentiality, as opposed to the actuality, of the present.¹¹

Under Khrushchev, car production expanded significantly though the increase in the number and proportion of cars “assigned for sale to the population” was quite erratic. Between 1955 and 1964, an average of 61,000 per year were made available for purchase by individuals, representing some 45 percent of all cars produced in that period.¹² The remainder went to ministries and other state institutions, taxi and rental fleets, the lottery, and for export. The government’s lack of enthusiasm for individual car ownership and its preferences for mass transit and car rental systems appear to have been at least partly ideological.¹³ Such positions also coincided with popular attitudes. Steven Harris writes in reference to letters to the Leningrad press and resolutions passed at residents’ meetings that “given the opportunity to voice their collective input, residents overwhelmingly rejected garages.” Why? It wasn’t only that “car owners, their automobiles, and single-car garages dirtied new housing estates and generally got in the way of people’s everyday lives.” Judging from the terms that were used to refer to car owners—“private persons” (*chastnye litsa/chastniki*), and “independent proprietors” (*edinolichniki*)—there also was a moral dimension. To own a car was to set oneself apart from the community.¹⁴ Pity the poor automobilist (in

Russian, *avtoliubitel*, a term that combines the notions of amateur and enthusiast). This was the message of an article appearing in *Izvestiia* in January 1965, a few months after Khrushchev's forced retirement. "I'm an engineer, and it took me ten years to come up with the money for this car," complained the driver of a diminutive Zaporozhets late one evening when he stopped to give a lift to the author. "And here's what I don't understand. . . . It baffles me why when a person buys a television, a piano, a carpet or other junk it's called the growth of well-being. But deny yourself all these charms, go into debt and obtain the most modest automobile or even win a Moskvich in the lottery, and you immediately become a suspicious private person (*chastnik*)." This meant being treated rudely by police who dismissed "hooliganism" (i.e., randomly inflicted damage) against individually owned cars with the comment that "You must understand that private persons are not liked here," and were known to stop drivers on Sunday to fine them for driving dirty cars. And where was one to wash one's car? Not in the courtyard—the community (*obshchestvennost'*) wouldn't permit it. The nearest carwash is 15 kilometers away and you would have to wait at least three hours for your turn. As for parking, at nine rubles a month a parking place in the open air cost more than a two-room apartment with central heating and hot water.¹⁵

Clearly it was time to change attitudes toward car owners. They should be recognized as full fledged citizens, no different from the owners of other durable goods. But exactly which goods? The driver is quoted as referring to televisions, pianos, and carpets. The author chimes in with a reference to hats which during the NEP years (so he claims), were associated with disreputable entrepreneur types, the NEPmen. "But that was forgotten long ago." The implication was that if in the distant past ownership of such a quotidian article as a hat connoted political heterodoxy, so it now was inconceivable for someone to own a satellite. Cars, then, were somewhere "between hats and personal satellites."¹⁶

Other, less tortured analogies soon appeared. "Older citizens," wrote V. Stepanov in March 1966 "remember a time not too long ago when wristwatches and bicycles were luxury items, to say nothing of radio receivers, televisions, and vacuum cleaners. But now these things have entered into daily life." So too would automobiles, the article continued, including them along with motorcycles, furniture, and radio receivers among items whose supply was increasing.¹⁷ Five months later, Stepanov returned to the issue of "Your Personal Property," consoling a letter writer from Rostov-on-Don who had expressed hostility toward individual ownership of cars by assuring him that "Especially in connection with the rapid development of technology and the growth of production, the car undoubtedly will become more accessible and cease to be regarded as a luxury

item.”¹⁸ Later in the Brezhnev era, the impressive increase in the proportion of households with televisions and refrigerators made them obvious precedents for the expansion of car ownership and the identification of the passenger car as simply another item for “personal use.”¹⁹

This discourse was a far cry from the siren song of Western advertising and its creation of demand.²⁰ Demand far exceeding supply in the Soviet case, the primary thrust was not to interest consumers in purchasing cars but to increase popular acceptance of those fortunate enough to have done so. The taint associated with possession of a car, though, was not so easily removed. Historically, cars had been part of the privileged world of officialdom and its imaginings.²¹ They were, in this sense, more readily perceived as an extension of the state power than as a symbol of individual achievement or freedom.²² Whether such an association persisted beyond the Stalin era is unclear. Certainly, it is difficult to explain the earlier cited protests of Leningrad residents in these terms. But there was yet another problem with the rather facile equation of cars with household goods. Let us return to the hard-pressed, Zaporozhets-driving engineer. Did he just happen to encounter a pedestrian late at night and generously offer him a ride to the Kiev Station? Or was he actually cruising for clients, that is (I hasten to add), using his car as a taxi? If it was the latter, he would have crossed the line dividing “personal” from “private” property, for, as Stepanov explained in his “conversation with readers” about “ours” and “mine,” personal property was “that which is destined exclusively for the personal needs of the owner or his family.” It “cannot be used for profit, enrichment, or earnings.”²³

Not in theory at least. But according to an intrepid American couple who “studied the Soviet automobile industry closely since a visit to Russia in 1961–62,” “Large numbers of Soviet motorists have . . . [been] using their cars for various illegal activities, like driving out to the country and stealing cabbages from collective farms [and] hiring one’s car out for taxi service or buying up scarce foods.”²⁴ If this was known to American visitors, it was no secret to Muscovites, or for that matter, the police. For his part, Stepanov referred to the practice as being common in “bourgeois countries” where “such an automobile constitutes private, though not capitalist, property,” analogous to cottage industry (*kustar*) workshops and peasants’ garden plots in the Soviet Union.

The implication that in the Soviet Union cars were not used for “profit, enrichment, or earnings” was quite disingenuous. Unlike journalists’ tales, court cases resounded with the ambiguities of car ownership and use: could a citizen buy a car and then present it to his son as a gift? Did the owner of a car who has been assigned to the Far North or a posting abroad, or who was confined to hospital for an extended period have the right to transfer ownership and use to another, unrelated person? Could one citizen legally

swap his Moskvich for a Jupiter motorcycle and Astra tape recorder that belonged to another? Should someone who bought a used car be compensated for what he paid after it turned out that the car had been stolen and that the purchaser had “conspired with the person bringing the car to the commission store to be sold” by paying him an additional sum? The difficulty in deciding these and other cases came down to the fact that while “the automobile as an article of property to which is attached the right of personal ownership occupies the most prominent place along with a residence, in law it is not treated separately as an object of personal property distinct from other legally sanctioned things.”²⁵ A car, it turned out, was not just like a television or refrigerator.

However inconsistent was Khrushchev’s populism and commitment to reinvigorating the collectivist ethos of Soviet communism, Brezhnev hardly tried.²⁶ The Brezhnev administration sought a different kind of legitimacy, one rooted in what Western commentators have expressed in terms of “bargains,” “contracts,” and “deals.” In one version, Brezhnev provided the guarantee of stability, secure and undemanding jobs, and a slowly improving standard of living in return for acquiescence to authoritarian, oligarchic rule. In another, dubbed “the Little Deal,” the state tolerated “a wide range of petty private economic activities, some legal, some in the penumbra of the legal, and some clearly and obviously illegal,” “in exchange for restraint on managerial discretion, and the repression of overt political dissent.”²⁷ This “acquisitive socialism,” dominant in the Brezhnev era, formed the ecosystem of car ownership. It determined both the parameters of the car-owning portion of the population and what maintaining a car in running order required.

Cars and Car Owners

Contemporary Western observers date the change in Soviet government policy concerning the automobile industry to the spring of 1965 when Aleksei Kosygin, speaking to planning officials, criticized the Khrushchev administration for “deny[ing] even executives of large industrial plants and economic organizations the right to use cars.”²⁸ Shortly thereafter, the government announced its intentions of quadrupling passenger car production from 200,000 to 800,000 per year during the eighth Five-Year Plan (1966–1970).²⁹ This drastic increase, interpreted by one U.S. business weekly as “a giant first step toward a consumer economy,” was made possible by the agreement concluded between the Soviet Ministry of Automobile Production and FIAT for the construction of an automobile factory in the USSR capable of producing 600,000 cars a year.³⁰ The site selected for what was to become the Volga Automobile Plant (VAZ) was Stavropol’, renamed

Tol'iatti in honor of the recently deceased Italian Communist Party leader, Palmiro Togliatti. Forced-pace construction enabled the plant to turn out its first car, the VAZ-2101 (a modified FIAT-124 popularly known as the Zhiguli after the hills on the right bank of the Volga and exported as the Lada) in April 1970.³¹ On a smaller scale, Renault refitted Moscow's Lenin Komsomol Automobile Factory (AZLK), doubling its production capacity of the Moskvich to 200,000 a year, and also equipped the new Izhevsk Automobile Plant (IMZ) to produce the Moskvich-like Izh-Kombi.³²

By 1975, VAZ was producing 667,000 Zhigulis or over half of all cars rolling off Soviet assembly lines.³³ The total number of passenger cars produced in the country in that year, 1.2 million, was 6 times as many as in 1965.³⁴ Two other trends during these years are worthy of note: the proportion of new cars "assigned for sale to the population" more than doubled to two-thirds by 1975, and, owing largely to the selling off of used state-owned vehicles, the percentage of used cars in use by individuals increased. The combined effect of these trends was that by the mid-1970s, there were over 5.5 million privately owned cars in the USSR of which nearly 4 million were in the Russian republic and Ukraine. Whereas in 1970 only 2 percent of Soviet households possessed a car, it was five in 1975, ten by 1980, and fifteen in 1985.³⁵

As rapid as was the increase in car ownership, international comparisons show the USSR consistently had among the lowest car densities within the Communist bloc countries of eastern Europe, to say nothing of western Europe or the United States (where there was 1 car for every 1.9 people in 1978).³⁶ Contemporary Soviet sources repeatedly stressed that the car density level in the United States was an inappropriate standard for the USSR because it was the result of the "one-sided," "hypertrophic" development of individual, as opposed to mass, transportation, which had led to unenviable levels of traffic congestion in major urban areas and the attendant problem of air pollution.³⁷ They might have added that by the 1970s many commentators in the United States were blaming America's love affair with the automobile for other social maladies as well: rapacious destruction of wildlife habitats; impoverishment and ghettoization of inner cities associated with white flight to suburbs and suburban mall construction; uglification of towns and their outskirts and increasing levels of road deaths and injuries.³⁸

What was the desired level of car ownership for a country like the USSR? One study from the early 1970s expressed it in terms of 230–250 cars per 1,000 people, this at a time when the actual level was closer to 20 and the level in the United States was 426.³⁹ By 1985 Gosplan had scaled down this target to 93 per 1,000 people, though at the actual level of 45 per 1,000, the goal was still not close to being achieved.⁴⁰ Only the Baltic republics had reached or were within striking distance of reaching this figure (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Density of Automobile Ownership by Union Republic

<i>Union Republic</i>	<i>Cars/1000 People</i>	
	<i>1977</i>	<i>1985</i>
USSR	26	45
Estonia	61	96
Lithuania	50	93
Latvia	45	81
Georgia	35	71
Armenia	32	56
Turkmenistan	24	46
RSFSR	21	44
Ukraine	21	46
Belorussia	21	39
Kazakhstan	21	39
Azerbaijan	18	30
Kirgizia	17	34
Uzbek	16	36
Tadzhikistan	14	35
Moldavia	14	33

Sources: William Pyle, "Private Car Ownership and Second Economy Activity," *Berkeley-Duke Occasional papers on the Second Economy in the USSR*, no. 37 (1993): 49 and A. Arrak, "Ispol'zovanie avtomobilei lichnogo pol'zovaniia," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 7 (1978): 134 for 1977; *Izvestiia*, August 14, 1988, 3 for 1985.

Who were these lucky folks and their counterparts in other Soviet republics? The simple (but somewhat misleading) answer would be those who could afford the price of a car. Expressing the conventional wisdom among Western commentators, John Kramer noted in 1976 that prices were "deliberately set to preclude all but the most affluent from acquiring automobiles."⁴¹ Thus, at 5,500 rubles a VAZ-2101 (Zhiguli) from 1973 was priced at a level corresponding to 3.5 times the average annual wage of a Soviet worker; the price of a Moskvich-2140 in 1977 represented "20 months earnings for an average family with two income earners"; and there appears to have been little change in these equivalencies at least for the remainder of the Brezhnev years.⁴² What made these administratively set prices such an effective mechanism for limiting the purchase of cars was the requirement of a 25 percent down payment at the time of order and the balance paid in cash on delivery. In two surveys from 1978 and 1983 car purchasers reported that it took them an average of eight years to save up enough to buy a new car.⁴³

Much of this time would have been spent by purchasers waiting for delivery of their car after the initial down payment. That is, a second limit

to the deal that the state offered was the delay that owners often faced before taking possession of their cars. Waits were legendarily long, sometimes ten years, but usually in the range of four to six.⁴⁴ Problems of determining which organization's or institution's queues had priority, the maintenance of individuals' place in the queue, and illegal (bribe-induced) queue jumping were endemic, especially as it was well known that "members of 'elite' groups . . . receive special consideration in the allocation of cars." Aside from high-ranking party officials, this would have included members of prestigious organizations such as the Academy of Sciences and the Writers' Union; industrial executives; outstanding artists, actors, professional athletes, and other recipients of honors and medals; and disabled veterans of World War II.⁴⁵

These forms of rationing a scarce consumer item were only part of the story, though. It was also possible to purchase a used car through state-run commission shops (*kommissiony*), which set prices and charged a service fee of 7 percent.⁴⁶ Here as well, prices were set at high levels, though often not as high as those that sellers informally established with prospective buyers who agreed to pay the difference "on the side" (*na levo*).⁴⁷ Consequently, the actual price paid for a used car "was often higher than the price at which it had originally been sold," notwithstanding depreciation.⁴⁸

In class terms, 58 percent of car owners in a 1983 survey were described as "people with occupations involving primarily mental labor," 35 percent were workers (evidently both industrial and agricultural), and the remaining 7 percent consisted of pensioners, students, the handicapped, and others listed as not employed.⁴⁹ The overrepresentation of people in the first category is noteworthy, as "intelligentsia" accounted for only some 15 percent of the total population according to the 1979 census.⁵⁰ Class differences loomed large not only with respect to actual ownership but also aspirations, judging from a study carried out in the Azerbaijani city of Lenkoran and reported in the leading Soviet journal of sociological research. The study found that only 4.4 percent of state farm workers owned a car, compared to 12 percent of industrial and building workers, and 11.5 percent of "intelligentsia and office workers." More significantly, 18.3 percent of state farm workers "want[ed] to acquire" a car, compared to 28.9 percent of industrial and building workers, and 41 percent of intelligentsia and office workers. Whereas a car topped the list of items desired by intellectual workers, it ranked second among industrial workers' desires, and fourth among state farm workers.⁵¹

Consumer choice was not something in which the Soviet "dictatorship over needs" excelled.⁵² Nevertheless, researchers at the All-Union Scientific Research Institute for the Study of Consumer Demand did seek to discover preferences for specific models of cars among different occupational groups.

It turned out that as of 1974 “engineering-technical and scientific workers” preferred the VAZ-2103, teachers and doctors were inclined toward the Moskvich-427, and pensioners were at opposite ends of the price and prestige spectrum in their preferences for the Zaporozhets-968 and the Volga-24.⁵³

Anecdotal evidence suggests that discriminating among models of cars was part of the childhood experiences of the Soviet elite as early as the 1930s, and that foreign models outranked in prestige any Soviet model with the exception of the state-owned limousines built by the Stalin (later, Likhachev) Automobile Factory (ZIS, ZIL).⁵⁴ The broader range of models in postwar decades appears to have encouraged a greater degree of status-consciousness. When the writer Vladimir Voinovich announced to a hotel clerk in Minsk that his car was a Zaporozhets, he was met with a scowl, because while “others may not, . . . a clerk in a good hotel knows that important people never drive anything less than a Zhiguli.” Policemen also made distinctions, knowing that they could “always squeeze a ruble out of the driver of a Zaporozhets,” had “to be more polite with the driver of a Zhiguli,” should leave Volga drivers alone, and were expected to salute Chaika and ZIL limousines.⁵⁵ Foreign cars such as those spotted in Moscow by the already-mentioned Western journalist, David Willis, were clear markers of “high *klass*.”⁵⁶ And why not, when none other than Leonid Ilych himself was reputed to have a “private stable of more than a dozen fast and expensive cars” including two Rolls Royces, a Cadillac, Mercedes-Benz, and Citroën. “When I am at the wheel,” he told an interviewer in 1971, “I have the impression that nothing can happen,” which just about epitomized an ideal situation for Brezhnev.⁵⁷

Driving the Bargain

Back from a car trip in the summer of 1966 that took him from Volgograd to Moscow, A. Druzenko, a special correspondent to *Izvestiia*, contrasted railroads “with their communications, stations, restaurants, snack bars, kiosks, medical stations, and so forth” to the “almost empty” highways he encountered. While Koningsberger’s experience of these “roads of Gogol” would provoke him to wax nostalgic, they had the opposite effect on Druzenko. He envisioned a time when “on both sides of the road would gleam comfortable service stations, gasoline dispensers, cafes, hotels of concrete and glass. . . . Round the clock technical service would be available. Billboards would stand along the roadside brightening the night with their neon glow. At the entrance to the city you would be able to familiarize yourself with its detailed plan and list of sights.”⁵⁸

Druzenko’s dream of a modern, civilized road experience—perhaps inspired by the recently announced “deal of the century” with FIAT—would

never come to pass in the Soviet Union. The bargain that the Soviet government struck with future automobile owners and enthusiasts did not include anything more (and usually meant much less) than the most rudimentary of services. Driving and maintaining a car in the Soviet Union thus ironically involved more individual initiative and risk-taking behavior than in the capitalist West. The fear that cars, cars, and more cars would activate individualistic tendencies at odds with "the nature of our society, and the principles and norms of our moral system," turned out to be justified, though not necessarily because individual car owners reveled in the experience of owning a car.⁵⁹

"In Russia," wrote the authors of a book on "automania," "they say that owning a car brings joy twice in an owner's life—when it is bought and when it is sold. In between there is only torture."⁶⁰ It wasn't that the cars were badly built. After all, the FIAT-124 was European Car of the Year when it was introduced in 1966, and even if the Lada's reputation abroad suffered because of its cheapness and no-frills interiors, mechanically it had little to apologize for.⁶¹ The problem was not so much the cars themselves but rather the lack of infrastructure to support them. If the Soviet economy was a shortage economy by design, then the automotive sector was designed very well. In 1963, there were some 70,000 individually owned cars in Moscow and all of 8 service stations; by 1980, the number of service stations had increased to 13, but the number of cars had risen to an estimated 250,000.⁶² One could buy auto parts at special stores of which Moscow boasted 31 and Leningrad 21 in 1968. Still, three-quarters of respondents to a national survey of automobile enthusiasts cited the lack of spare parts among the difficulties associated with using their cars.⁶³ Fourteen years later, in 1982, more than 160 car parts were reported to be in short supply (*defitsitnye*).⁶⁴ Gas stations were not numerous either: in 1977 a total of approximately 5,000 (of which 3,500 were fixed and 1,500 were trucks dispensing fuel in rural areas) served some 6 million privately owned cars. In many parts of the country gas was rationed, limiting travel within a radius of no more than 250 kilometers.⁶⁵ Finally, the need to store a car over the winter or simply park it overnight was rarely part of urban housing design, at least in the case of Moscow where in 1973 only three out of ten private cars were so accommodated.⁶⁶

Why was the bargain the state offered to car owners so limited? Why were they so ill-served? It wasn't for lack of awareness of their needs. Institutes devoted to the study of automobiles and related transportation issues abounded. Articles by researchers specializing in such issues appeared regularly in sociological journals. Newspapers carried exposés by special correspondents and letters from irate drivers. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, a weekly closely identified with an intelligentsia readership, organized "autoclub

debate sessions” to deal with the “problems of automobilization.” And, there was *Za rulēm*, the popular magazine for automobile enthusiasts with a print run of over 2 million as of 1972. For something so “personal” if not private, the passenger car was a very public topic.

The answer surely lies both in the imbalances endemic to the system of centralized planning, and the low order of priority attached to the satisfaction of consumers’ needs. The relevant Union ministries—of automobile transport, construction, industrial construction, automobile production—did not lack for plans to supply parts and service to automobiles. VAZ developed plans for its own network of centers and stations—modeled on FIAT—to service the Zhiguli.⁶⁷ But somehow securing the land on which such centers would be built, the materials needed to build them, the parts to be produced in the requisite sizes and quantities, and the staffing of the centers with mechanics trained and willing to carry out the necessary tasks could not keep pace with the rapidly increasing numbers of cars on the road or waiting to be fixed. Everything—from brake linings, to seat belts, to cement for more and safer roads, to the bricks, reinforced concrete and steel for garages, not to mention the service centers themselves—was in short supply.⁶⁸

Did this mean that although minuscule by U.S. and west european standards, the density of individually owned cars in the Soviet Union was “hypertrophic” compared to service and repair capacities? It certainly seemed so judging from a memo sent by the RSFSR’s minister of Automobile Transport to the republic’s State Planning Commission (Gosplan) in October 1969. Service stations in many cities, the minister reported, “are little more than primitive [*kustarnye*] workshops. Some besides servicing transport undertake the repair of washing machines, refrigerators, sewing machines, and other household items,” evidently because the stations were part of the distribution system controlled by the Ministry of Housing Services.⁶⁹

Things were looking up for the future . . . even if the future never quite arrived. “If today our stations have only 800 technical service bays, then by 1976 their number will increase to 4,850,” the director of “Rosavtotekhhobsluzhivanie,” the RSFSR’s network of service stations, promised in 1971. “The supply of parts is increasing every year,” car owners were assured by the minister of Automobile Transport of the RSFSR in May 1973. We will double the number of auto service centers and increase by one-and-a-half times the number of technical service stations during the tenth Five-Year Plan (1976–1980), promised VAZ’s technical service director in 1976. “By 1983 or 1984 the capacity of auto technical service centers will more or less correspond to demand,” a Gosplan official predicted in 1978.⁷⁰ As of 1982 it came closer to “a little more than 30%, and for parts, 35–40%.”⁷¹ Little wonder that drivers routinely removed their windshield wipers and

often their sideview mirrors when leaving their car overnight or that an English-language guide for foreign motorists recommended doing so “because otherwise there is a chance that someone may fancy them as souvenirs.”⁷² Meanwhile according to Western sources, customers in both the United Kingdom and Canada “reported satisfaction with the services provided by Lada dealers, including a ready supply of spare parts.”⁷³

So what was a Soviet automobilist to do? Here we come to the heart of the matter and at least one way in which a car was like a refrigerator or television. Owners either could take care of the problem themselves or pay someone working on the side. Admitting that the figures were probably underestimates, one source claimed in 1978 that 30 percent of owners serviced their own cars and another 14 percent relied on the services of a friend or paid someone. One or the other or both of these percentages would have risen thereafter, for reliance on the state’s network of service stations was reported to have declined quite markedly between 1977 and 1982.⁷⁴ Whether relying on one’s own technical skills or those of someone else, the parts used in the process were likely to have fallen off the back of the state’s trucks and thence into “private hands.”⁷⁵

What was true of spare parts was even more the case with fuel. The paucity of legally obtainable supplies of gasoline and the ease with which truck drivers were able to pad their distance and haulage reports combined to make the coupons distributed to truck drivers readily marketable items. The cooperation of gas-station attendants in this business was often necessary and apparently widespread. The estimated amount of gasoline thereby obtained by car owners was an astonishing 7.5 billion liters, worth 2.4 billion rubles in official prices in 1984. This second-economy phenomenon was so large as to dwarf its legal first-economy equivalent.⁷⁶

Indeed, in many ways the state accommodated to this illegal activity. “Car owners,” averred a participant in a roundtable discussion among sociologists and automotive experts in 1981, “involuntarily are compelled to raise their own technical culture which can be considered a positive development.”⁷⁷ One would hope so, for in 1976 owners reportedly averaged 162 hours per year looking after their cars, a significant investment of time.⁷⁸ But many owners lacked the time or wherewithal to effectuate repairs and, as in the case of the professor of physics described in a stereotypical account, turned to the likes of “Uncle Vasia,” the pensioner who fixed cars in his spare time.⁷⁹ The Uncle Vasias may not have been to the liking of upstanding Soviet citizens—or the journalists speaking in their name—but they were absolutely essential, and were among the tradespeople (*kustarno-remeslenniki*) whose trades were listed as legal in Article 17 of the 1977 Constitution.⁸⁰

One concession led to another. Whether owners fixed their cars themselves or hired the services of a mechanic, space was needed to make the repairs

and store the cars. What had offended apartment bloc residents' aesthetic sensibilities in the 1960s—cars scattered around courtyards, up on blocks in the winter and covered by tarpaulins like bodies awaiting burial, or stored in makeshift rusting metal garages or sheds—became nearly ubiquitous in subsequent decades. Garage space and the cooperatives that enabled people to obtain it entered into novels, movies, and the courts, demonstrating how cars sucked into their orbit the neighbors, relatives, and workmates of owners.⁸¹

And so . . .

Where did you get the spare parts?

And you?

Same as you. And where do you do maintenance?

And you?

Where you do. And where is your car?

Where yours is.

Do you want a heated underground garage?

And you don't?

I do but how? Where can I buy the materials, hire a technician, pay the money to whom? How much do you pay the old guy to carry your battery back and forth? You used hired labor.⁸²

Though fictitious, this conversation was entirely comprehensible and believable to Soviet citizens, particularly those who, like the hero of the 1972 novel from which it is taken, were car owners. Like Roman Romanovich Krot, Soviet car owners faced multiple challenges and indignities in the course of driving, maintaining, and garaging their cars. They consequently tended to feel no less put upon than apartment dwellers, pedestrians, and others inconvenienced by the growing presence of the "automobile for personal use." Minimally, owning a car was not a casual matter. It consumed a great deal of time, and considerably expanded the network of acquaintances on whom one depended.

Surely one of the unintended, though in retrospect not surprising, consequences of the bargain the state offered to car owners was that it provided an additional opportunity for male bonding. The time devoted to attending to cars—those 162 hours a year—generally was not spent with one's spouse or sweetheart but rather, if anyone, mechanics like "Uncle Vasia," other parts suppliers, or fellow car owners all of whom tended to be men. In geographical terms the bargain resulted in parts of residential communities—courtyards, playgrounds, roadsides, fields, gardens—being converted into predominantly male spaces for car work and talk. The interiors of parked cars and sheds became especially attractive to men seeking privacy or simply escape from their families, although such spaces might also have been used for heterosexual rendezvous and associated activities.

Faust enters into the bargain because in mass producing cars and allocating most of them to the “population,” the Soviet state virtually guaranteed that millions of its citizens would become entangled in webs of essentially private—in the double sense of invisibility to the state and as particularistic as opposed to collective activity—relations that were ideologically alien and often in violation of Soviet laws.⁸³ Thus, ideological strictures (against promoting personal autonomy, and encouraging materialistic values) contributed to the lack of infrastructure, which drove car owners to enter into and expand the private sector, which in turn should have heightened ideologically based concerns. Instead, the state basically threw in the towel, which is consistent with what else we know about the last years of the Brezhnev era. Ideological strictures ultimately proved to be no match for the appeal of “comfortable service stations, gasoline dispensers, cafes, hotels of concrete and glass . . . round-the-clock technical service” and other accouterments of the automotive age.⁸⁴

Car owners were far from unique in requiring services that the state was not providing. Residents of apartments and dachas requiring materials or repairs, parents seeking to enhance their children’s educational credentials, patients needing medicine—the list of “second-economy” activities and favors exchanged is a long one. Many of the items on it predated the advent of mass car ownership and probably involved larger numbers of people. All to a degree mitigated the state’s dictatorship over needs, and the inadequacies and inconveniences associated with the planned economy. Perhaps, though, it is because the ownership and use of automobiles impinged on so many others in so many ways that cars, cars, and more cars seems to have been a particularly important and invidious part of the Brezhnev administration’s “deal” with Soviet citizenry.

Notes

1. Hans Koningsberger, *Along the Roads of the New Russia* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1968), 176. Koningsberger did a lot of traveling through time and space, authoring books on Vermeer’s world, his native Amsterdam, Christopher Columbus, China, and 1968, not to mention his novels. After 1972 he published under the name of Hans Koning.
2. *Ibid.*, 16, 31, 79, 176, 181, 186. Note that this relatively carless utopia was accessible only because Koningsberger had “his own car.” For other car-centric utopias, see Peter Wollen and Joe Kerr, eds., *Autopia: Cars and Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2002).
3. David Willis, *Klass, How Russians Really Live* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), 131.
4. The ratio of truck to car production during the years 1935–1939 was 8.5:1. It dropped slightly during 1945–1949 to 7.9:1 and then more precipitously to 3.8:1 in the following quinquennium. W. H. Parker, “The Soviet Motor

- Industry," *Soviet Studies*, 32, no. 4 (1980), 520; Alain Dupouy, *L'Automobile en URSS- Chronologie de 1917 à 1990* (Grenoble: A. Dupouy, 1991), 56–87; L. M. Shugurov, *Avtomobili Rossii i SSSR* (Moscow: ILBI, 1993), 2 vols., vol. 1, 160, 174.
5. *Avtodorozhnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v tsifrah. Statisticheskii spravochnik* (Leningrad-Moscow: Tsudortrans, 1935), 144–145.
 6. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 9414, op. 1, d. 318, ll. 44–45. Letter from USSR minister of justice, P. Kudriavtsev, to chairman of the Council of Ministers, G. M. Molotov, September 28, 1953 requesting that Moscow "autobase" of Ministry of Internal Affairs be turned over in connection with transfer of GULAG to Ministry of Justice.
 7. Article 10, *Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1969), 15. See Paul Augier, *La Propriété privée en U.R.S.S.* (Nice, n.d.), 9 for an explicit reference to the application of this article to automobiles.
 8. *Pravda*, May 19, 1937, 4. On the exchange of party documents, see J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 87–91. Among the unfortunates whose cars were confiscated were former "activists" in Avtdor (an organization promoting automobilism that was disbanded in 1935), officials from the Central Administration for Road Transport (Tsudortrans), the Main Administration of the Auto-tractor Industry (GUTAP), and in particular, the head of GUTAP's network of garages, Iakunin, who seems to have been very naughty indeed.
 9. *Za industrializatsiiu*, May 12, 1937, 1.
 10. Shugurov, *Avtomobili Rossii i SSSR*, vol. 1, 188–190, 192–195. Both cars have been claimed as the first to be available for purchase. Cf. Aleksandr Luk'ianov, " 'Pobede' otechestvennogo avtoproma—60 let," *Vesti*, May 10, 2004. <www.vesti.ru/comments.html?id=28368>, last consulted May 10, 2004.
 11. Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, enlarged and updated edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 46–47.
 12. The phrase "assigned for sale to the population" and the figures come from TsSU SSSR, *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v . . .* [annual series] (Moscow). The only years in which the percentage of cars for domestic sale comprised more than half the total produced were 1955, 1956, and 1958.
 13. Many sources allude to Khrushchev's bias against individual ownership and preference for a car rental system. See D. S. Levinson, *V sobstvennost' ili napolakat? (Dogovor prokata legkovykh avtomobilei)* (Moscow: izd-vo Iurid. Lit-ra, 1966), 4.
 14. Steven E. Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment: Building, Distributing, Furnishing, and Living in Urban Housing in Soviet Russia, 1950s–1960s," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003, 438–439. For a cartoon illustrating the disfigurement of new housing estates by garages, see *Krokodil*, no. 15 (1960), 8.
 15. *Izvestiia*, January 28, 1965, 3. The shortage of garage space was already an issue in the late Stalin era. For a humorous treatment, see *Krokodil*, no. 42 (1947), 10. I thank James Heinzen for providing me with this source. For a satirical treatment of excessive concern about the acquisition and ownership of cars, see El'dar Ryazanov's film, *Beregis' avtomobil!* (Mosfil'm, 1966).

16. *Izvestiia*, January 28, 1965, 3. The title of the article is "Between a Hat and a Personal Satellite."
17. *Ibid.*, March 4, 1966, 3; March 5, 1966, 3.
18. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1966, 5.
19. The proportion of Soviet households reported as owning televisions and refrigerators rose respectively from 24 and 11 percent in 1965, to 74 and 65 percent in 1975, and 92 and 89 percent in 1982. See Table 2.6 in David Lane, *Soviet Economy and Society* (New York: Blackwell, 1985), 58. For references to these items in connection with automobile ownership, see D. P. Velikanov, "Avtomobil' i my," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, March 19, 1971, 12; *Pravda*, July 24, 1971, 3; Leonid Likhodeev, *Ia i moi avtomobil'* (Moscow, 1972), 17–19 ("Do you have a TV, do you have a refrigerator? So, there will be a car."); and G. N. Andrienko, "Legkovoi avtomobil' v sem'e," *Ekonomika i organizatsiia promyshlennogo proizvodstva*, no. 21 (Kiev, 1985), 106.
20. Wolfgang Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile: Looking Back into the History of Our Desires* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992); D. Gartman, *Auto Opium: A Social History of Automobile Design* (London: Routledge, 1994); Grace Lees-Maffei, "Men, Motors, Markets and Women," in Wollen and Kerr, *Autopia*, 363–370.
21. "We came in a car—so it followed that we were officials," wrote Gennady Andreev-Khomiakov, explaining the less than friendly greeting he and his boss, a factory director, received upon turning up unannounced at a village soviet ispolkom in the late 1930s. Gennady Andreev-Khomiakov, *Bitter Waters: Life and Work in Stalin's Russia*, trans. Ann E. Healy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 62. For rather fanciful imaginings of car driving, see Yuri Pimenov's painting, "New Moscow" (1937) in Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 148, and the scene of the Stakhanovite heroine and her fairy godmother *flying* in a convertible over Moscow in Grigori Aleksandrov's musical comedy, *The Radiant Path* (1940).
22. For an evocative cinematic representation of the wonder and dread produced by the arrival of a (n NKVD) passenger car (as opposed to a truck whose driver is farcically lost), see Nikita Mikhalkov's *Burnt by the Sun* (1994).
23. *Izvestiia*, March 4, 1966, 3.
24. Donald D. Barry and Carol Barner Barry, "Happiness is Driving Your Own Moskvich," *New York Times*, April 10, 1966, 48.
25. E. I. Aiueva, "Sdelki grazhdan po rasporiasheniiu legkovymi avtomobiliami," *Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, no. 9 (1974), 109–114; V. V. Zhigulenкова and K. B. Iaroshenko, "Judicial Practice in Cases Involving the Alienation of Automobiles Belonging to Citizens According to the Right of Personal Ownership," *Soviet Statutes & Decisions*, 22, no. 1 (Fall 1985), 33–45.
26. For the contrast between Khrushchev's "populist approach" and Brezhnev's "managerial approach," see George W. Breslauer, "Khrushchev Reconsidered," in *The Soviet Union since Stalin*, ed. Stephen F. Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert Sharlet (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 50–70.
27. John Thompson, *A Vision Unfulfilled: Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1996), 423; James Millar, "The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism," *Slavic Review*, 44, no. 4 (1985), 694–706.

28. Quoted in Barry and Barry, "Happiness," 15. Also cited (incorrectly) in John M. Kramer, "Soviet Policy Towards the Automobile," *Survey*, 22, no. 2 (1976), 17.
29. *Pravda*, April 9, 1966, 6. See also February 20, 1966, 2. Truck production was to increase by a relatively modest 1.6–1.7 times with the result that more passenger cars than trucks would be produced by 1970. In actuality this did not occur until 1972.
30. *Business Abroad*, May 30, 1966, 30. Cf. *Time*, May 6, 1966, 49; Forbes, October 1, 1966, 19–20. For the designation of the agreement as the "deal of the century," see Leonid Kolosov, *Sobkor KGB, zapiski razvedchika i zhurnalista* (Moscow: Tsentropoligraf, 2001), 209–232. Worth some \$800 million, it was probably the largest deal ever made between a private company and the USSR. It provoked reports from the CIA and the House of Representatives' Banking and Currency Committee. See respectively CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, *USSR: About to Enter the Automotive Age?* (Washington, DC: Directorate of Intelligence, 1966); *The Fiat-Soviet Auto Plant and Communist Economic Reforms, a Report Pursuant to House Resolution 1043, 89th Congress, 2nd Session for the Subcommittee on International Trade, Committee on Banking and Currency, House of Representatives* (March 1, 1967) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967).
31. The frenetic history of the factory's construction can be followed in *Pravda*, September 25, 1968, 2; September 26, 1968, 2; March 16, 1969, 2; March 17, 1969, 2; January 3, 1970, 2; June 11, 1970, 3; November 11, 1970, 1. See also A. Brodskii, "Ia znaiu—gorod budet," *Za rulem*, no. 5 (1968), 5–8; Shugurov, *Automobili Rossii i SSSR*, vol. 2, 39–40. Shugurov tastefully notes that Zhiguli was not exactly an ideal name outside of Russia because "in a number of foreign languages it had double meanings." The fictitious—and humorous—history of the first Zhiguli was the subject of Ivan Dykhovichnyi's 2001 film, *Kopeika*.
32. William P. Baxter, "The Soviet Passenger Car Industry," *Survey*, 19, no. 3 (1973), 222–223; W. H. Parker, "The Soviet Motor Industry," *Soviet Studies*, 32, no. 4 (1980), 522–523; Toli Welihozkiy, "Automobiles and the Soviet Consumer," in *Soviet Economy in a Time of Change, A Compendium of Papers submitted to the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States* (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 812–816.
33. Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 815.
34. TsSU SSSR, *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1975* (Moscow: Goskomstat, 1976), 265. Output hardly grew thereafter, reaching 1.3 million in 1980 and remaining at more or less that level throughout the decade.
35. TsSU SSSR, *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1985* (Moscow: Goskomstat, 1986), 446. Welihozkiy, "Automobiles" (818) cites a figure of 7.3 million vehicles by 1979, of which 80 percent (5.8 million) were owned by individuals.
36. Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 819; *MVMA Motor Vehicle Facts & Figures '80* (Detroit: Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association, 1980), 37.
37. D. P. Velikanov, "Vazhneishie voprosy razvitiia avtomobil'nogo transporta v SSSR," in *Voprosy razvitiia avtomobil'nogo transporta*, ed. D. P. Velikanov (Moscow: Transport, 1971), 20–21; Velikanov, "Avtomobil' i my," 12; V. T. Efimov and G. I. Mikerin, "Avtomobilizatsiia v razvitom sotsialicheskom obshchestve," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 1 (1976), 134; A. Arrak,

- "Ispol'zovanie avtomobilei lichnogo pol'zovaniia," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 7 (1978), 134.
38. See, e.g., Max Carasso, *People vs. Cars: The Rising Resentment Against the Automobile* (New York: Autofacts Publications, 1970); Kenneth R. Scheider, *Autokind vs. Mankind* (New York: Norton, 1971); John Jerome, *The Death of the Automobile: The Fatal Effect of the Golden Era, 1955–1970* (New York: Norton, 1972); and Emma Rothschild, *Paradise Lost: The Decline of the Auto-Industrial Age* (New York: Random House, 1973).
 39. Velikanov, "Vazhneishie voprosy," 20–21.
 40. *Izvestiia*, August 14, 1988, 3.
 41. Kramer, "Soviet Policy," 20.
 42. Ibid.; Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 822; Lane, *Soviet Economy and Society*, 60.
 43. Andrienko, "Legkovoi avtomobil'," 111.
 44. Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 822; A. Iarovikov et al., "V prodazhe—avtomobil'," *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, no. 5 (1974), 26. Was this any worse, the authors of this article asked, than the opposite phenomenon of 2 million cars produced by Detroit in 1972 lacking customers because of the "deep crisis of the automobile industry in the US"?
 45. Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 820.
 46. For the regulations governing sales of used cars that were introduced in 1971, see M. Teliushkin, "Pravovye voprosy komissionnoi torgovli legkovymi avtomobiliami," *Sovetskaia iustitsiia*, no. 9 (1972), 15–17.
 47. For some examples see Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 823–824.
 48. For a fascinating analysis of "second economy activity in the market for the used cars" based on a survey of some 70 respondents, see William Pyle, "Private Car Ownership and Second Economy Activity," *Berkeley-Duke Occasional Papers on the Second Economy in the USSR*, no. 37 (Washington, DC: WEFA Group, 1993), 42–45. Quotation on page 42.
 49. Andrienko, "Legkovoi avtomobil'," 111.
 50. L. A. Gordon and A. K. Nazimova, *Rabochii klass SSSR, tendentsii i perspektivy sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 30. See also M. E. Podzniakova, "Obespechennost' naseleniia predmetami kul'turno-bytovogo naznacheniia," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 3 (1987), 60, based on All-Union survey of 1981. It would be useful to know to what extent men were overrepresented, but unfortunately data relating to gender were not included in the literature at my disposal.
 51. Ch. A. Mansimov, "Izmeneniia v zhiznennom uklade semei lenkoranskogo raiona," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 3 (1981), 105. The sample was 600 people.
 52. See Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller, and György Márkus, *Dictatorship Over Needs: An Analysis of Soviet Societies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).
 53. Iarovikov, "V prodazhe," 26; Andrienko, "Legkovoi avtomobil'," 112.
 54. For examples from the 1930s, see Mikhail German, *Slozhnoe proshedshee* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo SPB, 2000), 31–33; Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), 37; and Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1937), 441.
 55. Vladimir Voinovich, *The Anti-Soviet Soviet Union* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 5–6.

56. Willis, *Klass*, 8.
57. Cited in Julian Pettifer and Nigel Turner, *Automania, Man and the Motor Car* (London: Little, Brown, 1984), 30. For a conveniently assembled compendium of reminiscences about Brezhnev's fondness for cars and fast driving, see V. Shelud'ko, ed., *Leonid Brezhnev v vospominaniakh, razmyshleniakh, suzheniakh* (Rostov on Don: Feniks, 1998), 108–117.
58. A. Druzenko, "Odnokii kilometr," *Izvestiia*, August 23, 1966, 4.
59. The fear was expressed by B. T. Efimov, professor at the Moscow Automobile and Highway Institute (MADI) in Efimov and Mikerin, "Avtomobilizatsiia," 130.
60. Pettifer and Turner, *Automania*, 167.
61. See <<http://www.caroftheyear.org>>, last consulted June 30, 2004. For a more jaundiced but not unaffectionate view see Peter Hamilton, "The Lada: A Cultural Icon," in Wollen and Kerr, *Autopia*, 191–198, and for some jokes at the Lada's expense <<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Lada>>, last consulted April 27, 2004.
62. Barry and Barry, "Happiness," 48; Willis, *Klass*, 126. By comparison, in the United States there was 1 repair station for every 800 cars in 1972. *MVMA Motor Vehicle Facts and Figures '78*, 68.
63. *Za rulem*, no. 3 (1968), back page; no. 4 (1968), 17; "Skol'ko zhit' avtomobilu?," no. 5 (1968), 12. The shortage of spare parts topped the list of eight items mentioned.
64. Andrienko, "Legkovoi avtomobil," 115.
65. Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 828–829.
66. *Izvestiia*, May 20, 1973, 3; L. Agalakov, "Pochemu ne stroit'sia garazh," *Za rulem*, no. 1 (1978), 17.
67. *Pravda*, July 24, 1971, 3; *Izvestiia*, April 13, 1972, 4.
68. *Pravda*, October 14, 1971, 2; *Izvestiia*, August 5, 1973, 3; February 4, 1974, 3; August 24, 1974, 2. The USSR paradoxically was the world's leading producer of cement.
69. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF-2), f. 398, op. 9, d. 9, correspondence with Gosplan USSR on work of automobile transport, July–December 1969, l. 335. In 1965, the Moscow Likhachev factory reported having produced 377 domestic refrigerators above plan. See Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Ekonomiki (RGAE), f. 398, op. 1, d. 56, annual report of the Moscow Automobile Factory named after Likhachev-ZIL, 1965, l. 74.
70. *Pravda*, July 24, 1971, 3; *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 19 (1973), 10–11; no. 38 (1978), 12.
71. Andrienko, "Legkovoi avtomobil," 109. This same source claims that spare parts production declined by 9 percent between 1980 and 1982.
72. V. E. Louis and J. M. Louis, *Louis Motorist's Guide to the Soviet Union*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987), 12. Interestingly, the first edition, published in 1967, did not contain such advice.
73. Welihozkiy, "Automobiles," 826.
74. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 38 (1978), 12; Andrienko, "Legkovoi avtomobil," 112.
75. *Pravda*, November 12, 1983, 3.
76. M. Alexeev, "Underground Market for Gasoline in the USSR," *Berkeley-Duke Occasional Papers on the Second Economy in the USSR*, no. 9 (Durham, NC: Department of Economics, Duke University, 1987), 1–25. Alexeev estimates

that at least 75 percent of all gasoline used by private car owners in 1982 was obtained illegally (17).

77. Efimov and Mikerin, "Avtomobilizatsiia," 134.
78. Arrak, "Ispol'zovanie avtomobilei," 136.
79. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 38 (1978), 12. For other experiences with mechanics, see Likhodeev, *Ia i moi avtomobil'*, 9 ("Ah, Genka, my angel-savior from the municipal garage. How did you know that I wallow in a maelstrom of helplessness?") and *Literaturnaia gazeta*, no. 8 (1973), 12.
80. *Izvestiia*, August 6, 1977, 2.
81. Likhodeev, *Ia i moi avtomobil'*; *Garazh* (1979, director Eldar Riazanov); and *Soviet Statutes & Decisions*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1986), 54–57.
82. Likhodeev, *Ia i moi avtomobil'*, 56.
83. For this sense of "private," see Jeff Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 4–5.
84. I am grateful to Steven Harris for urging me to make this point more explicit.

PART 2

DOMESTICITY AND DOMESTIC SPACE

CHAPTER FIVE

DOMESTIC LIFE AND THE ACTIVIST WIFE IN THE 1930S SOVIET UNION

Rebecca Balmas Neary

In the afternoon of May 10, 1936, over three thousand women convened in the Great Hall of the Moscow Kremlin. Delegates to a nationwide conference, they waited expectantly in their best dress, some seated on a flower-bedecked dais where they were joined by the Soviet Union's highest-ranking officials, including Stalin himself. For three days, the women were congratulated by these officials and heard testimonials from their fellow delegates. Proceedings were reported in the central organs of the Soviet press and were later published in a handsomely bound volume.¹

Such conferences were not uncommon in the prewar Stalin era. The quota-busting worker-heroes known as Stakhanovites met under similar circumstances, as did female tractor-drivers. Even so, this particular conference was unusual: it was the first All-Union Conference of Wives of Managers and Engineering-Technical Workers in Heavy Industry—a conference for housewives. The women attending the conference were no ordinary *hausfrauen*, however. Instead, they were “mistresses of the great Soviet home,” “non-party Bolsheviks” who could “stand together with their husbands as active builders of socialism.”² In the parlance of the time, they were *obshchestvennitsy*,³ participants in a “wife-activists’ movement.”

The Wife-Activists’ Movement and the Soviet Domestic Sphere

Soviet wife-activists were usually the spouses of engineers, army officers and other socioeconomic elites, usually well educated and not otherwise

employed. From 1934 to 1941, they undertook voluntary social service work, organizing and supervising clinics, day-care centers and cafeterias. They also provided a “cultured” touch to Soviet daily life, arranging concerts, hanging curtains in workers’ dormitories, and overseeing “discussion circles” (*kruzhki*) on a range of topics.⁴ These social and cultural services were desperately needed in the new provincial factory settlements where the *obshchestvennitsa* movement developed first and most deeply. They were a boon to the Commissariat of Heavy Industry (Narkomtiazhprom) and the trade union apparatus, which were responsible for the well-being of managers, workers and their families, and which fostered and guided wife-activists’ councils.

