

Appendix E -

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

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PROJECT TITLE: Images of Women in "Soviet Life"

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Vegas Lindericus, Faculty Mentor

Date: April 28, 2004

General Assessment - please provide a short paragraph that highlights the most significant features of the project.

Comments (Optional):

This was a research project undertaken through the History Dept.'s honors seminar (Dr. Bradley), with myself as faculty advisor and as committee members Dr. Pinckney and Dr. Maczek, in History.
Valerie's research examined a Soviet English-language publication for evidence of changing representations of Soviet women's roles, life, and work.

V.L.

Senior Honors Thesis:
Images of Women in *Soviet Life*

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Images of Women in *Soviet Life*

Introduction

"Women can become truly free and equal only in a world organized along new social and productive lines." -Alexandra Kollontai, advocate of women's emancipation, in her book The Social Basis of the Woman Question, (1909).

The "Woman Question" emerged in the 1860s in Russia, and this issue of women's rights was part of the Russian educated elite's desire for all kinds of social reform.¹ The movement for women's rights was certainly not limited to Russia, and in fact, it follows two significant periods of activity and change across Europe: the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. Well-educated, upper class men across Europe had denied women (and some men) the same legal and political rights that they afforded themselves. Philosophers and political theorists during the Enlightenment began to assert that all men were created equal. As this idea was drafted into new laws in Europe, some women seized the opportunity to begin advocating for their equal rights, mainly in the area of suffrage. The Industrial Revolution changed people's ways of life, as men and women left traditional ways of farming and craft-making to seek employment in factories. This change made it possible for women activists to attempt to mobilize young, unwed women who had left their family farm to take employment in the city. The emphasis of the Industrial Revolution on product instead of worker also caused concerned men and women to call for social reforms.

¹ Richard Stites, "Women in the Revolutionary Process in Russia," Becoming Visible: Women in European History, ed. Renate Bridenthal, et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), 452.

When discussing women's rights, it is important to note that there are multiple definitions of feminism, equality, and liberation. Classical feminism and Bolshevik feminism were two schools of thought on the liberation of women. Bolshevik feminism was inextricably linked to the push for a complete social revolution, whereas classical feminism fought for women's rights largely within the existing framework of society. Bolshevik feminists worked to bring about the October revolution of 1917 in Russia, and they supported the new socialist government. Because the primary evidence for this paper comes from a Soviet magazine, the ideology of Bolshevik feminism will be discussed instead of classical feminism.

This paper will analyze images of women and their roles in the years 1963, 1973, and 1983 of the magazine *Soviet Life*. This illustrated monthly magazine was published for an American audience by the Embassy of the USSR in Washington, DC. After looking at the roles of women portrayed in these specific years, perhaps we can shed light on the central question: to what extent did women achieve equality and liberation under the Soviet system, as exhibited in articles and images of an official magazine?

Bolshevik Feminism

To understand the female Bolsheviks' desire for change is to understand a woman's place in pre-revolutionary Russian society. Therefore, we must first look at life for women in pre-Revolutionary Russia. Then we can examine the *Bolshevichki* (female Bolsheviks) and the ideology and goals of Bolshevik feminism. Before the revolution in 1917, according to a standard historical account, "patriarchal power, deferential ritual, clear authority patterns, and visible hierarchy" characterized Russian society.² The tsar ruled over all of Russia. There was a small class of nobility, a small educated elite, and the rest of the population lived as peasant farmers.³ One scholar estimates that "the rural population comprised 87 percent of the people in the Russian Empire."⁴ The patriarchal power in Russian society was visible not only in the power held by the tsar, but also at a lower level in domestic life, as the husband ruled over his wife. This patriarchy was reinforced by the Russian Orthodox Church's teachings of the value of obedience and subordination.⁵

Women in pre-Revolutionary Russian society were restricted by their lack of legal rights and lack of educational opportunities (greater access to schooling for females would be granted only a short time before the legal reforms enacted by the Bolshevik government). Peasant women and urban working class women were both bound to their social class. Even though women factory workers had more independence than peasant women did, they both experienced difficult lives of hard labor with little chance of

² Stites, (1987), 452.

³ Stites, (1987), 452.

⁴ Natalia Pushkareva, Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century, Trans. Eve Levin (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 220.

⁵ Stites, (1987), 452.

improving their social status.⁶ A closer look will be given at some of these legal restrictions and the subsequent legal reforms authorized by the Bolshevik government.

Women's lives were legally restricted in tsarist Russia. Even though women in the upper strata of society had certain legal rights that peasant women did not possess, all Russian women were denied the right to vote. Abortion was also illegal for all women. Women in the nobility and mercantile estates were given legal rights according to the "Code of Laws of the Russian Empire."⁷ These rights included: "to own and dispose of property, to enter into transactions and file lawsuits, to inherit and bequeath their possessions."⁸ However, the majority of women were peasants, and they still lived under the customary law.⁹ This law only favored a woman if she was the head and primary breadwinner of a family. A woman in that position had higher legal status than any other members of the household. Otherwise, peasant women had fewer legal and inheritance rights. Peasant women had to have the permission of their parents or guardians to marry, and once married, they could not live apart from their husbands. If a woman left her husband, she was required to return to him, but this mandate was not reciprocal in the case of a husband leaving his wife.¹⁰ Without the permission of her husband, a peasant woman could not obtain a passport. Peasant women were not guaranteed payment of alimony and had no right to property in the case of divorce.¹¹ Female factory workers had no legal right to paid maternity or sick leave.

Women of both the nobility and the peasantry had limited educational opportunities.

⁶ Pushkareva, (1997), 225.

⁷ Pushkareva, (1997), 233.

⁸ Pushkareva, (1997), 233.

⁹ Pushkareva, (1997), 233.

¹⁰ Pushkareva, (1997), 235.

¹¹ Pushkareva, (1997), 233.

