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THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET ATTITUDES
TOWARDS WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

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at the University of Glasgow, Institute
of Soviet and East European Studies.

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CONTENTS

<u>page</u>	
vi	SUMMARY
1	<u>CHAPTER 1</u> Introduction
1	1:1 The validity of a historical approach to the position of women and the family in the Soviet Union
7	1:2 Outline of the discussion
30	Notes to chapter 1
39	<u>CHAPTER 2</u> Women and the Family in Russia to the Nineteenth Century: A View From the Outside
39	2:1 Travellers' tales as source material
41	2:2 Russian studies
60	2:3 Travellers' observations of Russia
60	(i) Autocracy and the position of women
70	(ii) Marriage customs
81	(iii) Role of the peasant wife
86	(iv) Upper-class women
92	(v) Female pollution and the female form
98	2:4 Conclusion
111	Notes to chapter 2
135	<u>CHAPTER 3</u> The Impact of Industrialization on the Position of Women and the Family, 1880-1917
135	3:1 The development of the working class
152	3:2 The organization of women workers

<u>page</u>	
168	3:3 Women workers and the revolutionary movement
190	3:4 Gentry women, work and revolution
203	3:5 Conclusion
206	Notes to chapter 3
230	<u>CHAPTER 4</u> The Development of the Woman Question in Russia
230	4:1 The individual, the collective and the woman question
254	4:2 Service to the people
275	4:3 Women and revolution
290	Notes to chapter 4
314	<u>CHAPTER 5</u> Alexandra Kollontai and the Woman Question in Russia
314	5:1 Biographical context
325	5:2 Theoretical context
332	5:3 The New Woman
338	5:4 Women and class society
346	5:5 Capitalism and relations between women and men
353	5:6 The New Morality
361	5:7 Maternity
365	5:8 Conclusion
373	Notes to chapter 5
384	<u>CHAPTER 6</u> Family, Women and Work in Soviet Society
384	6:1 The sexual revolution

<u>page</u>	
400	6:2 The impact of the revolution on the position of women
410	6:3 Women and the Soviet economy
421	6:4 Women's work in Soviet society and the family
443	6:5 The unsolved question
448	Notes to chapter 6
474	CONCLUSION
479	Notes to conclusion
480	BIBLIOGRAPHY
480	1. Works in Russian
489	2. Russian works in translation
495	3. Sources for travellers to Russia
495	a) Travel accounts
501	b) Collections and commentaries
504	4. Non-Russian secondary sources
504	a) Books
514	b) Articles
519	c) Theses

SUMMARY

Western analysts of the position of women in the Soviet Union generally hold that Soviet ideology of women's place reflects the needs of the state as defined by a male leadership. They see as deficient the economic-determinist analysis of women's position, and a 'biological determinism' which confuses women's biological and social roles. The former is reflected in the complacent assertion, prevalent in the Soviet Union until the 1960s, that the woman question had been solved. The latter is seen as strengthening conservatism and reflecting fears over the high birth rates in the Moslem republics and low rates in the European areas. Many western observers have equated the contemporary Soviet family with the western bourgeois family before the advent of feminism.

This thesis contends that the tendency to concentrate on what has happened, and what has not changed, since 1917 reduces the pre-revolutionary period to a mere picturesque backcloth, a timeless patriarchal era. It is argued here that the period before 1917, particularly the nineteenth century, was crucial for the development of Soviet attitudes towards women and the family. They stem from a political and social structure with a stress on the collective which was evident in the nineteenth century and did not originate with the Bolsheviks; from an ideology of sexual equality determined by the material base which was not exclusive to Marxism; and, perhaps above all,

from the peasant heritage.

Chapter one outlines the argument for continuity within change in Soviet attitudes towards women and the family. Chapter two examines the peasant family and position of women before 1917, arguing that the former was not a static institution, and that the latter were not completely without rights. Not only was there a gap between the ideological and actual position of women, but peasant culture survived the Revolution. The peasant community embodied a notion of equality between families, rather than individuals, and peasant collective consciousness influenced the development of the working class from the late nineteenth century. Chapter three posits a symbiotic relationship between village and town. The peasant stress on the necessity of women working for the family, and on a flexible division of labour which nevertheless maintained the centrality of women's role in the family, and their subordinate position, persisted. While revolutionaries recognised that women had specific needs and grievances, the stress was on solidarity, on drawing women into the labour movement to overcome the traditional divisions and hierarchy between women and men.

Chapter four examines the nineteenth-century discussions on the woman question, which saw individuality as developing within the harmonious community and rejected the western concept of individualism as divisive. The oppression of women was recognised as a central feature of the established

order, but not as an issue separate or distinct from the general social situation. Alexandra Kollontai's ideas on women and the family are discussed in chapter five against this theoretical background and within the traditional stress on the collective. Her work is seen as reflecting a continuing tension between the individual and the community. Her stress on the significance of morality is recognised as important, but her ideas on the New Woman are seen as a vision for an ideal industrial future which overlooked, or at least underestimated, the vitality and tenacity of peasant culture.

Chapter six examines the Soviet period in the light of the recent peasant past and the Russian influences on the development of Marxism, as well as the economic, political and demographic factors which have affected attitudes towards women and the family. While Soviet women appear to accept a definition of gender based on their maternal function, the current low birth rate in the European republics, as well as the discussion on women's role, show that they are not passive recipients of state ideology, however much their lives may be constrained by economic factors.

In conclusion, it is recognised that there has been considerable change in the position of and attitudes towards women and the family not only since 1917, but also in the pre-revolutionary period, particularly in the late nineteenth century. At the same time, there is continuity in sex roles. The family has

remained a key institution for integrating individuals into society, with women as the primary agents of that socialization by virtue of their role in the family. Moreover, a belief in the complementarity of the sexes has persisted because the woman question has been consistently viewed within a social and cultural ideal that stressed community, and because Russia industrialised as a peasant society with a living tradition. Kollontai's New Woman, her communist family, were shaped by the traditions of peasant collectivism and influenced by the development of Russian ideas on the woman question from the 1840s, and not simply moulded by the ideological imperatives or economic and demographic needs of the Soviet state.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1:1 The validity of a historical approach to the position of women and the family in the Soviet Union

R. Aminova has written that 'far from diminishing in the course of communist construction, the role of women in the family increases. The Communist Party highly values the work of woman the mother, woman the educator'. (1) Western feminist critics see the Soviet family of today as the equivalent of the western bourgeois family, as the 'traditional individual unit of consumption, reproduction and socialization', a conservative and stabilizing force. (2) They see as deficient Soviet Marxist ideology, which assumed sexual equality once women were drawn into the process of production on a massive scale. Moreover, besides this economic determinism, western feminists identify a 'biological determinism', a confusion of women's biological and social roles, a sex-role stereotyping which strengthens conservatism, and which they claim has been granted academic respectability with the growing concern over the falling birth rate in European Russia. (3)

On the one hand, western observers contrast Russia on the eve

of revolution, a predominantly peasant society with a patriarchal culture almost untouched by western modernization, with the Soviet Union of today where the position of women has improved markedly, where 'in relative terms, Soviet women have probably achieved more of the prerequisites of emancipation and equality than any other female population', if only as a 'by-product of policy designed for some other, "higher" purpose'. (4) On the other hand, they contrast the modern European republics of the Soviet Union, which they view as nevertheless still lagging culturally as well as economically behind the west, with the Moslem republics, seeing a clash between Soviet ('western') values and Islamic ('eastern') values. They believe that the latter fuels concern over natality in the former and serves to strengthen conservative views of women. In addition, western feminists are disheartened by the fact that Soviet women's political roles have not kept pace with their economic ones, and point to the absence of a women's movement on western lines. It is claimed that it is precisely this lack which makes it 'unlikely that the kind of thinking necessary to produce a sustained attack on sex-differentiated domestic roles, not to mention the concept of domestic roles itself' will develop in the Soviet Union. (5)

However, Mary Buckley's recent interviews with Soviet social scientists on the position of women have revealed that the

issues are more complex than the above interpretations suggest. (6) Indeed, the debate since the mid 1960s on changing female roles and on women's 'double burden' of paid employment and household work has not only been vigorous, it has seen active female participation. Z.A. Yankova has pointed out that work outside the home, and especially professional activity, has tended to modify women's attitudes towards motherhood to which they are less eager to be totally committed, in terms of housework and childcare. (7) L. Pavlukhina, an engineer in Sevastopol, wrote to Komsomolskaya pravda in 1978 against inculcating femininity:

The concept of femininity was developed over the centuries with no regard for whether women themselves were happy to possess that limited set of attributes. If a little girl is taught always to be tractable and nice, this will act to restrict her professional growth. After all, in order to defend one's own scientific ideas or manage a large staff, a person needs to be able to think independently and to be forthright and courageous... Upbringing should not be separated but unified. (8)

At the same time, one of Buckley's interviewees expressed the general view that in the Soviet Union 'women have two roles, as workers and mothers, which are not separate. These roles

are complementary', while a Soviet study concluded that the persistence of ideas concerning the exceptional role of women in running the household is shown in 'the excessive importance that many women attribute to their prestige as a good housewife'. (9) Western feminists thus point to the implicitly more conservative Soviet view that woman's position in society is defined not just by her part in the economy, but by the social function of motherhood and female 'psychological characteristics', and that sexual equality should not be equated with sexual identity, which in the Soviet view is a western misconception. (10) Mary Buckley argues that 'despite the great candour of current Soviet theoretical writings on women, Soviet ideology reflects the needs and priorities of the Soviet state as defined by the male political leadership'. (11) Moreover, Joni Lovenduski claims that the time has long since past when historical explanations were valid for persisting inequalities between the sexes in the Soviet Union, and that 'the site of the discrepancy is without doubt the female domestic role'. (12)

It will be argued here, however, that Soviet views on women and the family, on sexual equality and complementarity, must be seen in the context of Russian history, that they cannot simply be dismissed as evidence of the failure of the Marxist analysis of the woman question, and that to focus on Soviet ideology, whether on economic determinism or

biological determinism, can provide only a partial analysis. The value of western feminist insights into the position of women in the Soviet Union is not denied. Rather, the focus here is on the specifically Russian situation of a recent, vital and overwhelmingly peasant past in which the Bolsheviks did not make history as they pleased. Not only were they influenced by Russia's radical tradition, they were too integrated into the Russian social context to be thoroughly westernized. The Bolshevik analysis of the woman question was thus not solely based on Marxism. It was also informed both by Russian radical thinking since the 1840s and by the peculiar development of Russian society which saw a symbiotic relationship between town and village, with the peasant tradition fundamentally shaping the growth of the working class. Moreover, since the late nineteenth century, urbanization, industrialization and the spread of mass education had taken place in a political context, and at a speed, very different from what happened in the west. A further contrast is that the Bolsheviks were deeply committed both to rapid modernization and to female equality, with the latter seen as not simply a consequence of the former, but as an integral part of the process of economic development.

It is nevertheless difficult not to agree with Buckley that economic and demographic factors, and not simply ideology,

lie behind such an intense involvement of women in the Soviet economy, and further, that the pursuit of economic growth has led to a playing down of the importance of sexual equality. (13) It will be argued here, however, that the stress on women's productive role, on women being socially useful, and on the need for paid employment to be independent and to promote personal growth, has deep roots in Russian thinking on the woman question, and in the expectations of women among the peasantry as well as among the intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. The Russian roots of Soviet Marxism, and not just the ideas of Marx, Engels and Bebel on the woman question, must be taken into account. In this sense, Soviet attitudes towards women and the family have evolved, and are not simply the products of the political, economic, demographic and ideological context since 1917. In addition, the vast changes which have taken place since 1917, and especially from the 1930s, should not be so simplistically contrasted with a backward and implicitly timeless peasant past. As this discussion will show, peasant society, particularly in the nineteenth century, had to adapt to economic, social and cultural developments, and indeed adapted so successfully that it retained its vitality not only into the twentieth century, but beyond the Bolshevik revolution. It is, therefore, the contention of this thesis that, while not providing the full explanation, a historical examination of the continuing

inequality between Soviet women and men is an important factor which cannot be lightly dismissed.

1:2 Outline of the discussion

Historians, western and Soviet alike, tend to assume that before 1917, Russian women, and above all the female peasantry, were without rights, completely at the mercy of patriarchal authority. Yet as discussed in chapter two, both nineteenth-century Russian observations and travellers' perceptions place caveats on this generalization, firstly by noting the gap between ideology and the actual situation of women, and secondly, by describing the active and central role of women in the family. It is paradoxical that the peasantry have for a long time dominated our conceptions of pre- and post-revolutionary Russia, being the focus of debates in both periods. Yet when viewed from the stance of the woman question, the Russian peasantry is reduced to an anachronistic patriarchal institution in which women were defenceless victims. Chapter two records the general customs surrounding marriage and the family which, even as they acknowledged differences throughout the Russian empire, foreign visitors believed reflected the peasantry as a whole. This view was reinforced by observations of the peasant commune, an institution which both fascinated and puzzled outsiders.

Despite all their prejudices and the impressionistic nature of their accounts, the travellers discussed in chapter two also serve to caution us that the peasant family and community were not timeless, unchanging institutions based on an ancient patriarchy. Rather, they were vital, living and developing. In a very real sense, as chapters two and three discuss, there was continuity within change. Peasant institutions were not static. Their structure and functions changed significantly over time and over different parts of Russia. Indeed, Aleksandrov's study of the peasantry under serfdom revealed eighteenth-century peasant village communities which held land collectively while farming it individually, with some redistributing the land periodically while others did not. (14) The peasant community may be romanticized as embodying a primitive equality or communism, while it may also be condemned as the epitome of patriarchy. These views are not incompatible if the equality is seen as between families, rather than individuals. While the radical writers discussed in chapter four addressed the woman question and the peasant problem in the nineteenth century, seeing individuality as crucial if society was to develop, they nevertheless placed that development firmly within the institution of the family. Moreover, whatever the hierarchies, for example of sex and age, the Russian peasant commune involved the experience of cooperation, a collective consciousness. In a sense, Alexandra Kollontai's much

idealized solidarity of the working class which will be discussed in chapter five, had its roots in the peasant tradition, rather than being born of the factory system as she seemed to assume.

Further, in his study of the peasantry under the Soviet regime, V.P. Danilov shows how the commune survived into the 1920s because it continued to serve customary peasant needs, and above all, because it protected the weak and the less well-off members. He believes, however, that in a developing society and economy, the commune was, in effect, about to give way, either to the capitalism of the New Economic Policy (NEP), or to socialism. Yet still, and contrary to his own interpretation, some of Danilov's material reveals that even after enforced mass collectivization, there were some elements of continuity between customary peasant systems of land use, and Soviet ones. Moreover, his painstaking detail, including local material, of pre-revolutionary peasantry - of family structure as well as land-holding and agricultural practice - underlines the dangers of generalizations about the peasantry before 1917, and of too stark a contrast between the pre- and post-revolutionary periods. (15) As chapter six will discuss, not only had the Bolsheviks no blueprint for the replacement of the traditional family, but that peasant tradition continued to influence day to day life in the

Soviet Union, and not only, though especially, in the countryside.

Thus, chapter two will attempt to describe the condition of women and family customs from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, by the use of foreign travellers' accounts. In observing the surface aspects of Russian life, in noting the novelty of the surroundings, the travellers, merchants, diplomats and foreigners in Russian service provided a picture of the Russians which the latter could not have done without stepping out of themselves and their culture. The features of Russian, and specifically peasant, life in this period which so amused, alarmed and baffled non-Russians would have been passed over by the Russians themselves as ordinary, normal and unworthy of note. Such sources are nevertheless also fraught with problems, not the least of which are the cultural prisms through which foreign visitors viewed Russia. Indeed, their accounts reveal as much about the writers themselves as about the country under review. They exhibit a general tendency to attribute contemporary western motives to all societies. Thus, in the travellers' tales, Russia appears as a vast, frozen, barbarous backwater, inhabited by drunken, rude, profoundly ignorant, superstitious and idolatrous people, inclined to cruelty, avarice and arbitrary violence, especially against women whose abject position is taken as the true reflection of the despotic

regime. (16)

Such accounts provide us with a vivid, even lurid, sense of alien customs and practices of everyday life in a different society and time. However, we must constantly be aware that the writers' own cultural background prevented them, for the most part, from penetrating beneath the superficial. Yet even at this level, they serve to puncture any idealization of peasant communism by presenting the hardships of peasant life and the hierarchies. At the same time, these accounts serve to highlight the vitality of peasant life, the tenacity of peasant values, even as both the travellers and Russian observers like M. Kovalevsky and L. Tikhomirov believed that the patriarchal family was falling apart by the late nineteenth century as individuals chafed against community controls.

Writers in the nineteenth century such as Kovalevsky, as well as H.S. Maine, J.J. Bachofen, E.H. Morgan, and J.H. McLennan, had placed the position of women on a historical basis, within social systems, rather than as the ineluctable fate of biology. In their various works, the family and the role of the sexes in the nineteenth century were viewed as the result of a long and difficult struggle away from nature to civilization. (17) In the case of Russia, Kovalevsky postulated a matriarchal stage in history, associating it

with a low state of morality. (18) Thus, women had had considerable independence before civilization developed, a status which disappeared as society moved onto the patriarchal household community. However, Russian studies of the nineteenth century also insisted that even under patriarchy, women had rights. (19) The husband's total authority was in practice balanced by customary law and the village tribunal. There is a need, therefore, to consider the gap between ideology and reality with respect to the position of women. Indeed, for S.S. Shashkov, it was the lip-service paid to patriarchal claims in the late nineteenth century that was degrading. (20)

In both Russian and foreign accounts, the peasant family and community were seen to interact at important moments in life, at birth, marriage and death. The extent of community control over its members can be seen in the ceremonies and customs surrounding such events. Life for the peasants had a fixed, though not unchanging, pattern, governed by innumerable traditions. Economic functions in peasant families were important. Marriage was an affair between families within the community, involving an economic settlement of family property and usually entailing the movement of a woman from one family to another, from her father's to her husband's family. A description of the courtship and marriage customs provides some clues to the peasant family's daily life. It also serves to underline the proposition that both the

family and the position of women are not only historical phenomena, but have to be seen within the specific context.

The travellers' observations show that marriage was not a matter of free choice by the partners. Yet it should not be assumed that it was simply imposed, since they also show that the interests of each peasant developed within the community. Women saw their future constructed not only around their reproductive functions, but around their wider role of providing continuity through future generations. Nor should women be regarded as mere pawns or merchandise in a property transaction, for the travellers' accounts reveal that they were active, if unequal, participants, and increasingly so as the nineteenth century progressed. The lot of a single person in Russia, of men as well as of women, was assumed to be economically unviable and socially deviant. Indeed, nineteenth-century observers agreed that in Russian peasant society, a man was considered incomplete without a wife, that the community regarded them as a working team. (21)

To regulate the flow of property and services, since labour too was involved, male control and female chastity were deemed essential. However crucial the woman's role, she was nevertheless subordinate. The family secured for its members economic protection and social status. Moreover, the villagers did not distinguish between the community and the

individual member. The mir was an ancient institution of local self-government and its authority was increased in the nineteenth century. Indeed, after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the village assembly was empowered to manage all internal affairs. Hence it is not surprising that it had become a symbol of peasant communism. In the late nineteenth century, D. Mackenzie Wallace, correspondent for the Times, noted that:

the Constitution of the Village Communes is of the English type - a body of unwritten traditional conceptions, which have grown up and modified themselves under the influence of ever changing practical necessity ... The Commune is, in fact, a living institution, whose spontaneous vitality enables it to dispense with the assistance and guidance of the written law, and its constitution is thoroughly democratic. (22)

He went on to note that flowing from this communal democracy, the peasants were accustomed to make concessions for the communal welfare, and even to 'bow unreservedly to the will of the mir'. (23) Members of the complex type of household always adhered to the strictest observance of male superiority. A report from a town elder described the household in the Orel province in the late 1890s thus:

The peasant family in our town consists of several

kinsmen, their wives and children, from fifteen to twenty persons in all, who live in the same house. The elder wields great authority over the family. He keeps the family in peace and order; all of its members are subordinate to him. He assigns the work to be done to each member, manages the farm and pays the taxes. After his death, his authority goes to his eldest son, and if none of his sons is of age, then to one of his brothers. If there are no men left of age in the family, the elder's widow assumes his duties... All the belongings [are considered] the common property of the family, except for women's clothes, linen and canvas... The elder's wife supervises the work of all the women folk; however, if she is not fit for the task, a younger woman may be selected for it. All the work is distributed among the men and women according to the strength and health of each. (24)

Women, therefore, held positions of influence and authority in the family, and in certain circumstances could become heads of households. They were not, however, thereby recognised as equal with men. (25) The peasant way of life contained inequality among its members based on patriarchal authority, which often included brutality against women and children. (26) Yet the foreigners seem scandalized less by the low esteem in which they believed Russian women were

held, than by the fact that peasant women worked alongside men in the fields. They regretted that the expectations of women in Russian peasant society precluded them from conforming to the western ideal of domesticity, femininity and fragility. They saw the Russian family, and specifically the peasant household, as despotism in miniature. They recorded that women of all ranks owed complete obedience to the male figure of authority, first to the father and then to the husband. It was a view borne out by Russian writings of the nineteenth century. Yet as we shall see, there were qualifications, for as the Russians pointed out, it was not an absolute, unlimited power. (27) Nevertheless, in Shashkov's view, however much the reality of women's subordinate position may have differed from the patriarchal notion of complete subjection, the ideal itself persisted, at least in an attenuated form. (28) It is therefore crucial to understand the vitality of peasant society, and that this vitality was not just a consequence of Russia's continuing backwardness, nor merely a part of a struggle for survival in a rapidly changing and insecure world. Rather, it was popularly valued as a proven structure. Indeed, while peasant women may have struggled against male tyranny by the end of the nineteenth century, they also saw the economic and political developments of that period as undermining their position. (29)

With the development of industry from the 1880s, peasant

women were increasingly expected to take on the responsibilities of the land in order to free men to go in search of paid work. Yet as chapter three will discuss, there was also the movement of peasant women into industry: by 1895, women constituted over a quarter of the industrial labour force in Russia, and forty per cent of the work force in the textile industry. By 1913, women were 30.7 per cent of the industrial labour force, and by the beginning of 1917, they made up 40.2 per cent. (30) The burden of Russian industrialization was recognised to fall especially heavily on women by the factory inspectors of the 1880s. Yet they did not seek to exclude women from industry. Rather, they sought to improve factory conditions so that women could both remain at their jobs and fulfil what was still seen as their primary natural and social function of maternity, and could meet their responsibility for the health of future generations of workers. (31)

The development of an industrial economy, notably from the 1890s, was expected to result in the break-up of the community, in the liberation of individuals from community restraints. The growth of industry brought increasing social diversification, including diversification between women. Non-agricultural occupations became increasingly important for the household economy. At the same time, as chapter three discusses, the conditions of urban factory life in Russia were generally not conducive to the setting up of

nuclear families. In practice, traditional community forms and ties were preserved, and peasant culture was carried over into the towns and factories. There was the tenacious hold of pre-industrial morality in a situation of lessening community controls. On the one hand, women's increasing participation in the labour force served to help change society, especially given the rapid pace of industrial development in Russia. On the other, their involvement was expected to conform to the traditional ideological basis of society. The early forms of factory organization sought to preserve family unity, in some cases with the family acting as a unit, in others, and more commonly, with migrating workers supporting the peasant household. Migration to the city thus did not automatically encourage the acquisition of 'modern' attitudes or the development of the nuclear family. The development of the Russian working class was not a process along western lines. Capitalist relations in industry developed before there were reforms in agriculture. There was no sharp division between village and factory, no clear break with the communal past which remained very much a part of the urban present. (32)

In general, male workers continued to see women above all in their traditional, 'natural' roles. (33) Yet here too there are qualifications, which shall be discussed in chapter three. The socialist women of the 1870s and the

Brusnev group of the late 1880s and early 1890s tried to organise women workers. The former had little success. (34) The latter made more headway, showing a deeper understanding of and sympathy for the women's position. The Brusnev circles, however, were smashed by the mid 1890s. (35) From their experience, it seemed that the key to the position of women was education. (36) The 1897 census revealed that only 9.8 per cent of peasant women were literate, compared to 25.2 per cent of men, and 21.3 per cent of female workers compared to 56.5 per cent of male workers. (37) The process of education, however, had to overcome not only tsarist repression, but also the women's suspicions, as well as the popular conception of them as the 'dark mass', reflected in the memoirs of the skilled worker Kanatchikov who seemed to view marriage and the family as not only sapping male workers' consciousness, but as entailing a loss of individuality, of personal identity for men. (38)

By 1914, women workers were themselves complaining about their situation and about the men's indifference to their specific needs. (39) The Bolsheviks turned their attention to working women as their numbers in industry increased dramatically in the early twentieth century and especially with war in 1914, as the feminists appeared to have made inroads into the female labour force since 1905, and as the strike movement revived in 1912. (40) There was never any

question of a separate women's movement, however. As in the 1870s, 1880s, and early 1890s, the issue was seen as one of how to integrate women into the labour movement as a whole, of how to overcome the divisions between male and female workers. (41) The Bolshevik position on the woman question was, therefore, not unusual. The stress on solidarity, on working for the good of the whole, and the denunciation of western bourgeois individualism as militating against the collective opposition to oppression and common fight for a new life, may be seen as part of the development of Russian thinking on the woman question in the nineteenth century which is discussed in chapter four. It was also reflected in the interdependence of members in peasant and working-class families, who had been imbued with a profound sense of family identity.

Revolutionaries were not unaware of the specific oppression of women. They opposed feminism, however, not simply because they saw it as a distraction from the 'big' issues of state power into a focus on reforms within a system which they believed corrupt. They also identified feminism with the western concept of individualism which they saw as a divisive force, setting a specific oppression against the general oppression. The Bolsheviks in particular aimed to widen the collective mentality so that women workers would be accepted by men as their equals in the class struggle, and

so that women would identify their individual and family interests with the interests of their class.

Nevertheless, the late nineteenth-century demands for women's rights which are discussed in chapter four involved a fundamental critique of not only the entire family structure and patriarchal tradition, but of Russian society as a whole. Women's rights were seen as a benefit to all, as a protection against arbitrary authority. Those who addressed the woman question were not simply seeking a Trojan horse for the transformation of society. Rather, they saw the position of women, marriage and the family as 'matrices' of mutual rights and obligations, based on moral, not economic, relationships, protecting and not submerging the individuality of each member of the household. In other words, change in the position of women and in the family, above all through the limitation if not the abolition of male authority, would prevent abuse of power and provide scope for the development of the individual family member, which in turn would secure social harmony. The woman question was thus viewed not as an issue of individual rights, but as an integral, and fundamental, part of the social question. Women's rights could only depend on the type of society in which they lived, on their position in that society, and on the values that dominated it. Reforms in an unreformed society, which feminism sought, were at the very least problematic.

The individual was not denied. Indeed, a major problem with tsarism was seen in the subjection of the individual to the despotic state. Yet even as the individual was asserted, there was to be integration within the community. At the same time, the negative features of the traditional community were seen in the subjection of women. Hence, from the 1840s, the woman question in Russia was not seen as a single, separate issue, but as an integral part of the whole question of the future society. (42)

Indeed, Russian feminists, like the Marxists, saw the need for women to be economically independent by means of socially useful work. They too thought of the liberation of women in terms of the broader social question. They too represented a challenge to tsarism, built as it was on patriarchal foundations. (43) They too looked to the urban woman as the New Woman. There was likewise an ambivalence in their views of working women. They saw working women as still dominated by patriarchal ideology. Yet they also believed, as did the Marxists, in the capacity of women workers to raise the general cultural level of society through the traditional female role of moral guardian. (44) Neither the feminists nor the Marxists tackled the idea of distinct sexual spheres or identities, though both championed sexual equality and called for a widening of the female sphere. For the Marxists, however, whatever women may have had in common in terms of sexual inequality, class interests divided women

irrevocably. That view was reinforced by the feminist support for war in 1914. (45)

Chapter five will discuss the ideas of the Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai who vigorously opposed the feminists. Yet her essential point that work and not emotion should be the focus of women's lives was not novel. Indeed, it may be seen within the context of the development of Russian thought on the woman question since the 1840s. Her stress on the New Woman's integration into the working class and on socially useful work reflected the continuing tension between the individual and the community highlighted by Herzen. Even as she insisted on the need for independence, she attacked what she perceived as the bourgeois stress on the ego as hypocritical. She herself conceived the New Woman as a distinctive human being who was conscious of herself as a social being, as a member of a community based on solidarity and trust. She saw the stress of urban life in a capitalist society as leading to alienation, and to a distorted desire to possess people and emotions, and not only material things. For Kollontai, there was not only strength in the collective, there was also the opportunity for true individualism in which the demands of the individual and the community were harmonized. Work for the collective would not only make woman independent of a male breadwinner, it would be a path towards discovering her true self.

It will be argued, however, that Kollontai's writings on the New Woman and the new morality seem to have been irrelevant to the Russia of her time. The vast majority of the population remained peasant, even after the Bolshevik revolution when she herself acknowledged the heavy burden of past customs which she saw as combining with the economic backwardness and the stresses of civil war against sexual equality. (46) Kollontai's essential contribution lay in her stress on the need to work out the new morality as an integral part of the revolutionary process. (47) She showed that morality played a vital part in reinforcing the status quo, even as she failed to address the dominant morality in Russia.

Thus, as Russian thought on the woman question developed in the nineteenth century, tensions arose between the influence of western ideas and the peculiarities of the Russian situation. Liberals and revolutionaries, feminists and Marxists disputed the parameters of the woman question in Russia. Yet they were fundamentally in agreement. The common denominator was the economic analysis, that sexual equality would spring from the absorption of women into the labour force. Economic independence, however, was never set against the integrity of the family. Nor was it expected to undermine women's traditional role within the family. If anything, they would be strengthened by women's work outside the home. The Bolsheviks foresaw a greater role for the

state in providing services that would allow the woman to participate fully in the world outside the household. The maternal role remained unquestioned. Indeed, it was highly valued - more so, Kollontai claimed than under capitalism.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Socialism would ensure the necessary security, instilling confidence in women in the positive contribution they would make to society through their reproductive function.

In one sense, it seems curious that the nineteenth-century faith in science and reason did not include their application to family planning. Abortion was reluctantly accepted as a fact of life in 1918, but one that was assumed to be temporary. The practice was expected to decline as the economic and social forces progressed to allow women to exercise to the full their potential as workers and as mothers. Given the current low birth rate in the Soviet Union, that hope now appears naive. Yet it was a product of the Russian approach to the family and the position of women which focused on the collective. At the same time, it was not merely a case of biology determining women's position. Rather, we have to confront the popular perception of women's childbearing potential, which was positive and optimistic, reflected in the peasant hopes for large families which the foreign travellers recorded. It was also reflected in the works of Alexandra Kollontai, who held out the vision of socialism abolishing the

disadvantages of birth. Such an optimistic view cannot be reduced to the state's need for a large labour force, though it is of course a factor to be considered. It must also be seen as a belief in developing the full potential of women. In addition, it shows that the Bolsheviks did not narrow their analysis of the position of women to the economic aspect. They did not assume that wage labour made women complete human beings, though they insisted on its necessity for the full development of her personality and for equality with men. Moreover, Bolshevik plans for the socialization of housework and childcare were not intended to destroy the family. They were instead a recognition that there could no longer be a simple division between man as wage labourer and woman as housewife, and no strict separation of home from work, or between family and society.

As will be discussed in chapter six, the Bolsheviks had no blueprint for the solution of the woman question after 1917. Nor did they simply manipulate it to strengthen their regime. They were faced with the breaking down of traditional sexual relations under the pressure of civil war. At the same time, the war served to reinforce the stress on the collective, even as women were encouraged to participate in the struggle in order to defend the gains they had made as women through the revolution. (49) Moreover, the context of the 'sexual revolution' of the post-revolutionary period ensured the

continuation of traditional family relations. Yet given the vast economic and social changes discussed in chapter six, there could be no complete return to peasant patriarchalism in family relations. The five-year plans drew women into the labour force in their millions, while their educational and occupational skills increased. Trotsky, followed by many western historians, saw the situation under Stalin as one of total regression in the family. Yet there were changes, or at least modifications, even under Stalin. Since then, and especially since the 1960s, there has been renewed discussion of the limitations placed on women by their role in the family. (50) Moreover, this discussion has returned to the issue of the individual, with the recognition that economic and social development has resulted in a restructuring and individualization of the woman's personality.

There is indeed continuity in sex roles and in the strength of the family between the pre- and post-revolutionary periods which reveals the essential limitation of the political analysis that saw women's subordinate position as stemming from economic dependence above all. Moreover, even as the solution to this persistent inequality is seen in a change in popular conceptions of women and the family, a sexual division of labour is still accepted as natural, based on the woman's maternal function. The vast majority of women have a conception of self that involves gender as a basic

determinant of their lives and of the stability of the family. (51) The family has remained the key institution for integrating individuals into society, and women the primary agents of socialization. A belief in the complementarity of the sexes seems to have become integral not only to the imagery of culture, but to the structure of society itself. Moreover, it has persisted because Russia industrialised not so much from a peasant base, but as a peasant society. Kollontai's New Woman was shaped by the traditions of peasant communism and influenced by the development of Russian ideas on the woman question from the 1840s, and not simply moulded by the ideological imperatives and economic and demographic needs of the Soviet state. While feminism in the west was identified with the rights of the individual woman, the woman question in Russia was always viewed within a social and cultural ideal that stressed the community.

Nevertheless, the sexual division of labour identified by western feminists as evidence both of the failure of Soviet ideology and of the lower level of Soviet women's consciousness, is considerably modified. The present Soviet discussion tackles the issues of the continuing discrimination against women at work, in the form of the unequal burden of domestic labour, which is seen as hindering the development of the female personality, even as it favours men. Genia Browning insists that the question

of gender remains in the context of extending women's roles rather than radically changing men's. (52) Moreover, the debate on sexual characteristics is linked to the concern over the low birth rate in the European republics. Yet the efforts to improve it are not simply constrained by the dependence of the economy of female labour. In practice, natality policy amounts to social and welfare measures aimed to lighten the burden of employed mothers. Also in practice, other policies, such as the continuing availability of abortion and easier access to divorce, work against that policy, as well as the inadequate child-care facilities. (53) Further, not only does sexual equality remain an integral part of Soviet ideology, it is now recognised that economic development has itself resulted in a declining birth rate as women have come to see their personal growth as not solely dependent on, though still including, the family.

Thus, the historical context of the current debate must be taken into account, while the ideas on femininity and masculinity are not nostalgic in the sense of returning to some past ideal as the discussion in chapter two will show. Rather, it is nostalgic in the sense of wishing to return to the apparent clarity of former sex roles. Clearly, however, as chapter six will show, the situation has changed. In particular, Soviet women are themselves playing an active part in the debate.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. R. Aminova, The October Revolution and Women's Liberation in Uzbekistan (Moscow, 1977), p.9.
2. See for example, B. Holland (ed.), Soviet Sisterhood British Feminists on Women in the USSR (London, 1985), p.60; M. McAndrew, J. Peers, The New Soviet Woman - Model or Myth? (London, 1981), p.21.
3. See for example, G. Browning, Women and Politics in the USSR (Sussex, 1987), pp.8-9; S. Bridger, Women in the Soviet Countryside (Cambridge, 1987), pp.223-225; McAndrew, Peers, op.cit., p.21.
4. McAndrew, Peers, op.cit., p.20; J. Lovenduski, "USSR", in The Politics of the Second Electorate Women and Public Participation, edited by J. Lovenduski, J. Hills (London, 1981), p.282.
5. Lovenduski, ibid., pp.296-297.
6. Mary Buckley (ed.), Soviet Social Scientists Talking (London, 1986).
7. Z.A. Yankova, Gorodskaya sem'ya (Moscow, 1979), pp.60-62.

8. L. Pavlukhina in Current Digest of the Soviet Press (CDSP), 1978, vol.XXX, 42, p.6.
9. Buckley, Soviet Social Scientists Talking, p.9; L. Gordon, E. Klopov, Man at Work (Moscow, 1975), pp.74-75.
10. For the Soviet view, see Buckley, ibid.; Z.A. Yankova, Sovetskaya zhenshchina (Moscow, 1978), p.123; I.E.A. Kotlyar, S. IA. Turchaninova, Zanyatost' zhenshchin v proizvodstve (Moscow, 1975), p.6. For a discussion of these views, see M. Buckley, "Soviet Interpretations of the Woman Question", in B. Holland (ed.), op.cit., pp.24-53.
11. Buckley, "Soviet Interpretations of the Woman Question", pp.25, 50.
12. Lovenduski, op.cit., p.296.
13. M. Buckley, "Women in the Soviet Union", Feminist Review, Summer 1981, 8, pp.79-106:80-85.
14. V.A. Aleksandrov, Sel'skaya obshchina v Rossii (XVII-nachalo XIX v.) (Moscow, 1976).
15. V.P. Danilov, Rural Russia under the New Regime, translated and introduced by O. Figes (London, 1988).

16. See for example, R.H. Major (ed.), Notes upon Russia (Haklyut Society, London, 1851), vol.1, p.clv; L.E. Berry, R.O. Crummey, Rude and Barbarous Kingdom (London, 1983), p.83.
17. H.S. Maine, Village Communities in East and West (London, 1881); J.J. Bachofen, Myth, Religion and Mother Right (1861: London, 1967); L.H. Morgan, Ancient Society (New York, 1877); J.F. McLennan, Primitive Marriage (Edinburgh, 1865); M. Kovalevsky, Modern Customs and Ancient Laws of Russia (London, 1891).
18. Kovalevsky, ibid., p.13.
19. See P.G. Mizhuev, Zhenskiy vopros i zhenskoe dvizhenie (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp.61-62; S.S. Shashkov, Sobranie sochineniy (St. Petersburg, 1898), vol.1, p.846; Ya. A. Kantorovich, Zhenshchina v prave (St. Petersburg, 1896); M. Zebrikoff, "Russia", in The Woman Question in Europe (New York, 1884), edited by T. Stanton, pp.396-397; V.O. Klyuchevsky, A History of Russia (New York, 1960), pp.48-49.
20. S.S. Shashkov, Ocherk istorii russkoy zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1872), pp.121-123.
21. See A. Leroy-Beaulieu, The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians (London, 1902), p.495; M.N. Kovalevsky, Tableau

des Origines et de l'Evolution de la Famille et de la Propriété (Stockholm, 1890), p.142; L. Tikhomirov, Russia, Political and Social (London, 1881), vol.1, p.119; Baron von Haxthausen, The Russian Empire (London, 1856), vol.1, p.44.

22. D. Mackenzie Wallace, Russia on the Eve of War and Revolution, edited and abridged from the 1912 edition by C.E. Black (New York, 1961), p.276. Norman Levine has described the mir in similar terms: 'The mir was an ancient Russian rural community. An institution of local self-government, the mir practised communal ownership of agrarian property. Communal officials had jurisdiction over local forests, hunting grounds and vacant lands. In the nineteenth century, the authority of the mir was enlarged. In 1838, it was given the power to redistribute arable land so that a direct relation could be established between the size of a household and the amount of land that it possessed. After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, primitive democracy was established and a village assembly was empowered to manage all internal affairs. Consequently, the mir was a symbol of primitive village communism. Communal landholding promoted a sense of equality and mutual aid within the community, and the decisions of the mir possessed indisputable authority.' Thus, however ancient

the practice and primitive the democracy, the mir was a living institution. See N. Levine, "Dialectical Materialism and the Mir" in Marx: Sociology/ Social Change/ Capitalism, edited by D. McQuarie (London, 1978), p.162.

23. Mackenzie Wallace, op.cit., p.185.
24. M.N. Kovalevsky, Rodovoi byt (St. Petersburg, 1905), 1, 32-33, in G. Vernadsky, A History of Russia, vol.2, Kievan Russia (London, 1973), p.133.
25. According to Mackenzie Wallace, in the northern provinces, where a considerable proportion of the male population was absent, working away from the villages, the village assembly generally included a good many women as heads of household. As such, they had the unquestioned right to be part of the assembly, and to participate in its deliberations. He noted, however, that they rarely spoke on matters of the general welfare of the commune. Rather, they concentrated on the affairs of their own household. He further noted that if a woman spoke, she exposed herself to uncomplimentary remarks, but 'any which she happens to receive she is pretty sure to repay with interest'. Mackenzie Wallace, op.cit., pp.278-279.

26. See for example, Stepniak, The Russian Peasantry (London, 1905), p.155.
27. See Kantorovich, op.cit., pp.50-59; V. Shul'gin, O sostoyanii zhenshchin v Rossii do Petra Velikago (Kiev 1850), pp.4-67; E.N. Shchepkina, Iz istorii zhenskoi lichnosti v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1914), pp.17-27.
28. Shashkov, Ocherk istorii russkoy zhenshchiny, pp,121-123. See also Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.1, p.187.
29. V. Bilshai, Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR (Moscow, 1956), p.65.
30. A.G. Rashin, Formirovanie rabocheho klassa v Rossii istoriko-ekonomicheskie ocherki (Moscow, 1958), pp.214-217; A. Ryazanova, Zhenskiy trud (Moscow, 1923), pp.33,68.
31. See for example, I.I. Yanzhul, Ocherki i issledovaniya (Moscow, 1884), pp.381-393.
32. See for example, M.N. Nechkina (ed.), Iz istorii rabocheho klassa i revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya (Moscow, 1958), p.282; I.I. Yanzhul, Fabrichnyi byt moskovskoy gubernii (Moscow, 1966), p.155.
33. See for example P.K. Kudelli (ed.), Rabotnitsa v 1905g v S.-Peterburge (Leningrad, 1926), p.14.