The wife-activists’ movement is significant for what it demonstrates about daily life in the Stalin era—its combination of grassroots enthusiasm and state- and party-sponsored mobilization, for example. It also shows how gender worked in relation to public and private spheres in the 1930s Soviet Union, for in addition to helping to care for Soviet society at large, wife-activists were held up as model wives, mothers, and homemakers.

The division of social, economic, and political life into public and private, with the domestic realm as a subset of the private sphere—and as woman’s “separate sphere”—has been a commonplace of feminist scholarship. The domestic sphere has been associated almost universally in Western experience with women whose work in it has been devalued in ways that significantly affect gender politics. At the same time, historians have also questioned how fully women were relegated to a separate domestic sphere, and how divorced from public life the domestic sphere really was.⁵ Seclusion in the domestic sphere was, after all, never an option for the majority of women, who worked in agriculture or industry to augment the family income. In addition, by the late nineteenth century, social organizations and the state made serious inroads into the domestic lives of European citizens.

In the Soviet case, there was a sustained and systematic effort on the part of the state and party to “sovietize” the domestic sphere by enlisting the active participation of its most significant figure, the housewife. The *obshchestvennitsa* movement was a key component of this process, although significant efforts to co-opt housewives predated it. State intervention in the domestic sphere and the effort to make family life conform to officially approved values occurred elsewhere in Europe in this period; at the same time, the Soviet case had significant and unique aspects.

Analysis of the Soviet domestic sphere must start by taking into account the Marxist-Leninist approach to the “woman question.” Here, as in other aspects of their thinking, Marxists condemned women’s oppression under capitalism more thoroughly than they provided a blueprint for the future.⁶ Even so, Bolshevik propagandists and policy makers could look to some guiding ideological principles. Central among these was the assertion that

women and men must have equal rights and opportunities. In contrast to most feminists, however, Bolsheviks and other Marxists argued that women's liberation required the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois sociopolitical order. Under socialism, women would participate in waged labor alongside men, gaining economic independence and equal status and liberating themselves from the confines of the domestic sphere. To facilitate women's entry into the workforce and exit from domestic isolation, housework and child care would be socialized. Marxists considered collectivizing the domestic sphere a necessity not only because of domesticity's negative impact on women themselves. It was also argued that this negative impact extended to other family members, as wives' isolation in the domestic sphere led them to resent their husbands' civic activities and stifle their children's civic development.

Bolshevik Views of and Appeals to Housewives, 1917–1934

After the revolution, the Bolsheviks were unable to make good their promise to socialize housework and free women from domestic duties. During the Civil War, when morale was crucial, state and party leaders feared the harmful effect of housewives' backwardness on Communist husbands. As Lenin lamented in 1920, most women's lives continued to be "a daily sacrifice of self to a thousand insignificant trifles," as "the ancient rights of her husband, her lord and master, survive unnoticed."⁷ This oppression was not without consequence, he observed, as the wife "takes her revenge": "her backwardness and lack of understanding for her husband's revolutionary ideals act as a drag on his fighting spirit."⁸ Such women, Lenin concluded, are "like tiny worms, gnawing and undermining imperceptibly, slowly but surely."⁹ While Lenin regretted the effect of wives' circumscribed worldview on the women themselves, he was at least as concerned about its impact on husbands' civic consciousness.

The inability to fund child-care centers, cafeterias, and communal laundries—to socialize domestic life—continued after the Civil War. Concern over housewives' influence on husbands' and children's mentalities and on nascent Soviet culture and society likewise survived. In 1921, the party and state embarked upon a cautious program of reconstruction, known as the New Economic Policy (NEP). The era's climate of relative toleration and diversity has led some historians to interpret it as a "golden age."¹⁰ However, NEP can also be seen as a period in which the revolution's success was jeopardized by a climate of excessive permissiveness and moral laxity.¹¹ The perception of NEP as threatening and degenerative was especially apparent with regard to women.

On the one hand, NEP policies posed a threat *to* women who, as the least skilled and most recently hired workers, suffered disproportionately from its

economic consequences.¹² At the same time, women were considered part *of* the threat posed by NEP, with its reinvigoration of such traditionally feminized domains as the domestic sphere and material culture. In this regard, Aleksandra Kollontai, director of the party's Women's Department (*Zhenotdel*) scornfully condemned what she called "doll-parasites": "Motherhood repulses them; housework they leave to the servant. As for participating in public life and in (socialist) construction, they don't want to, don't know how to, and cannot."¹³ In Kollontai's view, this type of housewife presented "an incomparable . . . danger" to Soviet power.¹⁴

Without the financial means to restructure daily life along collective lines, the Communist Party and Soviet state responded by reaching into the domestic sphere to reform it from the inside out, instilling a Bolshevik consciousness in its most influential figure—the housewife. For example, *Zhenotdel* activists, whose primary mission had been recruiting women into the labor force and involving women workers in Soviet civic life, ventured into uncharted territory to agitate among urban housewives. Records suggest that they had some success in this regard.¹⁵

Wives of the Red Army officers were also the subjects of official concern in the 1920s. According to the Army's Political Administration (PUR), many of these women forced their husbands to undergo church weddings, suffer icons in the home, and squander time and resources seeking out perfumes, frilly dresses, and restaurant meals. The alleged effect on morale included tensions between (older, married) senior officers and their (younger, unmarried) subordinates, as well as a seeming epidemic of officer suicides.¹⁶

By 1927, the army was grappling with these problems at their purported source. PUR organized work among officers' wives, providing "political-education services" and "drawing them into . . . active social work."¹⁷ More visibly, in 1930 the Political Administration sponsored a conference for over 400 commanders' wives in Moscow to discuss work among commanders' families and the "socialization of their daily life."¹⁸ Party organizers in the garrisons were ordered to conduct political agitation among officers' wives in the hope that this would improve their—and their officer-husbands'—morale.¹⁹

While the army's efforts to involve officers' wives in Soviet civic and cultural life was informed in part by anxieties wrought by NEP, they also were influenced by the renewed militancy on cultural and social questions known as the Cultural Revolution. Although the socialization of daily life through communal dining, laundry, and child-care facilities was one of its major thrusts, the Cultural Revolution did not advocate a wholesale rejection of home life or the domestic sphere. As Svetlana Boym has shown, the home could become as much a site of Bolshevik values as the workers' club

or the cafeteria.²⁰ In 1928–1929, for example, the Communist youth organization's newspaper launched a campaign entitled "Down with Domestic Trash," prescribing a living space that was comfortable but spare and functional, devoid of petty bourgeois clutter. The editors applauded the advanced consciousness of model housewives who accepted their challenge by smashing bric-a-brac, tearing paintings and postcards from the walls.²¹ The desire to organize housewives which lay behind the 1930 army wives' conference had much to do with spreading the Cultural Revolution's doctrines of daily life.

Party work with army officers' wives faltered after the 1930 conference (until 1936, when PUR expanded the *obshchestvennitsa* movement into the military), but housewives remained the object of official appeals. The perception of their political and social apathy and its detrimental influence remained, but instead of its effect on morals or Bolshevik culture, officials emphasized its impact on labor productivity. Just as NEP and the Cultural Revolution lay behind state and party concerns with housewives' effect on morale or the spread of Bolshevik culture, the crash industrialization drive of the late 1920s and early 1930s also had an important impact. Industrialization's most significant effect on women was the large-scale effort to recruit them into production. The results were numerically impressive: the number of women workers more than doubled from 1928 to 1933.²² But industrialization also affected those women who remained at home, and officials shifted their approach to these women in notable ways.

Appeals to housewives after 1930 represented an evolution in the Bolshevik approach to the woman question and a new validation of the domestic sphere. Whereas previously housewives were characterized by the threat they posed to the regime as individuals and figures of influence in the domestic sphere, as the Soviet Union approached the mid-1930s emphasis shifted from wife-as-threat to wife-as-potential-asset. State and party officials hoped that housewives could come to feel a sense of joint responsibility for their husband's job performance. As a result, men's labor productivity would increase, while housewives could feel themselves part of the great Soviet project. This changed viewpoint prepared the ground for the *obshchestvennitsa* movement.

The new approach was evident in initiatives attributed to industrial workers' wives. Some of these aimed at improving conditions in husbands' workplaces or for other workers. Other prominent examples focused on the significant, if indirect, influence wives could have on labor productivity by means of their influence in the domestic sphere. For example, wives from one Urals steel factory were determined to "help our husbands . . . make (their) open-hearth furnace first in the Union."²³ A grateful husband

described his wife's surprising methods as follows:

it was as if my old lady had been replaced by someone else. Before, you'd come home, she'd nag you about household affairs, the kids would be screaming, lunch wouldn't be ready. Now I come home, and the samovar is steaming on the table, lunch is ready. I lie down and relax, she busies herself with the children. If they start making noise, she takes them out of the room. When I leave for work, she gets up and readies everything. Our life runs smoothly.²⁴

The dual nature of wives' contribution—directly in civic and factory life and indirectly at home—would become a hallmark of the *obshchestvennitsa* movement.

Nadezhda Krupskaya, with her iconic status as Lenin's widow, was an ideal mouthpiece for the party among workers' wives, and was a strong supporter of their efforts.²⁵ In one of the first uses of this term in this context, Krupskaya applauded wives who were "obshchestvennitsy."²⁶ She also carefully distinguished between bourgeois and Soviet domestic activity:

we are not talking about comfort in the petit bourgeois sense of the word, not of that coziness (*uiut*) which in bygone times concerned merchants' wives and their bureaucratic sisters, envying each other every teacup or pretty napkin. (Workers' wives) . . . concern themselves with proletarian daily life, so that all is clean, all is done on time, so that there is no filth or vermin, so that . . . one can relax in one's home.²⁷

Krupskaya's emphasis on cleanliness, health and hygiene, rationalization, and productivity similarly partook of an ethos of modernity rather than one of traditional domesticity.

Domesticity, Public Activism, and Personal Happiness

Attempts to organize (working-class) housewives continued throughout the early 1930s, with varying degrees of organization and success.²⁸ It was with the advent of the wife-activists' movement in 1934, however, that these attempts attained a new level of vigor. Wives' influence on their spouses' labor productivity remained a prominent theme, but it was now combined in equal and explicit measure with a focus on disseminating Soviet culture. "Flowers and metal" was the way one delegate to the all-Union wives' conference described the combination of culture and industrial output: "Difficult though it might seem to combine these two notions, they coexist easily and beautifully in our factory."²⁹ Flowers and metal coexisted as symbols of the *obshchestvennitsa* movement's dual priorities. A cultured

citizenry and industrial might were two of the era's major goals, closely linked aspects of the revolution's modernizing project. *Obshchestvennitsy* strove to attain these goals through social work and their influence in the domestic sphere.

As earlier, wives were called upon to appropriate and disseminate official culture. The *obshchestvennitsa* movement's "civilizing mission" differed in significant ways from the endeavors of the late 1920s and early 1930s, however. First, the character of Soviet official culture had changed. While the Cultural Revolution had emphasized class antagonisms and a sharp break with the past, Soviet culture of the mid- to late-1930s was less militant and incorporated more elements from the prerevolutionary Russian past.³⁰ In addition, as part of the more positive view of housewives as potential assets, trade union activists and industrial commissariat officials explicitly contrasted wife-activists with superstitious, apolitical housewives of the past—perhaps even of wife-activists' own pasts. As one influential trade union official congratulated wife-activists, "You have torn yourself out of the framework of personal interest, domestic duties, you have begun to feel yourselves masters [*khoziaieva*] of the country."³¹ Prominent wife-activist Sofiia Butenko described her view of personal and public life this way:

Activists, myself included, think of it this way: this or that national event, this is my personal event [*lichnoe sobytie*], of vital concern to me . . . Sometimes you hear that those of us living in the conditions of new industrial settlements have no personal life. This, of course, is not true. We do have a personal life, personal happiness—I have it myself, but in our country personal happiness does not and cannot contradict the interests of the collective. Our life is full of great content [*soderzhanie*]. You can see how we ourselves grow even as our surroundings grow.³²

Interestingly, Butenko had offered nearly identical comments over a year earlier at the all-Union wives' conference.³³ The editors of the journal *Obshchestvennitsa* clearly looked with favor on her formulation of "personal happiness," editing it and reprinting it to reach greater numbers of wife-activists. Butenko's elision of the distinction between personal and collective life was characteristic of the wife-activists' movement, and of the prewar Stalin era more generally. The double versions of her remarks show both the individual articulation and official dissemination of a "revolutionary self."³⁴

Sponsors of the *obshchestvennitsa* movement ascribed housewives' changed outlook to the Soviet Union's achievement of socialism, which was declared in 1936 with the ratification of the Stalin constitution. This document also affirmed men's and women's equal status, and women's emancipation was considered another impetus for wives' new outlook. As

one of the movement's sponsors in the trade unions declared, "in our country woman is an equal, active creator of the new way of life . . . Your movement is a manifestation of a new increase in creative activity on the part of Soviet women."³⁵

Finally, wives' role in spreading Soviet culture, while apparent even before the rise of the wife-activists' movement, was now far more prominently featured. This is partly because of the unprecedented scale on which the *obshchestvennitsa* movement operated. Whereas earlier campaigns to organize housewives involved hundreds of women, the *obshchestvennitsa* movement numbered tens of thousands.³⁶ In addition, these women were encouraged and/or recruited by a powerful organization—the Commissariat of Heavy Industry—which was led by a powerful figure—Commissar "Sergo" Ordzhonikidze, who served as the movement's patron. At the local and factory level, a uniform organizational format (the "wives' council") and institutionalized link to the factory administration (usually the engineering-technical section (ITS), a factory trade union committee for engineers) helped foster the movement's growth and durability. To help spread information about and propagandize the *obshchestvennitsa* movement, wives' conferences met on a regional and industry-wide basis, as well as on a national level. At these conferences, trade union, factory or industry commissariat officials outlined steps wives could take to help meet organizational goals. Then activists described their local wives' councils accomplishments, as well as the challenges they faced in their efforts to meet official goals. The record of these conferences, as well as extended accounts of the activities of wives' councils and of individual wife-activists' experiences, were printed in information booklets and pamphlets, and received prominent exposure in the press. The culmination of this sort of activity was *Obshchestvennitsa*, the Commissariat of Heavy Industry's glossy bimonthly journal that, from its first issue in mid-1936, provided extensive coverage of the movement and was influential in shaping its priorities and the wife-activist's official persona.³⁷

Given that campaigns to draw the "backward," "isolated" housewife into public life dated back virtually to the inception of the Soviet regime, why did these efforts coalesce into the wife-activists' movement in the mid-1930s? Why did Soviet efforts to mobilize housewives to reshape the Soviet domestic sphere in line with official priorities take on this especially potent and systematic form at this particular time? Two sets of conditions gave rise to the wife-activists' movement. First, the formation and consolidation during the first and second five-year plans of a socially and economically privileged technical intelligentsia created a pool of nonemployed, well-educated, and energetic women who initially dominated the movement's membership. In addition, the first Five-Year Plan period's state of social and economic

emergency gave way to a “breathing space” (however brief) in the mid-1930s which allowed state and party leaders to devote attention to fostering the broad development of a movement encouraging wives to become activists.³⁸ These activists could serve state and party priorities while feeling themselves participants in the great Soviet experiment. One aspect of this participation was infusing home life—the domestic sphere—with officially supported values, including productivity, sobriety, cultural literacy, and support for the collective. Unable (or unwilling) to do away with major aspects of domestic life, the Soviet state and Communist Party co-opted it instead.

Wife-Activists and Soviet Domesticity in Comparative Context

When attempting to understand what the domestic sphere meant in the 1930s Soviet Union, it is crucial to consider how the Soviet experience was similar to or differed from that of other countries in the same period. Long accustomed to thinking in terms of the uniqueness or at least the systemic specificity of the Soviet enterprise, scholars are only beginning to appreciate that the Soviet state was far from alone in penetrating the domestic sphere—most other European nations did the same in this period. As David Hoffmann pointed out, “Soviet efforts resembled . . . policy in other countries that also used the traditional institution of the family to serve modern state goals of population growth and social discipline.”³⁹

Indeed, during the interwar period that Hoffmann focuses on, European governments, reeling from the consequences of World War I’s mass destruction, implemented pronatalist policies seeking to boost the birthrate and quell fears of demographic decline.⁴⁰ From fascist regimes in Germany, Italy, and Spain to democratic ones in France and Great Britain, a similar set of policies emerged: restrictions on abortion, family allowances, state-sponsored organizations to protect the health of children and pregnant women.⁴¹ The Soviet family legislation of 1936 and 1944 fits this pattern closely.⁴²

To effectively trace the modern European state’s incursion into the domestic sphere, however, it is necessary to go back further in time, to the late-nineteenth-century development of the modern welfare state. The widespread expansion of state programs affecting mothers and children grew out of conditions prevailing in Europe after 1870. These included a geopolitical situation in which competition between European states was fuelled by the rise of Germany, the global “new imperialism,” and the arms buildup that accompanied these phenomena. In addition, the expansion of male suffrage in many countries led to concerns about the consequences of mass politics, including the desire for a stable, healthy, and educated citizenry. Finally, a declining birthrate was apparent in most west European

countries by 1870, giving rise to concern about the decline of the “race.” As one prominent British physician and eugenicist asserted, “The history of nations is determined not on the battlefield but in the nursery, and the battalions which give lasting victory are the battalions of babies. The politics of the future will be domestics.”⁴³

In response to widespread views like these, European states and social organizations implemented legislation and established institutions designed to promote population quantity and quality. The British Infant Welfare and Endowment of Motherhood movements led the way, and they were quickly followed by the Parisian “Maison Maternelle” and 1909 French Engerand Act for maternity protection, the 1910 Italian National Maternity Fund, and the 1905 German League for the Protection of Mothers, all of which sought to improve the welfare of children and new mothers. These measures also represented a “series of interventions”⁴⁴ in which the state expanded its power into the domestic sphere, seeking to extend to the entire population a prescription for nurturing maternal behavior that had been influential among the middle class since the Enlightenment.⁴⁵

Russia too took steps in the late nineteenth century to improve maternal and infant welfare, but the Russian state and medical community operated under a different set of circumstances.⁴⁶ Russia in the late imperial period suffered not from a declining birthrate but rather from the highest infant mortality rate in Europe,⁴⁷ perceived as a disgraceful reminder of the country’s relatively low level of development. In the 1890s, the Commission for the Spread of Hygiene Education among the Populace and similar organizations distributed literature for mothers conveying “rudimentary knowledge of cleanliness and nurturing.” These efforts met with little immediate success, however, as peasant childbirth and infant-care customs proved to be highly resilient.⁴⁸

It was not until after the revolution that the state began to effectively implement what Elizabeth Waters called “modern mothercraft.”⁴⁹ By 1925 the Soviet Department for the Protection of Motherhood and Infancy (Okhmatmlad), founded in 1918, oversaw in the Russian republic alone 584 nurseries, 96 maternity homes, and 580 prenatal and infant clinics.⁵⁰ Within a few years, however, financial strictures forced Okhmatmlad to postpone further plans to socialize child care and focus instead on education and propaganda for mothers.⁵¹ Given the shortage of institutions to socialize Soviet children, the government and party would have to socialize Soviet mothers. By the mid-1930s, however, experts conveyed parenting advice less condescendingly. It was assumed that women understood the necessity of hospital births, clean linens, and breast feeding. In this respect, the Soviet Union had at last “caught up” to modern Europe, closing a gap about which state and party leaders had long been self-conscious.

How useful, then, are the notions of public and private as a means to describe the Soviet domestic sphere in the 1930s? Potentially quite useful—as one scholar of Middle Eastern women's history suggested:

It is only through the direct interrogation of (the concepts of public and private) in local historical contexts, and through direct scholarly debate about their merits, that we may succeed in redefining them in truly universal terms or in identifying new conceptual frameworks that foster comparative and transnational historical understanding.⁵²

An examination of the Soviet domestic sphere—its gendering, its place between public and private—provides a case in point. The Soviet domestic sphere in this period was powerfully shaped by the state and party, and by the priorities of labor productivity and cultural dissemination. This intrusion of state policy into the domestic realm was a gradual process that began unfolding in the 1920s and reached its apogee with the wife-activists' movement of 1934–1941. This process was by no means a unique by-product of “communist totalitarianism,” however. Rather, it was a process seemingly inherent to the construction of the modern European family—a process that began elsewhere in Europe as early as the 1870s. In Europe and the Soviet Union alike, the domestic sphere was not a private haven in a heartless world, but a building block of the modern welfare state. The domestic sphere was a site for building strong, healthy, and loyal families, and it was the duty of educated, nurturing, and civically conscious housewives to oversee this process.

As the Soviet state's leading representative in the domestic sphere, the wife-activist occupied a position distinct from that of her European peers who were involved in social work and were held up as ideal housewives. *Obshchestvennitsy* resembled in some ways members of the Nazi *Frauenwerk* or the Italian *fasci femminili*. All sought to bring the party's message to other women, including other housewives. The latter two groups, however, were far more closely tied to the party; Soviet wife-activists were rarely party members. Similarly, many *obshchestvennitsy* had much in common with British or French middle class or high-society “do-gooders,” but this quality was combined in the Soviet case with an ideology of classlessness, as well as the practical, can-do ethos of the Bolshevik *aktivistka*.

The Soviet domestic sphere was also gendered in ways that were somewhat different from its European counterparts. To be sure, domesticity was feminized in all cases; even in those instances where the Soviet Union managed to socialize housework and child care, domestic labor was merely transferred from the shoulders of women who performed it in the home to women who performed it in cafeterias and day-care centers. Likewise, the

prominence of the wife-activist movement did not confer any real political agency on its participants (although some did exercise a limited administrative authority). By contrast, the early phase of state intervention in European domestic life had been informed by a degree of maternalist politics and feminist advocacy (which had not been the case in imperial Russia).⁵³ By the 1930s, however, this was the case neither in Europe nor in the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Soviet Union, unlike other European countries, maintained a discourse of gender equality that construed women's domestic role differently. To be sure, Soviet ideology in general gave the domestic sphere unique contours. For one thing, the Communist Party never abandoned its intention to collectivize daily life even if only to some degree. This, along with the value Soviet ideology placed on the collective over the individual, rendered the domestic sphere yet another site (like the child-care center or the workers' club) in which to partake of officially approved culture. With regard to the gendering of the Soviet domestic sphere, the persistent rhetoric of equality meant that wife-activists' endeavors in the home were described not only as fostering good Soviet families, but also as a contribution to building socialism—a productive (i.e., publicly valuable) contribution not unlike the woman worker's work in the factory or the woman collective farmer's labor in the fields.

The domestic sphere in the 1930s Soviet Union occupied a place in between the public and the private. To be sure, domestic and family life had their individualized aspects, and could be the site of personal happiness. This personal happiness, however, was not private in the sense of being divorced from public life. As wife-activists learned to think of it, "personal events" were "national events"—domestic happiness was public happiness. A proper 1930s Soviet housewife would see no difference between the two.

Notes

1. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, May 10–12, 1936; *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie zhen khoziaistvennikov i inzhenerno-tekhnicheskikh rabotnikov tiazheloi promyshlennosti—stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1936).
2. *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie zhen khoziaistvennikov*, 9; *Pravda*, May 10, 1936; *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie zhen komandnogo i nachal'stvuiushchego sostava RKKA* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1937), 80; V. L. Shveitzer and A. Ul'rikh, eds., *Zheny komandirov tiazheloi promyshlennosti* (Moscow: NKTP SSSR, 1936).
3. *Obshchestvennitsa* (plural: *obshchestvennitsy*) can be loosely translated as "civic-minded woman."
4. For a more detailed description of wife-activists' work, see Rebecca Neary, "Flowers and Metal: The Soviet 'Wife-Activists' Movement' and Stalin-era Culture and Society, 1934–1941," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2002, and "Mothering Socialist Society: The Wife-Activists' Movement and the Soviet Culture of Daily Life," *Russian Review*, 58, no. 3 (1999), 396–412.

5. Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal*, 36, no. 2 (1993), 383–414; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1992); Introduction, and *Journal of Women's History*, 15, no. 1 (2003).
6. For a summary of the most influential works, see Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1–58.
7. V. I. Lenin, "Dialogue with Klara Zetkin" and "A Great Beginning," in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1975), 698, 484–485.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Stephen Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1980); and Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
11. Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); and Kenneth Pinnow, "Making Suicide Soviet: Medicine, moral statistics and the politics of social science in Bolshevik Russia," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1998.
12. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 110–112.
13. Aleksandra Kollontai, "Novaia ugroza," *Kommunistka* (August–September 1922), 5–9.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Michelle Fuqua, "The Politics of the Domestic Sphere: The *Zhenotdely*, Women's Liberation, and the Search for a *Novyi Byt* in Early Soviet Russia," *The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies*, no. 10 (September 1996), 65, note 45. See also Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 188–189.
16. Mark Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 110–111, 193–194; Pinnow, "Making Suicide Soviet," 266–267.
17. "Rezoliutsii soveshchaniia po vneshkolnoi rabote v RKKA, 1–4 fev. 1927," and "Rezoliutsii 1-ogo soveshchaniia po rabote domov Krasnoi Armii i Flota, 4–7 fev. 1929 g.," in *Vsearmeiskie soveshchaniia politrabotnikov, 1918–1940*, ed. N. I. Smorigo (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), 229–230, 274–275; Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Arkhiv (RGVA), f. 9, op. 13, d. 672, l. 206.
18. *Boevye podругi: Kniga o zhenakh komandirov RKKA*, ed. B. E. Fonareva (Moscow: Izd. Tsentral'nogo organa Nar. Kommissariata Oborony SSSR, 1936), 20; and A. E. Makhrova, "Iz istorii zhenskogo dvizheniia v Krasnoi Armii i na Flote v 30-kh godakh," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 3 (1972), 90.
19. RGVA, f. 9, op. 13, d. 672, ll. 80, 104, 116.
20. Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 33–38.
21. *Ibid.*, 37.

22. Wendy Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 92–98; and G. N. Serebrennikov, *Zhenskii trud v SSSR* (Moscow: Gos. sotsial'no-ekon. izd-vo, 1964), 51.
23. F. M. Rizel', *Zhenshchina na sotsialisticheskoi stroike. Metodrazrabotka dlia krughkov polit. ucheby chlenov semei nachsostava* (Moscow: NKO SSSR, 1935), 37.
24. *Ibid.*, 39.
25. N. K. Krupskaiia, "Zhenam shakhterov," in *Zhenshchina strany sovetov—ravnopravnyi grazhdanin*, ed. N. K. Krupskaiia (Moscow: Partizdat, 1938), 86.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, 88.
28. See, e.g., S. Kriachko, *Pomoshchnitsy politotdela* (Moscow, 1934).
29. *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie zhen khoziaistvennikov*, 26.
30. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 357; Neary, "Wife-Activists and the Soviet Culture of Daily Life," 410. On the "traditional" versus "revolutionary" character of 1930s Soviet culture, see Nicholas Timasheff, *The Great Retreat* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1946); and David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
31. *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie zhen khoziaistvennikov*, 207.
32. *Obshchestvennitsa*, 20, no. 2 (1937), 22.
33. *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie zhen khoziaistvennikov*, 185.
34. Oleg Kharkhordin points out the distinction in the Soviet era between *lichnaia zhizn'* (which he translates as "personal life," in the sense of "life which does not involve official organizations, but is [ideally] as demonstrative of the Bolshevik personality as official life") and *chastnia zhizn'* (which he translates as "private life," "to signify the way of life, related to private property, which the Bolsheviks fought and almost vanquished.") Oleg Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintaub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 333–363, especially 344. The distinction he draws is consistent with the usage of these terms in the discourse of the *obshchestvennitsa* movement. At the same time, his suggestion that Soviet citizens "dissimulated," essentially presenting their "personal lives" for official inspection while hiding their more authentic "private lives" from view suggests a kind of bifurcated Soviet personality less consistent with how many people in the 1930s—wife-activists at least—conceived of themselves. In this regard, see Jochen Hellbeck and Igal Halfin, "Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain* and the State of Stalinist Historical Studies," *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, 44, no. 3 (1996), 456–463; Anna Krylova, "The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies," *Kritika*, 1, no. 1 (2000), 119–146; and Eric Naiman, "On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them," *Russian Review*, 60, no. 3 (2001), 307–315.
35. *Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie zhen khoziaistvennikov*, 22.
36. I. V. Kashkina, "Dvizhenie zhen-obshchestvennits," candidate dissertation, Moscow State University, 1988, 243.
37. Neary, "Flowers and Metal," 171–175.

38. On 1934–1936 as a “breathing space,” see Gennady Andreev-Khomiakov, *Bitter Waters: Life and Work in Stalin’s Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); and Naum Jasny, *Soviet Industrialization, 1928–1952* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).
39. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 102–103, 117.
40. Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, eds., *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s–1950s* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and Maria Sophia Quine, *Population Politics in Twentieth-Century Europe: Fascist Dictatorships and Liberal Democracies* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
41. Bock and Thane, *Maternity and Gender Policies*; Quine, *Population Politics*; Susan Pedersen, *Family Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State, Britain and France, 1914–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Victoria DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983); and Arina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
42. Rudolf Schlesinger, *The Family in the USSR* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1949); Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*; and Janet Evans, “The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women’s Question: the Case of the 1936 Decree ‘In Defense of Mother and Child,’” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16 (1981), 757–775.
43. Anna Davin, “Motherhood and Imperialism,” *History Workshop Journal*, 5 (Spring 1978), 29.
44. Jane Lewis, “Models of Equality for Women: The Case of State Support for Children in Twentieth-Century Britain,” in *Maternity and Gender Policies*, 109.
45. Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature from Catherine to Yeltsin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22–32.
46. Nancy Frieden, “Child Care: Medical Reform in a Traditionalist Culture,” and Samuel Ramer, “Childbirth and Culture: Midwifery in the Nineteenth-century Russian Countryside,” in *The Family in Imperial Russia: New Lines of Historical Research*, ed. David Ransel (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Frances Bernstein, “Envisioning Health in Revolutionary Russia: The Politics of Gender in Sexual Enlightenment Posters of the 1920s,” *Russian Review*, 57, no. 2 (1998), 191–217; David Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) and *Village Mothers: Three Generations of Change in Russia and Tataria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
47. Frieden, “Child Care,” 236; Ramer, “Childbirth and Culture,” 218; and Frank Lorimer, *The Population of the Soviet Union—History and Prospects* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1946), 124.
48. Frieden, “Child Care,” 246, 251, 236.
49. Elizabeth Waters, “Teaching Mothercraft in Post-revolutionary Russia,” *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 1, no. 2 (1987), 30.
50. Elizabeth Waters, “Childcare Posters and the Modernisation of Motherhood in Post-Revolutionary Russia,” *Sbornik: Study Group on the Russian Revolution*, 13 (1987), 65. On *Okhmatmlad*, see Tricia Starks, “The Body Soviet: Health,

- hygiene, and the path to a new life in the 1920s," Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 2000, Chapter Four.
51. Waters, "Teaching Mothercraft," 30.
 52. Elizabeth Thompson, "Public and Private in Middle Eastern Women's History," *Journal of Women's History*, 15, no. 1 (2003).
 53. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., "Introduction," *Mothers of a New World* (New York: Routledge, 1993). On the absence of maternalist politics in Russia, see Adele Lindenmeyr, "Maternalism and Child Welfare in Late Imperial Russia," *Journal of Women's History*, 5, no. 2 (1993), 114–125.

CHAPTER SIX

A HEARTH FOR A DOG: THE PARADOXES OF SOVIET PET KEEPING

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Dogs have served as man's helper in hunting and guarding for ages. Depending on what kind of work they do, we divide them into two categories: hunting dogs and working dogs. There are also useless, harmful dogs. These include parasitical, non-working, lap dogs and homeless dogs and strays. The Soviet Union, which is building socialist society, needs only useful dogs, especially working breeds.

—Zavodchikov. *Ovcharka na sluzhbe v kolkhoze. Instruktivnye ukazaniia*

The practice of keeping animals regardless of their usefulness, the keeping, exactly, of pets . . . is a modern innovation, and, on the social scale on which it exists today, is unique. It is part of that universal but personal withdrawal into the private small family unit, decorated or furnished with mementoes from the outside world, which is such a distinguishing feature of consumer societies.

—Berger, "Why look at Animals?" in *About Looking*

Treasure the dog. It is your helper and friend; a true, unselfish friend, who will never, ever change. But in order for it to give much to you, you must invest much feeling, care, love, and affection in it. A dog is a friend, if you are also its friend.

—Riabinin, *Moi druž'ia*

Shur'a moved in and stared pointedly at the bench where I was sitting, stepping aside only grudgingly when my hostess approached with the teapot. "That's really his spot," she noted casually, turning back to the kitchen for more food. As I moved from the padded comfort of the bench to the rickety uncertainty of a bentwood chair, the Borzoi gracefully wedged his massive frame onto what I now realized was "his" cushion. Yawning and licking his chops, he waited for Galla to finish setting the table. It was 1989 and I was in the midst of an unusual, but not really extraordinary encounter with late Soviet pet-keeping culture. While having a pet dog seemed fairly "normal" to my American dog lover sensibilities, there was much about my

Soviet friends' relationships with dogs such as Shur'a that made me think twice, and even three times. Most of these canines were big. The apartments (and sometimes the kitchen tables) they shared with several humans were small. The dogs were all purebred. Their owners tended to be from the intelligentsia. The country was in turmoil—heavy with political reform and democratization, and wracked by economic malfunction and collapse. Finding food and other “deficit” items such as soap had become an overwhelming concern of almost everyone I knew. Yet my friends found the time and resources to exercise and care for their dogs. They “cooked” for them nearly every evening, setting aside hard to come by soup bones, vegetables, and even meat for creatures they considered part of the “family.”

The similarities between Soviet dogs and their Western counterparts were readily apparent: they were pets, exemplifying the encyclopedia's definition of an “animal kept by human beings as a source of companionship and pleasure,”¹ as well as Keith Thomas's more specific description of animals that are kept indoors, given an individual name, and never eaten.² The behavior and attitudes of their owners were more difficult to categorize. First of all, the peculiarities of contemporary Russian suggested that the concept of a “pet” might be somewhat problematic. Before the revolution, Russians had identified favored animals and people as *liubimtsy*—loved ones, often designating the nonhuman variants as “*domashnie liubimtsy*” (domestic pets).³ In the Soviet period, the term *liubimets* was often reserved for people, although animals kept inside as “pets” still might be referred to as *domashnie*, assigning them to the “domestic” realm of “home, family, and private life (*chastnyi byt*),” but also to the broader category of “domesticated” (rather than wild) animals. Wild animals that were definitely not *domashnii*, but were tamed and kept as pets, were described as “*ruchnoi*” (pertaining to the hand), as in a “pet crow” (*ruchnoi varon*) or “pet squirrel” (*ruchnaia belka*). The prerevolutionary concept of a *komnatnaia sobaka*—literally a dog kept “indoors” but generally meaning a “lap dog” also retained some currency, although it hardly seemed appropriate for Shur'a.⁴

So, there were Soviet pets even though the nomenclature for describing them was somewhat complicated. But the ambiguities in terminology suggested more profound tensions pertaining to the broader goals and specific characteristics of the Soviet project. In the West, the “family dog” has long been a cliché of middle-class life and an integral part of modern visions of domesticity. Indeed recent scholarship on pet keeping in other national contexts has underscored how pet-keeping practices worked in concert with various aesthetic responses to modernity and anxieties about nineteenth-century liberalism as integral components of the gendered bourgeois order.⁵ As the first epigraph for this essay suggests, the Bolsheviks' assault on the political, economic, and social relationships that constituted

that order extended to interactions between people and animals as well. Denouncing pets as the decadent diversions of the exploiting classes, activists like Petr Zavodchikov proposed an uncompromising taxonomy for the new Soviet dog consisting of two main categories: the nonworking, parasitical lap dogs of the former exploiters, and the hardworking sled, hunting, and guard dogs that would help build socialism. Although the tenor and substance of prescriptive discourse modulated considerably in the decades after Zavodchikov's care manual for dogs on collective farms was published in 1933, the underlying concern with practicality and assumptions about the instrumentality of human relationships with other living creatures and the natural world in general remained palpable at almost every level of Soviet society.⁶

Given the prominence of utilitarian and collectivist impulses even in late Soviet socialism, why did people devote themselves to something as impractical, personal, and burdensome as a pet dog, especially one with a fancy pedigree? While the modification and eventual reappropriation of cultural practices against which revolutionaries initially had rebelled is one of the most fundamental and well-studied paradoxes of the Soviet experience, the rehabilitation of the pet dog and the emergence of a distinctively "Soviet" style of pet keeping after World War II are more than just underappreciated aspects of the Great Retreat or the Big Deal.⁷ By examining the evolution of Soviet pet-keeping culture, with particular attention to the pet dog, this study seeks to shed insight both on more fundamental assumptions underlying sensibilities about animals in the Soviet context and on the contours and constitution of the "private sphere."

Pet dogs engaged both of the analytical axes suggested by Jeff Weintraub as essential underpinnings of the (often elusive) distinction between public and private that seems particularly problematic in the Soviet context. The first of Weintraub's axes juxtaposes the "hidden or withdrawn" versus the "open, revealed, or accessible." The second contrasts the "individual or particularistic" to the "collective or general."⁸ In the second epigraph of this essay, John Berger links the growth of pet keeping in the affluent urban centers of capitalist modernity to the tensions implicit in the material and cultural processes by which the animal "other" became increasingly remote from the daily workings of human society. In Berger's formulation, the pet serves a dual and somewhat subversive role as both a commodity and a connection to the outside world—a memento of a more substantial relationship between humans and animals, as well as a token of (or passport into) the "natural" world which the built environment of the modern city has so decisively subdued. Linking the growth of pet keeping to the "personal withdrawal into the private small family unit," Berger seems to place the pet firmly in the domestic interior of the nuclear family that constitutes one node on Weintraub's first axis. The linguistic assignment of the pet to the "domestic" in Russian confirms this

conceptualization of the private, which includes the realm of *byt* (everyday routine and stagnation), with all of its attendant idiosyncrasies.⁹ But further on in this passage, Berger characterizes the relationship between pets and their owners in ways that engage the “individual” (versus collective) nodes of Weintraub’s second axis: “The pet *completes* him, offering responses to aspects of his character which would otherwise remain unconfirmed. He can be to his pet what he is not to anybody or anything else.”¹⁰

A more positive expression of this same sentiment is found in the third epigraph, taken from a book of dog stories published for Soviet children in the 1960s. As “a true, unselfish friend,” the pet dog could be what most humans could not. Official Soviet culture may have lauded the efforts of the collective and encouraged individual commitment to the abstract causes of the state, but this essay shows that Soviet urban denizens, like their Western and prerevolutionary counterparts, treasured their dogs for their personal loyalty and devotion. Investing animals with qualities highly valued but rarely encountered in people, Soviet pet-keeping culture described what Kathleen Kete has characterized as “the fault lines of individualism.”¹¹ Dogs offered their owners companionship, a literally “selfless” ideal of friendship, and a connection with the outside world. They also facilitated the moral development of people, especially children.

However “private” Soviet pet keeping was, revolving around individual, subjective relationships (and sometimes centered in domestic interiors screened from outside view), it also had significant “public” aspects and implications. As Susan Reid has noted elsewhere in this volume, under Khrushchev, the regime began to promote the nuclear family and separate apartments even as it encouraged collectivism in other areas. The domestic realm and *byt* of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras were not distinct spheres, but formed part of a continuum that included the official realm and collective concerns. Like the cultivation of the Soviet “home,” pet keeping was a personal and familial pastime pursued in a somewhat transparent relationship with official discourses that prescribed “appropriate” pet-keeping practices, celebrated dogs’ service in the military, their work protecting the country, and their contribution to scientific research and the space race. Because the dog fancy involved people in clubs, shows, and training associations that were sanctioned and supervised by the state, dog ownership also served as a medium through which people engaged the collective and official sphere of state authority.

From Sentiment to Utility: The Development of Soviet Sobakavodstvo

Like more well-studied aspects of the Bolsheviks’ agenda, early Soviet attitudes toward dogs were strident and marked by ambivalence. At an

ideological level, keeping pets was incompatible both with the revolutionaries' vehement rejection of "bourgeois" culture and public health discourses that identified animals as sources of disease and dirt. The Bolsheviks' visions of domestic space emphasized cleanliness and order.¹² They abhorred the decadence of sharing the comforts of human living quarters with dogs as well as the threat to good hygiene these canines represented. A poster produced by the Commissariat of Education (Narkompros) in the 1920s juxtaposed a "dirty" home, where domestic animals and children played together on a messy floor, against a tidy, animal-free abode, where a well-groomed mother bathed her toddler. The latter depicted the "clean and healthy" home for the future generation.¹³ Squandering precious resources on "pampered little lap dogs" or such trifles as "dog cemeteries" (which had emerged in the late imperial period) while workers lacked adequate housing and food smacked of the irrational excesses of capitalism.¹⁴ Animal protection societies, such as the Russian Society for the Protection of Animals, which had promoted pet ownership and the humane treatment of animals since the mid-1800s, were disbanded, and legal penalties for cruelty to animals were eliminated from new law codes.¹⁵

As icons of bourgeois domesticity, pets presented an ideal foil for revolutionary critiques of the old order, or cautionary tales about the corrupting potential of the past. In Abram Room's controversial film, *Bed and Sofa* (*Tre'tia meshchanskaia*, 1926), which dramatizes the story of a proletarian *ménage à trois*, a pet cat underscores the petty bourgeois banality of the apartment interior in which the protagonists' struggles for happiness unfold. Like the interior's overstuffed sofa (where the cat sometimes sleeps), the nice pottery (on which it is fed), and other bric-a-brac (including a ceramic cat statuette), the comfortable (*uiutnaia*) but useless cat represents the narrow, philistine concern with personal comfort and possessions, the hallmarks of the *meshchanstvo* so detested by the revolutionaries.¹⁶ In Maiakovskii's poems such as "On Trash" ("O drianii," 1920–1921) and "Give Us an Elligant [*sic*] Life" ("Daesh iziachnuui zhizn'," 1927) the connections between pets (especially cats and canaries), including their artificial likenesses, and the threat that banal, bad taste posed to the revolution are more explicit:

Quick

Twist off the heads of the canaries—

So that communism won't be beaten by canaries!¹⁷

While dogs were targeted less directly by these critiques, the hunger, disease, and social and economic turmoil of the civil war years, combined with the vitriolic denunciation of "parasitical" lap dogs (cited earlier), caused a precipitous decline in the number of canines kept as pets. For people who

did choose to keep a companion dog, the individual, sentimental pleasures of pet ownership that had validated the practice in the late imperial period gave way to a new ethos of utility.¹⁸ Evidence of this shift is found in dog care manuals published in the early Soviet period, many of which were reprints of prerevolutionary editions. The most popular, by Aleksandr Shenets, was already in its seventh edition when it was published in 1917.¹⁹ When a new edition came out in 1928, the text was essentially unaltered, but the title, which previously had highlighted the author's gentle training techniques for pets and hunting dogs, had been changed to *The Dog and its Service to Man*²⁰ (figure 6.1). Aside from purging the training manual of "foreign words," the most substantial revision to the book was the new cover, which featured a "postal dog" kitted out with saddle bags holding a neatly folded copy of *Pravda*.

Given the practical importance of dogs to various kinds of economic activity, the Soviet state quickly became involved with their propagation, training, and dissemination. Prerevolutionary hunting societies and other social organizations, such as breed clubs, reconfigured themselves in the Soviet period, with appropriate adjustments in their ideological orientation, and under the auspices of state regulation and sponsorship. Thus, a society for cultivating purebred dogs in Rostov on Don proclaimed that "individualistic beginnings should give way to the collective" and embraced making purebred dogs accessible to worker-hunters as its main task.²¹ In Leningrad, the Society for the Cultivation of Purebred Dogs also focused its efforts on producing hunting dogs, particularly hounds and setters, "for the common good."²² Other clubs were organized for the breeding and training of working dogs (*sluzhebnye sobaki*), usually under the auspices of "OSOAVIAKHIM," a union of societies supporting defense industries and military endeavors that was reconfigured as the voluntary society, "DOSAAF," in 1947.

By the eve of World War II, a new rationale for breeding and keeping dogs had congealed as the justification for a distinctively Socialist activity, different in orientation and objective from its prerevolutionary precursor. Soviet *sobakavodstvo* (literally, "dog husbandry") encompassed all aspects of the breeding and management of dogs for the benefit of socialist society. State kennels produced dogs to protect socialist property, guard flocks, herd livestock, and defend the country. At the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition of 1940, the achievements of Soviet *sobakavodstvo* were proudly displayed at a special pavilion featuring murals of South Russian Shepherds guarding sheep, Siberian Laikas pulling sleds, and Caucasian Shepherds patrolling the Soviet border.²³ The pavilion's exhibits boasted of the elevation of *sobakavodstvo*, from an "amateur passion" and "lordly amusement" in the prerevolutionary period to a scientific and valuable branch of socialist animal husbandry. Although it is clear that the practice of keeping pet dogs never died out completely, the main trajectory of official discourses about dogs in



Figure 6.1 “Postal Dog.” Cover Illustration from Andrei Fedorovich Shenets, *Dog and Its Service to Man* (Leningrad, 1928).

Stalin's time emphasized their productive value, rather than the personal and emotional rewards of pet ownership. As the brochure to the 1940 *sobakavodstvo* pavilion emphasized, "A dog is not an amusement, but the friend and helper of man at work."²⁴

"Members of the Family": Constructing Canine Fidelity and the Rewards of Postwar Dog Ownership

While Catriona Kelly has rightly located the rehabilitation of pets in the post-Stalin era, diffuse but unmistakable signs of this shift appeared in the first years after the war.²⁵ Ranging from the iconic to didactic, representations of pet dogs and cats in these years foreshadow the more complete embrace of pets as important components of the urban, everyday socialism which would take shape in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. For example, a photo of Lenin and Krupskaja in "a domestic setting" published in *Sovetskaia zhenshchina* in 1947 shows a contented cat sitting on the lap of the revolutionary leader famous for his asceticism and modest lifestyle.²⁶ Pets reappeared in artistic representations of domestic space as well, including Aleksandr Laktionov's famous, idealized depiction *Into the New Apartment* (1952) and Fedor Reshetnikov's more critical portrayal of Soviet childhood, *Low Marks Again* (1952). In Laktionov's picture, a beaming girl holds a healthy kitten while admiring the bright, parquet-floored interior of a neighbor's new abode. In *Low Marks Again*, the family dog jumps up to greet a dejected schoolboy, who avoids the disappointed gaze of his mother and siblings. Pets also began to appear in photographs of domestic interiors, such as "Concert for Friends" (figure 6.2) which shows a pig-tailed schoolgirl playing the piano for "Andreika, Marinka, and Ara." The latter two, a cat and a German Shepherd, listen attentively to the performance, along with Andreika the doll.²⁷ Together with the piano, throw rug, and large potted plant, which are the only other objects in the somewhat austere interior captured by the photograph, they symbolize the circumscribed embrace of material possessions sanctioned by High Stalinist notions of *kul'turnost* ("culturedness") and the promises of postwar reconstruction. The photograph's emphasis on Marinka and Ara also suggests that, like the nurturing and culturally elevating influences of dolls and piano lessons, pets might figure prominently in the ideals of Soviet childhood.