Women could not attend universities until the 1870s. Secondary education was designed to prepare an upper class woman for her role as wife and mother in a well-to-do household.¹² Peasant women received no formal schooling. However, early reforms focused on education; and by the early 20th century, women could take courses in pedagogy and medicine in their pursuit of higher education.¹³ The availability of public education for females grew at both the primary and secondary levels.¹⁴ It is estimated that by 1914, one in four females had the opportunity to receive a primary education.¹⁵ In 1897, the literacy rate for urban women was 46 percent, and the rate for the entire female population was 17 percent.¹⁶

Women in the lower strata of society—the peasants and the factory workers—were also saddled with the extra burdens of housework in addition to exhausting agricultural work or a miserable factory job. Peasant women did heavy fieldwork and cared for livestock. They also managed the household, which included cooking, cleaning, weaving, sewing, and carrying water and wood. Customarily, the eldest woman of the household, the *babushka*, was the informal head of the household, and she was in charge of her daughters and daughters-in-law.¹⁷ The *babushka* could often be critical of those in her charge, especially the daughters-in-law. Peasant husbands beat their wives, and the community did not frown upon husbands taking this action. Female factory workers made up one third of the industrial labor force in 1914.¹⁸ They worked ten hours a day in

¹² Gail Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978), 28.

¹³ Lapidus, (1978), 30.

¹⁴ Lapidus, (1978), 30.

¹⁵ Lapidus, (1978), 32.

¹⁶ Barbara E. Clements, Bolshevik Women (Cambridge: Cambridge University P, 1997), 40.

¹⁷ Pushkareva, (1997), 220.

¹⁸ Clements, (1997), 45.

miserable conditions.¹⁹ These women were also expected to cook and clean for their household.

Although women of the propertied class did not have to bear the burden of household chores or factory work as did women in the lower classes, they too were restricted by their status as women. Employment opportunities were limited. If these women worked outside the home, they could expect to find employment in the fields of teaching, medicine, and clerical work.²⁰

The *Bolshevichki* wanted to achieve personal independence for women, as part of the larger goal of the socialist revolution to liberate Russian society from the stranglehold of the tsarist hierarchy and modern capitalism. The *Bolshevichki* were female Communists who joined the party before 1921. There were two generations of the *Bolshevichki*, as described by Barbara Clements. The first were those women who came into the movement before 1917. These number about 2,500. The second, far larger, generation of women became members of the party between 1917 and 1921, which is the period of the Civil War in Russia. This distinction between the two generations is important for two reasons: the *Bolshevichki* themselves recognized this distinction and the two groups differed demographically.²¹

The original *Bolshevichki* grew out of the larger grouping of female Social Democrats. By 1905, as unrest grew in Russia, these female Social Democrats (later to be divided into the Bolsheviks and the moderate Mensheviks) began efforts to recruit the female proletariat into the party.²² However, the Social Democrats were divided on this issue of

¹⁹ Pushkareva, (1997), 224.

²⁰ Clements, (1997), 48.

²¹ Clements, (1997), 14-15.

²² Clements, (1997), 102.

recruitment. Most of the Social Democrat women believed that their efforts to reach the proletarian women were in vain because this group was so backward.²³ A small group of *Bolshevichki* rejected that stance, and, instead, began to pursue and propagandize the working-women. These *Bolshevichki* were important for their contributions to the cause of women's emancipation in the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Soviet State. They were the articulators of Bolshevik feminism, authors of the magazine *Rabotnitsa* (The Working Woman), and administrators of the *Zhenotdel*, which was the Communist party's Department for Work Among Women. First, we will look at the demographics of these *Bolshevichki*. Secondly, we will consider the ideology and goals of Bolshevik feminism.

The Old Generation of *Bolshevichki*, who had joined the party before 1917, was mostly from the small ranks of the nobility and middle class. One third were from the working class, and less than ten percent were peasants. The common denominator for the majority of these women was that they were well educated for their times.²⁴ The new generation of *Bolshevichki* was also well educated like the older generation. A higher percentage of the new *Bolshevichki* came from the working class, and fewer were from the nobility.²⁵

The *Bolshevichki* were committed to Marxism, and Marxism acknowledged that the subordination of women was linked to their economic dependence on men.²⁶ Engels lumped women's liberation with other social problems that would only be resolved after

²³ Clements, (1997), 103.

²⁴ Clements, (1997), 307.

²⁵ Clements, (1997), 162, 165.

²⁶ Clements, (1997), 212.

the revolution had abolished private property.²⁷ Bolshevichki educated themselves in Marxist thought and read Marxist authors like August Bebel.²⁸ His assessment of the “Woman Question” in his work Woman Under Socialism stated that “The complete emancipation of woman, and her equality with man is the final goal of our social development ... and this realization is possible only by a social change that shall abolish the rule of man over man....”²⁹ Bolshevik feminism taught that men were not the true source of women's oppression, as evidenced in the writings of Kollontai. She wrote in her book The Social Basis of the Woman Question, “Specific economic factors were behind the subordination of women; natural qualities have been a secondary factor in this process.”³⁰ In other words, private property was the basic source of oppression for men and women. Therefore, the goal of the Bolshevik feminists was to convince women to cooperate with men in bringing about the revolution.

After the October Revolution in 1917, the new revolutionary government under the leadership of V.I. Lenin committed itself to the transformation of Russia into the world's first socialist state. The Bolsheviks included reforms directed at women and their status with the general reforms issued to establish the Soviet state. The Bolsheviks (soon to be renamed Communists) gave women legal standing equal with that of men in the first Soviet constitution in 1918. The Provisional Government (established after the February Revolution in 1917) had actually given women the right to vote before the Bolsheviks came to power in the October Revolution, but the Bolsheviks ratified this decision in the

²⁷ Clements, (1997), 213.

²⁸ Clements, (1997), 49.