34. See S.O. Tsederbaum, Zhenshchina v russkom revolyutsionnom dvizhenii 1870-1905 (Leningrad, 1927), pp.22-24.
35. ibid., pp.167-168.
36. See V.I. Nevsky, Ocherki po istorii rossiyskoy kommunisticheskoy partii (Leningrad, 1925), vol.1, pp.276-278; R.A. Kazakevich, Sotsial-demokraticheskie organizatsii Peterburga kontsa 80s-nachala 90s. godov (Leningrad, 1960), pp.144-148; Tsederbaum, op.cit., pp.154-160; V. Karelina, "Vospominanii", Krasnaya letopis', 1922, no.4, pp.12-13; S.I. Muralova, "Iz proshlogo", in Na zare rabochego dvizheniya v Moskve (Moscow, 1923), edited by S.I. Mitskevich, p.155.
37. Rashin, Formirovanie rabochego klassa v Rossii, p.593.
See also A.G. Rashin, Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (Moscow, 1956), p.283.
38. S. Kanatchikov, Iz istorii moego bytiya (Moscow, 1926), pp.78-96.
39. Rabotnitsa, 1914, no.6, p.13.
40. Rashin, Formirovanie rabochego klassa v Rossii, p.43.

41. See A.F. Bessanova (ed.), "K istorii izdaniya zhurnala Rabotnitsa", Istoricheskiy arkhiv , July-August 1955, no.4, pp.25-54: 3-12.
42. See for example, M. Lyadov, "Koe-chno o zhenshchine rabotnitse", Literatura Moskovskogo Rabocheho Soyuza (Moscow, 1930), pp.163-170.
43. See M.V. Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, Zhenskoe dvizhenie v Rossii i zagranitsey (St. Petersburg, 1902), p.139; N.V. Shelgunov, Sochineniya (St. Petersburg, 1904), vol.2, pp.217-266. For a fuller discussion of Russian feminism, see L.H. Edmondson, Feminism in Russia 1900-1917 (London, 1984).
44. Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, op.cit., pp.165-166.
45. Bessanova, op.cit., pp.31-38; Bilshai, op.cit., pp.83-97.
46. A.M. Kollontai, Za tri goda (Moscow, 1920), p.6.
47. A.M. Kollontai, Novaya moral' i rabochiy klass (Moscow, 1918), p.60.
48. A.M. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo (Moscow, 1918).

49. See A.G. Kharchev, Brak i sem'ya v SSSR (London, 1964), p.140. See also A.M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsy, krest'yanki i krasniy front (Moscow, 1920).
50. See for example, V. Mikha⁴lyuk, Ispol'zovanie zhenskogo truda v narodnom khoz⁴ystve (Moscow, 1970), p.72; Kotliar, Turchaninova, op.cit., p.8.
51. See for example, V.N. Tolkunova, Trud zhenshchin (Moscow, 1973), pp.102-103; Mikha⁴lyuk, op.cit., p.82; Kotliar, Turchaninova, op.cit., p.6; D.I. Valentei (ed.), Zhenshchiny na rabote i doma (Moscow, 1978), p.63; L. Kuznetsova, Zhenshchina na rabote i doma (Moscow, 1980), pp.190-191.
52. Browning, op.cit., p.108.
53. See A.A. Abramova, Okhrana truda zhenshchin. Spravochnik po zakonodatel'stvu (Moscow, 1978), pp.81-94; E.K. Vasil'yeva, Obraz zhizni gorodskoy sem'i (Moscow, 1981), p.37.

Chapter 2

Women and the family in Russia to the nineteenth century: a view from the outside

2.1 Travellers' tales as source material

This chapter is an attempt to describe the condition of women in Russia and their place in the family, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, through the use of travellers' tales. Its main sources are the observations of foreign, particularly British, contemporaries. The problems of bias and of insufficient and superficial knowledge have already been noted. ⁽¹⁾ However, it is also held that such observations can be a rich source since outsiders will note what natives take for granted, especially where literacy was reserved for the very few who, being generally from the upper class, would also be alien to the harsh life of the majority of Russians. In addition, travel accounts are useful given the conditions of censorship, notably under Nicholas 1. ⁽²⁾ It must, of course, be remembered that the description of Russian morality and the position of women presented by travellers was influenced as much by their beliefs and prejudices as by the conditions they observed. Thus, great care must be taken with such sources. Foreign writers either did not enquire into, or could not understand, the bases of Russian morality. Moreover, the British picture of Russia

remained constant, and failed to keep pace with the vast changes which occurred in this period, which will be discussed in chapter three. In effect, the British had basically the same ideas and prejudices in the nineteenth as in the sixteenth century; these proved extraordinarily tenacious and were only very gradually modified. The Russian historian, Klyuchevsky, pointed out that it was largely from ignorance of the Russian language that most foreign descriptions of Russia suffered. (3) Certainly, the more discerning of the observers were themselves aware of such deficiencies. (4) Nevertheless, almost without exception, and often with ill-concealed delight, foreigners stressed the 'uncivilized' aspects of Russian life; the general abuse, particularly physical, of women; the superstitious and idolatrous nature of Orthodoxy; the bestiality and endemic drunkenness. Yet Klyuchevsky maintained that foreign interest in Russia was not simply a curiosity about a barbarous and unfamiliar land: a higher interest could be detected behind their observations. A few at least gave less coloured and more thorough accounts which penetrated beneath the apparently Asiatic form of Russian society, and saw aspects of similarity with the origins of western Europe. He admitted that this realisation was often a disagreeable surprise to them; but he also accepted the travellers' accounts as a useful source from which to draw a description of the Muscovite state. (5)

2.2. Russian Studies

Foreign observations serve, at least, to illuminate the past, especially if they are measured against native studies of Russian life. V.O. Klyuchevsky and later Maxime Kovalevsky both traced the development of marriage in Russia - from marriage by capture, to marriage by sale of the bride to the bridegroom by her kin, to marriage by dowry brought by the bride to the groom - from the Russian Primary Chronicle. (6) Indeed, in Kovalevsky's view, 'the comparative immorality of the Russian peasants has no other cause than the survival amongst them of numerous vestiges of the early forms of marriage'. (7) Moreover, he accepted the existence of an early matriarchate among the Russians, asserting that 'in a low state of morality' communal marriage between near relations and endogamy went hand in hand with a considerable degree of independence among women. (8) This relative freedom disappeared in the next stage of evolution of society, which Kovalevsky held to be the patriarchal household community. (9) His general account of the latter is borne out by the travellers' descriptions. It is a community characterised by:

the complete subjection of the wife to the husband, and of the children to the father; community of goods and the common enjoyment of their produce by the relatives living under the same roof; the acknowledged superiority of old age and of direct descent from the common

ancestor; the total absence of testamentary dispositions of property, and even of that mode of legal succession which supposes partition and the exclusion of the more remote by the nearer kin; the elimination of women from participation in the family estate because marriage makes them aliens ... (10)

The Soviet scholar of the peasant commune under serfdom, V.A. Aleksandrov, observed that serfs, and state peasants, spent their lives in the isolation of their villages. There was an environment populated almost entirely by other peasants. In a very real sense, the village was a world apart from the rest of Russia. Peasant lives revolved around the commune, 'the organizational basis of all village life'. (11)

Aleksandrov has perceptively noted the dualism of the obshchina, which was both an instrument of estate management, and an instrument for the defence and preservation of peasant interests, and he argues that the peasants also had a dualistic attitude towards the land, looking upon it as both communal and private, although he claims that there was a gradual evolution from the former to the latter. (12) Since serfs worked for their own subsistence, landowners had a strong interest in the cohesion of peasant families and hence their economic viability. Aleksandrov asserts that the norm was for the landlord to set certain standards or regulations for the marriage of his serfs. Thus, for example, it was a common requirement that female serfs marry by the age of

seventeen, and males by the age of twenty. Yet he points to evidence that many peasants paid fines rather than marry off their teenage daughters who were valuable contributors to the household labour force. (13) This may be interpreted as a measure of peasant resistance to the interference of landlords, although Aleksandrov also records that pressure from the landlords sometimes forced the village communities to take marital affairs into their own hands, and arrange marriages by lot, a method that was apparently used particularly in the case of widows and widowers. (14) Bervi-Flerovsky, however, wrote in the nineteenth century that a peasant girl might make herself useful in every way in her parental household, in order to avoid marriage. (15)

Aleksandrov has recorded that in law, the power of the landowners over their serfs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was unlimited. Writing in the late eighteenth century, the Russian traveller, A.N. Radishchev, portrayed serfdom as morally debasing because female peasants were at the mercy of their landowners. (16) In the nineteenth century, Bervi-Flerovsky noted that before Emancipation, peasant women were under the complete control of the landowner who could force his attentions on them, and who could compel them into marriage to increase his 'stock' of serfs. (17) Yet it also appears that some masters forced reluctant male youths to marry against their will. S.T. Aksakov wrote that his grandfather rewarded an ugly servant woman by marrying her to a

a man ten years younger than her who 'turned cold with horror' when introduced to his bride. (18) There is, however, a scarcity of evidence, and besides the fact that there was a high ratio of serfs to owners, as well as the impression of village isolation, Aleksandrov's study has shown how much the reality of rural Russia differed from a simple 'rule from above', and that in practice, the omnipotent serf-owner could seldom impose demands without some kind of negotiation, of compromise, with the commune. Patterns of communal authority varied, yet the communes displayed a fundamental similarity, playing a major role in peasant life which did not decline, but rather continued until the early 1930s. (19) At the same time, collective life did not necessarily signify equality among peasants. Although Kovalevsky thought that the foreigners greatly exaggerated in their descriptions of Russian society, believing them to be both prejudiced and misinformed, he agreed with them that the despotism of the tsarist government was 'far from beneficial to the moral character of the people'. (20) With the increasing centralization of the state from the sixteenth century, and of the arbitrary power and violence of the autocracy, went an increase in social violence, which Kovalevsky saw mirrored in the punishments within the family, and in the increasing restrictions on upper-class women. (21) The Russian exile, Ivan Golovine, described the pervasive and pernicious effects of despotism on the morality of his people in the 1840s:

The Emperor abuses his courtiers, and they revenge themselves on their subordinates, who not finding words sufficiently energetic, raise their hands against those who, in their turn, finding the hand too light, arm themselves with a stick, which further on is replaced by a whip. The peasant is beaten by everybody; by his master, when he condescends so far to demean himself; by the steward and starosta, by the first passer-by, if he be not a peasant. The poor fellow on his part has no means to indemnify himself, except on his wife or his horse; and accordingly, most women in Russia are beaten, and it excites one's pity to see how the horses are used. (22)

Russian observers noted specifically that sexual hierarchy was integral to peasant society, and was reflected in the brutal habits of male serfs towards their wives. Thus, Bervi-Flerovsky claimed that peasant husbands beat their wives, and that if a man wanted to marry another woman, he might drive his original wife to her death through systematic tyranny. (23) However, Kovalevsky's study of Russian customs and laws recorded that, at least up to the mid eighteenth century, Russian clergy would dissolve marriage for 'incompatibility of temper', while he asserted that peasants recognised separation by mutual consent. (24) Kovalevsky observed that, by the nineteenth century, divorce was no longer only for the husband's benefit, and that what was regarded as wrong for the

woman (such as adultery) was also considered wrong for the man. (25) Bervi-Flerovsky remarked that peasant women were not keen to marry quickly, particularly since a peasant's wife had a heavy workload, and it was she who bore responsibility for feeding her children, while it was common for husbands to squander money on alcohol. (26) Despite his reservations about the foreigners' lurid tales of Russian society, Kovalevsky accepted the connection they saw between despotism and drunkenness:

Ignorant, vain, and indolent as they were, the Muscovites could find no enjoyment but in drunkenness and gross immorality. The pleasure one derives from conversation or from the society of well-educated women, was out of the question for a people who were afraid to express their individual opinions, and who confined their women in a sort of private prison called the terem. All foreigners agree that spirits were used in Muscovy to a great extent, indiscriminately by men, women, and children. (27)

Writing in the mid nineteenth century, the Russian emigre Golovine agreed that drunkenness in Russia was so prevalent because of the dire poverty, the despair, the lack of security for person or property, and the uncertainty of the future. Above all, it was caused by the lack of education. Under the prevailing system of political despotism, Golovine held that

the morals of his people were as low as their circumstances. (28)

Russian folk tales and songs often centred on the need to subjugate lazy or ungrateful wives. (29) The Soviet scholar Sokolov, however, has pointed out that many of the peasant songs were created by women, and devoted to describing the heavy lot of the daughter-in-law, of the misfortunes and unhappiness of marriage under the compulsory choice of bridegroom, of the domination of the husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law, of the machinations of the taunting sisters-in-law. (30) One of the laments sung at the bridal party, on the day before the wedding, painted a disconsolate picture of life of the young married woman in the strange house of her husband's family, warning the bride not to expect:

That your father-in-law will wake you up gently,
 That your mother-in-law will give orders nicely.
 They will howl at you like wild beasts
 And they will hiss at you like snakes. (31)

Her future, as told in the songs, appeared forbidding. According to Tikhomirov, writing in the late nineteenth century, Russian songs were full of complaints against the common fate of servitude suffered by women.

Who is going to bring the water? The daughter-in-law.

Who is going to be beaten? The daughter-in-law.

Why is she beaten? Because she is the daughter-in-law. (32)

Sokolov, however, urges caution in interpreting such lamentations, since tradition demanded the bride weep bitterly at the beginning of the wedding, and in addition, the weeping chants demonstrated the bride's respect and love for the family she was leaving behind. (33) Traditional lyrics featured prominently in peasant life, for a large part was played by evening gatherings and spinning bees, when all the female members of a large undivided household, or the women from several homes of neighbours or relatives, met and worked together through the long, busy autumn and winter evenings, giving vent to their feelings in song. (34) Indeed, the songs continued to have relevance even after Emancipation, when it had been assumed that marriage would be by choice but when in practice, and among poor peasants in particular, marriage was still often for economic reasons. (35)

Yet the Russian studies insist that women did have rights. True, the wife's duty was of unlimited obedience to her husband. Kovalevsky pointed out, however, that Russian law was a long way ahead of the customs of the time from the reforms of Peter the Great which gave women the right to defend themselves in law against their husbands. Russian women held both property and inheritance rights, though not

by any means on an equal basis with men. Nor did marriage change these rights. Marie Zebrikoff wrote, in 1884, that the Russian woman controlled her own fortune and, by virtue of being a property-owner, could participate in local elections, although she had to have a male friend or relative place the vote for her. (36) In addition, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Russian women won the right to higher education, though this was a reform which in practice touched only a small minority, given the widespread illiteracy, especially among women.

Nevertheless, as the Russian scholars recognised, the woman was still very dependent. She owed complete obedience to her parents, and once married, to her husband. Even in the reforming period of the 1860s, Russian law insisted that the woman owed her husband unlimited obedience in his position as 'ruler of the household'. On marriage, the wife's name was inscribed on her husband's passport. She could not legally leave him to visit another town without a pass from him. The Russian husband, in fact, had the power to require his wife to live with him. (37) In Kovalevsky's opinion, the rights and duties of a Russian wife could be reconciled only if the word 'unlimited' was not taken literally. (38) True, he acknowledged that, while according to Russian customary law, there were reciprocal rights and duties of husband and wife, nevertheless the husband was held to be master of the wife who in turn was seen as completely subordinate to him. This

was reflected in symbolical acts during the wedding ceremony, which the foreign observers also noted, such as the husband's holding of a whip over the wife, the wife having to pull off his boots, as well as the husband's right to chastise his wife. However, Kovalevsky pointed out that if the husband's punishment of his wife was too severe, he would be condemned by the village tribunal; and further, that customary law protected the wife's property. (39) Indeed, Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu asserted that, while juridically Russian women had no claim whatever to land, in practice, they had about as great a share of it as the men, since a lot was given to each couple, so that, in his view, it was the women in Russia who really held the key to landed property: hence marriage was so important there, and a man was not considered complete unless he married. Still, he accepted that the subordinate condition of women was 'the ugly side of popular life in Russia'. (40) In his famous journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow in the 1780s, Radishchev had discerned a noble dignity among the serfs, and claimed that the village women were innocent of hypocrisy, whereas the upper class, both men and women, set an example of debauchery and despotism. However, as S.S. Shashkov pointed out in the late nineteenth century, although the patriarchal ideal of the male elder's despotism in the family, a supremacy which Shashkov saw as based on fear, could not in reality be the foundation for lasting family relations, nevertheless, the lip-service paid to patriarchal claims led to the hypocrisy of superficial servility, which

itself was degrading. (41)

Like the foreign observers, the historian Klyuchevsky noted that marriage, accompanied by a dowry, was peculiarly important in Russia; but he stressed the rights of the woman rather than focusing, as did the travellers, on the picturesque ceremonies which emphasised female submission:

In fact, the dowry served as the first basis of the separate property of the wife, while its institution also brought about a juridical defining of the position of the daughter-in-law in the family, as well as of her legal rights with regard to family property. (42)

In agreement with the travellers' accounts, however, Klyuchevsky observed that the lot of women in Russia was often a harsh one, including the complete power exercised by parents over their children, the indecency of the marriage rite, and the violence used against women. (43) Yet Kovalevsky cautioned that the Russian woman was no more a slave to her husband than the western woman to hers, however much it may appear so from a foreign point of view. For him, the proof lay precisely in the Russian woman's legal position regarding property, in the fact that she had rights which the husband could not prejudice. (44) He made the point that, in a society such as Russia in which the interests of the family constantly prevailed over those of the individual, there was no room for marriages

controlled by the mutual consent of the young people. He felt that solidarity inevitably flowed from living and working together in a common cause, in a way inexorably prescribed by the seasons and scrupulously maintained by custom. (45)

Moreover, Kovalevsky insisted that the elder in the household was really only the first among equals, who included all the adult members in the family and whose advice he must seek - of the women as well as of the men. True, female opinions were considered of less importance, but Kovalevsky maintained that they could not be disregarded, and that since the property of the household was held in common, the members perforce relied on each other. (46) Kovalevsky pointed to the depiction of the Russian peasantry in Turgenev's novels which portrayed 'a people who, though rude and rough, yet enjoy the great blessing of being unconscious of the need of securing their individual happiness by a constant struggle and the pursuit of selfish ends'. (47)

Both Klyuchevsky and Kovalevsky noted that the Orthodox Church had had to struggle continuously to persuade the peasantry that marriage was above all a religious act. Indeed, Kovalevsky claimed that the prevailing opinion among the Russian peasantry even in the nineteenth century was that marriage was a civil contract, sanctioned as soon as the couple were publicly joined together in the presence of the community, so that a religious ceremony was superfluous. (48) The Soviet writer Sokolov recorded that the peasants did not

consider the rite of the church wedding as sufficient acknowledgment of marriage, for which it was necessary to observe, in some degree or other, the popular wedding ceremony. Indeed, he observed a special form of wedding in the north of Russia - wedding by the 'fiction' of elopement, or abduction, which was agreed by poor peasant parties in order to avoid the great expenses customarily required by wedding festivities. (49) Sokolov also noted that, even at the end of the nineteenth century, peasant customs retained many superstitions: for example, hostile spirits were got rid of by covering the head of the bride, surrounding the bridegroom or the couple by a wedding procession, and by the couple abstaining from the sexual act on the first night. Other ceremonies were connected with fertility: throwing grain or hops at the bride, deliberate profanity, erotic lyrics, a fur coat turned outward (also a symbol of wealth), and touching the bride with a stick or lash. (50) There were also deeply rooted fears of female pollution. (51)

In contrast to the foreign observers, Tikhomirov gave a very favourable picture of the Russian village community in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, he claimed that the peasants accorded to women many more rights than the state law granted them. (52) He pointed out that, if the fathers of families left the village for work, their wives were often heads of households, so that at times, the whole village assembly consisted of women. (53) He claimed that according to peasant

thinking, if the woman was independent - that is, if she was not under the submission to a father or a husband - she had the same rights as a man, whereas 'the state law, on the contrary, accords almost as few women's rights as the other European legislatures'. (54) Tikhomirov pointed out that the property of the family did not belong to the patriarch; it was collective. (55) He admitted that what the travellers saw as 'coarseness of manners' reflected contempt for all human rights and dignity, and was widespread among the Russians, as was corporal punishment, particularly of women. In his view, the great or extended family acted as a brake on the moral development of the Russian people, was a veritable school of slavery, and 'an obstacle of no less importance than serfdom'. (56) He further agreed with the travellers that the despotic authority of the male elder in the family fell most heavily on the women. He painted a similar picture to that of the travellers' accounts, of the new young wife entering a house of hostile strangers in which she was burdened with ceaseless toil. However, he noted that in the late nineteenth century, though the husband could do nothing, he now saw the injustices suffered by his wife and sympathised with her. Moreover, the Russian songs by this time were not only full of touching complaints against this state of female subservience, but often pictured 'the implacable revolts of the women for the reconquest of their rights, now trodden underfoot'. (57) Tikhomirov claimed that, at the time of writing (the 1880s), village women were rebelling against the despotism of their

husbands :

Everywhere they are beginning to make the fruits of their labour (spinning and so forth) their own personal property. Often again, the women demand plots of land for themselves; sometimes they get them ... It is not uninteresting to notice that celibacy, with a view to keeping their independence, is not uncommon among the peasant women. (58)

Indeed, Tikhomirov saw such change, in the form of a moral revolution, as having been going on among the Russian peasantry since the end of the seventeenth century. Within the upper class, there was the development of education and of European influence; within the peasantry, there was the schism in the Church, in which women played a prominent part. (59) Thus, in Tikhomirov's view, by the late nineteenth century, the traditional extended family was disappearing, and in this process of undermining custom the wife played a very significant role:

Her instinct of independence can no longer adapt itself to the old fetters. Our village tribunals receive numbers of complaints from the women against the oppression of their husbands and of the older members of the family. When complaints and protests are unavailing, the wife acts.

Tikhomirov concluded that the wife made such a hell of family life that the old people themselves were inclined to beg the young married couple to leave and set up their own, separate household. (60) Bervi-Flerovsky in the nineteenth, and Sokolov in the twentieth centuries, point to other factors affecting the traditional peasant family. According to the latter, the development of capitalist relations in the countryside undermined the patriarchal wedding ritual, and notably the character of the dowry of the bride was subjected to decisive changes. Previously, the bride distributed gifts which she herself had made to all the members of her husband's family, as proof that she was a good worker. (61) Bervi-Flerovsky noted that among poor peasants especially, the wife still had to be a capable worker, and that even though female labour was valued less than male, the work of the woman was nevertheless so heavy that it exhausted them within a few years. (62) Although men and women worked together in the fields, there was a definite division of labour between the sexes in rural Russia, as reflected in the ethnographic study of the village of Viryatino. It was the men who did the skilled work in the fields and the women who assisted. There was also a division of duties among the married women living in the same household, with the unmarried girls assisting and the older women supervising. As this study pointed out, the need for money became more important to the survival of the peasant households in Viryatino toward the close of the nineteenth century, while there was an intensified desire of

peasant women to earn independent incomes. (63)

Sokolov, moreover, recorded that by the late nineteenth century, the bride's dowry consisted of ready-made objects of urban culture, while concerns about the capacity for work and physical health had begun to disappear, reflected in changing views of feminine beauty. The matchmaker, Sokolov claimed, looked less to the physical capacity of the bride, and more to her conduct and physical appearance. (64) Bervi-Flerovsky acknowledged that peasant women wanted to dress fashionably, like the aristocracy. Yet he insists that they still recognised the importance of chastity. (65) Nevertheless, he believed that industrialization, compounded by the prolonged period of military service for men, had resulted in a decline in moral standards among the peasantry. He pointed to the high incidence of illegitimate births in the northern regions, where peasants had to go into the towns for work, leaving their families behind, often in areas where soldiers were stationed. In his view, the most stable peasant families were in the Black Earth regions, where the number of illegitimate births was low. (66)

Kovalevsky also posed the question of why the patriarchal family seemed to be falling apart in the nineteenth century. In his view, the cause lay in its very nature, central to which was the total subservience of the individual to the community. In particular, he held that the family property

was increasingly divided up as a result of internal family quarrelling, in which young wives played a large part. In the traditional patriarchal community, their role seemed small, almost invisible. Now they sought a more prominent, powerful position in independent households. Certainly, even here there was not complete equality between the sexes, but there was at least a degree of equality in the husband-wife relationship. (67) Moreover, the Soviet scholar Dubrovsky saw the desire to establish an independent household as a factor in the disintegration of the peasant commune under the impact of the Stolypin reforms at the beginning of the twentieth century. (68)

Interestingly, Tikhomirow claimed that the position of women of the upper class in Russian society in the nineteenth century was almost worse than that of the peasant women, for they were isolated in idleness in the home, and outside of society. The family was the focus for the Russian women of whatever rank, and her position in it was always subordinate. However, for the upper-class woman - unlike the peasant woman whose participation in the running of the household was essential - that position was effectively powerless, though in common with her class, she had power over the serfs before the 1861 Emancipation. As the travellers' tales will show, the upper-class woman was secluded at home, a tradition which persisted for merchant women even into the nineteenth century, though in an attenuated form. Peter the Great's decree that

men and women should meet together socially was so strange an innovation that he had to give detailed instructions on how they should behave. (69) Yet, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Tikhomirov wrote, 'the mutual relations between husband and wife in the cultured class are full of liberty and equality far greater than in any other European nation'. (70) This tremendous change, which had come about in a relatively short time, was influenced above all by the intellectual development and European influence. Tikhomirov observed that 'the man educates the woman; then in turn, he has to reckon with her effect on the family and on himself. Henceforth, the old order of things is not possible'. (71) Moreover, this development was percolating down the social scale to the emerging working class. Tikhomirov maintained that the woman not only became the man's educated, intelligent companion, but developed her own personality, and turned to the service of the people. (72) True, as Kovalevsky noted, the man was still dominant; but Tikhomirov pointed out that the Russian woman had made great strides in the nineteenth century, though the law - and it could be added, many of the least observant travellers - seemed to ignore the changes. (73) Still, writing from France in the mid nineteenth century, Golovine agreed with the foreigners' view of the upper-class Russian woman:

Civilization, education, and sensibility are almost the exclusive portion of women, and their superiority to

the man is incontestable in everything that regards the cultivation of the mind. (74)

2.3 Travellers' Observations of Russia

(i) Autocracy and the position of women

In 1823, the traveller Robert Lyall wrote that it was unfair to make a comparison between the Russians and any European state which had long been civilized. In order to know the Russians thoroughly, he believed that it was necessary to know their language and to have resided in Russia for a considerable length of time. It was also essential that a foreigner's contact should not be limited to any one class. Thus, travellers who saw only the lower classes, including the inferior nobility, would tend to form too low an opinion of the Russians, whereas those who associated only with the highest and politest society could overlook the defects. He believed that by this time, the upper class in Russia could be regarded as equally civilized, though not so well educated, as their European counterparts. However, Lyall admitted that the largely untravelled lower nobility retained more of the national customs and manners - they were, in his view, cunning and deceitful, sensual and immoral, improvident, gregarious, cheerful and good-humoured, curious and indolent. (75) Such sweeping generalizations are recurrent themes in the various travellers' accounts. Describing his travels to Russia in the years 1788 and 1789, Swinton declared that the complete

strangeness in dress, manners and customs made him feel as if he were in another world. (76) By the end of the nineteenth century, the American traveller, Isabel Hapgood, noted that the Russians had 'become so used to hearing and reading remarkable statements about themselves that they only smile indulgently at each fresh specimen of ill-will or ignorance'. (77)

To those travellers to Russia after the time of Peter the Great, it seemed as if the people had been forced from a state of barbarism into one of immature civilization. Generally, they considered that the despotic system of government accounted for what they saw as the low moral state of the people. (78) Generally too, pious moralisms pervade their accounts of Russian society, while they portray a remarkably consistent picture of Russian morality which is unflattering to say the least. Almost without exception, the visitors to Russia in this period gave a dark description of Russian manners and morals. Before the eighteenth century, the general picture was one of barbarity, ignorance and squalor, which continued for the lower classes into the nineteenth century. Travellers listed the common vices as drunkenness, deceit, adultery and sodomy. (79) Yet despite their harsh criticisms of the Russians, few of the travellers attempted any deep analysis of the causes of their condition. The few who did pointed to the tyrannical system of government to which the masses were totally subservient, and to the 'false' religion of

Orthodoxy. The great majority of British visitors, however, believed that despotism coloured every aspect of human behaviour. They generally condemned serfdom, though there were some exceptions. (80) Thus, for the travellers, what they saw as an extraordinary immorality was intimately linked to the autocratic system.

In 1892, on a visit to Russia, E.B. Lanin (Dillon) had declared that the social position of women was the touchstone of a nation's civilization. It was generally recognised by the travellers that the behaviour of Russian husbands towards their wives was much rougher and more austere than in Europe. Russian wives were expected to work hard, and to accept submissively their husbands' intemperance and other irregularities. Russian men commonly acted in an uncivilized manner towards their wives, treating them as servants, although Giles Fletcher had noted at the end of the sixteenth century that noble women seemed to be held in relatively high esteem by their husbands, while the mass of women suffered dreadful abuse. (81) It was the general opinion of the travellers that the great majority of women in Russia, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, were drudges first and mere females afterwards. They portrayed brutal sensuality as a general phenomenon which was not restricted to any particular section of Russian society. In fact, foreign visitors found the ill-treatment and contempt to which they observed women were subjected among the most

shocking aspects of Russian life, at least to the eighteenth century. Thereafter, visitors pointed to what they perceived as a moral dualism between the upper class after the Petrine reforms and the masses of peasants.

Most British observations tended to draw a close relationship between the autocracy in Russia and the particular subservience of women in the family. Indeed, in the foreigners' view, there was the same outward subservience of wife, children and, among the better-off, servants to the male head of the household as was expected by the tsar of his subjects. A late seventeenth-century visitor, Jodocus Crull, had declared that Muscovy was a veritable purgatory for women who were kept under such a rigorous discipline by their fathers and husbands that, in some places, slaves were treated with less severity. Yet about a quarter of a century earlier, Samuel Collins had remarked that it was not so harsh as it had been. (82) Half a century after Collins, in 1722, the traveller F.C. Weber reiterated that Russian women were generally ill-used and were subjected to a very severe discipline. (83) The Russian husband's brutal and contemptuous attitude towards his wife was expressed in many proverbs which the travellers recorded:

Beat your fur coat, and it will be warmer; beat your wife
and she will be sweeter;

Beat your wife with the blunt end of an axe; if she falls

to the floor and cries, she is fooling you - give her some more;

A wife isn't a jug - she won't crack if you hit her a few times;

A dog is wiser than a woman; he won't bark at his master. (84)

The last proverb may indicate that the Russian woman was not as passive as many of the travellers assumed her to be, nor as the patriarchal ideology expected her to be. Still, the foreigners believed that the Russian opinion of women's intelligence was expressed in the old adage, 'the hair is long, but the mind is short', while they recorded another saying that the women had one soul collectively, and yet another, that women had no soul at all, but only a vapour. The travellers believed that women were not thought worthy of consideration unless they were heads of households. Of course, such proverbs, while they may reveal the male peasant's attitude towards women, do not necessarily comply with the women's actual position as the Russian studies pointed out, reflecting a gap between ideology and reality. Yet in both, women were nevertheless in a subordinate position. Indeed, there was in Russia no penal law which condemned for the killing of a wife, or of a servant, when they were being 'corrected'. Many of the travellers believed the notion that Russian women viewed the whip as evidence of their husbands' love, though in the seventeenth century, Olearius had denied

that the absence of beatings was considered by Russian women as a mark of indifference - but he did think that women accepted the whip because of their 'guilt'. (85) However, by the nineteenth century, such practices were beginning to decline. Parents, it seems, were becoming more prudent in contracting marriages for their daughters; husbands were directed to use their wives kindly, without whipping, striking or kicking. Yet the travellers still believed that little notice was taken of a wife's complaints, and that 'the best comfort the poor women have is that their neighbours receive the same treatment'. (86)

In 1839, the traveller Robert Bremner declared that if the Russian man took into consideration the woman's feelings and wishes before marriage, he would not be able to beat her when he felt like it. Later, in 1889, Georg Brandes wrote that on giving his daughter in marriage, the Russian father still brought a new whip to give her the last domestic discipline from him, and then gave it solemnly to his son-in-law, with the direction to use it early and unsparingly. On entering the nuptial chamber, the ceremonial custom was for the groom to give the bride one or two lashes over the shoulders, bidding her to submit to him now, in place of her father. One of the marriage songs recorded by the travellers at least urged him to take a silken whip. To the travellers, the corporal punishment administered by Russian husbands and fathers was equivalent to the 'lowering of a woman to the

rank of brute': they held that women were made to work like beasts of burden and were corrected as such. (87)

The travellers recorded other punishments. The fact that there were so many, and so many severe ones, perhaps reflected that women were not so passive as custom demanded and the foreign visitors assumed. The family throughout Russia in this period always involved a hierarchical system, including a female hierarchy of the mother-in-law over the daughter-in-law; but as the travellers' accounts show, the most powerful hierarchy was the domination of the elder male head of the household. Moreover, according to the travellers, such power was exercised in an often violent and brutal manner, even into the nineteenth century. The roles of each member of the family were generally ascribed by sex, age and position in the household. The head of the household possessed vast patriarchal authority. Nevertheless, as the travellers' accounts describe, there were conflicts within the family. Writing in the seventeenth century, Olearius said that if a married woman committed adultery, she was punished by the knout, and sent to spend several days in a convent, on a diet of bread and water, after which, he maintained, she returned home to the blows of her husband. It seems that a husband could punish his wife by putting her into a convent which she could not leave without his permission. Samuel Collins reported in the same century that a Russian woman found guilty of murdering her husband was buried alive up to her

neck and left to die, while local authorities were warned to disregard pleas for mercy from her children and relatives, which might indicate a certain tolerance and understanding of such an extreme action by a wife in her local community and imply that the prescribed punishments for women were not always imposed. (88)

Such apparently widespread, endemic social violence was linked by the travellers to what they saw as another feature of the despotic government of the tsars - drunkenness. It was commonly asserted by visitors to Russia that the people drank inordinate amounts of alcohol. C.A. Stoddard remarked at the end of the nineteenth century that the Russian peasants worked long hours each day, ate wretched food, and lived a hard life in which they, both men and women, were treated as field animals rather than as people. With no hope of a different, better future, at least for the majority, it was not to be wondered at that they sought exhilaration or oblivion in alcohol. (89) However, foreigners seemed especially shocked that it should be counted no disgrace for women to become intoxicated, and so often, although some conceded that the secluded, idle, boring life of the upper-class women and the unceasing toil of the peasant women could be reason enough for such excesses. (90)

In general, foreign observations tended to be subjective and intolerant. British travellers certainly exhibited a deep-

seated conviction of their own, unique righteousness. Their criticisms of the shortcomings of the Russian political system and way of life stemmed from their Protestant and capitalist ethos. The Russian autocracy was based on a predominantly agricultural, peasant society, and on a patriarchal social structure. Still, the travellers recognised that for such a society, producing the next generation of workers was a crucial factor in its continued stability. Essentially, the need to control reproduction meant control over women; in turn, their vital reproductive potential ensured their subordination. The travellers believed that in a patriarchal system daughters were generally a financial drain, in comparison to sons whose marriages were profitable. Thus, for example, in the mid nineteenth century, Lucy Atkinson recorded the joy among the Kirkhiz at the birth of a boy, and disappointment on the arrival of a girl. (91)

However, Edmund Spencer, who had travelled in the Caucasus and Crimea in the late 1830s, observed that children were welcomed whether male or female, reflected in the Tartar proverb 'males give power and strength, and females flocks and herds'. (92)

At any rate, although the choice for men was certainly restricted, they were nevertheless in a superior position to women, according to the travellers. Marriage among the peasantry was of profound importance, and was subordinate to the primary purpose of maintaining the family. While this

entailed the subordination of everyone, though especially of women according to the travellers, to the needs of the family, they recognised that marriage gave both men and women full membership of the community. At the same time, the structure of the family was closely linked to the way in which its members worked together to survive. Marriage was extremely important, since it involved labour, property and children. Hence the stress on, the necessity of, making a good bargain as the travellers recorded. They noted that the Russian peasant family was not an autonomous unit, but was in turn part of the village community. The traditional ceremonies associated with marriage, birth and death which foreign visitors observed revealed the dominance of the collective over the individual. Thus, guests as well as bride and groom participated in the wedding ceremony in such acts as the blessing of the marriage bed, the visit paid by the guests to the newly-wed couple when they retired to bed, the rowdyism of the guests during the wedding night, the inspection of the bride's shift for signs of virginity. Moreover, an essential feature of these ceremonies, which the travellers observed to last for several days, were the marriage songs which tended to be laments of the bride, whom they noted was expected to weep, not so much over any specific unhappiness, but for the common fate of Russian women. An Englishwoman who had spent ten years in Russia in the mid nineteenth century wondered why Russian women were so eager to marry, and concluded that marriage was seen by them

as a means of escape from the strict surveillance and tyrannical rule of the father. (93)

(ii) Marriage customs

These characteristics of marriage among the Russian peasantry were amplified by the travellers. Crull had observed in the seventeenth century that marriage was accounted honourable among the Russians, and that polygamy was forbidden. Lord Macartney, who was resident in Russia in the mid eighteenth century, confirmed this view, and claimed that few people remained unmarried. The travellers generally believed that, although within the Russian Empire marriage customs varied from one part of the country to another, nevertheless their substance was always the same. They agreed that Russian marriages were not very solemn affairs, observing that they were very theatrical, appealing mainly to the senses. (94)

In the sixteenth century, the visitor Herberstein had noted that in Russia, it was deemed dishonourable and disgraceful for a young man to address a girl directly about marriage. Indeed, the man was not allowed to see his future wife, nor she him. Marriage was arranged between their fathers, or at a meeting of friends who represented the two families.

Among the upper class, the travellers reported that the man had to learn from others what his bride looked like.

Presumably the woman did likewise. In the following century,

Olearius wrote that the couple were still not permitted to become acquainted on their own, much less discuss marriage together - that was still to be arranged by the parents. Generally, the couple did not see each other until they were in the nuptial chamber. (95) Samuel Collins, another seventeenth-century observer, related that the Russian father gave his children little warning of marriage, while they in turn could not refuse the parental choice; nor could serfs refuse the lord's choice. Macartney wrote in the eighteenth century that the consent of the parents was still essential, while among the lower classes many of the ancient marriage ceremonies had been retained. Serfs continued to need the consent of their lord, particularly in the case of a woman who wanted to marry a serf from another estate, which indicates that there was less restriction on the peasant couple, and perhaps even some degree of choice for the woman. The usual agreement, it was observed, included the landlord of the male serf giving a female serf in return, since the children of serfs belonged to the lord of the male serf. (96) However, an English lady noted, on the eve of the emancipation of the serfs, that considerable etiquette was necessarily observed in communications between the serf owner and the peasants. She observed with approval that:

There is none of that sans ceremonie invasion of a poor man's cottage by the grandees of his neighbourhood, that one so often sees with regret in old England ... Were

visits of this kind to be thrust on the Russian serf, or peasant, he would feel himself bound - according to his fraternal notions - to return the visit with the greatest possible dispatch. (97)

According to the travellers, the persistent practice of marrying people without their consent gave rise to immorality. It was reported that, at least before the nineteenth century, men of the lower classes had no scruple about hiring out their wives as prostitutes. After the Emancipation of 1861, the visitors believed that the peasants had more say in their own marriages, though they acknowledged that parental consent continued to be necessary. The formal engagement was contracted through the man's father, or godfather, asking the girl's parents for her hand in marriage. In some districts, the girl's family made the first move, by sending a female matchmaker as an intermediary between the two families. (98)

In the sixteenth century, only after the girl's dowry was settled was a day appointed for the wedding. While it seems that no dowry was expected of the man, the travellers give the impression that the bridegroom's family bore the expense of the wedding festivities. Giles Fletcher wrote that the dowry was settled at a meeting of the fathers or their representatives. In addition, if the girl had never been married, her parents had to guarantee her virginity.

Fletcher recorded that there were many legal quarrels if the

man was deceived. (99) At the end of the eighteenth century, it was reported that marriage was still contracted through a broker, usually an old woman. She was given instructions by the girl's parents, together with a very detailed inventory of her dowry. Once the broker had found several subscribers, she returned to the girl's parents who would then inquire into the circumstances and character of the interested parties. Tooke observed that where families of substantial property were concerned, the marriage contract was made with veritable mercantile punctuality. Even in the nineteenth century, many marriages, including those of the nobility, were still being contracted through professional marriage brokers. In the villages, if parents thought it was time for their son to marry, they would hire an old woman to find him a suitable partner. It would seem, therefore, that it was generally the parents who set the process in motion, although travellers in the nineteenth century reported that the prospective husband had a say in what kind of a wife he expected. They also observed that he had to outline how much work she would be expected to perform, to specify what dowry he would demand, and to state whether or not his mother was still alive. This last point was very important for the bride, since the husband's mother ruled over her daughters-in-law. It also implies some concern on the part of the bride's family for her future. (100)

In the late nineteenth century, travellers noted that a

favourite motif of popular poetry were the complaints of the young bride who found that the mother-in-law put all the work on her shoulders. The young woman would grieve over the renunciation of her maidenly liberty in return for a wife's state of subjection among unfriendly strangers. In one song, she complains that 'they are making me marry a lout, with no small family'. Apparently, the mother-in-law would take revenge for her own sufferings on the young wife. Even as she entered her new home, reproaches would rain on the young bride from the husband's family:

Says the father-in-law;

They have brought us a bear.