A journalist's claim in 1954 that "four legged pets" (*chetveronogie liubimtsy*) lived in "almost every house" might have been somewhat exaggerated, but by the time Stalin died, the main veterinary clinic in Moscow was providing free treatment to an eclectic assortment of 36,000 dogs, cats, rabbits, hedgehogs, squirrels, and various kinds of birds every year.²⁸ Talented canines such as "Sheriff," an order-loving Airedale Terrier who lived on Moscow's prestigious Gorky Street and played piano at clubs and movie



Figure 6.2 "Concert for Friends," *Sovetskaia zhenshchina*, no. 5 (1953), p. 17.

theaters, served as subjects for lavishly illustrated nonhuman interest stories in mass circulation journals.²⁹ These developments foreshadowed a more vigorous resurgence of pet keeping after Stalin's death that was informed *inter alia* by the unique patterns of consumption that emerged under Khrushchev, the cultivation of domestic spaces and private experience

associated with the regime's new emphasis on individual family housing, and what public health officials described as the general "increase in prosperity and improvements in cultural-everyday living conditions" for urban citizens.³⁰

One sign of the increasing acceptability and popularity of keeping pets was the publication in the late 1950s of the first pet-care manuals written since the revolution. Unlike the "scientific" and "applied" literature on dog breeding and training aimed at "specialists," brochures such as *Dogs and Cats in Everyday Life* (*Sobaki i koshki v bytu*), were intended for "animal lovers" (*liubiteli zhivotnykh*) who shared their living space with "man's friend," the dog, and even that "beautiful, clean, and affectionate . . . symbol of domestic comfort," the cat.³¹ Written by veterinarians and "dog experts" (*sobakavody*), these manuals continued to emphasize the concerns about hygiene and public health that had emerged in the 1920s. In order to avoid the dangers of rabies, worms, and other zoonotic diseases, owners were urged to get their pets vaccinated, keep them clean, and not allow them to lick people, especially on the face.³² Objections to the potential health risks dogs presented to human populations remained throughout the Soviet period, and fueled considerable alarm at certain moments. But from the late 1950s to the mid-1980s, discourses about pet dogs, whether in dog-care manuals, children's fiction, or journal and newspaper articles increasingly focused on the rewards, rather than the risks associated with keeping them.

Most of these rewards were to be found in the private sphere of emotions and personal experience.³³ Using metaphors of kinship and friendship to describe the bond between dog and owner, Soviet pet-keeping culture embraced the dog as a companion, "a member of the family," and an oracle of the natural world.³⁴ Dog owners' relationships with their pets replicated the affective bonds of familial and other personal relationships. At the same time, the canine-human friendship could be embraced as more genuine and less flawed by human weakness than the human-human variant. This was possible at least in part because dogs' mutable, plastic nature facilitated their owners' efforts to invest them with idealized versions of desirable "human" qualities. Indeed, as the title *Raise Yourself a Friend*, suggests, dog-care and training manuals depicted dogs as their owners' creations.³⁵ New owners were encouraged to make their new puppy into a "sweet, smart, little friend."³⁶ According to the head of the Murmansk dog club, "The master [*khoziain*], and only he, models the pup on what he wants to see in his dog. It is absolutely clear that one can raise and train a good dog out of a bad puppy, or ruin a good puppy."³⁷

Dogs' devotion to their masters and sensitivity to human feeling and need was asserted by evoking both allegedly "timeless" tropes of canine fidelity as well as more historically grounded Marxist-Leninist examples. Thus, dogs were hailed as "man's first and most faithful friend," and "the first of all animals to approach the fires of our prehistoric ancestors."³⁸

Valorization of the fidelity of the average dog to its owner drew on a mystique of canine loyalty and sacrifice, consisting of real and legendary examples of dogs that had endangered themselves to save their owners, or had perished from grief when their owners died.³⁹ The famous *sobakavod*, Boris Riabinin, referred those who doubted that dogs could display such “human” qualities as devotion and grief to the following section of Friedrich Engels, *The Dialectic of Nature*:

The dog and the horse, by association with man, have developed such a good ear for articulate speech that they easily learn to understand any language within the range of their circle of ideas. Moreover, they have acquired the capacity for feelings, such as affection for man, gratitude, etc., which were previously foreign to them.⁴⁰

Faithfulness, the quintessential characteristic of the dog, was actually an artifact of the domesticating process, a canine adaptation that mirrored a human quality. To underscore the mutually reinforcing nature of canine-human fidelity, Riabinin reminded readers that Lenin had been devoted to his hunting dog, attentively caring for it, and lavishing it with caresses.⁴¹

Aside from companionship and friendship, dogs also facilitated the moral development of their owners. For city dwellers, they were both a token of the “natural” world and a passport into it. Marking a dramatic shift from early Soviet attitudes, postwar pet-care manuals praised pets as representatives of the world of nature from which contemporary urban dwellers were so estranged, and identified the desire to have a dog or cat as “a natural manifestation of man’s love for animals.”⁴² Literary portrayals of dogs by authors ranging from Lev Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev to Anton Chekhov and Sergei Esenin were cited as evidence of humans’ “natural” attraction to dogs.⁴³ This “new” awareness drew on the burgeoning environmental sensibilities of the Soviet nature protection movement so ably documented by Douglas R. Weiner, as well as a more diffuse veneration of nature as a cleansing antidote to the artificiality of urban life common to any number of urban cultures from the nineteenth century onwards.⁴⁴

Changing attitudes about nature and animals were also incorporated into the more hegemonic rubric of “culturedness.” While cultured behavior previously had focused on the nuances of dress, physical possessions, comportment, and the consumption of high culture, proponents of pet keeping now urged that these “superficial” matters make way for more profound moral and spiritual qualities. Reading good books and listening to classical music was not sufficient, they argued, without embracing their fundamental moral lessons and elevating potential.⁴⁵ A genuinely cultured individual should be good and kind as well as polite and well read.

Pet ownership helped instill these qualities in children. The desire to have a pet was often characterized as a universal urge of childhood, the youthful manifestation of the “natural love of animals” discussed earlier.⁴⁶ For example, a photograph in *Okhota i okhotnich'e khoziaistvo* from 1970 depicted a curly-haired toddler astride a patiently panting Borzoi above the caption, “child and dog—this friendship is centuries old!”⁴⁷ (figure 6.3). Pet-keeping advocates urged parents to indulge their child’s longing for a pet, asserting that pets played an important role in the upbringing (*vospitanie*) of the young generation.⁴⁸ According to one dog-care manual, a child who has pets

does not grow up to be cruel or egotistical. He becomes used to taking care of a puppy or kitten, attending to it, feeding it, and having certain defined responsibilities. The play and kindness of the puppy awakens a corresponding kindness and softness in the child.⁴⁹

Learning to treat pet animals kindly also figured prominently in broader discussions about the correct socialization of boys, and the link between cruelty to animals and violent behavior toward other people.⁵⁰

While the importance of pets in childrearing and the personal gratification of the faithful companion had been central tropes of pet keeping in the West since the nineteenth century, the utilitarian ethos of the early Soviet period also continued to influence the status of pet dogs into the Brezhnev era and beyond. Echoes of the rigidly practical and economic motivations informing prewar *sobakavodstvo* were heard in postwar pet-keeping culture, which privileged purebred dogs over mongrels, and stressed the allegedly useful and functional qualities of particular dogs (as protectors, hunters, retrievers, etc.). Although a pet is by definition useless, the popularity of certain kinds of purebred dogs derived, at least in part, from their historical service to human society. The cost of purebred dogs was regulated by broader anxieties about the corrupting potential of petty-bourgeois property instincts, but dog owners, especially hunters, did consider their dogs as personal property (*lichnaia sobstvennost'*) that was protected under Article 10 of the 1936 Constitution.⁵¹

Given the crowded conditions of apartment living, it would seem that small dogs would have been the pet of choice. Lap dogs, the much maligned companions of the parasitical prerevolutionary elite, did make a cautious comeback, with the formation of a club organization specially dedicated to their propagation and care, but they remained rare and expensive.⁵² Acknowledging that even pet dogs were supposed to be useful, at least in theory, helps (but does not fully) explain the preference of city apartment dwellers for large, even massive dogs such as East European (German) Shepherds (used extensively by the military in World War II), Great Danes



Figure 6.3 “Child and Dog—this Friendship is Centuries Old!” *Okhota i Okhotnich’e Khoziaistvo*, no. 6 (1970), p. 26.

(formidable guard dogs), and Saint Bernards (legendary rescuers of stranded travelers), despite the inconvenience and expense that keeping such animals entailed.⁵³ Of course, these dogs sometimes served double duty as pets and protectors of their owners’ homes and families, but their appeal was also partly semiotic. They were status symbols, comparable in some ways to the orange lampshades that had represented the material and spiritual aspirations of postwar society.⁵⁴ Also like the lampshades of High Stalinist *kul’turnost’*, the quasi-utilitarian undercurrent of postwar pet keeping had more than one idiosyncratic wrinkle: it validated the popularity of the elegant Standard Poodle (technically a hunting dog) as the prestige pet of choice for art students in the 1970s.

Heroes, Patriots, and Strays: The Public Face of the Private Pet

If dogs’ theoretical or historical usefulness reinforced their status as pets, their ongoing service to the Soviet state made that status more contingent

on official discourses and made private relationships between pet dogs and people more transparent. As the following quote from a Brezhnev-era dog book suggests, pet dogs should be seen as the private counterparts of the many “public” dogs who helped guard the country, catch criminals, and protect livestock:

[I]t is not just highly emotional feelings that attract us to dogs, although these are extremely important. There are also more tangible, completely materialist reasons. The overwhelming majority of our faithful friends are zealous toilers, selflessly carrying out their labor, some of them on combat watch in the most far-flung corners of our immense country.⁵⁵

Like human Soviet citizens then, dogs were workers and patriots. The celebrity of individual dogs and the contributions of dogs to military endeavors and Soviet science validated the status and reinforced perceptions of the ideal pet. Dogs’ service during the war as messengers and bomb detectors, as well as in first aid and search and rescue was particularly important, serving as a starting point for many postwar commentaries on the place of dogs in contemporary urban life.⁵⁶ This peculiar form of canine renown recognized the military achievements of the anonymous cohorts of dogs bred in state kennels, as well as those trained by social organizations such as the Moscow Working Dog Kennel Club,⁵⁷ which sent more than 6,000 dogs to the front. It especially celebrated the work of individual dogs, such as “Dick,” a collie that helped disarm thousands of mines, was wounded three times, and buried with “military honors,” as brave, heroic, and invaluable in saving human life.⁵⁸

Ironically, the heroism of the canine veterans was grounded both in their contribution to the decidedly human enterprise of the Soviet war effort and the fact that the dogs’ nonhuman status and distinctively canine qualities made these contributions possible: they were used as mine detectors and messengers because they had physical attributes humans lacked (such as a keen sense of smell), at the same time they were deployed in missions deemed too dangerous for people (such as taking medical supplies or communication equipment to besieged troops). This appreciation of canine achievement precisely for its incalculable service to human causes was even more pronounced in the commemoration of dogs’ role in the development of Soviet science and the space race. The centrality of dogs to Pavlov’s research on conditional reflexes, the nervous system, and digestion, was widely known and celebrated. A monument outside of the Institute of Experimental Medicine commemorated the nameless laboratory dogs who had served as the great scientist’s research subjects, while dog-care books invariably cited this canine “service” to humanity as evidence of dogs’

unique value and utility.⁵⁹ These sources also emphasized the invaluable contribution of canine cosmonauts such as “Laika,” the mixed breed dog that became the first living being to orbit the earth, to the Soviets’ successful efforts to send human beings into space.⁶⁰ The fact that Laika was knowingly sent to her death (because Sputnik II had not been engineered to withstand the environmental stresses of reentry into the earth’s atmosphere) only enhanced her fame and resonance as a symbol of human achievement. Indeed her image peers in at the corner of the monument to fallen cosmonauts at the Institute for Aviation and Space Medicine near Moscow.⁶¹ The quintessentially Russian concept of the *podvig*, usually translated as “feat,” but carrying strong connotations of extraordinary courage and self-sacrifice as well, was not confined to human endeavor.⁶² Even dog stories for children described the exploits of dogs that scaled the peaks of the Caucasus, hunted down vicious wolves, and captured notorious criminals as *podvigi*—distinctly canine and beyond human feats.⁶³ The personal loyalty and devotion of the family dog mirrored and was reinforced by official canine heroism and sacrifice for the greater Soviet cause.

As had been true since the early Soviet period, the official “dog fancy” and the kennel club system retained a prominent role into the Brezhnev era. Some organizations, such as the working dog clubs affiliated with DOSAAF, served as fairly transparent intermediaries between the private sphere of pet “ownership” and the production of dogs bred and trained for use by the military and other state agencies. Depending on the kind of dog they wanted, people seeking a pet turned to a club for working, hunting, or lap dogs. These organizations controlled the breeding and disposition of purebred dogs by maintaining breed registries and enforcing breed standards. Kennel clubs also sponsored the dog shows and field trials that provided an increasingly popular recreational opportunity for animal lovers of all stripes.⁶⁴ They promoted responsible dog ownership through their publications on dog care and training, and offered the expert advice of the *sobakavod* to “amateur” pet lovers. People seeking a less formal relationship and willing to take in an animal of more dubious ancestry turned to the murky networks and economically “grey” world of Moscow’s Bird Market (*ptichii rynok*), where villagers assembled on weekends to sell an array of pet animals, including puppies and dogs.

While charting the growth of the postwar pet dog population with any precision is difficult, it is clear that by the early 1970’s, the number of dogs living in city apartments had risen dramatically. Since municipal ordinances forbid keeping dogs in communal apartments, the rise in the pet population followed the increased availability of single-family apartments. On the one hand, the 60,000 dogs registered with Moscow municipal authorities in 1972 represented a fairly modest number for a city with a population

of more than 7 million.⁶⁵ On the other hand, a seasoned nature writer's observation that no fewer than 76 dogs took their daily exercise on the vacant lot next to his apartment building where twenty years ago there had only been 2, suggests that pet dogs had become a much more visible component of urban life.⁶⁶

Along with their rising numbers and heightened visibility came increased apprehensions about dogs and their relationships with people. Some of these anxieties were directed at dogs themselves. Perspectives on sanitation and public health dating back to the early Soviet period resurfaced to stigmatize dogs as sources of dirt and infection that transmitted intestinal parasites, toxoplasmosis, mange, and rabies to human populations.⁶⁷ While the kennel clubs and other proponents of dog ownership rightly insisted that proper grooming and veterinary care eliminated the risks of infection, dogs that bit people presented a more serious problem. Indeed there were nearly 10,000 dog bites reported in Moscow alone in 1974, and the number of people requiring the painful rabies vaccine series increased as much as 24 percent annually in this period.⁶⁸ Although pet dogs accounted for more than two-thirds of the bite cases, the growing numbers of stray dogs were widely seen as the main culprits in this and other canine-related problems.

Dog experts, such as the senior cynologist at the Ministry of Agriculture, identified stray dogs as "dirty, bitter beings" that threatened the health and safety of humans and other domestic animals.⁶⁹ They blamed human behavior for the stray dog problem, citing increasing incidents of the "disposable pet" syndrome, wherein parents took in a puppy for their child's amusement, only to abandon it when it grew too large, became unruly, or the child lost interest in it. Irresponsible dog owners, who failed to register their dogs and keep them leashed, also contributed to the problem, as did those who bred their dogs outside the official supervision of the kennel club system. "Heartsick animal lovers" who fed or sheltered homeless dogs, or who kept mongrels as pets, also came under fire from officials who agreed that although pitiful, stray dogs had to be destroyed.⁷⁰

In 1970, officials from the Main Veterinary Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture called for a comprehensive set of regulations to deal with these problems.⁷¹ At the direction of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR, new rules for keeping dogs and cats were formulated for Moscow and presented as "All-Union" guidelines in 1972.⁷² Sanitary and prophylactic concerns dominated the new rules, which required dog owners to vaccinate their animals and register them with local veterinary authorities annually. A registration badge securely fastened to the dog's collar signaled compliance with this order. Except in designated "dog parks," dogs were to be leashed and muzzled whenever they were outside their owner's apartment. Dogs

running at large were subject to capture, and could be put to death if their owners failed to claim them and pay the appropriate fines within five days.

In fact, this last procedure was rarely followed. Instead, local authorities authorized the periodic shooting of homeless and unsupervised dogs, which was easier and cheaper than rounding them up and keeping them alive for a few days. While kennel clubs, public health officials, and representatives from various organizations affiliated with the All-Russian Society of Nature Protection had welcomed the new rules on keeping dogs, at least in theory, shooting dogs in populated areas evoked outrage from citizens who pleaded for help: "Here in our village in Inozemtsevo Krai they shot dogs during the white nights right in front of everyone. They threw dead and wounded dogs in a box on a cart. And children saw all of this. Surely not everyone can bear such brutality," wrote an impassioned subscriber to the journal *Okhota i okhotnich'e khoziaistvo* in 1970.⁷³ To make matters worse, these campaigns often targeted dogs that were not strays: "The dog was on a chain in a little shed. One of the shooters came to the shed, pushed past my wife, and killed the dog," complained an indignant dog owner.⁷⁴ Incidents such as these were reported in Vladimir, Iaroslavl, Iakutiia, and Moscow, where a 1963 Supreme Soviet decree forbidding shooting in populated areas was ignored as well as the Ministry of Agriculture's guidelines for preventing rabies and the new regulations on keeping dogs.⁷⁵ Aside from the obvious danger of such techniques to the physical well-being of passersby, concern about the psychological effects of officially sanctioned violence on children was widespread. Kennel club officials, dog experts, and psychiatrists all agreed that shooting "man's best friend" in front of children did enormous harm to their moral development.⁷⁶ They argued that such spectacles traumatized children, taught them to be cruel to animals, and inclined them to acts of violence against people as well. If treating animals humanely was an essential lesson of childhood, then how society dealt with animals in public spaces was as important as how a child handled a pet in private.

Conclusions

Concerns about shooting stray dogs formed just one strand of broader discussions that developed in these years over the significance of cruelty to animals and the "cultural growth" of the Soviet population. While hunting societies and kennel clubs contested the legality and morality of shooting dogs to local soviets and courts, leaders of the Conservation Section of the Moscow Society of Naturalists, and the Section for Animal Protection began to lobby for legal protections for animals and penalties for those who abused them.⁷⁷ As Douglas R. Weiner has noted, the psychiatrist Ksenia Semenova's concerns about the treatment of laboratory animals and the

environmental movement's investigation of the origins of human cruelty and sadism marked an important milestone in exploring the "the forbidden territory of common behaviors and cultural patterns in Soviet society."⁷⁸ Linking the moral welfare of children as individuals and of society as a whole to the humane treatment of animals also represented the revival of prerevolutionary and Western discourses on this theme. In the era of fully developed socialism, the treatment of the private pet and public stray had become matters of common concern.

Still, it may be tempting to confine the paradoxes of Soviet pet keeping to the more fundamental contradictions of Soviet consumerism and peculiarities of urban modernity. In an insightful study of dog ownership in the post-Soviet period, Adele Barker asserted that keeping dogs in cramped urban apartments enabled Soviet animal lovers to mock the system and domesticate state-owned spaces.⁷⁹ But beyond the obvious ironies of big dogs in small apartments and the reappropriation of bourgeois pet-keeping practices in socialist society, pet dogs epitomized more profound relational tensions as well. Certainly the dog, which served as intimate friend and domestic companion, moving effortlessly between the private preserve of the high-rise apartment, the natural refuge of the forest, and the more public arenas of the city street, the dog show, and the space race, embodied the tensions implicit in a culture that promoted the private and the domestic at the same time it stressed collectivism and transparency between individuals and the official realm. Just as the stray dog "Sharik" allowed Dr. Preobrazhensky to explore but not overcome human depravity in Bulgakov's dystopic masterpiece, *Heart of a Dog*, the Soviet pet dog provided its urban owner with a relationship that enabled her/him to investigate if not resolve the contradictions of individualism and personal fulfillment in the collectivist context of Soviet socialism. The Soviet dog's place by the figurative hearth was secured not only by its function as a memento of the outside world (to use Berger's formulation) in a peculiarly Soviet brand of urban consumerism, but by the way it helped define and enrich the human condition of its owners.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MEANING OF HOME: "THE
ONLY BIT OF THE WORLD
YOU CAN HAVE TO YOURSELF"

Susan E. Reid

When *Izvestiia* introduced its new "home and family" page in July 1959, the editors set out from the start what the Soviet attitude to home and family was *not*: it was not the bourgeois conception of the sanctity of family bonds, as expressed in the aphorism "my home is my castle." In the *Communist Manifesto*, they reminded readers, Marx and Engels had exposed the bourgeois ideal of the private sphere as a smokescreen that propped up the capitalist system. By giving the oppressed worker respite, it made him oblivious to his fundamental state of alienation. But "only socialism, by removing from human relations everything that is dirty and mercenary, born of centuries of private-property piggery, brings purity, contentment and happiness to the family of the worker."¹

This chapter seeks the "elusive Soviet private sphere" in the domestic realm: specifically, in the apartment built for single-family occupancy in the Khrushchev era, and in practices of inhabiting and decorating it (figure 7.1). Home is commonly identified as *the* private sphere par excellence. A British observer of Soviet life, Wright Miller, noted in 1959 that "during the worst years [presumably under Stalin] many spoke of family life as 'the only bit of the world you can have to yourself.'"² But both the role of home and family in the future communist society, and their status as a "private" sphere were far from uncontentious in the Soviet Union of the 1950s and 1960s, as *Izvestiia's* own pages reflected. The Khrushchev era was characterized by contradiction, and its treatment of domestic "private life" was no exception. *Izvestiia's* attention to the home and simultaneous denial of its sanctity and seclusion reflects the paradox that the Khrushchev regime's mass housing campaign, launched in 1957 on the basis of industrial principles of standard



Figure 7.1 Khrushchev-era mass housing, Leningrad c. 1960. Photograph: Ekaterina Gerasimiva supported by the Leverhulme Trust.

plans and factory prefabrication of standard modules, made the nuclear family the normative household and primary unit of society, even as it pushed in other respects for collectivism.

The need for privacy, in the sense of a retreat from anonymous company and unsolicited exposure, was also increasingly recognized as a legitimate one in modern, urban society, even under socialism. Even Stanislav Strumilin, that inveterate utopian visionary of the collectivist future, acknowledged the following in 1960: "The working person needs peaceful rest without outsiders, in one's own family or even completely alone. It is good to be alone without disturbance, when you are thinking about something deeply or engrossed in interesting creative work. . . . every worker longs to have a separate room, and the family to have an isolated apartment even if it is small."³ By 1967, sociologists could state that "the abundance of information and human contact the contemporary city thrusts on people arouses psychic exhaustion and emotional tension. . . . Therefore, the person seeks separation and isolation from contacts in order to alleviate psychological tiredness. The dwelling must, then, become a place of psychological rest."⁴

On the other hand—in line with the reinvigoration of Marxist ideological first principles, the renewed emphasis on participatory government and collectivism, and the commitment to enabling women's full participation in public life—hostility was resumed toward such institutions as the family and domesticity. With the imminent transition to full communism, the separation of the private from the public—which Marx and Engels had shown to be the original sin from which the division of labor and alienation ensued—would disappear, and the individual would recognize that his or her interests were identical with those of the collective.⁵ For Strumilin, even as he admitted that opportunities for seclusion were a necessity in modern urban life, the goal was total liberation from the fetters of individuality. With the transition to communism everyone would voluntarily become submerged in the "all-embracing social fabric of the community. There *will be* privacy but the *meaningless choice of privacy* is insignificant when contrasted with the choice of individual fulfillment through participation within the group."⁶

Domestic, everyday life was not to be closeted away from public life and collective concerns, but part of a continuum: the boundaries were supposed to be transparent and permeable. *Izvestiia's* "home and family" page expressed this ideal relationship: "In a drop of water the sun is reflected, in the life of the family the whole structure of the country's social life."⁷ I have argued elsewhere that, far from falling outside the purview of public discourse, home was a central site for the linked projects of the party-state: modernization and advanced construction of communism.⁸ As Khrushchev told the Twenty-First Party Congress in January 1959: "It is necessary not

only to provide people with good housing, but also to teach them to . . . live correctly, to observe the laws of socialist communality [*obshchezhitiiia*]. This will not come of its own accord but is to be achieved through protracted, stubborn struggle for the triumph of the new, communist way of life.”⁹ *Izvestiia*’s introduction of a “home and family” rubric was symptomatic of the intense concern, in this period, with defining modern, socialist domesticity and its relation to the common cause. Ideologues, planners, and other specialists were preoccupied not only with providing the masses with homes, but also with the minutiae of how they should furnish and dwell in them. Thus the housing construction campaign of the late 1950s was accompanied by a barrage of advice promoting modernist norms of rational living and good taste in the form of the “contemporary style.”¹⁰ As the journal *Tekhnicheskaiia estetika* (Technical Aesthetics) noted in 1964, in conditions where nearly 100 million people had moved into new homes in the past 10 years, “The creation of the interior of the contemporary urban apartment has become one of the most important all-state [*obshchegosudarstvennykh*] problems.”¹¹

Home was one of the building sites of the “communist way of life,” and becoming the new Soviet person began there. But could home also be a site for production of personal meaning? Privacy, I want to argue, was far from a “meaningless choice” as Strumilin put it. Nor was it a given, automatically arising out of the provision of separate apartments; it had to be produced, claimed, wrested. These contradictions were fought out in the discourse and practice of homemaking in the new flats, in which, given that the home was still conventionally gendered as a female domain, women were construed as the main protagonists.

It hardly need be reiterated in the present context that the concepts “private” and “privacy” are problematic ones, especially in regard to Soviet Russia.¹² Both the fundamental axes, in terms of which, according to Jeff Weintraub’s useful distinction, “private” can be contrasted with “public”—visibility and collectivity—are pertinent to a consideration of the nature and limits of privacy in the modern Soviet home.¹³ But perhaps more important than the presence or lack of these conditions is the possibility of agency and the ability to exercise control over either boundary with the “public.”¹⁴ Thus, privacy is constituted not by concealment or solitude per se, but by discretion over disclosure of information about oneself, the right to make decisions, to promulgate rules of action, to dispose over resources and space, and to choose association with others.¹⁵

The domestic and everyday are commonly regarded as “the part of life you have most control over.”¹⁶ By comparison with the cramped barracks and *kommunalki* (communal apartments) in which most people lived, the provision of separate apartments, beginning in the late 1950s, surely gave

unprecedented opportunities for privacy along both Weintraub's axes.¹⁷ Control over space could be realized at the most elementary level of privacy. Aleksei Adzhubei, Khrushchev's son-in-law, recalls how in 1956 he and his wife attended a housewarming in a new five-storey block of flats. Cutting the ceremonial ribbon strung across the bathroom-toilet doorway, their host announced: "For the first time in 40 years I have received the opportunity to use the conveniences of this establishment without waiting to hear the sorely-tried howl of my neighbour, 'what's up in there, gone to sleep?'"¹⁸ For Vladimir Shlapentokh the new housing was partly responsible for social shifts he designates the "privatization" of life, which came to fruition in the Brezhnev era.¹⁹ A similar conclusion was reached by Soviet social scientists on the basis of a survey on the "problem of organization of the domestic interior," conducted in a cooperative apartment building in Moscow's prestigious new South West region in early 1968, just over a year after residents had moved into the new building in autumn 1966. The survey found that "for a number of social reasons the attitude toward the individual [*lichnosti*], to personal life [*lichnoi zhizni*], to problems of family and leisure, has received new emphasis."²⁰

Forces for "privatization"—for modern, home-centred, urban lifestyles based on the nuclear family—also included the gradual increase of television airtime and ownership of TV sets (Significantly, much early programming concerned the experience of moving into the new apartment and advice on how to make it home.).²¹

Let us look first at a somewhat romanticized and essentialist—indeed, bourgeois—account of privacy in the Soviet home. We then analyze some limits on "privacy" and autonomy even within the one-family flat. Finally, I outline some directions for research concerning the diverse material practices and strategies through which, in spite of the home's imbrication in the public realm, boundaries were maintained and home was appropriated—or "privatized"—and rendered a site of *lichnaia zhizn'* (private life) of personal meaning and memory. I want to suggest that popular everyday practices produced a sense of privacy, which, however contingent and illusory—Marx's "smokescreen" perhaps—nonetheless merits our consideration.²²

The Myth of Privacy

A commonplace of Western and émigré representations of the Soviet Russian home during the long cold war was the warm, hospitable, unchanging, and essentially feminine hearth. Writing about Soviet Russian women in the 1980s, Francine du Plessix Gray refers to an apparently timeless "national tradition of *uiutnost'*—coziness." The term "*uiut*," which is central to definitions of a "real home," is defined by her as the "Slavic talent for creating a

tender environment even in dire poverty and with the most modest means.” “Moscow’s other havens,” she writes,

were and remain the homes of friends; [t]hose padded, intimate interiors whose snug warmth is all the more comforting after the raw bleakness of the nation’s public spaces; those tiny flats, steeped in the odor of dust and refried *kasha*, in which every gram of precious space is filled, every scrap of matter—icons, crucifixes, ancient wooden dolls, unmatched teacups preserved since before the Revolution—is stored and gathered against the loss of memory.²³

In Gray’s elegiac account, the home’s womb-like embrace is defined by explicit antithesis to an inhospitable, inhuman public sphere. A cocoon of material things contains and shields the inhabitant from visibility, ideological intrusion, and scientific and industrial progress. Privacy is identified with confined and congested space, with authentic, elective human relations materialized in teacups and *uiut*, and with a sediment of clutter and dust that maintains home as a site of personal memory insulated from the forces of Soviet modernity.

Just such a conception of a private realm was denigrated in the Khrushchev era by publicists seeking to delimit the proper, socialist attitude to the new apartments from the bourgeois “home-is-my-castle” mentality. Boris Brodskii, writing in *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo*, condemned the idea of home “as an island where one could build one’s personal [*lichnyi*] life ‘as I like.’” He and other taste professionals firmly identified this residual “petit-bourgeois” conception of privacy with a particular treatment of domestic space and residue of clutter: ornate furniture, embroidered tablecloths and antimacassars, and silk lampshades. These trappings of “private life” not only failed to cement relations between people, he argued, but, as fetishes, alienated them.²⁴ Widespread efforts to purge them from people’s homes were part of a restoration of modernist aesthetics and resumption of the campaign for *novyi byt* (new lifestyle) by taste professionals after Stalin. Their laundry list of bad taste was largely the same as in the 1920s, suggesting that tablecloths, napkins, and silk lampshades had continued in popular practice to represent *uiut*, family identity, and the skills of a good, female homemaker. Indeed, they had been reinstated since the 1930s as signs of virtue, as Vera Dunham showed long ago. In late Stalinist narratives and visual representations they were also associated with the creation of a “private” or personalized space even within the most communal living conditions.²⁵

For Brodskii and other modernizing taste reformers, the private realm Gray celebrates was the stuff of nightmares. Those prerevolutionary teacups and ancient wooden dolls were the monsters brought forth by the Sleep of Reason. In just such an interior he might dream himself menaced by the jellyfish tentacles of silk lampshades, and losing consciousness in the suffocating embrace of bourgeois cushions.

What was needed was to fight for the liberation of man—and more particularly, given the conventional gendering of this discourse, woman—from the bondage of things and to foster social/public forms of *byt*. This was a matter of domestic aesthetics: the contemporary interior must be fitted to assist the process of opening everyday life up into the public sphere (figure 7.2). Brodskii called to battle against the “cult of acquisitions” and



Figure 7.2 Model interior in the “contemporary style.” O. Baiar and R. Blashkevich, *Kvartira i ee ubrantsvo* (Moscow: Stroiizdat, 1962).

“the striving at any cost to build a nest,” in order to make the boundary between public and private transparent and shift the center of gravity of everyday life out of the room or flat and into the public sphere.²⁶

Brodskii assumes a direct, seemingly causal link between possessions and a home-centered mentality, segregated from the public sphere. Things, or at least things of a particular quantity, kind, and style, chain people—especially women—to the home and inhibit engagement with public life. Thus, a certain aesthetic of home furnishing is identified with the problem of a bourgeois private sphere, which continued as a holdover even under Soviet conditions. Its aesthetics of confinement and *horror vacui* is challenged by one of liberation and transparency. This suggests that in our search for the “elusive private sphere” it is worth looking at just those styles of interior decorating, and the specific material deployed in them, which taste reformers like Brodskii identified with philistine fetishism.

The *Un-Private* Flat

Kharkhordin’s “Grid of Surveillance”

In considering the candidacy of the Khrushchev era family apartment to represent the “elusive Soviet private sphere” we have to take account of a strong argument according to which, in Victor Buchli’s terms, the Thaw “should not be seen as a liberalisation of attitudes towards the domestic realm but quite the contrary. It was . . . a period of intense state and Party engagement with the terms of domestic life, one that was highly rationalised and disciplined.”²⁷ Similarly, Oleg Kharkhordin proposes that the post-Stalin era, far from being a period of increased privacy (in the sense of Weintraub’s visibility/concealment axis) was one of systematic monitoring of people’s everyday lives by the public gaze: “1957 marked the final achievement of the Stalinist goal: a fine-tuned and balanced system of total surveillance.”²⁸

The thesis is a compelling one; it is certainly necessary to note the contradictions of the Khrushchev era and the limits of its “liberalization.” As I have already indicated, although one could now close the front door of one’s apartment on the world, what one did behind it was still a matter of public concern, right down to the ornaments one arranged on the cabinet. Indeed, in Soviet terms there was nothing shameful about attempting to intervene in the terms of everyday life. It was a legitimate part of the effort to build communism. And there are many innovations of the Khrushchev era that might support Kharkhordin’s “grid of surveillance,” some of which I discuss later.²⁹

However, we should remember that the total embrace of the state, leaving no space outside its purview, was a commonplace of anticommunist

rhetoric and scholarship of the totalitarian school. For example, Erich Goldhagen wrote in *Problems of Communism* in 1960:

It is endemic to a totalitarian regime that it insist on integrating *res privata* into *res publica*. In this respect, the similarity between communism and fascism is striking. "In National Socialism," one Nazi official proclaimed, "there is no such thing as a private individual." . . . [T]he private domain must be transformed into the public domain—controlled, supervised, and dominated by the Communist Party.³⁰

The image of a seamless and ubiquitous system of surveillance fails to take account of how, in the Khrushchev era, rational schemes often foundered on the competing interests and visions of the individuals and agencies who had to implement them. In the home the authorities (themselves far from unitary) had to rely to a large extent on household members—"private" individuals—to put their prescriptions into practice, a process in which there was always room for slippage and negotiation.³¹ How far was the universal penetration of the state in fact achieved? As Deborah Field has noted with regard to a related public/private interface—parenting—Kharkhordin's provocative assertion, relying on official party statements and speeches, "ignores the extremely variable ways in which people implemented and responded to official visions."³² Moreover, the efforts invested in justifying interventions in "private life" imply that their legitimacy was not beyond question.³³

In what follows I first examine the contingency of any notional privacy in the *khrushchevka* (Khrushchev-era apartment). I outline just some of the ways—in addition to regimes of taste already discussed—in which the home, despite its isolating walls and (often) padded front door was *not* a segregated, private matter but shaped by, and subject to, "public" interests and permeated by public values. Kharkhordin, emphasizing regimes of sight/surveillance, makes his case against the existence of privacy in the Khrushchev era on the basis of the transparency/concealment axis of the public-private dichotomy. I focus, rather, on the collective/individual axis and in particular on the binary oppositions common/particular or collective/singular. I then try to develop a counterargument to redeem autonomy, agency, and something like "privacy" for life in the home, while seeking to avoid lapsing back into the essentialism and ahistoricism of du Plessix Gray.

State Ownership of the Means of Production of Domesticity

The *khrushchevka* was clearly not "private" in the sense of being privately designed, built, or owned. The role of public agencies in the ownership of

housing was increasing in the 1950s, and the state had a virtual monopoly over urban housing construction as small, self-built, wooden houses were torn down to make way for prefabricated apartment blocks.³⁴ The state gave Soviet citizens their housing for lifelong use. But this did not constitute ownership of private property, because it did not confer legal rights of disposition—to sell it, or pass it down to children in a will.³⁵ The only control occupants had over what happened to their living space was over the decoration, moveable furniture, and the state of cleanliness and repair of the interior.³⁶

The press and early TV programs in the Khrushchev era sought to establish the correct relationship tenants should have toward their state-loaned dwellings, and thence to their provider, in terms of the contingent proprietorship implied by the term "*khoziain*."³⁷ As distinct from a *vladelets* (owner) whose relationship to property would be *vladetel'nyi*—sovereign—the *khoziain/khoziaika* was a caretaker or (house)keeper, responsible for the *khoziaistvennost'* (management) and upkeep on behalf of the owner the state (or its agents).

The magazine for women workers, *Rabotnitsa*, printed a letter from "outraged of Kolomna": two female house wardens, complaining about residents who, having received the gift from the state of an "excellent apartment, bright, spacious, with all conveniences," had reduced it to an uninhabitable condition: "dirt everywhere, internal glass doors broken, layers of dust on the walls, cobwebs, damp in the bathroom." Others had let their apartment go so far that it was no longer fit for human habitation.³⁸ The journalist drew the larger moral: "Our state confers on its citizens homes to live in for life: live in it and make use of all the conveniences," even taking over two-thirds of the running costs upon itself. "It is in the highest degree ungrateful, having accepted such invaluable services, to pay for them with *beskhoziaistvennost'* (mismanagement) and negligence."³⁹ Full names and addresses of the culprits were supplied.

If lifetime use did not constitute the rights of ownership, then it did imply duties. Housing was a gift of the state. And since all gifts impose reciprocal obligations, so generous a gift as a new, well-appointed flat for a single family must incur a deep debt of gratitude from that family. Housing established a reciprocal (but asymmetrical) relationship between households and the state as benevolent provider.⁴⁰ The real (*nastoiashchii*) *khoziain/khoziaika* voluntarily kept not only his/her own apartment but also the common space, such as staircase and entrance, in order. *Rabotnitsa* applauded voluntary initiatives such as repair brigades and the work of *obshchestvennitsy* as public activity and a contribution to the common weal that began in the immediate environment of one's home. It called on all women to become housewives of the state's property: "Let us, women, fight together for exemplary order in our houses, declare war on slovenliness and carelessness!"⁴¹

Since homes were the state's property and gift, it had a right to take an interest in how they were used and maintained. Acting on its behalf were people like the "outraged of Kolomna" who "voluntarily" took responsibility for monitoring standards of cleanliness and décor inside as well as around people's flats. They were probably members of the house committee or *domkom*, an institution reinvigorated in the Khrushchev era, which, along with other forms of citizen self-policing such as vigilantes and comrades courts, allow Buchli and Kharkhordin's case to be made for the establishment of mutual surveillance.⁴²

Nevertheless, *Rabotnitsa* lamented, people responded variously to the state's gift, and not everyone understood the slogan "Residents—*khoziaeva doma*" correctly. " 'In my own apartment I can behave as I want to' one type of resident loves to cry, beating his chest with his fists. This idea of 'as I choose' is the sum total of his concept of the role of being *khoziain*. He doesn't pick up a hammer to fix a window frame, or check the wires when the lights fail in the common hallway."

To abuse the gift of housing through failure to observe norms of hygiene, décor, and repair was to show contempt of the state. By reducing public housing to an uninhabitable condition such that the proprietor-state or its agents could not even redistribute it to a more deserving tenant, delinquent tenants removed it from circulation—consumed it. Thus they arrogated the right of disposal which they did not legally possess—a form of theft or sequestering of public property.

Material Interventions: "Standard Individual Living"

Before the *domkom* could even knock on the door, before taste police and efficiency tsars could have any impact on the interior furnishing—indeed, before the family even moved in—structures were set in place that determined, predisposed, or placed strict constraints on how they could configure and dwell in their home. The plan and fabric of the one-family flat, as well as the manufactured furnishings and equipment to go in it, were the product of the state, centrally planned economy and infrastructure, and were shaped by its priorities, as well as by its shortcomings and contradictions.

In the interests of economical and efficient industrial mass production, every major component in the home from the late 1950s was subject to standardization according to a limited repertoire of set types. To provide housing and consumer goods on a mass scale, the use of mechanized, industrial production methods was prioritized. Strongly promoted by Khrushchev since 1954, standardization of both plans and construction components was a necessary condition and corollary of factory prefabrication of panels for housing construction and mass, conveyer belt production of

consumer goods.⁴³ Given the state's virtual monopoly over urban housing construction, budget allocations and standards, the material culture of millions of people's domestic lives was shaped by "public" agents, state standards agencies, accredited experts, and industrial processes beyond their control.

"Standardization and uniformity in house form," as a recent anthropological study of "House Life" puts it, "tends to homogenize . . . domestic settings," and, with them, domestic behaviors and values.⁴⁴ Even as they provided apparently "private" spaces for individual families, the *khrushchevki* were also "an instrument of regimentation of life."⁴⁵ The new flats, designed on principles of industrial, technological construction, rational planning, and standardization, were expected to produce correspondingly modern, rational, and common ways of living.⁴⁶ They would achieve this not by shunting people together at close quarters, as in the communal apartment and experimental house communes of the past, but by providing them with a common material structure. As leading theoretician of the new discipline of Technical Aesthetics Karl Kantor put it (concerned to promote the role and status of the designer in Soviet society): "In shaping the objective environment, industrial art shapes life processes themselves."⁴⁷ For, it was axiomatic: "the Interior Organizes Life!"⁴⁸ There was a limited number of standard plans, and limited ways in which one could fit one's life and its accoutrements into that space. Even if people could now close the door on the common realm their homes had much in common.

Housing, according to the editors of *House Life*, is "potentially one of the most invasive agents of Western hegemony" because the physical form of housing "can influence domestic behaviors and values as well as express them."⁴⁹ Moving into their new environment, shaped as it was by the dictates of modern, socialist, industrial mass construction, people were expected to slough off the last traces of the past, both materially and mentally. Thus the new housing, given its mass scale, provided, literally, the premises for the advent of the new, communist society.

The pervasive, multifaceted effort to keep the separate apartment within the public domain and shape people's everyday lives was nothing new; it resumed the Bolshevik project of the 1920s, at which time architectural theorists such as the Constructivist Aleksei Gan had vigorously argued the potential of built form to be an agent of social change through the structure into which it organized space and material.⁵⁰ Nor was faith in the regulatory potential of housing the unique preserve of Soviet planners; the invasive role of architects and other specialists in defining people's everyday lives was part of the modernist project in general, which sought to shunt the messiness of people's lives into a hygienic, rational, manageable, and visible order.⁵¹ The paradoxically public nature of late Soviet privacy is part of the wider paradox of modernity.⁵² Thus, the forces for "privatization" of everyday life,

which Shlapentokh identified with phenomena originating in the Khrushchev period—separate apartments and increased car ownership, as well as the spread of television—were counterbalanced by other processes characteristic not only of the Soviet Union in the period of “advanced construction,” but also of industrial modernity in general. Many critics from Ruskin to Habermas have seen such key processes of modernization as industrialization, standardization, and the growing role of the state as eroding the difference between public and private spheres.⁵³ Technological development and its penetration of the home, especially since the 1950s (in the Soviet Union as in the West, if rather more slowly), has also been recognized as a process that complicates the identification of modernity with increasing privacy. Electronic media, for example, widely identified as a force for increasing privatization of leisure, serve also as a two-way channel of information; they render the home “a permeable structure, receiving and transmitting images, sounds, text and data.”⁵⁴ Even the increasing permeation of the home by television sets, washing machines, and electric appliances—whose increased availability was proclaimed by Khrushchev as evidence of progress⁵⁵—knit it into, and made it reliant upon, public utilities, rendering the putatively hermetic space a junction of numerous public networks and infrastructures. Thus the same historical processes that engendered the segregated private spheres, at the same time, produced forces that compromised its sovereignty and transgressed its threshold.

We have, then, to acknowledge the extent to which the nature and meaning of the modern Soviet home was contingent upon the public realm of party/state and its agents, and a product of the state’s interventions. Our discussion of some of the ways the separate flat of the Khrushchev era was common rather than particular, and of industrial, system-built housing as an “invasive agent of hegemony” has seemingly endorsed the image of the all-pervasive state envisaged by Kharkhordin’s seamless grid of surveillance. People’s lives were shaped and conditioned on an everyday level by the non-negotiable exigencies of built space, by concrete walls that cannot be pulled down and that defined the dimensions, plan, arrangement, and—to some extent—*use* of rooms.

Appropriating Standard Spaces

What hope, then, for “private life”? How can we redeem the *khrushchevka* for that “elusive private sphere”? How to restore autonomous agency to the seemingly passive recipients of state housing, molded into shape by its state-prescribed plans and standard dimensions, and pummeled into tasteful, rational uniformity by its accompanying bombardment of modernist advice? The story so far has seemed to presuppose a passive consumer-dupe

as the sufferer of the action of the state and its agents, thereby recapitulating the long-critiqued conceptual problems of sender-receiver models of communication, or of models of production and consumption premised on a confrontation between (primarily male) producer and (conventionally female) passive consumer-victim. By what means was the standard space lent to citizens by the state appropriated by individual occupants: that is, particularized, assimilated to their lives, and made to represent them? What strategies and what material things were deployed to render the standard apartment a “*teplo obzhitii dom*?” For, as Vysokovskii observes, even “under these circumstances, the occupants of huge slab-concrete apartment buildings somehow managed to overcome the facelessness of their surroundings, often quite imaginatively.”⁵⁶ I want to suggest that we will find that elusive privacy in everyday aesthetics. As Svetlana Boym observes, “Privacy and aesthetics, culture and survival—such issues are intimately linked.”⁵⁷

Since the structural aspects of the apartment—the walls, dimensions, and plan—were unconditional material givens (though even these varied a lot more in practice than they were supposed to in the simple world of blueprints), room for maneuver lay primarily with the secondary material arrangements that constitute the aesthetics of the interior. But even most of the furniture to go in it was supposed to be standard. In these conditions, any process of making the apartment “one’s own,” entailed overcoming, mitigating, or subverting the homogenizing power of modern production, standardization, and technology. The limitations of state production also imposed limits on people’s scope for customizing space—through shortage and restricted choice. At the same time, its shortcomings and irregularities demanded reciprocal, compensatory action from individual “consumers.” I here outline some ways people made the standard spaces lent to them by the state into a meaningful, singular place—*home*—and the imaginary and physical acts upon common material things, whereby they co-opted them into a projection of themselves as personal *effects*.⁵⁸

The relationship between mass consumption and personal identity is a central object of enquiry in consumption studies, and although their chief object has been late consumer capitalism they can perhaps help us think about the common and particular in the Soviet case.⁵⁹ In his study of a London council estate, “Appropriating the State on the Housing Estate,” anthropologist Daniel Miller noted the alienation felt by state housing tenants as a result of their consciousness of themselves as merely passive recipients of something they might wish control over.⁶⁰ He looked at how some tenants “appropriated” this state property through “consumption,” broadly understood to include their work on, and aesthetic investment in, the interior (specifically the kitchen). By such activity, “what is inevitably met as alienating when received through the distributive institutions of the nation-state,”

is transformed into "inalienable culture."⁶¹ Similarly, in an ethnographic study of Norway in the early 1980s, Marianne Gullestad proposed that the Norwegian home "can be analyzed as an *intentional* effort to *create* a whole and complete microcosm within a marginal social field." As such it can be seen as a "form of *resistance* to fragmentation and anomie."⁶²

That occupants of new Soviet apartments found ways of overcoming such alienation is suggested by Aleksandr Vysokovskii on the evidence of surveys conducted in the 1980s. When asked whether or not they control the apartment they live in, "the overwhelming majority of respondents in state-owned apartments answered affirmatively without hesitation."⁶³ A similar point is made by Charles Hachten in this volume, in reference to an earlier period. This "perception of pseudo-home ownership in state housing" was founded not on institutionalized property rights but, according to Vysokovskii, on "*controlling the space* one has integrated into oneself." "People invest a considerable amount of energy and mental effort to make an apartment . . . their own . . . , people's surroundings acquire some of their personality, some of what makes them individuals."⁶⁴ By putting themselves into the apartment, people incorporate the space lent them by the authorities, and assimilate it to their own sense of themselves. This constitutes, in effect, an imaginary (in the sense that it is symbolic only, without legal effect) appropriation—privatization—of state property.