²⁹ Clements, (1997), 213.

³⁰ Alix Holt, trans. & ed., Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai (London: Alison and Busby, 1977), 58.

new constitution in 1918.³¹ The Bolsheviks enacted laws that opened all institutions of learning to women.³² Decrees limited the workday, prohibited women from working at night or in mines, and guaranteed a four-month paid maternity leave.³³ The Bolsheviks revoked the legal recognition of church marriages, therefore invalidating all of the Church's restrictions on the role of women. Women were given equal status in marriage, divorce, and inheritance rights. The Bolsheviks legalized abortion and outlawed prostitution in 1920.³⁴ The new Communist government also established the Women's Department of the Communist Party, otherwise known as the *Zhenotdel*, in 1919. This department was founded as part of the Communist party and not a separate feminist organization. Alexandra Kollontai was one of the early leaders of the *Zhenotdel*, and she and the other women who were involved in this group, worked to educate workers and peasant women about the goals of the new Soviet state and to mobilize these women to work towards this socialist vision.³⁵ After the establishment of the *Zhenotdel* and the enactment of laws concerning women's legal rights, the new Soviet government proclaimed "that 'the position of women in Soviet Russia is now ideal from the point of view of the most advanced states' and thus declared the 'Woman Question' solved."³⁶

³¹ Pushkareva, (1997), 257.

³² Stites, (1987), 460.

³³ Pushkareva, (1997), 257-58.

³⁴ Stites, (1987), 460.

³⁵ Stites, (1987), 460.

³⁶ Pushkareva, (1997), 458.

Introduction to *Soviet Life*

Soviet Life was an English language monthly magazine published by reciprocal agreement between the governments of the USSR and the USA. The Embassy for the USSR published *Soviet Life* in the USA, and the American embassy in the USSR published *Amerika* for Soviet readers. The terms of the intergovernmental agreement limited the subscription levels of both magazines to 30,000. The first issue of *The USSR: Soviet Life Today* hit the newsstands in October 1956. The editors shortened the name to *Soviet Life* by 1965. *The USSR* and the subsequent *Soviet Life* both adhere to the communist party line. The sixty-four pages are devoted to topics such as “Russian culture, history, scientific achievements and the various peoples inhabiting the biggest country on earth.”³⁷ The purpose of this paper is not to analyze the editors or their motivations. I will assume that the images and media representations present in *Soviet Life* were purposefully included in the magazine to cast a favorable light on the roles of women in the USSR. This assumption rests on the fact that *Soviet Life* was a propaganda tool of the USSR, specifically designed for an American audience.

The examples of articles and images of women in particular roles provide a form of evidence of the status of women in the Soviet Union. These examples are not the only images of women in official publications that were translated into English. The October issue in 1963 names another periodical, *Soviet Woman*, available for American subscribers in 1964. It claims to give “a comprehensive picture of the activities of women in the USSR—as workers, mothers and fighters for peace.”³⁸ Both magazines

³⁷ Paul Richardson, publisher, “A Short History of *Russian Life* magazine,” *Russian Life* website, Retrieved from World Wide Web, 2 April 2004. < <http://www.rispubs.com/rlhist.cfm> >

³⁸ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, October (1963), 65.

were officially sanctioned by the government, so one could speculate that the editors would choose to portray Soviet women in the same manner in both publications.

We will analyze the images and perspectives of women that are presented in the 1963, 1973, and 1983 issues of the magazine *The USSR and Soviet Life*. These samples will provide us with decade-by-decade examples of the ways in which Soviet women were represented in the official press. By narrowing the focus to three years in decadal increments, we can discuss and analyze the roles of women across a twenty-year period without the burden of poring over each of those twenty years. Each year is a sort of representative for its particular decade, and it can support some generalizations and speculations about the roles of women within that decade. Each year can be evaluated in comparison to the material presented in the other two years, and this analysis will be further segmented by four categories that specify ways that women are depicted. Upon reviewing these three decadal samples, I see four recurring categories of women's roles. These four themes are women as mothers, women as professionals/workers/students, women as cultural figures, and women as individuals. The significance of these roles lies in the goals of Bolshevik feminism and the status of women in pre-Revolutionary Russia, as well as the official status of women in the USSR by 1963.

USSR: Soviet Life today 1963

When flipping through the pages of the twelve monthly issues of *USSR* in 1963, one notices that the dominant images of women categorically are women as professionals/workers/students. There are few images of women as mothers, although a few of the articles discuss motherhood as a secondary issue. Even less represented are women as cultural figures. The editors included two articles about a female poet and a female Jewish singer, but neither of these women is dressed in traditional folk costumes. The category remaining, the women as individuals, is represented by a unique editorial column that appears in every issue with the exception of November.

Although there are few images of women as mothers, there are articles about women, in which they mention motherhood. One example is found in the March issue in an article about female athletes.³⁹ Seven female athletes were asked to describe how they managed their busy schedules of sports, family, work and study. Of the seven interviewees, five were mothers, and these mothers tell of their hectic schedule in which they must juggle their role as a mother with their other activities. Family members or kind neighbors take care of the children when the women go to work, school, or sport's practice. For these women, motherhood is not a singular all-encompassing role, but rather one of several roles that define them.