Says the mother-in-law;

They have brought us an eater of men.

Say the brothers-in-law;

They have brought us an unclean thing.

Say the aunts;

They have brought us a spinner of naught. (101)

In the songs, the young girl would complain bitterly of her parents' conduct. She might turn to her brother, since in some places, he would receive a present of money during the betrothal ceremonies. However, according to Ralston, by the late nineteenth century, the woman might well take a more business-like view of the situation, and demand that her parents should not sell her cheaply. Nevertheless, her new

life among her husband's family does not appear to have been a particularly congenial one: 'my father-in-law scolds me for nothing, my mother-in-law, for every trifle'. If, however, the bride's parents were unwilling to part with her, the travellers concluded that it may have been because they were reluctant to lose a useful servant to another family, to give up 'a living broom or shovel'. (102) Despite their narrowly utilitarian view of family relations among the Russian peasantry, the travellers were, at least implicitly, acknowledging the crucial role of female labour in the household.

Some of the travellers to Russia in the nineteenth century related the old ceremony, variously termed 'Inspection', 'Show of Girls', 'Choosing a Bride', which took place on Whit Monday in the Summer Gardens of St. Petersburg. By that time, the participants were generally from the middle classes, from the families of merchants and traders. It was, the travellers claimed, a unique ceremony. Young unmarried girls were paraded in the Gardens by their parents, that they might be inspected by bachelors of all ages who were looking for a wife. The girls were dressed in their finest clothes, with their faces painted. They were arranged in rows, with their families standing behind them. The prospective husbands, accompanied by their fathers, moved slowly through the ranks. If a man decided on a likely candidate for his wife, his family would approach the girl's, and the negotiations over

the marriage contract would be conducted by the traditional marriage broker. A German resident in Russia in the early nineteenth century noted that the Exhibition of Brides underlined the economic, rather than the romantic, basis of marriage. In 1842, the visitor Kohl wrote that although the practice was now ridiculed by the nobility, who in earlier times had been its main participants, and despite its decline, the custom was still maintained in an informal way among the lesser merchants and the lower classes of the towns. (103)

Giles Fletcher reported in the sixteenth century that on the evening before the marriage, the bride was taken to the groom's house, together with her wedding dress and the marriage bed which she had to provide. She was accompanied by her mother and some other women, but was neither seen nor welcomed by the groom. Once the marriage was solemnized, the bride, still heavily veiled, fell down at the groom's feet, knocking her head on his shoe as a token of her subjection to him, of her obedience. The groom in reply would cover her with the edge of his gown as a mark of his duty to protect and cherish her. The bride and groom then retired to their respective family homes to celebrate separately. In the evening, the bride, still veiled, was brought to the groom's house. She was not to utter a word all night, and the groom was neither to see nor hear her till the day after the wedding. For the next three days, the bride was expected to remain silent, except for a few words at

the table, which Fletcher interpreted as a sign of reverence for the groom. (104) Also in the sixteenth century, Herberstein noted that the groom would make an inventory of the wedding gifts and after the marriage would return those he rejected, and have those he wanted valued at the market. In the course of the following year, he would compensate the donors, either in money or in kind, for the gifts he retained. In Herberstein's opinion:

Love between those that are married is for the most part lukewarm, especially among the nobles and princes, because they marry girls whom they have never seen before; and being engaged in the service of the prince, they are compelled to desert them, and become corrupted with disgraceful connection with others. (105)

Whatever his disapproval, the implication is that these wives were not always compelled to follow their husbands wherever the job took them.

The seventeenth-century observer, Samuel Collins, wrote that, on coming out of the church, the bride was strewn with hops in the hope that she would bear children as thick as hops while someone else would meet her with his sheepskin turned outward, and pray that she have as many children as there were hairs on his coat. Such rites emphasised the main function of women in Russia as child-bearer, as well as the

importance placed on children. The groom was led home by a crowd of young men, and the bride, covered all over by a veil, was preceded by an old woman. The priest marched before them all, carrying his cross. They would then sit at a table which displayed bread and salt, but they would not yet eat. A choir, meanwhile, was singing bawdy songs. The couple were next conducted by the priest and an old woman to the nuptial chamber. The latter advised the bride to be debonair and exhorted the groom to show due benevolence towards his wife. After this, the newly married couple were shut up for two hours, while the old woman stood by, waiting for the tokens of the girl's virginity. The groom generally had a whip in one boot and a jewel or money in the other, and according to Collins, he would order the bride to pull them off. If she first pulled the one with the money, she was counted lucky; if instead, she 'won' the whip, she was deemed unlucky and given a bride lash for her pains, which Collins claimed was 'but the earnest-penny of her future entertainment'. The old woman would tie up the bride's hair. According to that other seventeenth-century observer, Olearius, married women rolled up their hair under a cap or a kerchief, while young girls left it hanging down their backs, plaited in a braid. (106)

An eighteenth-century traveller noted that on the eve of the wedding, the bride would lock herself up with her friends, and they would weep and sing laments, though this custom was now

observed only by the common people. The virginity of the bride was determined by a jury of women who performed an examination of the bride's shift which the European visitors considered indecent. (107) It seems that a magician was often present at the wedding ceremony, as well as a priest, to ward off any evil spirits. The couple were still ceremoniously conducted to the nuptial chamber where the bride handed round brandy to the assembled company. The couple were prepared for bed and the guests retired, leaving one older woman to wait for the signs of virginity. She was rewarded if they duly appeared and the jury of women were satisfied. According to William Tooke, these signs never failed to appear. In his tour of the 1790s, John Parkinson noted that it was the eldest female relation of the bride on the father's side who waited on the consummation and bore the marks of virginity to the friends. On rejoining their guests, the couple were met by triumphant music, and the celebrations continued. (108)

The travellers interpreted these ceremonies as a reflection of the subordinate position of women in Russia. Yet they also contained reference to those reciprocal rights noted by Kovalevsky. They showed the complete absence of privacy and delicacy in the western sense, emphasising in the eyes of the travellers the dominance of the community over the individual. The wedding ceremony represented for them a kind of theatre in which all who attended had a part, and everyone knew their place.

By the nineteenth century, the travellers believed that although marriages were still contracted through the intermediaries of parents or matchmakers, the wishes of the man and woman who were to be married were consulted. The man, it seems, still tried to prove his superiority during the wedding ceremony. When the couple were formally asked if they were pleasing to each other and exchanged gifts, the groom would try to raise his glass highest and pour some of his drink into the bride's glass. According to Ralston, writing in the late nineteenth century, the most important event before the wedding was held on the previous evening, when the bride's unmarried female friends met at her house, sang the ritual bridal laments with her, inspected her wedding dress and presents, and braided the bride's hair. Her face was veiled until after the wedding ceremony, when it was uncovered by the mother-in-law. The couple retired after the wedding feast - Ralston observed that in the past, someone would have kept watch. On the following day, the couple would go to the baths. Ralston believed that since weddings, with their elaborate ceremony, feasts and presents, proved expensive poor peasants would sometimes allow their daughter to elope. After the wedding, the bride was still obliged to pull off her husband's boots, but Ralston said that she would now hit him over the head with one of them in protest. He also spoke of struggles at the ceremony to see who would be dominant, such as trying to reach the church porch first or to tread first on the cloth on which they were

to stand. (109) Ralston's observations allow for the possibility that while the rituals remained, the substance had changed, with the women insisting on their importance and with the dominance of the community less in evidence.

(iii) Role of the peasant wife

As late as the 1850s, it appears that there was still no courtship in Russia, in the form that the British understood. Nevertheless, the travellers' accounts warn against the assumption that marriage was simply imposed. Russian women, it was recognised, possessed property rights which gave them a certain power in their relations with men. (110) Moreover, Mary Holderness insisted that although peasant marriage was an arrangement between families, it should not be equated with absence of affection between husband and wife, or with immorality. She acknowledged that the peasant wife in the Crimea was 'most completely the slave of her husband', but she perceived nevertheless that:

Among the peasantry ... who are less bound by rigid forms, or less observant of them than their superiors, I have often seen sincere affection displayed; but their religious tenets, as well as long-established customs, teach them to suppress and subdue feeling rather than to indulge in it. (111)

The implications of this observation are interesting, for it seems that peasants may not have been the slaves to custom which so many travellers assumed. It also points to a gap between the ideology and practice of hierarchy. After four years in the Crimea, Holderness insisted that though 'a Tartar husband is supreme and absolute, and tho' he considers his wife most perfectly his slave, still he is affectionate and kind to her, and instances of unhappy marriages are rare'.⁽¹¹²⁾

Marriage was of crucial importance to the Russian peasant economy, as the foreign observers realised. It brought labour in the person of the wife, property in the form of her dowry, to the husband's household; and it carried with it the expectance of progeny. Births were recognised by the travellers to be of very great significance in such a social system, for they provided not only the workers, but ensured the generational continuity of the family. Hence, according to the travellers, if a man believed his wife to be sterile, he would try to persuade her to enter a convent, so that he could marry another. Yet the travellers observed that few were permitted to enter a convent unless they were too old to marry, past the age of childbearing, or sterile and discarded by their husbands. Maria Guthrie, in her tour of 1795, noted approvingly that Catherine II had forbidden women to take the veil so long as they could bear children. On the other hand, a man could enter a monastery without his wife's consent. By the early nineteenth century, it was

observed that divorce seemed relatively easy for the Russian man, the main check on it being that the husband would have to return the wife's dowry. However, if a wife left her husband to return to her family, they had to send her back when he demanded, or else pay for her release. In the general view of the travellers, divorce was virtually impossible for the woman. (113) Yet there are indications that separation was not in fact impossible, however rare divorce might be. Mary Holderness had noted in the early nineteenth century that among Crimean Tartars, even in the situation of polygamy, the wife could obtain a divorce if the husband beat or otherwise abused her: 'she may complain to the Mullah, who, attended by the community of the village, comes to the house, and pronounces a formal separation between the parties'. The wife went back to her own relatives. (114) The late nineteenth-century observer of Russia, Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, commented on peasant separation:

In cases of matrimonial separation ... the educated man naturally assumes that, if there's any question of alimony, it should be paid by the husband to the wife. The peasant, on the contrary, assumed as naturally that the wife who ceases to be a member of the family ought to pay compensation for the loss of labour power which the separation involves.' (115)

From this observation it would seem that not only was the family central in peasant society, but that the contribution of the wife was significant, while there is the implication that the role of the wife differed outside of the peasantry. After noting the importance of the wife's labour to the household, Mackenzie Wallace added that if an unmarried son was working away from home, his earnings did not belong to himself but to his family, so that for both sexes, it was the survival of the household which came first. (116)

The travellers observed that generally the Russians married in their teens. They believed that the birthrate was consequently high, but acknowledged that there was a very high rate of infant mortality. Most visitors noted the poor diet, the rigorous climate, rudimentary medical care and the persistence of harmful traditions such as swaddling. They believed that smallpox and venereal disease, which the Russian studies of Shashkov and Kuznetsov had shown to be prevalent, took a high toll in children's lives. In 1874, a traveller was informed that the average number of children in a Russian family was seventeen, of whom half perished in infancy, 'some from cold, others from the use of the soska, a milk poultice, tied up in a long bag, at which the infants, left alone for hours, suck away', and on which they would often choke. Yet the travellers accepted that this method of feeding was a necessity, especially for poor peasants, for the women had many duties other than child-rearing to perform,

being expected to tend the household plot and the domestic animals, and to help in the fields when necessary. (117)

Yet despite the general stress on fertility, Edmund Spencer observed in his travels through the Caucasus in the late 1830s that women generally had only two or three children, and he believed that many were sterile. (118)

In general, the travellers depicted a very harsh life for the Russian peasantry, whether male or female. As noted above, the woman had many duties to carry out, besides the bearing and rearing of children. Women were expected, and were accustomed to labour in the fields. They married young and aged quickly, according to the travellers, after years of continuous childbearing and ceaseless toil. In 1839, Bremner observed that kindness to women was regarded by their husbands merely as spoiling a good working creature. (119)

Even at the end of the nineteenth century, it was remarked that the Russian peasant wife was still regarded as a beast of burden, a domestic animal. A century earlier, Tooke had observed that Russian women of the lower classes generally did the same work as European women - cooking, cleaning, spinning - but, he believed, they were subjected to a much harsher regime than was customary in Europe. Mackenzie Wallace noted, at the close of the nineteenth century, that Russian women worked on the land, but not in trades, that their winters were very busy, in contrast to the men, since it was then that the women spun and wove. (120) In fact,

agricultural work such as sowing, cultivating and harvesting was done by women as well as by men, with the former performing much heavy, physical work. It seems that it was precisely the 'male' field labour being done by women which offended the foreign observers' sensibilities.

(iv) Upper-class women

Life for upper-class women in pre-revolutionary Russia, however, was very different, according to the travellers' accounts. On the eve of the emancipation of the serfs, an English visitor, Mary Ann Pellow Smith, noted that some estates were so isolated and at such distances from towns and major roads that:

the only strangers the serfs of one generation may have ever seen are their seigneur's family, who once in their lifetime may have passed a month or two at their estate. Such are like separate tribes almost, having customs peculiar to their position. (121)

Not only did upper-class women do no work, they took almost no charge of their children, whom they handed over to nurses almost immediately after birth. The travellers also noted that, if circumstances permitted, the wives of Russian merchants passed their lives doing little, apart from ordering the preparation of food, resting and sleeping.

For Tuberville in the sixteenth century, the treatment of upper-class women, who were 'encouraged to paint themselves like whores, then kept in confinement for fear they should act the part', reflected what he saw as the immorality of the Russians. No woman was considered virtuous, at least before the reign of Peter 1, unless she was secluded and rarely ventured outside the home, and even then she must never go unaccompanied. According to the travellers, the higher the social position, the closer was the seclusion of women, and many noble families maintained their own chapels so that their women need not attend public churches. (122)

Yet, also writing in the sixteenth century, Herberstein had claimed that women were seldom admitted into churches. Even at the close of the nineteenth century, it was remarked that neither women nor dogs were allowed into the inner sanctum. When they did attend church, women were expected to stay at the rear, near the doors. (123)

Seclusion set upper-class women apart in society. It seems scarcely to have been known among the peasantry, whose houses were not large enough to allow it. In any case, economic necessity decreed that peasant women worked. According to the travellers, before the changes imposed by Peter the Great, the houses of the rich had a separate entrance for the women, as well as separate apartments. It was said that in Old Russia, women were not only shut away during their life-time, but were even buried in separate vaults and cemetaries, reflecting,

perhaps, the old notion that women did not possess a soul. (124) Since they rarely appeared in company and were little involved in housework, travellers assumed that upper-class women were idle most of the time. The travellers wrote that as a special treat, on certain feast days, the men allowed their wives and daughters to meet in pleasant meadows where they could amuse themselves with simple games - at least they appeared simple in the eyes of these more sophisticated visitors. Some observers believed that the laziness and indolence imposed by such a lifestyle caused depravity of manners and morals among upper-class women, for which they blamed the tyranny of Russian men. (125) After spending a decade in Russia in the mid nineteenth century, an English woman declared that Russian ladies were immoral, and displayed an 'inconceivable want of delicacy'. Macartney, British ambassador to Catherine II, had complained of the 'profligate manners and unbounded libertinism' of her court, and in particular of the lack of female chastity, though it seems that he himself took advantage of its absence. (126) The travellers in general believed that the seclusion of women among the upper reaches of Russian society failed to prevent promiscuity, and may even have encouraged it by the implicit and explicit mistrust of women reflected in the terem.

According to travellers before the reign of Peter the Great, if a man wanted to honour a guest in Russia, he would bring out his wife and her maids to be saluted by the guest,

to hand round a tray of drinks, and then to retire. Even after the Petrine reforms had declared that men and women should be brought together at entertainments, travellers recorded that the old practice of confining women continued outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg among certain sections of society. Indeed, in 1833, Pinkerton remarked that a remnant of this custom was still observed in the domestic circles of the merchants in the Russian interior, where wives and daughters seldom saw strangers. When they did meet them, according to Pinkerton, the women displayed a considerable degree of shyness, constraint and agitation. As late as 1891, it was observed that merchants' wives and daughters were still kept out of sight when male friends visited the husband, that they did not control the housekeeping money, and that they were accompanied by a male relative when shopping. (127) However, some foreign visitors noted that, after the reforms of Peter I, women from the nobility and the richer merchant families were allowed a great deal of freedom in company. The travellers charged that these women lived in a perpetual round of pleasure and diversion. It was even declared that nowhere did women lead a more artificial life than in Russia where the ladies seemed inordinately fond of play and dancing. If the Russian man was debauched, the travellers believed, he was so to the point of brutality; the educated woman of the upper class, on the other hand, was 'more refined in her licence'. The Russian emigre, Golovine, agreed that this laxity of morals undermined domestic

happiness among the nobility. The travellers discerned that, despite the recently acquired veneer of extreme politeness, even gallantry, the nineteenth-century Russian nobleman thought little of the ladies, preferring to indulge in hunting, smoking, gaming and drinking. (128)

Writing in the early 1820s, Robert Lyall condemned the practice of contracting marriages of convenience which he believed was prevalent among the nobility, as well as the frequent separation of husbands in government service from their wives soon after the wedding, which again may indicate that women were not always expected to follow their husbands. Lyall held that the men and women of the nobility tended to ignore their partners' infidelities. (129) Yet by this time, other travellers were contending that women of the nobility had become far superior to their husbands for whom they had little respect. In 1854, William Jesse agreed on the lady's superiority, but he maintained that the female intellect was being cultivated mainly to impress, while domestic duties were neglected. Like many travellers, he displayed the enduring prejudice that a woman's place is in the home, not in the mind. The frivolous noblewoman, he wrote, had no interest in family or domestic affairs, and he charged that 'their vanity withers into elegant corruption'. (130)

Not all the travellers agreed with this verdict. An English woman who spent six years travelling in Russia in the 1850s

noted the sophistication of the high society ladies of St. Petersburg, quoting the advice of one that if the wife has tact 'she will always lead; and if her husband is a wise man, he will always follow'. (131) This English lady also admonished that 'those unacquainted with social life in Russia cannot form the remotest idea of the onerous duties and wholesale responsibilities devolving on the mistress of the family by the removal of her household from the city to the interior'. (132) In addition, Isabel Hapgood, the American traveller along the Volga at the end of the nineteenth century, noted that her hostess, like most Russian women who spent any time on their estates, knew a great deal about medicine, and treated the peasants. It was a skill made necessary, Hapgood believed, by the circumstance of both the distance of the district doctor and the wide area he had to cover. (133) Similarly, the Reverend James Christie, who visited Russia in the later nineteenth century, disagreed with those travellers who accused the upper-class women of constantly seeking pleasure: 'the Russian ladies are not given to wine, and when they see the English governess take more than one glass at dinner, they do not like it, and the gentlemen talk'. (134) Martha and Catherine Wilmot, two Irish sisters who had been guests of Princess Dashkova in the early nineteenth century, noted the fact that women in Russia possessed property rights, in contrast to England. Writing of the noble circles associated with the Princess, they observed that:

The full and entire dominion which Russian women have over their own fortunes gives them a very remarkable degree of liberty and a degree of independence of their husbands unknown in England. A woman's powers to dispose of her own wealth is a great check on her husband's inclination to forsake her or to tyrannize her. (135)

(v) Female pollution and the female form

The seclusion of upper-class women in Russia, and their lack of a positive economic role revealed the very different ways of life among Russian women, as well as the subordination and contempt in which, the travellers believed, women generally were held. For the travellers, the traditional segregation of the sexes was carried over into ideas of female pollution, and the need for men to avoid potentially dangerous contacts with women. It has been argued that ideas of female pollution were related to population pressure on scarce resources, and that the greater the need for population control, the greater the fear of female pollution which, by limiting male access to women, acted as a form of birth control. Yet, as has been acknowledged, it is paradoxical that the taboos surrounding sexual intercourse and fears of menstruation limited intercourse precisely during those periods when a woman was least fertile. (136)

These arguments, however, seem less relevant in a country as

vast as the Russian empire and in a peasant society with such a positive attitude towards fertility and with such a high rate of infant mortality. The travellers to Russia believed that the Byzantine influence lay at the root of women being considered unclean. Herberstein recorded that in the sixteenth century if a woman killed an animal for cooking, it was considered defiled, though this may have related to the sexual division of labour in which men were the hunters. In the seventeenth century, Olearius wrote that upper-class women were not allowed to take part in the slaughter or the cooking of animals, this work being left to the servants, which in turn reflected the social divisions among women, for such customs were not observed by the common people. (137) At the end of the nineteenth century, Lanin (Dillon) asserted that the Orthodox Church contributed to what he saw as general mysogyny by calling for special prayers to be read over a woman who had just given birth. In his view, Russians felt defiled if they had been in the same room in which a woman had given birth and sought prayers from a priest for purification. (138) Certainly, the peasants still depended on an experienced old woman rather than a qualified midwife, and the woman preferred secrecy at her delivery, though this preference may have reflected the peasants' reliance on each other and distrust of the professional intelligentsia. (139)

The travellers generally held that the notion of pregnant

women near their delivery being unclean led them to resort to the stable or the bath house, and particularly the latter, but this practice seems to have reflected the significance of the bath house in Russian society. Russian bathing habits had consistently attracted the attention of the foreign visitors. Lyall had declared in 1823 that Russian baths should be observed as an illustration of the national customs. Other visitors took a rather dim view of Russian bathing habits, believing the steam baths to be injurious to health as well as morals, to nurture early prostitution and lascivious inclinations generally. The foreigners seemed most disconcerted by the apparent lack of inhibition of both sexes, but particularly of the women, over their nakedness. To many visitors, at least before the nineteenth century, the bath house in Russia seemed to fulfill the function of a brothel in Europe. (140) Yet they acknowledged that the Russians attached great importance to bathing, especially after marriage ceremonies, and that they considered the baths as a general medicine against any indisposition. (141) By the nineteenth century, visitors differed about the alleged promiscuity which attended the baths, and some accepted that not only was such public bathing inoffensive, but it was beneficial to health. (142)

Nevertheless, the notion that women were unclean seems to have lingered, and according to the travellers, even at the end of the nineteenth century, it was considered unlucky to

meet a woman when going fishing or hunting. Sexual intercourse was considered unclean, too, and ikons were reported to be covered during, and ablutions made afterwards, though none of the travellers admit to any firsthand observations. They believed that sexual intercourse was forbidden on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, during Lent and on some of the days of fasting. They noted, too, that a man could not enter a church, nor a priest approach the altar, after sexual intercourse, unless he had thoroughly washed himself and put on clean clothes. (143) Priests in Russia were married young, according to the travellers, so that they could win office early, which perhaps reflects the importance of marriage and of the role of the wife. If a priest's wife died, it seems that he could not marry again, so that Samuel Collins in the seventeenth century concluded that 'a pope's priesthood is wrapped up in his wife's smock', and the travellers generally remarked that the marital regime was less harsh for a priest's wife than for other women in Russia. (144)

Like the practice of secluding women, that of them painting themselves was thought to be derived from the period of Mongol domination over Russia. (145) None of the travellers were reconciled to this fashion. Their general opinion was that the women looked 'as though they were beaten about the face with a bag of meale'. Olearius wrote that in the seventeenth century a box of rouge was usually among the presents which a prospective bridegroom would send to his bride on the eve of

their wedding, indicating incidentally that the traffic of goods was not all one way. Olearius maintained, however, that it was generally in the towns where women painted themselves so crudely. While the travellers acknowledged that to the Russians, the more red the greater the beauty, they still expressed surprise and consternation that the practice of women plastering their faces with paint was universally approved and financed by the Russian men. (146) Certainly, by the end of the eighteenth century, the practice seemed to have died out among the nobility, to be replaced by the liberal use of snuff, according to Lyall. Paint, however, still seemed an essential article of toilet especially among the merchants' wives, and also among the peasant women. (147) Perhaps, then, life for the peasant woman did not simply consist of unceasing toil.

The visitors to Russia also complained that their ideal of beauty was rare among Russian women. They implied that men of the Russian upper class also sought beauty in a wife, in contrast to the male peasant who looked for health and strength. Collins wrote in 1671 that if the husband found his wife ugly, she would pay for it with rough treatment. Since the traditional practice among the upper class was that the bride was not seen until she entered the nuptial chamber, it could happen that a man was deceived. From the travellers' accounts, there seems to have been a great deal of such deception. Once unveiled by the husband, the girl

might be forced to become a nun. The travellers also noted, however, that if she not only refused but complained of his violence towards her, the husband might be sent to a monastery for penance. Thus, despite her subordinate position, the wife had the right to redress, which in turn implies that the wife did not always accept her fate. If the husband refused to accept his wife, they were separated, and the property divided, while neither could marry again for six years, according to the travellers. This observation implies that the couple were not simply pawns in a marital arrangement between families. If the husband's complaint of deception played on him by the girl's parents was upheld, they would be punished by being fined. (148) Outside of serfdom, Peter the Great had decreed that the consent of the man and woman who were to be married was necessary, and that they should see each other freely, at least during the six weeks before the wedding. However, at the end of the eighteenth century, it was reported that in practice inclination was not always consulted on the lady's side. Parents, it seems, were reluctant to give up very much of their authority, so that, as Richards remarked in 1780, 'if Cupid's wings are ever clipped, or his dart blunted, 'tis in Russia'. (149)

The travellers observed that into the nineteenth century, Russian women cultivated corpulence. Generally, the physical proportions of Russian women far exceeded that which was

considered tasteful in Europe. By the early nineteenth century, however, Russian ladies were deemed to be 'amiable, agreeable, and highly accomplished', and in the 1850s, it was asserted by one traveller that 'the Russian belles have all suddenly become thin, which is styled being a l'Anglaise'. (150) Travellers complained, however, that among the peasants it was less easy to distinguish between the sexes, which is perhaps a reflection of the shared workload between men and women. (151) The travellers considered that female beauty faded early in Russia due to the practice of face-painting, the ravages of smallpox, the early marriages and frequent pregnancies, the heavy fieldwork done by peasant women, and the greatly submissive state in which, they believed, Russian women lived. (152)

2:4 Conclusion

Even when dwelling on what they saw as the unusual or unfamiliar aspects of Russian life, which they assumed to be inferior to their own, foreign observations may serve to highlight the situation of women, as well as the institution of the family. What shocked or surprised the travellers were precisely those features of Russian communal life which went against their own family sentiments, their concept of individualism and their privatization of family relations. Most travellers were dismayed by the living conditions of the peasants, which in their view harmed family morality.

Peasant huts generally had a single room with what seemed to the visitors an extraordinarily large stove, on which, given the scarcity of beds, the 'whole family go to lie promiscuously on the top of it, and bake themselves thoroughly'. Some of the travellers believed that if the husband was sent on military service or migrated to the town in search of work, the male elder would enter into sexual relations with his daughter-in-law. It seems that in regions of considerable male migration for work and where there were military 'colonies' there was a high rate of illegitimate births. In addition, some of the travellers noted that those babies brought up in the foundling hospitals established by Catherine II were recruited into the local manufactories. (153)

The open, public way in which the Russians lived, their spontaneity, their intimate sleeping arrangements, their strongly collective sentiments, all proved too much for western sensibilities. In addition, the western romanticization of women, relegating them to moral superiority, was held in sharp contrast to what was considered the primitive Russian attitudes at least among the peasantry towards wives and daughters. Because western observers expected companionship and romantic love from marriage, at least by the eighteenth century, they noted with distaste that Russian peasant men married a woman on the basis of her skills as a housekeeper and a labourer, of her strength rather than her beauty. It seems that it was not so much the low esteem which the travellers believed

was accorded to women in Russia that shocked them so much as the fact that the peasant women worked, often alongside men, in the fields.

Apart from highlighting the features of Russian life different from their own, travellers' accounts provide some idea, however biased and exaggerated, of the toil, ignorance and early death which seems to have been a large part of the lot of Russian peasants. Although they recorded the exuberant celebrations of marriages and feast days, the visitors tended to see the peasant world as hedged in by sorrow as well as by custom. Thus, one contribution that the travellers' tales make is to puncture any romantic ideal, any sentimental myth of the peasant way of life. Besides focusing on the hardship and cruelty which they believed was the norm of peasant life throughout Russia, the foreign observations restore that communal experience to a living and relevant past. The travellers tended to apply their own concepts of public and private to Russia, distinctions which made little sense in a society in which the family, but above all the commune, had many characteristics similar to a public institution. At the same time, the travellers oversimplified in their assumption that family relations reflected the political system, as for example, in their notion that the authority of the male head of the household over his wife and children mirrored the authority of the tsar over his subjects. In practice, peasant society traditionally empowered the male

elder to impose his will in the best interests of the family, while his wife was accorded a position of power over her daughters-in-law. The stress was on the collective.

By the eighteenth century, and under the influence of the Enlightenment, the position of women in the west was assumed to be both a natural phenomenon, and one which had improved over time, being closely related to the stage of civilization reached by a society. Hence, for western travellers from the eighteenth century, the ideology of women's place was influenced by the dual forces of nature and history. The travellers accepted continuity in the female role, but believed that progress brought improvement in the position of women. In their optimism, they declared that the level of civilization could be judged by the position of women, while they assumed the superiority of their own society to the Russian. Yet whatever their criticism of the treatment of women in Russia, sexual equality was not considered an issue by them. Essentially, they believed in the complementarity of the sexes, a belief that was offended by the situation of Russian peasant women, specifically in terms of their work in the fields.

From the travellers' accounts, the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries seem to have been a period in which the position of women was severely degraded, coinciding with the development of serfdom throughout Russia. However, peasant

women should not simply be dismissed as passive beasts of burden, as so many of the travellers tended to do. The Prussian observer of the peasant commune in Russia in the 1840s, Baron von Haxthausen, held that women had a peculiar position, different from the situation in western Europe. In his view, in Russia 'the wife reigns, and the man governs':

The same unlimited authority which the father exercises over all his children is possessed by the mother over her daughters; the same reverence and obedience are shown to the communal authorities ... (154)

In a recent study of women's roles in rural development in the Soviet Union, Susan Bridger wrote that nineteenth-century contemporary observers of the extended peasant family invariably described it as hierarchical, patriarchal and authoritarian. (155) However, as this discussion has shown, the situation was much more complex than that, reflected in the observations of both Russian and foreign contemporaries. It is crucial to understand the strength, vitality and coherence of pre-industrial society in Russia, so vividly described by the travellers, who also record the crucial role of women. Otherwise, and like those visitors who assumed that the tenacity of peasant society was simply a consequence of Russia's backwardness, women's history before industrialization seems unchanging, their position static.

The travellers recognised that the Russian community was all-embracing, and that a member was seldom left alone or regarded as an individual outside of the collective, even in the conditions of labour migration. Each family fitted into the community in which the basic sexual division of labour and hierarchy was a traditional guarantee of social coherence. For the travellers, the peasant way of life encompassed suffering and oppression in a myriad of forms. Yet they also portrayed a way of living that was not simply a means of survival, but constituted a way of relating socially, without the sentiments the westerners assumed were a reflection of their own more sophisticated culture, but with norms and values which they acknowledged, however grudgingly.

The superior physical strength of men, as well as the fact that women bore children imposed what appeared to the travellers to be a natural division of labour between the sexes. Their accounts show that the peasant woman should not be romanticised for her pivotal role in the family, or her maternal strength. Indeed, some of the travellers pointed to the prevalence of syphilis, which they linked to sterility among women, and to the high rate of infant mortality. Moreover, the travellers acknowledged that, however many the births, child-rearing was a brief season, and the peasant woman's role was not narrowed to the care of children or confined to the home. They recognised that, with the development of the economy from the 1880s, peasant women

took on more of the responsibility for working on the land so that their men might seek wage labour in industry. The visitors generally overlooked the peasant women who left the village. (156) Migration to the city, however, did not automatically encourage the acquisition of 'modern' attitudes or the development of the nuclear family, as the travellers assumed it would. (157) However diluted peasant patriarchal ideology may have become by the late nineteenth century, the traditional family was the main defence against the fragmenting impact of industrial development.

Peasant women were accorded specific tasks within the family which remained with women after industrialization. These tasks were based on women's biological function, while socially it was their position in the family that determined their crucial yet subordinate role. However, the travellers' accounts show the complexity of sexual hierarchy. They noted that many of the rituals in the peasant wedding revolved around the woman. She had a fixed role to play. Her central position in the household was reflected in the proof she had to provide of her housekeeping abilities, while the fertility rites showed that it was the mother who ensured the continuity of family life. Hence, she was not only the bearer but also the rearer of children, since continuity was a matter of survival as much as of birth. Moreover, the travellers also noted the complexity of the peasant division of labour. Despite regional variations, certain kinds of work were

always reserved for women, while the balance of roles within the household had been regulated by centuries of practice. Yet at specific times women were called upon to perform predominantly 'male' tasks, so that most of the work depended on cooperation between the sexes. Thus, despite certain areas of dominance, female as well as male, which the peasants saw as a logical organisation of responsibilities, there was some overlapping of territories and tasks. The western observers of the Russian peasantry, particularly in the nineteenth century, however, construed everything as a sign of female inferiority, whether women worked in the house or the field.

The travellers condemned the brutal treatment of women, though they recognised that the latter were not the only victims of violence. (158) As some of the more analytical travellers contended, power was the key, and the peasant man may have used his power within the family as a cultural defence against peasant powerlessness in the face of their superiors. Certainly, the travellers saw despotism as morally corrosive. They recognised that the poor man at least had power over the poor woman. For her part, they saw that she had a necessary role in the household economy, and a confidence in that role, however restricted or subordinate. As some of the travellers grasped, peasant women had a definite sense of purpose, an essential pre-determined place in a small world which was sustained while the community was relatively isolated. The single person was a figure largely

absent from the travellers' descriptions, which may indicate both the universality of marriage, and that the situation of the unmarried person was economically unviable. Certainly, nineteenth-century observers, both foreign and native, agreed that in Russian peasant society:

neither in the home nor in the commune can a man be a complete workman unless he is married and can place at the community's service, together with his own hands, those of his wife. (159)

Nevertheless, Bervi-Flerovsky and Tikhomirov had noted, by the later nineteenth century, the reluctance of some peasant women to marry, or at least to marry quickly. (160) It was change in the world at large and its impact on the community that affected both the lives of women and the family. The travellers tended to see the industrialization of Russia as a sign of progress, indeed as inevitable. They viewed the patriarchal institutions, not least the peasant family, as a barrier to change, though one they assumed was bound to disappear. (161) Change, however, was not always welcomed by the peasant women. Indeed, they saw the economic and political progress of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as harmful to their valued position. In their view, the total lack of political rights had at least enforced a form of sexual equality, which was lost with the 1905 Revolution and the reform granting limited suffrage:

There was a time when, although our men might beat us now and then, we nevertheless decided our affairs together. Now they tell us: 'Your are not fit company for us. We shall go to the State Duma and take part in the government - perhaps not directly, but we shall elect members. If the law had made you equal with us, then we would have asked your opinion.' ... This law is wrong; it leads to discord between men and women, and even enmity ... We lived in misery together, but when it was changed so that we all have to live according to the law, we women find we are not needed. ... The men do not understand our women's needs. We are able to discuss things no worse than the men. We have a common interest in all our affairs, so that the women should take a part in deciding them. (162)

In Russia, as the travellers noted, change came especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. (163) The emancipation of the serfs reduced the amount of land worked by each peasant family, so that their economic dependence on the gentry landowners increased after 1861. Emancipation was followed by a series of interrelated social and economic changes which had an enormous and complex impact on Russian society, and which the travellers believed served to widen the gulf between the largely illiterate masses and the intelligentsia. It was a gulf reflected in their descriptions of the labouring peasant woman and the learned gentry woman,

between the 'masculine' strength of the former and the refined accomplishments of the latter.

The huge rise in the peasant population intensified demands on the land, drove up land prices and depressed wages, so that, as both foreign and Russian observers noted, the second half of the nineteenth century was a period of progressive impoverishment of the majority of peasants. Those peasants who sought work in industry were trying to shore up their family's position in the countryside, while their peasant culture influenced the developing working class. Still, the travellers believed that the isolation of the village was being eroded by improvements in transport and communications; by the development of a rural intelligentsia; and by the growth of a hereditary working class. As will be discussed in chapter three, however, despite the rapid tempo of change, traditional values remained strong, and informed the developing industrial society. These customs included a stress among the peasantry on the necessity of women's work for the family, on a flexible division of labour which nevertheless maintained the centrality of women's role as the pivot of the family, and on her subordinate position.

Upper-class women were also profoundly affected by the emancipation of the serfs and the development of the economy. Yet as both Russian and foreign observers pointed out, these women had been experiencing change since the reforms of

Peter the Great. The travellers also believed that Russian ladies were influenced both by western values and western fashions. According to their accounts, differences had developed among these women since the eighteenth century: there was the traditional lady, in both the landowning and the merchant classes, whose position was still heavily influenced by patriarchal customs even in the late nineteenth century; there was the modern lady who was increasingly well-educated in western ideas and attracted by western fashions; and within this group there were those who led a frivolous existence, devoted to pleasure, and those who dedicated themselves to the service of the people. And, as noted above, between this tiny minority of privileged women and the vast majority of peasant women lay an enormous gulf which the travellers traced back to the 'artificial' westernization of Peter the Great.

Nineteenth-century interest in the status of women in Russia reflected the social and political concerns of the period. It seemed to the travellers that the position of Russian women was tied to the general situation of the people, to the backwardness of peasant communal agriculture and to the despotism of the autocratic system of government. They believed that industrialization and urbanization was breaking down the isolation of the peasant household and undermining, or at least diluting, the traditional patriarchal family structure. The ethnographic study of Viryatino revealed

that the wealthier peasant families preserved patriarchy longest; that it weakened sooner in poorer families where women were much less closed in and where they enjoyed a relative freedom by the beginning of the twentieth century. (164) At the same time, Kovalevsky's study of modern customs and ancient laws in Russia led him to the conclusion that all the features of the patriarchal family reappeared in the modern constitution of the family among the peasantry, whereas in contrast, the upper class had adopted European manners and customs. (165) The latter were also influenced by western theories on the position of women, but before considering the development of Russian ideas on the woman question, the influence of the peasant heritage on the situation of women in the developing working class will be discussed.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. See Hugh Prince, "Real, Imagined, and Abstract Worlds of the Past", Progress in Geography, (1971), vol.3, pp.30-32.
2. See R.W. Pethybridge, "The Merits of Victorian Travel Accounts as Source Materials on Russia", Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, (1972), vol.20, pp.10-33: 10.
3. V.O. Klyuchevsky, Skazaniya inostrantsev o Moskovskom gosudarstve (Petrograd, 1918), p.21.
4. See for example E.P. Thompson, Life in Russia: or, The Discipline of Despotism (London, 1848), p.v; C.H. Cottrell, Recollections of Siberia in the years 1840 and 1841 (London, 1842), pp.214-216.
5. Klyuchevsky, op.cit., p.6. See also S.S. Shashkov, Ocherk istorii russkoy zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1872), pp.127, 131.
6. V.O. Klyuchevsky, A History of Russia (New York, 1960), vol.1, pp.45-49; M. Kovalevsky, Modern Customs and Ancient Laws of Russia (London, 1891), p.7. See also The Russian Primary Chronicle (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), translated and edited by S.H. Cross and O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzer.

7. Kovalevsky, Modern Customs, p.13.
8. ibid., p.17.
9. ibid., p.32.
10. ibid.: See also Shashkov, Ocherk istorii..., pp.121-245; V. Shulgin, O sostoyanii zhenshchin v Rossii do Petra Velikago (Kiev, 1850), pp.4-67; E.N. Shchepkina, Iz istorii zhenskoi lichnosti v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1914), pp.17-27;
11. V.A. Aleksandrov, Sel'skaya obshchina v Rossii (XVII - nachalo XIXv) (Moscow, 1976), p.176.
12. ibid., pp.178, 236-241.
13. ibid., pp.303-305.
14. ibid., p.308.
15. V.V. Berwi-Flerovsky, Isbrannye ekonomicheskie proizvedeniya (2 vols., Moscow, 1958), vol.1, p.88. V.V. Berwi wrote under the pseudonym of Flerovsky.
16. A.N. Radishchev, A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow (1790: Cambridge, Mass, 1958), p.134.

17. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, p.88.
18. S.T. Aksakov, The Family Chronicle (1856: New York, 1961), p.189.
19. Aleksandrov, op.cit., pp.111-170; 314-315.
20. M. Kovalevsky, Russian Political Institutions (Chicago, 1902), pp.97-98.
21. ibid., p.95.
22. I. Golovine, Russia under the Autocrat, Nicholas the First (London, 1846), vol.1, pp.88-89. See also Radishchev, op.cit., pp.95-96.
23. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, p.88.
24. Kovalevsky, Modern Customs, pp.42-43.
25. M. Kovalevsky, Tableau des Origines et de l'Evolution de la Famille et de la Propriété (Stockholm, 1890), p.148.
26. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, p.88.
27. Kovalevsky, Russian Political Institutions, pp.97-98.
See also V. Mikhnevich, Russkije zhenshchiny XVIII

- stol'tiya (Kiev, 1895), pp.19-34.
28. Golovine, op.cit., vol.1, p.125.
29. Aleksandrov, op.cit., pp.294-310.
30. Y.M. Sokolov, Russian Folklore (1938: Detroit, 1971), p.529.
31. ibid., pp.215-216.
32. L. Tikhomirov, Russia, Political and Social (London, 1888), vol.1, pp.185-186. See also Sokolov, op.cit., p.527: 'the daughter-in-law said to the new bride: "It is not for us, sister, to be exalted above our husbands"'.
"
33. Sokolov, op.cit., pp.212-213.
34. ibid., p.529.
35. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, pp.88-89.
36. Marie Zebrikoff, "Russia" in The Woman Question in Europe (New York, 1884), edited by T. Stanton, pp.396-397. See also P.G. Mizhnev, Zhenskiy vopros i zhenskoe dvizhenie (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp.61-62; S.S. Shashkov, Sobranie sochineniy (St. Petersburg, 1898), vol.1, p.846.