The symbolic function of place making, and especially of interior decorating was recognized in public discourse in the Khrushchev era. The premise of an exhibition of model interiors and prototype furniture for the new flats, *Iskusstvo v byt*, held in Moscow in 1961 was that "an apartment only becomes a *home* when it is not only well planned, well organized and equipped, but also well decorated."⁶⁵

Specialists acknowledged the need for residents to customize their living space, and to adapt it to their household's particular needs and composition as these changed through the life cycle. In spite of common technical devices, materials, norms, and state standards, it was wrong, Luppov declared, to presuppose some "standardized unification of its appearance."⁶⁶

Designers did not have the final say, he reminded them. The finishing touches to the interior were almost always made by the occupants, who obtained the things to put in it themselves from the shops. Constant interaction with the Soviet consumer was therefore vital, including the study of their demands. At the same time as educating the public in good taste, design professionals must also listen to their views.⁶⁷ He indicated the need for a space for negotiation between user and producer, for channels whereby the consumer could affect the design and production process.⁶⁸ Architect Ol'ga Baiar similarly emphasized that homemaking was not a matter of passive consumption, but a partnership, entailing collaboration and

negotiation. "The specificity of the dwelling house consists in that in the creation of its interior two authors participate: the architect-builder who designs and erects the building; and the *khoziain* of the apartment who furnishes it in accordance with his own needs and taste. In the final account, in the interior of the dwelling house architectural features must combine organically with the furnishing and décor."⁶⁹

Despite the stress on negotiation rather than dictation, on reciprocity rather than passive reception, this was not, of course, a dialogue between equals; the architects and construction industry called the tune. The construction technology that would deliver the liberated spatial deployment Luppov promised was not yet available in the early 1960s. In the meantime, families of whatever constellation had to make do and fit themselves into whichever one of a small variety of plans their assigned apartment came with, plans that were determined both by technical and economic considerations and by the planners' normative conceptions of the Soviet household. While the need for individual customization was acknowledged by some—though not all—experts, "individualism" had to be negotiated with the exigencies of built space and the limitations of state consumer goods production.

Evidence that some occupants of new flats felt that their home should be an expression of their sense of their own identity and difference is provided in the 1968 survey already cited, which was conducted just over a year after residents had moved into the new building in autumn 1966. Asked about negative aspects of contemporary organization of their dwelling, many cited standardization. Twenty-one out of eighty-five respondents named *standartnost' obstanovki* as a defining characteristic of the interior. Twenty percent said they did not want their apartment to look like their neighbors'. Lack of choice (i.e., of consumer goods), many thought, led to a problem of standardization of interiors. One wrote: "Standard, lack of *uiut*: if one were to judge from the contemporary home it might seem that everyone has identical characters."⁷⁰

Official discourse emphasized that while *uiut* remained vital to homemaking, its content had been modernized and socialized in line with the contemporary style currently being promulgated by reformist taste professionals. However, a respondent in the 1968 survey may have spoken for many when s/he denied that this minimal, "contemporary," aesthetic could be either cosy or convenient to live in. On the contrary, its modernist minimalism and cool perfection rendered the interior like one permanently on public display, in an exhibition or design magazine. *Uiut*, however, depended for this resident on signs of being lived in.⁷¹ Similarly in recent interviews with Ekaterina Gerasimova, one respondent cited her husband's insistence that a lampshade—a constant target of taste modernizers—constituted

uiut. He would not change it for a chandelier simply because that was fashionable. To do something just because others did so constituted for them *meshchanstvo*: philistinism resided in lack of individual taste, in fashion slavery, rather than in the form of the lampshade itself—even if this constituted an aberration from legitimate taste.⁷²

Making Do and Making Privacy

I want to end by sketching out two strategies by which the material culture of everyday life was deployed to construct home as a “private” space: first, collecting and composition, or bricolage; and second, handiwork, mending, and adapting. These represented a significant investment of time, skill, and resources in making the interior. Both were ways of overcoming the double bind that mass production and standardization of the living environment were combined with shortage. I want to suggest, however, that these were not just functional responses, but symbolic.

Strategy 1: Bricolage/Eclecticism

The personal aesthetics expressed by many in both the 1968 survey and in the recent interviews contradicted the modernist norms promoted by taste professionals. A cardinal rule of the tasteful modern interior was unity. The “contemporary style” condemned eclecticism and prioritized the homogeneous ensemble over individual items. The style of the furnishings should match the simple, clean lines of the modern architecture, and everything should be chosen to go together visually.⁷³

This contradicted past practice. The author of the 1968 survey, Elena Torshilova, acknowledged that in the single room of a communal apartment, from which many of the new residents had moved, unity and order had been hard to maintain: “The crowded, overfilled room always seemed full of superfluous things and was in fact a store for things used at quite diverse times.”⁷⁴ Such incoherent bricolage from hand-me-downs was treated, by champions of the contemporary style, as a regrettable, tasteless necessity and holdover from wartime habits of thrift, rather than as a positive practice to do with family identity, memory, continuity, and individual aesthetics. The emphasis on stylistic unity prioritized a visual order and logic of combination.⁷⁵ It de-legitimated alternative criteria, such as subjective, associative meanings and memories invested in things, whereby a seemingly disparate and haphazard accumulation of things from various times and sources is unified by its relation to an individual’s life. It also implied a unitary, synchronic newness or “contemporaneity.” When a family moved to a new apartment it was expected to leave its old furniture and clutter behind.

Thus, personal memory, invested in things, was to have no place in the new interior.

Many of the apartments in the 1968 survey apparently espoused the modernist wish to be rid of the past and move into the new apartment as into a *tabula rasa*. Only 8 percent of those interviewed gave “memory” (“*Doroga kak pamiat*”) as the reason for their refusal to get rid of old furniture. (Fifty percent said they liked it—i.e. they kept it on aesthetic grounds.) As Torshilova glossed: “The new forms [the contemporary style] emerged on an entirely radical rejection of the old which was labelled eclectic, non-functional. Aesthetic negativism brought with it a general negativism: along with the tasteless frame, the photograph itself was thrown out; along with granny’s bed—the memory of granny.”⁷⁶

However, we cannot conclude from this small survey of intelligentsia residents in Moscow’s prestigious new South West region—an area that epitomized modernity and progress in contemporary discourse—that abandoning the past was universal practice, or that the official disregard for the sentimental, memory value of things was universally espoused.⁷⁷ Torshilova’s intelligentsia respondents may have been the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, 20 percent said they had no opportunity to change their furniture. This is confirmed in recent interviews with people who moved into new apartments in the early 1960s. Given the limited extent to which promises of increased consumer goods production were realized, people moving from communal apartments into new flats often had to make do and piece together an interior from a haphazard collection of old things, whatever their attitude toward the material culture of the past.⁷⁸ As Buchli notes, “People had to use the pre-existing material stock to structure their lives because a new one from which *uiut* could be created on socialist terms was non-existent.”⁷⁹

In a recent interview, informants who moved to a new apartment in 1970 declared that they took everything with them.⁸⁰ This may be a sign of changing times; already by the late 1960s the wholesale rejection of the material culture of the past—throwing out granny’s memory along with her bed—was repudiated. But descriptions of homes by visitors to the Soviet Union in the early 1960s also suggest the lack of conformity to the “Contemporary” norms of modernist good taste.⁸¹ As Svetlana Boym concludes from an analysis of “Aunt Liuba’s” commode, still cluttered with clashing ornaments at the end of the Soviet period: “The campaign against ‘domestic trash’ did not triumph in the majority of the communal apartments. Instead . . . the so-called domestic trash rebelled against the ideological purges and remained as the secret residue of privacy that shielded people from imposed and internalized communality.”⁸²

Boym's example, from a communal apartment, suggests a more positive use of old things than mere necessity and haphazard residue. The little domestic objects and the memories associated with them are a means to affirm individuality and construct a sense of mental privacy, even in the overcrowded living conditions of a communal apartment. The private, she writes, "is reconstituted . . . in the minor aesthetic pursuits of communal-apartment dwellers and their personal collections of souvenirs."⁸³ The preservation and display of things that had sometimes outlived their use was all the more an active and meaningful process in the new apartment. Such clutter owed its presence there not just to inertia and failure to dispose of it; it had been packed up, transported, and a new home found for it in the tight space of the new apartment. As Miller noted in his study of the London housing estate, strategies for dealing with alienation by personalizing space that did not belong to the occupants included "aesthetic construction": the deployment of consumer objects to impose a facade or draw attention away from the standard fixtures of the apartment and toward items directly chosen by or associated with the tenants.⁸⁴ From the standpoint of taste professionals, one of the sins of seemingly nonfunctional clutter lay in its material and symbolic function of masking, concealing, and lack of transparency. It put up a screen of private meaning and associations that were impenetrable to the public gaze and public comprehension—and in that sense "meaningless." It was just that "smokescreen" of privacy that the official position on the transparency between home and public life condemned.⁸⁵

Strategy 2: Handiwork and Repair

Finally, one of the main paths to singularization, both of the standard apartment and of impersonal, mass-produced furniture and fixtures, lay in handiwork, do-it-yourself home improvements, repairs, and adaptations (figure 7.3). These were a practical response to shortage, poor quality, and inadequacy of production and supply. Not only was the Soviet everyday a culture of shortage but, as Ekaterina Gerasimova and Sof'ia Chuikina have recently discussed, it was a "repair culture."⁸⁶ Many goods, including housing, presupposed the need for work on them by the user. The new apartments were not commodities in the sense of ready-made items produced by the public economy, to be passively consumed as they were. The condition in which they were handed over to the occupants often made it necessary to invest large amounts of time, energy, and resourcefulness in making them habitable at an elementary level. They might not yet be connected to mains plumbing, or the doors and windows didn't fit. The

wall-mounted kitchen units prescribed by efficiency experts had to be found, or—more likely—made and fitted.⁸⁷ Advice literature assumed the necessary input of the tenant and included very practical directions on how to adapt or fit cupboards, equipment, and labor-saving devices. At the 1961 exhibition of model furniture, *Iskusstvo v byt*, viewers expressed the wish that do-it-yourself materials and prefabricated components, such as construction panels of various dimensions and plastic seats, could be available for purchase for home construction and assembly.⁸⁸

But handiwork was not simply a response to necessity, poor quality, and shortage. It also served a symbolic, singularizing, or “privatizing” function in regard to standard goods and spaces, as Gerasimova’s work on repair culture and Miller’s study of “appropriation” of housing suggest. In a recent interview a resident of a St. Petersburg *khrushchevka* made clear her pride in her furniture as a materialized memory of her father who had made it by hand.⁸⁹ The importance of handiwork and handmade objects in making “living space” into a “private” place is also noted by ethnographer Anu Kannike in a study of Estonian urban homes: “As what was built, produced and propagated by the state was usually of low quality and unreliable, one could rely [only] on oneself, one’s personal abilities, work and taste. The work invested [in] the building of a home thus acquired a ritual meaning. Making things . . . oneself became the main way of constructing privacy, individuality and security.”⁹⁰

Conclusion

Stephen Kotkin has argued, with reference to the 1930s, that “housing emerged as an important arena in which the relationship between individuals and the state was defined and negotiated and the confines and texture of daily life—the little tactics of the habitat—took shape.”⁹¹ The argument is no less applicable 30 years on, in the prefab housing erected during the Khrushchev era. If opportunities to withdraw from the presence of strangers grew, by comparison with life in a communal apartment, this did not automatically render the new, separate apartment a sovereign and hermetic private sphere, impervious to the values, interests, and interventions of society or the state. Nevertheless, the diverse ways in which people arranged their interiors, the aesthetic choices they made—or failed to make—can be seen as a form of negotiation along the interface of the dwelling, whereby the state’s standard and conditional gift could be singularized, appropriated, and made a “reflexive narrative of self,” full of private meaning.⁹² To pursue this requires analysis both of the narratives people tell about those choices, and of the often unarticulated everyday aesthetics embodied in interiors.



Figure 7.3 Interior of Khrushchev-era apartment built 1960 in South West of Leningrad. Photograph: Ekaterina Gerasimova, November 2004, with the support of the Leverhulme Trust.

Notes

1. "Izvestiia dlia doma, dlia sem'i," *Izvestiia*, July 11, 1959, 4.
2. Wright Miller, *Russians as People* (London: Phoenix House, 1960), 150.
3. S. Strumilin, "Rabochii byt i kommunizm," *Novyi mir*, no. 7 (1960), 213.
4. A. Baranov, "Sotsiologicheskie problemy zhilishcha," in *Sotsial'nye problemy zhilishcha*, ed. A. Kharchev et al. (Leningrad: Lenzniel, 1967), 17.
5. N. S. Khrushchev, *O kontrol'nykh tsifrakh razvitiia narodnogo khoziaistva SSSR na 1959–1965 gody* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo polit lit-ry, 1959), 59–63; Grey Hodnett, ed., *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, vol. 4, *The Khrushchev Years 1953–1964* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 247–248, 209–210; Deborah A. Field, "Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era," *Russian Review* 57 (October 1998), 601 and "Communist Morality and Meanings of Private Life in Post-Stalinist Russia, 1953–1964," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1996. For an example see Oleg Kurskii, "Moi papa—ne sem'ianin," *Sem'ia i shkola*, no. 1 (1959), 36–37.
6. B. M. Frolic, "The Soviet City," *Town Planning Review*, 34 (January 1964), 286, referring to Strumilin, "Rabochii byt," 213.
7. "Izvestiia dlia doma, dlia sem'i," *Izvestiia*, July 11, 1959, 4.
8. See Susan E. Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, no. 2 (2005), 289–316; and Susan E. Reid, "Women in the Home," in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. M. Ilic, S. Reid, and L. Attwood (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 149–176.
9. Khrushchev, *O kontrol'nykh tsifrakh*, 55.
10. See Victor Buchli, "Khrushchev, Modernism, and the Fight against Petit-Bourgeois Consciousness in the Soviet Home," and Susan E. Reid, "Destalinization and Taste, 1953–1963," both in *Journal of Design History*, 10, no. 2 (1997), 161–176, 177–202; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Aleksandr Rappaport, "Ideiia normy. O zhiznestroitel'stve, razrushivshem domostroi," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, September 5, 1992.
11. K. Zhukov, "Tekhnicheskaiia estetika i oborudovanie kvartiry," *Tekhnicheskaiia estetika*, no. 2 (1964), 1.
12. See O. Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 333–363; Susan Gal, "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," *Differences*, 3, no. 1 (2002), 77–98; Maurizio Passerin d'Entrevies and Ursula Vogel, eds., *Public and Private: Legal, Political, and Philosophical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2000).
13. Jeff Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice*, 4–5.
14. Compare Eduard Shils on the first principles of individualist democracy, cited in Alan F. Westin, *Privacy and Freedom* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 25.
15. Compare, on dachas, Aleksandr Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" in *Russian Housing in the Modern Age*, ed. W. Brumfield and B. Ruble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Stephen Lovell, "Soviet

- Exurbia: Dachas in Postwar Russia," in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. D. Crowley and S. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 113–119.
16. Dorothee Wierling, "Everyday Life and Gender Relations," in *The History of Everyday Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 151; Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xviii.
 17. V. Khazanova, "Arkhitektura v poru 'otpepli,'" in *Ot shestidesiatykh k vošmidesiatym*, ed. V. Lebedeva (Moscow, 1991) 81.
 18. Aleksei Adzhubei, *Te desiati' let* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989), 118.
 19. Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 153–163; Anne White, *De-Stalinization and the House of Culture: Declining State Control over Leisure in the USSR, Poland and Hungary, 1953–89* (London: Routledge, 1990), 39, 21–22; Katerina Gerasimova, "Public Privacy in the Soviet Communal Apartment," in *Socialist Spaces*, 210.
 20. E. Torshilova, "Byt i nekotorye sotsial'no-psikhologicheskie kharakteristiki sovremennogo zhilogo inter'era," in *Sotsial'nye issledovaniia, vyp. 7: Metodologicheskie problemy issledovaniia byta*, ed. A. G. Kharchev and Z. Iankova (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 137–144 [137–138]. I am indebted to Steven Harris for referring me to this volume.
 21. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 6903 (Gosteleradio), op. 26, d. 391, no. 1632; d. 449; d. 468; d. 469, no. 4827. My thanks to Kristin Roth-Ey for pointing me to this source, to Aleksandr Vatlin for his assistance, and to the British Academy for the Small Research Grant, "The Komsomol as Patron of Cultural Innovation," under which this aspect of the research was conducted.
 22. Compare, on "privacy" in communal apartments: Gerasimova, "Public Privacy," 207–230; Il'ia Utekhin, *Ocherki kommunal'nogo byta* (Moscow: O. G. I., 2001); Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 94, 139–159.
 23. Francine du Plessix Gray, *Soviet Women Walking the Tightrope* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 2. See also Bruce and Beatrice Gould, "We Saw How Russians Live," *Ladies Home Journal* (February 1957), 176; David Mace and Vera Mace, *The Soviet Family* (London, 1963), 160–162.
 24. B. Brodskii, "Novyi byt i kamufliazh meshchanstva," *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR (DI SSSR)*, no. 8 (1963), 24.
 25. Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, revised edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990) chapter 3; Karen Kettering, "'Ever More Cosy and Comfortable': Stalinism and the Soviet Domestic Interior, 1928–1938," *Journal of Design History*, 10, no. 2 (1997), 119–136.
 26. Brodskii, "Novyi byt," 24.
 27. Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 138.
 28. O. Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 300.
 29. These innovations, as well as their more repressive side effects, are associated with the Khrushchev regime's modernizing and welfare measures. See George W. Breslauer, "Khrushchev Reconsidered," in *The Soviet Union Since Stalin*, ed. Stephen Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert Sharlet (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 50–70; Alec Nove, "Toward a Communist

- Welfare State?" in *Russia under Khrushchev: An Anthology from Problems of Communism*, ed. Abraham Brumberg (London: Praeger, 1962), 571–590. Cf. A. Showstack Sassoon, ed., *Women and the State: The Shifting Boundaries of Public and Private* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1992 [1987]); Elizabeth Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State* (London: Tavistock, 1977).
30. Erich Goldhagen "The Glorious Future—Realities and Chimeras," *Problems of Communism*, no. 6 (1960), 17–18.
 31. Compare Scott, *Seeing*.
 32. Deborah A. Field, "Mothers and Fathers and the Problem of Selfishness in the Khrushchev Period," in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, 97.
 33. Kharkhordin's example of increased intervention can also be read as a sign of increased need to legitimate such intervention. Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate," 358, citing S. Garbuzov, "Nuzhno li vmeshivatsia v lichnuuiu zhizn'?" *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, January 4, 1958. As noted by Kelly, *Refining Russia*, 328–329, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in the early 1960s protested against "uncultured" busy-bodying.
 34. T. Sosnovy, "The Soviet Housing Situation Today," *Soviet Studies*, 11, no. 1 (1959), 9. The process began under Stalin. Buchli, *Archaeology*, 84.
 35. The anomalous case of cooperative housing would reward specific study but lies beyond our scope here. See R. Beerman, "Legal Implications of the 1957 Housing Decree," *Soviet Studies*, 11, no. 1 (1959), 111. Further research on attitudes to home would need to distinguish between cooperative buildings, ones that were institutional, and others more anonymously distributed.
 36. Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" 276.
 37. Compare also Charles Hachten's chapter in this volume.
 38. M. Voskresenskaia, "Dom, v kotorom ty zhivesh'," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 8 (1962), 25.
 39. Ibid.
 40. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1993 [1950]).
 41. Voskresenskaia, "Dom," 25; Boym, *Common Places*.
 42. Buchli, *Archaeology*, 146–147, 165–171; Kharkhordin, *Collective*, 279–303; Field, "Communist Morality," 19, 99–101; Theodore H. Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
 43. N. S. Khrushchev, *O shirokom vnedrenii industrial'nykh metodov, uluchshenii kachestva i snizhenii stoimosti stroitel'stva* (Moscow, 1955); Sosnovy, "Soviet Housing," 9.
 44. Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga, "Introduction: Houses and Families in Europe," in *House Life*, ed. Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuniga (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 27–28.
 45. Khazanova, "Arkhitectura," 77.
 46. See Reid, "Khrushchev Kitchen."
 47. K. Kantor, *Krasota i pol'za: sotsiologicheskie voprosy material'no-khudozhestvennoi kul'tury* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967), 192.
 48. "Iskusstvo inter'era," *Moskovskii khudozhnik*, no. 10–11 (1959), 1.
 49. Birdwell-Pheasant and Zuniga, "Introduction," 28.
 50. Catherine Cooke, "Sources of a Radical Mission in the Early Soviet Profession," in *Architecture and Revolution*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1999), 19–23.
 51. Khazanova, "Arkhitectura," 77; Scott, *Seeing*.

52. Compare Terence Riley, *The Unprivate House* (New York: MOMA, 1999) from whom I have borrowed the heading "un-private flat"; Christopher Reed, ed., *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London, 1996); Gerasimova, "Public Privacy," 207–230; Lovell, "Soviet Exurbia," 105–121; and David Crowley, "Warsaw Interiors: the Public Life of Private Spaces, 1949–65," in *Socialist Spaces*, 181–206.
53. Compare Kent Geiger, "The Family and Social Change," in *Transformation of Russian Society*, ed. Cyril Black (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 452.
54. Riley, *Unprivate House*, 11; Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975[1971]), 165; Fred H. Cate, *Privacy in the Information Age* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997); Reed, *Not At Home*.
55. For example, "Dobrotnye, krasivye veshchi—v nash byt!" *Izvestiia*, October 16, 1959; CPSU Central Committee and Council of Ministers Resolution, "O merakh po uvelicheniiu proizvodstva, rasshireniiu assortimenta i uluchsheniuiu kachestva tovarov kul'turno-bytovogo naznacheniia i khoziaistvennogo obikhoda," in *Sobranie postanovlenii pravitel'stva SSSR* (Moscow: Iurid. lit-ra, 1959).
56. Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" 283.
57. Boym, *Common Places*, 73, 94, 150–159.
58. See Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 143.
59. Space does not permit discussion here of the problems raised by applying theories from Western consumption studies, based on a market economy and affluence, to a socialist, centrally planned economy of shortage.
60. Daniel Miller, "Appropriating the State on the Council Estate," *Man*, 23, no. 2 (1988), 353–372 [354]. Granted the British context is different: tenants' dispossessed status is measured against, and takes its negative connotations from, the normative vision of Britain as a nation of homeowners, whereas in the Soviet Union renting an apartment from the state was the norm.
61. Miller, "Appropriating the State," 354.
62. Marianne Gullestad, "Home Decoration as Popular Culture" in *The Art of Social Relations* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1992), 83 (emphasis in original).
63. Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" 276.
64. *Ibid.*, 276–267.
65. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (RGALI), f. 2329, op. 4, ed. khr. 1388.
66. *Ibid.*, f. 2329, op. 4, ed. khr. 1388, ll. 51–52.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*
69. O. Baïar, "Dekorativnoe ubranstvo kvartiry," *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, jubilee edition (1957), 17–20; Irina Voelikova, "Vasha kvartira," *Rabotnitsa*, no. 9 (1962), 30; Lynne Attwood, "Housing in the Khrushchev Era," in *Women in Khrushchev Era*, 189 and 200–201, notes 72–73.
70. Torshilova, "Byt," 141–143.
71. *Ibid.*, 140.
72. Interview with Ekaterina. Meshchanstvo project.

73. For further description and analysis see Iurii Gerchuk, "The Aesthetics of Everyday Life in the Khrushchev Thaw in the USSR (1954–64)," in *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, ed. Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 81–100.
74. Torshilova, "Byt," 138.
75. Compare Scott, *Seeing*; Boym, *Common Places*, 157.
76. Torshilova, "Byt," 144, recalls Evgenii Evtushenko's poem *Krovat'*.
77. See S. Reid, *Khrushchev in Wonderland: The Pioneer Palace in Moscow's Lenin Hills, 1962* (Pittsburgh: Carl Beck Papers, no. 1606, 2002), 6–9.
78. Interview with "KV," November 2004. Conducted under Leverhulme Research Fellowship, "Everyday Aesthetics in the Modern Soviet Flat."
79. Buchli, *Archaeology*, 59.
80. Interview with "KV."
81. Mace and Mace, *Soviet Family*, 160–162; Santha Rama Rau, *My Russian Journey* (New York: Harper, 1959), 5.
82. Boym, *Common Places*, 150.
83. Ibid., 74. Compare Gerasimova, "Public Privacy," 207–230; Utekhin, *Ocherki*.
84. Miller, "Appropriating the State," 366, 362.
85. The use of things as repositories of, and camouflage for, private meanings and memories is perhaps best illustrated in Iurii Trifonov's short story, "One Summer Middy." See Iurii Trifonov, "Byl letnii polden," *Novyi mir*, no. 12 (1966), 85–91; and Robert Russell, "Time and Memory in the Works of Yury Trifonov," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 24, no. 1 (1988), 44–45.
86. Ekaterina Gerasimova and Sof'ia Chuikina, "Obshchestvo remonta," *Neprikosnovennyi zapas (NZ)*, no. 34 (2004), <<http://www.nz-online.ru>>, last consulted November 1, 2004; Galina Orlova, "Apologiiia strannoii veshchi: 'Malenkie khitrosti' sovetskogo cheloveka," *NZ*, no. 34 (2004), and other contributions to this issue.
87. For example, O. Baiar and R. Blashkevich, *Kvartira i ee ubranstvo* (Moscow: Stroiizdat, 1962), 15; Vysokovskii, "Will Domesticity Return?" 284.
88. RGALI, f. 2329, op. 4, ed. khr. 1391, l. 29; l. 47.
89. Interview with "Larissa," November 2004. A male interviewee also emphasized his role in making the home through handiwork. January 2005. Interviews conducted under Leverhulme Research Fellowship, "Everyday Aesthetics in the Modern Soviet Flat."
90. Anu Kannike, "Home Decoration as Culture Building: An Ethnological Study of Tartu," in Anu Kannike, *Kodukujundus kui kultuuriloomine: Etnoloogiline Tartu-uurimus* (Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Sari 4, 2002), 210–235. I am indebted to Anu Kannike for providing the translation.
91. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 160.
92. Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 75.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"I KNOW ALL THE SECRETS OF MY NEIGHBORS": THE QUEST FOR PRIVACY IN THE ERA OF THE SEPARATE APARTMENT

Steven E. Harris

Introduction

Shortly after Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet state and society embarked upon a mass housing campaign, the main purposes of which were the elimination of severe shortages in housing and the relocation of urban residents from communal housing into single-family separate apartments.¹ Unlike many reforms of Nikita S. Khrushchev's regime, the mass housing campaign was a success and continued past his downfall in 1964. Moving to a newly built separate apartment and creating a new domestic life were the mass phenomena through which most Soviet citizens experienced the "thaw" in state-society relations after Stalin. From 1953 to 1970, state and society built 38,284,000 apartments throughout the Soviet Union in cities and rural areas, and 140,900,000 individuals, or 38 million families, moved into new housing.²

The campaign's qualitative effects were a radical transformation of what everyday life had become under socialism. Soon after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks committed themselves to resolving the "housing question" for the urban lower classes languishing in basements, barracks, and dilapidated tenements.³ At first, workers forcibly resettled into the single-family apartments of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. This was the founding act of the communal apartment (*kommunalka*), in which families lived in individual rooms but shared common spaces and facilities with other families.⁴ In the 1920s, projects for collectivist living, such as the house-commune, dominated visions for future housing, but were rejected

in the early 1930s.⁵ As resources went into industrialization, the state opted for the inexpensive alternatives of barracks, dormitories, and communal apartments.⁶ The devastation of cities during World War II deepened extreme shortages in housing.⁷ By the 1950s, most residents lived in overcrowded dwellings with few amenities. For the population at large, housing was one of the chief failures of Stalinism.

Khrushchev's mass housing campaign revived the state's commitment to solving the "housing question." But instead of constructing collectivist housing for a socialist society as envisioned in the 1920s, it built the separate apartment. The single-family apartment had been rehabilitated under Stalin, but had been made available only to elites. The wretched conditions and unpopularity of communal housing further turned state and society away from collectivist living projects and toward single-family dwellings. In choosing to make the separate apartment widely available, Khrushchev's regime was responding to popular demand for better living conditions, single-family housing, and greater privacy. It also intended to use the separate apartment to achieve state goals. Popular enthusiasm for improved housing could be channeled into greater mass participation in the regime's overall project of building communism, including housing construction itself. Better living conditions would lead to a healthier and more satisfied workforce, which would result in higher productivity and economic growth. Separate apartments would strengthen the family unit. In turn, the family would take better care of its own housing than communal housing, thereby assisting the state in maintaining the housing stock.⁸

The separate apartment's most immediate, qualitative impact was on the spatial relationship of the public and private in Soviet society. The divide between public and private life had run straight through the communal apartment, producing a conflict-ridden domestic space, which Ekaterina Gerasimova has labeled "public privacy."⁹ The separate apartment moved the line between public and private back to the threshold of the home. It introduced privacy on a mass scale in a realm of the everyday, the home, in which little had existed beforehand. How did this change Soviet life?

Some have argued that the separate apartment was part of a larger "destatization" and "privatization" of society after Stalin that afforded urban residents greater autonomy.¹⁰ With private apartments, the state retreated from the domestic realm, permitting people to live a more "normal" life and purchase a greater variety of consumer items.¹¹ In the long run, the separate apartment transformed the state from a totalitarian into an authoritarian regime. Its "relative domestic freedom" gave root to "seditious thoughts about political and economic freedom, and the freedom of self-expression and creativity."¹² In short, the separate apartment eroded Soviet socialism, making its ultimate collapse possible.

Others have emphasized the state's efforts to keep privacy in check and even use the separate apartment to control society. "Social organizations," such as neighborhood parents' committees, served as a counterbalance to the privacy of a separate apartment.¹³ Authentic private life, existing for its own sake and independently of state and society, was effectively eliminated in the 1930s.¹⁴ But rather than revive this autonomous sphere, Khrushchev's regime used the separate apartment, particularly the kitchen, to propel Soviet citizens into modernity and communism through "the irradiation of the home by the Enlightenment values of rationality and science."¹⁵ Women were chiefly responsible for accomplishing these public goals for which the private domain was mobilized.¹⁶ Through new consumer items, such as furniture, the state allowed a resurgent cultural intelligentsia to police this new urban space against "petit-bourgeois" tastes and inculcate "a body of disciplining Modernist norms in the domestic realm."¹⁷ These assessments support the broader claim that the Khrushchev era was ostensibly less liberal than the Stalin era since social control became more thoroughly dispersed and ingrained.¹⁸

These two sets of arguments appear to be in strict opposition. The first contends that society gained privacy and pushed back against the state's totalitarian reach. The second asserts that the state either compensated for any ground it lost to private life or gained it in ways previously impossible under Stalin. Despite differences in outcome, both arguments share the same assumptions: any gains in private life necessarily came at a cost to the state, and citizens would only want more of it; conversely, any encroachments on private life were necessarily the product of the state's efforts to retrieve or extend power over people's everyday lives.

This essay adopts a different approach. At its most basic level, the privacy afforded by the separate apartment revolved around a person's greater control of space and time within the context of the family and to the exclusion of state and society. Obstacles to such control and efforts to resolve them reveal that in their quest for privacy, residents were far more engaged with state authorities and its discourses than has been recognized. For its part, the state was not always the source of encroachment on its citizens' privacy and worked at times to secure aspects of private life.

Two case studies illustrate these points. The first draws upon letters that working women in Leningrad wrote to the city soviet in 1965, complaining that its decision to delay the start of their workday deprived them of control over their nonwork time. The women assumed that the state would help them regain their lost time, which they saw as a crucial aspect of their private lives, and they drew upon their officially sanctioned and traditional roles as housewives and mothers to make their case. The second example concerns residential noises, which encroached upon residents' control of their private

space, but which the state attempted to resolve through a “war on noise” (*bor’ba s shumom*) from the late 1950s through the early 1970s. To adapt Gerasimova’s terminology, the separate apartment promised to separate the “public” from “privacy” in the home. But getting there, as our two case studies show, was a process that kept state and society in constant dialogue and even cooperation.

Working Women’s Control Over Time

Moving to the separate apartment was an emboldening experience, providing residents with a greater sense of control over their everyday lives. They were now liberated from communal apartment neighbors, their interminable conflicts, and the written and unwritten rules that structured people’s time and use of shared spaces. As a Muscovite housewife explained in *Izvestiia* in 1956, living in a separate apartment afforded her family “mental tranquility.” She added, “I, for example, can arrange my day, my many tasks by my own discretion. It’s not necessary to tune yourself to somebody else’s order and frequently to somebody else’s mood, like in the communal apartment where we lived previously.”¹⁹

While a separate apartment afforded residents a greater sense of control over their domestic lives, underdeveloped neighborhoods on the outskirts of town ensured that everyday life would remain difficult. Lagging behind housing construction, insufficient public transportation made the commute to work and home time-consuming and unpleasant.²⁰ Attempts by municipal authorities to manage public transport resulted in further disruptions. The case that interests us here reveals how decisions in urban management could upset, albeit unintentionally, the delicate balance between a person’s work and domestic life.

In 1965, the Leningrad city soviet received complaints, mostly from women, about its decision in January to delay the beginning of the workday for many research and scientific institutions, and planning and construction offices. In response to a letter from approximately 80 employees, both men and women, of the institute “Giproninemetallorud,” originally sent to *Leningradskaia pravda* in April, the city soviet justified the new policy as a way to relieve congestion on public transport. Instead of starting work at 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., employees of the designated institutions would arrive at 9:15 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. The new policy expected an estimated 300,000 employees to start work at this later time.²¹ (This represented at most 9 percent of the city’s population.²²) The schedule change violated a central feature of private life, control over one’s time. With their daily routines already spread out between work and home, women were bound to be affected in particular.

The new policy had its strongest impact at the end of the workday. In their letter, the employees of "Giproninemetallorud" questioned the city's attempt to pitch the reform in the state's paternalistic discourse of "care for the people." Attempts to increase public transport did signify "a good example of the care for Leningraders' needs." But the decision on the workday schedule shift, they charged, "can in no way be understood as care for the people." They explained, "Every minute of time in the evening after work weighs like gold for women. Is it possible that high-placed organizations do not know this? Stores, preparing meals, the wash, cleaning up the apartment, children—but you see some basic rest is desired, not to speak of cultured rest." The employees made their case for protecting women's nonwork time by appealing to the public discourse on their chief role in social reproduction.²³ "Schools and social organizations talk a lot about the role and responsibility of parents in raising children," they asserted. Yet the new policy prevented women from fulfilling this role. "But where does one get time for this, when the mother has a double working day at work and at home[?] Where is the care for the woman, the mother, the wife here?"²⁴

The policy also conflicted with everyone's desire to get out of the polluted city after work, enjoy rented dachas, and "breathe fresh air." While the employees linked a woman's claim to her nonwork time to the cause of social reproduction, they expressed the same claim for all residents as an individual's exclusive right to nonwork time. "Why draw out the workday, especially in the approaching summer period, when every free minute spent outside the city is only for a person's benefit, or is this also included in the care for a person's well-being?" The employees' sarcasm about the state's paternalistic rhetoric of "care for the people" ended in open ridicule. Transport problems would only worsen with more mass housing and the city's consequent territorial growth. With the workday shift, city officials had taken "the 'easiest' path" to resolving the problem by "subordinating workers' interests in how they live and rest to transport congestion." They ended their complaint, "So where is the continuously declared care for the person?"²⁵

In a letter to the city soviet chairman in the fall of 1965, 127 employees of an office in the State Forestry Committee emphasized that the schedule shift negatively affected women, who comprised 70 percent (400 persons) of their workforce. Such effects were particularly felt in new housing estates. "It will be especially difficult for women who have received apartments in new districts, such as Pontonnaia station, Dachnoe and others, where one has to get to by train." The employees sarcastically pointed out that "the splendid measure of our government on shortening the length of the workday from eight to seven hours cancels itself out, since we will end work now, as we have done before, at 5 p.m. and get home at 7 p.m. (taking into account

stopping off at stores to obtain food).”²⁶ By the time housework was done, there was “no free time for helping children with homework, not to speak of going to the theater, the movies, concerts and the like.”²⁷

While men continued to sign such letters, women began writing them independently of their male colleagues, as evidenced by a switch to the first person plural when discussing how the policy affected women. In a letter to Leonid Brezhnev and the Leningrad city soviet chairman, received in September, employees of Giprottranssignalsviaz’ explained that working mothers began their day at 6 a.m. and took smaller children to day care by 8 a.m. and older children to school by 8:30 a.m. Stores opened at 9 a.m., but the extra time gained from beginning the workday later was not enough to shift some housework to the morning. The schedule change reduced the amount of time they could spend with their children later in the day. Children arrived home at 2 p.m. and remained alone for the afternoon. “[C]oming home at 7 o’clock in the evening, we must go to the store, prepare supper, feed [our families], do the laundry and still spend some time with the children, but they must already go to sleep at 9pm.” With less time in the evening, but with the same amount of housework, women had less time for rest. The schedule change also prevented women in communal apartments in particular from shifting housework to the morning.²⁸ The unstated reason was that one’s use of the bathroom and kitchen was already restricted on account of having to share these facilities with neighbors.²⁹

The more women realized that the schedule shift affected them in particular, the more forcefully they represented it as such. In October, employees of an unnamed workplace wrote to Kosygin, Brezhnev, *Pravda*, and *Izvestiia* to complain that the schedule shift was “undemocratic” because “it worsened our life conditions for the sake of the Leningrad city soviet’s completely unjustified hopes of improving transport.” Use of the first person plural indicated that women had written this letter. They explained that “women are completely deprived of the possibility to rest since we shorten our little crumb of free time coming home late in the evening.” Since protecting free time on its own merits was not a strong enough argument, the women drew upon prescribed roles in social reproduction and represented it as work. “We value and guard our work time, and we want our popular authorities likewise to treat the work time of a toiling woman cautiously for whom the working day continues at home.”³⁰ If their male readers could see women’s housework as real work, they would have to protect their free time.

The changes in women’s thinking were best reflected in their decision to write and sign their letters independently of men. In November 1965, over 30 employees sent a letter signed, “Women of Lengiprotchtrans,” to the city soviet chairman. Suggesting that their earlier letters included male

signatories, they wrote, "This time women-mothers alone, who have ended up in a sad situation, turn to you." The schedule shift had increased congestion on public transport. "If before we more or less calmly used transport, now we gasp for air, hang on the footboards, they push us out and our coat buttons are torn off, [we're] exhausted, angry, with a spoilt mood. But then the entire working day lies ahead." These women backtracked several bus stops on foot just to get on a bus. "But this means that it is necessary to leave home even earlier. And all of this is because of the shift of the start of the work day to one time in many institutions."³¹

These women claimed that schedules at some workplaces had been staggered in the past and that the new policy had actually synchronized schedules. With more women in stores after work at the same time, shopping now lasted two to three hours instead of one to one and a half. Time was in extreme shortage and hence very valuable to women. They noted, "But indeed every 15 minutes plays a colossal role in the household cares of a woman." Echoing previous letters, these women bolstered their claim for recuperating control over lost time by appealing to the public discourse that mandated their central role as mothers and housewives in social reproduction. The schedule shift had upset "the normal evening order of the family and in particular of children." They continued, "We would like to pose still this question: exactly what time in a day is allotted to us for the upbringing of children, for our personal leisure?" This appeal to leisure, while not as frequently articulated as appeals to women's role in social reproduction, also drew upon an official discourse that promoted and guided increased time for leisure toward socially beneficial activities.³² This appeal underlined what was at stake for these women: their ability to determine the structure of their daily lives outside of work. They ended their letter in the most direct terms possible: "We need a lengthened evening. Return the former hours of the start of work."³³

The workday schedule shift made a working woman's day, already stretched between her public life at work and private life at home, even more difficult. Yet the women in Leningrad exploited, rather than criticized, the woman's "double working day" in making their case. They wrote their letters as collectives based in their workplaces, but discussed issues that primarily dealt with their ability to function fully as mothers and wives at home after work. In their minds, manipulating these interconnections in a working woman's public and private life, and the public discourses on women's social roles and leisure in order to achieve a private gain—control over one's nonwork time—made perfect sense. Public discourses could be used to secure private gains in a complementary fashion that benefited both the public cause of social reproduction and the private lives of women. State authorities, according to these women, should have no problem seeing the logic of their argument.

But in writing their letters, the women also reproduced, rather than challenged, their “double working day.” They justified their demands by explaining that they could best raise their children and do the housework under the old work schedules. This argument limited what they could do and what they could say as they pursued their goal of securing control over nonwork time. If they abandoned their jobs, they would have never written their letters. If they called for a reorganization of the division of domestic labor in order to adapt to the schedule shift, they would have had no argument. An alternative argument—that they should regain the lost time for themselves—was only rarely advanced, although one suspects that this was in fact their main goal.

While their decision resulted in a breach of private life, city leaders had not been motivated to shift the workday schedules in order to regain control over their citizens’ private lives in the era of the separate apartment. The women’s own assessment of the reasons for the city’s decision pointed to the mundane and the callous. As mass housing boomed and Leningrad grew larger, the city soviet faced a mass transit crisis that it could solve on the cheap by rearranging 300,000 people’s daily lives, not to mention those of their families. Complete disregard for what this might mean to women, as well as those eager to leave work for their dachas, most likely helped make this decision possible. The Soviet state did not need an ideological aversion to private life in order to violate it; mismanagement in urban planning could exact sufficient damage. Moreover, if the intended recipients of the letters, apparently all men, actually read them, they would have heard what appeared to be women’s tacit approval of their “double working day.” Little wonder, therefore, that the women’s male colleagues signed these letters.

What were the outcomes of this story? The letters of rejection the city soviet sent to the women strongly suggest that city leaders never amended their decision to meet the women’s demands.³⁴ Nevertheless, this episode made working women more aware of themselves as a social group particularly susceptible to losing out on major benefits of the separate apartment. This ran counter to an official goal of mass housing: improving women’s daily lives with the rationally designed kitchen equipped with modern appliances that would reduce their time spent on housework.³⁵ The women’s growing realization that the repercussions of the schedule shift were primarily a working women’s issue was evident in how their letters changed over the course of 1965. Initially, both women and men signed the letters in which women were discussed in the third person plural. Authors then wrote about women in the first person plural even as men continued to sign the letters. Later, signatories identified themselves exclusively as women and wrote about their experiences in the first person plural. This evolution in group consciousness appears when one reads the letters in their chronological

order. Moreover, all of the letters examined here were written by employees from different workplaces. This suggests that working women throughout Leningrad affected by the policy, not only those who wrote the letters discussed here, experienced this process of raised consciousness and group solidarity.

The War on Noise

While the women in Leningrad fought to control their nonwork time, others sought to maintain control over the exclusive, private space for the family afforded by the separate apartment. Gaining full control over previously communal spaces (the kitchen, bathroom, toilet, and corridor), furnishing them, and stocking them with household objects were new opportunities a family enjoyed in moving from the communal to the separate apartment. Mixed with this experience were the separate apartment's tiny dimensions, badly developed layout, construction defects, and dysfunctional modern amenities.³⁶ Noise and the lack of proper sound proofing were also major problems.

Hearing and being heard by one's neighbors had violated one's privacy in the communal apartment.³⁷ The separate apartment promised, in contrast, the complete eradication of this problem, yet always seemed to fall short. One major reason was the quality of new housing architecture and construction. In an article for *Izvestiia* on new housing in Moscow in 1955, an architect and an engineer noted that sound problems persisted in new apartments, despite recent efforts to use better building materials. "The penetration of walls that divide apartments and partitions between rooms by sound has become relatively low," they wrote. "Yet there isn't complete isolation from neighbors on other floors."³⁸

In complaints about new housing, residents typically represented the move to the separate apartment as a two-step process: a period of happiness, filled with the promise of creating a new domestic world, followed by intense frustration in dealing with the construction and design defects of new apartments and neighborhoods.³⁹ In a letter to architects at the 1954 All-Union Meeting of Constructors, a Muscovite party member, Ganicheva, wrote, "In 1951 I encountered great happiness—they issued a housing permit for a small separate apartment. My gratitude is great." But soon troubles began and noise was no exception. Worried that her neighbors might hear her and vice versa, Ganicheva explained that one had to talk quietly and concluded, "The fact that one can hear others is insulting." She pleaded with architects and constructors: "Don't spoil the happiness of 'new residents' by repeating old mistakes!"⁴⁰

Residents also confronted architects and housing officials in person. At a meeting of residents and architects in Leningrad in 1954, one individual

explained, "What's bad is that the noise penetration of partitions is high. People talk in a whisper, but everything can be heard."⁴¹ Some complained about noise from apartments that could be heard while one was in the public spaces of an apartment building. At a meeting of residents and housing officials in Leningrad's Vyborg district in 1962, one resident complained, "When you go along the stairs, the impression is such that it's a nut house—all around voices, laughter, music, shouts. Everything can be heard on the stairs."⁴²

In a review of new housing in Leningrad in 1963, reporters from *Leningradskaiia pravda* found that for one resident "there is no peace from the noise which comes through the walls, the floor, and the ceiling—even the tick-tock of his neighbors' clocks can be heard."⁴³ In 1969, *Vecherniaia Moskva* asked its readership to respond to questions about their apartments and how to improve housing design and construction. Letters were published under the rubric, "A Moscow Apartment. How Should It Be?" One Muscovite commented that noise problems were the "Achilles' heel of our apartment houses." He continued wryly, "I'll tell you a secret: I know all the secrets of my neighbors. Not only are conversations audible, but even the flip of switches. Architects helped out here: the ventilation shafts of kitchens and bathroom-toilet units reliably unite apartments."⁴⁴

In response to these problems, the state conducted a "war on noise," which enlisted medical and public health professionals, and acoustics engineers, to study urban noises and their ill effects in the home, the workplace, and the street. Combined with government decrees, their recommendations were to be used in industry, urban planning, and housing. The campaign illustrated the state's commitment to resolving a problem that plagued mass housing and encroached upon people's enjoyment of their private space. The "war on noise" also enabled its publicists to critique man's relationship to nature and his urban habitat, as well as Soviet industrialization and the promise of transforming man.

Technical manuals on noise and sound proofing predated the mass housing campaign, but were usually intended for engineers and provided little on the historical and cultural aspects of battling noise.⁴⁵ An exception was Aleksandr Marzeev's 1951 guide to municipal hygiene, *Kommunal'naia gigiena*, in which he noted that noise had existed since antiquity, but that the twentieth century had turned it into a threat to an individual's health and endangered the national economy.⁴⁶ Representing the twentieth century as a break from the past was nothing new, but in the Soviet context it was usually associated with the indisputably positive outcomes of the Revolution and industrialization.⁴⁷ When refracted through the lens of noise, however, the twentieth century's break from the past had negative undertones. Marzeev only hinted at this, but later publicists of the "war on noise" would expand upon it.

Marzeev's categorization of noises reflected a division of the city into public and private spaces. He identified three kinds of noises: street noises, noises in the home, and industrial noises. In addition to damage or loss of hearing, Marzeev was interested in how noise impacted "the nervous system and the psychology of the individual." In the communal apartment, he identified three ways in which noise adversely affected an individual: "a) it irritates, tires, and traumatizes the nervous system; b) it infringes upon normal rest, tranquility, and sleep; c) it lowers the ability to work and the productivity of work, particularly mental labor."⁴⁸ In other words, noise affected the individual on three levels: his person, his ability to enjoy his domestic space, and his ability to work.