Included in the category professionals/workers/students are the pictures of women, who are engineers, students, factory workers, athletes, mathematicians, collective farmers, teachers, and doctors. There are also a few images of women in the November

³⁹ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, March (1963), 40-41.

issue of women as party members and organizers.⁴⁰ Even the space program was open to women, as evidenced by two articles. An article in August highlights the public welcome in Moscow for the cosmonauts, female cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova included.⁴¹ A second article in the December issue shares the pictures of Valentina's visit to her hometown.⁴²

The monthly column "Women's Page" will be analyzed later for the author's opinions about women's roles; however, the column also provides statistical information regarding the fields of work in which women are employed. The statement in the March column that "in our country translating and teaching are women's professions"⁴³ is later backed by the statistic that seventy-five percent of all teachers are women.⁴⁴ Women also occupy positions in government. In the most recent election, 309 women were elected to the Supreme Soviet.⁴⁵ Women hold positions of leadership in nongovernmental jobs; fifty percent of the managers in industry and agriculture are women.⁴⁶ Women make up the majority of doctors; seventy-five percent of doctors are female. Females are half of the students in the USSR, as well as half of the work force.⁴⁷ One-third of all engineers are female, and one out of every four lawyers is a woman.⁴⁸ Despite the preceding significant percentages, there are considerably fewer women working in the service industry as hairdressers, waitresses, and cooks.⁴⁹ The column also provides the total numbers of women working in professions and trades like scientific research, livestock

⁴⁰ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, November (1963), 52-55.

⁴¹ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, August (1963), 26-27.

⁴² *USSR: Soviet Life today*, December (1963), 22-26.

⁴³ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, March (1963), 38.

⁴⁴ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, April (1963), 54.

⁴⁵ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, March (1963), 38.

⁴⁶ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, March (1963), 38.

⁴⁷ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, March (1963), 38.

⁴⁸ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, June (1963), 45.

⁴⁹ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, August (1963), 62.

farming, clothing and shoe industry, machinists, technicians and engineers, and accountants.⁵⁰

A special feature of the 1963 issues is the “Women’s Page.” The inclusion of a Women’s Page (when there is no Men’s page) could suggest that women have special interests and opinions that deserve a regularly featured commentary. However, on the other hand, it could suggest to the contrary that women’s opinions must be restricted to certain pages. Perhaps a “Women’s Page” is the only place in the magazine where a woman can freely and truly express her opinion. Does the “Women’s Page” represent liberation or confinement? Either way, the opinions expressed by the author and editor, Irana Kazakova, provide insight into the mind of one Soviet woman. Irana is praised by the editors of *Soviet Life* for possessing the “rare quality (in a woman) of being found likable by other women.”⁵¹

Irana’s commentary in the “Women’s Page” discusses topics like marriage, divorce, work, education, the ideal woman, beauty, community, and general musings about life. Irana makes some bold statements about women and their needs as individuals. She writes in her March column, “It’s simply that our women insist upon being people in their own right, productive and independent.”⁵² In April she addresses women’s roles as mothers and professionals in her assertion, “[N]o woman can thrive on love alone. ... A woman wants to feel that she’s needed by people not just her husband and children. She wants to be able to express herself in the job she’s been trained for, she finds excitement in the challenge of working with other people.”⁵³ She cites a description of the ideal

⁵⁰ USSR: *Soviet Life today*, June (1963), 45.

⁵¹ USSR: *Soviet Life today*, January (1963), 38.

⁵² USSR: *Soviet Life today*, March, (1963), 38.

⁵³ USSR: *Soviet Life today*, April (1963), 54.

woman, given by a futuristic novelist, “They are beautiful and highly educated. Their affection for their husbands and children is only part of their great love of life. Work has become the greatest joy for these women because it is a personal fulfillment, and they make significant contributions in science and art.”⁵⁴ Her statements recognize the various roles of women, as mothers, as professionals, and as individuals. There seems to be a hope that a woman can find fulfillment in varying degrees in all of those roles, but Irana places more importance on the roles of professional and individual. The theme that continues through several of her essays is that of self-worth. Women find self-worth in their roles as wives and mothers, but those alone are not enough. Beyond financial reasons, women seek outside employment for the independence, sense of purpose, and accomplishment that they gain from their role as professionals and workers.

Through the course of the year, Irana’s commentary mentions the concept of the “modern Soviet woman,”⁵⁵ whose educational attainments and femininity are compatible. This modern woman “is the educated woman in the main stream of life.”⁵⁶ She participates in a range of activities related to school, work, social engagements, and domestic life.

The January article about a young woman named Zoya and the June article about another young woman, Lyudmila, are examples of this concept of the modern Soviet woman emerging in the younger generation. The article about Zoya was originally featured in the magazine *Soviet Women*, and Lyudmila’s story is presented in lengthy picture captions. Zoya is a house painter by day and a student by night. She is studying industrial design at the local polytechnical institute. On the weekends, Zoya walks the

⁵⁴ USSR: *Soviet Life today*, April (1963), 54.

⁵⁵ USSR: *Soviet Life today*, August (1963), 62.

⁵⁶ USSR: *Soviet Life today*, July (1963), 45.

five and a half miles to her family's village, where she milks cows and carries water pails with the help of a yoke. Zoya retains her cultural heritage by dressing in national costume and playing the zither as a member of an amateur folk music ensemble. In her spare time, she conducts an amateur jazz band, spends time with her male friend, and goes yachting. The article claims that she recently joined an aviation club.⁵⁷ Lyudmila's schedule is just as busy. She works on the assembly line at a plant that produces televisions, and she takes evening classes in English language and literature at the local university. Lyudmila makes regular visits to the hospital to see her disabled, bedridden father. In her free time, she dances with an amateur ballet group, practices the javelin throw, and participates in a community-minded youth group that is working to make the citizens more greenery-conscious.⁵⁸ What is remarkable about these robust and cheerful-looking young women is not only their participation in a wide range of activities, but also their personal backgrounds. Zoya came from a family of peasant farmers. Lyudmila's father was fighting in the army during World War II and she, "like most children at the time ... practically had to bring herself up."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, January (1963), 12-17.

⁵⁸ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, June (1963), 24-26.

⁵⁹ *USSR: Soviet Life today*, June (1963), 25.

Soviet Life 1973

In general, there is more material about women in the 1973 issues than in the 1963 months. Additionally, the variety of images of women in the roles of professional/worker/student and cultural figure increases. The March issue is notable for its special section about women in recognition of International Women's Day.