37. See Ya. A. Kantorovich, Zhenshchina v prave (St. Petersburg, 1896), pp.50-59; but the power was not absolute: p.92.
38. Kovalevsky, Tableau des origines, p.145.
39. Kovalevsky, Modern Customs, pp.44-46.
40. A. Leroy-Beaulieu, The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians (London, 1902), pp.495, 501, 511.
41. Radishchev, op.cit., pp.131-134; Shashkov, Ocherk istorii, pp.121-123.
42. Klyuchevsky, A History of Russia, vol.1, pp.48-49.
43. ibid., vol.3, pp.253-255.
44. Kovalevsky, Tableau des origines, p.142.
45. ibid., p.182, and Modern Customs, p.36.
46. Kovalevsky, Modern Customs, p.55.
47. ibid., p.61.
48. ibid., pp.38-39; Klyuchevsky, A History of Russia,

vol.1, pp.180-181. See also M.F. Vladimirsky-Budanov, Obzor istorii russkago prava (Petrograd, 1915), pp.416-418.

49. Sokolov, op.cit., pp.209-210.

50. ibid., pp.204-207.

51. Kovalevsky, Russian Political Institutions, p.96.

52. Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.1, p.119.

53. ibid., vol.1, p.120.

54. ibid.

55. ibid., vol.1, p.137.

56. ibid., vol.1, pp.184, 187.

57. ibid., vol.1, pp.185-186. In these songs, the wife declares that she is no longer a submissive creature. She answers the insults of the old people by insults ten times as great, according to Tikhomirov (p.90), and:

The husband let out with his hand
and boxed his wife upon the ear;
the wife let out with her hand
and hit him right across the face.

58. ibid., vol.1, p.120.
59. ibid., vol.1, pp.188, 192. See also Stepniak, The Russian Peasantry (London, 1905), pp.468-587; in the religious sects, women often participated equally with the men.
60. Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.1, pp.197-198.
61. Sokolov, op.cit., p.207.
62. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., p.89.
63. The Village of Viryatino (New York, 1970), translated and edited by Sula Benet, pp.17-18, 28-29, 75-77.
64. Sokolov, op.cit., p.208.
65. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., pp.517-518.
66. ibid., pp.520-525.
67. Kovalevsky, Tableau des origines, pp.126-128, 139.
68. S.N. Dubrovsky, "Stolypinskaya reforma" in Kapitalizatsiya sel'skogo khozyaystva v XX veke (Leningrad, 1925), pp.98-113: 118.

69. See for example Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.2, p.34.

Whereas Kovalevsky and Tikhomirov agreed with the foreign observers that, however superficial and socially exclusive, Peter the Great's reforms were progressive, Russian conservatives, such as Prince M.M. Shcherbatov, saw moral degeneration and dissolution of the family among the aristocracy as the result. Writing in the 1780s, Shcherbatov acknowledged that, before Peter's changes, women had been almost slaves in their own homes, but he complained that thereafter:

Children have no respect for parents, and are not ashamed to flout their will openly and to mock their old-fashioned behaviour. Parents have no love for their offspring; as if removing a yoke from their shoulders, they gladly entrust the education of their children to strangers; often they sacrifice them for profit, and many have become vendors of their daughters' honour for the sake of ambition or luxury. There is no genuine love between husbands and wives, who are often coolly indifferent to each others' adulteries; others, on some slight pretext, destroy the marriage concluded between them by the Church and are not merely unashamed but rather seem to take pride in this conduct. There is no family feeling, for the family name counts for nothing, and each lives for himself.

Prince M.M. Shcherbatov, On the Corruption of Morals in Russia, edited, translated, introduced and annotated by A. Lentin (Cambridge, 1969), pp.113-115, 135.

70. Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.2, p.34.
71. ibid., vol.2, pp.34-35.
72. ibid., vol.2, p.40.
73. ibid., vol.2, p.47.
74. Golovine, op.cit., vol.1, pp.116, 128.
75. R. Lyall, The Character of the Russians, and a Detailed History of Moscow (London, 1823), pp.ii, iv, vii, xviii.
76. A. Swinton, Travels into Norway, Denmark, and Russia in the years 1788, 1789, 1790, and 1791 (London, 1792), pp.128, 229. Yet an English lady visiting in the late 1850s noted many similarities between the Scots and the Russians: high cheekbones and red hair, a love of song and dance, of showy dress and alcohol, a propensity for solemn religious devotion and deeply-held superstition, a craving for knowledge, intense national feeling and hospitality. [Mary Ann Pellow Smith], Six Years' Travel in Russia (2 vols., London, 1859), vol.1, pp.236-245.

77. Isabel F. Hapgood, Russian Rambles (London, 1895), p.ix. For a discussion of American travellers' observations of Russia, see Anna Babey, Americans in Russia 1776-1917 (New York, 1938).
78. See E.D. Clarke, Travels in various countries of Europe and Africa (London, 1811), vol.1, p.90; J.T. James, Journal of a Tour in Germany, Sweden, Russia, Poland, during the years 1813 and 1814 (London, 1816), p.241.
79. See for example, The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia (Stanford, 1967), edited by S.H. Baron, pp.142, 147.
80. See for example Elizabeth Lady Craven, A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople, in a series of letters (London, 1789), pp.41-42.
81. E.B. Lanin (Dillon), Russian Characteristics (London, 1892), pp.290, 316. See also W. Tooke, View of the Russian Empire during the reign of Catherine II and to the close of the eighteenth century (London, 1800), vol.2, p.56; E.A. Bond (ed.), Russia at the Close of the Sixteenth Century (London, Hakluyt Society, London, 1856), p.147; G. Fletcher, Of the Russe Commonwealth (1591: Cambridge, Mass., 1966), introduced by R. Pipes, p.103.

82. J. Crull, The Ancient and Present State of Muscovy (London, 1698), vol.1, p.160; S. Collins, The Present State of Russia in a Letter to a Friend at London (London, 1671), p.9.
83. F.C. Weber, The Present State of Russia (London, 1722-23: 1968), vol.1, p.160.
84. See for example E.D. Morgan, C.H. Coote (eds.), Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia (London, Hakluyt Society, 1886), p.38; D. Mackenzie Wallace, Russia (London, 1877), p.129; G. Brandes, Impressions of Russia (London, 1889), p.65.
85. The Travels of Olearius, pp.15, 170: See also R.H. Major, Notes Upon Russia (London, Hakluyt Society, 1851), vol.1, p.94.
86. See for example Collins, op.cit., p.9; Crull, op.cit., vol.1, p.161.
87. R. Bremner, Excursions in the Interior of Russia (London, 1839), vol.1, p.197; Brandes, op.cit., p.65; A. Gallanga, A Summer Tour in Russia (London, 1882), p.255.
88. The Travels of Olearius, p.170; Collins, op.cit., p.37.

89. C.A. Stoddard, Across Russia (London, 1892), p.41. See also Major, op.cit., vol.1, p.79.
90. See for example, Weber, op.cit., vol.1, p.150; Crull, op.cit., vol.1, p.143; Lyall, op.cit., pp.cxviii-cxx.
91. Lucy Atkinson, Recollections of Tartar Steppes and Inhabitants (London, 1863), p.152.
92. E. Spencer, Travels in Circassia, Krim Tartary, etc., (London, 1837), vol.2, p.140.
93. Englishwoman 7, The English Woman in Russia (London, 1855), p.110. See also A. & X. Hommaire de Hell, Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea, the Crimea, the Caucasus, etc. (London, 1847), p.61; W. Jesse, Russia and the War (London, 1854), p.68.
94. Crull, op.cit., vol.1, p.155; Lord Macartney, An Account of Russia (London, 1767), p.102. See also Bond, op.cit., p.131; Collins, op.cit., pp.7, 155; Thompson, op.cit., p.60; W.R.S. Ralston, Songs of the Russian People (London, 1872), p.263.
95. Major, op.cit., vol.1, pp.92, 99; Bond, op.cit., p.131; The Travels of Olearius, p.164.

96. Collins, op.cit., p.35; Macartney, op.cit., pp.102-103.
97. Mary A.P. Smith, op.cit., vol.2, pp.199-200.
98. See for example, Collins, op.cit., p.36; Tooke, op.cit., vol.2, p.37; Bremner, op.cit., vol.1, p.196; Ralston, op.cit., pp.264-266.
99. Bond, op.cit., p.131. See also Major, op.cit., vol.1, p.91.
100. Tooke, op.cit., vol.2, p.37; Mackenzie Wallace, op.cit., p.89. See also P.H. Bruce, Memoirs of Peter Henry Henry Bruce (London, 1782), p.86; Englishwoman, op.cit., p.103.
101. Ralston, op.cit., p.289. See also Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.1, pp.185-186. The Soviet scholar Sokolov also recorded the traditional welcome of the bride by her husband's family (op.cit., p.517):

And there is a father-in-law and a mother-in-law,
 There are four brothers-in-law,
 And two sisters-in-law,
 And so the father-in-law says,
 "They are bringing a wrong doer."
 And the mother-in-law says,

"They are bringing us a spendthrift."

And the brothers-in-law say,

"They are bringing us a slattern."

And then the aunts say,

"They are bringing us a homeless girl."

And the sisters-in-law say,

"They are bringing us a good-for-nothing."

102. Ralston, op.cit., pp.290-291, 304, 287. See also C.A. Pearson, Russia by a Recent Traveller (1859: London, 1970), with a preface by A.C. Cross, p.72.
103. See Bremner, op.cit., vol.1, p.95; J.G. Kohl, Russia and the Russians in 1842 (London, 1842), vol.1, pp.84-86; Thompson, op.cit., p.242; Englishwoman, op.cit., p.115; Stoddard, op.cit., p.102; L. Wraxhall (translator), Recollections of Russia during Thirty-Three Years' Residence. By a German Nobleman (Edinburgh, 1855), p.145.
104. Bond, op.cit., pp.131-133. The Soviet scholar Sokolov interpreted this silence as an effort to ward off evil spirits: op.cit., pp.204-207.
105. Major, op.cit., pp.91-93. See also The Travels of Olearius, p.165.

106. Collins, op.cit., pp.7-8; The Travels of Olearius, p.127.
107. J. Chappe d'Auteroche, A Journey into Siberia (London, 1770), pp.304-307. In contrast to the majority of travellers to Russia, Chappe d'Auteroche claimed that Russian fathers were very liberal in their attitude towards their daughters, though not to their wives, so that they had to pretend to determine with absolute certainty whether their daughters were still virgins.
108. J. Parkinson, A Tour of Russia and the Crimea, 1792-1794 (London, 1971), p.63. See also Tooke, op.cit., vol.2, p.58.
109. Ralston, op.cit., pp.266-274, 278-282, 302-304. It appears that the old marriage rite persisted in the countryside into the Soviet period. Stephen Dunn recorded that it was only certain individual elements which were objected to, because they seemed superstitious or demeaning to the woman, such as the displaying of the bridal sheet. On the whole, he wrote, 'the folk ritual is popular and is praised by Soviet social scientists'. S.P. Dunn, "Structure and Functions of the Soviet Rural Family" in The Soviet Rural Community edited by J.R. Millar, (London, 1971), p.340.

110. See for example, The Russian Journals of Martha and Catherine Wilmot 1803-1808 (London, 1934), edited by the Marchioness of Londonderry and H.M. Hyde, p.271.
111. Mary Holderness, Notes Relating to the Manners and Customs of the Crim Tartars (London, 1821), pp.20-21.
112. ibid., p.44.
113. Collins, op.cit., p.11; Maria Guthrie, A Tour Performed in the Years 1795-1796, through the Taurida or Crimea (London, 1802), p.105. See also Crull, op.cit., vol.1, pp.160-161; James S. Bell, Journal of a Residence in Circassia, during the years 1837, 1838, and 1839 (London, 1840), vol.2, p.216. In 1846, Ivan Golovine wrote (op.cit., vol.2, p.40) that a Russian man could not enter a monastery before he was thirty, nor a woman a convent before she was forty.
114. Holderness, op.cit., p.45.
115. See the revised 1912 edition of Russia, by D. Mackenzie Wallace, abridged by C.E. Black (New York, 1961), p.353.
116. ibid.
117. See for example Chappe d'Auteroche, op.cit., pp.351-353;

- W.E. Walling, Russia's Message (London, 1909), p.174;
 Henry Norman, All the Russias (London, 1902), p.43;
 Shashkov, Ocherk istorii, pp.245-275; M. Kuznetsov,
Prostitutsiya i sifilis v Rossii: istoriko-
statisticheskaya issledovaniya (St. Petersburg, 1871);
The Village of Viryatino, pp.121, 146; P.P.Dunne, "The
 Enemy is the Baby: Childhood in Imperial Russia" in
The History of Childhood (New York, 1974), edited by
 L. de Mause, pp. 385, 388.
118. Spencer, op.cit., vol.2, p.140.
119. Bremner, op.cit., vol.2, p.323.
120. Tooke, op.cit., vol.2, p.39; Mackenzie (1877), op.cit.,
 pp.99-100.
121. Mary A.P. Smith, op.cit., vol.2, p.200.
122. L.E. Berry, R.O. Crumney, Rude and Barbarous Kingdom
 (London, 1968), p.73; Major, op.cit., vol.1, p.94;
The Travels of Olearius, p.117, note 17.
123. Major, op.cit., vol.1, p.94, vol.2, p.134; T. Stevens,
Through Russia on a Mustang (London, 1891), pp.321-322;
The Travels of Olearius, pp.172, 169; Guthrie, op.cit.,
 p.105.

124. See for example, Gallanga, op.cit., p.222; Ralston, op.cit., p.300.
125. See for example, Chappe d'Auteroche, op.cit., p.305.
126. Englishwoman, op.cit., p.33; Macartney, op.cit., pp.58-59. See also Michael Roberts, Macartney in Russia (London, 1974), p.73.
127. R. Pinkerton, Russia (London, 1833), p.321. See also Bruce, op.cit., pp.85-86; Stevens, op.cit., p.321.
128. Golovine, op.cit., vol.1, pp.116, 128. See also Hommaire de Hell, op.cit., p.42.
129. Lyall, op.cit., p.xxvii. See also Jesse, op.cit., p.68.
130. Jesse, op.cit., p.65. See also Clarke, op.cit., vol.1, p.79; V. Tissot, La Russe et les Russes (Paris, 1882), p.460; A. Slade, Travels in Germany and Russia (London, p.337.
131. M.A.P. Smith, op.cit., vol.1, p.170.
132. ibid., vol.1, p.299.
133. Hapgood, op.cit., p.259. Not all such efforts to help

the local peasantry were appreciated. Sophia Satina wrote of the Tambov province in the late 1870s, in S. Satina, Education of Women in Pre-Revolutionary Russia (New York, 1966), p.24:

I remember how difficult it was for my parents to persuade the villagers to send their children to school. They were more willing to send boys because, in order to win the cooperation of the parents, the government announced in 1874 that special privileges would be granted in military service to literate young men. There were no privileges whatever for literate girls, and the parents maintained that their daughters were needed at home for various duties and that education was useful only for nuns in their nunneries, and they did not wish their daughters to be nuns.

134. Rev. James Christie, Men and Things Russian; or, Holiday Travels in the Land of the Czar (Edinburgh, 1879), p.202.
135. The Russian Journals of Martha and Catherine Wilmot, p.271.
136. See R. Reiter (ed.), Toward an Anthropology of Women (London, 1975), pp.131-132.

137. Major, op.cit., vol.1, p.316; The Travels of Olearius, p.169.
138. Lanin, op.cit., vol.2, p.6. See also Pinkerton, op.cit., p.154.
139. See Tooke, op.cit., vol.2, p.6; C.H. von Manstein, Contemporary Memoirs of Russia from the years 1727 to 1744 (London, 1856, second edition), p.269. See also L. de Mause, op.cit., p.386.
140. See Lyall, op.cit., p.112; Swinton, op.cit., p.483; Bond, op.cit., p.147; The Travels of Olearius, p.161 and note 19; The Russian Primary Chronicle, p.139.
141. See Weber, op.cit., vol.1, p.143; Crull, op.cit., vol.1, p.151; Bruce, op.cit., p.104; Chappe d'Auteroche, op.cit., p.54.
142. See E.D. Clarke, op.cit., vol.1, p.143; T. Macgill, Travels in Turkey, Italy, and Russia, during the years 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806 (Edinburgh, 1808), vol.1, p.276; Kohl, op.cit., vol.2, p.337; W. Richardson, Anecdotes of the Russian Empire (London, 1784: new impression 1968), p.215.
143. See The Travels of Olearius, p.172; Collins, op.cit., p.11.

144. Collins, op.cit., p.5.
145. See Bond, op.cit., p.147; Major, op.cit., vol.1, p.ci;
Morgan & Coote, op.cit., vol.2, p.375, vol.1, p.37.
146. The Travels of Olearius, p.127. See also Orull, op.cit.,
vol.1, p.139; Richards, op.cit., p.44.
147. Lyall, op.cit., p.cxviii. See also Bruce, op.cit.,
p.85; Tooke, op.cit., vol.2, p.3; Swinton, op.cit., p.221.
148. Collins, op.cit., pp.36-37.
149. J. Richards, A Tour from London, to Petersburg, from
thence to Moscow (London, 1780), p.46. See also J.
Perry, The State of Russia under the Present Czar
(London, 1716), p.201; Englishwoman, op.cit., p.103;
J. Carr, A Northern Summer, or Travels round the Baltic
(London, 1805), p.304.
150. Slade, op.cit., p.340. See also M.A.P. Smith, op.cit.,
vol.1, p.209.
151. See for example, Edna Dean Proctor, A Russian Journey
(Boston, 1872), pp.57-58; Hapgood, op.cit., p.120.
152. See for example, Lyall, op.cit., p.cxviii; Bremner,

op.cit., vol.2, p.107; Collins, op.cit., pp.69-70; Tooke, op.cit., vol.2, p.3; D.W. Freshfield, Travels in Central Caucasus and Bashan (London, 1869), p.325.

A traveller who journeyed from Reval to St. Petersburg in the late 1780s had observed that 'the dress of the Russian women is exactly the same as that of the Highland women in Scotland: both have a short jacket, the striped petticoat, and the tartan plaid; and both too, in general, have a napkin rolled about their head'.

Swinton, op.cit., pp.227-228. Swinton believed, however, that the Russian upper-class women were becoming more elegant in their attire, and a century later they were said to differ little from French women, in looks, dress, or morality. See Olympe Audourd, Voyage au pays des Boyards (Paris, 1881), pp.75-76. Writing in the early 1870s, the American Edna Dean Proctor remarked that, with the exception of those who follow French fashions, Russian women 'seem to believe in the old Muscovite idea that it is immodest for a woman to let the form of her waist be seen, or to go with her hair uncovered'. Proctor, op.cit., p.212. Nevertheless, it seems that peasant women cared for their appearance and were interested in that of their female visitors. See for example, Helen Peel, Polar Gleams (London, 1894), p.46.

153. See for example, W. Coxe, Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark (London, 1784), vol.1, pp.254, 435;

- T. Lumsden, A Journey from Merut in India to London ... during the years 1819 and 1820 (London, 1822), p.213; Bremner, op.cit., vol.2, pp.73-75; Kohl, op.cit., vol.1, pp.343-347; R. Harrison, Notes of a Nine Years' Residence in Russia, from 1844 to 1853 (London, 1855), p.100; Baron von Haxthausen, The Russian Empire (London, 1856), vol.1, p.281; Weber, op.cit., vol.1, p.118; Chappe d'Auteroche, op.cit., p.303; Marius Vachon, La Russie au Soleil (Paris, 1886), p.285; Gregoire Alexinsky, La Russie Moderne (Paris, 1912), p.64.
154. Haxthausen, op.cit., vol.1, p.44, vol.2, p.230.
155. Susan Bridger, Women in the Soviet Countryside (Cambridge, 1987), p.7.
156. There were exceptions, such as Henri Troyat, Daily Life in Russia (1903: London, 1961), p.92.
157. See for example, Norman, op.cit., p.38; Troyat, op.cit., p.92.
158. See Aleksandrov, op.cit., pp.294-310, for a discussion of the evidently pervasive and widely accepted physical chastisement of peasant women and children under serfdom. See also M. Gorky, "On the Russian Peasantry"

- in R.E.F. Smith (ed.), The Russian Peasantry from 1920 to 1984 (London, 1977), p.18; The Village of Viryatino, pp.95-96, 100, 104.
159. Leroy-Beaulieu, op.cit., p.495. See also Haxthausen, op.cit., vol.1, p.119; Kovalevsky, Tableau des origines, p.142; Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.1, p.119.
160. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., p.88; Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.1, p.120.
161. See for example, Mackenzie Wallace (1912), pp.356, 508.
162. Vera Bilshaj, Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR (Moscow, 1956), p.65.
163. See for example, Norman, op.cit., p.453; Troyat, op.cit., pp.88-97; W.E. Walling, Russia's Message (London, 1909), p.173.
164. The Village of Viryatino, p.105.
165. Kovalevsky, Modern Customs, p.33.

Chapter 3

The Impact of Industrialization on the Position of Women and the Family, 1880-1917

3:1 The development of the working class

The Russian working class of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been portrayed, by contemporaries as well as by historians, as a combination of an anarchic, rebellious mass of 'peasant-workers' with a minority of well-organised, politically conscious skilled workers, the organic intellectuals of their class. Women workers are generally seen as belonging to the first category. The cultural differences between the skilled and the unskilled workers were emphasised by the abyss between the male metal workers and the female textile workers drawn in the memoirs of one of the former:

Metal workers felt themselves to be the aristocrats among the rest of the working class. Their profession demanded more training so that they looked down on weavers and such like, as though they were inferior country bumpkins, at the mill today, back to ploughing the land tomorrow ... I was struck by the oddness of the textile workers. Many of them still wore peasant clothes, looking as if they had wandered into the town

by mistake, and as if tomorrow they would find their way back to their native village. Women predominated among them, and we never lost an opportunity to pour scorn on them. (1)

In her recent study of factory women in Russia in the period 1880 to 1914, Rose Glickman has pointed to the significance of gender in the development of the Russian working class. She highlighted the peasant legacy of female subordination to men, as reflected in the continuing sexual division of labour at the factory. (2) However, this hierarchy of skill and gender is not so simple, while the peasant legacy is more complex than these views suggest.

According to Bervi-Flerovsky, migration for work was not a new phenomenon brought on by industrialization in the late nineteenth century, although it was certainly on a much larger scale in the 1890s. (3) Even before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, peasants had migrated for work, so that family patterns had long been shaped by interaction with factories and cities. This interaction gradually undermined the isolation of the village, eroding the patriarchal structure of family and commune. Still, agriculture remained important for female labour - the 1897 census showed that around a quarter of all women wage earners were hired field hands. (4) Nevertheless, despite the continuing predominance of agriculture in Russia into the twentieth century, the

growth of industry in the late nineteenth century brought increasing social diversification. Non-agricultural occupations became more and more important for the peasant household economy. In most areas, indeed, some form of seasonal migration had long been a necessity. Late nineteenth-century travellers focused on the extra responsibilities taken over by the peasant women, observing that they had to work like a man in the fields. The American visitor to Russia in the early twentieth century, William Walling, noted that:

Bread is baked once a week, and this is about all the cooking; occasionally, with a great effort and at a sacrifice of her already exhausted strength, a peasant woman will be able to cook a little potato or cabbage soup in the evening. Ordinarily she leaves a few pieces of bread at home for the children, takes some more with her to the fields and returns only after an absence of twelve to fifteen hours ... It happens not only occasionally, but very commonly, that the women give birth to children in the fields, that they are carried home only in the evening, and that in three or four days they are back again at work, taking the child with them. The inevitable result is that nearly every peasant woman of middle age is sick in some way or other. (5)

Their babies were still being nourished by the soska, described

by Walling as bread previously chewed by the women and put in little sacks. Walling had the impression that children fed in this way died 'wholesale'. (6)

According to Sokolov, the fate of the peasant girl who had fallen in love with a factory worker was unenviable, reflected in the complaints of a song, that the man had come to know strange places:

In a distant foreign region he has fallen in love with
another,
And me, the sorrowful one, the unfortunate one, he has
forgotten forever.
He left me, he, the thief, the bandit, to sit forever
among the maidens,
Forever among the maidens to sit, suffering a bad
reputation.
No one will take me for his wife, poor me, unfortunate
me!
Neither an old man, nor a young man, nor a man of my
own age who is a terrible drunkard. (7)

Despite his own harsh criticism of the patriarchal base of the traditional peasant family, Bervi-Flerovsky believed that industrialization played a major role in lowering moral standards in Russia. (8) From the examples of western Europe, Russians were aware of the problems of industrialization, with

its deleterious effects on the woman worker and her family: the long hours, low pay, even lower than for men, and miserable working conditions, the sexual exploitation of women workers by employers and foremen, the isolation of the mother from her family, the neglect of children. Revolutionaries as well as conservatives feared the social consequences of industrialization for the family. As early as the mid 1870s, the revolutionary, Sophia Bardina, had said at her trial:

As far as the family is concerned, is it not really being undermined by that social system which forces a woman to leave her family and go to work in a factory for a miserable pittance, a subsistence wage, to be debauched there, along with her children? (9)

Bervi-Flerovsky showed that there was a high incidence of illegitimate births in those regions, such as in the north, where the migration of peasant men to the towns for work coincided with military garrisons. He held that a woman's life in the towns was much better than in the countryside. He observed that while male workers would squander their money on drinking alcohol, female workers would starve themselves in order to be able to buy silk clothes, and that in contrast to peasant women, the female factory workers did not hesitate to answer the call of romance. Yet, as he pointed out, the conditions of factory life were not conducive to the setting up of families, let alone establishing the independent

wage-earning woman. Bervi-Flerovsky believed that the incidence of illegitimate children was much higher in the urban areas, so that the situation could be worse for women in the towns than in the countryside. (10) However, in the 1890s, M. Lyadov claimed that the unhealthy conditions of work adversely affected fertility among factory women, while there was no provision for them to look after children at their workplace. (11) Bervi-Flerovsky had asserted that the barrack-like accommodation provided for the factory workers could not serve as a basis for sound family life. (12) It appears that at the turn of the century, the decline in fertility was already underway in the urban areas of European Russia, and notably in the Baltic provinces. (13)

The western travellers' perceptions of Russian urbanization, at least before the end of the nineteenth century, points to a symbiotic relationship between town and village, factory and farm. In contrast to their own experience, the Russian town was not radically different, socially or culturally, from the countryside. (14) The situation was recognised as different by the late nineteenth century. The British visitor, Henry Norman, noted the 'unduly hurried' pace of industrial development in Russia. He also observed the development of a 'regular' working class dissociated from the land, although he pointed out that many workers stayed in the mill for a few months, others for three to four years, before returning to their villages with their savings. (15) Another early

twentieth-century visitor, Henri Troyat, confirmed the gradual development of an urban proletariat, with workers' families living in communal apartments, each family having one room opening on to a shared corridor, and each generally taking in a lodger, preferably a bachelor, to help pay the rent. (16) However, men and women generally were kept apart inside the factories, while married couples were not always allowed to live in the dormitory or barracks accommodation provided by the employers. Only well-paid workers could afford to bring up their families in the towns. A hereditary working class thus grew first among the metal workers, a predominantly male trade. (17)

Yet even in the late nineteenth century, the Russian working class did not reproduce itself. It was still recruited overwhelmingly from the countryside, and was distinguished from the rest of the European working classes by the strength of its peasant traditions and values. There were regional differences in migration: for example, those peasants who migrated to Moscow came from the contiguous areas, whereas peasants who migrated to St. Petersburg came from provinces distant from the capital. In general, however, whatever the regional differences, the same demographic pattern can be traced: more men than women migrated, the majority of both were single, while there was a tendency for children to be brought up in the countryside. (18) Peasants from the same locality - village or region - often lived and worked

together in the factories, an association known as zemlyachestvo, which eased the transition into the urban, factory environment. Indeed, rooted in peasant life, the regional networks provided a great feeling of strength. However, given that much of the information on zemlyachestvo comes from the memoirs of skilled male workers, it is difficult to assess the extent of its impact on women workers. (19)

Besides the pattern of more men than women migrating, and of migrants being predominantly single, Pavlov has described factory villages in the Central Industrial Region in the late nineteenth century in which entire families found work in the mills, with wives and daughters in relatively low-skilled occupations such as spinning and carding, while male workers were employed as machinists and fabric printers. (20) The textile industry grew enormously from the late 1870s, and according to Ivanov, there was a significant rise in the incidence of 'factory families' by the turn of the century, with husband and wife working in the same factory, while their children served as a reserve labour force. Ivanov also noted that urban workers who married in the cities did so later than rural workers or peasants. Whereas the latter group tended to marry before the age of twenty, in Moscow in 1914, the median age of marriage was 22.6 years for women, 25.9 for men. (21)

The existence of a second generation at the factory was no

proof, however, that its members had severed ties with the village. Parents could force a son or daughter migrant worker to send money home by threatening to withdraw their internal passport. Male migrant workers could combine their earnings with their family's agricultural income to achieve a certain measure of economic security for the peasant household, which in turn enabled them to continue the rural patterns of early marriage and large families. The traditional patriarchal family system was still strong in the rural areas of European Russia, and above all in the fertile Black Earth region, and natality levels remained high in 1897. (22) In practice, the general trend seems to have been that female factory workers either remained single, or married and returned to raise their children in the countryside where the traditional patterns of family life had more chance of survival. It seems, therefore, that the abandonment of village traditions was most apparent among those female, and for the most part unskilled, migrants who remained in the city, as well as among the skilled male workers.

The working class in Russia thus developed through a peculiar interlacing of village customs and institutions with industrial change. The village's influence on factory life was subtle and complex, with the women in the villages maintaining peasant culture. Moreover, women workers were seen as living apart from society at large, their lives contained within the narrow orbit of home and mill: 'exhausted, ill from unhealthy,

unrelenting mill work, knowing no peace at home from morning to night, day in and day out, month after month, the worker-mother drudges and experiences only need, grief and worry'. (23)

Male workers continued to see women above all in their traditional, 'natural' role, while the women were in general associated with peasant culture. The patterns of migration reinforced the town-village nexus so that even where peasants became year-round factory workers, their ties with the village persisted, and the industrial system in Russia was permeated with the institutions, habits and customs of a recently enserfed peasantry whose communal tradition retained its vitality. There was thus no sharp division between village and factory, peasant and worker. (24)

Moreover, the peasant hierarchies were now supplemented by urban hierarchies in which women generally remained at the bottom. Given the stark contrast between the minority of skilled workers and the mass of unskilled, the hierarchy of labour assumed particular importance. Mixed in with the former's continuing ties with the village was condescension and even scorn for the unskilled peasant-worker, and especially for the women, as the memoirs of the skilled worker Buzinov revealed. He wrote, too, that, as an apprentice, he was painfully aware of the lack of equality among workers, whereas later it seemed a minor matter and not even particularly memorable. (25)

Such a craft hierarchy was at least diluted by the influx of peasants and women into the growing number of semi-skilled jobs, so that as industry developed, the balance of forces within the

Russian working class changed.

Recent studies of Moscow and Petrograd in this period have revealed that the Russian working class was highly diversified (26): between the skilled and the unskilled; between the urbanised and the recent migrants from the villages; between those working in huge plants and those employed in small workshops; between men and women. As has been discussed in chapter two, the traditional division of labour between the sexes was not completely rigid as far as women were concerned, though they were always held primarily responsible for the housework and childcare. Peasant notions of gender and expectations which did not confine women to the home or to the strictly delineated tasks informed the development of the working class in Russia and the structure of the labour force. Women workers tended to be, and to remain, unskilled, however. In addition, the increase in semi-skilled jobs also added to the hierarchies, and women, whether skilled or unskilled, were still considered the 'dark mass' by the skilled male workers. (27)

Between the 1880s and the Russian Revolution of 1917 there was a gradual increase both in the numbers of women in the industrial labour force and in their percentage of the total. By the end of the 1880s, there were around 200,000 female factory workers, accounting for a quarter of the industrial labour force, and forty per cent of the work force in the

textile industry. (28) According to Rashin, there was a tendency to increase the use of female labour wherever great physical strength was not required, although the impression is that women's work was nevertheless very physically demanding. Increasing mechanization and low skill requirements meant that there was a multiplicity of openings for first generation urban migrants lacking industrial experience: the textile, chemical and tobacco industries were major employers of village girls from the 1890s. Above all, they were concentrated in the textile industry in which they constituted 58.6 per cent by 1914. On the eve of World War 1, one in three factory workers was a woman. (29) Besides the textile, chemical and tobacco industries, women were also to be found in the lime, brick, glass, sugar-refining, distilling, food and rubber processing industries.

Russian industry had a huge, impoverished population to draw on so that it could afford to rely on labour rather than technological innovation. Translated into family life, there was no great urge for the transformation of the traditional peasant structure, though there was some change as we have seen. At the same time, the increased employment of women was seen as a consequence of mechanisation. Women, however, tended to perform the least skilled jobs with the lowest wages and lowest status. The factory inspectorate in this period recognised that the burden of industrialization fell especially heavily on women. Yet even as they noted the

failure of the generally held belief in women as weaker beings than men to prevent the growth of the female industrial work force, they accepted that it should not do so. They accepted, in effect, that women, or at least peasant women, should work. At the same time, they sought to 'improve' factory conditions so that women workers could still fulfil what was seen as their primary natural function, as well as their social duty, of maternity, so that they could meet their responsibilities for the health of future generations of workers. (30) Tsarist factory inspectors recorded that employers saw women as more industrious and abstemious than men and as less likely to organise in their own interests. Whenever possible, women were used to displace men, because of the former's cheapness and assumed passivity, a trend that was reinforced after the 1905 Revolution, particularly in the cotton-weaving industry. (31)

The factory inspector, I.I. Yanzhul, accepted women in the factories as a fact of economic life. However, he was aware of the social consequences. His aim was generally to ameliorate the working conditions of the female labour force, and above all, to protect their maternal function. (32)

Conditions of life and work in Russian factories were deplorable for both sexes, but besides the shared bad conditions, women were subjected to sexual abuse from their bosses. Even in the 1870s, Sophia Bardina believed that the family was being destroyed by 'a social system which forces

an impoverished woman to abandon herself to prostitution'. (33)

Propagandists like Bardina found the very low and unequal pay for women workers, as well as the sexual degradation to which they were subjected, insuperable obstacles to penetrating the female proletariat with their revolutionary ideas. Praskovaia Ivanovskaia's experience in an Odessa rope factory in 1876 seemed typical:

The women were paid twenty-five kopecks a day; the men, as I recall, got thirty or forty. Most of the women workers were totally rootless: as many of them told me, they had nowhere else to go but the streets. Some had to work there so as not to burden their families. In short, women were driven to the rope factory by the most pressing need, by the cruelest misfortune. Only women in this situation would put up with the ubiquitous rudeness, the men's disrespectful treatment of them, the pinches and searches as they entered and left the factory. (34)

In the 1890s, Lyadov pointed out that the majority of working women were not in a position to marry. Men at least could avoid the burdens of marriage and a family, and satisfy their sexual needs, through recourse to prostitutes and illicit relationships. As for the resulting illegitimate children, they were left at the foundling homes which, if the children survived them, would leave them vulnerable to recruitment as

capitalism's wage slaves. (35) Bardina had alleged that prostitution was 'a legal and necessary element of every "civilized" state'. (36) Indeed, according to Shashkov, in terms of prostitution, Russia conceded nothing to other states, while 'in the spread of syphilis, we even surpass all of them'. (37) It seems that prostitution was a major alternative to factory work for women, while it was often a necessary supplement to inadequate wages. The stark reality was that the working-class woman in Russia often earned barely enough to survive. M. Lyadov described the harsh and difficult conditions of labour and life for women toiling in the factories of Moscow in a special pamphlet on women workers under capitalism written for study in the workers' circles of the 1890s. According to Lyadov, women were simply not paid enough in the factories and workshops for even basic subsistence. Yet they competed against each other in the labour market for such meagre pay - about a third to a half of male wages. Lyadov noted how the lives of women had been profoundly affected by the introduction of machinery and the consequent demand for less skilled labour. He drew out the links between the low pay of women workers, their semi-starvation diets, frequent periods of unemployment, the complete lack of minimum financial security, and such widespread social problems as prostitution and venereal disease. Prostitution was officially recognised by tsarism, through the issue of government licences to women - the Yellow Card - which allowed them to act as prostitutes under

police registration. As Lyadov pointed out, the 'choice' of prostitution was not an unusual one. Rather, it was a general situation, and in his view, the lot of women workers was deteriorating. (38)

The worker Vera Karelina also related that foremen forced female factory workers into prostitution. She wrote that women workers, many of whom were only thirteen years old, were sexually abused during searchings. (39) In her view, prostitution allowed men to avoid marriage and the responsibilities of raising a family. As for the resulting illegitimate children, they were left at the foundling homes which, if the children survived them, would offer them to the local factories. Indeed, a number of leading women workers who were active in the study circles of the 1890s and in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, including Vera Karelina herself, had been orphans from the foundling homes of St. Petersburg. They had been recruited to work in the city's large textile mills which had special arrangements with the homes in order to get a steady supply of labour. (40) It seems, however, that the greatest number of prostitutes in pre-revolutionary Russia came not from factory workers but from the domestic servants who often fled want in the villages only to find economic insecurity, poor wages and appalling living conditions in the towns. (41)

Single women comprised the majority of the work force in the

Russian textile industry, although men occupied most of the skilled jobs. There was protective legislation. Indeed, the Russian factory laws of the 1890s have been described as more enlightened than similar legislation in Western Europe and the U.S.A. (42) While it may have been a reflection of tsarist paternalism, the legislation allowed the employers to decrease the already low wages for women on the grounds that night work was more demanding. Protective legislation thus appeared to put women at a disadvantage in the labour force, and to strengthen the division of labour according to sex. Such laws took account of women's biological role as child-bearer, as well as serving to reinforce their cultural role as child-rearer. The authorities seemed increasingly uneasy, afraid that the family life of the masses was being undermined by the rapid industrial development. Contemporary observers were alarmed by the increase in prostitution, in illegitimate births, in the abandonment of children, in the use of wet-nursing, in illicit sexual relations, and in the spread of venereal disease. (43) It thus seemed expedient to bolster the family, and protective legislation was part of this strategy. It restricted women to certain hours and specific occupations, ensuring, in the process, male superiority in the labour force. Yet the law of 1885 prohibiting night work for women and youths was more than part of a strategy to strengthen the family. It was also a response to the widespread industrial unrest of the 1880s, in showing concern about the worst abuses of the factory system. In addition,

it was a reflection of the competition between St. Petersburg and Moscow industrialists. The latter made extensive use of female labour and night work in their textile factories, which the former believed led to over-production, besides harming the women, both physically and morally. Thereafter, the Ministry of Finance gradually extended the scope of the law to cover other branches of industry in which women and young people were extensively employed, though as Karelina noted in 1905, such protective legislation for women workers was often ignored. (44)

3:2 The organization of women workers

It thus appears that, at least during the early stages of industrialization, there were not many workers' families in the towns, but that increasingly workers had their families with them; that their children served as a reserve work force as well as a source for replenishing the working class; and that the very fact of a parent working in the factories would affect the children, even if they remained in the village. By the end of the nineteenth century, the working class was not simply a first generation recruited from the villages. At the same time, the process of its development was a complex one in which both town and village influences interacted. (45) It was claimed that, as women were drawn into industry, their participation and presence in the factories helped raise the cultural level of the working

class, and eventually led to a more settled way of life among the workers. (46) Yet it seems that the children of factory labourers were 'brought up by the streets', had little time to enjoy childhood, and were themselves absorbed by industry from early youth. The worker Buzinov has described his developing consciousness of social injustice, and his determination that there should be, there had to be, a better life for the working class. (47) Possessing nothing except their capacity to labour, he claimed that the workers were exploited as a class without regard to their individual humanity. He recognised that the gap between the minority of politically conscious workers and the rest was huge, and that the difficult task of arousing the latter included the awakening of women workers to an understanding of their class position - male and female workers must fight together for their common cause, especially in view of the severe repression of any workers' unrest. (48)

The fact that a few women had impersonated men in order to get higher wages revealed dissatisfaction with a woman worker's lot. At the same time, the general absence, at least until 1917, of demands for equal pay - in 1914, women earned only half as much as men - reflected the situation in which most women continued to do jobs that were not only different from men's, but were perceived by both sexes to be inferior. (49) Yet women workers were not unwaveringly passive, for they too were drawn, and sometimes coerced, into strikes, especially

in the larger factories. (50) Occasionally, women took action for themselves, and by themselves, as in the strike wave of the 1890s when women workers and youth engaged in sporadic and often violent actions, and again in 1905, when women workers organised to make demands for maternity leave, time off work to feed babies, and nurseries. (51) Rose Glickman maintains that such demands reflected the domestic function of women. (52) Yet such reforms were essential for women to function as workers, while male workers generally were not concerned with these specifically female grievances. In making such demands, women were also demanding male recognition of their needs.