The state's decision to mount a broader campaign against urban noise coincided with the mass housing campaign in the late 1950s and expanded in the 1960s and 1970s as sound proofing deficiencies in mass housing became more widely apparent. Much of the literature continued to be written by and for health professionals and engineers.⁴⁹ A permanent Commission on the War on Noise was established in 1958 under the Main State Sanitation Inspectorate of the USSR.⁵⁰ Legislation on public health and changes in housing constructions standards were also implemented.⁵¹ Proponents of the "war on noise" praised both capitalist and socialist countries for combating noise and coordinating their work through international bodies such as the International Association on Noise Control, established in 1959, and the ISO (International Organization for Standardization).⁵²

Bulgaria's campaign for noise control shows that socialist countries shared similar approaches to and interpretations of the problem. The sounds of industry in Bulgaria were initially praised in the 1940s and 1950s as the country modernized, but were later reinterpreted as noises that adversely affected public health and productivity. The categorization of noises reflected a division of urban spaces "along a public-private axis" similar to Marzeev's. Improvements in housing design and construction were officially presented as ways to increase labor productivity by ensuring that residents could be fully rested for the next workday and engage in socially beneficial leisure. While never presented as an end in itself, greater privacy in the home was the practical effect of such measures. Furthermore, the Bulgarian campaign against noise allowed state officials, writers of fiction, and urban residents to explore and secure aspects of a quiet, private life that approximated "the classic bourgeois notion of privacy." Battling excessive noise in the Bulgarian home became part of broader efforts at defining proper social conduct and cultural mores.⁵³

Attention to such social and cultural aspects of urban noise likewise characterized the "war on noise" in the Soviet Union. In his 1965 book *The War on Noise* Mikhail Cheskin chided those who failed to see the

dangers of noise and the importance of doing something about it. He was most critical of urban residents, "mostly recent arrivals to the city, [who] even feel some kind of satisfaction and happiness from noise, seeing in it some sort of sign of civilization and even culture."⁵⁴ In his 1971 book *In Search of Silence* Vladimir Chudnov expressed disdain for those "who unceremoniously and scornfully treat the rules of the socialist community and the culture of sound, and the peace and health of their neighbors in apartments and houses." Soviet citizens were to embrace a regime of tranquility. Naturally, the exemplary, quiet citizen was Lenin, who "tried (during the years of emigration) not to bother the neighbors in his apartment and always walked about his room on tip-toes." Chudnov asserted, "The war on noise is the display of respect to those around us, and normal, healthy, mutual relations between people at home and at work."⁵⁵

To underline the seriousness of the situation, some made exaggerated claims about the detrimental effects of noise. Cheskin grimly explained, "One can kill a man with sound." He claimed that the guilty sometimes had been executed in the Middle Ages by being placed directly under ringing bells, the sound of which eventually killed the person. Jumping to the present, he warned that supersonic airplanes flying too close to the ground could shatter windows in houses.⁵⁶ Chudnov asserted that ten individuals in the United States had been paid to take part in a fateful experiment on the effects of a supersonic plane's noise. "The plane flew at a height of 10–12 meters over the heads of these unfortunates. As a result of the noise all 10 individuals were killed."⁵⁷

Cheskin attributed several more social and medical ills to modern urban noises. He claimed that young mothers could suffer such stress and lack of sleep that their breast milk would turn bad. In fact, noise appeared to affect women more than men. Cheskin claimed that a study in England had found that noise created nervous disorders in a third of women and a fourth of men. More frightening was the irrational and aggressive behavior that noise unleashed in animals and humans. Some animals had killed their newborns in a delirium caused by noise, while other animals had even been known to commit suicide.⁵⁸ According to Chudnov, in 1968 the noise of four youths loitering outside an apartment building in the Bronx drove one resident to dispose of one of them with a gun. "The murderer explained to the police that he had lost his self-control because the children were making noise and prevented him from falling asleep."⁵⁹

Cheskin also claimed that modern urban noise reduced life expectancy by eight to twelve years. Noise was a leading factor in various forms of cancer, and children could go blind or develop a stutter after a sudden burst of noise. Noise adversely affected one's cardiovascular system, led to nightmares if heard during sleep, caused various mental illnesses, and made

children irritable and unwilling to eat. Cheskin also cited its role in causing auto deaths. He made the hyperbolic claim that 38 million people had died in the United States in auto wrecks in 1957 alone (as opposed to 24 million dead from infectious diseases), and that noise had been a major factor in many of these accidents.⁶⁰ In a 1972 pamphlet, Chudnov similarly expressed concern about the link to nervous disorders and sleep deprivation. "In West Germany," he lamented, "they annually consume half a billion portions of sleep-inducing remedies or, as they call them, 'tranquility pills' or 'the happy pill,' for a total of 75 million marks."⁶¹

The mass housing campaign was one of the main reasons that concern about noise was broadened into a larger "war on noise" in the 1960s and 1970s. In a survey of 975 Muscovites published in 1964, it was residents of new housing who complained the most about noises coming from within their own buildings such as music, conversations, the elevator, and the garbage chute.⁶² After praising the great number of people who had received new apartments, Cheskin wrote, "it is now time to move from quantitative achievements to qualitative ones. The penetration of noise in new houses has become the talk of the town; moreover, it is not possible to eradicate this problem after a building has been constructed."⁶³ Chudnov noted the new consumer items of the home that created excessive noises. In addition to sewing machines, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, refrigerators, and alarm clocks, he explained that even electric razors created too much noise, reaching the decibel levels of a truck or autobus.⁶⁴

Industry and technology had caused noise pollution in the home and the city, but publicists of the "war on noise" were confident that science and technological progress would solve the problem. "Is man capable of putting a stop to the invasion of noise and decrease its influence?" Chudnov wondered. "Science, practice, and experience answer this question in the affirmative."⁶⁵ He reported that new models for refrigerators, sewing machines, and washing machines were being developed that reduced their previous noise levels. Doorbells were designed to sound a melody instead of ringing. Even alarm clocks would be transformed into a system of flashing lights based on the green, yellow, and red lights of a stop light.⁶⁶

Yet Cheskin and Chudnov also used the "war on noise" to articulate anxieties about urbanity and the technological transformation of domestic life in the twentieth century. According to Cheskin, man "had grown accustomed over millions of years of evolution to a background of optimal noise—the varied and unobtrusive sounds of nature." The modern world, in contrast, had fundamentally broken man's equilibrium with the natural world. Cheskin lamented, "But here unnatural sounds invade the animal and plant world—sounds which a million years of evolution had not known."⁶⁷ Even the belief in science and technology as the solution came

under doubt. In Cheskin's book, *The Invisible Enemy*, an acoustics academician considered why architects of the present were incapable of maintaining the high standards of sound proofing achieved in antiquity. "Unfortunately, at this very time, when constructors and architects are armed, as it is said, 'to the teeth' with the physical and mathematical laws of acoustics, buildings are often constructed with poor sound proofing."⁶⁸

Cheskin chastised those who foolishly believed that "the human organism, having adapted itself over the course of thousands of years to gradual changes in the conditions of the outer environment, will adapt itself to noise." He found such faith in nature's ability "to develop defensive powers in man" to be "theoretical" at best and potentially disastrous at worst. "Practically speaking, mankind risks having to pay millions of lives for such an adaptation." In contrast to past human evolution, contemporary noises were introduced so rapidly that nature simply had no time to create the necessary defenses.⁶⁹ While focused on the issue of noise, his analysis raised criticism of two ideas central to Soviet ideology: first, that man could and should be transformed by simply changing his environment;⁷⁰ and second, that rapid industrialization had been necessary, despite the heavy costs in human suffering.⁷¹

If noise pollution was a major symptom of the larger problems of industrialization, was there a solution? In his book, Chudnov provided partial answers. The separate apartment—when correctly designed and constructed, and inhabited by civil and quiet residents—was one urban space that afforded the urban dweller an escape from the city and its noises. Yet Chudnov's sense of a person's private space reached beyond the home. A person should be able to find parks and other places in the city where he could rest in absolute quiet and solitude. Lest there be any doubts, Chudnov explained that this did not run counter to socialist values. "One can hardly speak in the given instance about an unhealthy individualism, the opposition of oneself to the collective, a separation from society. The wish to be in silence, to be alone with nature is a person's natural tendency and right."⁷²

Conclusion

Massive campaigns that mobilized human and material resources for a greater cause were nothing new when Khrushchev set about building the separate apartment. Collectivization, industrialization, terror, and war were the defining mass campaigns of the Stalin era. What was different about mass housing? This was the first time that the Soviet state had conducted a campaign mobilizing enormous human and material resources that enjoyed the nearly unanimous support of its citizenry and, simultaneously, did not

result in the massive destruction of human life. The state mobilized the resources, people received separate apartments, and nobody got killed. Calling a campaign against poor sound proofing a "war on noise" underscored, in a sometimes comical way, how much times had changed.

Notwithstanding the absence of high costs in human life, the mass housing campaign was a quintessentially Soviet campaign: a systemic solution to a systemic problem. But it produced unintended consequences such as mass transit crises and noise pollution, and rising expectations among urban residents for better apartments, better neighborhoods, and more furniture.⁷³ State authorities responded with more systemic solutions, leading to yet more unintended consequences. In the case of the mass transit crisis in Leningrad, the city soviet's solution inadvertently deprived many working women of control over their nonwork time. In the case of noise, the state mounted a campaign to secure residents' control over their private space. As this essay has shown, this basic aspect of private life—control over time and space—was something that urban residents and sometimes state authorities worked to secure.

This essay has also explored the outcomes of these efforts to secure private life. As far as we know, the women in Leningrad did not convince the city to amend its decision. Yet their experience raised their awareness of themselves as the social group most likely to lose major benefits of the separate apartment and sharpened their ability to represent a flawed urban planning policy as a working women's issue. The "war on noise" promised actual improvements in housing construction and urban planning. Some of its publicists used the campaign to articulate anxieties about urban life and industrialization. Their reflections even suggested that transforming man through his environment might be dangerous, even undesirable, and that a reconciliation of modern man to nature was in order. In exposing the limitations of mass housing, the women of Leningrad and the publicists of the "war on noise" cast doubt on the feasibility of such modern systemic projects.

Notes

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2. *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1959 godu* (Moscow: Statistika, 1960), 568. *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.* (Moscow: Statistika, 1968), 677, 681. *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1974 g.* (Moscow: Statistika, 1975), 581, 585. The number of families was calculated by using the average family size in 1959, 3.7 persons. See G. M. Maksimov, ed., *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1970 goda* (Moscow: Statistika, 1976), 262.
3. Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, *Azbuka kommunizma* (Gomel': Gos. izd-vo, 1921), 273–276, 315–316.
4. On the origins of the communal apartment and its history through the 1930s, see Hubertus F. Jahn, "The Housing Revolution in Petrograd, 1917–1920," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 38 (1990), 212–227; Nataliia B. Lebina, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' sovetskogo goroda: Normy i anomalii, 1920–1930 gody* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Neva," 1999), 178–204. For analyses of communal apartment life, see Ekaterina Gerasimova, "Sovetskaia kommunal'naia kvartira kak sotsial'nyi institut: Istoriko-sotsiologicheskii analiz," Candidate dissertation, European University in St. Petersburg, 2000; Il'ia Utekhin, *Ocherki kommunal'nogo byta* (Moscow: O. G. I., 2001); Ekaterina Gerasimova, "Public Privacy in the Soviet Communal Apartment," in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 207–230.
5. S. Frederick Starr, "Visionary Town Planning during the Cultural Revolution," in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 207–240.
6. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 157–197.
7. Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment," 42–49.
8. These observations on the Khrushchev regime's decision to embark on the mass housing campaign are based upon the research and writing of my larger study, Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment."
9. Gerasimova, "Public Privacy."
10. Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3–14, 181–182.
11. Nataliia B. Lebina and Aleksandr N. Chistikov, *Obyvatel' i reformy: Kartiny povsednevnoi zhizni gorozhan v gody nepa i khrushchevskogo desiatiletiia* (St. Petersburg: Dmitri Bulanin, 2003), 162–194.
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13. Alfred John DiMaio, Jr., *Soviet Urban Housing: Problems and Policies* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 164–172, 202–203.
14. Oleg Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 333–363.
15. Susan E. Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (2005), 289–316.

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18. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 279–354.
19. A. Peremyslov, "Kvartira v novom dome," *Izvestiia*, December 27, 1956, 2.
20. Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment," 393–466.
21. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (TsGA SPb), f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, ll. 2–5.
22. This percentage is based on the assumption that all employees lived in the city and none in the oblast. The city's population was 3,218,000 on January 1, 1964, and 3,261,000 on January 1, 1966. *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1963 godu* (Moscow: Statistika, 1965), 22; *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1965 g.* (Moscow: Statistika, 1966), 34.
23. On women's roles in production and social reproduction as they developed in the West and the Soviet Union, see Ta'iana Iu. Zhurzhenko, "Social Reproduction as a Problem in Feminist Theory," *Russian Studies in History* 40, no. 3 (2001–2002), 70–90.
24. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, ll. 2–4.
25. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, l. 3.
26. The letter writers were alluding to a major labor reform of the Khrushchev period: reduction of the workday to seven hours. See Mary McAuley, *Labour Disputes in Soviet Russia, 1957–1965* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 107–111.
27. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, ll. 2, 5, 44–47.
28. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, ll. 47–48.
29. Gerasimova, "Public Privacy," 215–217.
30. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, ll. 148–149.
31. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, l. 157.
32. For example, P. Maslov, "Vrem'ia v bytu," *Novyi mir*, no. 10 (1960), 157–165. See also Murray Yanowitch, "Soviet Patterns of Time Use and Concepts of Leisure," *Soviet Studies*, 15, no. 1 (1963), 17–37.
33. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, l. 157.
34. TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 42, d. 1001, ll. 5, 44, 46.
35. For example, see Anna N. Cherepakina, *Blagoustroistvo kvartiry* (Moscow: izd-vo Min. kommun. khoz. RSFSR, 1961), 12–35.
36. Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment," 341–391, 467–546.
37. Gerasimova, "Sovetskaia kommunal'naia kvartira," 81–82.
38. Ia. Linetskii and A. Peremyslov, "Novyi dom," *Izvestiia*, June 26, 1955, 2.
39. Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment," 341–391.
40. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (RGAE), f. 339, op. 1, d. 1097, ll. 97–97ob.
41. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva Sankt-Peterburga (TsGALI SPb), f. 341, op. 1, d. 386, ll. 1, 14.
42. TsGA SPb, f. 6276, op. 273, d. 1270, l. 41.

43. V. Kupriianov et al., "Posle novosel'ia," *Leningradskaia pravda*, July 13, 1963, 2.
44. "Moskovskaia kvartira. Kak ei byt'?" *Vecherniaia Moskva*, October 25, 1969, 2.
45. For example, S. P. Alekseev et al., *Zvukoizoliatsiia v stroitel'stve* (Moscow, 1949).
46. Aleksandr N. Marzhev, *Kommunal'naia gigiena* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo meditsinskoi lit-ry, 1951), 133.
47. See, e.g., the Third Party Program (1961): "O programme kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz," in *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuz v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, Vol. 8 (1959–1965)* (Moscow: Izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1972), 202–206.
48. Marzhev, *Kommunal'naia gigiena*, 136–137, 431.
49. I. I. Slavin, "Nauchnaia konferentsiia po bor'be s shumami i deistviiu shuma na organizm," *Akusticheskii zhurnal*, 3, no. 1 (1957), 83–85. M. N. Grigor'eva and A. D. Rashkova, "Gigienicheskaia otsenka krupnopanel'nykh domov konstruktsii V. P. Lagutenko," *Gigiena i sanitariia*, no. 7 (1964), 75–77; and Georgii L. Osipov, *Zashchita zdaniia ot shuma* (Moscow: Izd-vo lit-ry po stroitel'stvu, 1972).
50. "O sozdanii komissii po bor'be s shumom pri glavnoi gosudarstvennoi sanitarnoi inspektsii SSSR," *Akusticheskii zhurnal* 5, no. 2 (1959), 257–258.
51. Vladimir I. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1971), 8–9, 84–85, 125; Inna L. Karagodina et al., *Bor'ba s shumom v gorodakh* (Moscow: Izd-vo "Meditsina," 1972), 9.
52. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny*, 124–125. Karagodina, *Bor'ba s shumom*, 7, 11; V. P. Trofimov, *Problema bor'by s promyshlennym i bytovym shumom* (Kiev, 1969), 47.
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55. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny*, 93–94, 118.
56. Cheskin, *Bor'ba s shumom*, 4.
57. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny*, 6.
58. Cheskin, *Bor'ba s shumom*, 6, 8, 11.
59. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny*, 7.
60. Cheskin, *Bor'ba s shumom*, 6–8, 11–12.
61. V. I. Chudnov, *Transport i bor'ba s shumom* (Moscow: Znanie, 1972), 4.
62. I. L. Karagodina et al., *Gorodskie i zhilishchno-kommunalnye shumy i bor'ba s nimi* (Moscow: Izd-vo "Meditsina," 1964), 62–64.
63. Cheskin, *Bor'ba s shumom*, 22.
64. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny*, 90–91.
65. Chudnov, *Transport*, 5.
66. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny*, 91–92.
67. Cheskin, *Bor'ba s shumom*, 5.
68. Mikhail S. Cheskin, *Nezrimyi vrag* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1966), 111–112.
69. Cheskin, *Bor'ba s shumom*, 11.

70. Discourses on kitchen designs and women's role in constructing communism reflected a revival of this ethos. See Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen."
71. During the mass housing campaign, housing shortages were cited as an unfortunate, but inevitable outcome of rapid industrialization. See A. I. Shneerson, *Chto takoe zhilishchnyi vopros* (Moscow: Izd-vo VPS i AON pri TsK KPSS, 1959), 61–62.
72. Chudnov, *V poiskakh tishiny*, 75–100, 112.
73. Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment," 341–546.

CHAPTER NINE

PRIVATE MATTERS OR PUBLIC CRIMES: THE EMERGENCE OF DOMESTIC HOOLIGANISM IN THE SOVIET UNION, 1939–1966

Brian LaPierre

An illustration in a 1964 issue of *Krokodil* depicts a young man roaming the city streets and harassing innocent pedestrians.¹ This was the stereotype of hooliganism that many Soviet citizens encountered in films and read about in novels and newspapers. This stereotypical portrait reflected common ideas about who hooligans were and what they did. It also reflected contemporary concerns over urban crime, youth culture, alcoholism, and public safety. It reflected many things. But, like most stereotypes, it did not reflect reality. By the mid-1960s, the typical Soviet hooligan was not an adolescent loitering on a city street and assaulting pedestrians. He was a married man who stayed at home with his family and who victimized his wife and children.

Reports on hooliganism in the early 1950s noted that “streets and courtyards (*dvory*)” were the most common sites of hooliganism.² However, the apartment began to displace the street and the courtyard as the center for hooligan activity in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. The relocation of hooliganism to the apartment transformed the identity of hooligan and victim. Husband and wife were much more likely to be parties to hooliganism than the stereotypical strangers in the night. Soviet family life, long heralded as a refuge from social instability, was itself a place of violence, victimization, and disorder for many Soviet citizens.³

Domestic hooliganism made abusive husbands and loud neighbors into a new class of deviants. It also made the public and the private into objects of debate. In cases of domestic hooliganism, police, judges, and procuracy officials were forced to define the borders of the public place. They were also forced to decide when events that went on behind closed doors, such as spousal abuse and family arguments, switched from being private matters

and became public crimes. In this manner, the emergence of domestic hooliganism is more than just a story of the relocation of hooliganism to the home. It is also a case study in the negotiation and transformation of public/private boundaries in the post-Stalinist period.

The Public Paradigm of Hooliganism

The People's Commissariat of Municipal Services of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (Narkomkhoz RSFSR) and the People's Commissariat of Justice of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (Narkomiust RSFSR) launched the debate over domestic hooliganism and the multiple meanings of the public by criminalizing misbehavior in communal apartments in a July 1935 circular (*tsirkuliar*). Designed to change a common site of interpersonal conflict into a zone of cultured living, the circular announced that the pathologies that commonly afflicted communal life, such as noisy drinking bouts and violent arguments, would now be considered as hooliganism.⁴ Inadvertently, the Narkomkhoz/Narkomiust RSFSR circular launched a debate about what hooliganism was and where it could occur that would transform hooligan prosecution patterns and challenge the unstable boundaries that separated public from private and individual from collective. With the 1935 circular "On the Fight Against Hooliganism in Apartments" Narkomkhoz and Narkomiust RSFSR brought hooliganism indoors and, by deciding to treat private deviants in the same manner as their public counterparts, created a new type of domestic hooliganism (*bytovoe khuliganstvo*).

However, the new circular ran into determined opposition from high-ranking members in the Soviet judiciary. The USSR Supreme Court housed a number of vocal critics of the Narkomiust/Narkomkhoz RSFSR circular. In an April 1939 Plenum, the court warned that the circular had, by expanding the application of hooliganism to new spaces, created a new type of domestic hooliganism that was not defined in republican criminal codes.⁵ By enabling legal workers to read hooliganism into everyday domestic dramas, the court worried that the circular had made hooliganism into a catch all category and obscured the meaning of a crime notorious for its opaqueness, elasticity, and ambiguity. This prompted criticism from justices who complained: "[although] hooliganism is an action that expresses disrespect for society we apply this article when a quarrel happens between a husband and a wife in their homes."⁶ They noted that the Narkomiust/Narkomkhoz RSFSR circular, by transforming the commonplace into the criminal, created a spike in hooligan cases that threatened to overwhelm an overstretched judicial infrastructure with the everyday "squabbles" that plagued life in overcrowded urban housing.⁷

The response of the USSR Supreme Court to the Narkomiust/Narkomkhoz RSFSR circular was to promulgate a public paradigm of hooliganism. The court would define hooliganism as a crime that took place only in public places. In an April 1939 resolution, the USSR Supreme Court announced the public parameters of hooliganism by defining it as an "activity that is connected with violence, damage or destruction of property . . . that is committed in a club, in a theater or in other public places."⁸ The correlation of hooliganism with a defined set of public locations was extended in an August 1940 decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. The 1940 decree identified a set of specific sites, "enterprises, institutions and public places," where hooliganism could be committed. The USSR Supreme Soviet decree invalidated and made contradictory the Narkomiust/Narkomkhoz RSFSR notion of domestic hooliganism by giving hooliganism public parameters that excluded the communal apartment as a site of possible deviance.⁹

Linking hooliganism to public places was only one means by which the court sought to prevent the transformation of "petty apartment squabbles" into hooliganism. In order to separate hooliganism from the home, the USSR Supreme Court stated that hooliganism could occur only between strangers and not between persons engaged in a personal, familial, or intimate relationship. The court, in its April 1939 resolution, asserted that crimes, such as "beatings" (*naneseniia poboev*), and "insults" (*oskorbleniia*), could be prosecuted as hooliganism only if their "goal" was to "display explicit disrespect for society and not when their motives [were] connected with *the personal relationship between the guilty party and the victim*."¹⁰ Like acts in private spaces, acts in private relationships were denied consideration as hooliganism.

The late 1950s and 1960s witnessed the rollback of this public paradigm of hooliganism. During this time, local law enforcement officials were trying and convicting a growing number of domestic hooligans despite the central orders aimed at curbing this practice. In 1964, the USSR Supreme Court revealed that half of all cases of hooliganism in Moscow were committed in apartments.¹¹ The Tatar Autonomous Republic (ASSR) reported, in the same year, that the majority of hooligan acts were committed in apartments.¹² The RSFSR Supreme Court reported in 1966 that the apartment was the main site of repeat petty hooligan offenses and the victim was, in the majority of cases, either the male or female head of household.¹³ Analyzing figures from the second half of 1966, noted criminologist A. A. Gertsenzon reported that 41 percent of hooliganism occurred in "living quarters," almost double the amount that occurred in "streets and courtyards." He also noted that every third act of malicious hooliganism took place in a communal apartment.¹⁴ In 1967, the Mordovian ASSR reported that over 60 percent of the hooliganism in the republic took place in

apartments and that the victim was most often the wife or the relative of the accused.¹⁵

The local domestication of hooliganism put increasing pressure on the public paradigm. Attempts that were made to address the mismatch between local practice and legal decree foundered amid disagreement over the domestic hooligan issue. Some state agencies were experimenting in the mid-1950s with expanding the definition of the public place to include such communal spaces as apartments and dormitories. A 1955 draft decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, for example, stated: "we must include in public places, for which criminal responsibility for hooliganism is established, multi-family apartments and dormitories."¹⁶ However, this draft was never passed.

Domestic hooliganism even found some champions within the top echelons of the state's law enforcement bureaucracy. At a January 1957 meeting, the head of the USSR Procuracy, R. A. Rudenko, emphatically resisted the attempts of his subordinates to limit the usage and expansion of hooliganism to domestic matters.

The position . . . that it is impossible to apply the decree on petty hooliganism to persons committing hooliganism in separate apartments [*chastnye kvartiry*] is incorrect. In December 1920, V. I. Lenin wrote "persons who keep their living quarters in a state of filth and violate the rules of public order must be sentenced to one month of imprisonment." Even in these cases Lenin thought it necessary to make convictions. Is spousal abuse in a private home [*chastnyi dom*] really not a public concern? Even here the decree must be active.¹⁷

As late as 1966, Rudenko was arguing that "violations of public order in apartments should be treated as hooliganism" urging the USSR Supreme Court to do something about the domestic hooliganism "that is worrying our citizens so much." However the chairman of the USSR Supreme Court, A. F. Gorkin, countered that legitimizing domestic hooliganism would "dilute the meaning of hooliganism" and flood the courts with trivial cases. By shelving any central decrees on apartment hooliganism at the draft level and passing the issue off to republican courts, opponents of domestic hooliganism were able to quash debate on this issue and preserve an embattled public paradigm.¹⁸

The USSR Supreme Court sought to contain the domestication of hooliganism that was happening in some localities by simply continuing to reassert that hooliganism was a public crime between anonymous third parties. For example, the USSR and RSFSR supreme courts, in their guidelines on judicial practice (*sudebnye praktiki*), continued to voice the prohibition against applying hooliganism to intimate relationships in

domestic spaces.¹⁹ Instead, the USSR Supreme Court delegated the task of defining contested terms such as the public place downward to republican level courts. Republican authorities, it was hoped, would tackle the thorny issue of defining hooliganism's spatial and relational parameters in the new criminal codes that they were preparing (ca. 1960).²⁰ However, republican level supreme courts were as reluctant as the USSR Supreme Court to take the initiative in deciding the domestic hooligan issue. Instead of resolving hooliganism's interpretive dilemmas, republican supreme courts kicked them back up to a USSR Supreme Court that was uninterested in solving this issue.²¹

The courts' unsuccessful attempts to deal with domestic hooliganism empowered, rather than hampered, local actors in the criminal justice system. The USSR Supreme Court, by its policy paralysis, silence, and inertia, surrendered the initiative on domestic hooliganism to local law enforcement bodies. These bodies used the interpretative freedom that legal ambiguity and the center's silence gave them to domesticate hooliganism by expanding its spatial and relational parameters to encompass the interpersonal pathologies of the everyday. In particular, ambiguous laws enabled lower level legal workers to see hooliganism in novel ways. In their everyday practice of applying crimes to cases, local legal actors invested hooliganism with new referential meaning by applying obscure centrally created labels (hooliganism) to new contexts and situations (domestic disturbances). Local courts, police, and procurators, by applying hooliganism in novel ways, not only fleshed out the center's abstract ideas, but created new (and sometimes unintended and unwelcome) meanings for old terms. Elites in the judicial system were particularly troubled as the mapping practices of local legal workers transformed even the most apparently innocuous and commonplace "domestic drama" into a hooligan crime against society. Through their actions, local interpreters recreated forbidden types of hooliganism and turned feuding apartment dwellers into domestic deviants.

Hooliganism and the Boundaries of Public Space

The problem of policing hooliganism during the Khrushchev period revolved around the problem of defining a "public place" (*obshchestvennoe mesto*). The correlation of hooliganism to the public place saddled the state's hooligan discourse with an ambiguous term that was not defined clearly and raised questions about public/private boundaries that the state was not prepared to settle. Controversial issues that were generated by the state's coupling of hooliganism to the public place (such as whether an apartment was a public space for the purposes of prosecuting hooliganism) were brushed over or ignored.

Instead of defining what they meant by a public place, Russian lawmakers would increase the confusion surrounding this keyword by deleting all reference to it in their new criminal code. The 1960 RSFSR Criminal Code definition of hooliganism differed from the 1940 decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet by removing the list of “public places” in which hooliganism could be committed. As we have seen, the 1940 decree had imagined a linkage between hooliganism as a public crime and a set of public spaces to which it was limited. However, the 1960 RSFSR redefinition of hooliganism severed this link. The 1960 RSFSR Criminal Code suggested that hooliganism was now to be understood not as being limited to specific public sites but rather as “any activity that is rudely disruptive of social order and expresses explicit disrespect for society *regardless of the place of its commission*.”²² By implying that what made hooliganism a crime was not where it occurred but what was the offender’s motive, the decree, jurists argued, appeared to legitimize the application of hooliganism to an unbounded domain of sites that included “homes, communal or private apartments and rooms.”²³

However, the RSFSR Supreme Court, as late as 1966, continued to couple hooliganism with a restrictive notion of the public place insisting to lower level courts that in cases of domestic disturbances “public order is not violated because the activity does not take place on a street or in other public places.”²⁴ However, neither the USSR nor the RSFSR supreme courts defined what they meant by a “public place.” A confused justice, for example, commented at a 1964 USSR Supreme Court Plenum discussion on hooliganism: “it would be useful to give a definition of the what we mean by a ‘public place’ because many courts have no firm idea about what that is.”²⁵ By failing to address what they meant by a public place, the High Court unintentionally gave local law enforcement the opportunity to define public/private boundaries for themselves. Instead of stopping domestic hooligan prosecutions, the courts increased it by ceding to local law enforcement the interpretive power to translate the private and interpersonal into the public idiom of hooliganism.

Hooliganism was not a public crime committed in a public place, but rather a crime that problematized the public by forcing legal workers to decide for themselves, in their daily casework, where the public ended and the private began. Central and local law enforcement officials, through the practice of labeling domestic misbehavior as hooliganism, were forced to assert and sometimes challenge their legal and cultural beliefs on what separated the public from the private and the individual from the social. Simply by deciding where the category of hooliganism could and could not be applied, jurists, citizens, and newspapers continually redrew and debated the ambiguous and unstable border between the public sphere and

the private space. Far from being clear-cut, the lines separating public and private varied according to the interpreter and were fluid. In some cases, the parties involved saw the home and the actions occurring within it as public. In other cases, the parties read the status of similar spaces in the opposite fashion and interpreted domestic spaces and activities as private matters.

The line separating public from private was so unclear and the status of spaces so contested that some hooligan cases revolved around the issue of whether the scene of the crime was a public place or not. The USSR Supreme Court, for example, overturned a hooligan conviction in the case of a man who had assaulted a traveler because its chairman considered that the deserted rural road on which the incident happened was not a public place and therefore not a valid site of hooliganism.²⁶ Newspapers ran articles detailing how citizens' attempts to stop domestic misbehavior were stymied by disagreements on where to draw the public/private border. For example, a 1955 *Literaturnaia gazeta* article presented a conflict between legal workers, who were strictly applying the 1940 USSR Supreme Soviet decree, and the opinion of the paper that the boundaries separating the public from the private must be rethought in cases of moral deviancy. Describing the assaults on tenants, "shouts," "noise," and "hysterics" caused by a pair of apartment hooligans, *Literaturnaia gazeta* argued: "Why was their unworthy and anti-social conduct not brought before the court? Certainly no one can dispute that their [the hooligans'] conduct is antisocial. But, you see, it takes place in the apartment, and in the ideas of some jurists, the apartment is not a public place and therefore it is impossible to prosecute them for hooliganism."²⁷

Krokodil in 1955 also published an article devoted to the apartment hooligan, which repeated the call to redefine the communal apartment as public and to reconfigure the private acts of "apartment troublemakers" against fellow tenants as hooligan assaults on the social order at large. Setting up a distinction between the prosecutor's belief that hooliganism could not be applied to apartments and the paper's opinion that hooligans should be punished regardless of the site in which they committed their acts, *Krokodil* lamented that

[i]n the rare cases in which a people's court does decide to evict some hooligan, the city court unfailingly reverses the decision. The reason is always the same: the hooligan activity has not occurred in a public place but in an apartment, behind closed doors. But this is strange reasoning. If an apartment hooligan were to hit somebody in the face with a dirty rag on the street he would immediately be sentenced. Yet apparently at home you can fight as much as you want . . . "You understand," said the prosecutor with embarrassment, "[it happened] behind closed doors."²⁸

The apartment, far from being a self-evident space, was a contested site onto which jurists and citizens projected their views of public and private. As we have seen earlier, some interpreters viewed the apartment as outside the realm of the public. Others, however, saw the same space in a very different manner. In fact, it was so self-evident to some legal workers that the multifamily communal apartment was a public space that many advocates of domestic hooliganism merely asserted, rather than argued, this point. Taking advantage of the center's silence and the elasticity of its terminology, such legal workers unilaterally deemed the domestic as a public space. For example, the chief justice of the Moscow City Court asserted before the USSR Supreme Court: "I think that we need to apply the same punishments to domestic hooliganism as we do to hooliganism in a public place, *because the apartment is also a public place*."²⁹ An official at the Russian Ministry of Justice, noting the local rise of domestic hooligan convictions approvingly in a 1957 report, likewise claimed that "the communal apartment, in which a great number of citizens live, is a public place [*obshchestvennoe mesto*] and the aforementioned actions have been ruled correctly as matters of public, rather than private [*chastnyi*], interest."³⁰

Originally, jurists, who sought to legitimize domestic hooliganism, argued that only the high-traffic, common areas of communal apartments, such as kitchens and bathrooms, were in fact public places and, therefore, possible sites of hooligan activity. However, local legal workers challenged this interpretation of the public by increasingly applying hooliganism in the 1960s to new domestic spaces like the single-family apartment.³¹ By making the single-family apartment and the rooms within it sites of hooliganism, local legal workers stretched the domain of hooliganism (and the meaning of the public) to encompass domestic areas once thought of in private terms. The movement of hooliganism from common spaces, like the communal apartment kitchen, to private rooms and single-family apartments undermined the public paradigm and worried its advocates. The deputy chairman of the USSR Supreme Court announced anxiously in a 1964 report to the court that "there occurs not only so-called domestic and apartment hooliganism but now room [*komnatoe*] hooliganism has begun to appear. . . . It has reached the point that any infringement against a person committed in a separate and private room is tried as hooliganism."³²

Concerned citizens also increasingly questioned the public paradigm's inscription of hooliganism within a narrow definition of the public. At a public meeting in 1955, a worker from Khabarovsk *krai* asked the USSR Procuracy to "expand the circle of activities which can be considered hooliganism so that any action which expresses clear disrespect for society can be defined as hooliganism wherever it occurs and not just actions taking place in areas of public use." A railway worker in Alma Ata, likewise, remarked to

representatives of the USSR Procuracy that “it is impossible to tolerate such people as hooligans in our society and it shouldn’t matter whether they commit hooliganism at home or in any other place.”³³ A man from Rostov, noting that the threat of apartment hooliganism was not addressed by current laws, demanded that the state pass legislation to deal with this problem:

If a person committed an undignified, hooligan, slanderous act in a public place, a policeman would immediately lead him off to the local precinct. The hooligan would then receive for his actions a punishment based on the law. But why is there no law or no article in the criminal code for apartment hooliganism? Why do these hooligans remain outside the law and without punishment? Why? Who gave them the right to commit hooliganism?³⁴

The coupling of hooliganism to public places and strangers, according to many citizens, had transformed the apartment into a space in which troublemakers could act with impunity. The separation of the public place from the apartment, they maintained, had created a double standard on how the law treated public and private behavior. A woman, for example, wrote to the USSR Supreme Soviet:

You write about establishing criminal responsibility for appearing drunk on the street and in public places. But what about in the home? Is it perfectly alright to act like a hooligan at home? A drunk thinks that when he is at home he is the master of everything. He can break the dishes. He can bust the furniture. He can fight with his family and with the neighbors.³⁵

Through their letters and local prosecutory practices, local citizens and legal workers undermined the Supreme Court’s distinction between the apartment and the public space and expanded rather than rolled back the growth of domestic hooliganism. The dissonance between center directives (hooliganism could occur only in public places rather than in apartments), legal definition (hooliganism was no longer linked with a notion of the public place), the writings of legal interpreters (the apartment was also a public place in some instances), and local practices (acts in homes were being prosecuted as hooliganism in large numbers) caused confusion and granted local actors the interpretive freedom to redefine public/private boundaries in flexible ways. The ambiguity of the key word “public place” allowed local legal workers to prosecute a type of domestic deviance that linked the formerly unbridgeable categories of hooliganism and home by locating the apartment within an expanded conception of the public.

The growth of domestic hooliganism not only challenged the separation of domestic spaces from public places. It also collapsed the distinction between private matters and public concerns. As we see in what follows,

hooliganism was gradually “domesticated” as public intervention in private worlds obscured the boundaries between them both and turned private matters, like domestic violence, into public concerns. Domestic hooliganism evolved between 1955 and 1964 from a private matter that stayed “behind closed doors” to a public concern that was being tried as a crime against social order.

Private Matters or Public Crimes

In the 1940s and early 1950s, many defendants successfully argued in court that their actions were not hooliganism because they were involved in a personal relationship with the victim. By demonstrating a personal history, the defendant could show that his actions were motivated by animus toward a specific individual rather than by the disrespect toward the social order that was the *sine qua non* of Soviet hooliganism. The defendant, by pursuing this strategy, could argue that his case was a private matter (*lichnoe delo*) rather than a public concern (*obshchestvennoe delo*) deserving criminal prosecution. Defendants could win their freedom by showing that their misdeed was, as the lawyer of a convicted hooligan argued in an appeal, “a typical domestic quarrel devoid of any element of hooliganism.”³⁶ Defendants were even coached by defense lawyers and their fellow criminals to dream up any kind of personal connection with the victim in order to disprove the hooligan charges brought against them.³⁷

As we have seen, the USSR Supreme Court made this type of defense possible by drawing a sharp line between personal relationships, no matter how dysfunctional, and public crimes like hooliganism. The public paradigm they created rested on a strict separation of private matters from public concerns. The interpersonal pathologies of the domestic world were viewed as private matters that, however unfortunate, should be dealt with in the family or as cases of private complaint (*dela chastnogo obvineniia*).

Yet at the same time as it was denying the validity of domestic hooliganism, the High Court changed the definition of hooliganism in ways that allowed local law enforcement to try personal affairs as cases of hooliganism. Until 1953, hooliganism was defined as a crime between anonymous third parties. In that year, the USSR Supreme Court dropped the last part of its April 1939 resolution that invalidated the application of hooliganism to cases where the parties knew each other and were involved in a personal relationship.³⁸ By deleting the restriction that made the everyday interactions of friends, family, and neighbors exempt from consideration as hooliganism, the 1953 USSR Supreme Court resolution opened a space for local legal workers to apply hooliganism to dysfunctional personal relationships.

Taking advantage of the silence of the new RSFSR criminal code on the issue of whether hooliganism was possible within families, many lower courts began to apply hooliganism to family scandals in large numbers. In 1962, it was reported that 43 percent of the persons who were convicted of hooliganism in the city of Irkutsk committed their crime against a family member. In Kalinin and Sverdlovsk *oblasti*, 33 percent of convicted hooligans performed their hooligan acts against their families; in Kostroma *oblast'* 35 percent; in Ivanovo *oblast'* 38 percent; in Murmansk *oblast'* 35 percent; in Novosibirsk over 40 percent; in Gor'kii *oblast'* 39.5 percent; and in Karelia ASSR 35.1 percent. The RSFSR Supreme Court reported in 1966 that over 40 percent of those convicted of petty hooliganism had been detained for acts against their families.³⁹

Light beatings, defamation (*kleveta*), and insults traded between apartment residents and family members had been treated as cases of private complaint (*dela chastnogo obvineniia*). Such cases were initiated only after the victim filed a complaint and could be terminated by reconciliation between the parties.⁴⁰ However, proponents of domestic hooliganism argued that physical and verbal abuse within the household were matters of social rather than individual concern and therefore should not be treated as cases of personal complaint. They maintained that domestic hooliganism often had significant spill over effects that transformed private interpersonal scandals into legitimate issues of public concern and intervention.⁴¹ Moreover, critics of the court's "hands off" approach to the interpersonal pathologies of the private world argued that such a stance rested on a discredited bourgeois ideology of privacy and a sharp separation of domestic/public spheres that was at odds with socialist collectivism.⁴² They were aided in this by new ideas on socialist morality that questioned the sharp distinction the USSR Supreme Court had posited between personal affairs and public responsibilities. The discourse on socialist morality overturned the distinction between public concerns and private matters by redefining the private as a space for public intervention and control and by conflating private/individual interests with public/collective ones.⁴³ As the boundaries separating private matters from public concerns eroded, domestic vices transformed from personal problems to public crimes. Domestic disputes changed from family matters that were nobody's business to social ills that called for public intervention and criminal prosecution.

The growing prosecution of domestic hooliganism grew out of and was fuelled by demands that the paternalistic state get involved in policing domestic behavior and personal problems via public institutions. These demands originated from both the top and the bottom of the Soviet system. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, for example, advocated increased public policing of the domestic sphere. After

noting that the domestic sphere was the place where “hooliganism and other survivals of the past flourish most freely,” the chairman of the Central Committee’s Ideological Commission, L. F. Il’ichev, argued at a June 1963 Central Committee Plenum: “it is time to expand the wide front for the struggle to strengthen and develop communist norms in domestic life, to run a fresh breeze into the back alleys of domestic life.”⁴⁴ The first secretary of the Kuibyshev *Oblast’* Party Committee, A. M. Tokarev, was even more explicit in insisting that the domestic should be open to public policing declaring at the same Plenum: “such vices as drunkenness, hooliganism and religious obscurantism occur most of all in the family. Therefore, it is necessary to attack these vices here in the home and the best means for that is the collective.”⁴⁵

Battered wives, one of the most common victims of hooliganism, were particularly outspoken about the need to hold domestic deviants publicly accountable for their behavior within the home.⁴⁶ Empowered by state anticrime policy, battered wives used criminal labels instrumentally in order to draft public agencies into private quarrels. In doing so, they often had to weigh the economic risks associated with imprisoning the family’s main wage earner. For example, the procurator of Chernoiarskii *raion*, Astrakhan *oblast’* wrote to the journal *Sotsialisticheskaia zakonnost’* that abused wives rarely sought legal redress against their abusive husbands “not only in order to preserve the family but because the court’s verdict would punish them again by depriving the family of a breadwinner.”⁴⁷ A police officer told the USSR Supreme Soviet of the bind battered wives faced in using the courts against their abusers:

Wives usually endure this [abuse] for a long time but when they lose patience then they come and request: “Put him in jail for twenty four hours.” Then you explain that such a measure of punishment does not exist and that their husband can only be sent to prison for an extended period. Some wives agree to this and off he goes to prison. The majority, however, ask that you give him a warning instead or the wife comes back after a few days and asks you to drop the case.⁴⁸

This made the rise in the number of abuse cases prosecuted as hooliganism during this period even more remarkable given the incentives many wives faced not to report cases of abuse. Despite the physical and economic risks associated with informing on their abuser, these victims lobbied the state to get involved in their intimate domestic lives and, by doing so, undermined the USSR Supreme Court’s attempt to keep private acts from being tried and policed as public concerns.

Victims of domestic violence, such as wives, used domestic hooliganism as a way to lobby for extending public accountability to private acts and for

opening the privacy of the home to the scrutiny of the public gaze. An Alma Ata family requested that the Supreme Soviet create a special group of public inspectors charged with policing people's domestic behavior. These inspectors would "systematically visit residents' apartments . . . in order to observe the norms of behavior of apartment residents and, in case of necessity, they could even spend the night in order to see and estimate the behavior of people."⁴⁹ The secretary of the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow also called for local comrades' courts to make a periodic tour of all the apartments in order to see "how people live."⁵⁰ Such letter writers, by crafting a more intrusive function for state and public agencies in the policing and surveillance of the domestic everyday, also helped to undermine the status quo separation of private matters from public concerns.

Many of these letter writers wanted to expand the Khrushchev era policy of using public (*obshchestvennyi*) agencies (such as the comrades' courts and the *druzhina*) to police the private relationships of the everyday.⁵¹ A single mother in Krasnodar *krai*, for example, encouraged the Supreme Soviet in a letter to "go into personal everyday life [*lichnyi byt*] more thoroughly."⁵² Far from keeping public organizations out of their private lives, victims of domestic deviance undermined the distinction between private problems and public priorities by inviting the state into their troubled lives and broken homes. The People's Court of the city of Okha in Sakhalin *oblast'*, for example, wrote to the USSR Supreme Soviet advocating "the active interference of society in the personal life of each of its members."⁵³ In addition, an Armenian pedagogue urged the USSR Supreme Soviet to project state power into personal relations proclaiming that "it is necessary in every possible way to encourage the courts to involve themselves in fights between relatives, friends, neighbors and even spouses."⁵⁴

As we have seen, proponents of domesticating hooliganism had upset conventional ideas on the spatial boundaries of public and private by asserting that the apartment was a public space. In a similar manner, proponents of criminalizing domestic deviance challenged prevailing conventions on what was a private matter (*lichnoe delo*) and what was a public concern (*obshchestvennoe delo*) by denying that private life was a purely personal matter. As a man from the Udmurt ASSR wrote to the USSR Supreme Soviet: "Soviet domestic life [*byt*], the Soviet family, these are not the private matters of individual citizens or families. These are the direct duty of public organizations."⁵⁵ In this way, the category of the domestic hooligan blurred the lines between the personal problem and the public concern. As one letter writer advised the USSR Supreme Soviet, "It is time to remember the famous position of Lenin that in our Soviet socialist society there is nothing private [*chastnyi*] and therefore it is necessary to use state means in the fight against all types of crime, including crimes in apartments which we workers think

are neither petty nor private.”⁵⁶ Just as it had forced jurists and citizens to rethink the public and private as spatial categories by calling into question where the public sphere ended and the private space began, domestic hooliganism challenged prevailing conceptions concerning personal privacy and public accountability. The domestic hooligan debate, by transforming the subject of how one treated one’s family and friends in the home from nobody’s business to all of society’s business, gave critics the opportunity to rethink the borders between the personal matter (*lichnoe delo*) and the public concern (*obshchestvennoe delo*).

Conclusion: Home is Where the Hooligan Is

The prevalent image of the street hooligan that was displayed in journals like *Krokodil* obscured the domestic origins of a great deal of hooligan activity and misrepresented hooliganism’s perpetrators and victims. It taught Soviet citizens to fear hooliganism from strange men on the streets, rather than from the husbands and male relatives who shared their homes. In the late 1950s and 1960s, hooliganism shifted from the street corner to the kitchen table and the typical hooligan transformed from the stranger in the street to the family member sitting at one’s side.