Pictures of women as mothers and wedded partners, not otherwise related to stories about parenting or marriage, are scattered across several issues. For example, in the article about jets in the June issue, there is a small picture of a mother and young child aboard the jet.⁶⁰ In the August issue, the section that features the city of Vilnius in Lithuania, there is a collection of small photos showing inhabitants of the city in public settings. One of the pictures is a mother and baby.⁶¹ On the first page inside the cover of the May issue is a two-page picture of a bride and groom. The picture is connected with an article forty-four pages later about a plant that produces equipment like tractors. Finally, in the September issue, there is a set of eleven interviews of people in Moscow on their opinion of Brezhnev's visit to the US. Of the four women interviewed, one of them is a production engineer, pictured in her wedding dress. In the November article "Moscow Apartment House: Four Tenants," one of the families that the author visits has ten children. The mother Klavdia was awarded the honorary title of Mother Heroine for raising ten children. She and her husband are pictured with some of their children and grandchildren.

⁶⁰ *Soviet Life*, June (1973), 17.

⁶¹ *Soviet Life*, August (1973), 27.

In 1973, there are images of women as professionals, workers, and students. Some of the most frequently occurring images are women as doctors, teachers, factory workers, and students. In fact, a female student's picture graces the cover of the August issue. She is dressed in western-style clothes with her long hair hanging loose as she intently reads a newspaper. For another example, an October article features the Moscow Aviation Institute. Pictures that accompany the article show male and female students working on projects and enjoying leisure activities. One picture's caption states, "the student body includes a sizable number of women."⁶² However, women are also shown as construction workers and supervisors, sanitary inspectors, athletes, flight attendants, and deputies to the Supreme Soviet. Female actors, dancers, and musicians are also present in photos and articles, but they will be discussed under the category of women as cultural figures.

However, female workers are also somewhat absent from roles of leadership. For example, in the December issue of 1973, there is a four-page article about an American delegation's visit to an automobile plant. There are two pictures on opposing pages, one shows a group of American and Soviet trade union leaders, and the other picture shows Americans watching Soviet workers in the plant. It is striking to notice that there are no females in the picture of the trade union leaders, but in the picture of the workers, all of the workers are women.⁶³

The March issue is noteworthy because of its focus on Soviet women, as indicated by the heading on the cover. The articles written about women in light of International Women's Day emphasize the roles of mother and worker. Some of the articles and

⁶² *Soviet Life*, October (1973), 32.

⁶³ *Soviet Life*, December (1973), 20-21.

pictures emphasize the role of the mother and others focus on the role of the female worker. Even though there are articles about women included in this issue, no woman is on the cover of the magazine. Instead, it is a picture of the Soviet men's hockey team. On the backside of the cover and page one, there is a two-page picture of a woman and a child, and the caption explains, "March 8 is International Women's Day, when women are honored for their role in shaping both society and the new generation."⁶⁴ The mother's face is partially hidden by the child. In whatever ways women shape society, this picture places a higher significance on the woman's role as a mother. The role of a mother is rewarded by the Soviet government, as stated in the article "Women in Soviet Society." Women who raise from five to ten children receive one of three medals depending on how many children they raised: the Motherhood Medal, the Order of Motherhood Glory, or the title Mother-Heroine.⁶⁵ The government encourages women to take on the role of mother, as evidenced by these special honors.

Two articles within this special section emphasize the woman's role as a worker. In the four-page article about the Volga Auto Plant, young women steal the spotlight from their young male co-workers. One large photo depicts a group of young female assembly line electricians. With their arms linked and smiles on their faces, they seem happy and proud to pose for the photographer.⁶⁶ Another four-page article features photographs of a young female primary-school teacher and excerpts from her diary. Nailya describes her work as a teacher as "very gratifying."⁶⁷ She not only wants to teach her students

⁶⁴ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 1.

⁶⁵ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 26-27.

⁶⁶ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 18-19.

⁶⁷ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 22.

academic subjects, but she hopes to “bring up admirable human beings” by teaching them about sincerity and friendship.⁶⁸

This special section also includes a one-page set of questions titled “American Readers Ask About Soviet Women” and answers provided by a female special correspondent. The questions all relate to a woman’s role as a worker or her role as a mother. Evident in the answers to the questions is the theme that women should work, they like to work, and women who work outside the home do not have to give up their role as mothers. To answer the question “why do Soviet women work,” the author presents the relationship between financial independence and personal freedom that women gain from holding an outside job. However, she cites that the more important reason for working is the social respect that is given to women who work, and this respect positively affects a woman’s relationship with her husband and children. This article also acknowledges the double burden that is created when women assume responsibility for a job and a household. The role of the mother and the housekeeper are “traditional” roles. Instead of encouraging the practice of women to quit their jobs after they have children, the USSR attempts to support women’s dual roles as mother and worker with an extensive child-care system and public catering and household services. The author of this article somewhat indirectly admits the lack of such services with her claim that the volume of these services will double in two year’s time—by 1975. She further discusses housework by stating the role that men play in helping with housework: “We know for a fact that the men help far more than they used to.”⁶⁹ A statement like this one can be interpreted in a positive light to show the progressive attitudes of Soviet

⁶⁸ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 25.

⁶⁹ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 20.

men or in a negative way to show how little men used to help with housework. Lastly, the author visits the concept of the modern Soviet woman—that a woman does not become less feminine because of her participation in an outside job. She writes, “Our women, independent though they are, are still women. They prize their femininity and their appeal, just like women the world over.”⁷⁰

Another two-page article in March’s section on women addresses the legal status of women. The article begins with the statement “Soviet power gave our women equal rights with men,” which suggests the kind of equality that Kollontai referenced.⁷¹ The article goes on to list legal rights of working women, mothers, and married women. It also provides a brief description of the Soviet Women’s Committee, which works in the women’s international movement and publishes the magazine *Soviet Woman*.