At the same time, given their preoccupation with family interests, as well as their low level of education, women workers were reluctant to support strikes and were used by employers to defeat male worker militancy. Whereas the peasant world depended more on ceremony than on the printed word, literacy, and particularly writing, is a concomitant of industrialization and urbanization. Yet literacy did not necessarily or immediately follow entry into factory work. In the early stages of industrialization, and especially in the textile industry in which women predominated, employers could rely on a vast pool of cheap, unskilled female labour rather than on more sophisticated technology. In 1897, only thirteen per cent of women in Russia were literate, although among factory women the percentage rose to 21.3, while the

corresponding figures for men were 29.3 per cent and 56.5 per cent. Invariably, illiteracy was more widespread among women than among men. (53) Nevertheless, the late nineteenth century witnessed increasing literacy among the population in European Russia, including the peasant women. (54) Certainly, by 1918, when women workers constituted almost two-thirds of the textile industry in Russia, literacy in this labour force was only about forty per cent, a situation repeated in the chemical, tobacco, and food processing plants. In trades where there were skilled women, however, the female literacy rate was much higher, while the gap between male and female literacy narrowed considerably in the younger age groups. (55)

The general political backwardness of Russian workers, and of the women in particular, was seen as a drag on the development of the labour movement, of both trade unions and political groups. There was, too, the assumed conservative influence of women in the family acting to defuse, to sap, the male family members' opposition to authority and association with the godless intelligentsia. Indeed, Bardina, who was carrying out propaganda work among factory workers in the mid 1870s, had been betrayed to the police by a woman whose lover seemed to have been unduly influenced by Bardina. (56) Until the 'going to the people' movement of the early 1870s, the Russian radicals had looked on the peasantry as the source and agent of revolution. Peasant response to such hopes, however, had generally been passive

and often hostile. An immediate problem was how to contact and influence the villages. More and more peasants were leaving the villages in search of work. Communal authorities and, later, heads of households, had to give permission for a migrant worker to get and hold a passport, while the workers themselves maintained links with their villages. In the 1870s, revolutionaries began to see in these peasant-workers a means of influencing the villages. They thus began to set up workers' circles for basic educational purposes as well as propaganda. True, these circles could only touch a few, and generally the skilled, since the intelligentsia found it difficult to penetrate factory life. Moreover, the circles were constantly hit by arrests. (57)

Women from the intelligentsia played a considerable part in the revolutionary movements, and their integrity, independence, bravery and dedication were recognised and lauded by their male comrades. (58) In attempting to take their propaganda work into the working class, a number of them found jobs in the factories, including Bardina, Kaminskaya, Lyubatovich and Lydia Figner. They soon found, however, that the sheer physical exhaustion, coupled with their very low cultural level, rendered the female workers virtually inaccessible to socialist propaganda. They, therefore, turned to agitation among the male workers, though the harsh regulations governing the social life as well as the labour of factory workers made this very difficult. Nevertheless, they

managed to read to the men in their barracks, readings which included information on the workers in the West. Such propaganda, however, did not escape the notice of the tsarist secret police, and there were mass arrests, culminating in the Trial of the Fifty in 1877, and Bardina's rousing speech. (59)

The revolutionaries had been impressed by the deep thirst for knowledge which they had found among the ordinary workers. Yet they had been forced to recognise that, apart from the obstacles of widespread illiteracy and political repression, the desire to learn, however profound and untapped, was usually overtaken by the necessary absorption in the wretched problems of everyday life, the basic struggle for survival. Given such terrible living and working conditions, and the even wider spread of illiteracy among women workers, it was not surprising that they were too tired, dispirited and ignorant, and too isolated from the world outside the factory barracks, to respond to the propaganda of the female revolutionaries. Yet a few did evince some interest and display a deep desire to learn, as well as a potential for organization. The female intelligentsia of the 1870s proved unable to take advantage of these glimmerings of consciousness among a few women workers because of their too brief stay, of two or three months only, in the factories. Apart from the crushing of their efforts by the police, the conditions of life proved too difficult and depressing for

the female revolutionaries to continue working there. (60)

By the 1890s, it had been recognised that not only did the skilled workers have to break down the barriers between themselves and the mass of the unskilled, but that, within the latter, the task of organising women factory workers, especially in the important textile industry, was vital and urgent. (61) The workers' continuing ties to the countryside ensured a persistent sense of solidarity based on the customary village communalism. At the same time, the peasant way of life included deeply engrained prejudices and widespread violence against women, as well as the generally low esteem in which women were held. The task, therefore, was not only to raise female consciousness, so that at the very least, women would not oppose the men's involvement in the struggle against tsarism. It was also to raise male consciousness so that they would accept women as equal partners in that struggle.

However, there was a general hostility and suspicion of the intelligentsia on the part of the leading worker revolutionaries, and between them and the mass of unskilled, uneducated workers, including the vast majority of women workers. The workers already protested against their situation in a variety of ways - spontaneous, individualistic and collective (luddism, shoddy work, widespread drunkenness, strikes). From the rise of social

democracy in Russia, the radical intelligentsia had placed the stress on preparing the workers to lead their own revolutionary movement by raising their intellectual and moral level. In this process, in which the intelligentsia performed technical and advisory functions, workers' circles played a vital role. The Brusnev circles of 1890-91, in both St. Petersburg and Moscow, exemplified these tactics. As early as the winter of 1890-91, women workers were joining the hitherto exclusively male circles, and from 1891, there was a network of specifically women's circles designed mainly for textile workers. These Brusnev circles attempted to overcome the divisive hierarchies of mental and manual, skilled and unskilled, male and female. (62)

It had proved extremely difficult to organise in the textile industry which was more backward in terms of technology and in the low cultural level of its workers. Nevertheless, it was a most important industry in Russia, particularly in the Moscow region, and so could not be ignored in any attempts to encourage trade unionism and a revolutionary movement among the burgeoning proletariat. The textile workers, however, remained close to their peasant traditions, and the huge gap between the majority of them and the skilled workers was typified, according to Mitskevich, by the male members of the former spending their spare time drinking vodka, while the latter, who were predominantly male, tried to educate themselves. (63) Yet it was precisely women who

formed the majority of the unskilled labour in the textile industry and who were deemed to be the most backward of workers, lacking in political consciousness and with a conservative tendency to accept and submit to authority that could only serve to delay the development of any working-class organization. (64) Efforts were made in these circles of the early 1890s to overcome the separation between male and female workers. It was recognised by the activists that not only were women already predominant in terms of numbers within the labour force of certain factories, but that they were even more harshly exploited than male workers by the employers. Women activists such as Vera Karelina, Anna Gavrilova (Boldyreva), Natasha Aleksandrova, Fenya Novinkaya, Masha Maklakova, Pasha Zhelabina, Natasha Keizer and Elena Nikolaeva were in a definite minority. They were helped by the male workers of the Brusnev organization to set up women's circles, such as that aimed mainly at women weavers established by Karelina with the assistance of the worker Gavrilov, in the winter of 1890-91. (65) The Karelina circle may have included as many as twenty workers, while women students as well as male intellectuals carried out propaganda work in it. Through its members, the Brusnev organization was able to maintain contacts with a number of factories employing large numbers of women. Vera Karelina has described the lives of some of those women who were touched by the propaganda of the early 1890s and entered the circles:

On the Vyborg side, we lived in a genuine commune. Four young girls lived there: myself, Natasha Aleksandrova (a seamstress), Varya Nikolaeva (a housemaid), and Aleksandrova's sister who worked at the dye works. A number of wives of the workers at the Rasteryaevsky foundry also lived here ... We lived as a commune: money was paid into a common fund, we shared a common table, laundry and library. Everyone did the housework and there were never any quarrels or arguments.

Young women in general played a large role in the organization. We were young, healthy and lively, and we attracted young male workers. Our meetings took on a social character. With many young girls, love matches occurred. (66)

However, the highly skilled, well-read male workers of the Brusnev circles were a far cry from the vast majority of the Russian proletariat. As Kazakevich noted, the initial contact with workers was often made by the radical intelligentsia in the taverns, male havens, while many of the male workers, at least in the beginning, were skeptical about the idea of women participating in the revolutionary struggle. They lacked confidence and trust in women, but in time, claimed Kazakevich, respect for the female proletariat began to develop. (67) These worker-activists, female as well as male, held that the interests of women and men workers were

essentially the same, and that unity between them was, therefore, necessary. (68) By 1894, the social democratic movement had recognised the further necessity of turning to mass agitational work among the factory workers, and away from the previous concentration on small groups of propaganda and study circles; of organising around the immediate economic demands of the workers, and from there, moving on to widen and deepen their general political understanding of the industrial capitalist system as a whole. While it was realized that the growing number of female workers could not be ignored, the activists saw class unity as, if anything, more pressing. (69) As shall be discussed in the next chapter, it was not only Marxists who saw the paid employment of women outside the home as a progressive development which would eventually make women both economically independent and politically conscious. At the same time, being overwhelmingly unskilled and illiterate, with a recent background of peasant patriarchalism, women workers were considered to be even more backward, passive and superstitious than the unskilled men. Although unions tended to be male organizations, the view of the Moscow Workers' Union of the mid 1890s, reflected in Lyadov's pamphlet on working women, was that there must never be a separation between male and female workers. Lyadov recognised that there were grievances and needs specific to women, and the Union accepted that women already constituted the majority of the labour force in many mills. Nevertheless,

it was held that the basic interest of the women were no different from those of the men, so that male and female workers must 'grasp each other by the hand' and present a united front of the proletariat in its struggle for the liberation of both sexes from capitalist oppression. (70)

The necessity of including women in their agitational efforts was underlined for the Union members by the behaviour of the female textile workers during the strike at Tsindel's Cotton Mill in 1894, when many of them had to be forcibly restrained from strikebreaking: the male workers locked the women up in the factory's living quarters. (71) Many wives and sisters of male workers were opposed to the latter's involvement with the radical intelligentsia. For example, the wife of the skilled worker Konstantinov was resolutely, indeed vociferously, opposed to his participation in the revolutionary movement, and especially one which included in its leadership intellectuals who did not believe in God. (72) Among the radical intellectuals and skilled workers there was a certain condescending frustration with these confounded babas who were delaying the urgent organization of the working class. The revolutionaries of the 1890s were forced, in practice, to address themselves to the 'woman question' which now appeared so vital to the class struggle. They saw that education was necessary, as well as the involvement of women in the struggles of their class. It was, however, an

extremely bleak prospect, given the large and growing numbers of women workers, the depth of their conservatism and ignorance, the difficulties in making contact with them, and the severe blows suffered by constant arrests among the workers' circles. (73) Hence, the Moscow Union, like the Brusnev group, supported - financially and in other ways - a number of women in their efforts to set up women's circles. (74)

Female hostility to the union activities of male workers led the Moscow women social democrats to the decision to try to reach women workers by infiltrating the Sunday schools as teachers. Since women propagandists were generally students, teaching in the Sunday schools was a common method of making contact with female factory workers, especially as it had proved so difficult for the intelligentsia to penetrate the world of the factory. In the spring of 1894, in the general turn to agitational work among the factory proletariat, some women intellectuals, including Muralova, Smirnova and Vinokurova infiltrated the Sunday school and evening class movement to try to reach at least a few women workers, and from there, to organise them into circles. At the same time, the agitators continually addressed those male workers whom the propaganda was reaching on the woman question in general, and on the need to involve working women specifically in their struggle. (75)

The student Muralova got a job teaching in the Sunday school at Rogazhsky Gate, where she knew the head teacher. (76)

Muralova had gone to Moscow in 1893, knowing that a workers' organization existed there. She had the specific aim of teaching and carrying out propaganda work among the industrial workers. Muralova had previously been involved in a circle consisting mainly of intelligentsia in the town of Taganrog. They had been pre-occupied with self-education. She had been influenced, however, by a rumour that the Moscow working class was on the brink of a mass rising against capitalism. At her first lecture in Moscow, Muralova met Pelagaya Vinokurova and A.I. Smirnova. They invited her to join a circle of women students. There, she began by studying Kautsky and the first volume of Marx's Capital. When Vinokurova was sure of Muralova's theoretical education - which incidentally reveals the stress placed on theoretical development, and highlights the problems faced in recruiting illiterate women workers - she introduced Muralova to practical work. She was also introduced to the male revolutionaries, A.I. Vinokurov, S.I. Mitskevich and M. Mandelshtam (Lyadov), who were all engaged in work among the Moscow working class through printing leaflets and distributing illegal literature which, it seems, was favourably received by the workers.

N.I. Perekrestov, who apparently enjoyed great popularity with the Moscow workers, acquainted Muralova with some women

employed in a local tobacco factory. These women were almost totally illiterate. Muralova worked regularly with them, teaching them to read and write, and gradually introducing them to political pamphlets. At her first Sunday school class, she met three young factory girls who were also illiterate, but who were eager to learn, alert and able. Her work with them progressed so that within three months, she had a circle of seven women workers, and of these, two were beginning to carry out their own propaganda among other female workers in the factories.

Given the numbers, and the low cultural base, it was work of a necessarily long-term perspective. The conscious male workers who were organising the unskilled men held that the female workers were not fit to become full union members because of their deep ignorance and general lack of preparation. Thus, work among the female proletariat was generally carried out separately. Muralova was intent on exposing the inequities of the capitalist system to the women workers with whom she made contact through making them aware of their particularly onerous conditions of labour and pitifully low wages. She pointed out that they worked long hours, often as many as sixteen a day, in conditions which debased their human dignity. She focused specifically on the fact that, in order to get employment at a factory in the first place, young women were generally expected to please the foreman sexually, and that these men would take

advantage of them for a long time, publicly humiliating them. If, however, the women workers resisted such sexual abuse from their supervisors, they could be summarily dismissed.

Although such efforts appeared to be making some inroads into the female proletariat, the unions were smashed by 1896. In the strike wave of that year, many women were involved, and were as harshly treated as the male workers, for the Cossacks did not discriminate in their charges on strikers and demonstrators, so that even pregnant women were their victims. (77) When the period of industrial prosperity came to an end in 1898, the strike movement began to weaken, and unemployment to increase. Given tsarist success in destroying the nascent workers' organizations along with any links between the radical intelligentsia and the working class, more and more stress was placed on the necessity of establishing an organization capable of operating within such an oppressive system. Besides the obstacles to working-class activity generally, very few female workers had been reached by the specifically women's circles. There was increasing controversy over the way in which women workers should be organised, while the wider woman question was seen as a necessarily long-term task, to be resolved once the urgent and elementary task of organising revolution was achieved.

3:3 Women workers and the revolutionary movement

In the late nineteenth century, then, Russian Marxists had addressed the specific situation of women workers. In a pamphlet published in 1901, Krupskaya pointed out that female peasants and industrial workers shouldered a double burden, both as women and as workers. For Krupskaya, however, the sexual inequality and oppression of women should not set them apart from the male workers. Rather, she maintained, women must join with their male comrades in the general struggle for socialism, for only a socialist society would and could resolve the woman question. (78) At the same time, social democracy had to recognise the specific grievances of women workers. Hence, it included the demand for protective legislation for women as part of its minimum programme.

The numbers of women workers in industry continued to increase, especially in the first decade of the twentieth century. There was also a growing trend for factory owners to employ fewer men than women, and to lay off more men than women, because not only were the latter cheaper, but in the aftermath of strikes, employers preferred the less rebellious, more easily cowed female labourers. (79) This trend was reinforced after the 1905 Revolution, particularly in the cotton-weaving industry. Generally, women were held to be more industrious and obediently pliant than men, willing to accept low and unequal pay, and much less prone to the

drunkenness so prevalent among the unskilled male workers. Moreover, while women's work remained very physically demanding despite increasing mechanisation, Kollontai claimed that, in terms of productivity at least, the female workers must have been the equal of the men. (80) In addition, the war with Japan in 1904 had drawn more women into Russian industry.

In opposition to the widespread assumption of female political passivity, Kollontai claimed that in 1905 there was 'no corner in which, in one way or another, the voice of a woman speaking about herself and demanding new rights was not heard'. (81) Though their efforts proved short-lived, working women, including domestic servants, organised themselves during the revolution. Textile workers presented specifically women's demands to the Shidlovskii Commission in 1905 as part of its investigation into workers' grievances. Indeed, women workers had voted in the elections to this Commission. (82) Yet it seems that at least until the feminist movement appeared to be gaining some support among the female proletariat, with women workers present at feminist meetings and feminist agitators at the factories, the Marxists did not focus attention on the problem of how to draw women into the working-class struggle. (83) There were exceptions: for example, there was a special women's section, aimed at developing the political consciousness of women workers, in the Bolshevik Party in Ivanovo-Voznesensk in 1904-05. (84)

In general, however, Bolsheviks distrusted separate organizations for women, preferring that women participate with men in strike committees and soviets, as in Kostromo where female textile workers were elected both to the local strike committee and soviet. (85) According to Kollontai, the Mensheviks were like the Bolsheviks in practice on the issue of separately organising women, either indifferent or hostile. Yet she also expressed vehement opposition to what she saw as a Menshevik willingness to collaborate with the feminist movement. (86) Kollontai was severely critical of the lack of a practical strategy, and of the ineffectiveness of existing agitation to win women workers. She refused, however, to work with the feminists, fearing that they would pull women workers away from revolution by their concentration on reforms that would benefit women as women within the system. Although feminist agitators claimed to have made some headway among factory women, Kollontai insisted that the events of 1905 revealed huge differences between the demands of working-class women and upper-class feminists. (87)

A number of the Brusnev women were active in 1905. Anna Gavrilova, who had been a member of the Petersburg Union of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class in 1895-96, was a member of the Petersburg Soviet in 1905. Vera Karelina organised women in Gapon's Assembly of the Russian Factory and Mill Workers in 1904. (88) Karelina wrote that the mass of male workers felt that social activity was not a woman's

affair; that her sphere for action was the machine in the factory and the stove at home; and that her task was to bring up the children. Yet in 1905, the female factory workers insisted that they too were human beings, and not inferior to male workers. They pointed out that they suffered a double oppression, exploited as workers and as women in a myriad of ways, but in particular, both economically and sexually. Moreover, they realised that the male workers did not understand or appreciate their specific needs. Karelina observed that the male comrades tended to dismiss these demands as relating to the home and not to the factory. Indeed, she claimed that even in industries exclusively staffed by women, they were treated as if they did not count as workers. (89) She persisted in her efforts to raise the political consciousness of women workers, and encourage their active participation in the struggle for a better life for all workers. Father Gapon supported Karelina's efforts to organise women within his Assembly, despite his apparent acceptance of peasant notions concerning women's inferiority. By the beginning of 1905, she had involved almost a thousand women on a regular basis. (90)

As in the 1890s, Karelina's aims were the enlightenment of the workers, and especially the women; the development of their understanding from a focus on their specific situation to the wider social, economic and political position; and growth in the unity and organization of the working class as a whole. (91)

The women workers in her study circle, however, refused to allow male workers to attend their meetings, fearing that the men would judge them wanting. (92) In practice, this attitude towards women workers was not peculiar to men, as Cecilia Bobrovskaya, a Bolshevik underground organiser, revealed when she claimed that the only concerns of female workers lay in 'nursing their children and making their husbands' meals', concluding that they were 'the most abject and ignorant creatures in the world'. (93) Karelina was herself responsive to the sexual aspects of the oppression of female workers and acutely aware of the men's lack of consciousness concerning such issues. Nevertheless, she saw the way forward in achieving the understanding by both men and women that they must overcome such divisions and recognise their common oppression. Yet she worked consistently to raise female political awareness through the separate organization of women workers, which she believed essential to overcome their backwardness. Her efforts, however, were always within the general movement for the liberation of the working class.

Between 1906 and the eve of the First World War, peasant women in Russia were drawn into the industrial labour force in increasing numbers. Indeed, their proportion of the labour force rose faster than that of males. The War quickened this process. The proportion of women in industry as a whole soared in Russia from 26.6 per cent in 1914 to 43.4 per cent in 1917; the numbers of factory women rose

from 723,000 in 1914 to over a million in 1917. (94) During the War, the increase in the employment of women and of children was especially marked in those areas where large factories predominated. Thus, in the Moscow industrial region, the percentage of women workers rose from 39.4 in 1914 to 48.7 in 1917; in the cotton industry from 49.5 in 1914 to 60.6 in 1917; and in the metal industry from 7.4 in 1914 to 18.6 in 1917. The percentage of women employed in the Petrograd district was similar: it rose from 25.3 in 1913 to 33.3 in 1917. Before the War, men had constituted two-thirds of the Petrograd labour force. Towards the end of 1917, less than half the total of workers employed in Petrograd were men. Even in male-dominated industries such as the metal and chemical industries, the numbers of women and children employed towards the end of 1916 was at least a third. (95) At the same time, however, while women made up 37.5 per cent of the unskilled metal workers in the Moscow province in 1918, they constituted less than one per cent of the skilled toolworkers. (96) Besides the factories, there were thousands of women employed in the sweatshops and as domestic servants: by January 1917, around 130,000 women worked in Petrograd factories, while there were approximately 80,000 employed as domestic servants, 50,000 as office workers, and another 50,000 as shop workers. (97)

The number of female workers who joined trade unions, however, remained relatively insignificant. Those who were drawn into

the socialist movement felt keenly their ignorance, and lacked confidence in their own leadership abilities. As Karelina had observed in her attempts to encourage female participation in Gapon's Assembly in 1904-05, women workers often wanted to say something, to contribute to a meeting, but feared the possibility of being ridiculed. Hence, they sat in frustrated silence with 'enflamed' hearts. (98) One woman worker who attended the Sunday schools and socialist women's clubs of 1907, and later became a member of the Bolshevik Party, described her development, in which the intelligentsia played a considerable role in promoting 'women's realization of their human dignity and role in public life'. (99) Through the intelligentsia they learned the names of revolutionary women such as Sofya Perovskaya and Vera Figner. She recorded that they read secretly Chernyshevsky's novel What is to be done? and later, in the underground political circles, they turned to Marx, Engels and Lenin:

We understood that the enslavement of women occurred together with the establishment of private ownership of the means of production and the beginning of the exploitation of man by man, and that real equality and real freedom for women would only be found in socialism where there would be no exploitation. Therefore, the most reliable path to the liberation of women was the path of political struggle against capitalism in the ranks of the proletariat. (100)

In the period immediately prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, the Bolshevik Party began seriously to pay attention to working women, and to ways of drawing them into working-class organizations. This renewed interest in working women coincided with the upsurge in the strike movement and its increasingly political nature from 1912. Proletarian women were themselves more and more resorting to strike action, though not as yet for explicitly political goals. The Bolsheviks devoted a new journal, Rabotnitsa, to this problem of organising women workers. (101) Editorial work was conducted in St. Petersburg by Anna E. Ulyanova, in Krakow by Krupskaya and Lilina Zinovieva, and in Paris by Lyudmila Stal' and Inessa Armand. The journal appeared seven times, between February and June, before the outbreak of war in 1914, and resumed with revolution in 1917. According to Krupskaya, the main instigator in setting up Rabotnitsa was Armand. (102) While Lenin was in favour of the initiative, the same could not be said of the majority of the Bolsheviks. Armand appealed to them and to the male working class in general not to forget that they shared the same cause with working women. Indeed, failure to include the female proletariat in their struggle constituted an immense obstacle which could only harm the movement. Armand exhorted the male proletariat to encourage and help the women in their attempts to organise themselves. (103)

The editorial of the first issue of Rabotnitsa declared that

it was clear to politically conscious women that the interests of the working class and of the bourgeoisie were diametrically opposed, and that women's place in society was determined by class divisions rather than sexual differences. Thus, as far as the proletariat was concerned, the woman question centred on the problem of how to involve the female workers, whom the journal described as the 'backward masses', in organization:

how to make them comrades in the common struggle quickly. The solidarity between working men and women, the common cause, the common goals, and the common path to these goals: such is the resolution of the 'woman question' for the working class. (104)

Rabotnitsa aimed to raise the social and political awareness of women workers. The journal pointed to the double burden of women's work, being responsible for the housework as well as having a job outside the home. Indeed, instead of widening her horizons, this double burden ensured that the woman worker's world remained relatively closed, still centred on the family which perpetuated peasant attitudes towards women. Women simply had no time outside work, and were preoccupied with domestic worries, which in turn prevented them from participating in class actions for fear of the dire consequences for their families. Rabotnitsa acknowledged and set out to overcome the restraining influence women had on the

working class. These women were seen as acting as a drag on revolution, which they in turn saw as male indulgence at the expense of their families. The women at least knew their responsibilities, and would remind the men of theirs.

Rabotnitsa determined to 'open their eyes', but recognised that this task involved a change in male attitudes to women. The journal tried to relate contemporary events, both in Russia and elsewhere, to the position of women workers. It described in various ways, and through the contributions of women workers themselves, their conditions of life and work, and their relationship to the capitalist system. It propagated the theory of class struggle, claiming that the interests of women workers could lie only with their class. It reasoned that instead of an autonomous organization for women, women workers must support and be drawn into the struggle of the male working class against their common, capitalist oppressor.

Kondratev's memoirs on the Party's work with the St. Petersburg working class record that a number of women workers approached Party organizers for help in education and organization, and at the end of 1914, a small group of these women workers had been set up, meeting sometimes at a Party member's flat, and sometimes in a tea room. It was not an exclusively female circle, having male leadership. (105) In Krupskaya's view, male and female workers were together trying to solve the woman question, which she believed meant quite a different thing

to the working class that to the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois women, in her eyes, fought for women's rights against the opposition of their own men. For them, the woman question was narrowed to the issue of equal rights. Workers, however, saw class as the basis of contemporary society and recognised that each class had its own interests which clashed with the others'. Krupskaya pointed to the harsh life led by women workers and by their children. She declared that workers had only each other to rely on, so that while women workers should indeed fight for their specific interests, they should do so within the common struggle: one for all and all for one. (106)

For the Marxists, the war revealed the underlying divergence of interests between feminist and socialist women, between the middle class and the working class. While the former saw patriotism as a way to achieve their political demands, the latter condemned the war as an imperialist struggle, as a slaughter house for the masses who had no stake in it. The Bolsheviks believed that feminist support for the war effort would serve to alienate increasing numbers of peasant and working-class women who bore the brunt of the effort on the home front. (107) There had been elections for worker representatives to sit on the War Industries Committee in 1915. Apart from their stance of revolutionary defeatism, the Bolsheviks noted that not one woman was elected out of a total of 198 representatives. This 'sad fact' was seen by them as

evidence of the strength of all the old prejudices concerning women among the majority of the male labour force, and their refusal to allow women to develop and cast off their age-old subservience. (108) Yet it was not only workers who persisted in the traditional view of women's work. In response to a serious food and fuel shortage in 1915, one leaflet stressed that women were particularly well equipped to deal with the problem, given their domestic experience. Yet it was recognised that the role of women could not be restricted to such domestic tasks as the food supply campaign. The leaflet also asserted that 'the struggle to raise pay and shorten the working day is possible only with the most active participation of women workers'. (109) In a sense, then, while the Bolsheviks saw women workers with a double burden, they accorded them a dual role in the workers' movement, to take on work relating to their experience in organising the household, and to take an equal part with their men in the general struggles of their class. The idea that women were practically experienced in certain, domestic areas of work was later reiterated by Alexandra Kollontai, who argued that women who knew how to bring order out of chaos in their households would also be capable of doing so on the larger social scale; and moreover, that working-class and peasant women would be able to do so more effectively than upper-class women could. (110)

With war in 1914, conditions of life and work began to deteriorate owing to the worsening problems of transport and

distribution, the rationing and the ever-lengthening queues. (111) The wartime privations made the lives of working women particularly difficult and harsh, further depressing their general situation of long hours, low wages and crude treatment from their male supervisors. The war, moreover, forced many women to be heads of households. With the mobilization of so many male workers, revolutionaries had to come to terms with the fact that any strikes or demonstrations could only be carried out if women were drawn into them. (112) In fact, women were not passive in the face of worsening conditions. Indeed, in March 1914, women at the Treugolnik Rubber Factory had struck over the mass poisoning of workers brought on by cost cutting. (113) During the war, which feminists saw as potentially liberating for women in political and employment terms, women workers were above all concerned with the shortages of bread and fuel, and the high death rate among Russian soldiers. (114) Yet the Bolsheviks worried about the potential dangers of feminism and separatism for the unity of the working class. They recognised that while all workers suffered from a lack of dignity, from the petty, arbitrary and despotic nature of the management, women workers were vulnerable to further, sexual degradation. The tendency among Marxists, however, was to dwell on issues which affected the physical and material well-being of the workers, to stress what united, rather than what separated or divided, the working class.

David Mandel has insisted that it was not sex but the level of skill and the social characteristics associated with it in Russia that were the primary determinants of political culture, and that in the Russian labour movement the term 'conscious worker' embraced an entire code of conduct that included relations with women. (115) Yet in his memoirs, the skilled worker Kanatchikov expressed the belief that male workers looked on the woman worker as a 'creature of a lower order'. He claimed that she was seen as being uninterested in higher things, and incapable of fighting for ideals, a drag on the life of the conscious male worker. He recalled his own amazement at his first contact with two women workers who reasoned and argued just as men did. But in general, he observed, wives failed to understand their more conscious husbands' interests in politics and cultural matters. Indeed, according to Kanatchikov, women saw such preoccupations as a threat to the family, detracting from the male role as head of and provider for the family. Hence, he concluded:

conscious workers have a negative attitude toward family and marriage, and even toward women. They look upon all contact with girls as a suffocation of personal freedom leading to the loss of their comrades from the revolutionary cause. (116)

Mandel has further conjectured that the inertia of the unskilled workers, their low level of participation in the

labour movement in general, had parallels in the peasants' fatalism and passivity. (117) But, as he acknowledged, this passivity did not preclude periodic outbursts of extremely militant collective action. Shlyapnikov pointed out that the burden of the food crisis struck above all at women who were forced, with very limited resources, to find ways and means of rooting out hoarded products, and who became the first to join the fight against speculation. (118) In fact, as an expression of collective suffering and demands, the bread riot, in which women played the most prominent part, was as significant as the strike, as revealed by the direct, spontaneous action taken by textile women workers in 1917 which proved to be the starting point of the revolution.

The Bolshevik Samoylova claimed that World War I was an important catalyst for the development of the female proletariat, in political consciousness as well as in numbers. (119) In her view, the war wrested women from the household and threw them into the cauldron of factory life, in place of their husbands and fathers, to earn their daily bread and support their families: in effect, to assume the traditional male role. Factory work helped mould these women, pressing them into active participation in the general class struggle. (120) Samoylova pointed out that the life of these women was especially hard and brutal, with long hours of heavy toil for low and unequal pay; with base and degrading treatment from male employers and foremen. These working

women were veritable 'slaves of capital who sold not only their working strength, but also often their own bodies for a piece of needed bread'. Their sufferings intensified with the shortages caused by the war and in the political context of the general absence of rights. Samoylova believed that through the experience of industrial work, the greatly expanded labour force came to place their own miserable situation in the wider context of the horrifying war and the common working-class struggle. (121)

When in 1917 it was decided to mark International Women's Day with a demonstration against the war, the Bolsheviks, feeling that the mood of the workers was tense, tried to maintain control by preventing isolated outbreaks of action which might detract from the overall disciplined organization of the demonstration. As far as the Bolsheviks were concerned, the task was to lead and discipline the masses. They saw International Women's Day solely as an opportunity for protesting against the war, with the overall strategy of conserving energy for a decisive strike on May Day. In fact, none of the socialist parties put much effort into organising for women's day, failing to appreciate the urgent desire for action felt by the women, both as workers and as housewives. According to Shlyapnikov, the Bolsheviks had been unable to produce a leaflet for the day because their press had broken down. He recorded that nevertheless, some Bolshevik women tried to persuade the reluctant Vyborg district committee to

hold a meeting on February 23, on the theme of war, inflation and the situation of working women. (122) The Bolsheviks tried to lead the movement of women on that day, to explain the political situation to them, and to contain their actions.

However, the women themselves took the lead in initiating action, having decided that enough was enough. In the militant Vyborg district of St. Petersburg, women from several textile mills struck, went en masse to the nearby metal works where they called on the men to join them in their demands for an end to the war and for bread. The Bolshevik worker Kayurov addressed the women's meeting, urging them to follow the directives of the party committee. He recorded later that, on hearing of the strike by the female textile workers, he had been extremely indignant at their blatant disregard of the call for self-control and discipline. (123) The women's action put the Bolsheviks on the spot, especially as the rank and file of the Party members supported the women. Despite bloodshed and beatings by Cossacks, the women refused the military's calls to disperse, responding that they were not to be dismissed as babas, for they were sisters and wives of soldiers at the front. From the beginning, they tried to win over the soldiers, or at least to neutralize them, recognising that these defenders of tsarism were vacillating. (124) Thus, in February 1917, the women generally took the initiative. The strikers and demonstrators would surround the Cossacks and describe their miserable situation, exploited

for profits while their men were slaughtered, pointing out that the Cossacks too had mothers, wives and sisters, and children suffering from such privation. The result was increasing confusion among the ranks, and the refusal of soldiers to fire on the crowds. (125)

The revolutionary groups had hesitated, reluctant to condone, let alone support, what they considered precipitate action. The demonstration by the Petrograd women was spontaneous, in that it had no direct, conscious, formal structure of leadership or strategy for overthrowing tsarism. It was, however, the culmination of long pent-up anger at the privations they had suffered and were expected to accept meekly as their contribution to the war effort. Nevertheless, despite the prominent part they played in the February Revolution, there were very few women in the first Petrograd Soviet - about ten - and it was mostly men who were elected to the factory committees. Although by 1917, women in Russia accounted for around forty per cent of the total work force, and were entering sectors of the economy previously dominated by, or exclusive to, men, the female proletariat retained its subordinate position. Women remained for the most part unskilled, while skilled male workers continued to dominate all working-class organizations. (126)

As in 1905, the women were themselves aware that their political development was as yet only a spark. They

acknowledged their need for a comrade who could brave a public meeting, speak on their behalf, explain things to them, and tell them what they should read and what was to be done. The majority of women continued to view the trade unions as male bastions. Nevertheless, women workers did not lapse into passivity. In May 1917, 40,000 Petrograd laundresses struck for increased wages, for the eight-hour day, and for more machinery to lighten their load, while Kollontai organised a movement of soldiers' wives. Both of these movements included political demands in their list of grievances. (127) However, it seems that in the factories, women workers were impeded in their attempts at organization by men who continued to believe that women were not capable of organising or leading; or at any rate, not as capable as men. (128) There were at the same time attempts to attract female membership, such as the special women's commissions set up by the leather workers' union. (129) Nevertheless, the minority of politically conscious, organizationally experienced, skilled male workers tended to monopolize positions of responsibility and leadership. One woman textile worker acknowledged that the predominantly male factory committee had done much to organise the 'dark masses'. But she also complained that this male vanguard seemed to want to retain their monopoly of the leadership, dominating in this case the Nevka cotton-spinning mill in which women comprised over ninety per cent of the work force. She accused the male leadership of acting

undemocratically, of beginning 'to boss their backward comrades', of treating the workers rudely and arrogantly. (130)

In March 1917, the Petrograd Committee of the Bolshevik Party had decided to organise among the female proletariat, recognising both a need and potential for systematic work among women. A bureau for work among women was set up, and the publication of the journal Rabotnitsa was resumed. It was stressed that no independent women's organization was being formed. The Bolshevik leadership appeared to be reacting to, rather than initiating the upsurge of women's activities, and to the new impetus gained by the feminists from the political changes. The Bolshevik Liudmilla Stal' noted that, following the February Revolution:

attempts were made to begin organizational work among the female proletariat, following the example of German Social Democracy. But these efforts were undermined by resistance from our Party workers. In their view, conducting special work among women reeked too strongly of feminism, and they would on no account split Party work among the proletariat along sex lines. The attempts of the Petersburg Committee to organise a city-wide centre for work among proletarian women was, therefore, a failure. The only organizational centre for such work was the journal of the Central Committee, Rabotnitsa. (131)

In Kollontai's opinion, a special Bolshevnik Party apparatus devoted to work among women was essential precisely to counteract the feminist activities and baleful influence among working-class women. (132) She noted further that women workers faced problems from within their own class. The condition of women workers deteriorated, notably after June, with the worsening economic situation, falling wages, spiralling inflation, and increasing unemployment. (133) Indeed, some factory committees attempted to combat the latter by forcing women workers whose husbands, brothers or fathers worked in the same factory, to leave their jobs. Rabotnitsa protested that women's labour should be defended and not fought by male workers, pointing out that dismissing women could not solve the immense problems caused by the war that had destroyed Russian industry. The metal workers' union also condemned the attempts by factory committees to make women workers bear the brunt of redundancies. The committees were thinking in terms of family interests. The Bolshevniks argued in terms of class solidarity, wanting the men to treat the women as equal members of the working class. (134) In the latter view, women in paid employment should learn to fight for the interests of their class, and not the selfish interests of their own family.

Bolshevnik women had come to see the necessity for conferences of working women to raise the general level of female consciousness. Previously, many of them had

dismissed such ideas as separatist. The editors of Rabotnitsa had found through practical activity and contact with the female proletariat that it was vitally necessary to overcome their profound cultural backwardness and centuries of silence. According to Samoilova, the political instability consequent upon the July Days, and what the Bolsheviks saw as a lack of class consciousness among women workers which that crisis had highlighted, forced the Bolshevik Party to conduct more intensive work among female factory hands through special sections attached to party organizations, with the ultimate aim of drawing the women into the general workers' movement. (135) Krupskaya recorded that she and Armand addressed women in special pamphlets and at meetings, as well as through the pages of Rabotnitsa, on the need for female involvement in the struggle against counter-revolution, and in the Party. They believed that systematic work by women delegates, on behalf of the Party, among women was vital if peasant and proletarian women were to be absorbed into active participation in the new Soviet society. (136) None of these women advocated separate women's organizations, favouring instead groups for agitation among women workers. They criticised the persistent opposition within the Party to special work among women as short-sighted dogmatism. Indeed, according to Stal', the result of such hidebound theory was not simply the slow growth of Bolshevik organization among women, but that the journal Rabotnitsa was itself cut off from the masses, and run too intellectually to have any real

impact on the majority of women workers. (137)

3:4 Gentry women, work and revolution

After the 1861 emancipation of the serfs, the gentry themselves faced the threat of impoverishment, even as the position of the peasantry deteriorated. Many gentry women now sought work from necessity for the first time. (138)

However, jobs for such women were scarce, while the traditional occupations of the needy female gentry, such as the post of governess (which was already in decline), school mistress and midwife, were very poorly paid. Gentry women were thus forced into marriage for economic reasons, lacking as they did both educational and employment opportunities, and in a period in which they no longer had the security of the patriarchal family. (139) Both Yunge and Vodovozova noted the profound impact that the 'thirst for knowledge and truth', which they claimed consumed young people in the 1860s, had on family relations, often resulting in tragic family crises. Kovalevskaya, too, observed that 'all the intellectual strata of Russian society were concerned with a single question: the family discord between old and young'. She wrote that the children, and particularly the young girls, 'were seized at that time by something like an epidemic of running away, [some of them] to Europe to study'. (140) Education was increasingly seen as the solution to the problems of the upper-class woman. As a

foreign observer noted:

Every year the necessity of providing some kind of higher education for women became more and more pressing, as an ever-increasing number of women belonging to the gentry were driven by the effects of Emancipation to seek education as providing a means of self-support.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

By the end of the 1860s, it was observed that 'a female proletariat' had arrived on the scene: the spinster aunts and sisters, the divorcees and widows, no longer living in the old patriarchal families, but forced to fend for themselves, in the wake of the 1861 Emancipation.⁽¹⁴²⁾ Individual women petitioned unsuccessfully for admission to the various institutions of higher education. Some attended lectures unofficially. Others went to foreign universities, notably Zurich. Yet whatever their personal needs, observers claimed that the concern of these gentry women was not so much for individual fulfillment, as the desire to be socially useful. Vodovozova reflected on the perfervid optimism of the 1860s, that these women shared the profound belief in the necessity of living according to social ideals.⁽¹⁴³⁾

For most Russian women, study abroad was impossible. More and more women from the gentry needed work. Their choice of jobs was limited, and was restricted even further by

their lack of higher education. In 1872, the government approved, on an experimental basis, courses run by Professor Guerrier (Gere) of the University of Moscow, which would train women as teachers for the higher levels of girls' secondary schools. (144) According to Satina, these courses were free from the general student unrest because of the degree of student participation in their direction. She pointed out, however, that Guerrier not only insisted that his students avoid politics as well as male students, but also believed that women required a different, limited and specifically 'feminine' education. (145) It appeared that the government was caught between an ideological belief that education, or at least higher education, was unnecessary and even harmful for women, and its practical need for more teachers. It was also concerned that if the demands of women for higher education were continually denied, they might be affected by the growing politicization of the Russian women students abroad. In particular, the government had become alarmed by the spectre of radicalism infecting their students at Zurich. Thus, in 1873, the Tsar decreed that Russian women who continued to study in Zurich would be ineligible for jobs controlled by the state, which meant virtual exclusion from the professions in Russia. Nor would they be admitted to any state examinations which were necessary for recognition as teachers, doctors or midwives.