The relocation of hooliganism to the home gave policemen, judges, and local procurators the opportunity to reexamine the public/private dichotomy. Because of hooliganism’s link to the ambiguous concept of the “public place,” hooligan cases provided ideal grounds for rethinking what the public meant in Soviet society and for arguing about where its borders ought to lie. Likewise, cases of domestic hooliganism opened a space for debating prevailing distinctions between private matters and public concerns. By calling attention to such terms as “public place” and “private matter,” the debate about domestic hooliganism made normally tacit cultural categories like public and private objects of debate. Local legal workers, by mapping hooliganism onto the home and the actions that occurred within it, redrew the boundaries of public space and public responsibility in newly expanded ways. Taking advantage of the ambiguity of the public place, local law enforcement expanded its meaning to include communal and private apartments. Through labeling domestic deviants like abusive husbands as hooligans, the proponents of criminalizing domestic dysfunction legitimized the public policing of the home and obscured the distinction between private matters and public concerns by making the former into the latter.

In a more general way, the domestication of hooliganism gave criminologists a new way of thinking about the origins of crime. It identified the family home as site where violence and victimization were practiced

and taught to the next generation. Previously, criminologists argued that since class exploitation did not exist in the Soviet Union there was no internal reason for crime except "survivals of capitalism." The development of "family criminology" grew out of the insight that the troubled family was a source of dangerous crime: an insight born in part from the increasing density of domestic hooligan convictions in the 1960s.⁵⁷

Notes

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1. *Krokodil*, 42, no. 11 (1961), 5. Hooliganism, in the Soviet Union, was more than just a term of approbation. It was a crime that covered everything from using foul language to knife fighting and for which one could be imprisoned (from 3 days to 5 years) or fined. Hooliganism was defined (post-1960) as "intentional actions that rudely violate public order and express clear disrespect for society." There were three types of hooliganism differentiated according to seriousness and punishment: petty hooliganism (the least severe), hooliganism, and malicious hooliganism (the most severe). For hooliganism in the prerevolutionary period see Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For the 1966 anti-hooligan campaign see Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminologists and Criminal Policy: Specialists in Policy-Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 81–90.
2. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. r-9474, op. 16, d. 644, l. 72.
3. On the supportive role of the Soviet family see H. Kent Geiger, *The Family in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 327–328.
4. For the text of the circular see *Sovetskaiia iustitsiia* no. 22 (1935), backpage. See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 48.
5. One justice openly questioned: "What is domestic hooliganism? What does it mean? Where in our criminal legislation can you find the term domestic hooliganism?" GARF, f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 122, l. 68.
6. GARF, f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 122, l. 54.
7. *Ibid.*
8. GARF, f. r-9474, op. 16, d. 618, l. 229. The italics are mine.
9. *Ugolovnyi kodeks RSFSR* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo iurid. lit-ry, 1957), 179.
10. GARF, f. r-9474, op. 16, d. 618, ll. 227–228.

11. GARF, f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 418, l. 85–86.
12. Ibid., f. r-9474, op. 16, d. 788, l. 3.
13. Ibid., f. A-428, op. 3, d. 514, l. 28.
14. A. A. Gertsenzon, *Ugolovnoe pravo i sotsiologiya* (Moscow: Iurid lit-ra, 1970), 92.
15. GARF, f. r-9474, op. 32, d. 21, l. 22.
16. Ibid., f. r-8131, op. 32, d. 4029, l. 7.
17. Ibid., f. r-8131, op. 32, d. 5290, ll. 80–82.
18. Ibid., f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 462, ll. 21, 34.
19. Ibid., f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 418, ll. 84–85, 176–177. For later *sudebnye praktiki* see *Sbornik postanovlenii Plenuma Verkhovnogo Suda SSSR, 1924–1986* (Moscow: Iurid lit-ra, 1987), 709; and *Sbornik postanovlenii Plenuma Verkhovnogo Suda RSFSR, 1961–1983* (Moscow: Iurid lit-ra, 1984), 338.
20. GARF, f. A-428, op. 3, d. 295, ll. 11–12.
21. Ibid., f. r-9474, op. 32, d. 284, l. 23; and Ibid., f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 418, ll. 5–6.
22. *Voprosy osobennoi chasti sovetskogo ugolovnogo prava v UK RSFSR 1960 goda* (Moscow: Iurid. lit-ry, 1962), 173–174. The italics are mine.
23. E. A. Andrusenko, “Poniatie khuliganstva i mery bor’by s nim,” Tadjikistan State University, Dushanbe, 1963, 9.
24. GARF, f. A-428, op. 3, d. 514, l. 24.
25. Ibid., f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 418, l. 6.
26. Ibid., f. r-9474, op. 33, d. 897, ll. 5–6, 9.
27. P. Skomorokhov, “Dela chastnogo obvineniia,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, August 11, 1955, 2.
28. S. Nariniani, “Za zakrytymi dverami,” *Krokodil*, 34, no. 14 (1955), 5.
29. GARF, f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 122, l. 58. The italics are mine.
30. Ibid., f. A-353, op. 13, d. 897, l. 3.
31. M. Isaev, “Sudebnaia praktika po delam o khuliganstve,” *Sovetskaia iustitsiia*, 20, no. 13 (1941), 6.
32. GARF, f. r-9474, op. 1, d. 418, l. 85.
33. Ibid., f. r-8131, op. 32, d. 4032, l. 20; and Ibid., f. r-8131, op. 32, d. 4031, ll. 85–6.
34. Ibid., f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 347, l. 61.
35. Ibid., f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 345, l. 124.
36. See the case in *ibid.*, f. r-9474, op. 33, d. 2089, ll. 2–15.
37. Ibid., f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 139, l. 252.
38. B. S. Nikiforov, ed., *Nauchno-prakticheskii komentarii ugolovnogo kodeksa RSFSR* (Moscow: Iurid. lit-ry, 1962), 207. After the deletion, the law read only that “crimes can be prosecuted [as hooliganism] if their motive is to display explicit disrespect for society.”
39. GARF, f. A-428, op. 3, d. 498, l. 34.
40. *Ugolovno-Protsessual’nyi kodeks RSFSR* (Moscow: Iurid. lit-ry, 1962), 16–17.
41. For example, a victim of apartment hooliganism wrote to the USSR Supreme Soviet: “Why are these apartment hooligans harmful and dangerous? This is very clear. After I return home from work, I don’t have the right to rest and relax as I want in my own apartment. In the morning, I have to go to work tired, irritated and with an aching head. And my work suffers. My children cannot prepare their lessons. My boy is in his fourth year at the institute but he cannot study well. He needs to be able to rest and to be able to work in order to become a useful, knowledgeable specialist for the Motherland. His training is costing the

- state more than forty thousand rubles. That apartment hooligan is hampering and sabotaging his progress. He is decreasing the knowledge of our children. This is happening to us right in the heart of the motherland and the state is indifferent. When a neighbor is playing his record player or watching TV at full volume, he is paralyzing all of family life. Isn't this person a dangerous and harmful hooligan? Such apartment hooligans are hampering the Seven-Year Plan," GARE, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 347, l. 59.
42. For example, a man from Rovno wrote a letter to the USSR Supreme Soviet criticizing "those who defend the rotten, vulgar, and petty-bourgeois (*meshanskaia*) moral that "a family should not air its dirty linen in public" (*sor iz izby ne vynosit*). Healthy minded people can never agree with such filth. It is precisely these acts which must be brought out of the house and the scoundrels and vulgarians dragged to the court. . . . We will never succeed in improving public order if we don't devote the necessary attention to this." GARE, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 351, ll. 67–8.
 43. See, e.g., Iu. Kornilov, "Eto i vashe delo, Tovarischch Prokuror!" *Trud*, November 13, 1955, 1, "Eto ne lichnoe delo," *Izvestiia*, August 12, 1955, 2; N. Monchadskaia and N. Syrtsov, "Eto ne lichnoe delo," *Izvestiia*, July 23, 1955, 2. On communist morality during this period see Deborah Field, "Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era," *The Russian Review*, 57, no. 4 (1998), 600–603.
 44. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), f. 2, op. 1, d. 635, l. 81.
 45. *Ibid.*, f. 2, op. 1, d. 637, l. 27.
 46. Many convicted hooligans were prosecuted for spousal abuse. Gertsenzon's figures show, e.g., that 66 percent of hooligans knew their victims and that they victimized their wives more than any other category grouping. Gertsenzon, *Ugolovnoe pravo i sotsiologiia*, 92. The dissident Andrei Amalrik also estimated that half of the people convicted for hooliganism were sentenced, not for disruptive behavior in public sites, but for spousal abuse. Andrei Amalrik, *Involuntary Journey to Siberia*, trans. Manya Harari and Max Hayward (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 74.
 47. GARE, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 142, l. 32.
 48. *Ibid.*, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 347, l. 126.
 49. *Ibid.*, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 344, l. 192.
 50. *Ibid.*, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 343, l. 104.
 51. For information on the comrades' courts and *druzhina* see Theodore H. Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 249–262.
 52. GARE, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 343, l. 213.
 53. *Ibid.*, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 347, l. 124.
 54. *Ibid.*, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 345, l. 28.
 55. *Ibid.*, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 350, l. 124.
 56. *Ibid.*, f. r-7523, op. 45, d. 351, l. 285.
 57. On "survivals of capitalism" see Walter D. Connor, *Deviance in Soviet Society: Crime, Delinquency and Alcoholism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 50–51, 168–169. For information on "family criminology" see D. A. Shestakov, *Semeinaia kriminologiia: Sem'ia, konflikt, prestuplenie* (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Sankt Petersburgskogo Universiteta, 1996).

PART 3
BEHAVIOR AND PRIVATE LIFE

CHAPTER TEN

A SYMBIOSIS OF ERRORS: THE
PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL,
AND POLITICAL IN THE
KIROV REGION, 1931–1941

Larry E. Holmes

In his introduction to this volume, Lewis Siegelbaum took note of the promising yet ambiguous and elastic distinction between private and public spheres. Historians working on revolutionary regimes have frequently dispensed with the distinction altogether by finding that everything, even one's thoughts, was a matter of public concern with "public" largely synonymous with the state's agenda. According to Lynn Hunt, French revolutionaries "conflated private moral character with public, political behavior."¹ Anne Gorsuch, Michael David-Fox, and Eric Naiman have highlighted Bolshevik efforts in the 1920s to politicize everyday behavior (*byt*). Improper dress, a luxurious lifestyle, uncultured speech, poor hygiene, alcoholism, sexual licentiousness, and gastronomic excess, among other "private" improprieties, were considered as acts of political deviance. Life itself was politicized; *byt* was a political matter.²

Scholars have found similar efforts by the party-state in the Stalinist 1930s to abolish the difference between public and private. Jeffrey Brooks has noted how in this decade the official press "shrank private space . . . by enlarging and sacralizing public places and structures." The press refused to recognize private time, all time was to be devoted to the grand cause.³ Oleg Kharkhordin has argued that the regime refused to recognize the legitimacy of a "private (*chastnaia*) life" that existed apart from Moscow's agenda and reduced a "personal (*lichnaia*) life" to public penance in support of the regime.⁴ Soviet citizens established a private realm only as "a secret sphere of intimate life" where, in contrast to their public behavior, individuals led a life of dissimulation.⁵ More recently, Igal Halfin has argued that the

party-state regarded the innermost sanctums of “personal” or “private” life as an area of its concern for a person’s soul was the locus of ideological and political sin.⁶

According to Jochen Hellbeck, during the 1930s not only the state but also individual Soviet citizens eliminated the borders separating public and private spheres. In his examination of diaries, Hellbeck found an “all-embracing and unconditional commitment to public values” without any notion of a private sphere.⁷ Their authors sought self-realization through self-loss and dispensed with any private thoughts as a sign of weakness.⁸ In my study of an elite institution, Model School No. 25 in Moscow from 1931 to 1937, I found similar attitudes prevailing among children. The school served as a second home for its pupils, blending child with school and school with society, its children living almost always in the public realm.⁹

I find this scholarly output on Soviet Russia of the 1920s and 1930s immensely instructive. Yet I think the use of the terms “private” and “public” when applied to the 1930s has been quite confining. We are left with the rather commonsensical observation that under Stalin the party-state refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of any private sphere or of a civil society existing apart from the public good as Moscow defined it. Soviet citizens either created a highly secretive private life beyond the gaze of the contemporary state (and, later, of historians) or they merged their sense of self with a pursuit of the Kremlin’s agenda. There was supposedly nothing else in between these bipolar opposites.

I am led to different conclusions in this essay that examines official discourse and its application in a single province. Rather than rely on the familiar staple of literary works, polemical tracts, manuals, diaries, autobiographies, and interviews usually associated with a discussion of public and private realms in the 1930s, I have depended on records of party organs, especially of primary party organizations (called cells before 1934) associated with district, municipal, and regional departments of education in Kirov. My source is no less “text” than those used by other scholars; my use of them no more objective. When using these documents, it is almost always impossible to sort out what actually happened from the flood of accusations and denunciations contained therein. I therefore make no special epistemological claims, but I do arrive at an understanding of private and public that is distinct from the theoretical (and theological) disquisitions that other sources have tended to elicit. When party organs discussed pupils’ suicide and the behavior of prominent educational officials in Kirov from 1931 to 1941, they acknowledged not separate public or private spheres but more prosaically personal, professional, and political realms (a representation, I think, largely in keeping with lived experience). To be sure, these three realms all fall under the rubrics of “the social” or “the public” as

commonly set forth in historical literature. Not even the personal, as I define it in what follows, existed as something private or apart from what the party-state claimed it could rightly supervise. Nevertheless, I hope to show that a recognition of these three realms allows for an understanding of important nuances in official discourse and of that discourse's application and the response to it.

By "personal" I mean what one did at home, or even in public, in one's own time in a bar, café, park, or along a river embankment, whether alone or with friends and acquaintances. My use of the "personal" also encompasses an individual's character traits as displayed at work or home. By professional, I mean one's performance on the job. Finally, by political, I mean an individual's apparent attitude toward as well as activity in support of the ruling party-state and its ideology.

This essay emphasizes as well that discourse about these three realms did not remain static. From 1931 to early 1938, the party acknowledged them as coexisting parts of a symbiosis. What happened in one sphere affected and was affected by what transpired in all others. A healthy symbiosis was healthy throughout, a diseased one degenerating throughout. While the former symbiosis prompted little official interest, the latter elicited passionate concern and is the focus of study here. This recognition of separate realms did not mean a kinder, gentler attitude, but on the contrary helped shape cruel social and political realities in Kirov. Implementation of the purges and terror depended in part on the proposition that an individual's apparent misconduct in one sphere required the discovery and, if need be, the invention of analogous activity in all others.

Beginning in 1938 and continuing at least until 1941 the symbiosis itself degenerated. Leading party organs ceased to present the personal, professional, and political in symbiotic terms and rather came to regard them as existing independently of each other. With what I call the rediscovery of personal sin, improper personal misbehavior no longer necessarily accompanied professional incompetence or political treason and was tolerated as never before.

And finally, by way of introduction, a few words about the history of the Kirov region are in order. Prior to 1934 both the province and its capital were named Viatka. In 1929, Moscow abolished the area as an administrative unit placing it in a huge province governed from the city, Nizhnii Novgorod (Gorkii after 1932), after which it was named. Within days of the assassination on December 1, 1934 of Sergei Mironovich Kirov, the party's Leningrad boss who had been born in Urzhum, 195 km south of Viatka, the city was renamed in his honor. On December 7, Moscow recreated the Viatka province, now called, as its capital, Kirov. In 1936, the city was subdivided into Stalin, Molotov, and Zhdanov districts.

Suicide: A Community Affair

Perhaps suicide is the one highly personal human act that most defies explanation. Nevertheless, Europeans, Russians included, have tried and in so doing have revealed more about their own understanding of “the human” than about the act itself. Suicide has been regarded as the work of the devil; the fitting end to a sinful and dissolute life; self-murder; desertion from a slaveowner, military commander, society, or state; victimization by impersonal social forces beyond an individual’s control; a product of weakness and lack of will; the result of a malfunction of the body or of natural biological changes; a noble act. By the early twentieth century, two competing interpretations held pride of place. Some analysts thought that suicide resulted from alienation from the rapidly changing world of industrialization and urbanization. The classic work of Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, gave considerable legitimacy to this view. Other observers, abetted by the work of Sigmund Freud, emphasized personal intrapsychic conflict as the primary factor.

In her study of Russians’ perception of suicide in the nineteenth century, Irina Paperno found that most commentators thought of it as a response to social change. They considered it as part of an “aesthetics of decadence,” one of several consequences of modernization that included murder, political violence, sexual depravity, and other forms of disorder.¹⁰ Bolsheviks found much to their liking in this sweeping sociological interpretation because of their emphasis on the collective rather than on the individual. “Suicide, indeed every personal act and thought of the party member,” Kenneth Pinnow has observed in his study of the 1920s, was the business of the collective.¹¹

That interest in suicide in the 1920s became an obsession among organs responsible for education in Kirov from 1931 to 1938. Yet it was a particular kind of obsession. Administrators disdained any effort to find any pattern whether by urban or rural locale or by gender or age.¹² Rather they responded to pupils’ suicides as one of the “painful manifestations” (*boleznennye iavleniia*), to use the vocabulary of choice, that resulted from a symbiosis of errors in school and community. Regardless of the apparent facts of the matter that often pointed to personal, even intrapsychic, motives, officials rushed to find interrelated personal, professional, and political misconduct on the part not of the suicide but of fellow pupils, teachers, and local school administrators. Moscow’s decree of April 7, 1935, that allowed youths 12 years of age to be tried under the general penal code did not in this instance redirect the assignment of blame to the child. The suicide, the individual, got lost in the celebration, as it were, of the assorted and intertwined evils at work in a pupil’s school and community and by extension throughout the region.¹³

A few cases, to be sure the most prominent ones, illustrate the point. From January 3 to April 5, 1933, five female pupils at Kirov's School No. 3 attempted suicide, two of whom succeeded by hanging. On December 2, 1935, in the town of Kotelnich, 124 km southwest of Kirov, a 14-year-old fifth grader, Ivan Martianov, shot himself to death. Sergei Essen, a seventh grader in Votkinsk Secondary School, located in the extreme southeast corner of the region, 305 km from Kirov, committed suicide on December 8, 1934. A sixth grader, Nikolai Trapeznikov, at Klimkovka Secondary School in Belokholunitsa district, 82 km east of Kirov, shot himself on October 6, 1937. Each of these cases prompted a rash of reports, one tripping on the heels of the other and playing with increasing alacrity on the symbiosis of errors purportedly afflicting all schools throughout the region.

In 1933 investigations by Viatka's party committee, the local Workers and Peasants Inspectorate (Rabkrin), and the city's department of education and its party cell made sense of suicides at School No. 3 only in the larger symbiotic context of poor instruction, theft, brawling, and secret meetings of so-called class hostile elements at this and other schools.¹⁴ Time to brood meant more attention to the assorted evils lurking in school and community. On April 27, 1933, the secretariat of Viatka's party committee linked these suicides with the popularity among pupils here and elsewhere of sexual and adventure literature, dancing, and drinking.¹⁵

When Martianov committed suicide, the initial investigation by Vershinin, head of Kotelnich's department of education, exonerated teachers, including Ivan Petrovich Chistoserdov, the son of a priest about whom the dead boy had complained in a suicide note. Vershinin blamed instead the youngster, a notoriously poor pupil academically, who at the time was repeating the fifth grade, and who had behaved rudely toward his teachers.¹⁶ However, such a relatively simple explanation that accentuated the personal clashed with an understanding of suicide held by officials beyond the district. David Borisovich Marchukov, head of the Regional Department of Education, immediately asked for another investigation.¹⁷ By mid-December the region's prosecutor, Mikhail Naumovich Dozorets, had arrested Chistoserdov. It stood to reason, the prosecutor wrote, that a priest's son had terrorized (*terrorizoval*) Martianov and other pupils over a long period of time. Dozorets added laconically that his office now sought evidence for the crime.¹⁸ When a local court cleared Chistoserdov of all charges, Vershinin, now properly instructed in the matter of suicide, followed with another, far different, report finding the teacher guilty of interrelated personal, professional, and political errors: a hot temper displayed before teachers and pupils, poor instruction, and questionable social origins and politics. The Regional Department of Education requested another indictment.¹⁹

Chistoserdov's arrest as a class enemy and counterrevolutionary soon followed.²⁰

In death, the boy, Essen, became a cause celebre illustrating as nothing else might a symbiosis of errors of almost everyone involved in educating the region's youth. On December 7, 1934, the director of Essen's school expelled the boy for writing verses on the school's wall disparaging of the director. The next day, the boy committed suicide. An investigation undertaken by the Regional Department of Education discovered that fellow pupils had written the remarks and had set up the boy as punishment for his tattling on a pupil who had written lewd comments in her notebook. However, the report proceeded well beyond this personal factor, determining that the suicide was only one of a number of "painful occurrences" at this and other schools in the district. Pupils got drunk and engaged in sexual escapades; teachers taught poorly and held counterrevolutionary views.²¹ Perhaps with the investigator's help, the boy's mother put it succinctly in a letter to the department: "This is not suicide but morally murder. My son fell victim to the political and pedagogical nearsightedness of the school's educators."²²

Not content to let a good thing go unembellished, on March 14, 1935, the region's chief newspaper, *Kirovskaia pravda*, interpreted Essen's death as one of the many consequences of efforts by class enemies, youthful hooligans, and poor teachers.²³ When asked in early 1935 by the Commissariat of Education and the regional party committee to report on problems facing education, Marchukov set forth the boy's suicide as evidence of the interrelated personal, pedagogical, and political depravity of pupils and teachers throughout the region. Pupils drank, smoked, defaced the portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and Zhdanov, and sang counterrevolutionary songs. Teachers taught poorly and carried on illicit sexual relations with each other. One school director had debauched a female pupil.²⁴ One year later, on March 15, at the Regional Conference of the Young Communist League (Komsomol), Marchukov repeated his accusations, albeit less sensationally, in explaining the suicide of Essen and other pupils.²⁵ Nine months later when reporting to the regional department of education's party organization and over two years after Essen's death, Ivan Petrovich Barinov, deputy head of the department's Schools Sector, presented the suicide as the result of the same set of circumstances then prevailing at a secondary school faraway in Falenki, 151 km east of Kirov, where a 15-year-old had given birth to her brother's child and another 15-year-old girl had infected multiple boys with gonorrhea.²⁶

In late 1937, the chief investigator for the regional party committee's Schools Department, Nikolai Georgievich Zakharov, made Trapeznikov's suicide the result of conditions paralleling those of Essen's.²⁷ Zakharov's

report caught the eye and the pen of someone at the Schools Department who underlined in blue ink the report's negative findings. It also found its way to Komsomol's regional committee where it was read by the heads of its Pioneers Department and Department of Student Youth. They used it to draw a still more negative and extended picture. Trapeznikov's suicide now became another example of "painful manifestations and direct counterrevolutionary activity" in schools throughout the region.²⁸

Sexual Politics

Well before the 1930s, Bolsheviks had demonstrated a fondness for the word, *"razlozhenie,"* a biological term for degeneration or decomposition, which they commonly applied to a person, institution, community, or society.²⁹ It also had sexual connotations for, as Naiman has pointed out, sex for Bolsheviks had become a "symbolic shorthand for all forms of contamination" and the resulting threat of degeneration.³⁰ So it was with a vengeance in Kirov during the mid-1930s when the party removed the region's top educational administrators. In these instances, charges of a person's moral degeneration, part of the symbiosis of errors, meant sexual depravity. It made no difference if the alleged sexual activity was consensual or if one or both participants were married. The personal, moral corruption, meant sex itself. Sex was politics.

Over and again, accusers resorted to the adjective, *"bytovoe,"* derived from the word, *byt*, the everyday, to signify sexual misconduct. Those condemned were guilty of "everyday contact" (*bytovaia sviaz*), or an "everyday relationship" (*bytovoe otnoshenie*), or "everyday corruption" (*bytovoe razlozhenie*) to mean in each case illicit sexual intercourse. Less frequently but with the same intent, accusers referred to "personal contacts" (*lichnye sviazi*). While such charges were brought against male and female administrators with equal vigor, their meaning, as we will see, varied somewhat depending on the gender of the accused.

On July 13, 1937, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) arrested Anatolii Stepanovich Reshetov, who had been head of Kirov's Municipal Department of Education since early 1934.³¹ Six months later, on December 3, 1937, the secret police picked up Marchukov, head of Kirov's Regional Department of Education since December 1934.³² Their arrest as enemies of the people should have surprised no one. Municipal and regional party officials had previously denounced both for the customary mix of interrelated personal, professional, and political sins. Reshetov and Marchukov allegedly treated teachers and subordinates rudely, failed to run their respective departments efficiently, refused to purge their staff of class- and socially alien elements, appointed enemies to teaching positions,

and rejected the leadership offered by the party's municipal and regional organs. Marchukov's colleagues in particular found him to be haughty and authoritarian, often refusing even to receive them. In late 1937, the deputy head of the regional party committee's Schools Department, Ivan Afanasevich Liusov, submitted a 23-page double-spaced report on the Regional Department of Education, charging Marchukov with gross incompetence and an unseemly obsession with the sexual activity of others. At a meeting of teachers in Kyrchani district, Marchukov had accused the head of the local department of education with masturbation because the official sat with his hands in his pockets. At a more recent conference of Kirov's teachers, August 27, 1937, Marchukov had called a teacher and wife of a Red Army commander a prostitute. When Liusov, attending as the representative of the party's Schools Department, objected, Marchukov, responded impudently: "You know, we know [our] people better than anyone else."³³

Despite the wide-ranging nature and gravity of the charges brought against both Reshetov and Marchukov, little was said about any improper sexual behavior of their own until *after* their arrest. Three weeks after Reshetov's disappearance, the party's municipal and regional party committees made his symbiosis of errors more damning with accusations of an illicit sexual relationship with a former female subordinate. Four days after Marchukov's removal, the Regional Department of Education's party cell accused him of repeated and aggressive exploitation of his female coworkers.

Reports by the municipal and regional party committees claimed to have uncovered "constant contact" (*postoiannaia sviaz*) between Reshetov and Nadezhda Pavlovna Kizei, candidate member of the party since 1932 and from 1934 inspector at the Municipal Department of Education until her transfer to the Regional Department of Education in 1935. In addition to intimate activity at Kizei's apartment lasting until the wee hours of the morning, the two conspired to appoint teachers and local officials hostile to Soviet power.³⁴ Marchukov too had shown an improper interest in Kizei following her assignment to his office. With more than work on his mind, he required her to stay late on several occasions. Marchukov became more aggressive after receiving a new and luxurious apartment in 1936, frequently hosting Kizei as well as Mariia Ignatevna Kniazheva, deputy head of the department's Elementary Schools Sector, and Mariia Andreevna Chudakova, a teacher in the Kirov region in the late 1920s, a graduate of the Moscow Pedagogical Institute's Department for Teachers of Mentally and Physically Challenged Children in 1936, then director of Kirov's Secondary School No. 11.³⁵

But why the charges of womanizing *after* the arrest of Reshetov and Marchukov and well after the adoption of a new family law in 1936 and

a corresponding national campaign against promiscuity? The prurient interest in the sexual exploits of both brought into play, albeit belatedly, the most reprehensible of personal behavior to accompany existing charges of professional wrongdoing and political treason. In December 1937, the secretary of the regional department's party cell, Ivan Nikitich Balalaev, pointedly equated the personal and immoral with the public and political. As an enemy of the people, Marchukov dominated women sexually so that he could use them "in support of his own politically hostile activity." It naturally followed that Marchukov's moral corruption (*bytovoe razlozhenie*) was connected with his political (and professional) crime of assigning teachers hostile to the Soviet regime to elementary and secondary schools.³⁶ On December 30, 1937, when referring to Marchukov's relationship with Kniazheva, Revekka Samuilovna Stoliar, head of Kirov's Institute for Teachers In-Service Training and cousin of the party's regional boss, Abram Iakovlevich Stoliar, declared bluntly: "Moral degradation (*bytovoe razlozhenie*) is the work of enemies."³⁷

However, these accusers had in their sights more than Reshetov and Marchukov. The alleged victims, women who held important positions in educational administration, were targeted in the campaign against bureaucrats and bureaucratism. The charge of sleeping with an enemy of the people made good sense in an environment that assumed a symbiotic relationship of counterrevolutionary activity, professional incompetence, and moral deviance. As Naiman has suggested in another context, accusations of illicit sexual activity concerned the inappropriate allure of the female body more so than male intentions and behavior, even when, as in this case, Reshetov and Marchukov allegedly used their position to exploit their female subordinates. It logically followed that Kizei, Kniazheva, and Chudakova had committed myriad other personal as well as professional and political offenses.

The investigation submitted to the party's municipal committee on August 7, 1937 alleged that Kizei had entertained, besides Reshetov, Aleksandr Alekseevich Bobkov, the chair of the regional soviet's executive committee, and unspecified others.³⁸ On October 15 at a meeting of the Bureau of the department's party organization, Stoliar rhetorically asked Kizei if she understood that her past "contact with Reshetov was a political matter." Additional testimony at this session and in subsequent reports made Kizei's symbiosis of errors complete with charges that she had ignored the party's guidance while at the municipal and regional departments and had littered the region's schools with class-alien teachers.³⁹ On October 15, a combative Kizei denied the charges of political wrongdoing while admitting past intimacy over several months with Reshetov that had resulted in a child. Unmoved, the cell purged Kizei as a candidate member of the party.⁴⁰ In the meantime, the regional department of education fired her from her

position and assigned her to teach geography in the junior secondary grades at Kirov's School No. 7. There neither her job nor her freedom was secure. In November, the Municipal Department of Education called for an investigation of the political character (*litso*) of ten teachers, Kizei among them, who had had contact with Reshetov and other enemies of the people.⁴¹

Kniazheva's case was similar. At meetings of the department's party organization in December 1937, she acknowledged Marchukov's personal interest in her but insisted that her only error had been a failure to inform the party of it.⁴² Nevertheless when under intense questioning, Kniazheva modified her defense. She admitted that on two occasions in 1936 and once in 1937 she had spent the night at Marchukov's apartment. On the second and third nights, Marchukov had kissed her without her permission. She denied, however, that anything more followed and that she had had "personal contacts" (*lichnye sviazi*) with Marchukov.⁴³ A kiss was a kiss and nothing more, sexually, professionally, or politically, than a kiss. She protested in vain. On December 30, 1937, the Bureau of the department's party organization and then on January 4, 1938, the party organization itself voted to purge her for the combined crimes of moral corruption (*bytovoe razlozhenie*) and hostile political activity. Although an intelligent individual who should have known better, Kniazheva had "taken up a personal life (*lichnaia zhizn*) with Marchukov."⁴⁴ An unforgiving Balalaev put it categorically: "Sexual contact (*bytovaia sviaz*) is political."⁴⁵ Four days later, Marchukov's successor as head of the Regional Department of Education, Liusov, removed Kniazheva as deputy head of its Elementary Schools Sector.⁴⁶

Chudakova too experienced criticism of her personal behavior and performance as director of Secondary School No. 11. On January 8, 1938, at a meeting of the school's pedagogical conference, attended by the school's staff and representatives from the Stalin district's party committee and the head of the district's department of education, Evgeniia Iosifovna Konchevskaia, accusations of poor leadership and sexual misconduct reached fever pitch. The school's deputy director, Taisiia Stepanovna Ishutinova, led the assault. The director had lost control of her school and therefore, she, Chudakova, bore responsibility for pupils who tore portraits of Soviet leaders, cursed, distributed counterrevolutionary literature, scribbled pornographic ditties in their notebooks, and carved on desks. Chudakova behaved rudely toward colleagues and had been in "very close contact" with Marchukov and especially Reshetov.⁴⁷ In summing up the proceedings, an official of the district party committee called for a political evaluation of conditions at the school and for special attention to "Chudakova's intimate contact (*blizkaia sviaz*) with Reshetov and Marchukov."⁴⁸

Chudakova denied any sexual contact with either Reshetov or Marchukov insisting that she despised both. On February 6, 1938, she

lashed out at her accusers in a letter to Konchevskaia. In it Chudakova focused on the allegations of personal misconduct in the hope that she might thereby neutralize talk of professional and political deviance. As a young specialist, a graduate of a Soviet higher educational institution, and daughter of a worker, she considered the charges as an affront to her dignity as a woman and as a person. "I am unable not to express my rightful [*zakonnnyi*] indignation at such a mindless treatment of a living person. Why me? . . . Really is this the Soviet Union if a woman must bear alone such unpunished assaults on her character [*lichnost*] and her dignity?"⁴⁹

The Degeneration of the Symbiosis

In 1938 Bolshevik officials came to regard the personal, professional, and political, as existing free of any symbiotic relationship. No single moment marked the origin or end of the symbiosis's decline. To be sure, on January 19, 1938, the Central Committee condemned excessive purging and a "formal bureaucratic attitude" toward the appeals of those purged. Yet the degeneration had already begun in a process, much like that of any biological organism, occurring over time and not without attempts at recovery.

Suicide Reconsidered

In 1938 interest and discourse about suicide changed. Administrative organs responsible for schools in Kirov continued to monitor the phenomenon and, as before, blamed poor instruction and lack of political vigilance at school as well as drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, smoking, card playing, and hooliganism in school and community. Yet the subject now elicited far less interest and certainly not the obsessive concern of prior years. Moreover, the discourse now focused not on any symbiosis of errors but rather on personal factors. From 1938 to 1941, the Schools Department, the regional prosecutor's office, and local party organs acknowledged the special importance of emotional distress produced by poor, even average, academic performance.⁵⁰ Rather than dismissing the evidence, authorities now focused on testimony by teachers and fellow pupils of a suicide's anxiety over grades, a suicide note mentioning academic difficulties, and parents' acknowledgment that their child had been depressed over a requirement to retake the spring promotion examinations in the fall.⁵¹

Strictly Personal

The degeneration of the symbiosis also meant that sex was no longer politics. As we have seen, well in advance of the Central Committee's decree in

mid-January 1938, Kizei, Kniazheva, and Chudakova had refused to play along and to read the script handed to them. Kizei insisted that her relationship with Reshetov had been a brief one and had not involved political or professional wrongdoing; Kniazheva argued that a kiss was just a kiss and nothing more. Chudakova flatly denied any intimate relationship with either Reshetov or Marchukov and angrily condemned the accusations as an affront to her personal dignity. In doing so, all three contributed to a rediscovery of personal sin by separating professional from personal life and politics from sexual activity. In early 1938 their detractors began to do so as well. While not necessarily accepting denials of improper personal behavior, the party, although not without resistance within its ranks, now recognized sin, real or imagined, as a personal and nonpolitical matter. In this new scenario, whether Kizei, Kniazheva, or Chudakova had slept with Marchukov or with Reshetov or with anyone else was largely irrelevant in an official assessment of their political character and professional worth.

In Chudakova's case, it began at the pedagogical conference where colleagues and representatives of the local party committee had so harshly criticized her. There Konchevskaia, the head of the Stalin district's department of education, waited her turn. When she spoke, she ignored the charges of sexual misconduct hurled at Chudakova and instead criticized the school's teachers for their poor instruction.⁵² Twice in early 1938, Chudakova requested of Konchevskaia relief from her onerous administrative duties at School No. 11 and an assignment somewhere in her specialty working with special children or a post teaching Russian language and literature.⁵³ On April 15, Konchevskaia obliged Chudakova by reassigning her to teach language and literature at School No. 11 where Chudakova returned that fall.⁵⁴

Although Kizei and Kniazheva were purged from the party, neither was arrested and both successfully sought readmission into the party's ranks in 1938. When on March 28 Kizei appealed in writing her purge to the party's municipal committee, she asked it to distinguish between political and moral wrongdoing. She had had a brief affair with Reshetov, but it was, she hastened to add, a personal not a political relationship. "My [sexual] contact," she insisted, "was only personal and not political" (*no sviaz byla tol'ko bytovaia*).⁵⁵ Not everyone yet was prepared to agree. The party's municipal committee commissioned an investigation that repeated the familiar charges and the presumed association of the personal and moral with the professional and political. Kizei had refused to follow the party's guidance at work and assigned class-alien elements to schools. As a natural corollary, she had maintained a "sexual relationship" (*bytovoe otnoshenie*) with Reshetov, an enemy of the people, a relationship confirmed, it was said, by Balalaev.⁵⁶ However, on April 5, 1938, the Bureau of the party's municipal committee accepted the report's facts regarding Kizei's sexual activity but not its

conclusions. It acknowledged Kizei's "sexual contact [*bytovaia sviaz*] with Reshetov who had been exposed as an enemy of the people" but ignored the symbiosis of which the charge had been a part. It refused to equate personal indiscretions with political error and therefore was free to dismiss her alleged professional incompetence and counterrevolutionary activity. The Bureau restored her status as a candidate party member by reducing her purge to a reprimand for lack of party vigilance.⁵⁷

Despite the vote to purge Kniazheva and her dismissal from the Regional Department of Education, she soon returned to her desk at the department and continued to attend meetings of its party organization. She appealed her purge to the Zhdanov district's party committee, which responded on February 13, 1938. While it continued to believe that Kniazheva had "sexual contact" with Marchukov, the affair had now lost its political significance. The committee recommended a reduction of her purge to a reprimand.⁵⁸ At the session of the Department of Education's party organization of April 17, 1938, Mariia Terent'evna Kulakova, head of the department's Elementary Schools Sector, explained: "Sexual contact is not political." She censured Balalaev for his past belief to the contrary.⁵⁹

Subsequently, both Kniazheva and Kizei enjoyed successful careers. By October 1938, Kniazheva had been promoted from deputy head to the head of the Regional Department of Education's Schools Sector.⁶⁰ Kizei continued to teach geography at School No. 7 and in January 1939 the city honored her as one of its 26 best teachers.⁶¹ A few months later, on April 16, 1939, the Regional Department of Education's party organization annulled its reprimand of Kniazheva and on March 16, 1940, the party's municipal committee similarly cleared Kizei's record.⁶²

The rediscovery of sin also contributed to Reshetov's good fortune. Cleared of charges of counterrevolutionary activity in late 1939 and the accusations of sexual misconduct rendered irrelevant, Reshetov returned to Kirov early the following year. That fall he became a teacher of history and director of Kirov's Secondary School No. 7 where once again Kizei became his subordinate. On June 17, 1941, the Regional Department of Education appointed Reshetov as head of its Schools Sector.⁶³

Marchukov benefited as well. On January 11, 1940, the Military Collegium of the USSR's Supreme Court annulled his sentence of ten years' imprisonment and freed him. On January 26, 1940, Marchukov petitioned an open meeting of the Regional Department of Education's party organization to restore his party membership. He felt he had a good case: the Court had cleared him of anti-Soviet activity, he could no longer be considered as an enemy of the people, his past sexual exploits, real or imagined, would no longer be an issue. He was right but not on all counts. At the meeting, no one bothered to raise the charge of womanizing.⁶⁴ Nevertheless,

Marchukov had too many personal liabilities to regain his party card and a position in educational administration. In addition to 14 full and 2 candidate party members, 9 others attended this session. Former colleagues, they were angry and unforgiving, rejecting his request because of his past rude and haughty behavior.⁶⁵

Conclusion

These drinking binges, of course, do not help a person who would become a complete warrior, a complete revolutionary. Instead they gradually overwhelm a person who then shirks revolutionary struggle and becomes at first a philistine, a drunkard, and then a hostile element, an enemy of the people.⁶⁶

With these words at Kirov's First Regional Komsomol Congress in September 1937, a delegate, Khromov, crudely but in his own way, elegantly, articulated distinct but interrelated personal and political spheres. He needed only to make explicit the implied charge of professional incompetence to make complete the symbiosis of errors that dominated Bolshevik discourse in Kirov until early 1938. That discourse required the discovery, even invention, of wrongdoing in all spheres when explaining pupils' suicide and purging and imprisoning top educational officials. The region's schools and their administrative organs became discursively dens of moral depravity, professional ineptitude, and political iniquity. Certainly reality in the classroom and administrative offices (if not at home) was bad enough without such vigorous, indeed theatrical, embellishment.

Kirov's Bolsheviks made personal use of alcohol and especially sex the natural corollaries of professional and political misconduct. Liusov marched in lockstep with such logic when he charged that Marchukov, the professional and political reprobate, had prostitution and masturbation on his mind when observing his subordinates. Such phrases as "everyday connection" or "everyday relationship" were more than euphemisms for sexual intercourse. They were synonyms for illicit sex and a way to emphasize that the everyday, the entire personal realm in the life of the people charged with other heinous crimes, was thoroughly corrupt.

Misogynistic attitudes dominated thinking about the personal, sexual, threat. In Kirov in the 1930s, not men but women were charged with "sleeping with an enemy of the people." When discussing conditions that led to suicide, Barinov made a female pupil rather than a boy the source of gonorrhea at school. Perhaps Kizei and Kniazheva promptly distinguished between their real and alleged personal behavior, on the one hand, and their professional worth and political standing, on the other, because they

understood the full gravity of accusations of sexual misconduct when brought against women. Chudakova quickly denied any illicit activity and articulated a remarkable sense of self-esteem because she was, as she put it, a woman in the Soviet Union.

Thanks in part to the efforts by these women, the symbiosis began to degenerate in 1938 and little of it remained by 1941. To be sure, the personal life of officials remained, as before, proper items for review by party organs and was therefore no less "public." However, improper personal behavior lost much of its former significance in assessing professional and political reliability. Highly personal factors emerged as acceptable explanations for pupils' suicides. Kirov's officials now acknowledged that the New Soviet Person, whether sitting behind a school desk, standing in front of the classroom, or occupying an office in the educational bureaucracy was less than perfect in his or her personal life and would remain so for the foreseeable future. Transformation of the everyday, of *byt*, was no longer part of the agenda.

Many of my Russian friends respond skeptically to these conclusions about the degeneration of symbiosis. Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev they experienced a linkage of alleged personal misconduct with questions about their performance on the job and political loyalty. They understandably believe that an unbroken continuum united the Stalinist period with their own recent past. They are wrong. Change did occur in the late 1930s at least in Kirov.

Notes

1. Lynn Hunt, "The Unstable Boundaries of the French Revolution," ed. Michelle Perrot in *A History of Private Life*, vol. 4, *From the Fires of the Revolution to the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 14.
2. Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); the section, "Byt, Ethics, Behavior, Deviation," in Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks, 1918–1929* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 101–117; Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
3. Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 74.
4. Oleg Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 333–363.
5. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 199, 270–272. Many Bolsheviks "individualized themselves primarily by dissimulation" (271).

6. Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
7. Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931–9," in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York: Routledge, 2000), 95.
8. Jochen Hellbeck, "Self-Realization in the Stalinist System: Two Soviet Diaries of the 1930s," in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, ed. David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 228, 234; Jochen Hellbeck, "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts," *Russian Review*, 60, no. 3 (July 2001), 357.
9. Larry E. Holmes, *Stalin's School: Moscow's Model School No. 25, 1931–1937* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999).
10. Irina Paperno, *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky's Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), especially 101, 104.
11. Kenneth M. Pinnow, "Violence Against the Collective Self and the Problem of Social Integration in Early Bolshevik Russia," *Kritika*, 4, no. 3 (Summer 2003), 660.
12. Kirov's records indicate that more females than males attempted to kill themselves but more of the latter group succeeded by choosing the surer method of shooting rather than taking poison. Such trends were (and are) evident in other countries and have prompted serious analysis.
13. I discuss later only the more celebrated cases of pupils' suicides. For additional responses by local, municipal, and regional authorities in early 1934, see Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no—Politicheskoi Istarii Kirovskoi Oblasti (GASPI KO), f. 100, op. 4, d. 54, l. 90. For 1935, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kirovskoi Oblasti (GAKO), f. R-2333, op. 1, d. 46 (the entire folder). For 1936, GASPI KO, f. 1210, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 32–34; f. 1955, op. 1, d. 31, l. 19 and d. 82, ll. 69–71; and f. 2739, op. 1, d. 23, ll. 38–41, 56. For 1937, GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 223, ll. 183, 222–223, 228–232, 245 and f. 1036, op. 3, d. 5, ll. 8, 17–18. For early 1938, GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 2, d. 260, l. 9 and d. 253, ll. 3–5 ob.
14. By the party committee: GASPI KO, f. 100, op. 4, d. 8, ll. 292–295; by Rabkrin, GASPI KO, f. 1864, op. 2, d. 139, ll. 18 ob.-28 ob.; by the Department of Education, GASPI KO, f. 1864, op. 2, d. 78, ll. 2–3; by the Bureau of the municipal party committee, GASPI KO, f. 86, op. 1, d. 3, l. 72; and by the municipal committee of the Young Communist League (Komsomol), GASPI KO, f. 1656, op. 2, d. 8, l. 142.
15. GASPI KO, f. 100, op. 4, d. 8, l. 294.
16. GAKO, f. R-2333, op. 1, d. 46, ll. 105–106. Reference to a suicide note came later in a report submitted some time in 1936 to Komsomol's regional committee: *Ibid.*, f. 1955, op. 1, d. 122, l. 73.
17. See Marchukov's order of December 6, 1935, written in the upper right-hand corner of Vershinin's report: GAKO, f. R-2333, op. 1, d. 46, l. 105.
18. *Ibid.*, f. R-2333, op. 1, d. 46, l. 111.
19. See Vershinin's memorandum of April 21, 1936 to the district prosecutor and the Regional Department of Education: GAKO, f. R-2333, op. 1, d. 68, l. 25.
20. Report from the Pioneers Department of Komsomol's regional committee in GASPI KO, f. 1955, op. 1, d. 122, l. 73.

21. Ibid., f. 1255, op. 1, d. 581, ll. 24–26.
22. Ibid., f. 1255, op. 1, d. 581, l. 28 ob.
23. *Kirovskaia pravda*, March 14, 1935, 1.
24. GAKO, f. R-2333, op. 1, d. 46, ll. 18–31, l. 31 for reference to Essen's suicide.
25. GASPI KO, f. 1955, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 692–693.
26. Ibid., f. 591, op. 1, d. 60, ll. 5–5 ob.
27. Ibid., f. 1290, op. 1, d. 223, ll. 228–232.
28. Ibid., f. 1682, op. 1, d. 25, ll. 1–17; Trapeznikov's suicide mentioned on l. 8.
29. In his campaign speech at Moscow's Lomonosov State University, February 12, 2004, the Russian Federation's president, Vladimir Putin, referred to the "destructive forces of the decay (*razlozhenie*) of state power (*gosudarstvennost*) during the collapse of the Soviet Union." See <<http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/02/62215.shtml>> (last consulted November 12, 2004).
30. Naiman, *Sex in Public*, 16, 116. For a discussion of this phenomenon and its connection with alleged female sexuality, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
31. Born in 1904 into a family of poor peasants, Reshetov had worked at a number of rural and urban odd jobs before joining the party in 1926, entering a Soviet Party School, and graduating in 1931 from the Viatka Pedagogical Institute's social-economics department. He remained to teach at the institute until his appointment to the municipal department on February 28, 1934. This information from Reshetov's autobiographical sketch of July 8, 1935 in GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 582, ll. 23–24.
32. Born in 1895, the son of a factory worker, Marchukov joined the party in 1919 and graduated from the Krupskaya Academy of Communist Training in 1934. He held several administrative posts in Moscow's Commissariat of Enlightenment until his appointment to Kirov in December 1934. See Ibid., f. 591, op. 2, d. 94, l. 4.
33. Ibid., f. 1290, op. 1, d. 206, ll. 128–129.
34. Ibid., f. 1293, op. 9, d. 171, l. 17; f. 1290, op. 1, d. 206, ll. 133–135, 142.
35. On Kizei: Ibid., f. 551, op. 2, d. 94, l. 2. For Marchukov's other alleged affairs, see the discussion that follows.
36. See Balalaev's comments at the sessions of December 7 and 30, 1937 of the Bureau of the department's party organization, Ibid., f. 591, op. 1, d. 60, ll. 122, 125 ob. and at the January 4, 1938 session of the department's party organization, ibid. f. 591, op. 1, d. 158, ll. 6–7. Balalaev had been a party member since 1920 and at this time served as head of the regional department's Planning and Finance Sector.
37. At the session of the Bureau of the department's party organization, December 30, 1937, Ibid., f. 591, op. 1, d. 60, l. 125 ob.
38. Ibid., f. 1293, op. 9, d. 171, ll. 17–20. A few months earlier, Bobkov had been transferred to Moscow.
39. See testimony at the meeting of the regional department's party organization of October 15, 1937 in Ibid., f. 591, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 88–89 and Liusov's report in Ibid., f. 1290, op. 1, d. 206, ll. 133–134, 142–143.
40. Ibid., f. 591, op. 1, d. 60, ll. 88–89.
41. GAKO, f. R-1864, op. 1/s, d. 189, l. 58.
42. GASPI KO, f. 591, op. 1, d. 60, ll. 113–114.