It is also just as important to look at the material included in this issue that focused on women, as well as the places where women were absent in this issue. There is a two-page article about the “Problem of Modern Science,” in which seven male scientists and scholars were polled for their opinions on research and ethics in regards to science.⁷² Women are absent from this panel of experts.

Women also seem to gain significance as cultural figures: musicians, ballerinas, and actresses. For example, the September issue includes an article about three sisters who are musicians and an article about five actresses in a World War II film. The three sisters are shown in several photos practicing their instruments. The composition of the photos suggests gracefulness and artistry. The young women are praised as, “highly sensitive,

⁷⁰ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 20.

⁷¹ *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 26.

⁷² *Soviet Life*, March (1973), 48-49.

intelligent, true musicians,” by the Rector of the Music Conservatory where they attend.⁷³ Similarly, the five actresses featured in another article of the same month, are praised for their talents: “‘The actresses did not act, they lived their screen lives,’ said the director.”⁷⁴

There are also several images of women as cultural figures in traditional costumes. Examples are from several issues. In the January issue, an article with large pictures features a folk chorus from the Ural region. The women are wearing similar, heavily embroidered dresses. In one of the pictures, they are also wearing high headdresses.⁷⁵ In the July article that features the city of Tashkent, a picture of a man and a woman wearing ethnic outfits is included in the three-page photo introduction to the article. This image stands out from the other images in the photographic introduction that includes views of the city’s architecture. The woman, who obviously has the attention of the man, also gains the attention of the reader with her gold-embroidered costume.⁷⁶ In the November issue, there are two separate images of women in traditional costumes. A photo capturing participants at the World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin, when casually glanced at, shows young women dressed in various ethnic costumes. Upon closer study, it becomes apparent that all of the participants in the foreground of the picture are also female.⁷⁷ There is a picture on the next page of a group of young women in the Siberia Dance Company, which is a ballet company that specializes in folk dances. All of the women are wearing traditional costumes as they walk through a snowy forest scene.⁷⁸

⁷³ *Soviet Life*, September (1973), 34.

⁷⁴ *Soviet Life*, September (1973), 55.

⁷⁵ *Soviet Life*, January (1973), 6-9.

⁷⁶ *Soviet Life*, July (1973), 30.

⁷⁷ *Soviet Life*, November (1973), 60-61.

⁷⁸ *Soviet Life*, November (1973), 62-65.

While the 1963 issues ran the “Women’s Page,” this editorial is absent from the 1973 issues. However, women state their individuality in other ways. Two articles feature women, who are both accomplished professionals and mothers. These women also prize their independence. One of the articles appears in the January issue, and it features a female test pilot named Marina. As one of few female test pilots, Marina has set herself apart with 2500 hours of flight and 13 world records for speed and distance. She is also a mother to two daughters and a wife to a famous cosmonaut. In her spare time, she sings with an amateur singing group and writes poetry. In contrast to the “hardness” prized by the *Bolshevichki*, the author of the article praises Marina for “remaining feminine, a good mother and an affable hostess.”⁷⁹ Marina’s determination and drive helped her pursue her dream to become a test pilot. Her individuality is obvious in her statement, “My husband enjoys his own fame, which he earned honestly. Am I supposed to live in its reflection? I could never bask in someone else’s glory. I have my own goals.”⁸⁰

Likewise, the July article about a female graphic artist named Clara, praises her artistic abilities as well as her path of individuality. Clara is a talented children’s illustrator and a member of the esteemed Union of Artists. Her work has received attention in the Soviet Union and abroad. She receives many commissions to do work for kindergartens and Young Pioneer houses. The article begins with the statement, “The woman of today is as different from her great-grandmother as the space rocket is from the Wright brothers’ machine. ... Soviet women accept their present status as a matter of course, although it is the result of great social changes. Individuality has become a woman’s prerogative as well. Even if her husband is well known in the same area of

⁷⁹ *Soviet Life*, January (1973), 41.

⁸⁰ *Soviet Life*, January (1973), 41.

endeavor, as is the case with Moscow graphic artist Clara Kalinycheva, her independence is in no way cramped.”⁸¹ Even though the article praises her for her talent and independence, it is also noted that her hobbies are “more feminine: knitting and cooking.”⁸² She also maintains the traditional role of housekeeper, but “housework is disposed of quickly because she is a good housekeeper, and her husband and son give her a good deal of help.”⁸³ In the pictures that accompany this article, Clara is shown at work in her studio and on location. Several small reprints of her paintings are also included.

⁸¹ *Soviet Life*, July (1973), 49.

⁸² *Soviet Life*, July (1973), 50.

⁸³ *Soviet Life*, July (1973), 50.

Soviet Life 1983

The overall themes of the magazine for 1983 are world peace and pride in Soviet accomplishments. The magazine seems to also focus more on performing arts and cultural activities, as noted by addition of the "Things Cultural" page, which includes briefs about various artists, dancers, musicians, and singers. Perhaps this shift is a consequence of the aim to present all Soviets as peace-loving people who are more interested in going to a ballet than masterminding a nuclear war.