The decree also virulently attacked the female Russian students at Zurich, claiming that they indulged in free love and debauchery, used the study of medicine as a screen for specializing in abortion, and generally were not serious students, but merely hiding their revolutionary activities behind the facade of higher education. However, the decree also promised educational opportunities for women in Russia. Many of the women at Zurich simply went to other universities abroad, such as Paris. (146) Nevertheless, the growing educational opportunities for women in Russia in the 1870s reflected government recognition of the social utility of women, as well as its limits. Thus, in 1871, the state restricted the employment of women, stressing the lower levels of teaching and medicine, as well as clerical work. A statute of 1876 provided for pedagogical courses at all secondary schools and the establishment of women's industrial and technical schools, as well as advocating higher education courses for women in all university towns. The most famous of the latter were the Bestuzhev courses in St. Petersburg which survived until 1918. Many of the Bestuzhev women utilized their learning by teaching in remote provinces of Russia. Others continued their studies and research. Some became agricultural experts and mathematicians. In general, these female students, who by 1881 represented twenty per cent of the total enrolment of higher education institutions in Russia, saw their studying not as an end in itself, but as a means for serving the

people. (147)

Russian feminists of the late nineteenth century were firmly in this gentry tradition of social responsibility. They insisted that not only did women share social duties with the men, but that they should be accorded the means to fulfil the common obligation to the people. Women, they believed, were debarred from jobs not from any lack of ability, but rather from convention and prejudice, a situation which they condemned as socially wasteful. Hence, in their view, the solution to the inferiority of women lay in the higher education and professional employment which would equip them for their social role on an equal basis with men. (148)

In her study of the Russian women's movement between 1859 and 1917, Rochelle Goldberg has speculated that in Russia 'the feminist fight for higher education could well have aided a government eager to maintain the class basis of its rule by increasing the number of available service personnel from the gentry'. (149)

Apart from the implication that the tsarist regime consciously sought to employ women as part of its survival strategy, this view overlooks the ambivalence of the autocracy's attitude concerning the education and employment of women pointed out by the nineteenth-century writer, Tikhomirov. (150)

Progress in the education of women was not uninterrupted. Indeed, it suffered severe setbacks under Alexander III, reflecting deep unease within the autocratic

system over women's place in society, and a fear of schooling them beyond its limits.

Satina claimed that only women with extreme radical convictions, and not feminists, took part in revolutionary activity. (151) Until 1905, the feminists in Russia concentrated on philanthropic and educational activities, acting on the advice of Jenny d'Herricourt in 1857. She had counselled against involvement in general politics, which she saw as the exclusive sphere of men and which, given the power of the autocracy in Russia, could crush any attempt to improve the position of women if it perceived that feminist reformers were 'meddling' in politics. (152) As reaction deepened in Russia from the 1860s, moderate feminists had tried to distinguish themselves from the revolutionaries. Such prominent feminists as Nadezhda V. Stasova (1822-95), Anna P. Filosofova (1837-1912) and Maria V. Trubnikova (1835-97), looked to the women's movements in the West, and imitated in particular the philanthropic tradition. However, they were not only fighting against female inequality. They were also distressed by the terrible conditions of industrial urban life. Part of their response to the economic dislocation experienced with the 1861 Emancipation and to the increasing industrialization of the late nineteenth century, was to run innumerable charities for the education and employment of lower-class women. They founded societies to provide cheap accommodation for working

women; to offer employment to women; to help 'fallen' women. Their most successful activity towards the close of the nineteenth century was the campaign for higher education for women. (153) Given the immense scale of poverty in Russia, and the increasing numbers of women, from both the gentry and the peasantry, seeking work in the towns and cities, such modest philanthropic enterprises could ameliorate the lot of only a few women, and generally only those with some education. Moreover, these upper-class feminists were socially isolated, while their moderation and willingness to compromise in order to win official sanction, as well as the often patronizing regime of their charitable institutions, alienated them from the more radical women and the hapless recipients of their benevolence. (154)

The rapid industrialization of Russia under state direction in the 1890s brought more favourable conditions for the growth of education in general, and of higher education in particular. There were increasing demands for specialists and teachers. There was also renewed concern over the possibly political activities of Russian women studying abroad, since by the end of the 1880s, all the higher educational institutions for women, with the exceptions of the pedagogical and Bestuzhev courses, had ceased to exist, prompting those who could to attend foreign universities. (155) From 1894, under Nicholas II, higher education for women was recognised as necessary and even desirable.

Until the revolution of 1905, higher education and increased job opportunities for women remained the foci for Russian feminists. Despite their contacts with the western female suffrage movements, they expressed little interest in the question of political rights for women. In Russia, there was a certain equality between the sexes in that neither had political rights. The stress among the Russian intelligentsia as a whole was on cooperation between men and women against a reactionary state that denied everyone rights. However, Russian feminists took up the issue of political rights for women in the revolution of 1905. Indeed, from then, Kollontai saw them as a potential threat to social democracy, whatever her claims that the feminists' dress, behaviour and general conversation at meetings of the Women's Progressive Party (established in 1905) tended to alienate working-class women. (156) Another feminist suffrage organization founded in 1905, the Union for Women's Equality, attracted even factory and peasant women, calling for protective legislation and compulsory insurance of wage-earning women, and equal rights for peasant women in future agrarian reforms. Although it was open to both sexes, and sought links with the Liberation movement as a whole, the Union failed, however, to win the wholehearted support of male liberals. (157) The feminists claimed that those male liberals who argued for women's rights did so from principle, whereas those who argued against did so from expedience and custom. (158)

Despite successful efforts to reach remote districts with their petitions, however, the feminists failed to gain mass female support. (159) Kollontai was nevertheless alarmed at their activities, notably by the agitators from the Equal Rights Union who were invited by women workers to speak at their factories and by the attraction of some factory women to feminist meetings. (160) She tried to counteract feminist influence, addressing numerous public meetings, trying to organise a bureau for women workers, and encouraging socialist clubs for working women. She insisted that feminist demands for equal rights between the sexes could not cover over the differences between women of different classes. She claimed that working-class women disappointed the feminists by proving more interested in demands for a minimum wage, a standard working day, and a day off work. (161)

Yet in her efforts to combat the feminist inroads to the working class, Kollontai had little support from within the social democratic movement. She claimed that her comrades accused her of feminism, but she felt vindicated when the Equal Rights Union failed to pass a resolution linking the liberation of women to the overthrow of class society. As far as the feminists were concerned, the differences between the sexes were greater than any class differences. They suspected Kollontai's sincerity on women's issues and that the social democrats were unwilling to fight for women's

rights as a priority. (162)

Disappointment with the Duma deflated the feminist movement. A women's congress, for which official permission was obtained in 1908, was seen by feminists as a way of reviving it. The congress was to be as broadly based as possible, and would include men. In an attendance of over one thousand, upper-class women dominated, peasant women were absent, and the working-class were a small minority. Nevertheless, Kollontai was worried. From 1907, she had concentrated on organising women's clubs for workers in St. Petersburg. According to Kollontai, many of her social democratic comrades saw such women's clubs as superfluous, a feminist deviation that could only serve to undermine the solidarity of the working class and sap the strength of the Party. For her part, Kollontai recognised the opportunity provided by the feminist congress not only for propaganda but also for the education of the female working-class participants. (163)

In her intervention in the congress, Kollontai relied on the textile workers' union and on what she later praised as the 'uncompromising and stoic nature of the Bolshevik women'. She criticised the Menshevik women's willingness to cooperate with the feminists. (164)

According to Kollontai, the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee only reluctantly sanctioned her plans. She saw their ambivalence reflected in the thwarting of one of her attempts

to organise a meeting of women workers. Despite the promise of the Committee to provide a meeting place, when Kollontai and several women workers arrived, they found a sign on the door which read : 'The meeting for women only has been cancelled; tomorrow there will be a meeting for men only'.

(165) This episode reflected the Russian Marxist view that separate women's organizations were potentially harmful. Yet at the same time, the Bolsheviks supported, albeit reluctantly, the organization of women's groups within the social democratic movement. (166) It was indicative of the tension between the Marxist recognition of women's specific inequality, and the belief in the necessity for class solidarity, between the tactic of raising women's consciousness by organising them around women's issues, and the strategy of uniting men and women to overcome the traditional divisions between them.

The programme of the 1908 feminist congress provided for the discussion on the activity of women in various fields: philanthropy, the economic situation of women, the political and civil aspects of women's situation, both in Russia and abroad, women's education, and questions of ethics in the family and society in general. (167) Police intervention, however, prevented any far-reaching criticism of existing conditions. There was, nevertheless, debate and disagreement, for example on the tactics of the movement and on the question of marriage. (168) The relationship of the

feminist movement to the political parties also aroused controversy. In addition, Kollontai's working-class delegates, as well as the more conservative feminists, vigorously objected to the contention that women constituted an oppressed class and must, therefore, fight for their own liberation, apart from men. (169) In Kollontai's view, the feminists were supporters of capitalism who saw the woman question as a question of rights and justice within the system, whereas the working-class woman experienced it as a question of 'a morsel of bread'. (170) Nevertheless, the working-class delegates won support at the congress on the issue of the conditions of female and child labour in the factories. (171) Yet whereas the feminists were concerned with the right to work and equal opportunities, working-class women experienced work as a necessity. Whereas the 1908 congress revealed what women held in common by virtue of their sex, it also underlined fundamental social and economic divisions among women, which had political implications. The feminists criticised what they saw as the limited, opportunistic and even simply lip-service support of the socialists for women's rights. The socialists in turn criticised the class nature of the women's movement generally, a judgement that seemed borne out by the ban on the participation of workers' groups by the organizers of a later congress on women's education at the end of 1912, although some workers took part. (172)

The polemics continued after the 1908 congress, partly through Kollontai's book, The Social Foundations of the Woman Question (1909). As at the congress, she argued for the interrelationship between economic change and changes in the situation of women, and that participation with upper-class women in a united feminist movement was a dangerous diversion from the real struggle against the common enemy of both female and male workers: capitalism. Working-class women, Kollontai believed, must fight within the organizations of their own class for the liberation not just of individual women, but of all humankind from the yoke of contemporary wage slavery. At the same time, Kollontai accepted that special efforts were needed to organise working-class women as well as to prevent the feminists gaining allies in the labour movement. The debate she thereby engendered among the Marxists reflected the importance of the woman question not only to the feminist movement, but to revolutionary theory and the labour movement in general. (173)

In contrast to the influx of peasant women into industry during World War 1, the professions remained generally closed to women. The war, however, provided femininists with the opportunity for public service and the hope of suffrage. There had been a pacifist element in Russian feminism, reflected in the women's committee of the Russian League of Peace (1899), and involving Shabanova and Filosofova. Yet

although they opposed war with Japan in 1904, the pacifist feminists seemed willing to compromise on the issue of the Slavs in the Balkans. Shabanova and her Mutual Philanthropic Society supported the war effort in 1914 wholeheartedly. (174) After the overthrow of tsarism, the feminists pressed for women's suffrage, and in July 1917, all adults over the age of twenty were granted the vote. (175) However, the feminists do not appear to have participated in the February Revolution itself, and thereafter remained committed to the Provisional Government's war effort and the Entente, which served to distance them from the mass of working-class and peasant women who demanded peace. (176) The feminists were finally overtaken by the October Revolution. (177)

3:5 Conclusion

According to Linda Edmondson, 'such was the abhorrence felt by orthodox Marxists (Mensheviks no less than Bolsheviki) towards the idea of separate women's organizations, that the potential value of the female proletariat went almost unnoticed for many years'. (178) As this discussion has shown, however, such a view is too simplistic. There was opposition to the autonomous organization of women workers, as well as a condescending, even contemptuous attitude towards female capabilities in organising themselves. Yet Marxists from the early 1890s had acknowledged the need not only to include women in the revolutionary movement, but

also to win their support and participation by special groups for women, though always within the wider labour movement. The Marxists recognised that women had specific needs associated with their reproductive potential, and specific grievances, including sexual discrimination and abuse at the workplace. There was also the cultural backwardness of the women, and their lack of political confidence as well as consciousness. Moreover, there was the division of labour inherited from the peasant tradition which accepted women working outside the home as part of their family duties, but which nevertheless accorded them a primarily domestic and subordinate role. The peasant traditions were reinforced by the workers' continuing ties with the countryside and by the communal living which those who established families in the towns were forced by circumstances to adopt. The hierarchical division of labour was further strengthened by the separation of women and men in the factories, and by the development of craft consciousness among the skilled male workers.

There were specifically women's circles in the revolutionary movement, notably the Brusnev circles of 1890-91. Such separate groups for women workers, however, had a limited impact given the organizational problems of how to reach the women workers, experienced from the early efforts of the 1870s, and of how to reach them in large numbers. There was also the cultural context of mass female illiteracy, and the

political context of tsarist repression which crushed the women's circles and closed their journals. Moreover, the Marxists were determined to overcome the separation of male and female workers, which they saw partly as a peasant legacy, and partly as a capitalist tactic to divide and dominate the working class. Revolutionary women, like Karelina and Kollontai, sought to break out of the social and political isolation of women by showing that their interests, outside the home at least, coincided with the men's. Thus, the stress on working-class solidarity was not simply a matter of dogmatism.

At least until the partial male suffrage gained after the 1905 Revolution, feminists too saw their struggle as alongside men. Indeed, they did not exclude men from their conference in 1908. Kollontai's polemics against feminism focused on the growing social divisions she perceived among Russian women with the development of capitalism. Nevertheless, both feminists and socialists saw work outside the home as potentially liberating for women. Both looked to the urban working woman, the 'New Woman' being forged by economic development, forced out of her traditionally subordinate place in the patriarchal family. Yet Russia remained an overwhelmingly peasant country. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate the theoretical development of the woman question in Russia to account for the general focus on work for women and the Marxist ambivalence towards separate groups for women.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. A. Buzinov, Za nevskey zastavoy: zapiski rabocheho (Moscow, 1930), pp.20-21.
2. R.L. Glickman, Russian Factory Women Workplace and Society 1880-1914 (California, 1984), p.279.
3. V.V. Bervi-Flerovsky, Izbrannie ekonomicheskie proizvedeniya dvukh tomakh (Moscow, 1958), vol.1, p.86.
4. A.G. Rashin, Naseleniye Rossii z 100 let: 1811-1913 (Moscow, 1956), pp.158-179.
5. W.E. Walling, Russia's Message (London, 1909), p.173.
6. ibid., p.174.
7. Y.M. Sokolov, Russian Folklore (1938: Detroit, 1971), p.596.
8. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, pp.90, 525.
9. V. Burtsev, Za sto let (London, 1897), pp.124-127.
10. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, pp.515-525. In his study of the Moscow working class in the late

nineteenth century, Robert Johnson pointed out that women who worked as domestic servants, day labourers or seamstresses accounted for a disproportionately high share of the mothers of babies left at foundling homes, whereas the share of factory women was disproportionately low. He acknowledged that this fact does not preclude 'unwanted' pregnancies among factory women, but rather that, in his view, unlike servants or artisans, factory women were part of a community which maintained many of the traditional sanctions of village life. Johnson suggested that 'in such a setting, a father may have found it harder to shirk his obligations, and a pregnant girl less likely to be left to her own devices'. R.E. Johnson, Peasant and Proletarian The Working Class of Moscow in the late Nineteenth Century (Leicester, 1979), p.96.

Diane Koenker's study, Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution (Princeton, 1981), shows (p.81) that domestic servants accounted in 1912 for almost 100,000 wage earners, of whom 93 per cent were women. She agrees with Johnson that they had little family life of their own in the city.

11. M. Lyadov, "Koe-chto o zhenshchine rabotnitse", Literatura Moskovskogo Rabocheho Soyuza (Moscow, 1930), p.168. See also Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, p.168.
12. Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, p.521.

13. Rashin, Naseleniye Rossii z 100 let, pp.167-168.
14. See for example R. Bremner, Excursions into the Interior of Russia (London, 1839), vol.2, p.203; J.G. Kohl, Russia and the Russians in 1842 (London, 1842), vol.1, p.8; E.P. Thompson, Life in Russia; or the Discipline of Despotism (London, 1848), pp.19-23. See also Patricia Herlihy, "Visitors' Perceptions of Urbanization: Travel Literature in Tsarist Russia" in The Pursuit of Urban History, edited by D. Fraser & A. Sutcliffe (London, 1983), pp.125-137.
15. H. Norman, All the Russias (London, 1902), pp.381, 453.
16. H. Troyat, Daily Life in Russia under the Last Tsar (1903: London, 1961), pp.90-95.
17. A.G. Rashin, Formirovanie rabocheho klassa v Rossi istoriko-ekonomicheskie ocherki (Moscow, 1958), p.541.
18. See Rashin, Naseleniye Rossii z 100 let. See also Bervi-Flerovsky, op.cit., vol.1, pp.522-524, where he relates the proportion of men and women in various Russian provinces to the incidence of illegitimate births. However, Barbara Anderson, in her study Internal Migration during Modernization in late Nineteenth-Century Russia (New Jersey, 1980), has found (p.78), that the general pattern of migration evidenced in the

census year of 1897 was more similar by work status than by sex. She believes that women may have been responding to the same kinds of motivations and inducements for migration as men, and suggests that Russian women, at least in the late nineteenth century, may have exercised more independent decision-making in migrating than has generally been supposed. However, evidence from the female peasant-workers is lacking, while Anderson acknowledges that the work they performed was different from that performed by men.

19. See for example A. Buiko, Put' rabochego (Moscow, 1934), pp.94-95; P. Timofeev, Chem zhivet zavodskiy rabochiy (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp.12-13. For local studies, see Johnson, op.cit., and S.A. Smith, Red Petrograd Revolution in the Factories 1917-1918 (Cambridge, 1983).
20. For Pavlov, see Victoria E. Bonnell (ed.), The Russian Worker (California, 1983), p.18.
21. L.M. Ivanov, Rabochiy klass i rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii 1861-1917 (Moscow, 1960), pp.99-100. See also Koenker, op.cit., p.57.
22. Rashin, Naseleniye Rossii z 100 let, pp.167-168.
23. Rabotnitsa, 19 April, 1914, p.12.

24. See for example M.N. Nechkina, Iz istorii rabochego klassa i revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya (Moscow, 1958), p.282; I.I. Yanzhul, Fabrichnyi byt moskovskoy gubernii (Moscow, 1966), p.155.
25. Buzinov, op.cit., pp.20-21.
26. See for example Johnson, op.cit.; Koenker, op.cit.; Smith, op.cit.; D. Mandel, The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime (London, 1983), and The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power (London, 1984).
27. See Rashin, Formirovanie rabochego klassa v Rossii, pp.225-236; Z.V. Stepanov, Rabochee Petrograda v period podgotovki i provedeniya oktyabr'skogo vooruzhennogo vosstaniya (Moscow, 1956), pp.33-36.
28. Rashin, Formirovanie rabochego klassa v Rossii, pp.214-217. See also A. Ryazanova, Zhenskiy trud (Moscow, 1923), pp.33, 68.
29. Rashin, Formirovanie rabochego klassa v Rossii, pp.185-195. See also S. Kingsbury, M. Fairchild, Factory, Family and Women in the Soviet Union (New York, 1935), pp.7-8.

30. See for example I.I. Yanzhul, Ocherki i issledovaniya (Moscow, 1884), vol.1, pp.381-393.
31. See A. Ryazanova, op.cit., p.34; Rashin, Formirovanie rabocheho klassa v Rossii, pp.235-236.
32. Yanzhul, op.cit., vol.1, pp.348, 392-392. See also I.I. Yanzhul, Iz vospominaniy i perepisok fabrichnogo inspektora pervogo prizyva (St. Petersburg, 1907), p.64; M.I. Tugan-Baranovsky, Russkaya fabrika v proshlom i nastoyashem (St. Petersburg, 1898), p.380.
33. Burtsev, op.cit., pp.124-127.
34. For Ivanovskaia see B.A. Engel, C.N. Rosenthal Five Sisters Women Against the Tsar Memoirs of Five Revolutionaries of the 1870s (London, 1976), p.104.
35. Lyadov, op.cit., p.168.
36. Burtsev, op.cit., pp.124-127.
37. S.S. Shashkov, Sobranie sochineniy (St. Petersburg, 1878), vol.1, p.868.
38. Lyadov, op.cit., pp.163-170.

39. For Karelina see P.F. Kudelli (ed.), Rabotnitsa v 1905g. v S-Peterburge! Sbornik statiy i vospominaniy (Leningrad, 1926), p.18. See also E. Bochkareva, S. Lyubimova, Svetlyi put' (Moscow, 1967), pp.3-4.
40. See for example Vera Karelina, "Vospominanii", Krasnaya letopis', 1922, no.4, p.12.
41. See Prof. V. Bronner, La lutte contre la prostitution en URSS (Moscow, 1936), pp.5-14.
42. See M.V. Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, Zhenskoe dvizhenie v Rossii i zagranitsey (St. Petersburg, 1902); Frederick C. Giffen, "Prohibition of Night Work for Women and Young Persons: The Russian Factory Law of June 3, 1885", Canadian Slavic Studies, Summer 1968, vol.11, no.2, pp.208-218: 208.
43. See for example S. S. Shashkov, Ocherk istorii russkoy zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1872), pp.265-275. See also M.G. Kuznetsov, Prostitutsiya i sifilis v Rossii: istoriko-statisticheskoe isledovaniye (St. Petersburg, 1871).
44. See Giffen, op.cit.; J.D. White, "Moscow, Petersburg and the Russian Industrialists", Soviet Studies, January 1973, vol.xxiv, no.3, pp.414-420; Kudelli, op.cit., p.57;

- Yanzhul, Iz vospominaniy, pp.95-98; Tugan-Baranovsky, op.cit., pp.385-386.
45. See Ivanov, op.cit., pp.98, 110, 120.
46. Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, op.cit., pp.165-166.
47. Buzinov, op.cit., pp.9-10.
48. ibid., pp.101-103. See also Literatura Moskovskogo rabocheho soyuza (Moscow, 1930), p.68; V.G. Gerasimov, Zhizn' russkogo rabocheho: Vospominaniya (1852-1892) (Moscow, 1959), p.42.
49. A. Amfiteatrov, Zhenshchina v obshchestvennykh dvizheniyakh Rossii (Geneva, 1905), p.53; A.M. Kollontai, "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", Proletarskaya revolyutsiya, 1921, no.3, pp.261-302: 268-170; V. Bilshai, Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR (Moscow, 1956), p.73; Kingsbury & Fairchild, op.cit., pp.15-16.
50. See Lyadov, op.cit., p.170.
51. See Rabochee dvizhenie v Rossii v XIX veke (Moscow-Leningrad, 1952), vol.3, part 2, pp.429, 578; Gerasimov, op.cit., p.28; S.N. Serditova, Bolsheviki v borbe^{1a} zhenskie proletarskie massy 1903g.-fevral' 1917g. (Moscow, 1959), pp.13, 43-45.

52. R. Glickman, "The Russian Factory Woman, 1880-1914" in Women in Russia (Stanford, 1977), edited by D. Atkinson, A. Dallin, G.W. Lapidus, p.81.
53. Rashin, Naseleniye Rossii za 100 let, pp.293, 305-306.
54. ibid.
55. Rashin, Formirovanie rabocheho klassa v Rossii, pp.601-602; Stepanov, op.cit., p.44.
56. See S.I. Mitskevich, Na zare rabocheho dvizheniya v Moskve (Moscow, 1932), p.111; J. Prelooker (Priluker), Heroes and Heroines of Russia (London, 1908), ch.XII.
57. See B.S. Itenberg, Dvizhenie revolyutsionnogo narodnichestva (Moscow, 1968), pp.186-190; Vera Figner, Zapechatlenniŭ trud (Moscow, 1921), vol.1, p.79.
58. S. Tsederbaum, Zhenshchina v Russkom revolyutsionnom dvizhenii 1870-1905 (Leningrad, 1927), pp.15-28; Stepniak, A Female Nihilist (Boston, 1885); Stepniak, Underground Russia (London, 1883); Engal & Rosenthal, op.cit.
59. Tsederbaum, op.cit., pp.22-28; Engel & Rosenthal, op.cit., pp.27-29; Itenberg, op.cit., p.186; Amfiteatrov, op.cit.,

- p. 37; V.I. Nevsky, Ocherki po istorii rossijskoi kommunisticheskoy partii (Leningrad, 1925), vol.1, pp.99-101; The Graphic, October 27, 1877, vol.XVII, no.413, p.387.
60. Engel & Rosenthal, op.cit., p.109; Figner, op.cit., vol.1, p.79.
61. See Mitskevich, op.cit., p.85.
62. Tsederbaum, op.cit., pp.154-160; Nevsky, op.cit., vol.1, pp.276-278, 301-310; R.A. Kazakevich, Sotsial-demokraticheskie organizatsii Peterburge kontsa 80s-nachala 90s godov (Leningrad, 1960), pp.144-148.
63. Mitskevich, op.cit., pp.75-77.
64. See for example Kazakevich, op.cit., p.148.
65. Karelina, "Vospominani¹", p.13; Tsederbaum, op.cit., p.156; Kazakevich, op.cit., p.147; Nevsky, op.cit., vol.1, p.301.
66. Karelina, "Vospominanii", p.12.
67. Kazakevich, op.cit., pp.44, 147.

68. Literatura Moskovskogo rabocheho soyuza, p.68.
69. See for example Buiko, op.cit., pp.30,32, 36-37.
70. Lyadov, op.cit., pp.163-170; Mitskevich, op.cit., pp.79-85; Karelina, "Vospominanii", pp.13, 18.
71. Lyadov, op.cit., p.170.
72. Mitskevich, op.cit., p.111.
73. ibid., pp.73-96.
74. ibid., p.85.
75. ibid., pp.79-85.
76. The following discussion is based on S.N. Muralova, "Iz proshlogo", in Mitskevich, op.cit., pp.153-155. For the origins of the Sunday school movement, see R.E. Zelnick, "The Sunday-School Movement in Russia, 1859-1862", Journal of Modern History, June 1965, vol.XXXVII, no.2, pp.151-170.
77. Karelina, "Vospominanii", p.20.
78. N.K. Krupskaya, Zhenshchina-rabotnitsa (Geneva, 1901).

79. Ryazanova, op.cit., p.34.
80. A.M. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin v evolyutsii khozyaystva (Moscow, 1923), p.80.
81. A.M. Kollontai, Sotsialnyie osnovy zhenskogo voprosa (St. Petersburg, 1909), p.21.
82. Kollontai, "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", pp.268, 270; Kudelli, op.cit., pp.9-11.
83. See Kollontai, Sotsialnyie osnovy zhenskogo voprosa, pp.102-106.
84. Serditova, op.cit., pp.43-51.
85. ibid., p.60.
86. Kollontai, "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", pp.271-272.
87. Kollontai, Sotsialnyie osnovy zhenskogo voprosa, pp.102-06.
88. Karelina, "Vospominanii", p.19. See also Nevsky, op.cit., vol.1, pp.276-278; Kazakevich, op.cit., pp.144-147; Tsederbaum, op.cit., p.160.
89. Kudelli, op.cit., pp.9-11, 14.

90. ibid., pp.14-26.
91. ibid., p.26. See also Walter Sablinsky, The Road to Bloody Sunday (New Jersey, 1976), pp.76-139.
92. Kudelli, op.cit., pp.24-25.
93. C. Bobrovskaya, Twenty Years in Underground Russia (London, 1934), p.109.
94. Rashin, Formirovanie rabocheho klassa v Rossii, p.43.
95. S.O. Zagorsky, State Control of Industry in Russia during the War (New Haven, 1929), pp.54-55.
96. Rashin, Formirovanie rabocheho klassa v Rossii, p.541.
97. I. Gordienko, Iz boevogo proshlogo, 1914-1918gg (Moscow, 1957), p.34. See also Stepanov, op.cit., pp.33-36; N.D. Karpetskaya, Rabotnitsy i velikiy oktyabr' (Leningrad, 1974), p.19; Smith, op.cit., p.23.
98. Kudelli, op.cit., p.15.
99. A. Artyukhina et al, Zhenshchina v revolyutsii (Moscow, 1959), p.20.

100. ibid., p.21.
101. Amy Knight notes that the Mensheviks also put out a woman's paper, Nash listok rabotnitsy. See A. Knight, "The Participation of Women in the Revolutionary Movement in Russia from 1890 to 1914" PhD., London School of Economics, 1977, p.154.
102. N.K. Krupskaya, Pamiati Inessy Armand (Moscow, 1920), Introduction.
103. A.F. Bessanova (ed.), "K istorii izdaniya zhurnala Rabotnitsa", Istoricheskiy arkhiv, July-August 1955, no.4, p.31.
104. ibid., pp.37-39, for the quote and the following discussion.
105. K. Kondratev, "Vospominaniia", Krasnaya letopis, 1922, no.5, p.234.
106. Bessanova, op.cit., pp.31-38.
107. Bilshai, op.cit., pp.83-87.
108. Bochkareva & Liubimova, op.cit., pp.49-50.

1109. Serditova, op.cit., pp.118-119.
1110. See A.M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god revol'yutsii (Moscow, 1918), Rabotnitsa-mat' (Moscow, 1918), and Bud' stoykim bortsom! (Moscow, 1919).
1111. Artyukhina, op.cit., p.153.
1112. K. Samoylova, Rabotnitsa v rossiyskoy revol'yutsii (Moscow, 1920).
1113. Vsegda s vami: sbornik posvyashchennyi 50-letiya "Rabotnitsa", (1964), pp.206-211.
1114. Kollontai, "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", p.296;
Samoylova, op.cit., pp.3-12.
1115. Mandel, The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime, pp.16-27.
1116. S. Kanatchikov, Iz istorii moego bytiya (Moscow, 1926), pp.78-96.
1117. Mandel, The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime, pp.27-31.
1118. A. Shlyapnikov, On the Eve of 1917 (London, 1982), p.118.

119. Samoylova, op.cit., pp.3-12.
120. ibid.
121. ibid.
122. A.G. Shlyapnikov, Semnadtsatyi god (Moscow, 1923), pp.60-61.
123. V. Kayurov, "Shest' dney fevral'skoi revolyutsii", Proletarskaya revolyutsiya, 1923, no.1, p.158.
124. According to Shlyapnikov, On the Eve of 1917, p.7, even in 1914, the workers had begun to make contact with the soldiers:
- An extremely active part in propaganda was taken by women workers, the weavers and the millgirls: some of the soldiers were from the same villages as the women workers, but for the most part, the young people came together on the basis of 'interests of the heart' and thus kinship relations were established between barracks and factory.
125. Gordienko, op.cit., pp.56-57; E.N. Burdzhhalov, Vtoraya russkaya revolyutsiya: vosstanie v Petrograde (Moscow, 1967), pp.118-123; T. Hasegawa, The February Revolution Petrograd 1917 (Washington, 1981), pp.215-224.

126. Kollontai, "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", p.296;
Kingsbury & Fairchild, op.cit., pp.15-16.
127. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god revolyutsii, pp.18-19.
128. Rabotnitsa, 19 July 1917, no.7, p.4.
129. Rabotnitsa, 30 May 1917, no.4, p.15.
130. Rabotnitsa, 18 October 1917, no.11, p.15.
131. Liudmilla Stal', "Rabotnitsa v Oktyabre", Proletarskaya revolyutsiya, 1922, no.10, p.297.
132. Kollontai, "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", p.197.
133. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god revolyutsii, p.4.
134. Rabotnitsa, 1 September 1917, no.9, p.9; Stepanov, op.cit., p.146.
135. Samoylova, op.cit., p.7.
136. Krupskaya, Pamyati Inessy Armand, pp.24-26, 31.
137. Stal', op.cit., and "Istoriya zhurnala Rabotnitsa"
in Artukhina, op.cit., p.108.

138. Shashkov, Sobranie sochineniy, pp.857-858.
139. S.S. Shashkov, Istoricheskiye sudby zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1871), pp.312-313.
140. E. Yunge, Vospominanya 1843-1860gg. (St. Petersburg, 1913), p.481; E.N. Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni (Moscow, 1964), vol.2, pp.99-100; S. Kovalevskaya, A Russian Childhood, translated, edited and introduced by B. Stillman (New York, 1978), pp.146-147.
141. T. Darlington, Education in Russia, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, volume 23 (London, 1909), p.125. For reforms in women's education in the 1860s, see L.D. Filippova, "Iz istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniya v Rossii", Voprosy istorii, February 1963, pp.209-218. For the idea that upper-class women suffered particularly from their lack of education, whereas lower-class women at least had equality in poverty with their men, see Helene Lange, Higher Education of Women in Europe (New York, 1871), p.130.
142. Shashkov, Istoricheskiye sudby zhenshchiny, pp.312-313; Shashkov, Sobranie sochineniy, vol.1, p.858; E. Karnovich, O razvitii zhenskogo truda v Peterburge (St. Petersburg, 1865), pp.64-67; V.V. Stasov, Nadezhda Vasileva Stasova: vospominaniya i ocherki (St. Petersburg, 1899), p.215.

143. Vodovozova, op.cit., vol.2, pp.558-559; A.N. Shabanova, Ocherk zhenskogo dvizheniya v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1912), pp.10-11; Tsederbaum, op.cit., p.18.
144. E. Likhacheva, Materialy dlya istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniya v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1890-93), vol.2, pp.530-535; Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, op.cit., p.138.
145. Sophie Satina, Education of Women in Pre-Revolutionary Russia (New York, 1966), pp.74-75, 124-125.
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162. ibid., p.301. For the feminist view, see A.A. Kalmanovich, Zhenskoe dvizhenie i otnoshenie partiy k nemu (St. Petersburg, 1911), pp.9-11, 15.
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168. Trudy (1908), pp.367-368, 348.

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170. Trudy (1908), p.792.
171. ibid., pp.791-792; Kalmanovich, op.cit., p.15.
172. Kalmanovich, op.cit., p.11; Serditova, op.cit., pp.79-80.
173. Kollontai, Sotsialniye osnovy zhenskogo voprosa, p.4.
174. Shabanova, op.cit., p.24.
175. See for example, A. Tyrkova-Williams, From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk (London, 1919), p.197.
176. Shabanova played host to Emmeline Pankhurst during the latter's semi-official visit to boost morale and the the Alliance in 1917. See E. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Life of Emmeline Pankhurst (London, 1935), pp.159-161; M. Bochkareva, I.D. Levine, Yashka: My Life as Peasant, Officer, and Exile (New York, 1919), p.168.
177. For a discussion of feminism and support for the war, see Linda H. Edmondson, Feminism in Russia, 1900-1917 (London, 1984), pp.158-164; Richard Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia, Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930 (New Jersey, 1978), pp.278-289. In Stites' opinion, (p.295), 'it seems fairly apparent

that the Provisional Government, had it retained power longer, would have, under the constant surveillance of the feminists, established at least the mechanics of emancipation as conceived by feminists elsewhere'. Edmondson claims, (p.170), that 'if it had not been for their twelve-year campaign, one can be sure that the call for women's suffrage in March 1917 would have made little impression on the new regime'. Both are speculations; both Stites and Edmondson accept that the feminists were absent from the events of February, and that their continual support for the war may have alienated working-class and peasant women. Edmondson also acknowledges, (p.170), that 'the obstacles to enfranchisement were already toppling by the time women's delegates presented their demands to the Soviet and Duma, only weeks after the downfall of the Tsar'. Stites agrees, (pp.293-294), that 'the parties in power had committed themselves for too long to the idea of women's equality for them to back out now'. Stites (p.192, note 4), and Edmondson (p.168), observe that sources for the feminists are thin from 1917. For the latter, (p.170), this has resulted in the obliteration of the feminist movement by the October Revolution, which she sees as a distortion of the history of the women's movement. Stites agrees (p.301), but acknowledges that 'the Bolsheviki never had any real competition as organizers and propagandists among

women of the urban lower classes in 1917'. In the effort to give the feminist movement historical prominence, however, it seems that too much is made of the Bolshevik-feminist polemics, with a consequent oversimplification of the opposition between the class and sex arguments for women's oppression, and under-estimation both of the Marxist efforts to organise women and of the political 'backwardness' of the masses of working-class and peasant women.

178. Edmondson, op.cit., p.171.

Chapter 4

The Development of the Woman Question in Russia

4:1 The individual, the collective and the woman question

Despite the continuity presented in foreign observations of Russia between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, there had indeed been considerable change by the end of the nineteenth century, both within the peasant community and within Russian society as a whole, which affected the institution of the family as well as the position of women. Yet as the travellers' accounts perceived, there was the persistence of old forms and customs alongside the new, surviving even under the impact of the rapid process of industrialization in the 1890s.

The travellers had traced the roots of the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia back to Peter the Great. His programme of reforms enforced the creation of an elite educated along western lines, but one which would recognise that a necessary concomitant of such a privileged position was service to the state. Moreover, this ideal was stressed in a period in which the Enlightenment in Europe was emphasizing that education was the key to human progress based on reason. Peter's policy had a number of profound implications. It entailed a tremendous cultural shock, not least in the attitude towards women. As

discussed in chapter two, it opened up a huge gulf between the privileged few, who were imbued with western, secular values in varying degrees, and the mass of oppressed peasantry who continued to live as before, though not without experiencing change, as outlined in chapter three. Another result of such cultural westernization was that the intelligentsia became increasingly alienated from the autocracy itself. The French Revolution of 1789 and the Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century forced Russia into direct contact with the west. The wars stimulated national consciousness. They also brought to the intelligentsia a shame and a guilt about the backwardness, cultural and political, of tsarist Russia.

From the defeat of Napoleon, European influence on Russia, if anything, increased, as did the dissatisfaction with the autocratic regime among growing numbers of the intelligentsia. However, though they keenly felt Russia's backwardness, the critics did not simply ape the more developed west. Indeed, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Donald Mackenzie Wallace, correspondent for the Times, commented that educated Russians saw the peasant commune as a practical solution to the many difficult social problems which progress seemed to bring and with which the west had long been struggling. (1) Above all, they recognised the dichotomy between the traditional organic community (located in the peasant commune) and the fragmented nature of modern society. The Russian

political emigre, Alexander Herzen, had remarked earlier, in 1858, that Europe had never solved the antimony of the state and the individual, but it had at least stated the problem. Russia had approached the problem from quite a different direction, but had had no greater success in finding a solution to it. (2) It was an issue that vitally concerned both the family and the position of women in nineteenth-century Russia, though as Herzen hinted, the question of the individual was not viewed in Russia through the western concept of individualism.

Even in the west, the individualistic ethic had not upset fundamentally the traditional sexual hierarchy. European laws generally were influenced by the Napoleonic Code in which women were seen as subservient wives and mothers, just as they were in Russia. (3) There had been foreign, and notably French, influences on the Russian upper class since the time of Peter the Great at least until the end of the eighteenth century. As part of his reforms, Peter had forced free men and women to come together socially, had given women some say in their choice of husband, and had allowed the nobility to travel and be educated abroad. As the travellers observed, however, parents retained a great deal of authority over their children, and particularly their daughters.

After the defeat of Napoleon, there was a general reaction in Europe against the French Revolution, with its egalitarian

tendencies and its philosophy of rationalism. This reaction was reflected in the development of a national consciousness, particularly in Russia after the defeat of the Decembrist Revolt in 1825. The subsequent political reaction, and the state's increasing reliance on professional bureaucrats and the secret police, further alienated the intelligentsia who came to see their duty as to society, rather than the state. In this period, there was a retreat from the ideas of the Enlightenment, and a growing desire to discover what was specifically national in the country's culture. This search, as Mackenzie Wallace later observed, was partly reflected in an idealization of the Russian peasant communal organization, including the patriarchal family. The intelligentsia was influenced in particular by German idealism and romanticism, (4) Society was seen in moral and ethical terms, with the ideal being the harmonious integration of the whole people, and the idea that true diversity or individuality could only be attained within a greater unity or universal harmony.

The Romantics pointed to tradition and history as containing the solution to the fragmentation caused by modern society. Romanticism seemed to answer the intelligentsia's need for an identity which would make them an integral part of the nation, which would overcome their sense of rootlessness and inner disharmony. It allowed them to come to terms with what the rationalism of the eighteenth century had dismissed as Russia's essential, peculiar backwardness, through a

reinterpretation of the past before Peter the Great. One result was an oversimplified dichotomy between Russian peasant society, viewed as harmonious, and modern western civilization, viewed as fragmented and corrupt, with an unbalanced stress on the individual. Women had their place in this dichotomy, being the representative or reflection of both. There was the recognition of a special role for women, of their essential significance in the maintenance of harmony, and their dangerous potential for disturbing it.

The Russian Romantics saw materialism and the modern industrial society as having their roots in rationalism. Industrial capitalism had already displayed distressingly negative features in Europe. Yet it was also apparent, to the native intelligentsia as much as to the travellers, that tsarist Russia was economically backward, still dependent on peasant agriculture at a time when progress was increasingly seen in the development of industry. Moreover, Russia's standing in the west, reflected in so many of the travellers' accounts, was that of an outmoded, obscurantist despotism. With the development of romantic nationalism, however, came the conviction that each nation had its own, distinct mission. The Russian Romantics looked to their past and saw a vital community that was more than just the sum of its parts. They looked to the west European present and saw an artificial society that was a mere aggregate of individuals; and they feared for Russia's future. They realized, as the travellers

had done, that in Russia the peasant traditions and social structures were still very much alive, and in this vitality they saw Russia's salvation. They recognised that the mir was based on harmony, unanimity and the extended family, whereas modern western society was based on divisive majority rule and on individuals at odds with themselves and with each other.

At the same time, the Russian Romantics were influenced by the western idealization of women. In this view, rationalism had denigrated that side of human nature which women embodied in what was seen as their unique capacity for tender feeling, intuition and emotion, the suppression of which had resulted in one-dimensional human beings, and the loss of the organic community. Yet although the relationship between the sexes was not a subject of profound interest to the philosophes, in contrast to the prominence given to it by the Romantics, the contribution of the Enlightenment to the position of women is a complex one. In their historical investigations into the progress of social institutions, the philosophers asserted both a continuity in the female role and improvement in the position of women, so that the ideology of women's place was influenced by the dual forces of history and nature. Thus, even as the role and functions of women were seen as natural, even as the sexes were recognised as opposites which necessarily complemented each other, the position of women was not static, but was set in a historical framework. Like the

travellers, the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century took the position of women as an indication of the level of civilization.