43. See testimony at a meeting of the department's party organization, January 4, 1938 in *ibid.*, f. 591, op. 1, d. 158, l. 5.
44. *Ibid.*, f. 591, op. 1, d. 60, l. 124 and f. 591, op. 1, d. 158, ll. 6–8.
45. As quoted by Mariia Terent'evna Kulakova, head of the department's Elementary Schools Sector, at a session of the department's political organization, April 17, 1938, GASPI KO, f. 591, op. 1, d. 158, l. 23 ob.
46. GAKO, f. R-2342, op. 1, d. 71, l. 15.
47. *Ibid.*, f. R-1969, op. 1, d. 167, l. 42.
48. Comments by Khudiakov: *Ibid.*, f. R-1969, op. 1, d. 167, l. 53.
49. *Ibid.*, f. R-1969, op. 1, d. 169, l. 38 ob.
50. By the Schools Department, GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 2, d. 260, l. 15; by the regional prosecutor, GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 2, d. 260, ll. 20–20 ob.; by the Urzhum district party committee, GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 2, d. 260, l. 11; and by the Lalsk district department of education's party cell in 1940 in GASPI KO, f. 3069, op. 1, d. 2, l. 84 ob.
51. On grades and a suicide note, *ibid.*, f. 1290, op. 2, d. 260, ll. 20–20 ob.; on parents' testimony, *ibid.*, f. 988, op. 1, d. 305, l. 10.
52. GAKO, f. R-1969, op. 1, d. 167, l. 53.
53. See Chudakova's letters of February 6 and April 13, 1938: GAKO, f. R-1969, op. 1, d. 167, ll. 31, 38 ob.
54. For Konchevskaia's order, *ibid.*, f. R-1969, op. 2, d. 2, l. See assignments for the 1938–1939 academic year in *ibid.*, f. R-1864, op. 1/s, d. 186, ll. 7, 39. After this year, Chudakova's name disappeared from the city's school rolls.
55. GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 9, d. 171, l. 6.
56. *Ibid.*, f. 1293, op. 9, d. 171, l. 3.
57. *Ibid.*, f. 1293, op. 9, d. 171, ll. 1–1 ob.
58. *Ibid.*, f. 591, op. 1, d. 126, l. 53.
59. *Ibid.*, f. 591, op. 1, d. 158, l. 23 ob.
60. She was signing documents as head in late 1938: GAKO, f. R-2342, op. 1, d. 74, ll. 167, 209, 237–238.
61. *Ibid.*, f. R-1864, op. 2, d. 324, l. 499.
62. For Kniazheva, GASPI KO, f. 591, op. 2, d. 33, l. 10 and for Kizei, GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 9, d. 171, ll. 21, 24.
63. GAKO, f. R-1864, op. 1/s, d. 214, l. 23 and R-2342, op. 1, d. 238, l. 192.
64. GASPI KO, f. 591, op. 2, d. 94, ll. 1 ob.-2.
65. *Ibid.*, f. 591, op. 2, d. 94, ll. 1 ob.-2. Several of my colleagues at GASPI KO believe Marchukov's Jewish origins accounted for some of his past difficulties and certainly for the problems he encountered in 1940. The archival record is, of course, silent regarding this issue.
66. *Ibid.*, f. 1682, op. 1, d. 1, l. 346.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FRIENDS IN PRIVATE, FRIENDS
IN PUBLIC: THE PHENOMENON
OF THE *KOMPANIIA*
AMONG SOVIET YOUTH IN
THE 1950S AND 1960S

Juliane Fürst

Sometime in 1956 Liudmila Alekseeva, then a history graduate student, ran into a friend outside Moscow State University. Within minutes they had established that they had the same problems and frustrations concerning life and work. Within days they had set up a get-together of like-minded friends and acquaintances—a *kompaniia*—in a small room in a Moscow communal apartment. They began to be the regular hosts of “a group of regular guests, who, like us, were looking for opportunities to dance to jazz, drink vodka, and talk until dawn.”¹ Soon Liudmila was part of an interlocking network of such friendship circles, which assembled in various apartments, discussed Soviet life and politics, circulated underground literature, and listened to the songs of bards such as Bulat Okudzhava. They were not alone. The young intelligentsia all over the Soviet Union imbued their friendship circles with a spirit of political and social reawakening turning them into something more meaningful than just a random collection of acquaintances. These circles varied in nature, size, origin, composition, and almost everything else—yet they were recognized as a phenomenon of their time and characterized as much by their own self-perception as by the reaction they evoked within the official sphere. While neither exclusively a reserve for the young, nor in essence a Khrushchevite invention, *kompanii* were nonetheless strongly rooted within the social, political, and ideological changes of the early Thaw and thus in many ways a phenomenon of a period of transition. Alekseeva’s functional analysis of the phenomenon

captures the multi-natured character of the *kompanii* and indicates their precarious location on the borders of the private and public sphere:

The *kompaniya* had sprung up as a social institution because it was needed. . . . *Kompanii* evolved their own forms of literature, journalism, music and humor. They performed the functions of publishing houses, speaker bureaus, salons, billboards, confession booths, concert halls, libraries, museums, counseling groups, sewing circles, knitting clubs, chambers of commerce, bars, clubs, restaurants, coffeehouses, dating bureaus, and seminars in literature, history, philosophy, linguistics, economics, genetics, physics, music and art.²

The *kompaniia*, as described by Alekseeva and a number of other members of the Soviet intelligentsia, was essentially a private affair based on mutual friendship and located in the intimate privacy of personal rooms and spaces. Yet at the same time the *kompaniia* seems to have transcended its private origins and fulfilled functions in the lives of its members that belonged to a more public realm. It was as much a collective as it was a group of individuals, handpicked by each other. Its members were bound by a shared secrecy concerning the content and details of their discussions, yet its relatively fluid membership and openness to guest members made it a quasi-public forum. *Kompanii* assembled in private spaces, which, through the presence of strangers, acquired public overtones. At the same time they made public spaces such as cafes, street corners, and even university offices their territory giving them an air of exclusiveness and thus privacy. Their members rebuked participation in official life in favor of spending private time with their friends, but they considered this action to be a contribution to society. Were *kompanii* thus part of what Vladimir Shlapentokh has named the growing "privatization" of the Soviet Union or were they the first shy attempts to establish a civil society and thus a public sphere in the Habermasian sense? Were they a monument to the inevitable retreat of the Soviet citizen from the Soviet project or one of many attempts of its renewal?

Public and Private in the Soviet Context

To investigate such questions it is necessary to consider the terms "public" and "private" in the Soviet context. Most of the theories of the public/private divide, and indeed the paradigm itself, have been developed within the framework of Western European history and its legacy of medieval self-government, enlightenment, individualism, and social and economic modernization.³ There has thus been considerable debate, if the term is applicable to Russia in general and the Soviet Union in particular. Many

analysts have applied a quasi- or neo-totalitarian model to the problem, portraying the atomized private Soviet individual under siege from the official sphere of party and state.⁴ Recent studies of the Stalinist public sphere have been more flexible in their normative assumptions, recognizing that a direct and unfiltered application of a Western understanding of public sphere would only result in platitudes about the lack thereof in the Soviet system.⁵ Alekseeva's *kompaniia* does not appear in any of these interpretations. This is precisely because Alekseeva offers a subjective view of her own experiences—an approach completely ignored by most analysts of the public/private divide. Yet especially in a society such as the Soviet Union, where borders between utopian fiction, propaganda, and factual reality were habitually blurred, the subjective perspective was of crucial importance in determining an individual's reality. For a critical Soviet subject there was no objectivity except one's own. To dismiss as irrelevant Alekseeva's assertion that for her the *kompaniia* was seminar, library, and interest group—all institutions that in the West could be considered part of the public sphere—would oversimplify the issue of how Soviet life was organized and what kind of physical and mental spaces were available for its participants.

One of the issues that has obscured the integration of subjective perception into the historical analysis of the socialist public/private sphere is the fact that, just as the state was often seen as a monolithic actor, the reaction of the Soviet people was established as *a priori* oppositional. It was assumed that the individual was naturally striving for privacy, while the state was eager to expand its tentacles of public control into the last reserves of personal intimacy. Yet research on the Soviet self, on rituals and practices of mass participation, and on Bolshevik identity has shown that Soviet people displayed a strong desire to participate in public life and identified themselves via their function, role, and usefulness within the system.⁶ Many perceived themselves to be contributors to a public life that rested on *their* commitment and *their* activism, even if in fact they enacted formulaic rituals and worked as executors of official demands. Some, recognizing the lack and inefficiency of publicly sponsored structures, created their own parallel worlds that would fulfill their need for sociability and politically conscious interaction. In other words they created their own public spheres—or at least what they perceived to be the missing space within Soviet society that truly linked the needs of the individual with the collective good.

Ultimately, rather than concentrating on the Soviet subject's quest for privacy, an interpretation of the Soviet public/private divide has to take into account Soviet people's will to go public, to do public deeds, and to fulfill public functions. It has to pay respect to the importance of ideology in the lives of Soviet citizens and analyze how acceptance and/or nonacceptance of Soviet norms and beliefs shaped people's personal understanding of their

actions. At the same time it will have to put these subjective views into play with the de facto consequences of people's actions and with the view taken of them by Soviet officialdom. Therefore the following analysis of the nature and function of *kompanii* is based on a careful and independent reading of memoirs, supplemented by interviews with participants, contemporary newspaper clippings, and official documents, that indicate how the "other side" saw the phenomenon. Necessarily these sources favor those *kompanii*, whose members came to the attention of authorities or continued to be active in the Soviet dissident movement. Yet it is precisely these groups that should be the focus of our attention, because they were the ones who tried to challenge and redefine what public and private meant in the Soviet context and thus highlight where the borders of socialism were and how they moved.

Foundation

From the perspective of the official Soviet normative code the creation of a *kompaniia* was unquestionably an act of what Shlapentokh has termed privatization. Friendship was not forbidden in the Soviet Union. Yet, private friendship circles, especially among youth, were in essence an entirely superfluous structure in the Soviet world. Any possible environment where a young person could make friends had an official collective ready to fulfill the function of a peer group. This started with the Octobrists in kindergarten, followed by the Pioneers in primary school, and the Komsomol for the teenager and young adult. Moreover, Soviet youths were bound to their class collective, study group at university, sports club, trade union affiliation, or any other official collective they cared to join. With so many collectives on offer, an independent group of friends was destined to have subversive overtones. Retreating into a sphere that had not been created and furnished by the Bolshevik authorities was a slap in the face of the socialist state. It implied that official collectives failed in their duty to satisfy young people's need for belonging, friendship, and collectivity.

However, such a purist understanding of collectivism was hard to maintain in the face of reality, especially since Soviet life encouraged friendship groups to form on the basis of precisely the enforced official collectives their members were seeking to escape. The domestic courtyard, so central to Soviet urban life, was the first point of contact for children escaping the tight conditions of their communal apartments. Later, official organizations and school provided the framework for making friends. Khrushchev, in his zeal to re-ideologize youth, did much for private friendship by sending students for weeks on end into the countryside to help with the harvest or construct new industrial projects. As will become apparent, already in their creation *kompanii* were a hopeless mixture of the public and private.

The way how public collectives mutated into private ones only then to reclaim a share of the public sphere is well documented in the case of the Leningrad *kompaniia* around Valerii Ronkin, which transformed itself into the dissident group *Kolokol*. They started out as members of one of the first Komsomol patrols in Leningrad—a typically Khrushchevite phenomenon designed to give young people a purpose through charging them with safeguarding streets, dance halls, and public venues from hooligans and other non-Soviet elements. Valerii Ronkin and his friends did not find themselves on “public duty” by coincidence. They testified in memoirs and interviews that they arrived at university with a set of strict values and high standards, which they applied to themselves and others in the name of perfecting the world they lived in. They detested those who did not take the socialist cause seriously or engaged in excessive alcohol consumption, empty entertainment, or exaggerated fashion. With the same vigor they hated arrogance, bureaucracy, and cynicism, and soon found themselves opposing both the private world of their hedonistic peers and the stifling public sphere of the Komsomol authorities. Soon their Komsomol patrol was at loggerheads with the Komsomol organization over the direction and control of the brigades. Certain members of the public brigades started to retreat more and more into the world of private friendship, which meant meetings at home, where public holidays were celebrated in privacy. Their commitment to public service, however, propelled them eventually to political *samizdat* activity and oppositional agitation.

Liudmila Alekseeva's *kompaniia* also reflected a mixed heritage of public and private founding principles. Her circle of friends was unique insofar as it was a continuation of a *kompaniia* of eight Moscow State University science students that had been formed right after the war. Involved in all sorts of hooligan pranks, they were arrested the moment they had been foolish enough to give themselves the name “Brotherhood of Impoverished Sybarites” and drafted a program. In the eyes of Soviet officialdom they had thus turned themselves from a friendship circle into an organization.⁷ After their release from the camps they returned to Moscow and resumed their *kompaniia*, which in the conditions of the Thaw, widened and operated openly rather than in clandestine. Originally indeed a very private affair, their imprisonment had made them a public unit, stamped and confirmed by the documents of the procurator. The identity they acquired in the public context as *podel'niki* (co-accused) and *politzeiki* (camp inmates) continued to inform their self-perception after their release.⁸

Several *kompanii* were based on a shared interest in literature and especially poetry, which experienced a renaissance during the Thaw.⁹ It was not uncommon for literary *kompanii* to emerge from the official structures provided for young writers such as literature circles at universities, institutes, pioneer palaces, or Houses of Culture. In some cases, such as the *kompaniia*

created among the members of the *lito* (*literaturnoe obedenenie*—literature circle) of the Mining Institute in Leningrad, these circles never left the public realm. The circle of young poets, which was led and inspired by the writer Gleb Semenov, participated in public events such as the annual conference of young writers and the publication of the almanac *Young Leningrad*, but identified themselves, and were recognized by others, through their poetry as different from the usual young Soviet participant in official literary events.¹⁰ Their experience of *kompaniia* was less one of a network of private guests, but of a permanent exchange with other *lita*, whose members would come to the Mining Institute or invite miners to their poetry workshops. Persistent and increasing pressure from above culminated in the burning of their second volume of collected poems in the courtyard of the Mining Institute—an event that cemented their identity as a separate group of young poets, with both a public identity as the *lito* of the Mining Institute and a private one as a circle of peers bound together by a lyrical style and shared persecution.¹¹ Evgenii Rein, Dmitrii Bobyshev, and Anatolii Naiman at the Polytechnical Institute experienced a similar transformation from public activists (or at least participants) to private victims of official pressure after their radical wall newspaper *Kul'tura* came to the attention of the KGB.¹²

In Moscow the literary circles took a different path of development. From 1958 onwards young people started to assemble under the statue of the most revered poet of the early revolutionary years, Maiakovskii, at the upper end of Gor'kii Street, Moscow's main thoroughfare. This was a place known as *Maiakovskaia*. Here they would declaim poetry, initially that of officially recognized authors, later increasingly their own. Supported initially by the Komsomol,¹³ the poetry meetings changed in nature when the style of the recitals became more nonconformist and the square became the central exchange for unofficial information among different youth *kompanii*. While unabashedly public in location, the square acquired private overtones as the transactions taking place came under increasing public criticism and disapproval.¹⁴

While all *kompanii* were bound together by a shared outlook on Soviet life, some groups specifically united over political questions. In the early Khrushchev years thoughts of rejuvenation and re-ideologization became such common currency that they could be voiced in public, if phrased carefully. The events in Hungary and the subsequent clampdown of the authorities on critical voices forged more clandestine circles of like-minded friends, who now sought to discuss in private and collectively what a few months earlier they could still have said in Komsomol assemblies and other public meetings. Unlike their Stalinist predecessors, they usually refrained from forming formal organizations with names, charters, and membership rituals.¹⁵

Indeed, more often than not the politically based *kompanii* were closely involved in official Komsomol structures. Krasnopevtsev, leader of a political *kompaniia* at Moscow State University and Molostvov, instigator of a friendship group at Leningrad State University (LGU), both served as high-ranking activists in their respective faculties. Many members of such *kompanii* had already attracted the attention of the authorities because of their radical speeches at Komsomol assemblies or at mass meetings such as the scandalous discussion of the Dudintsev novel *Not by Bread Alone* at LGU.¹⁶ The fact that at least part of the privacy of their *kompanii* was enforced from above because of the state's clampdown on such debates gave these friendship groups an even more pronounced desire to recover the public ground, while at the same time awareness of their oppositional stance made them retreat deeper into secrecy and privacy.

Mechanisms of Identification

Friendship circles, unlike more formal organizations, are fluid and ultimately unstable structures. While outside perception can give a friendship group some coherency and identity, to a large degree they are subjective constructions, relying almost entirely on the conviction of their participants that each and every one of them belongs and deserves the epitaph "friend." Most groups of friends thus develop certain internal mechanisms of identification, which allow them to recognize each other, provide bonding rituals and signal to the outside world the nature of their particular brand of collectivity. The Khrushchevite youth *kompanii* were no exception. They tapped into the youth culture of the time and created their own identifying markers. As expressions of their group spirit these mechanisms of bonding can be read as programmatic statements and serve as indicators of the extent to which their activities reached into a sphere that Soviet officialdom had designated as its monopoly.

Without doubt the most powerful and widespread mechanism of integration was the sharing of poetry. One contemporary wrote that only laziness prevented some young people of his generation from composing poems. Young people's obsession with fresh and new poetry was by no means a phenomenon restricted to *kompanii*—even though it helped to establish a great many of them—nor was it a feature of solely literary circles. Many contemporary witnesses refer to the importance of poetry in giving themselves personally and the Thaw generation collectively an identity. Evgenii Rein remembers that "in reality I was preoccupied only by poetry . . . mine, others', any, of all people and all times, and this vivid half-literary, half-bohemian life, which bubbled in Leningrad at the end of the 1950s."¹⁷ Lina Glebova from the Mining Institute recalls that "now poems

came to me like a liberation from the grayness of existence.”¹⁸ Alekseeva states that “passion for poetry became a sign of the times.”¹⁹ Britanishskii remembers how his and his friends’ “younger and louder” poems literally drowned the voices of their predecessors.²⁰ The “poets” at the Polytechnical Institute coined the slogan “No ruble that is not earned through literary work” in order to express their collective devotion to literary pursuits. The Mining Institute *lito* then tried to top them with the even higher assertion: “No ruble that is earned with a dishonest line,” vowing to “speak the truth.”²¹

Each *kompaniia* would have its own set of poetry or other writing that was common currency among its members, thus imparting a unique identity. Vladimir Bukovsky, a participant in the poetry readings at the Maiakovskii monument in Moscow, recalls in his memoirs the poem “Manifest of Humanity,” composed by his friend Golonoskov.

Until now I do not know if these lines are really good poetry, and I cannot evaluate them: too closely they are linked with the memory of these days; we took the “Manifest of Humanity” as a symphony of rebellion, a call for disobedience. “I go out on the square, and into the city’s ear . . . This is me, calling to truth and revolt, willing no more to serve, I break your black tethers, waver of lies.”²²

In Leningrad the *kompaniia* around Nikolai Molostvov rallied around the production and discussion of his political statement “Status Quo.”²³ Often the selection of a defining poem or prose was less the private choice of a *kompaniia*, but was imposed from above, when authorities took objection to a particular piece of poetry. The events in Hungary in the autumn of 1956 were the catalyst for a great many such problematic works, which subsequently became watershed events in the relationship between *kompanii* and authorities. In Moscow the literary circle “Sensus” attracted the attention of the KGB when, in the wake of Hungary, an informer leaked poems decrying Khrushchev as an “idiot.”²⁴ In Leningrad, Revol’t Pimenov wrote his “Hungarian Theses,” which were read to his *kompaniia* at a meeting at his girlfriend’s flat.²⁵ Both items became the keystones to the prosecution of the respective *kompanii*. At the Mining Institute Lidia Gladkaia composed a poem just after the tanks rolled into Budapest—“Over there red blood on black asphalt, there a Russian stop, like a German ‘halt’”—drawing the most damning of all comparisons—that between the universally hated fascist invader and their own ruthless government. These lines went from hand to hand, from ear to ear. The case was discussed at the district Komsomol assembly and the faculty office, setting in motion a process that ended with the burning of the *lito*’s second almanac, the dismissal of their

leader and mentor, Gleb Semenov, and the dissolution of the *lito* at the Mining Institute.²⁶ The destruction of the *lito's* work, which took place after a proof copy found its way to the International Youth Festival then taking place in Moscow, became a defining moment for the circle of young poets at the Mining Institute. Most members had already left for assignments outside Leningrad, yet in their memory the experience of having their lines go up in flame gave the *lito* a nonconformist identity, which had hitherto only been lurking between the lines.

It was not only the mere production of literature around which *kompanii* came together. Soon the consumption of their literary output by only a select audience became a framework too tight for the ambitious young people who usually found themselves engaged in such pursuits. Participants of one *kompaniia* began to copy poems and other works of literature for other *kompanii*, and soon poems and prose began to disappear into the endless channels of the *kompaniia* network, reaching audiences the author had never met or even heard of. Publication and redistribution became one of the *raison d'être* of such friendship circles and satisfied both their desire to share good poetry or prose with a wider world and to pick holes in the tight blanket of official censorship. Liudmila Alekseeva recounts "*samizdat* sprung up on its own, arising naturally from *kompanii*. . . . My friends and I helped each other fill the enormous void of information, and soon the *izdat* [publishing] part of *samizdat* became a *Kompanyia* ritual."²⁷ The poets were followed by the memoirs of the *Polizeki* (political prisoners), the translations of classical foreign texts such as Hemingway and Orwell and the circulation of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* and Solzhenitsyn's early works, which reached the Moscow *kompanii* in 1957.²⁸ Moscow and Leningrad in the 1950s and 1960s were literally spilling over with lists of essays, short stories, and above all poems, which had been forgotten, forbidden, or newly composed and now were circulating in hand-made copies. Iurii Mal'tsev, a contemporary member of the scene, reckoned that more than 300 authors were in *samizdat* circulation at the time.²⁹

The ritual of transmitting literature was soon joined by the desire to pass on other types of information. *Kompaniia* members wished to give their political views a wider airing. Endless discussions on the state of the Soviet Union, its successes and failures and how they could be explained theoretically and philosophically, were one of the staples of *kompaniia* meetings. The desperate need to theorize reality reflected, of course, the strong Soviet socialization of this generation for whom the Marxist-Leninist model, which aimed to give a complex and total explanation to life and society, was still the basis (and in most cases remained the framework) of their political deliberations. Molostvov, a student at LGU, aired his views in his long essay "Status Quo."³⁰ Vladimir Osipov, Eduard Kuznetsov, and Ilia Bokshtein,

three participants in the readings at the Maiakovskaia, made the rounds among the Moscow *kompanii* with a paper calling for more organized forms of opposition to the regime.³¹ Vladimir Bukovsky circulated his "Theses on the Dissolution of the Komsomol".³² A new phenomenon of the time was the desire to spread simple, often even banal, information for the sake of undermining a system that was based on the strict censoring of information. In 1956–1957 Revol't Pimenov, Irina Verblovskaia, and Boris Vail' collected, edited, and disseminated the so-called *Informatsii*. They were almost random pieces of typed news with no commentary added. Taken from foreign newspapers, letters from friends from the provinces, and rumors floating around town, the *Informatsii* contained pieces such as: "Not long ago, in the first half of March, 11 Yakutians perished trying to cross the Bering Sea, 8 were killed when they were caught by border guards." This was followed by a paragraph on the discovery of anti-Soviet pamphlets in the Kursk oblast' on the day of the elections to the Supreme Soviet, and preceded by a piece on two underground explosions.³³ These almost random pieces of news were linked only in so far as they were concerned with issues the Soviet government liked to conceal from its population—accidents, discontent, crime, testing of weapons, and much more. As such the *informatsii* were a major step toward a society reclaiming the right to information and disclosure and became the precursor to later seminal dissident publications such as the *Chronicle of Current Events* and the *Political Diary*.

The *kompanii* of the 1950s and 1960s also facilitated the emergence of a new genre—the *avtorskaia pesnia* (author's song). The *avtorskaia pesnia* was closely linked to another very Khrushchevite pastime—*turizm*. Soviet *turizm* among young people was a form of travel that is best translated as backpacking. *Turisty* set out in small or middle-sized groups, with very little money and with the idea to better themselves through the experience of nature, their encounter with rural communities, or the achievement of physical feats. Trips could range from a day into the regional countryside to several weeks in the Caucasus. It was customary to sing in the train, on the road and around the campfire. The repertoire was rich: war songs, communist songs, children's songs, sailor songs and the so-called *blatnye pesnii*—criminal songs. Soon members of *kompanii* started to write songs themselves and performed them for and with their friends. The guitar became the instrument of choice due to its suitability for travel and association with youth, rebellion, and the working class.³⁴

Both *turizm* and songs were curious half-breeds between official instigation and private initiative. *Turizm* had had from its very beginning the blessing and support of the Soviet authorities.³⁵ Indeed, the first collective form of travel many Soviet students experienced was the obligatory summer work at

a collective farm or at a large construction site. It was here that many encountered collective singing for the first time since their Pioneer days. Valerii Ronkin describes how, as a student-volunteer working at the building site of the Baltic canal, his musical repertoire matured from songs devoted to the subject of construction to songs by the later famous songwriters Vizbor, Iakusheva, Okudzhava, and Gorodnitskii, whose names meant nothing to him then, but who were to become the leading voices of his generation of young Khrushchevite intelligentsia.³⁶ Soon he and his friends became the authors of many songs themselves. Ballads from the Great Fatherland War remained an important source of inspiration: "... the ideals of soldierly brotherhood were for us the ideals of human interaction."³⁷ The *avtorskaia pesnia* became subject to a certain professionalization. By the end of the 1950s Bulat Okudzhava was already traveling from *kompaniia* to *kompaniia*, singing about the tragic side of Soviet life, about his street—the Arbat in Moscow—and about love that served no communal purpose.³⁸ With the arrival of the first tape players, which were the size of big suitcases, *samizdat* was joined by *magizdat* (from the Russian word *magnitafon* for recorder) and the songs of the bards began to circulate among the *kompanii* giving a musical background to the scene's texture of poetry, politics, and risqué anecdotes.³⁹

Spaces

While most *kompanii* participants cite their common interests and activities as the defining features of their friendship circle, the space in which groups met and spent their time was a significant factor in determining collective identity. It is tempting to establish a link between the rise of the *kompanii* and Khrushchev's housing boom that allowed many Soviet families to move into single family apartments for the first time. Yet the evidence from memoirs is quite clear that indeed the most common meeting place was a room in an overcrowded communal apartment with the same curious and suspicious cohabitants as had existed under Stalin. The *kompanii* of the Khrushchev era used the same streets, frequented the same cafés, and ventured into the same nature. The outer circumstances of lack of privacy did thus not change—rather space was transformed by the use the *kompanii* made of it.

The birthplace of most *kompanii* was a private room in either a student hall or in a communal apartment. Either was considered an essentially private space in comparison to the world occupied by the Komsomol, academic institutions, and state structures. Russian hospitality applied to the *kompaniia* evenings and most pictures taken of assembled friendship groups show us a table with half-eaten *zakuski* and vodka. The room selected for *kompanii* meetings was very much an issue of practicalities, depending on centrality,

neighbors, and wealth of the occupant. Once, however, a place had been designated as meeting point for a *kompaniia*, it became virtually public property of those in the know. Since telephones were still the preserve of the elite and people in the Soviet Union were rarely in a hurry, people would drop in at all times of the day and night without warning. Alekseeva remembers that “just about every evening I would walk through the dark corridor of some communal flat and open the door of a crowded, smoky room filled with people I knew, people I’d never met, people I must have met but didn’t know by name.”⁴⁰ The transition of the private room to a more public space became even more pronounced when it became the stage for poets, songwriters, artists, and others willing to share their creative output with the assembled *kompaniia*. “Our domestic air was filled with poetry,” remembers Liudmila Shtern, a close friend of Iosif Brodskii and his literary *kompaniia*. The fact that these readings were not limited to home performances, but were repeated in the wider world of unofficial culture, heightened the sense of being at the center of events. “Who did not perform in our home!,” Shtern continues, reveling in the fact that some of the poetry heard in her private quarters was on the lips of every Leningrad young intellectual.⁴¹ Liudmila Alekseeva reckons that each *kompaniia* in Moscow counted about forty to fifty “close friends” and that most had contacts with other *kompanii* in places as far away as Kiev and Novosibirsk.⁴² By the late 1950s some of the more popular apartments of assembly had acquired the name “salon,” indicating their public function and their rootedness in the tradition of the Western intellectual elites.⁴³

At the same time *kompanii* that did not meet in private rooms enacted the reverse process, privatizing an essentially public space. The Maiakovskaia, while right in the center of Moscow, became a territory that was the reserve of those belonging to its group of young poetry lovers. When Komsomol “spies” appeared, participants learned very quickly who was a true *Maiakovnik* and who was there to observe for those “from above.” Many participants started to rely on the private apartment or the parental dacha, others gave themselves fake names to disguise their identity.⁴⁴ How much the square had become a contested space, which the young poets considered their own, became apparent when two of the core participants were arrested while reading their poetry. Their assembled friends and audience almost turned over the police car—an action inconceivable for most of these youngsters in any other context.⁴⁵ The creation of a private oasis in the middle of public space could take place almost anywhere, may it be a park such as the one surrounding the Peter the Great monument in Leningrad favored by fashion-conscious *kompanii*, or the café at Malaia Sadovaia, which in the early 1960s became the meeting point for a large *kompaniia* of creative artists.⁴⁶

Another favorite space of the *kompanii* was the countryside. The desire to escape the routine and grayness of everyday life was widespread among students, who, as *turisty*, started to travel up and down the country. The wideness of the Russian tundra and taiga, the loneliness of the Caucasian mountains, or even just the isolation of the borderlands surrounding Leningrad signified an escape into a certain privacy—a world without rules, without norms, and without authority.⁴⁷ This was especially true, since although many excursions were organized by public agencies, most people went on tour on their own initiative or submitted only casually to official guidelines and control. At the same time, the private space of natural surroundings was used to establish the kind of society to which communism aspired and which many young people of the Thaw considered their ideal: “The most important thing here was the complete voluntariness, selflessness, and equality. Everything was communal: tents, pots, blankets, food and drink . . . At expeditions and construction projects the heaviness of the backpack or work was divided by ‘ability,’ the weak were helped, the stronger burdened himself with more.”⁴⁸ Ronkin’s description of tourism as a catalyst for the creation of communism is echoed in the analysis of the historian Natalia Leбина, who also points to the Bolshevik utopian overtones in *turizm*: “The sporty-healthy aspect of tourism was in complete congruence with the Soviet duty to achieve ‘a physically perfect’ personality.”⁴⁹ Escapism into the privacy of nature and select company was thus to no small extent infiltrated by a belief in a better Soviet society than that existing in the reality of the tourists’ urban homes.

Competing for the Public

The precarious situation of *kompanii* in the gray zone between Soviet public and private spheres was exacerbated by the fact that neither the phenomenon nor official reaction to it remained static. As the *kompanii* became more and more ambitious in their self-perceived public scope and function, authorities started to push back and reclaim what they considered to be their rightful territory. *Kompanii* and officialdom found themselves competing over a piece of public sphere or rather over the right to create and shape this piece of public sphere. This was not only a clash of different societal forces. It was a collision of different visions over what constituted the public good. Friction was inevitable given the gap between the self-perception of participants in *kompanii* and views held by the Soviet authorities over what function a public sphere should have, who should participate in it, and in what capacity.

In the eyes of the authorities the explicit or implicit claim of *kompanii* members that they were contributing to the public good was much more

damaging than the actual number of people involved in *kompanii*. Soviet authorities took the mental world of their citizens extremely seriously. It worried them that participants in *kompanii* felt that the world of their friendship circle gave them the kind of sense of belonging Soviet structures failed to provide. "No matter which *kompaniia* I was invited to, no matter which corridor I walked down and which door I opened, I sensed that those people were like me," Liudmila Alekseeva remembers, explaining that it was precisely the failed attempt to acquire an official collective that drew her and her friends together. "[These people] grew up reading Pushkin and Akhmatova, disliking Pavlik Morozov, tuning out party activists, and considering themselves outsiders. They grew up thinking that they were pitiful beings who did not fit into the 'healthy collective.'" ⁵⁰ Dmitrii Bobyshev also remembers his friendship with Anatolii Naiman and Evgenii Rein as an escape from the social loneliness he had felt as a result of his "otherness." "From the very beginning our friendship did not need affirmation . . . we mainly needed conversation." ⁵¹ The world of the *kompaniia* with its poems, songs, and discussions assumed even the most sacred feature of Bolshevik ideology—that of personal and spiritual salvation. Rubina Arutiunian claims: "What was the Maikovskaia for me? First of all—my spiritual motherland." ⁵² Her fellow *Maiakovnik* Alisa Gadasina said that "it gave inner freedom." ⁵³ Lev Anninskii remembers that for him the songs sung around the fire or in cramped rooms with his friends meant "rescuing his private personality [*lichnost'*]," while Bukovsky described Aleksandr Galich's songs as "an odyssey, a journey through the labyrinths of the soul of Soviet man," that so fully expressed "our yearning and pain that the authorities could not tolerate it." ⁵⁴

It was not only on an emotional level that the *kompanii* came into direct competition with Bolshevik ideology and structure. Their very mechanisms of identification replicated attributes of official public life. Indeed often the participants of *kompanii* took their clues from the world of party and Komsomol. They tapped into the official rejuvenation of poetry, but made their poems symbols of "spiritual courage" against the rigid demands made on lyrics from above. ⁵⁵ They appropriated Bolshevik song culture, promoted in numerous communist and patriotic songs, and in the process articulated "a protest against the prescribed jolliness of official songs." ⁵⁶ They believed in the Bolshevik rhetoric of communality and equality, but put these ideas into action independently and with strict exclusion of bureaucrats or careerists. ⁵⁷ Moreover, all these elements had expansionist ambitions. The *kompanii* pressed forward into the wider public with their unsanctioned products thus threatening one of the Bolsheviks' most important monopolies—the control over information, interpretation, and opinion making. ⁵⁸ Poems and songs became *samizdat* and *magnizdat*. Private meetings of friends became

stages for the opinions and artifacts of the underground. Participants in *kompanii* strongly believed they rendered a public service. They followed their moral—and this meant a highly Soviet influenced—conscience.⁵⁹ The desire to reach a wider audience was natural for people socialized in a state where description and depiction were seen as the precursors of reality. If you only conjured up a vision strongly enough, life would follow.

After a brief period of tolerance in the early 1950s, Soviet authorities made serious attempts to undermine the activity of *kompanii* and claim back some of the spaces lost to what they perceived as private and individualistic interests. Since it was Khrushchev and not Stalin in charge, the response was a mixture of repression and persuasion. The year 1957 saw a flood of arrests of young protesters, who included the group around Pimenov and Verblovskaia, and three of the main actors of the poetry meetings at the Maiakovskaia. Bobyshev's, Rein's and Naiman's wall newspaper, *Kultura* was forbidden, and the members of the *lito* at the Leningrad Mining Institute were frightened into burning their almanac. Yet it was the more subtle measures that demonstrate just how much the phenomenon of the private *kompaniia* was perceived to have stepped on the toes of the regime. The tactic of undermining the *kompanii* spirit by dragging their activities back into the official public sphere was applied to *kompaniia* song culture. In 1959 the Komsomol organized a national concert for songwriters. From the national the newly founded *klub samodeiatel'noi pesni* (KSP)—Club of Amateur Songs—filtered back onto the regional level until every university offered the opportunity to sing in them.⁶⁰ In 1961 the Komsomol tried to regain control over the nonconformists at the Maiakovskaia by coaxing them back into a space that was ironically less public than the square, but more controllable. They offered the principal readers a club, where they could assemble.⁶¹ The offer was declined. Tougher measures were employed. The square was emptied with the help of so-called Komsomol *druzhiniki*. The new word for Komsomol patrol, which literally means Komsomol friendship groups, demonstrates the regime's eagerness to offer a verbal and physical alternative to the *kompanii*.⁶²

How quickly a *kompaniia* could be turned from nonconformist trouble makers into a vehicle for Komsomol propaganda is demonstrated by the group of Leningrad students from the Altai, who, in an early form of environmentalism, dreamed about creating a tree conservation project in their homeland. Initially demonized as "*gruppka*" by their local Komsomol committee and excluded from their institute of study, they gained the support from the Komsomol's Central Committee. Soon they found themselves elevated to spearhead a patriotic campaign to save the Siberian pine tree through the establishment of Kedrograd (Pinetown), a city in the midst of the Altai forests.⁶³ In the late 1960s the Komsomol continued its attempts

to create what Nikolai Mitrokhin has termed “experimental spaces,” whose ethos was informed by the demands of youth having fallen outside the official collectives.⁶⁴ Similarly among the members of *kompanii* in Moscow and Leningrad were not only future dissidents, but quite a few individuals, whose adulthood was devoted to journalism, broadcasting, or other activities in the public eye, demonstrating once again the precarious position of the *kompanii* at the frontline between conformist reforms and oppositional rebellion.⁶⁵

Conclusion

What is significant about Soviet youth *kompanii*? Were these youngsters anything more than the fourth or even fifth generation growing up under Bolshevism—slightly bored, slightly rebellious, but ultimately unable to stand up to a regime much mightier than their world of friendship, equality, and small pockets of freedom?

This paper has argued that the Soviet public sphere is more a construction of the mind than an objectively measurable reality. In conventional interpretations of the public/private divide *kompanii* would be relegated to the private sphere. They were a minority among youth, they achieved no power, and their influence was limited to their friends and friends of friends. Yet the subjective vision of *kompaniia* members clearly demonstrated a desire to “be” or to “create” a public sphere. This desire never would have been stated *expressis verbis*. Indeed, the dichotomy of public and private was actively rejected by most members of such groups. Yet precisely in this rejection they demonstrated that they did not feel subsidiary to the official structures of the public sphere. Their life was not private—a word that had almost dirty connotations in the Soviet Union. Their choice of attributes, rituals, and spaces indicated that they were searching for something that went beyond “privacy.” In line with the education they had received as Soviet youngsters, members of *kompanii* had a strongly romantic notion that they could achieve some kind of higher purpose. They desired to contribute to the collective good and believed in the existence of individual and societal perfection. The *kompaniia* was the embodiment of these ideas and thus the incarnation of their vision of a public sphere.

While thus the study of Soviet friendship groups challenges our traditional understanding of public and private, these concepts have nonetheless proven useful in disentangling the complicated web of interaction between different Soviet actors and agencies. The application of categories usually reserved for Western societies throws into relief the dialogue that existed between the Soviet regime and individual subjects. As has been demonstrated, *kompanii* became spaces emulating an idealized form of public life.

Inevitably this brought the *kompanii* into direct competition with official structures of public life. Officialdom responded with carrot and stick. It closed down some of the venues favored by *kompanii* and arrested key players. Yet at the same time the public organs began imitating the *Kompanii*, taking over their ideas and activities, and bringing them back under official control. Neither side won the battle. *Kompanii* did not achieve a change in how the Soviet official sphere was constructed nor in who was allowed to participate in it legitimately, while the authorities were never quite able to stamp out the public life created by these eager youngsters. The participants and members of such friendship circles eventually grew up and out of the *kompanii* of their youth. The idea, however, to provide an alternative forum for private citizens to engage in public life, lived on and in the end survived its mightier "big brother."

From the mid-1960s *kompanii* as an alternative form of public space became less prominent. Groups splintered into their different components with some pursuing the idea of art and literature as a vehicle of change, while others devoted themselves to politics. Many retreated into a more unambiguous privacy, finding their "salvation" in family and friendship circles devoid of public ambitions. Soviet underground culture, the dissident movement, and the kitchen table picked up from where the *kompanii* had left off. While the Soviet state tried to hang onto its version of "public" as "sanctioned by the regime," there was a growing constituency of Soviet people who defined their own public sphere and acted accordingly. The spaces of the *kompanii*, without changing much of their actual physical appearance, were transformed into places that were either more overtly private or more decidedly public. The apartments that had served as *kompanii* spaces either returned to their private usage, or became known as salons and exhibition sites. Some even acquired the name "museum" in the vocabulary of its visitors.⁶⁶ Spaces outside the public life of the city continued to be prominent—may they have been dachas, which served as meeting places for large number of artists from the cultural underground, or remote spaces deep in the Russian heartland, where in the name of science a number of devoted enthusiasts ran a yearly expedition, keeping alive the tradition of 1950s/60s *turizm*, song culture, and *kompaniia*.⁶⁷ The more politically oriented part of *kompaniia* youth graduated into the dissident movement. In Leningrad they continued to operate as clandestine groups, publishing underground journals and staging underground exhibitions. In Moscow, as already foreshadowed by the public readings at the *Maiakovskaia*, dissident work took a less secret face and was characterized by open demonstrations, attendance of court trials, and public statements to the foreign press.⁶⁸ Many participants of former *kompanii* eventually emigrated. It is through their memoirs that the world first learned about the Soviet Union's other

public sphere, which in the climate of the cold war was portrayed—and eagerly received—as running fundamentally counter to the official world of the Soviet regime. Yet, as Andrei Zorin has pointed out, even the archetypal dissident memoir of former *Maiakovnik* and *kompaniia* member Bukovsky follows essentially the trajectory of a socialist realist novel, thus revealing once again the entangled nature of the Soviet Union's competing public spheres.⁶⁹ Rather than looking for the precise border between socialism and privacy, it might thus be more useful to resurrect a concept that was common currency among Soviet citizens at the time—that of a second world (*vtoroi mir*) overlapping with and existing alongside official life, which provided both inspiration and counterpoint.

Notes

1. Liudmila Alekseeva, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), 83.
2. Ibid.
3. See, e.g., Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand, 1999 [1962]); Philippe Aries and George Duby, *History of Private Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
4. Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 6–13; Mark Garcelon, "Public and Private in Communist and Post-communist Society," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 315, 323–324.
5. See Gabor Rittersporn, Malte Rolf, and Jan Behrends, "Von Schichten, Räumen und Sphären: Gibt es eine sowjetische Ordnung von Öffentlichkeit?," in *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs: Zwischen parteistaatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten*, ed. Gabor Rittersporn et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 389–421; Ingrid Oswald and Victor Voronkov, "'Licht an, Licht aus!' Öffentlichkeit in der (post-)sowjetischen Gesellschaft," in *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit*, 37–64; Karl Schlögel, "Der 'Zentrale Gorkii-Kultur-und Erholungspark' in Moskau: Zur Frage des öffentlichen Raums im Stalinismus," in *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: Neue Wege der Forschung*, ed. Manfred Hildermeier (München: Oldenbourg, 1998), 255–274.
6. See Jochen Hellbeck, *Tagebuch aus Moskau 1931–1939* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996), 9–19; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 198–237; Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); and Choi Chatterjee, *Celebrating Women: Gender, Festival, and Bolshevik Ideology* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).

7. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 8137, op. 37, d. 2984, ll. 1–2.
8. Alekseeva, *Thaw Generation*, 86–93.
9. See B. Ivanov, "Literaturnye pokoleniia v Leningradskoi neofitsial'noi literature: 1950–1980-e gody," in *Samizdat' Leningrada: Literaturnaia Entsiklopediia*, ed. V. Dolinin and D. Ja. Severiukhin (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003), 535–384; Emily Lygo, "The Need for New Voices: Writers' Union Policy towards Young Writers 1953–64," in *Problems of Destalinisation*, ed. Polly Jones (London: Routledge, 2005).
10. Valdimir Britanishskii, "Studencheskoe poeticheskoe dvizhenie v nachale Otpepli," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 14 (1996), 1–18; Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (TsGALI), f. 371, op. 1, d. 299, l. 56–59.
11. For the burning see Aleksandr Gorodnitskii, "Gornyi Institut," *Neva*, 7 (1993), 3; Elena Kumpun, "Autodafe vo dvore gornogo instituta," in *Pod Voronikhinskimi sbodami*, ed. Victor Tsaritsyn (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Neva," 2003), 492–496.
12. *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* published a negative article on the paper ("Chto otstaivaiut tovrashchi iz Tekhnologicheskogo instituta?" *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, April 12, 1956, 2). Secretary of State John Dulles then cited the editors of the paper in a speech in Turkey as examples of Soviet opposition getting the machinery of the KGB rolling. However, only one member of the editorial team was arrested (and in connection with a different matter). Iurii Dimitrin, "Gazeta Kul'tura," in *Samizdat' Leningrada*, 37–39.
13. *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* even featured a positive article, which encouraged participation. See Liudmila Alekseeva, *Istoriia inakomysliia v SSSR* (Moscow: Vest', 2001), 211.
14. Liudmila Polikovskaia, *My predchuvstvie . . . predtecha: Ploshchad' Maiakovskogo, 1958–1965* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1997); Rubina Arutiunian, *Moia Maiakovskaia* (Moscow, 2002); Delo Osipova et al., *Archive Memorial* St. Petersburg.
15. There were, of course, exceptions. Yet there is no doubt that the trend was toward a loose affiliation of friends rather than organized membership. Not even the highly politicized groups around Nikolai Krasnopevets, Revol't Pimenov, and Victor Trofimov had given themselves names and organizational charters.
16. See, e.g., Mikhail Molostvov's demand for information on Poland and Hungary in a Komsomol meeting and Nikolai Solokhin's (*kompaniia* Molostvov) speech at the LGU Komsomol assembly. Mikhail Molostvov, *Iz zametok Vol'nodumtsa* (St. Petersburg: Memorial, 2003), 16–17; interview with Nikolai Solokhin, St. Petersburg, September 2004. For Revol't Pimenov's speech at the LGU discussion on Dudintsev, which personally attacked the director Aleksandrov for anti-Semitism, see Pimenov, *Revol't Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Panorama, 1996), 23–24; interview with Irina Verblovskaia, St. Petersburg, September 2004. For an independent eye-witness account see RGALI, f. 1702, op. 6, d. 243, ll. 38–39.
17. Evgenii Rein, *Zametki marafona: Nekanonicheskie memuary* (Ekaterinburg: U-Faktoriia, 2003), 333.