The role of the mother becomes politically charged in some articles in the 1983 issues. Part of the Soviet peace agenda, as presented by this magazine, makes an appeal to universal motherhood and a mother's enduring love for her children as a reason to strive for peace and disarmament. This politicized image of a mother is a strong presence in the first article of the January issue "Peace: Policy and Perspectives." The eight-page article is about a mother who had seven sons, all of whom died during World War II. Maria, the youngest daughter and sister to the seven brothers, tells the story. She is now a mother and a grandmother herself, and her plea is for peace so that no one will have to endure the pain of losing children or parents in a war. The pictures that correspond to the story are of Maria and her children and grandchildren. The two-page picture at the end of the article shows Maria standing arm-in-arm with two of her grandsons at the base of a statue memorializing the young men who gave their lives fighting in World War II. That image along with the quote in the introduction of the article, "A human being can endure all sorrow except the death of a child," effectively communicate that Soviet women have

endured great loss in the past and, therefore, are opposed to any kind of war.⁸⁴ The words of mothers are used later in the January issue to reemphasize the need for peace in the world. In an article titled "Why I value peace so much..." men and women are asked for their opinions. Out of fifteen respondents, seven were women. Even though they were not necessarily all mothers yet, six of the seven women related their desire for peace with the universal desire of mothers for their children to have a happy, peaceful future. The seventh woman is a doctor, and so her reasoning was related to her calling as a doctor to preserve lives.⁸⁵

The image of the woman as mother is not always used so strongly as in the anti-war campaign. There are other articles and images of mothers with children not related to war. One example is the March picture of a mother with her son who just underwent heart surgery. In the picture, the mother lovingly touches her son's cheek and smiles.⁸⁶ Another tender image of a mother and child that is not directly related to governmental foreign policy is also found in the March issue. It is included in a collection of photographs highlighting the work of one of the magazine's photographers. The picture is of a mother and young daughter in ballet clothes. The mother sits on the floor in a relaxed pose as the little girl pretends to be a ballerina. The caption reads, "a born ballerina."⁸⁷ Yet another image of a mother and a happy family is found in an article called "The Romanovskys: why we are happy" in the September issue. The article features a family of five with three adolescent and young adult children. The largest picture shows the mother surrounded by her family, and all are smiling as if the camera

⁸⁴ *Soviet Life*, January (1983), 7.

⁸⁵ *Soviet Life*, January (1983), 55-56.

⁸⁶ *Soviet Life*, March (1983), 27.

⁸⁷ *Soviet Life*, March (1983), 51.

caught them in the middle of a family joke.⁸⁸ Nelli, the mother, is an English teacher, who is admired by all—her family, her friends, and her neighbors. Even though the father is present, this mother seems to be the center of the family. One of the children even says, “I love [Dad] because he makes Mom very happy.”⁸⁹

In the March issue, an article concerned with de-population addresses the multiple roles that women take. The question is, “What do women themselves think about their participation in socially useful labor and in public activities? Wouldn’t they prefer to devote all of their time to family life?” The answer was compiled from several “on-the-spot polls,” and the verdict is that “women would like to combine the roles of mother, wife and housewife with participation in production and public activities.”⁹⁰

In the 1983 magazines, women are shown as professionals, workers, and students. There is an even greater variety of occupations than in 1973. Teachers, doctors (including nurses and midwives), students, factory workers, and engineers still make up the majority of the positions, but there are also sales clerks, weavers, collective farm members, bookkeepers, athletic coaches, confectioners, fashion designers, magazine editors, and an archaeologist. A female skydiver is pictured on the cover of the October issue. There is also an increase in the number of women in the performing arts—actresses and singers, especially.

Nearly every issue in 1983 includes an image of a woman in the role of cultural figure, whether as an actress, ballerina, singer, or musician. In fact, the cover of the March issue shows a superstar singer dressed in layers of red, sheer fabric with softly curled hair. She is an image of femininity and beauty. One particularly striking image is of a woman

⁸⁸ *Soviet Life*, September (1983), 59.

⁸⁹ *Soviet Life*, September (1983), 61.

⁹⁰ *Soviet Life*, March (1983), 39.

whose identity and performing arts-related talents are unknown. Included in a February article about increasing farm production, along with pictures of tractors and other farm machinery, is a picture of a woman peeking through the branches of an apple tree. The caption reads, “symbols of Moldavia’s beauty.”⁹¹

There are also more pictures of women in traditional costumes. Some examples are the folk dance company from Armenia pictured in the May issue. The women are all wearing brightly colored matching folk costumes, and the men are also wearing matching outfits.⁹² Another photo from the same section on Armenia shows a different group of women dressed in matching traditional costumes.⁹³ The June issue includes several photos of Siberian dance companies. One is a ballet company, and the other is a folk dance group. The female folk dancers are wearing matching heavily embroidered dresses. The caption states the significance of these folk dancer groups; “Folk traditions and the never-ending quest for their revival are the intrinsic signs of culture and the arts in Siberia today. Groups on tour, like the Krasnoyarsk State Dance Company... help preserve national customs in all parts of the vast territory.”⁹⁴ Folk dance ensembles and choral groups are pictured in July and December, and the women in each group are wearing matching folk dresses.⁹⁵ Other female ballerinas, dancers, singers, and musicians are pictured in various issues, particularly in the “Things Cultural” two-page briefing.

One particularly memorable image of a female cultural figure is the picture of an eleven-year old girl on the cover of the November issue. The photograph is a close-up of

⁹¹ *Soviet Life*, February (1983), 25.

⁹² *Soviet Life*, May (1983), 11.

⁹³ *Soviet Life*, May (1983), 14.

⁹⁴ *Soviet Life*, June (1983), 51.

⁹⁵ *Soviet Life*, July (1983), 47-49. December (1983), 4-5.

her face and her ornate, high headdress. The girl in this unique picture is actually an American named Samantha Smith, who visited the USSR upon invitation by Yuri Andropov.⁹⁶ A needlework circle of a Young Pioneer Club gave Samantha the headdress, which is actually a replica of an ancient Russian one.⁹⁷

There are two examples of articles that feature single women who enjoy their jobs and prize their independence. One of the women is a schoolteacher and the other is a sales clerk. The November issue contains the story about a Byelorussian schoolteacher named Nina. Most of the photos in the four-page article are in color, and they show Nina with her students or socializing with her adult friends. The author writes that Nina is an independent woman, who is full of energy and devoted to her students. Outside of the classroom, she spends time during the summer and winter break with her students, taking them on trips to museums and other Soviet cities and accompanying them to a summer camp. When asked by the author of the article, "Don't you ever get tired of your independence?" Nina replied, "Of course I want to have a family. ... I realize with my heart that I should not be alone, but I simply can't make up my mind."⁹⁸ Natasha is a sales clerk, whose story is printed in the March issue. In addition to her work in the medical book department, she is a student, and she finds time to socialize with friends and her fiancé. The pictures show Natasha hard at work at the bookstore and out enjoying her free time with her friends and fiancé. Her attitude about working is summed up in her comments: "To have a job you love is a great privilege," and "It seems to me my husband would not like me to be nothing more than a housewife."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Soviet Life*, November (1983), 39.