Both the situation of the peasantry and the position of women fuelled criticisms of the superficial, artificial westernization of Russia by the autocracy since the time of Peter the Great. By the 1840s, the intelligentsia had come under the influence of Hegelian philosophy with its stress on the state as providing the solution to social fragmentation. The repressive regime of Nicholas I, however, led to disillusionment among Hegel's disciples and the return of French intellectual influence. The 'social question' now dominated, including specifically the idea of the emancipation of women. All these strands can be detected in the thought of Alexander Herzen. In the mid nineteenth century, he wrote that:

The liberty of the individual is the greatest thing of all, and it is on this and on this alone that the true will of the people can develop. Man must respect liberty in himself, and he must esteem it in himself no less than in his neighbour, than in the entire nation. Even in the worst period of European history, we encounter some respect for the individual ... With us, the individual has always been crushed, absorbed, he has never even tried to emerge ... Man was engulfed in the state, dissolved in the community. (5)

Herzen's view, however, was not reached by simply applying the individualistic ethic to Russia. In his opinion, aping Europe mechanically had reaped profound damage on Russia. Indeed, since Peter the Great had opened the 'window on the west', all Russian history had been the history of the aristocracy, and of the influence of European civilization upon it. Such crude westernization had not penetrated the masses, as the travellers had observed. Like them, Herzen saw the aristocracy and peasantry as belonging to two different cultures, with a gulf of centuries separating them. For the masses still acted according to instinct, whereas the aristocracy had 'become so introspective that we have killed in ourselves those natural impulses by means of which history fights its way forward into the future'. The masses, Herzen wrote were full of 'secret aspirations and passionate impulses, their thought has not become divorced from fantasy, nor does it remain theory with them as it does with us ... they are children, women; they are capricious, violent and fickle'. (6) It is as if the peasants were the female side of the Russian nation, the aristocracy the male side, and as if the latter had been artificially inflated at the expense of the former. Yet given the nature of the autocratic system, the privileged aristocracy were incapable of action. Indeed, 'we Russians who have absorbed European civilization cannot hope to be more than a means to an end - the yeast in the leavening - a bridge between the Russian people and revolutionary Europe'. He went on to say that Russia's

future lay with the peasantry:

The commune has preserved the Russian people from Mongol barbarism, from Imperial civilization, from the Europeanized landowners, and from the German bureaucracy... By good fortune it has survived right into the period that witnesses the rise of socialism in Europe. (7)

After the defeat of the 1848 revolutions, Herzen was profoundly pessimistic about the future of Europe. His vision of the Russian future went far beyond the conservative romanticism of his Slavophile contemporaries. Nevertheless, their idealization of the Russian village commune, together with the Prussian observer Haxthausen's study of the mir in the 1840s, turned Herzen's focus away from the problems in the west and on to the peasants in his own country, in the hope that backward Russia could help solve Europe's problems. Haxthausen's conclusion had been that the greatest equality in Russia was to be found among the peasantry, though he acceded that patriarchy formed the basis of the Russian family. (8) For his part, Herzen did not idealize the peasantry. He recognised their deep sufferings; but he also recognised that, however despotic Russian rule had been and was, the peasants had retained a basic independence from the state, an awareness of their own oppression, and a common humanity preserved in the mir. Hence, his optimism about

the potential of the peasant commune existed alongside his criticisms of certain conservative features of the mir.

Herzen looked specifically to the Russian peasant morality, which he believed flowed instinctively and naturally from the communal life. He noted that the peasant family, of three or four generations, living together under one roof and ruled over in a patriarchal manner, was very highly developed, and that it might be the source of peasant conservatism. He acknowledged that 'women, for the most part, lead a rather oppressed life, as is generally the case in an agricultural community'. He believed, however, that Russian women were treated with respect when their sons became adults, and especially if they were widows of family chiefs, for it was not uncommon to find the grandmother running the household. (9) Herzen recognised that the patriarchal family, and especially the oppression of women within it, held back the positive development of Russian socialism. Thus, of necessity, the future harmonious community demanded change in the position of women, with profound implications for the traditional family. For Herzen, equality between men and women was essential if Russia was to be liberated both from the dead-weight of tsarist bureaucracy and the horrors of industrial capitalism.

The basis of Russian society before 1861 was still serfdom. The majority of serf women were completely subject to the

arbitrary whims of their master, although as discussed in chapter two, such power may have been mediated by the commune. (10) Women in general, however, were subordinate to men, ideologically and legally. Their cultural level was regarded as low, and before the time of Peter the Great, literacy among women in Russia was rare. Peter decreed that schools should be attached to convents which would teach children of both sexes to read and write. In practice, however, his reforms did not help the education of women, and co-education was long considered 'unseemly'. The few Russian women who were highly educated in European culture were not representative of gentry women as a whole, while they were even further isolated from the female peasantry. Until the reforms of Catherine II, in the second half of the eighteenth century, there was still no secondary education for girls of any class. (11) Moreover, according to one of its students, Catherine's Smolny Institute - established in 1764 in St. Petersburg as a boarding school for young gentlewoman and a day school for middle-class girls - instilled in its pupils 'artificiality in every respect', widening the gulf between them and peasant women. (12)

The patriarchal basis of Russian society was reflected in the Domostroy, or Domestic Ordinance, of the sixteenth century. It set out rules for the running of the household. Moreover, according to Chudinov, it necessitated the suppression by women of their feelings and thoughts. Indeed, any woman's

attempts to evade her situation of subjection were met with accusations of witchcraft and paganism. (13) Even as late as the 1840s, Polunin recalled that 'the rules laid down in the Domostroy were regarded [in Kursk] ... as containing the essence of married happiness, and any departure from them led to family strife - a grievous sin!'. (14)

Romantic love held out the potential for bold, unconventional and even revolutionary behaviour since it posed a challenge to social and political norms and traditions. The Romantics upheld emotion and sentiment, and opposed the financial aspect of marriage. They believed that, without love, marriage was unethical. The romantic conception of women's role was a mainly moral one. Women were exalted as the embodiment of morality, virtue and maternity. The Romantics viewed woman as a higher being, with a sacred nature, one whose function was to civilize, regenerate and redeem man; one whose influence on humanity should only be beneficial. (15)

For the Romantics, men and women were human first. Given this spiritual equality, and the redemptive qualities women were supposed to embody, the Romantics held that women could not be confined to the home and domestic duties, but must become interested in the higher things in life, in philosophy and poetry. The aim was to humanize and harmonize the relationship between the sexes. This ideal of womanhood - of woman as morally superior in her self-sacrifice - was

reflected in and reinforced by the wives of the Decembrists when they dutifully, devotedly chose to share the life of exile with their husbands. (16) Their choice also underlined the belief that a wife's primary loyalty was to her husband. However, this supposed moral superiority, this claim to equality with men at least on the plane of emotion and sentiment, had little impact on the actual position of women, whose inferior status continued. While romanticism involved an examination of important social questions, such as poverty, equality, marriage and divorce, the individual and the state, the stress it laid on refinement of sentiment meant that it had little material effect, even on the literate few it could reach.

Nevertheless, the early socialists had interpreted romanticism as meaning total emancipation, not least the emancipation of women. Many of the male intelligentsia themselves determined to educate their wives. (17) It was thought necessary to rehabilitate women's 'special' qualities for feeling, passion and tenderness, and to unite them with reason. Herzen recalled how impressed he had been by the Saint-Simonians and why:

Firstly, they proclaim the emancipation of women - summoning them to a common task, giving them control of their own destiny, and making an alliance with them on terms of equality.

Their second dogma was the restoration of the body to credit - la rehabilitation de la char.

These mighty watchwords comprise a whole world of new relations between human beings, a world of natural and therefore pure morality.

Herzen conceded, however, that the idea of freedom for women and the recognition of 'the rights of the flesh' were mocked by many, 'for our minds, corrupted by monasticism, fear the flesh and fear women'. (18)

Throughout Europe, George Sand's novels were very popular in this period. (19) Her early novels, attacking the general confinement of women to a life ruled by the emotions as well as the particular issue of the marriage laws, were widely read and discussed by the Russian literate public. Her novels had been translated into Russian as early as 1835. They served as a pipeline of ideas between French socialists and the Russian intelligentsia. In Russia, a veritable cult arose around her name among the intelligentsia: zhorzhdandism. In spite of Sand's own form of idealism - her portrayal of the free heart, the emancipation of the individual, and a vague sort of socialism - she was still more concrete than the German Romantics. In the 1840s, Sand's feminism was influential among the Russian upper class. (20) Both Herzen and Belinsky, the literary critic, admired her. Under Nicholas I, literature, and especially literary criticism as

developed by Belinsky, exerted a powerful influence upon Russian intellectual life. Belinsky was seen as one of the first in Russia to consider the position of women, to place the development of the spirit in the context of social relations and family life, and to call for equality between the sexes. Writers such as Belinsky and Herzen paved the way for the writers of the 1860s - Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, Mikhailov, but especially Chernyshevsky, all of whom considered the emancipation of women as a necessary part of the liberation of society as a whole. (21)

Sand, in fact, advocated that women should not centre their feelings on one man, but should love mankind. Besides propounding the idea of sexual equality, the Saint-Simonians had called for the 'rehabilitation of the flesh' in reaction against the asceticism of the Church and what they condemned as the hypocrisy of bourgeois marriage. This 'rehabilitation of the flesh' was far more radical than Sand's 'rehabilitation of the heart'. It was the latter, however, that was particularly influential in Russia in the 1840s. It was felt that relations between the sexes should be based on the honest expression of feeling and mutual respect, which in turn could only come from equality of the partners.

It was not, in practice, upper-class women themselves who first acknowledged the need for the liberation of women. Rather, it was the so-called 'superfluous men' of the 1840s, the general

impression of whom is that they were suffering from inner divisions which profoundly disturbed their personal life and family relations, and that they were rendered incapable of action, caught as they were between the suffocating despotism of Nicholas I and their lack of contact with the masses. Belinsky realized that throughout Russian society, at all levels, it was the man who played the leading role. He acknowledged that the upper-class Russians had adopted European manners and fashions, but in his view, this influence did not run deeply enough to change fundamentally Russian attitudes towards women:

Our 'fair sex' exists only in novels, stories, plays and elegies; but actually, it is divided into four categories: little girls, marriageable girls, and married women, and finally, old maids and old women. The first, being children, no one is interested in; the last are feared and hated (often with good reason); consequently, our fair sex consists of two compartments: marriageable girls and married women. The Russian girl is not a woman in the European sense, not an individual: she is merely a would-be bride.

He added that this was the image the Russian woman had of herself since childhood: she could not see herself as an individual.⁽²²⁾ Yet the upbringing of Russian upper-class women failed to prepare them in any serious way for marriage, which it seems

many viewed as a possible means of escape from parental tyranny. Sand's novels provided an opportunity in Russia to discuss the position of women. (23)

Sand's novels were also severely criticised in Russia by conservatives who considered them not only scandalous, but dangerous - responsible even for the breakdown of marriage and morality as reflected in what was believed to be an increasing incidence of adultery and a rise in the divorce rate. (24) Sand's Lucrezia Floriani stimulated great debate among the Russian intelligentsia, because it seemed to incarnate the theory of free love and to portray the sensuous woman. Nikolai Strakhov criticised it vehemently, as he did the very idea of the emancipation of women whose essential individualism he saw as part of European, and not of Russian culture. Indeed, Strakhov saw the 'woman question' in Russia as an issue fabricated under western influence and posing western solutions in which he condemned their materialism and utilitarianism. (25)

It has been suggested that the emancipation of women became a sacred radical cause, not just as an issue in itself, but also as a symbol for general emancipation of individuals from the restraints placed upon them by the old order. Thus, Belinsky wrote that he had come to see that all the social institutions of the time needed to be subjected to radical revision if human beings were to be liberated. (26) Commenting

generally on the Russian enthusiasm for Sand's novels, Gerstein and Karp made the same points in their studies of the 1970s: that feminism was tolerated by the authorities as a 'safe' diversion from political reform, and that it was used by some radicals in an Aesopian way. (27) This view would seem to underestimate the centrality of the woman question. Moreover, the patriarchal family, and woman's subordinate place in it, was considered the basis of Russian society. Indeed, as the travellers' tales have shown, the family was seen as the autocracy in miniature. Any attack on the institution of the family, any criticism of women's role and subordination, any questioning of the traditional morality could only be, and was, interpreted as an attempt to change fundamentally the established order. In addition, given the heavy weight of oppression, and specifically of censorship, under Nicholas I, it is perhaps not surprising that criticism of the regime found an outlet in the woman question. Sand herself was above all interested in the spiritual, rather than the material and political aspects of female emancipation. Nevertheless, it was generally felt in Russia that the woman question in literature in the 1840s and 1850s was raised under the direct influence of George Sand. It was reflected in such Russian writers as Elena A. Gan (Zeneida R-va), however inferior in literary terms. (28)

As Gan wrote:

What evil genius perverted the destiny of woman? Now,

she exists only in order to please, entice, enliven man's leisure time; to dress up, dance, shine in society, a paper queen in worldly affairs, someone to whom the clown bows in the presence of the crowd, but then ignores in private ... Sometimes, it seems that God created the world only for men; the universe with all its services is open to them; fame, art, and knowledge is for them; freedom and all the happiness of life is for them. Woman from the cradle is fettered by the chains of custom, entangled in the awful question: what does society say? And if her hopes for family happiness do not come true, what remains for her? Her poor, limited education does not even allow her to dedicate herself to any important pursuit; and so, she must throw herself into the quagmire of 'society', whether she likes it or not, dragging out a drab existence to the grave! Or, she could focus on a dream, fall in love at a distance ... and cherish a platonic love. (29)

In the 'George-Sandist' writings of the 1840s, woman was portrayed as trying to determine her own 'fate' within the confined world of the family, and in the process revealing both the moral worth, indeed superiority, of the female personality, and the social limitations on woman's role. Yet it seems, paradoxically, that the idea of woman finding the entire meaning of life in loving a man may actually have

been strengthened among upper-class women in Russia by the very influence of Sand's novels, so that they focused on their personal life and marriage as the escape from the harsh reality of parental tyranny, and did not yet concern themselves with general social issues. (30) Herzen sympathized, but disapproved, revealing that he was not an uncritical admirer of George Sand or of the 'rehabilitation of the flesh'. On the one hand, he wrote, there was the repressive patriarchal family. At the other extreme, there was the denial of any bond, and the recognition only of the supposedly irresistible force of passion. For Herzen, it was just as impossible, and inhumane, to reduce the relationships between men and women to a casual encounter of fleeting sexual attraction, as it was to chain people together in marriage, whether sanctified by church or state, until parted by death. Indeed, he criticised the former as a new dogma, that of the absolute infallibility of the passions, and the incapacity and hence senselessness of human beings to struggle against them. As a result, 'those who were yesterday the slaves of marriage are now becoming the slaves of love'. (31)

In Herzen's view, the upbringing of women not only ill-prepared them for life and love, but deceived and confused them. Firstly, Christianity inspired terror of 'the flesh' in the female child. Yet on becoming a woman, she was expected to see marriage as the goal of her life, as her 'sexual

assignment'. From having the importance of chastity dinned into her, the woman was 'flung into the arms of a man'. Herzen believed that 'for a woman to extricate herself from this chaos is an heroic feat: only rare and exceptional natures accomplish it'. (32) Yet he also insisted that:

Surely woman has not sought to be free from the yoke of the family, and from perpetual tutelage and the tyranny of father, husband, or brother, has not striven for her right to independent work, to learning and the standing of a citizen, only to begin over again, cooing like a turtle-dove all her life ... (33)

Thus, even as Herzen strenuously attacked accepted values and beliefs - and in the case of marriage, he made a sweeping assault on the civil as much as the religious basis - he just as vigorously railed against the tyranny of all moral absolutes and ideological abstractions. His novel, Who is to blame?, published in Russia in 1847, was interpreted as saying that the single significant cause of human misery in Russia lay in the despotism of autocracy and in the abasement of serfdom, in a system based on antiquated notions of authority and property, symbolized in the novel by the marriage bond.

Herzen's novel was morally didactic. (34) Its focus on marriage reflected both the influence of George Sand and the Russian

context which rendered the prospect of political reform remote. Given the conditions of censorship, the subjection, 'enservment', of women in marriage seemed to encompass both symbol and reality of the despotic system. The intelligentsia denounced established institutions and conventions, including serfdom and the subordinate status of women in marriage. It saw Christian morality as having a corrosive effect on human relations. In addition, Herzen charged that civil marriage was 'simply a measure of state economy, freeing the state from responsibility for the children and attaching people more closely to property'. (35) However, he could not accept that jealousy could so simply be dismissed as 'a morbid, monstrous feeling of egoism or proprietorship':

The radical elimination of jealousy implies eliminating love for the individual, replacing it by love for woman or for man, by love for the sex in general. But it is just the personal, the individual, that pleases; it is just that which gives colouring, tone, sensuality to the whole of our life. Our emotion is personal, our happiness and unhappiness are personal happiness and unhappiness. (36)

Nevertheless, despite his championing of the personal, of the individual, Herzen's novel may have contributed to a blurring of the boundaries between the individual and society, through the identification of personal problems with the political

system. Yet even as Sand's call for the 'rehabilitation of the heart' and Enfantin's for the 'rehabilitation of the flesh' found an echo in Herzen's novel, he resisted their insistence on the imperatives of passion as the sole criterion of the individual's actions. In Who is to blame?, as in Herzen's personal 'family tragedy', the wife refused to follow the demands of passion, and remained with her husband. (37) In his view, the idea that human beings were subject to the 'irresistible' force of emotion was completely inconsistent with the demands made for reason. (38) In addition, he warned against the tendency of European thought, a tendency which he saw as based on a fusion of idealism and romanticism, to impose an artificial symmetry on a complex reality. He warned against simple solutions, such as the substitution of one dogma or set of convictions for another. The fundamental problem was how to reconcile the widest possible freedom of the individual with the harmonious society.

On the one hand, this individualism represented a new independence from traditional structures, a rejection of authority, whether of god or the state. On the other, it sought completion in a harmonious social order. Partly under the influence of Saint-Simon, partly under the weight of their own isolation from the mass of Russian society, the intelligentsia's individualism contained a horror of alienation. Given their own privileged, powerless position, caught between a hostile autocracy and an uncomprehending

mass of peasantry, the intelligentsia sought both purpose and identity by means of service to society. From the beginning of the 'woman question' in Russia, the contrast, indeed opposition, was drawn between the individual and the social aspects of the question, between the supposed selfishness of the former and altruism of the latter. Women, therefore, had to go beyond the confines of their domestic role, and their concentration on family and home, if they were to become fully developed human beings. It was recognised that women were only one group to suffer from despotic rule. In a society based on serfdom, the extent of the oppression of upper-class women, themselves a small minority of the population, seemed of necessity secondary to the burdens of the peasantry. (39) Herzen's novel had asserted the moral superiority of women. Yet there was still no clear idea of what women's role in society should be, nor of how to achieve change in what it was. What was clear was that gentry women, no less than the men, owed a debt of service to the people. These women, by the mid nineteenth century, were subject to the romantic ideal of woman as an exalted spiritual being, socially limited but morally superior, the redemptress of humanity. Ekaterina Zhukovskaya aptly described the ideas and fantasies surrounding marriage which were held by many young gentry women in the mid nineteenth century:

I shall establish a school, teach the children myself,
talk with the peasants and try to raise their

consciousness. My husband and I will read the best works on agriculture, and buy machinery for the peasants. And how I shall love my husband for helping me to do all this! (40)

Besides her naivety about overcoming the suspicions of the peasantry, Zhukovskaya evidently saw the ideal of service to the peasants as personally both liberating and fulfilling, while her vision entailed partnership between men and women of the gentry. (41)

4:2 Service to the people

As early as 1811, conservatives had warned against what they perceived as the potentially immoral consequences of the education of women:

Would love of knowledge in a woman dampen her love for her husband? Would a learned woman want to bother with the details of housework? If she had a husband who was not so well-educated, would she not occasionally transgress the law which orders her to be obedient and deferential? (42)

They were alarmed even by the very few women who attended gimnazii and sat in on lectures at university. Nicholas I, however, ended admission of girls to schools attended by

males. (43) Academic learning was held by conservatives to be unnecessary for women, and even bad for their health. Into the 1850s, languages for conversation, music, singing and dancing, and the fine arts were considered natural and essential accomplishments for upper-class Russian women. (44) Thus, while the conservatives accepted sexual differentiation as a fact of nature, they recognised femininity as a cultural construct, requiring the appropriate education.

Nevertheless, there was criticism of the existing education for young ladies, and specifically of the conditions of life and methods of instruction in the boarding schools for girls, so vividly portrayed in Vodovozova's memoirs of Smolny. Almost every detail of life at Smolny was regulated: there were instructions on how to walk, play, stand in church; talking during meals was forbidden; and in terms of general behaviour, the girls were taught to 'look pleasant with obliging manners; to be dignified; to be gracefully polite when carrying on a conversation'. (45) Vodovozova wrote scathingly of the petty regimentation of life at Smolny; of the attempts by for the most part ignorant, severe and sometimes violent teachers to suppress high spirits, to mould all the girls in one way, which on some occasions resulted in the destruction of a few of the pupils. She painted a startling picture of the poor living conditions at Smolny - the hunger, the cold, and the grim, bare walls - which were themselves hardly conducive to serious study,

even had that been the objective. Yet this schooling in the accomplishments, or as Vodovozova saw it, in sheer pettiness which engendered in her a sense of uselessness, was for a tiny minority of privileged women.

New political conditions came with the Russian defeat in the Crimean War and with the death of Nicholas I in 1857. Great social as well as political changes were expected. With the relaxation of censorship, issues were posed which previously could never have been raised directly. Among the questions discussed was the position of women. With the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, and the other consequent reforms, it seemed that there was a direct relationship between the new economic pressures on the gentry, with the breakdown of the serf-based gentry family economy, and the great upsurge of the woman question. It was in the exciting atmosphere surrounding the reforms of Alexander II that writings which took up the woman question evoked unprecedented interest. (46)

Thus, the structure of the family and the situation of women seemed directly tied to the form of the economy and the type of political system.

Maria N. Vernadskaya took up the new question of the economic independence of women in the journal Ekonomicheskii ukazatel which she founded and edited with her husband. In a series of articles published between 1858 and 1860, she discussed the question of women's work, linking economic and job

opportunities to the need for improving women's education. Vernadskaya stressed the liberating aspects of employment for upper-class women, whose subservience, she felt, stemmed from the fact that the economic responsibility for the family fell on the man. She recognised that if women were to be independent, they would have to find a job, and in the process, fight against public opinion and the deeply engrained prejudices which condemned such a 'public' role for women outside the family. She refused to accept the traditional justification - in her view, excuse - that the mother had to stay at home to care for her children. Vernadskaya maintained, as Belinsky and Hahn had done before her, that in fact, a great deal of the upper-class woman's time was devoted to trivia. She exhorted women to study, think, work and stand on their own two feet, just as men did. Useful work would command respect, and lead to the emancipation of women from the yoke of sexual prejudice. (47)

Vernadskaya's exhortations implied that only with paid employment outside the home would women become fully developed human beings. Thus, her writing took up the themes of sexual equality and economic progress, focusing on the wage-earning woman. In Vernadskaya's opinion, not only more and better education, but also the will to work on the part of women was necessary. In effect, her writings were anticipating the economic dislocation which the emancipation of the serfs would entail for gentry women.

It had already been argued, in 1854, that women needed some sort of education to enable them to fulfil their 'natural' role as housekeeper, mother and educator of their young children, and to make them more agreeable companions for their husbands, functions for which the fashionable training in the accomplishments so ill-equipped them. (48) The debate on women's education came to prominence after the Crimean War. It was stimulated by an article entitled 'Questions of Life', written by N.I. Pirogov, a noted surgeon and pedagogue who had organised women nurses during that war. His was a philosophical approach to education, seeing in it a deep spiritual aspect, and refusing to limit his discussion to questions merely of the content and rules of schools. Hence, his article was dedicated to the purpose of life itself. It considered the relation of education to the condition of Russian society. Yet even as he castigated the empty formalism and rigidity of upper-class life in Russia, he deplored the victory in Europe of what he saw as selfish, utilitarian values in moral and spiritual affairs. (49)

Thus, Pirogov did not uncritically admire European examples. Moreover, his general ideas on the needs of Russia and his specific suggestion about the need to educate women as well as men of all classes, not only in line with European science but also in keeping with Russia's national characteristics, can be traced back to Herzen and Belinsky.

An essential part of Pirogov's programme of reforms was change in the education of women. It was time, he believed, that upper-class women were educated for the realities of life, and taught how to think for themselves. Russian society could no longer afford the luxury of placing these women on a pedestal, artificially protected from the struggles of everyday life. While Pirogov accepted that women's chief role remained that of wife and mother, he insisted that they could only fulfil their 'natural' function through a serious education. (50)

His article was widely read among the literate minority in Russia, and was held to be deeply influential. (51) It seemed that the old ideas had been turned on their head. It was now held that women had a right to education precisely because of their role in the family, and their duty to set a moral example. It was proposed that the scope of women's education should be broadened to include the natural sciences and pedagogical training. At the same time, women were cautioned not to be too learned, in case their spiritual qualities suffered as a consequence. Pirogov himself considered that women were not only incapable of becoming scholars or of entering the professions, but that such concerns lay outside their natural sphere. (52)

The literary critic, N. Dobrolyubov, commented, however, that to give women a real education, a human education,

would have meant recognising her right of personality - and that would have gone against all the traditions upon which life in the 'realm of darkness' that was Russia was based. (53)

The student Elizaveta Yunge acknowledged the 'empty' lives, the endless social round of frivolous pleasure, that was expected of young ladies, and how difficult it proved to break away from all the previous conditioning, to view the world critically. Nevertheless, some women were determined to get an education in this period, and persisted despite the obstacles. They were, Yunge wrote, condemned as materialists. Yet in her view, they were idealists striving to learn useful skills, especially medical, so that they could dedicate themselves to the service of the people. (54)

In Yunge's observations there is a coming together of three major themes of the woman question in Russia: the idealization of unselfish devotion, even of self-sacrifice, by women for the good of others; the proposition that, to be independent, women must work outside the home; and the implication that these privileged gentry women owed such service to the people.

Moreover, while an attempt to raise women's cultural and educational levels was a part of Alexander II's reforms, just as it had been of Peter I's, in neither case was the motivation to develop the individual woman for herself. Rather, she was to be educated for the good of her family and for society as a whole. Decrees of 1858 and 1860

established secondary schools for girls of all social classes, though in practice, most of the students came from the gentry and not from the poor or peasant women. These schools also were not given state funds, but relied instead on private finance and donations. Still, although they continued to be regarded as vocational, in being a preparation for motherhood, the curriculum was fairly wide, even if the standard of teaching was generally low. Yet despite even the focus on education to equip women to fulfil their domestic duties, a Soviet historian notes that there was persistent hostility to education for women. (55) Thus, political, social and economic changes, and specific reforms to improve the situation of women, encountered resistance from the traditional views on women's place.

The conservative stance on the necessary limitations to the education of women had been elaborated in France in the 1850s by Michelet and Proudhon. The ideas of both - women's physical weakness and mental inferiority, and their natural passivity as justification for their inferior position - found an audience in Russia. (56) Essentially, those who opposed any serious education for women, and denied sexual equality, accepted that biology determined that women were by nature inferior to men, and that to fly in the face of nature could only result in the degeneration of morality and the disintegration of the family. Indeed, Proudhon denied that women were morally superior, so that, in his

view, there could be no grounds for asserting any kind of sexual equality. (57)

For Herzen, Proudhon's conceptions of family relationships were 'coarse and reactionary, ... haughtily regarding woman as a subordinate worker and himself as the autocratic head of the family'. (58) The feminist reply in France to these writings, which like them also found resonance in Russia, came from Dr. Jenny d'Herricourt. In her opinion, women's inferior status in all aspects of life lay at the root of all immorality and evil. Women were like slaves, and slavery of any kind could only degrade society as a whole. Women, after all, were the primary educators, and d'Herricourt insisted that their inferior status and inadequate education could only serve to debase the men they shaped from birth. Hence, as those influenced by the polemic in Russia agreed, the vital need for women to be equal with men, and to be educated, for the good of men as much as for the women themselves. (59) D'Herricourt dismissed Michelet's writings as so much specious babbling. Her polemic with Proudhon, however, resulted in a book entitled A Woman's Philosophy of Woman (1860). In it, d'Herricourt exposed what she saw as Proudhon's lack of logic, as well as his spurious evidence of women's inferiority. She pointed to herself as an example of what women could achieve if they were not restrained by the deadening weight of tradition and prejudice. (60)

D'Herricourt's ideas were introduced into Russia by M.L. Mikhailov, who had himself participated in the French debate while visiting Paris in 1858. Mikhailov accepted that there had indeed been an increase in family problems and in general immorality in the first half of the nineteenth century. In his opinion, however, regression to some past ideal was not the answer. Rather, the basis of the family and of relations between the sexes in general had to be transformed. Mikhailov held that marriage should be founded on the mutual respect and equality of the partners. In particular, he asserted that equal education for men and women would actually serve to strengthen marriage. He did not agree with the extreme solution that the family should be abolished. At the same time, he could not accept that tradition had to be defended. Mikhailov contended that the subordination of women on the basis of their inferior physical strength was an anachronism in a civilized society, for civilization reduced the importance of brute force. It was no longer necessary, indeed it was positively harmful if society was to continue to develop, to shelter women from the world outside the home. It was precisely this enforced seclusion and idleness of Russian upper-class women which ensured their physical and mental underdevelopment, and reinforced their position of inferiority to men. In Mikhailov's view, the limited, superficial education that such women received actually served to undermine whatever ability they may have had, and to render them

less and less fit to carry out even those tasks assigned them by conservatives, in the context of an increasingly complex society. Thus, for the sake of society, so that they could properly serve society, women had to be educated as the equal of men. Mikhailov held that equal education would make women capable of many things, both within the family and in society at large. He believed that if women were to develop fully, their education must go beyond the limited goals set even by Pirogov. (61) Mikhailov based his arguments for an improvement in women's position on what he perceived to be the good of society as a whole.

Thus, both Vernadskaya and Mikhailov, by the beginning of the 1860s, were exhorting Russian gentry women to see education as the key not only to their personal development, but to the future progress of society. Such writing seems to have been influential, particularly in eclipsing the sentimental feminism of George Sand. (62) The early 1860s and the general disappointment with the reforms brought about a significant change in the situation of the gentry, forcing many to seek work, including gentry women. (63) However, jobs were scarce, particularly for the gentry women who were ill (if at all) qualified. Higher education seemed increasingly essential. (64) The debate between conservatives and reformers concerning education for women continued, with the former still contending that it would lead to the breakdown of marriage and the family, the

corruption of morals, and the spread of prostitution, and the latter countering that serious education and an end to the traditional but outmoded family tyranny would lead to moral improvement and the abolition of prostitution. (65)

Alexander II's reforms needed trained personnel, and demanded the utilization of all available resources. Hence, the promotion of the educated woman as elementary school teacher and medical auxiliary, both of which could be seen as an extension of what was assumed to be the natural female talent for nurture. Still, while such women were less expensive to employ than men, they were at least being accorded a more useful public role. However, the political retreat from the consequences of reform, and specifically after the student unrest of 1861 in which a female student was arrested, led to the exclusion of women from university and medical courses in 1863. (66) While it had been recognised that to remain a great power, Russia had to modernize, it had also been seen that change had to be limited if tsarism was to survive. Hence, the social basis of the autocracy had to be shored up, including the traditional family. The position of women thus seemed to be caught between the political and economic needs of the state.

The year 1863 also saw the publication of a novel entitled What is to be done?, written while the author, N.G.

Chernyshevsky, was in prison during the political reaction

which followed on the Emancipation reforms. The importance of literature in tsarist Russia, not only in influencing political thought but also in portraying the ideal woman, has already been noted. (67) This particular novel seems to have had a profound effect on young upper-class Russians, and especially on the women who saw the traditional, patriarchal family as a major obstacle to their self-development and above all, to their desire to be socially useful. Indeed, What is to be done? shaped the attitudes and values of the young gentry far beyond the 1860s, and was being read in workers' circles and Sunday schools into the twentieth century. (68)

Chernyshevsky's novel seemed to be raising the next question on the agenda, after Herzen's Who is to blame?. Moreover, it seemed to provide rational and practical solutions to the problems of family tyranny, divorce, jobs and education for women, and even prostitution. Essentially, the story outlines the development of Vera Pavlovna, a sensitive, educated woman trapped in an obscurantist family, who is given the chance of escape by means of a fictitious marriage. She later discovers that marriage, even one based on mutual love and respect, is not enough for a woman to lead a full life, and that basically, economic independence is essential for a woman to enjoy sexual equality. Above all, work is the central force in life, of women as much of men, although Chernyshevsky also considered the erotic, sensual nature of

sexual relations. Self-confident and socially conscious, Vera Pavlovna seemed to embody all the characteristics of the New Woman. The New Man was embodied in the ascetic, scrupulously honest revolutionary, Rakhmetov. Between them, between 'new' men and women, there was freedom and equality. (69)

Chernyshevsky's ideas were not, in fact, original. Fictitious marriage, freedom in sexual relations (though still monogamy), rational egoism, socialist communes or artels, and medicine as a career for women had all been discussed and tried before the publication of his novel. (70) For the first time, however, all these elements were woven together in a coherent, if didactic, whole. The book was recognised as a seminal work, and Vera Pavlovna's life as a realistic programme for the future. This literary character seemed to be more than just a reflection of the unattainable ideal of passive, saintly womanhood. Rather, she appeared to represent a positive example which could be followed. The book was received reverently. The intelligentsia became engrossed in it, the seriousness with which they treated the subject matter being a reflection of the profound influence the novel had on them. (71)

In her study of female members of the Russian intelligentsia, Barbara Alpern Engel asked if there were seeds of conflict between the woman's desire for self-realization and the goal

of service to the people, despite the belief in Russia that any conflict between the two had been overcome, or reconciled, through rational egoism: in the pursuit of self-interest, the women would inevitably pursue the best interests of society as well. (72) However, the Russians themselves would not have recognised any such conflict, given the absence of an individualistic ethic in the western sense. Indeed, in the Russian context, a sense of self seems to have developed precisely from working for the community. Writing in the late nineteenth century, Tikhomirov observed that the Russian upper-class woman rapidly developed not only under the influence of education and western ideas, but also by turning to service of the people: in this way, she developed her own personality, so that the female intelligentsia saw self-interest in being socially useful. (73) These women recognised that education was necessary for independence, and that the independence they sought lay in service to the people. The government itself reacted to this threat to woman's traditionally dependent, subordinate status by trying to restrict the employment of women working in state service. It also banned Chernyshevsky's novel, though it continued to be read in secret. (74)

The intellectual, social and political turmoil of the 1860s and 1870s provided a more favourable milieu in which women could struggle for better education and the opportunity to

perform socially useful work. (75) Given the impoverishment of the mass of Russia's peasantry, and the disillusionment with the Emancipation settlement, purely feminist goals were considered selfish, even by those gentry in difficult financial straits. Marie Zebrikoff asserted that 'Russian women who have risen to the consciousness of their right to knowledge and independence consider these blessings as means with which to improve the condition of their native land'. (76) An American historian, Ruth Dudgeon, has taken this attitude as symptomatic of the 'slow development of self-consciousness among Russian women and the attraction of many frustrated women to revolution rather than feminism', and as responsible for keeping women's education firmly orientated towards public service 'rather than the full realization of the talents of individual women'. (77) This interpretation would seem to be imposing a western view of women's oppression and feminism on to the Russian situation, to assume a conflict between public service and individual fulfilment and development, with the implication that a feminist consciousness would necessarily be different from a social consciousness. Considering the previously useless and secluded life of upper-class women in Russia, and the desire of some to serve their local community observed by a few of the travellers, as well as the central role of the state, public service was indeed a step towards independence for the individual woman. The traditional view of women in Russia, the demands of modernization, and the

various political standpoints - conservative, reformist as well as revolutionary - all seemed to agree that women had a specific role to play and social obligations to fulfil, and that they necessarily complemented men. Russian women themselves demanded improved education and job opportunities as a means to personal fulfilment through service to the people.

Alexander II's reforms prompted a flood of gentry women from the provinces to the cities in search of education and work. (78) Kovalevskaya wrote that while some young girls ran away to Europe to study, others ran 'to Petersburg to the Nihilists'. (79) Nihilism was not a political movement. Rather, it was:

negation in the name of individual liberty, negation of the obligations imposed upon the individual.

Nihilism was a powerful and passionate reaction, not against the political despotism, but against the moral despotism that weighs upon the private life of the individual. (80)

Yet it was not merely negative. Nihilists were materialists with a great faith in the natural sciences, in education, and in the standard of social utility. Disillusionment with Alexander's reforms had brought about a great questioning of authority, and a new radicalism that

rejected tradition in everything. Nihilist women insisted on freedom of the individual and on equality with men. According to Vodovozova, both men and women among the nihilists were deeply committed to creating egalitarian sex roles, and recognised that it entailed a break with conventions. Moreover, it meant that men had to stop treating women with 'coarse barbarism', in a cavalier fashion, while women had to stop hanging on helplessly to the neck of a man. In addition, both sexes had to renounce romanticism as part of the discredited past. (81) The nigilistka dressed and acted unconventionally. In the opinion of Richard Stites, theirs was an individualist revolt in personal relations, while their free unions, alternative lifestyles in mixed communes, and recourse to fictitious marriage, had little general relevance to the struggle for economic independence, and no relevance to the peasant women. (82) Nevertheless, as the nineteenth-century Russian writer, Tikhomirov, suggested, however ridiculous in appearance, the nihilist women aped men in the externals - wearing spectacles, short hair and functional clothes, - and smoking - in an effort to escape the stereotype of the idle, frivolous upper-class woman. Their particular revolt was always, he held, very serious. The women despised femininity as a barrier to achieving real independence and equality, associating it with male chivalry, another obstacle. (83)

Nor can nihilism be reduced to an individualist rebellion

in personal relations. As Tikhomirov pointed out, these women saw the need for education to achieve independence through a useful role in society. He admitted that the Russian intelligentsia had discussed free love for some time, with the aim of developing, not restraining, the individual. Free love, however, was not considered simply for the benefit or selfish pleasure of the individual. 'It is in fact a principle that the intelligentsia for some years has tried to give as the basis of the family' - part of the general tendency to replace formal by moral ties. Vodovozova agreed that the nihilist ideal of marriage was not, in fact, based on sexual attraction, but was seen as a partnership between comrades, a marital union between like-minded thinkers who fought for social progress. (84) The nihilists were not only a minority within the upper class, they were almost completely isolated from the rest of Russian society. Theirs was a personal solution to and not a general programme for changing the established order. Nevertheless, the conservatives equated nihilism with revolution.

The Petrine reforms, including those on the position of women, had been sudden and artificial. Yet they had had a long-standing impact not simply on Russian society, but on the debates about the best road for Russia to take. Thus, the window on the west opened by Peter did not result in a Russia that was a mere imitation of western civilization.

Instead, western ideas had been moulded to fit Russian reality. Russia remained a political despotism. The gulf between the mass of peasants and the privileged upper class remained, indeed widened. The influence of the west was seen in the mid nineteenth century in the idea of progress and the 'authority' of science. The nihilism of the 1860s was an integral part of the process of secularization and rationalization in Russia. It signalled an increasing dependence on science, not only as a basis for material progress, but also as a guide for moral and spiritual life. The stress was on utility. Nihilism was a unique combination of a concentration on the individual and anti-individualism. Further, whatever its rational and scientific basis, the idea of progress was seen above all in moral terms. Nihilism was, therefore, also a combination of contempt for conventions and a profound moralism. Even while the intelligentsia proclaimed the dominance of science and reason, they were still influenced by the collective mentality in their commitment to socially useful work, in their insistence that the freedom and emancipation of the individual was for the service of the people. They saw the problem of modern society as how to overcome its fragmentation. Increasingly, the solution was seen in the fusion of the individual into the harmonious whole in which each person would have a place, in which no one would be 'superfluous', or lacking in purpose. The nihilists of the 1860s saw personal harmony in the integration within the

individual of thought and deed, of emotion and action. They looked to a revitalized peasant commune to restore the social harmony sundered by reason. At the same time, they were harshly critical of the traditional inequality between the sexes and within the family. They recognised the particular problems faced by women under the 'despotism' of the family. The sexual freedom which nihilist women strove for was bound up in what they saw as women's right, and duty, to regenerate society, to promote social progress. They insisted that they be valued by men as co-workers, so that between men and women there would be communication uncontaminated by the insincerity which characterised traditional relations between the sexes.

Radical women still recognised that, as women, they suffered specific disadvantages. Thus, the female Russian students in Zurich in the early 1870s formed a women's circle (the Fritschi circle) because, given the cultural backwardness of women and their lack of experience in public debate, men tended to dominate in study groups. The Fritschi felt that women had to develop confidence and skills through study and debate among themselves, away from male competition and authority. (85) Nihilism had waned even before the decade was over. The majority of radical men continued to support the cause of women's rights. From the early 1870s, however, radicals of both sexes increasingly insisted that the emancipation of women could be achieved only through social

revolution.