18. Lina Glebova, "Vospominaniia i osviiashcheniia," in *Pod Voronikhinskimi sbodami*, 450.
19. Alekseeva, *Istoriia inakomyshleniia*, 210.
20. Britanishskii, "Studencheskoe," 3.
21. Nina Koroleva, "O Leningradskoi poezii 1960-kh godov," in *Pod Voronikhinskimi sbodami*, 481–483, here 481.
22. Vladimir Bukovsky, *To Build a Castle: My Life as a Dissenter* (London: Deutsch, 1978), 120.
23. Interview with Nikolai Solokhin, St. Petersburg, September 2004.
24. Vladimir Kuznetsov, *Istoriia odnoi kompanii* (Moscow: V. Kuznetsov, 1995), 9.
25. Pimenov, *Vospominaniia*, 21.
26. Vladimir Britanishskii, "Pokhishchenie prozerpiny plutonom," in *Pod Voronikhinskimi sbodami*, 30; Lidiia Gladkaia, "26 Noiabria 1956 goda," *Pod Voronikhinskimi sbudami*, 151.
27. Alekseeva, *Thaw Generation*, 98.
28. Ibid., 99.
29. Alekseeva, *Istoriia inakomyshleniia*, 210; Irena Verblovskaia, *Gor'koi, Liubov'iu, Liubimy: Peterburg Anny Akhmatovoi* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal "Neva," 2003), 256–258.
30. Molostvov, *Zametok*, 19; Delo Molostvova, Archive Memorial St. Petersburg.
31. Delo Osipova et al., Archive Memorial St. Petersburg.
32. Bukovsky, *Castle*, 128.
33. Delo Pimenova et al., Archive Memorial St. Petersburg, envelope l. 16–16 ob.
34. It was not coincidental that the *turizm* movement resembled the youth movement of the early twentieth century, especially in Germany. The German organizations had been role models for Komsomol work. The guitar had been promoted as an instrument by the Kosmomol itself in the 1930s. RGASPI M-f. 1, op. 23, d. 1304, ll. 92–94.
35. See, e.g., N. B. Lebina and A. N. Chistikov, *Obyvatel' i reformy: kartiny povesd-nevnoi zhizni gorozhan* (St. Petersburg: Dmitri Bulanin, 2003), 284–288.
36. Valerii Ronkin, *Na smenu dekabriam prikhodiat ianvari . . .* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 2003), 75.
37. Ronkin, *Na smenu*, 84–86.
38. Alekseeva, *Thaw Generation*, 101–103.
39. Viacheslav Dolinin, "Leningradskii periodicheskii samizdat serediny 1950–80-kh godov," in *Samizdat' Leningrada*; Verblovskaia, *Gor'koi*, 259.
40. Alekseeva, *Thaw Generation*, 84.
41. Liudmila Shtern, *Brodskii: Osia, Iosif, Joseph* (Moscow: Nezavisimaia gazeta, 2001), 72.
42. Alekseeva, *Istoriia inakomyshleniia*, 214.
43. Andrei Gaivoronskii, *Sladkaia Muzyka Vechnykh Stikhov: Malaia Sadovaia: Vospominaniia, Stikhotvoreniia* (St. Petersburg: im. N. I. Novikova, 2004), 33.
44. Polikovskaia, *Predchuvstvie*, 82.
45. Ibid., 13.
46. Interview with Boris Pustyntsev, St. Petersburg, September 2004. Gaivoronskii, *Sladkaia*, 9–42.
47. Interview with Liudmila Klimenova, St. Petersburg, September 2004.
48. Ronkin, *Na smenu*, 77.

49. Lebina and Chistikov, *Obyvatel'*, 285.
50. Alekseeva, *Thaw Generation*, 84.
51. Dmitrii Bobyshev, *Ia zdes'* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2003), 109.
52. Ariutunian, *Maiakovskaia*, 5.
53. Alisa Gadasina, "Maiakovka dala nam vnutrennnuiu svobodu," in Polikovskaia, *Predchuvstvie*, 100.
54. Lev Anninskii, *Bardy* (Moscow: Soglasie, 1998), 37; Bukovsky, *Castle*, 115–116.
55. Bobyshev, *Ia zdes'*, 112.
56. Anninskii, *Bardy*, 37.
57. Ronkin, *Na smenu*, 77.
58. See on this theme: Petr Vail', Aleksandr Genis, *60-e: Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1988), 179.
59. This was a notion that was strongly expressed in almost all of the interviews taken for this project. See interviews with Valerii Ronkin, Irina Ronkina, Liudmila Klimenova, and Irina Verblovskaia, all at St. Petersburg, September 2004.
60. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bard_\(Soviet_Union\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bard_(Soviet_Union)) Bella Ostromoukhova, "La chanson d'auteur," Master's Thesis, University of Paris, I, 2002.
61. Vladimir Talitskii, "O tom, kak klub na ploshchadi pytalis' perenesti klub pod kryshei," in Polikovskaia, *Predchuvstvie*, 149–152.
62. Polikovskaia, *Predchuvstvie*, 249.
63. Vladimir Chivilikhin, *Shumi Taiga shumi!* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1960). See also the discussion on the Kedrograd experiment in Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 319–333.
64. Nikolai Mitrokhin, *Russkaia Partii: Dvizhenie russkikh nationalistov v SSSR, 1953–1985* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2003), 283–285.
65. For biographical data on Moscow and Leningrad *kompanii* members see Polikovskaia, *Predchuvstvie*, 367–387. *Samizdat' Leningrada*, 69–388.
66. Arutunian, *Maiakovskaia*, 46, 53–57; Valerii Val'ran, *Leningradskii Andergraund: Zhivopis', Fotografii, Rok-Muzyka* (St. Petersburg: im N. I. Novikova, 2003), 5–22.
67. On the Lizovskaia gruppa meeting in a house in a village near Moscow see Polikovskaia, *Predchuvstvie*, 377. On the KSE (Kompleksnaia Samodeiatel'naia Ekspeditsiia), which made its first expedition to Tunguska in 1959, see Iu. Kapduba, *V strane ognenogo boga ogny* (Kemerovo, 1967); interview with Vladimir Shnittke, St. Petersburg, September 2004.
68. See Veniamin Ioffe, *Novye Eriudy ob optimizme* (St. Petersburg: Memorial, 1998), 47–48.
69. Andre Zorin, "Sekta Piatidesiatnikov," in Polikovskaia, *Predchuvstvie*, 325.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE 1959 *LIRIKI-FIZIKI*
DEBATE: GOING PUBLIC WITH
THE PRIVATE?

Susan Costanzo

“[A] person’s spiritual side depends to a significant degree on how he spends his free time . . . [P]rogress in the sphere of the hard sciences [and] technology and ignorance of social problems lead society to decay or catastrophe.”¹ In spite of very recent achievements in the Soviet space program and less recent exhortations that glorified work and personal sacrifice in order to build the fledgling Soviet state and industry, writer Il’ia Ehrenburg’s remark in a September 1959 *Komsomol’skaia pravda* article caused no outrage. On the contrary, editors embraced his ideas as a catalyst for public discussion.

Ehrenburg’s unorthodox observation appeared in response to a letter from “Nina V.,” a Leningrad student, who had written to him after a failed personal relationship. She had broken her engagement to “Iurii,” a successful engineer, as a result of some of his behavior and attitudes. Believing that sport provided the only legitimate form of leisure, he dismissed her enthusiasm for art, literature, history, and current events as a waste of time in the atomic age. Although he regularly sent money to his uneducated mother, he did not want to spend time with her. He abandoned a best friend because the latter would not help the ambitious engineer get ahead. When Nina attempted to talk to her fiancé about their relationship, he lost his temper and accused her of “complicating” matters. She asked Ehrenburg if he agreed with Iurii’s views about relationships and art’s function in modern society. The writer decided to publish his reply as a means to draw attention to this type of behavior and its public and private consequences.² His article sparked a public outpouring that came to be called the “liriki-fiziki debate,” named for a Boris Slutskii poem that was composed in response to the discussion.³

Komsomol'skaia pravda's treatment of the letters presents an intriguing opportunity to examine the public discourse on private life. Because the published letters represent only a small portion of the contributions, they reveal more about the newspaper staff's assumptions than those of readers.⁴ The course of the debate from September through December 1959 demonstrates tensions within *Komsomolka*, as the paper was affectionately called, over the role of the press during Nikita Khrushchev's uneven retreat from Stalinism. Whom did the press serve first? Party and Komsomol organizations expected the press to communicate their goals and ideology to the public. Journalists, including Ehrenburg, also saw themselves within the tradition of *intelligenti*, whose function included educating (*vospitanie*) the masses. While state leaders also believed that the press had this mission, newspapers did not blindly follow party prescriptions. This discrepancy was most apparent when the role of the public came into play. *Komsomolka* staff was conscious of its popularity and was not immune to public influence. While the state encouraged the publication of letters, such opportunities led readers to believe that the press was their forum too, rather than the exclusive instrument of the state, and the newspaper agreed. Furthermore, although staff members tended to agree on the paper's overall editorial direction, disagreements peppered discussions of specific articles and the coverage of personal relationships in its pages. An analysis of the debate reveals that the newspaper was ambivalent toward public debates about private lives. As a result, discussion of the topic was carefully circumscribed. The newspaper rejected the responsibility for resolving the hardships of private relationships, but it continued to provide a venue for individual articles that revealed that such problems existed. Some members of the public, particularly women, may have been dissatisfied with the press's unwillingness to tackle these particular social ills, but the consequences for individuals were not all negative.

This analysis of the *liriki-fiziki* discussion focuses on personal relationships, which scholars generally agree falls into the private sphere. It might be tempting to argue that "private" is a Western concept that does not translate into the authoritarian realm of Soviet communism. More fruitful is to consider the line of argument that suggests that the growing importance of family and emotional attachments was a development of modern society more broadly, rather than a byproduct of liberal capitalism.⁵ The *liriki-fiziki* debate also suggests that this private realm was not always antagonistic toward public life, as some scholars have argued.⁶

Although the bulk of evidence of the newspaper's discourse on personal relationships is drawn from the published letters, additional documents allow for a more nuanced assessment of the newspaper's motivations and goals. Catriona Kelly has found evidence that *Komsomolka* staff rewrote,

excised, or embellished texts of letters, and they cannot be accepted at face value.⁷ Transcripts from newspaper staff meetings (*letuchki*) provide a valuable corrective to this shortcoming. They expose staff priorities and attitudes toward specific letters and the overall direction of the debate.⁸ Journalists frequently disagreed on the merits of various letters, but no one suggested that the spirit of a letter had been undermined by the editing process, although they often criticized each other's articles. Reporters were more careful with famous contributors. One staff member disliked an article by playwright Viktor Rozov but acknowledged, "A dramatist, writer has the right to say what he wants."⁹ This deference was not extended to ordinary letter writers, but in the context of this discussion, censorship was most likely occurring in the choice of letters for publication and some editorial cleanup, which less well-educated participants may have appreciated. In addition to transcripts, 15 letters have survived in Ehrenburg's archive. This tiny sample cannot be construed as representative of all unpublished letters, but it adds an unedited perspective from the public.¹⁰ Finally, other articles appeared during the debate but outside its frame, and they offer a broader perspective on the newspaper's discourse on private life at the time.

Efforts to explore some issues of private life were not new in 1959. The importance of families and personal relationships may have been downplayed in the Stalin era, but very soon after his death in 1953, critics and writers returned to emotional themes in the arts. Beth Holmgren characterizes this renewed depiction of fictional private life as the "feminization" of Soviet literature.¹¹ Although she credits the leading role in this process to women writers, many men including Ehrenburg were also engaged in creating artistic works that emphasized the intrinsic value of emotional lives. Some of these works were criticized in the press, typically when portrayals of private, but more often public behavior were deemed too negative. However, no one criticized writers and filmmakers for their efforts to depict private lives. Ehrenburg contributed to this "feminization" of literature with his 1954 novella *The Thaw*, but his article in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* attempted to shift the discussion from imaginary characters to real people with legitimate and concrete problems.

Ehrenburg might have called upon his own experience as a case as an example of a fulfilling private life. Having lived through two world wars, numerous revolutions, and Stalin's purges, he was now taking stock of the most meaningful aspects of his life. By 1959, his personal life reflected the twin components for a satisfying emotional life: his spacious apartment included an impressive collection of modern art, and he was very much in love with Lisolette Mehr.¹² The themes raised in *The Thaw* and the *liriki-fiziki* debate received fullest expression in his memoirs, which chronicle his unabashed love for twentieth-century art and artists.

The debate also occurred at a time of increasing state attention to certain aspects of private life. Recent party and government policies increased investment in housing and consumer goods for Soviet citizens.¹³ An interest in the nonmaterial elements of private life also emerged. Advice literature proliferated in the Khrushchev era and included works that addressed young men's responsibilities to their families.¹⁴ Newspapers devoted so much space to issues of behavior that the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* created a new category "Of Manners and Morals" in fall 1958. For *Komsomolka* staff, the so-called moral theme was a hot topic.¹⁵

The Course of the Debate

Interest in this topic was not confined to public institutions. Readers plunged into the debate begun by Ehrenburg. With the second largest circulation of Soviet newspapers in 1957, *Komsomol'skaia pravda* reached a broad national audience.¹⁶ In 1959, one journalist boasted that the paper received "eight hundred, nine hundred, up to a thousand letters a day."¹⁷ Even allowing for some exaggeration, the quantity is daunting, easily amounting to a quarter of a million per year. Although letter writing to newspapers was common for Soviet citizens, the response to Ehrenburg's article was extraordinary. Ehrenburg reported that he read "about a thousand" letters, but they represented only a fraction of the contributions.¹⁸ Over the course of the *liriki-fiziki* debate, the newspaper printed excerpts of varying lengths from 59 letters in 7 issues over 2 months (plus Ehrenburg's 2 articles). Letters were typically written by a single individual and reflected an impressive geographic diversity. In those cases where it was possible to determine professions, the largest group of published responses came from white-collar professionals, followed by a number of students, and then workers. *Kolkhozniki* were least visible in terms of the number of published letters, but one of them included 50 signatures from the Beacon of Revolution collective farm in Krasnodar krai. An unpublished letter to Ehrenburg also reported that the debate had been followed at a rural secondary school in Brodokalmak, Cheliabinsk oblast', and some students wrote to the paper.¹⁹ It is unknown whether the demographics of published writers reflected a similar diversity of unpublished contributors, but the discussion reached beyond the pages of *Komsomolka* and captured the public imagination.

As a journalist, Ehrenburg understood the difficulties of writing in the press about personal relationships that were merely unhappy, rather than violent or criminal. Combining his duty as an *intelligent* to educate the public with an interest in promoting strong personal relationships, Ehrenburg's first article provided a deft means of connecting Nina's private concerns with the public production and consumption of art. He linked Iurii's

behavior toward her with his lack of interest in the arts. Ehrenburg praised Iurii's dedication to his profession and acknowledged the scientific advancements over the previous century. At the same time, he cited Nazi Germany's despicable morality to demonstrate that scientific and social achievements were not the sole indications of a society's overall development. The lack of artistic appreciation among some Americans also disturbed him. For Ehrenburg, U.S. wealth and material comforts did not lead to the happiness found in meaningful personal relationships. American society tolerated the exploitation of Detroit factory workers and "businesslike" relations between the sexes. Worst of all, he deplored the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as evidence of science at its most destructive and Americans' indifference toward human life. The sensitivity required for deep relationships could be cultivated through either the participation in or appreciation of art, and he provided positive role models of renowned scientists and artists who valued both spheres.²⁰ Ehrenburg's commentary could also be read as Aesopian remarks about Soviet society. His comparisons implicitly criticized Soviet society's emphasis on work at the expense of personal life.

Delighted with the opportunity to publish Ehrenburg's work, *Komsomolka* staff forwarded letters to him but neither shared his goals nor felt compelled to consult with him on the direction of the dispute. As one journalist bluntly stated, "*Komsomol'skaia pravda* is leading the discussion, not Ehrenburg."²¹ In each publication of letters, page layouts offer clues to the newspaper's priorities. Editorial direction was not initially clear, and at first seemed to focus on the themes raised by Ehrenburg. On October 11, the newspaper introduced the first installment of responses and described them as "a conversation about the culture of feelings" (*razgovor o kul'ture chuvstv*). Nine letters covered a variety of issues, and their lengths were roughly equivalent. Five of them commented on Nina's and Iurii's relationship in some fashion, including all 3 letters written by women. Two of them decided that Nina made the right choice. One woman with a similar history concluded, "A diploma is not enough if the soul is impoverished." The third woman blamed educational institutions for Iurii's shortcomings.²² The men who addressed the relationship did not condemn Iurii, but both noted that such men were not unusual, and one admitted that he was a former "Iurii" whose life was transformed when a young woman introduced him to the arts.²³ Others concluded that people like Iurii were "boring" or "dried-up" (*sukhari*), and they had "no feelings."²⁴ Surviving unpublished letters in this early phase made similar statements, but those who condemned Iurii and his ilk were more severe. One woman advised Nina "to run from such a husband," and an anguished mother attributed her daughter's suicide to a young man's insensitivity.²⁵ The majority supported Ehrenburg's main point that the arts could teach people how to behave and feel.

But both editors and subsequent writers reacted most strongly to the letter placed at the top and in the center of the page. A Moscow engineer, I. Poletaev, defended Iurii and derided Nina. Poletaev proclaimed that science and technical achievements dominated the era, and art declined to a secondary level (a view shared by other contributors). As a result, "Ninas" were welcome to pursue the arts for leisure or amusement, but they should not subject "Iuriis" to it. Poletaev revealed particular scorn for Nina's "immodest advertising of her intimacies," as he described it, when she confessed that she "had cried into her pillow." He concluded that societies would benefit from more "Iuriis" and fewer "Ninas."²⁶ Newspaper staff and readers oversimplified Poletaev's remarks and mistakenly assumed that he too despised the arts. On this superficial level, his pronouncements neatly repudiated Ehrenburg's views and framed the central question of the debate: does art still have a role in society? The limitations of this direction quickly emerged.

Because Poletaev's dismissive statements about art were so provocative, a second, more subversive message in the letter was ignored: individualism. He argued that all leisure activities provide entertainment alone and should be a matter of individual choice. By rejecting the potential of art to transform individuals and society, he was disregarding prevailing notions that educated Soviet citizens should have a broad exposure to and appreciation for art.²⁷ This individualistic attitude also appeared in an unpublished letter to Ehrenburg. In it, a physicist noted that artists and scientists share the same creative impulse. If art does not serve an immediate utilitarian purpose, he argued, scientific discoveries likewise occur long before the applications of those advancements are evident. To make his point, he recalled that when Hertz discovered electromagnetism in the nineteenth century, no one understood its relevance. When asked to explain its utility, Hertz supposedly answered, "There is none, not now, not later, except for knowledge." In the physicist's view and in contrast to party ideology, scientists were not primarily concerned with the future applications or social utility of their work. Like Poletaev, this scholar privileged the purely selfish motives of individuals, and his letter suggested that this egotism was inherent in man's nature.²⁸ Later in the discussion, some *Komsomolka* staff would question the wisdom of publishing Poletaev's letter, but no one objected to his problematic defense of an individual's right to not conform to collective expectations.

Overall, in the first set of letters the press demonstrated a willingness to present a variety of issues, including frank assessments of Nina's and Iurii's relationship, that reflected readers' opinions. This diversity of views did not continue in future installments because Poletaev's polarizing views defined the debate. The next set of letters appeared on October 18 and reveals a more deliberate approach that characterized the remainder of the discussion. The layout now featured one lengthy letter, typically written by an academic,

which dominated the page, but it is unclear whether the newspaper commissioned the pieces. The article's style was pedantic and slightly condescending. It lacked the real enthusiasm and urgency of average participants who relished the opportunity to contribute and whose prose reflected an informality and a genuine personal engagement. The central letter served as the authoritative voice for the edition, although not all other letters necessarily covered the same themes. The secondary letters also changed. They became shorter, although it is impossible to know the extent that they were edited. In many cases, several authors were corralled into a box "Here's our opinion," and their contributions were reduced to a few sentences.²⁹ Some of the shorter letters made substantive remarks, but experts were privileged at the expense of the broader public.

The content of the letters also narrowed as the debate retreated from personal issues and returned to the public realm. The discussion now appeared under the rubric "a conversation about the spiritual world of our contemporary" (*dukhovnom mire nashego sovremennika*). "Feelings" no longer complicated the question. Of the four letters on October 18, only one briefly mentioned the personal relationship; all addressed on the need (or not) for individuals to appreciate art. The central letter most clearly emphasized this priority. Graduate student L. Minaev took issue with Poletaev. Lacking the verve of other, less self-conscious correspondents, Minaev presented a predictable argument that the future belonged to individuals who did not focus exclusively on scientific specialization. He characterized Iurii as a egotist but ignored the ramifications of such behavior on personal relationships. Moreover, this egotism led Minaev to the more damning accusation that Iurii demonstrated philistinism (*meshchanstvo*), and as such defined the engineer as a negative social type and, therefore, a public problem. Nina was not even mentioned.³⁰ Through this analysis, Iurii was transformed into a fictional character and a symbol, while Nina ceased to exist. This fictionalization was laid bare by a later contributor who referred to the relationship as "the dramatic story being played out between Nina and Iurii."³¹ No one in the next few staff meetings noted the absence of family issues and emotional relationships. Ehrenburg's public dialogue on the emotional lives of real people was short-lived.

As the debate was steered in the direction of art appreciation, the role of women contributors diminished. Although it is not always possible to determine writers' gender, the first set of letters included viewpoints of 3 women (33 percent), and their letters were roughly the same length as men's. On October 18, only one woman signed a letter, and her comments were reduced to a few sentences.³² A week later 2 of 10 participants were women, but their letters, while less edited, were literally marginalized toward the bottom and outside edges of the page.³³ No woman provided a

leading article, perhaps because few of them occupied academic positions. The only woman's contribution of any length after October 11 was written by O. Zharova. She wrote not as a private citizen but as a raion-level Komsomol official, who blamed schools and pitied Iurii's type for "elevating their shortcomings into sham achievements."³⁴ In meetings, only one newspaper staff member referred to Nina and only as "that girl" who may have misrepresented Iurii; responding letters from women were never discussed.³⁵ It is unclear why women were absent from the debate. They may have written fewer letters than men because the former lacked time (as one unpublished letter from man suggested about his wife) or interest, or because their letters were passed over.³⁶ Women wrote roughly half of the letters preserved by Ehrenburg, although that sample was not necessarily representative. The limited evidence available suggests that women were interested in issues related to personal relationships, but the newspaper's staff, which included women, did not accommodate them.

The narrow question of the validity of art in modern society did not remain interesting for long. Published letters became repetitive and staff members grew dissatisfied with the results. Immediately following the second publication of letters, one journalist commented that there was nothing (*nechego*) debatable in the art or science question.³⁷ This complaint surfaced regularly, and by late November, a reporter declared that the discussion had reached a dead end (*tupik*).³⁸ Coverage of the debate reflected the staff's disillusionment. Forty letters were published in the first five installations over the course of one month, but only two editions and nineteen letters appeared in the second month. Staff expressed irritation with some correspondents, as one reporter remarked, "He shows his stupidity. It's just laughable."³⁹ Indeed, some readers' views on the arts verged on the silly. For example, one agronomist astutely pointed out "You can live without art, but you can't live without bread, clothing, and shelter."⁴⁰ An unpublished letter from a border guard observed "Can art really defend the border?"⁴¹ A reporter remarked about one such respondent: Although it appears that the journalists only ridiculed letters that disagreed with the newspaper's perspective, Ehrenburg later admitted that he was equally disappointed with the responses that recognized art's importance.⁴² As the debate progressed, staff spent increasingly less time discussing its merits. Their attitudes demonstrate an ambivalence to the diversity of public opinion expressed in the letters. The reporters assumed that they could use the letters to advance their agenda and influence the public, but contributions did not always offer insight and could not be easily molded. The interaction with real readers tended to reinforce *intelligenti* notions that the people (*narod*) needed guidance and education rather than free reign in the press.

Not all letters were simplistic, and some were serviceable to the press. But staff favored their traditional educational function. In an effort to keep the debate alive, staff relied on letters that followed the conventional approach and pointed to probable causes of Iurii's indifference to art. Letters blamed various institutions and practices: the poor teaching of philosophy; art education in schools; the need for artists to be engaged with the "real world" and technological progress; and the problem of "bad taste" (*poshlost*) on the variety stage (*estrada*), in film, and on television.⁴³ This strategy kept the discussion in the realm of *vospitanie*, but these contributions repeated long-standing orthodox explanations of low cultural development. At this juncture, the letters not only omitted the issue of personal relationships; they also no longer addressed the supposed rubric: the inner world of Soviet youth. Instead, the role of public institutions and their influence on the young predominated.

Invited to write a summary of the discussion in December, Ehrenburg attempted to revive his agenda in "On the education of feelings." Refusing to close the debate, he announced that "the discussion is far from over" and clarified his disagreements with Poletaev. The writer opposed the idea that art had become outdated; instead, he insisted, "Indifference has become outdated." In his estimation, art provided the means to overcome the shortcomings embodied in Iurii. He concluded, "Let's put aside Bach and Blok and talk a bit about our customs, our morals, our dreams."⁴⁴ At *Komsomolka's* next *letuchka*, the weekly critic admitted Ehrenburg's popularity with readers but dismissed the article.⁴⁵ The newspaper did not want to sponsor a debate about private behavior that did not have public ramifications. Having been enthusiastic about Ehrenburg's original "scoop" and Poletaev's provocative reaction, the staff concluded by December that the discussion was no longer newsworthy. The private would remain private.

Although the issue of personal relationships disappeared from the *liriki-fiziki* debate, *Komsomolka* staff did not reject all articles that addressed feelings and personal relationships. The issues resurfaced in other articles at that time. For instance, the letters department printed a plea from nineteen-year-old student "Nikolai Iu.," who confessed that he had no ideals and was bored with life. He also could not understand why people accepted extra responsibilities at work without additional material benefit. Five employees of the Hammer and Sickle factory responded with brief, orthodox answers that attempted to "solve" Kolya's ennui by changing his attitude toward work. In a lengthy response, playwright Viktor Rozov took a different approach. He examined Kolya's feelings and the challenges that youth faced during the transition from childhood to adulthood. Empathizing with the disillusionment that results when youthful idealism confronts imperfect

reality, Rozov also warned that idealization of either life or people was “extremely dangerous,” an oblique reference to crude Soviet propaganda and its consequences, as he knew from personal experience. Like Ehrenburg, Rozov emphasized the importance of a rich emotional life, and he thought that falling in love would improve Kolya’s outlook. But he ignored any mention of the “public” consequences of the young man’s plight.⁴⁶

Another article appeared a few weeks later. Correspondent Vera Benderova responded to repeated letters from a disgruntled engineer Aleksandr Fomenko, who complained that his reputation had been damaged after a failed romance. Benderova’s investigation revealed that Fomenko was a self-absorbed chump, who had cheated on his wife, did not provide adequate child support after the couple separated, and was indifferent to the fate of the ex-girlfriend. Worse still, Fomenko demonstrated no interest in public life. He refused to help coworkers and never participated in voluntary Sunday work. Benderova concluded that he had “a deformed psychology” (*urodlivaia psikhologiia*) and, as Ehrenburg argued, his public and private behavior (*na liudakh i doma*) were inseparable.⁴⁷

Komsomolka staff had mixed responses to both articles. The weekly critic characterized Benderova’s “bombastic” report as “cheap passions” (*deshevymi strastnishkami*) and “petty” details that ignored the important issues raised by Fomenko’s public behavior. A second colleague dismissed the piece as “bad, boring, uninteresting and written in a tiresome old style.” Benderova also reported that a third colleague had accused her of “digging in dirt” (*kopaesh’sia v griazi*). In her own defense, she pointed out that, although stories of positive behavior were more pleasant to write, it was equally necessary to show “what needs to be thrown away.” Some staff members supported her effort, but everyone, including Benderova, agreed that she should have emphasized the public manifestations of Fomenko’s callousness. In short, they believed that conventions of good reporting focused on public behavior. Rozov’s work was criticized less forcefully. One journalist was disappointed that Rozov refused “to argue” with Kolya, who manifested a “new formation of the young philistine.”⁴⁸ Not all *Komsomolka* reporters were so dismissive, but neither piece launched a discussion. It is unknown whether readers responded to these articles, but the fact that the staff did not allot space to continue the issues, which in both cases focused almost exclusively on individuals’ private behavior and emotions, is telling. This response demonstrates again that the newspaper was unwilling to grapple with the issues of emotion and private behavior that Ehrenburg tried to explore.

Significance for the Discourse on Private Life

Why not? To some extent, the purpose of discussions and debates was highly formulaic, and they provided the means for *Komsomolka* to fulfill its

function as educator of the general public. The convention assumed that problems could be solved through concrete steps: identify a problem, reveal its causes, and propose solutions. But in the realm of personal relationships, no clear prescriptions emerged. Furthermore, a detailed examination of the difficulties of relationships could remind citizens of the shortcomings of state policies by exposing the ongoing shortages of goods, services, and time for harried Soviet citizens. Then again, concrete manifestations of problems in the public sphere, where specific institutions and practices could be blamed and reformed, offered reassurance to both staff and readers that society was progressing toward a better future. This strategy also prevented the paper from tipping the balance toward privileging readers' priorities over those of the state.

Within this framework, the newspaper developed new rubrics that pointed to future directions from the *liriki-fiziki* debate and returned to core concerns. In early 1960, the newspaper introduced a variety of new approaches to "moral" themes: "A calling (*priznanie*)! . . . how to find it?" "Ideas about pedagogical work," "Communism, collective, individuality [*lichnost'*]." ⁴⁹ These choices reinforced orthodox platitudes that work and public service were inherently meaningful in spite of recent articles that contradicted this claim. The titles acknowledged that some individualized needs, such as choosing a satisfying profession, were legitimate, but the substance focused on the public consequences of these decisions. People's personal needs would remain unexplored.

A second factor further explains the newspaper's discomfort with negative behavior in private life. In most cases, the transgressors were men. Women complained bitterly about the men's lack of participation both in terms of domestic work and emotional support at home. In spite of the press's role as an investigator of citizens' concerns, *Komsomolka* was uninterested in domestic discord. As one reporter cautioned, "We ought not to give birth to this attitude: ah, a scandal at home, need to write a letter, a correspondent will come and help." ⁵⁰ Iurii's relatively benign behavior, which did not involve drinking or violence, and Fomenko's affair were not excused, but ignored. In a society in which the private sphere was represented as feminine and subordinate to public life, journalists were sympathetic to men who were not attuned to the private sphere's feminine rules and rituals. ⁵¹ Men needed to be judged in the public sphere, where they understood the rules of male behavior.

Although *Komsomolka* staff was unwilling to expose men to ridicule or possible punishment, it was not advocating that women tolerate jerks. A comparison with similar articles in *Izvestiia* that appeared during the *liriki-fiziki* debate is instructive. In one case, a young woman sought advice when considering whether to drop her boyfriend, who was much like Iurii but also enjoyed drinking and "vulgar" (*poshlost'iu*) dancing. In response, a

woman correspondent agreed that he was not the inquirer's equal but recommended that she, as the more advanced member of society, should raise her man to her level: "Struggle for everything that is better in him!"⁵² In effect, the reporter was encouraging women to serve the public good by taking responsibility for men's behavior. A second article made a similar point in December.⁵³ This viewpoint rehashed standard Soviet gender roles, but this tired formula was no longer adequate because women were increasingly choosing divorce.⁵⁴ In fact, party priorities that emphasized better standards of living and fewer sacrifices for the future inadvertently undermined claims that women should tolerate suffering in their relationships. *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, however, remained silent on this question. Neither the newspaper nor its readers advocated that Nina should have stayed with Iurii for his or society's sake. By sidestepping questions of personal relationships, the newspaper tacitly allowed individuals to make their own choices, a point of view more in tune with popular preferences.

The changing atmosphere of the Khrushchev era also suggests another motive for the newspaper's reticence on private discord. Staff was uncomfortable with the tawdry details of Fomenko's (and Iurii's) personal failings. Benderova's article intended to shame Fomenko for his appalling lack of concern for others, but another reporter voiced a potential consequence of this approach: "[T]here is an echo here from several years ago, when people paid for such family problems (*neporiadki v sem'e*) with jobs, careers, party affiliation."⁵⁵ A similar but more chilling objection arose in response to Minaev's article. One journalist warned that Minaev's attack on Iurii could scare away participants, because it argued as if Iurii was "an enemy of the people."⁵⁶ These reminders arose after the articles appeared in print, but the reactions suggest that some staff lacked confidence that Stalin-era repression had ended. In order to protect the public, they sought to avoid the inflammatory language of the Stalin era because they did not condone the harsh punishments that, according to some journalists, were disproportionate to these minor, private transgressions.

This concern for readers manifested itself not only in protection from the state but in a recognition of the public as an audience that should not be taken for granted. As the newspaper's attention to private lives waned, not all reporters accepted this development. In late December 1959, one staff member chastised his colleagues:

The rubric "our contemporary" has disappeared from the pages of the newspaper. . . . When we spoke about moral themes, the argument arose that too much of the discussion led to family affairs. That was true. But turn down family themes and overall there aren't any discussions about moral themes. . . . The most dangerous thing, in my opinion, is that you've begun to forget about the reader.

He insisted that the newspaper always needed "to answer in some way the spiritual needs (*zaprośy*) of the reader."⁵⁷ Another journalist observed that readers' letters were not merely vehicles for the paper's point of view, and even unsophisticated ideas were needed alongside "orthodox" ones in order to present a variety of opinions.⁵⁸ These comments suggest that the newspaper had to serve the readers to some extent on their own terms, and its popularity depended on it.

Although such remarks did not necessarily represent the view of most staff members, they may explain the repeated publication of articles and letters that described the frustrations of private lives at the time. An unusually candid letter appeared in January 1960. Under the sarcastic title "About 'villain' wives and 'hero' husbands," I. Afanas'eva described the predicament faced by new families and the tendency to criticize women who opposed their husbands' numerous social activities. As a single person, she had participated in social work and enjoyed amateur activities, sports, and tourism. These opportunities changed little when she first married, because her husband shared the domestic chores and even assumed a greater burden when she became busy with additional career responsibilities. Their daughter's birth transformed that idyllic life. Unable to find child care, she could not return to work. She lost contact with friends and former coworkers. Her only adult contact was her husband, who now rarely spent time at home. She resented his coworkers, who pressured him: "It's prohibited to stay home." While finishing up night school and serving on trade union committee, he signed up for light athletics, a people's militia (*družinu*), a chess club, and an unspecified amateur group. He expected her to be, in her words, "some kind of kitchen-janitorial combine." Almost ten years prior to the publication of Natalia Baranskaia's *A Week Like Any Other*, Afanas'eva's article highlighted the lack of time and support services for young families. She blamed marital discord on society and its excessive expectations for men in public life. Like Ehrenburg, she concluded that communism would not be built without strong families, but she added that men's participation at home was vital to the creation of happy families.⁵⁹ It is unclear whether readers wrote responses to Afanas'eva's plight, but no discussion ensued.

The ongoing presence of such articles suggests the dilemma for the newspaper. There is no evidence that staff supported Afanas'eva's views, and, as already shown, her concerns elicited little discussion at staff meetings. Unwilling or unable to analyze the tangible causes and perhaps compromising either the state or individuals, the newspaper nevertheless provided a venue for these concerns as isolated cases. Through this tactic, the paper could serve readers whose letters demonstrated an unflagging interest in these topics. In doing so, *Komsomolka* legitimized these issues, even though it offered no solutions. This delicate balance partially appeased readers and addressed

state expectations to engage the public, but avoided overt criticism of the state.

Conclusion

Given the very narrow sample of the *liriki-fiziki* debate and *Komsomol'skaia pravda's* coverage of emotional life and personal relationships, only tentative conclusions can be offered. Readers' letters and the newspaper's discourse present an opportunity to reconsider Oleg Kharkhordin's argument that the private "was reestablished as the 'secret' but pervasive underside of the social, as the invisible sphere of the most intimate comportment, carefully hidden by individual dissimulation." For Kharkhordin, private life "became invisible; it was hidden not only from leaders" but "from the pervasive surveillance of surrounding comrades."⁶⁰

Both reader and newspaper responses to the *liriki-fiziki* debate suggest otherwise. Some individuals were quite willing to share their personal experiences in a public forum. The repeated appearance of such letters reveals that at least some members of the public wanted these issues to be less hidden. Many letter writers were willing to tell other people that they should appreciate art, but no one suggested any social mechanisms to enforce compliance. Women especially resisted prescriptions to marry unsatisfying partners. Readers contributed to public discussion of the issues perhaps because they believed that public institutions should take the lead in solving society's ills. Individuals contributed to this process by identifying problems, and the press provided the medium to examine the causes and offer solutions. Khrushchev-era policies were already demonstrating the party's interest in improving standards of living. The *liriki-fiziki* debate attempted to use collective efforts to improve emotional lives.

Komsomol'skaia pravda's response to this demand from readers suggests that "mutual surveillance" was also not assured at the institutional level. The effort to discuss personal relationships during the *liriki-fiziki* debate was sidelined in favor of public issues of art education and appreciation. This tangential approach to Ehrenburg's concern allowed the newspaper to fulfill its role to educate the public and offer solutions for certain social questions. Other letters raised issues of personal relationships, but no in-depth analysis of the problems resulted because the newspaper was committed to keeping the private obscured, if not hidden. Individual reporters stated bluntly that the surveillance and punishments of the Stalin era were excessive, and the press should not facilitate a revival of such measures. While it cannot be concluded that those individuals set editorial policy, it is likely that individual journalists crafted their articles in order to protect individuals from unjust consequences for personal failings. The variety of opinions among reporters

also suggests that the newspaper at best provided only an appearance of uniformity, and this diversity may have allowed for a flexible approach to the public.

The persistence of letters that detail the difficulties of private lives during this time suggests that not all readers were satisfied with the status quo, but *Komsomolka's* limited coverage of the topic demonstrates that some public institutions were abrogating the responsibility to shape people's private, noncriminal behavior. As a result, citizens would have turned to family, friends, and other private sources in order to find individual solutions to domestic problems. In this respect, the private sphere became increasingly important at the expense of traditional public institutions.⁶¹ But this development did not necessarily reflect a rupture between readers and *Komsomol'skaia pravda*. By avoiding discussions of private relationships, the newspaper was also declining to dictate how readers should live their daily lives.

Notes

I would like to thank Joshua Rubenstein, Boris Frezinskii, and Lewis Siegelbaum for their assistance.

1. Il'ia Ehrenburg, "Otvet na odno pis'mo," *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (hereafter *Kp*), September 2, 1959, 2–3. Respecting privacy, Ehrenburg changed the names.
2. Ibid.
3. Slutskii wrote a series of poems on the value of art and science. "Fiziki i liriki" was published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* (hereafter LG) on October 13, 1959. Others were published much later: "Liriki i fiziki," LG, September 6, 1978; "Fiziki i liudi," *Sel'skaia molodezh'*, no. 1, 1986; "O 'fizikakh i lirikakh,'" *Vospopy literatury*, no. 10, 1989. It is unclear when the label for the debate was adopted, but I found no such usage in the debate.
4. Galina Ianchuk, current head of the *Kp* letters department, told me that the letters had been turned over to the archives. According to Irina Ioffe, now retired from the former Komsomol archive (subsumed currently under RGASPI), *Komsomolka* was required to turn over documents for preservation. She remembered seeing sacks of letters. In spite of the archive's efforts to enforce compliance, no letters survived. Conversations with Galina Ianchuk, October 11, 2004, and I. A. Ioffe, October 12, 2004. Thanks to Matt Lenoe for referring me to Ianchuk.
5. Jeff Weintraub reviews this understanding of the private in "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 16–25.
6. See, for instance, Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1999) and Oleg Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice*, 333–363.
7. Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia. Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 354–355.

8. *Letuchka* translates as emergency or extraordinary meeting, but by 1959 they occurred weekly or biweekly in 1959. During *letuchki*, one or two staff members presented a detailed assessment of recent editions, and discussion followed. The responsibility rotated. Meeting attendance averaged forty to sixty individuals.
9. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), f. M-98, op. 1, d. 252, l. 86; Stenogramma redaktsionnoi letuchki "Komsomol'skoi Pravdy" (hereafter Stenogramma), October 26, 1959.
10. Letters preserved by Ehrenburg fall into two groups: those written during the debate, and those sent after its conclusion (although the writers would not have necessarily known that the debate had ended). The latter group probably remained in Ehrenburg's possession because the newspaper no longer wanted them. The first group perhaps reveals that either only a very small number of letters were sent directly to him because most participants did not know Ehrenburg's address, or he deliberately did not turn them over to the newspaper. The writer had a keen sense of the private: some letters were too personal to be published; others included statements that could have caused problems for contributors. One specifically requested that he not share the contents. With his bitter memory of the purges, Ehrenburg had no stomach for even unintentional complicity in someone's harassment for his or her beliefs.
11. Beth Holmgren, "Writing the Female Body Politic (1945–1985)," in *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*, ed. Adele Marie Barker and Jehanne M. Gheith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225–242. Scholarship on the arts during the Thaw is vast. For concise overviews, see Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature Since the Revolution*, revised and enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 190–221; Harold B. Segel, *Twentieth-Century Russian Drama from Gorky to the Present*, updated edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 333–359; Josephine Woll, *Real Images. Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000).
12. Joshua Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties: the Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg* (New York, 1996), 282, 306–367. Both he and Mehr were married to other people.
13. See Susan E. Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review*, 61, 2 (2002), 211–251; Katerina Gerasimova, "Public Privacy in the Communal Apartment," in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 207–230; Steven Harris, "Moving to the Separate Apartment: Building, Distributing, Furnishing, and Living in Urban Housing in Soviet Russia, 1950s–1960s." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003. See also articles by Reid and Harris in this volume.
14. Kelly, *Refining Russia*, 312–367. See also Deborah Ann Field, "Communist Morality and Meanings of Private Life in Post-Stalinist Russia 1953–1964." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1996.
15. See *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 10, no. 33 (1958). *Kp* and *Izvestiia* provided the most extensive coverage on the subject.
16. Cited in Gayle Durham Hollander, *Soviet Political Indoctrination: Developments in Mass Media and Propaganda Since Stalin* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 110.
17. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 254, l. 98. Stenogramma, December 21, 1959.

18. Il'ia Ehrenburg, "O vospitanii chuvstv," *Kp*, December 24, 1959, 4.
19. E. Kalitkina et al., "Smysl zhizni ne v logarifmicheskoi lineike," *Kp*, November 22, 1959, 3; Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (RGALI), f. 1204, op. 2, d. 2614, ll. 46–47. Letter from G. A. Efros to Il'ia Ehrenburg, December 23, 1959. Efros was the school principal.
20. Ehrenburg, "Otvet na odno pis'mo."
21. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 252, l. 105.
22. Evgeniia Beliankina, "Malo byt' inzhenerom," *Kp*, October 11, 1959, 4; El'vira Popova, "Mir veshchei i mir chelovecheskoi dushi," *Kp*; G. Leshchinskaia, "Chuvstva nado vospityvat'," *Kp*. In this edition, a writer's gender was always clear.
23. Dmitrii D., "Ia byl gluptsom," *Kp*; A. Anikin, "A ved' on liubit . . .," *Kp*.
24. See Fedor Antonenko, "Chto takoe schast'e," *Kp*; A. Krasnov, "O liudiakh neinteresnykh," *Kp*.
25. RGALI, f. 1204, op. 2, d. 2612, ll. 97–99, letter from E. V. Bitiukova to Il'ia Ehrenburg, September 7, 1959, 131–132; letter from A. G. Martynenko to Il'ia Ehrenburg, September 30, 1959, 134–137; letter from A. Alikhanov to Il'ia Ehrenburg, September–October 1959; d. 2613, l. 5, letter from V. Iakimova to Il'ia Ehrenburg, October 5, 1959, 12–13; letter from K. K. Kovylova to Il'ia Ehrenburg, October 15, 1959.
26. I. Poletaev, "V zashchitu Iuriiia," *Kp*, October 11, 1959, 4.
27. For an analysis of a similar tension between Soviet readers and official expectations in the post-Stalin era, see Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Era* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 45–71.
28. RGALI, f. 1204, op. 2, d. 2612, ll. 134–137.
29. On November 12, for instance, seven of the thirteen printed "letters" were condensed to a handful of sentences each. See "A vot nashe mnenie . . .," *Kp*, November 12, 1959, 3. Almost half of the page was devoted to the letter from a Ph.D. in philosophy. M. Koval'zon, "Chelovek dela i delo cheloveka," *Kp*.
30. L. Minaev, "Nado li ssorit'sia matematike s muzykoi?" *Kp*, October 18, 1959, 4.
31. V. Kirpotin, "Ob odnoi obiazannosti iskusstva," *Kp*, October 25, 1959, 3.
32. Z. Lebedeva, in "A vot nashe mnenie," *Kp*, October 18, 1959, 4.
33. Tamara Kozulina, "Otkuda berutsia skeptiki," *Kp*, October 25, 1959, 3; Roza Imendaeva, "Kak mne khotelos' stat' 'kul'turnoi,'" *Kp*.
34. O. Zharova, "Kichit'sia tut nechem," *Kp*, November 12, 1959, 3.
35. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 252, ll. 60, 64; Stenogramma, October 19, 1959.
36. For the letter of a man frustrated by the lack of free time for men and women, see RGALI, f. 1204, op. 2, d. 2614, ll. 112–113; letter from D. I. Kharkevich to Il'ia Ehrenburg, undated but after December 24, 1959.
37. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 252, l. 57.
38. Ibid., f. M-98, op. 1, d. 253, l. 21, 113–114; Stenogramma, November 23, 1959.
39. Ibid., f. M-98, op. 1, d. 252, l. 23. See also l. 65.
40. S. Vlasiuk, "I ia za Iuriiia," *Kp*, October 25, 1959, 3.
41. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 253, l. 25; Stenogramma, November 9, 1959.
42. Il'ia Ehrenburg, *Liudi, gody, zhizn'. Tom tretii, kniga sed'maia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 367–368.
43. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 253, ll. 21, 24, 25, 115.
44. Il'ia Ehrenburg, "O vospitanii chuvstv."
45. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 254, l. 175; Stenogramma, December 28, 1959.

46. V. Rozov, "Cheloveku deviatnadsat' let . . .," *Kp*, October 24, 1959, 4.
47. V. Benderova, "Chelovek zovet na pomoshch'," *Kp*, November 14, 1959, 4.
48. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 253, ll. 45, 56, 74; Stenogramma, November 16, 1959; d. 252, l. 86–87.
49. *Kp*, January 4, 1960, 2 ("Calling"); January 6, 1960, 2 ("Pedagogical work"); January 10, 1960, 2 ("Communism").
50. RGASPI, f. M-98, op. 1, d. 253, l. 47.
51. A 1958 *Kp* article emphasized this gendered view of personal relationships and offered a folktale-like outcome. When a working-class couple developed marital difficulties supposedly caused by the wife's sharp personality, a female coworker visited the wife's mother, and their conversation was reported as "a secret between two women." The next day, the wife dutifully ironed her husband's shirt and prepared his breakfast. In the author's unstated assessment, the problem required a woman's touch, and marital harmony was women's responsibility. See S. Garbuzov, "Nuzhno li vmeshivat'sia v lichnuiu zhizn'?" *Kp*, January 4, 1958, 4.
52. Tat'iana Tess, "Ne stoi v storone, ne otstupaisia!" *Izvestiia*, October 30, 1959, 2.
53. V. Kotliar, "Vot kakaiia liubov'," *Izvestiia*, December 13, 1959, 6.
54. Deborah A. Field, "Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era," *Russian Review*, 57, 4 (1998), 599–613.
55. RGASPI, M-98, op. 1, d. 253, l. 47.
56. Ibid., f. M-98, op. 1, d. 252, l. 58. For similar comments see ll. 38, 63, 67.
57. Ibid., f. M-98, op. 1, d. 254, l. 83. Stenogramma, December 21, 1959.
58. Ibid., f. M-98, op. 1, d. 252, ll. 64–65. See also l. 72.
59. I. Afana'seva, "O zhenakh-'zlodeikakh' i muzh'iakh-'geroiakh'," *Kp*, January 8, 1960, 2.
60. Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate," 359–360.
61. Vladimir Shlapentokh refers to this process as "privatization," but his work focuses primarily on the Brezhnev era. See Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 14.

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