⁹⁷ *Soviet Life*, November (1983), 1A.

⁹⁸ *Soviet Life*, November (1983), 34.

⁹⁹ *Soviet Life*, November (1983), 60.

As stated earlier, one of the main themes in 1983 is the success of the USSR. One such example is the focus of the August issue on the central Asian city of Tashkent and its 2000th birthday. Looking at the photographs included in the introduction, one may conclude that the two main accomplishments were the modernization of the city's infrastructure and the westernization of the role of women. Opposite a picture of the city's Lenin Square and modern apartment buildings is a picture of four women walking through the city. They are wearing simple western-style clothes and smiling, as if they were laughing. The caption asserts, "Women had a hard time in pre-Revolutionary Tashkent, the uneducated chattel of their husbands. Now they are scientists, teachers, and engineers."¹⁰⁰ Even though the caption makes this claim, there are no pictures or articles depicting women in those occupations. In fact, the only other women pictured in the section about Tashkent are a chairperson for the architecture union, students, ballerinas, a dancer, and three women who are either flight attendants or pilots (neither the caption nor the article specifically state which occupation). However, all of these women, except for the dancers, are dressed in western clothes with styled hair. Several pages later in the same issue, an article features a young Tashkent couple's semi-traditional wedding. The bride is wearing a white, western-style dress with a veil and the ceremony was performed at a municipal building, but the wedding reception still contains traditional elements. The article states that the groom is an engineer and the bride is a medical student.¹⁰¹

There are also instances in the magazine where women and their voices are noticeably absent. The first example comes from an article in the January issue. Even though

¹⁰⁰ *Soviet Life*, August, (1983), 5.

¹⁰¹ *Soviet Life*, August (1983), 11-12.

images of female doctors appear more frequently than women in other professions, women and their opinions are absent from a round-table discussion between Soviet and American doctors about the medical consequence of nuclear war.¹⁰² The second example is from an April article titled "Kiev's air traffic controllers."¹⁰³ Male and female air traffic controllers are present in a large picture extending across the bottom half of two pages. The caption even states, "Women supervisors are not uncommon at Aeroflot."¹⁰⁴ However, women provided none of the comments in the three-page text.

¹⁰² *Soviet Life*, January (1983), 32-34.

¹⁰³ *Soviet Life*, April (1983), 8-12.

¹⁰⁴ *Soviet Life*, April (1983), 9.

CONCLUSION

Bolshevichki, like Kollontai, believed that women would be free and equal in a socialist society, and the official rhetoric states that Soviet women enjoy equal rights with men. The ideas of freedom and equality for women under the Soviet system are better understood after an examination of the images of women in *Soviet Life*. Not all of the women's roles have the same kind of freedom and equality, but these liberties are apparent in each of the four roles.

There is equality for women worker in the respect that female workers, just as male workers, were guaranteed the right to work. Women were not limited to teaching, medicine, and clerical work. A comparison of images of working women across the three decades shows that the variety of jobs for women increases. The core group of occupations remains the same from 1963 through 1983; these are teacher, doctor, engineer, and factory worker. Expansion into the performing arts and the service sector is notable in 1973 and 1983. However, in each of the three decades, there is an inequality apparent in the lack of women portrayed in leadership roles in the workplace.

The articles and pictures, as related to the women's role as individuals, suggest a great amount of freedom for women in all three decades. In 1963, Irana is given the freedom to express her opinions every month in the "Women's Page." Clara, the artist, and Marina, the test pilot, both featured in 1973 articles, are praised for their individuality and independence. Although in two articles in 1983, Nina, the schoolteacher, and Natasha, the sales clerk, seem reluctant to give up their independence upon marriage, both have

freedom as single women to devote themselves to their jobs and decide how to spend their leisure time.

The amount of freedom and equality for women in the role of the cultural figure is ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a steady increase throughout the three decades in the number of images of women as cultural figures. This increase may correspond to a shift in the focus of the magazine from science to the arts. The role of the cultural figure could be an honor for women. Conversely, the women's role as cultural figures could be negatively interpreted as an unequal responsibility for the preservation of the culture of the Soviet nationalities.

The role of the mother is the most complex; sometimes it pushes to the forefront and other times, the role exists as an underlying theme for women. The absence of a major women's liberation movement in the USSR during these decades left motherhood as a role that could be discussed or overlooked, but not ridiculed. The images of mothers are sparse in the 1963 issues; however, motherhood is discussed in Irana's commentaries and the interviews of the female athletes. These women seem to express the sentiment that the role of the mother is one of several roles that women must juggle in their busy lives. In fact, according to Irana's comments, being a mother is not as fulfilling for a woman as being a productive worker. By 1973, the images of mothers suggest that the role of the mother is intrinsically rewarding. By contrast, one could speculate that motherhood does not allow women the same kind of freedom and equality as men because the Soviet government awarded women honorary titles and stipends for raising large families. The role of mothers comes to a new kind of attention in 1983 as *Soviet Life* uses the plea for

universal motherhood to relate to its American audience the peaceful intentions of Soviet citizens.

The images of women in *Soviet Life* show that freedom and equality for women cannot be expressed in an absolute term. The amount of independence for women varies by specific example, by the role, and by the decade.

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