4:3 Women and revolution

The Russian intelligentsia assumed that women had special moral qualities which society needed and which involved a revolution in the position of women. The woman question, however, was seen as part of the whole, essential but not so pressing as other problems. Russian feminists in the late nineteenth century were seen as demanding a selfish freedom, a 'bourgeois' individualism, however much their motivation was also based on social utility. The usual feminist tactic was to work within the existing system, trying to achieve reform by gradual, peaceful and legal means, which inevitably entailed compromising with the established order. (86) Nevertheless, Russian feminists also recognised the total oppression of the autocracy. Marie Zebrikoff wrote that:

The Russian women's movement has one characteristic feature in which it differs from the similar movements elsewhere - it holds to the idea of progress. In other countries, however, women sometimes strive for their own rights alone, for their own well-being, and in their eagerness to secure them they leave themselves open to the manipulations of church and conservatism. Russian women don't separate their

cause from the great cause of human progress. No retrogressive element in our society can count on the aid of one woman battling for equality. (87)

This sentiment was echoed by the revolutionary Vera Figner, who saw the goal of her personal development as the good of society. (88) Figner recorded that those women who developed a revolutionary consciousness turned away from the 'individual' concern for education and a profession, from the hope of changing society gradually, towards dedication to social revolution through the renunciation of personal ambitions for the cause of the masses. The former was seen by Figner as merely a palliative, 'a small patch on a dress that should not be mended, but rather should be discarded and replaced with a new one'. In effect, reform was treating the symptoms, rather than eliminating the basic cause. (89)

Barbara A. Engél has written that the women of the Russian intelligentsia had an ethical vision of devoting themselves to society as a whole. She believes that there was in these women an absolutism and an intensity of dedication lacking (at least in degree) in most of their male radical contemporaries, and that the result was a sexual division of labour within the revolutionary movement, even though the women enjoyed equal status with men. It was a division of labour which Engél claims left an enduring mark on the

quality of female radicalism in Russia. (90) Yet it should be clear that this altruism and devotion to the general good was precisely what was expected of and by women in Russia. The intelligentsia had criticised the uselessness and the subordinate position of upper-class women in Russia, but they had not questioned that there was a specifically female role. Vera Figner's ultimate espousal of terrorism was consistent with the nihilist determination to fuse, to harmonize, word and deed. Vera Zasulich's attack on Trepov, governor of St. Petersburg, in 1869 was both the model and the catalyst for revolutionary terrorism, as moral action against barbaric acts (in this case ordering the flogging of a political prisoner). Implicit in the judgement that, while women such as Figner and Sofya Perovskaya were important in terrorist activities with the latter organising as well as participating in the assassination of Alexander II, these same women failed or abdicated intellectual leadership, is a hierarchy within the division of labour that acknowledges theorizing as superior to practical deeds. The evidence of the Fritschi showed the stress put on the theoretical development of female as much as male revolutionaries, a stress which did not diminish, as the following discussion will show. It is, in addition, interesting to look at the nineteenth-century Russian viewpoint. Writing in the middle of the century, Herzen had pointed to the Russian intelligentsia's propensity to introspection and apparent impotence to do, to act. In his view, 'all that is left

to us in the way of instinct is a restless desire to be active'. Hence, he felt, the intelligentsia remained 'eternal spectators, miserable members of a jury whose verdict is never accepted, experts whose testimony no one wants'. (91)

This point is a salient reminder that the hierarchy of mental over manual, of thinker over doer, does not always hold. Moreover, the pauperization of the peasantry, the disillusionment with the reforms of the 1860s, and the persistence of the gulf between the masses and the intelligentsia, all contributed to the apparently urgent necessity for action to stir the people - the intelligentsia as Herzen's yeast, as the catalyst to popular revolution through what they did rather than what they said or wrote, since the latter seemed not only egoistic, but tended to deepen the cultural divide between themselves and the peasant community. The failure of the 'going to the people' movement in the early 1870s brought home to the radical intelligentsia just how wide the chasm yawned between them and the village. (92)

Russian revolutionaries in the late nineteenth century saw their relationship to the people as both teacher and pupil. From the failure of the v narod movement, the peasants seemed both innately conservative and socially isolated. Hence, the radical intelligentsia's turn to terrorism in the

late 1870s, and increasingly to Marxism from the 1880s. Indeed, by the 1880s, Marxism had begun to challenge agrarian socialism in Russia. The former generally saw the peasantry as backward and superstitious, prone to undisciplined violence, incapable of overthrowing tsarism by themselves, and with aspirations that were fundamentally incompatible with the emerging industrial system. The Marxist faith lay in a future based on science and industry, though some recognised the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. The Marxists also recognised that the traditional family structure, with its subordinate place for women, was a brake on the development of revolutionary consciousness, particularly with the increasing absorption of women into the industrial labour force from the 1890s.

A growth in the female labour force was characteristic of all industrializing states in Europe in the nineteenth century. The European labour movement generally was concerned with the issues raised and problems posed by the rise in the numbers of female workers. The early nineteenth-century, 'utopian' socialism of the Saint-Simonians and Fourier had insisted on the necessity of the emancipation of women and their equality with men, and had not viewed the woman question in a narrowly economic way. Yet it was not until the Second International in the 1890s that the socialist movement took up the struggle for sexual equality, while many male workers and intellectuals continued to dismiss

the issue as either secondary or unimportant, and to condemn feminism as divisive.

A fundamental dilemma facing socialist women lay precisely in the problem of priorities, and the ideological demand to subordinate the woman question to the class struggle. Socialist women, like socialist men, looked to the working class, in contrast to the feminists who claimed that women's interests transcended social divisions and were above party politics as defined and dominated by men. In this latter view, the egalitarian ideals of the French Revolution of 1789 remained unfinished so long as they were not applied to women. Moreover, middle-class women, too, were generally excluded from the predominantly male world of privilege and power, and they, too, suffered from economic change. In opposition, socialist women insisted that the impact of industrialization on women varied according to class. So different and conflicting were the class interests of women that there could be no joint action between the classes on the women question. The socialist women saw the fight for equal rights and better conditions for the female proletariat as an integral part of the class struggle. They campaigned for reforms favourable to women workers, mothers and housewives. They also sought to make women more aware of their social duties and thus to break out of the confines of what they saw as the selfish, introverted familial viewpoint so divisive to proletarian solidarity. Socialist

women were generally not concerned with demands for sexual freedom. Yet neither was the feminist movement of the nineteenth century. Both tended to accept the traditional view of sexual relations and of women's supposed moral superiority to men. Socialist women in general did not see sexual freedom as a specifically socialist demand which would challenge the basis of capitalist society. They viewed the struggle of working women as a common struggle with their male comrades against the capitalist economic oppression in the first instance.

The fact that women worked was hardly novel. The conditions in which they did so, however, were rapidly being transformed in the nineteenth century. The growth in the size of the female proletariat in Russia from the 1880s, and their cultural backwardness were recognised as serious concerns by Marxists, as reflected in the special pamphlet on women workers under capitalism written by M. Lyadov for study in the workers' circles in the mid 1890s. (93) Lyadov described the particularly harsh and difficult conditions of labour and life for women toiling in the factories of Moscow. He drew out the links between the capitalist system which condemned large numbers of women workers to low pay, semi-starvation diets, frequent periods of unemployment, the complete lack of minimum security, such widespread social problems as prostitution and venereal disease, as well as physical illness and even death. Lyadov's pamphlet

detailed, in clear and simple terms, the lot of female workers, and why he believed it was essential to involve them on an equal basis in the struggle for a better society. It was a telling indictment of industrial capitalism's oppression of women in particular, and of the working-class family as a consequence. It was also in line with the development of Russian thought on the woman question, seeing its economic causes and directly relating it to the political despotism of tsarism.

Lyadov's pamphlet showed that women were simply not paid enough in the factories or workshops for even basic subsistence. Yet women were, from dire necessity, competing against each other in the labour market for such meagre pay. The pamphlet recorded how the lives of women had been profoundly affected by the introduction of machinery and the consequent demand of less skilled labour. While potentially machines could help workers, instead they were used by the capitalists to cut wages and force workers to labour in bad conditions and to work faster for lower wages. The capitalists profited from the fierce competition for work, and from the fact that women were paid so much less than men - about a third to a half of male wages, according to Lyadov. Many women, he observed, were forced to turn to prostitution, which he pointed out existed on a large scale throughout Europe and America. His pamphlet was a searing

attack on the existing morality which so debased working-class women.

Lyadov noted that the majority of women workers in Russia had little, if any, hope of marriage, and moreover, he held that the unhealthy conditions of work deprived women of the opportunity for motherhood. There were, in any case, no provisions for women to look after their children while working. With such low wages and sexual abuse at work from male bosses, and no real hope of escape from such an intolerable situation through marriage, it was not surprising that prostitution flourished. Lyadov asked whether women workers had only this 'choice' of prostitution, illegitimate births and syphilis. He answered the question by asserting that there was indeed a way out, to a truly humane life, which was through struggle against capitalism as the working class did in the west. It had to be a united class. Women had to join trade unions and take an active part in the class struggle. The fact that women workers often opposed strikes and were used by employers to defeat them, Lyadov asserted, showed how necessary and urgent this task was. (94) Again, the emphasis was not on the individual woman, but rather on the emancipation of the whole class of oppressed. This lesson was reiterated by the writings of Clara Zetkin which were also studied in the Russian circles of the 1890s.

Socialist energies were increasingly concentrated on developing an economic analysis of capitalist society and a political movement to transform it. Yet however narrow the prism, socialist consciousness encompassed the whole of life, including culture and relations between human beings, and not merely sexual relations. It was this wider view of socialism which Alexandra Kollontai embraced and tried to develop. At the same time, she agreed that the woman question was a class question. She spelled out her ideas on the position of women workers in the established order at the first feminist congress in Russia in St. Petersburg in 1908. These ideas were presented to the congress by the worker Volkova on behalf of Kollontai, following the latter's flight from the police into exile.

Kollontai disputed the feminist analysis of the woman question. Instead, she stressed the effects of the growth of industry on the masses of women. Despite the horrors of industrialization outlined by Lyadov, Kollontai, like him, saw the enforced trend of women's work outside the home as the only way to raise their consciousness and to make them independent of the family. Such women, she held, only became aware of their needs when they became an integral part of the labour force. She contrasted the heavy cross of wage labour shouldered by the proletarian women with the sheltered lives of the upper-class women. Not for the working-class women the luxurious demand for the right to

work, since work they already had to do, in increasing numbers, for their own and their families' survival. Rather, what the female proletariat needed was protective legislation. Nor was the woman worker demanding a spurious freedom in love, or the right to motherhood even if unmarried. Rather, they needed maternity protection and state support for child care without which they could not afford to bring up a family. Indeed, for the woman worker to be truly free, she needed to be rid of the myriad petty domestic worries so much a part of the individual, isolated family life. Kollontai insisted that the state must step in to provide services if the woman worker was to gain true equality. Feminist solutions of suffrage and philanthropy were, she held, pitifully ineffective in the face of such cruel oppression. Kollontai concluded, as Lyadov had done, that working-class women could only defend their interests and rights as women and as workers by staying within the ranks of the class and fighting for class aims and ideals. (95) Women, therefore, had to join trade unions to fight for reforms such as the eight-hour day, the abolition of female labour in jobs dangerous to their health, free pre and post-natal care, maternity leave, nursery facilities in all factories, and breaks in the working day for mothers to feed their babies. (96)

Whether the stress was on class or on sex, the problems encountered by both socialists and feminists in their

efforts to reach working-class women revealed and underlined the tenacious hold of traditional ideas and prejudices about women's 'natural' place on the vast majority of women themselves. They clung stubbornly to the security of the familiar, for it had given them an essential role, however inferior. Women workers themselves often refused to accept the implications of their direct participation in the industrial process, viewing their jobs as an economically necessary, but temporary period in their lives, before marriage and motherhood, whatever the reality. Middle-class women looked on work as potentially personally fulfilling, linking female equality with improved family relations and the greater good of society. (97) Yet while they came to resent the barriers to female education and job opportunities, working-class women toiled under the conditions described by Lyadov, with all the strains these imposed on relations between the sexes and the stability of the family. While male workers opposed the supposed competition from women in the labour market, women workers generally doubted the importance or necessity of trade union protection for themselves. Their focus remained the family.

When this outlook was seen as a drag on the further development of working-class solidarity, some socialists began to realize that women must be included in any agitation, to force them to widen their horizons. Yet this

meant struggling not only against capitalism, but also against the belief in female inferiority so deeply inculcated into the working class which Vera Karelina had encountered during the 1905 Revolution. (98)

Russian society in general was becoming increasingly conscious of the rapidly growing size of the female proletariat in the late nineteenth century. Industrialization appeared to bring new, looser moral values and unstable sexual relations. Urban and factory life was recognised to be unsettling. For socialists, capitalism brought alarming increases in the rates of prostitution, of illegitimate births and venereal disease. On the one hand, they denounced traditional sexual morality for hypocrisy, favouring men with a double standard which penalized women. On the other hand, there was the sexual exploitation of women under capitalism, the insecurity of family life and the neglect of children. Given the conditions of life among the working class, and particularly among women workers, demands for sexual freedom seemed to have a hollow ring. The asceticism of Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov remained the ideal among Russian radicals, while the romantic notions of women's special qualities which would enhance public life heavily influenced the socialist movement. (99)

However, the profound disillusionment in the wake of the 1905 Revolution led some of the intelligentsia to become apolitical

and look for relief in the satisfaction of their own personal desires, including sexual pleasure, a development that was reflected in literature, particularly in M. Artsybashev's novel of 1907, Sanin, with the female equivalent in A. Verbitskaya's Klyuchi schast'ya (1909).⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Enfintin's call for the 'rehabilitation of the flesh' seemed finally to have struck a chord in demands for sexual freedom. Indeed, in her writings on women and morality, the Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai gave serious consideration to the issue of erotic relations between the sexes. She was severely critical of the literary portrayal of women in the past which denied 'the flesh', and praised the new woman's positive attitude to sexual pleasure as healthy. She was still, however, very much in a minority in Russia. Besides the antagonism raised among peasants and workers by demands for sexual freedom, socialists generally refused to work out an alternative morality. For Kollontai, the persistence of traditional ideas on marriage and the family, and on relations between the sexes outside of both, in both the theory and practice of the labour movement, and the failure to make a sustained challenge against them a socialist priority, helped to reinforce them. She insisted that these questions were a vital part of the revolutionary struggle.

Kollontai's writings on women and the family went far beyond the opinions of most Russian Marxists, and were heavily criticised by them. Nevertheless, as the following

discussion of her writings will show, her ideas can be seen against the background of the development of thought in Russia on the woman question, within the traditional stress on the collective, and in line with the socialist argument for the primacy of the class struggle. However intrinsic the woman question was to Russian revolutionary thought, the reality was of a still predominantly peasant culture. Yet, as chapter five will discuss, Kollontai contributed to the development of the belief in the New Woman as a creature of developed capitalism, of urban society.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, Russia on the Eve of War and Revolution, introduced, edited and abridged from the 1912 edition by Cyril. E. Black (New York, 1961), p.166.
2. Alexander Herzen, From the Other Shore, translated by Moura Budberg, and The Russian People and Socialism An Open Letter to Jules Michelet, translated by Richard Wollheim, with an introduction by Isaiah Berlin (London, 1956), p.189.
3. P.K. Bidelman, "The Feminist Movement in France: the Formative Years, 1858-1889", PhD., Michigan State University, 1975. In fact, the Napoleonic Code decreed that the married woman in France had no property rights, and that her earnings went to her husband, in contrast to the Russian situation. French women could not get a passport without the husband's consent. If they appeared alone in public, they risked the morals police. The wife could be imprisoned for adultery, whereas the man would go unpunished, and if the wife was caught 'in the act', the husband could kill her without fear of legal condemnation. For further discussion on the position of women in western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see for example, Martha

Vicinus (ed.), Suffer and be Still (Bloomington, 1973); J. O'Faolain, L. Martines (eds.), Not in God's Image (London, 1973); Patricia Branca, Silent Sisterhood (London, 1977); R. Bridenthal, C. Koonz (eds.), Becoming Visible (Boston, 1977); Edward Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (New York, 1978); Bonnie Smith, Ladies of Leisure (Princeton, 1981); Katherine M. Rogers, Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England (London, 1982); Martine Segalen, Love and Power in the Peasant Family (Chicago, 1983); Jane Rendall, The Origins of Modern Feminism (London, 1985). For the position of Russian women, see P.G. Mizhnev, Zhenskiy vopros i zhenskoe dvizhenie (St. Petersburg, 1906), pp.61-62; S.S. Shashkov, Sobranie sochineniy (St. Petersburg, 1898), vol.1, p.846; Ya. A. Kantorovich, Zhenshchina v prave (St. Petersburg, 1896), pp.50, 59. See also Richard Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930 (Princeton, 1978); part one.

4. According to Herzen:

The period that followed the suppression of the Polish revolt in 1830 was a period of rapid enlightenment. We soon perceived ... that things were going badly in Europe and especially in France - France to which we looked for a political creed and a banner; and we began to distrust our own theories ... It was then that some young Russians ... took

refuge in the profound study of Russian history, while others took to German philosophy.

A. Herzen, Childhood, Youth and Exile, translated by J.D. Duff, with an introduction by I. Berlin (Oxford, 1980), p.133.

See also E.J. Brown, Stankevich and his Moscow Circle, 1830-1840 (Stanford, 1960); A. Walicki, A History of Russian Thought From the Enlightenment to Marxism (Cambridge, 1980), pp.71-80.

5. See Herzen, From the Other Shore, pp.12-13. For a fuller discussion of Herzen's life and thought, see Martin Malia, Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism 1812-1855 (Cambridge, Mass., 1961). See also Walicki, op.cit., pp.127-134.
6. Herzen, From the Other Shore, pp.76-77.
7. Herzen, The Russian People and Socialism, pp.189-190; 185-186.
8. Baron von Haxthausen, The Russian Empire (London, 1856), vol.2, p.282.
9. Herzen, The Russian People and Socialism, pp.184, 190-191.
10. See V.M. Khvostov, Zhenshchina i chelovecheskoe

dostoinstvo (Moscow, 1914), pp.224-225; V.A. Aleksandrov, Sel'skaia obshchina v Rossii (XVII - nachalo XIX v.) (Moscow, 1976), p.308; A.N. Radishchev, A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow (1790: Cambridge, Mass, 1958), p.134.

11. See S. Satina, Education of Women in Pre-Revolutionary Russia (New York, 1966), pp.35-36; Isabel de Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great (London, 1981), p.493. Until the mid nineteenth century, the few girls who attended school were taught subordination. See E. Likhacheva, Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1899-1901), vol.2, pp.250-251.
12. After Catherine II's death (1796), the stress on education for domesticity increased at Smolny, where girls were taught that their 'destiny' was the family. See Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, pp.173-176. Yet although Smolny was above all interested in refined, ladylike behaviour, Vodovozova's memoirs record that 'the uncivilized nature of our mistresses turned us into uncouth creatures too. We quarrelled until the swear words poured out of us like water from a jug and it never entered our heads to treat each other with any consideration or pay any regard to other people's feelings'. E.N. Vodovozova, A Russian Childhood (London, 1961), pp.151, 144.

13. A.N. Chudinov, Ocherk istorii russkoy zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1889), p.15.
14. V. Polunin, Three Generations of Family Life in Russia, 1845-1902 (London, 1957), p.5. See also E.N. Shchepkina, Iz istorii zhenskoy lichnosti v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1914), pp.53-54.
15. See Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.1, p.267; Sbornik pamiati Anny Pavlovny Filosofovo (Petrograd, 1915), vol.2, p.77.
16. See A.V. Amfiteatrov, Zhenshchina v obshchestvennykh dvizheniyakh Rossii (Geneva, 1908), p.15, who points out that this ideal of virtuous womanhood was reinforced in Russian literature in the nineteenth century, from Pushkin to Tolstoy, Nekrasov to Turgenev. See also Shchepkina, op.cit., pp.228-238. The traveller, Adolphus Slade observed that while Russian ladies rarely showed enough devotion to follow their husbands into exile, there were 'a few noble exceptions'. A. Slade, Travels in Germany and Russia (London, 1840), p.368. Barbara A. Engel, Mothers and Daughters Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia (Cambridge, 1983), claims (p.18) that the Decembrist wives rebelled in a very different sense than their husbands. While the men sought a share of political power (and excluded women from it), the women challenged the values that

upheld the political order by defying social strictures and following their men to Siberia. However, the wives of the Decembrists would seem to be obeying the view of their role as moral arbiters of society. Herzen noted that under the repression instituted by Nicholas I :

The tone of society changed before one's eyes; the rapid deterioration in morals was a melancholy proof of how little the sense of personal dignity was developing among Russian aristocrats. Nobody (except women) dared utter a warm word about relations or friends, whose hands they had shaken only the day before they had been carried off at night by the police ... Women alone did not take part in this shameful abandonment of those who were near and dear ...

My Past and Thoughts The Memoirs of Alexander Herzen
translated by C. Garnett, revised by H. Higgens,
introduced by I. Berlin (London, 1968), vol.1,

17. See T.A. Bogdanovich, Lyubov' lyudey shestidesyatykh godov (Leningrad, 1929), p.265; Shashkov, op.cit., vol.1, p.655.
18. Herzen, Childhood, Youth and Exile, p.134.
19. See for example Carole S. Karp, "George Sand's Reception in Russia, 1832-1881", PhD., Michigan State University,

1976; R.P. Rosenberg, "George Sand in Germany 1832-1848. The attitude towards her as a woman and as a novelist", PhD., University of Wisconsin, 1933; Patricia Branca, George Sand and the Victorians (London, 1977).

20. See Shchepkina, op.cit., pp.238-239.

21. See A.N. Shabanova, Ocherk zhenskogo dvizheniya v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1911), p.7.

22. V.G. Belinsky, Selected Philosophical Works (Moscow, 1956), p.261. Herzen agreed:

Bride, wife, mother, scarcely in old age, as a grandmother, is a woman set free from sexual life, and becomes an independent being, especially if the grandfather is dead. Woman, marked by love, does not soon escape from it.... Pregnancy, suckling, child-rearing are all the evolution of some mystery, the same act of love; in women it persists not in the memory only, but in blood and body, in her it ferments and ripens and tears itself away - without breaking its tie.

Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, vol.2, p.831.

23. See Shashkov, op.cit., vol.1, p.851.

24. See ibid., vol.1, p.484; Karp, op.cit., pp.13-16.

25. N.N. Strakhov, Zhenskiy vopros: razbor sochineniya Dzhona Styurta Millya "O Podchinenii Zhenshchiny" (St. Petersburg, 1871). See also Linda Gerstein, Nikolai Strakhov (Cambridge, 1970), especially pp.120-127. In the late eighteenth century, Scherbatov had complained that westernization had resulted in the 'immoral' behaviour of noblewomen. Prince M. Scherbatov, On the Corruption of Morals in Russia (London, 1969), pp.227-235.
26. Belinsky, op.cit., pp.174-176.
27. Gerstein, op.cit., p.120; Karp, op.cit., p.60.
28. See Chudinov, op.cit., ch.6; Shashkov, op.cit., vol.1, pp.848-854.
29. Taken from Sochineniya A.P. Shchapova (St. Petersburg, 1906), vol.3, p.605. For a discussion of Gan's writings, see B.A. Engel, op.cit., pp.28-33.
30. See Shashkov, op.cit., vol.1, pp.650, 849-850; E. Elnett, Historic Origin and Social Development of Family Life in Russia (New York, 1926), p.64.
31. Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, vol.2, p.828.

32. ibid., pp.830-832.
33. ibid., p.829.
34. Nicholas Rzhevsky, Russian Literature and Ideology (London, 1983), insists (p.65) that Herzen's literature is not a dry didacticism, but a hoped-for spiritual education of the reader through literary fancy.
35. Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, vol.2, p.828.
36. ibid., pp.825, 822-823.
37. ibid., p.892. See also A. Hertzzen, Who is to blame? translated, annotated and introduced by Michael Katz (London, 1984). Rzhevsky offers an alternative interpretation. In his view, the key issue is not the 'external' oppression of Russian society, but the individual's own self-inflicted internal oppression. He asserts that (op.cit., p.59):

Bel'tov and Liubonka are at fault much more than the society they inhabit because they allow themselves to be victimized by the social institution of marriage instead of asserting the moral prerogative of their love. The absence of such assertion lies at the heart of their tragic separation and indicates that 'blame' and

'responsibility', in Herzen's view, must rest finally with the individual, his internal makeup, and his ethical choices.

Herzen himself, however, did not accept that emotion should determine action. Katz, in his introduction to Who is to blame?, sees a much more subtle and complex message in the novel. For him, Liubonka is a powerful portrait of the 'New Woman', who emerges as 'a whole character, morally superior even to the hero'. He accepts that the novel brings the institutions of marriage and the family into question, but insists that it shows that there was no simple answer to the question, who is to blame? Rather, 'the new woman has emerged, but she is as yet incapable of overcoming the enormous obstacles in her path'. Who is to blame?, pp.28-29. From a reading of Herzen's memoirs, he would seem, through this novel, to be criticising both the status quo which imprisoned women in marriage and the simplistic radical call to follow the demands of the heart, for in this case he complicates the affair by recording the wife's continuing affection for her husband. The New Woman has yet to emerge. For Herzen:

[woman is] irreparably gnawed and destroyed by the all-devouring Moloch of love. She has more faith in it and she suffers more from it. She is more concentrated on the sexual relationship alone, more driven to love... She is both intellectually

more unstable and intellectually less trained than we.

Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, vol.2, p.829.

38. Herzen, ibid., pp.828-829.
39. Shabanova, op.cit., p.5; Khvostov, op.cit., pp.224-225.
40. E. Zhukovskaya, Zapiski (Leningrad, 1930), pp.22-23.
41. Zhukovskaya, however, also admitted (ibid., pp.33-35) to complete ignorance of what marital relations entailed, which may be linked to Herzen's criticism of the Christian upbringing which stressed chastity and utterly failed to prepare a woman for what it instilled in her were the 'sins of the flesh'. Zhukovskaya related her deep shame and disgust with the sexual experience of her wedding night, which she bitterly condemned as legalized rape. She was not comforted by her mother's advice that such was woman's lot in life, to which she must submit, and from which there was no escape. In Zhukovskaya's own eyes, she was nothing less than a prostitute, having sold herself for a false freedom.
42. See Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.1, p.238. See also M.V. Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, Zhenskoe dvizhenie v Rossi i

zagranitsey (St. Petersburg, 1902), pp.134-137.

43. Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.1, p.264.
44. Amfiteatrov, op.cit., pp.19-26; Shabanova, op.cit., p.6; Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, pp.173-183, 267; Bogdanovich, op.cit., p.265; Shashkov, op.cit., vol.1, p.265.
45. Vodovozova, op.cit., p.141 and chapters 6 & 7. See also Shabanova, op.cit., p.4. Another female student wrote that such institutional education for young ladies was equivalent to being enclosed in a monastery in their formative years, awaiting knights in shining armour to rescue them. N.A. Lukhmanova, Dvadtsat' let nazad (St. Petersburg, 1894), p.172.
46. Shashkov, op.cit., vol.1, pp.857-858. See also S.S. Shashkov, Istoricheskie sudby zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1871), pp.312-323.
47. M.N. Vernadskaya, Sobranie sochineniy (St. Petersburg, 1862), pp.115, 71-146. See also E. Karnovich, O razvitii zhenskogo ^{truda} v Peterburge (St. Petersburg, 1865), p.116.
48. V.V. Deriker, Fiziologiya zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1854).

49. N.I. Pirogov, Sochineniya (St. Petersburg, 1900), vol.1, pp.24-76.
50. ibid., pp.42-43.
51. See Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, pp.7, 17, 156, 456-462; N.A. Dobrolyubov, Selected Philosophical Essays (Moscow, 1965), p.4.
52. Pirogov, op.cit., vol.1, p.39.
53. Dobrolyubov, op.cit., pp.282, 305.
54. E. Yunge, Vospominanya 1843-1860gg. (St. Petersburg, 1913), pp.479-481.
55. L.D. Filipova, "Iz istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniya v Rossii", Voprosy istorii, February 1963, pp.209-218: 214. For conservative arguments against women's education beyond a certain level, see Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, pp.7-14. For the aim of Alexander 11's reforms for girls' secondary education - for the good of society and of the family - see Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.3, p.96. For a general discussion of women in this period, see Cynthia Whittaker, "The Women's Movement during the Reign of Alexander 11: A Case Study of Russian Liberalism", Journal of Modern History, June 1976,

supplement to vol. 48, no.2, p.38.

56. Muzhchina i zhenshchina vroz i vmeste^v razlichkiye epokhi ikh zhizni (St. Petersburg, 1859).
57. Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, edited by S. Edwards (New York, 1969), pp.255-256:
- Society does no injustice to woman by refusing her equality before the law. It treats her according to her aptitudes and privileges... By the ideal nature of her being, woman is, so to speak, of priceless value. She can reach greater heights than man, but only on condition that he raises her up.... If she were to be on an equal footing with man in public life, he would find her odious and ugly. This would mean the end of the institution of marriage, the death of love and the ruin of the human race.
58. Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, vol.2, p.817.
59. See L.P. Shelgunova, Iz dalekago proshlogo (St. Petersburg, 1901), pp.69-71.
60. J. d'Herricourt, A Woman's Philosophy of Woman (New York, 1864), p.17.

61. M.L. Mikhaylov, Zhenshchiny: ikh vospitanie i znachenie v obshchestve (St. Petersburg, 1903). For a fuller treatment of Mikhailov's writings, see Richard Stites, "M.L. Mikhaylov and the Emergence of the Woman Question", Canadian Slavic Studies, Summer 1969, 3, pp.178-199.
62. Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, p.457.
63. Shashkov, Sobranie sochineniy, vol.1, pp.857-858. For the ferment of the early 1860s, see Vodovozova, E.N., Na zare zhizni (Moscow, 1964), vol.2, pp.33-45.
64. See T. Darlington, Education in Russia, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, vol.23 (London, 1909), p.125. For the idea that upper-class women suffered particularly from the lack of education, whereas lower-class women at least had equality in poverty with their men, see Helene Lange, Higher Education of Women in Europe (New York, 1871), p.130.
65. As the debate continued into the second half of the nineteenth century, witnessing reforms and retraction of reforms, prostitution increased. See S.S. Shashkov, Ocherk istorii russkoy zhenshchiny (St. Petersburg, 1872), pp.265-270.
66. Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, pp.468-469, 478.

67. See for example, Herzen, From the Other Shore, pp.12-13; Barbara Heldt, Terrible Perfection Women and Russian Literature (Bloomington, 1987), p.12; Vera Dunham, "The Strong Woman Motif in Russian Literature" in C.E. Black (ed.), The Transformation of Russian Society (Cambridge, 1960), pp.459-483.
68. E. Shtakenshneider, Dnevnikii zapiski (Moscow, 1934), p.325; Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni, vol.2, pp.186-202; S. Tsederbaum, Zhenshchina v russkom revolutsionnom dvizhenii 1870-1905 (Leningrad, 1927), p.8. Aleksandra Artyukhina, who attended the women's clubs in St. Petersburg in 1907 and later joined the Bolshevik Party, wrote that:
- When we began to attend the Sunday and evening schools, we began to make use of books from the library and we learned of the great Russian democrat Chernyshevsky. We read his book, What is to be done?, secretly, and found the image of Vera Pavlovna, the woman of the future, very attractive.
- A. Artyukhina et al (eds.), Zhenshchina v revolutsii (Moscow, 1959), p.21.
69. N.G. Chernyshevsky, Chto delat? (Leningrad, 1976); N.G. Chernyshevsky, What is to be done?, introduced by E.H. Carr (New York, 1961). See also Bogdanovich,

op.cit., p.22; Tsederbaum, op.cit., pp.7-8. In her discussion of women in nineteenth-century literature, Barbara Heldt (op.cit.) sees the male image of women as one of 'terrible perfection' - terrible to the women expected to incarnate it, and to the men who could not match it. She claims that heroines such as Vera Pavlovna are not the literary equals of male characters, but are the foil for the larger pre-occupations of men. Yet Chernyshevsky himself wrote to his wife that men were obliged to end the subordinate, servile relationships between the sexes, even if it meant for a time that women be superior and man 'a slave'. See Sbornik pamiati Anny Pavlovny Filosofovoy, vol.2, pp.102-103. For Chernyshevsky's view, see also Bogdanovich, op.cit., p.95.

Heldt also points to (p.77) the general portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship in the nineteenth-century novel as being one of failure to communicate, with the mother as a figure of limited understanding, reflected in Vera Pavlovna's mother who wants to continue to live the traditional way, which her daughter sees as a life of deception. Heldt claims that in autobiographies, daughters have a far greater understanding of their mothers than in fiction. Barbara Engel has found strong mother-daughter ties among the female radicals (op.cit.). Nevertheless, the fact remains that radical women saw

it as necessary to defy 'family despotism', to escape from the traditional image of womanhood which their mothers seemed to embody, and certainly to break away from the maternal home-centred vision and devote themselves to society as a whole. See for example, Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni; Zhukovskaya, op.cit; S. Kovalevskaya, A Russian Childhood, translated, edited and introduced by B. Stillman (New York, 1978).

70. For examples of fictitious marriages, see Bogdanovich, op.cit., pp.420-421, and p.427 for the fictitious marriage and triangular relationship between the Bokovs and Ivan Sechenov that served as the basis for Chernyshevsky's tale. See also J. Prelooker (Priluker), Heroes and Heroines of Russia (London, 1908), pp.53-57. Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni, vol.2, pp.284-289, relates the story of the Sleptsov commune, also known as the Znamenskaya commune (from the street in which it was situated). See also Kovalevskaya, op.cit., p.251, note 1; K.I. Chukosky, Ljudi i knigi (Moscow, 1958), pp.272-304. According to Chukovsky (p.272), such communes were a phenomenon of the 1860s, and revealed the influence of literature and vice versa. However, he points out (p.281) that the six members of the commune in Znamensky Street did not quite live up to their 'historical mission'. For problems encountered in the fictitious marriages of the 1860s, see Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni, vol.2, pp.255-257.

71. See for example Bogdanovich, op.cit., pp.16-17; Amfiteatrov, op.cit., p.31; Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, op.cit., p.145.
72. B. A. Engel, "From Feminism to Populism: A Study of Changing Attitudes of Women of the Russian Intelligentsia, 1855-1881", Ph.D., Columbia University, New York, 1974, p.53.
73. L. Tikhomirov, Russia, Political and Social (London, 1888), vol.2, pp.40, 46, 51. For the subordination of personal to social concerns among women of the late 1860s and the 1870s, see V.L. Perovskii, Vospominaniya o sestre (Moscow, 1927), p.51.
74. Artuikhina, op.cit., p.20.
75. See Shashkov, Istoricheskie sudby zhenshchiny, pp.212-3.
76. M. Zebrikoff, "Russia" in Theodore Stanton (ed.), The Woman Question in Europe (New York, 1884), p.423.
77. R. Dudgeon, "Women and Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1905", Ph.D., George Washington University, 1975, pp.390, 378.
78. See Yunge, op.cit., p.481; Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni,

vol.2, pp.99-100; Karnovich, op.cit., pp.16, 69-70.

For a discussion of the reforms in higher education for women, see Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, op.cit., pp.137-144; Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, pp.510-535; V.V. Stasov, Nadezhda Vasilevna Stasova: vospominaniya i ocherki (St. Petersburg, 1899), p.183.

79. Kovalevskaya, op.cit., pp.146-147. See also Sonia Kovalevsky Biography and Autobiography, A.C. Leffler (London, 1895), pp.265-266.
80. Stepniak, Underground Russia (London, 1893), p.4.
81. Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni, vol.2, pp.118-119.
82. Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia, pp.99-105.
83. Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.2, p.41. See also Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.2, pp.480-481; Sbornik pamiati Anny Pavlovny Filosofovoj, vol.2, p.72.
84. Tikhomirov, op.cit., vol.2, pp.48-52; Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni, vol.2, p.79. In 1862, the nihilists demanded the abolition of marriage and of the family because these were 'highly immoral institutions, irreconcilable with the equality of the sexes'. See

- V. Burtsev, Za sto let (London, 1897), p.43. For a discussion of the nihilist women, see B.A. Engel, Mothers and Daughters, pp.62-80; V. Broido, Apostles into Terrorists Women and the Revolutionary Movement in the Russia of Alexander II (London, 1977). In the early 1870s, some of the female radicals demanded celibacy of revolutionaries. See V. Figner, Polnoe sobranie sochineniya (Moscow, 1929), vol.5, p.95.
85. See for example, Vera Figner, Zapechatlennyi trud (Moscow, 1964), vol.1, pp.116-120; Tsederbaum, op.cit., pp.17-18. On the need for a women's circle to develop their confidence, see Figner, Polnoe sobranie sochineniy, vol.5, pp.27, 47. For a fuller discussion of the Fritschi, see B.S. Itenberg, Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva (Moscow, 1965), pp.142-144; Amy Knight, "The Fritsche: A Study of Female Radicals in the Russian Populist Movement", Canadian Slavic Studies, Spring 1975, vol.9, no.1, pp.1-18. For the precedence of social revolution and the idea that the woman question would find solution only through the struggle of the masses, see a revolutionary pamphlet of 1871 in P.I. Lavrov, Narodniki (Propagandisty) 1873-1878 (Geneva, 1895), p.69.
86. See for example Sbornik pamiati Anny Pavlovny Filosofovoy; Stasov, op.cit.

87. Zebrikoff, op.cit., p.422.
88. Figner, Polnoe sobranie sochineniya, vol.5, p.39.
89. Figner, Zapechatlennyi trud, vol.1, p.122. For differences between the feminists and the nihilists in the mid 1860s, see for example, Shtakenshneider, op.cit., pp.349-357, 408-409, 420-421; Stasov, op.cit., pp.214-215; Sbornik pamiati Anny Pavlovny Filosofovoy, vol.1, pp.125-136; O.K. Bulanova-Trubnikova, Tri pokoleniya (Moscow, 1928), p.104; Likhacheva, op.cit., vol.3, pp.497-499.
90. B.A. Engel, Mothers and Daughters, pp.5, 173, 183.
91. Herzen, From the Other Shore, pp.76, 87. Vera Figner wrote, in her Memoirs of a Revolutionist (New York, 1927), that they had tried to reach the peasants through factory workers because they saw the workers as the key to spreading revolutionary ideas, but that the organization had been crushed by 1875 (pp.44-45); that work among the people had come to no avail because of the lack of political freedom (p.13); and therefore, she had come to terrorism because (p.62) 'the people were crushed by their poverty, abased by the constant demands made upon them, and did not have the strength themselves to employ such means'. See also V. Ya.

- Bogucharsky, Iz istorii politicheskoy borbe v 70s i 80s gg. XIX veke (Moscow, 1912), pp.49-123 for a discussion of terrorism, and pp.124-141 for this early political activity among the workers.
92. See V. Ya. Bogucharsky, Aktivnoe narodnichestvo semidesyatick godov (Moscow, 1912), pp.172-211.
93. M. Lyadov, "Koe-chto o zhenshchine rabotnitse" in Literatura Moskovskogo Rabochego Soyuza (Moscow, 1930), pp.163-170, on which the following discussion is based.
94. ibid., pp.164, 167-170.
95. Trudy pervogo vserossiyskogo s'ezda pri Russkom zhenskom obshchestve v Sankt-Peterburge 10-16 dekabrya, 1908 (St. Petersburg, 1909), pp.793-800. For a fuller discussion of the congress, see Linda Edmondson, "Russian Feminists and the First All-Russian Congress of Women", Russian History, 1976, vol.3, no.2, pp.123-149.
96. A.M. Kollontai, Sotsialniye osnovy zhenskogo voprosa (St. Petersburg, 1909), pp.227-229.
97. See Vodovozova, Na zare zhizni, vol.2, pp.119-135.
98. See P.F. Kudelli (ed.), Rabotnitsa v 1905g. v S-

Peterburge. Sbornik . statey i vospominaniy
(Leningrad, 1926), p.14.

99. See Kechedzhi-Shapovalov, op.cit., pp.165-166, for the idea that the participation of women in industrial development led to a more settled working-class way of life, where previously male workers had been 'factory nomads'.
100. For contemporary reaction against 'saninism', see Ia. Abramovich, Zhenshchina i mir muzhskoy kul'tury (Moscow, 1913), p.92.

Chapter 5

Alexandra Kollontai and the Woman Question in Russia

5:1 Biographical context

Alexandra Kollontai is generally accepted, at least in the west, as a central figure in the movement for the liberation of women in Russia and in the development of Marxist theory on sexual relations. She insisted that socialists needed a new standard of sexual morality as an essential part of their revolutionary armoury. Certainly, Kollontai was a prolific writer on these issues, although given the scope of her own revolutionary commitment, there is perhaps too much stress put on the novelty of her ideas on relations between the sexes, or at least on their originality within the Russian context. In fact, as this discussion will show, Kollontai's writings on women and the family were firmly in line with the development of Russian thought on both since the 1840s. In particular, Kollontai forwarded the view that had been propagated at least since the 1860s, that work, and not emotion, should be the centre of women's lives, and further, that it was productive work - that is, paid employment outside the home - for the collective which would make women independent and personally fulfilled. (1)

Kollontai was born in 1872 into the lower aristocracy, her mother coming from the merchant class, her father from the Ukrainian gentry and a general in the tsar's army. She received a liberal education at home, but did not go on to university as her parents were afraid of the possible influence on her of revolutionary ideas. Kollontai refused an arranged marriage and, instead, married her second cousin against her parents' wishes in 1894. The marriage lasted three years, during which time she had a son. Kollontai became a socialist around 1896, the year of the big textile strikes in St. Petersburg. In that year, she became acquainted, for the first time, with the desperate living and working conditions of the Russian working class. Kollontai did not immediately become a Marxist. She broke out of what she experienced as a restrictive family situation and, in 1898, she attended university at Zurich, studying political economy and statistics. She returned to Russia in 1903 when she made a study of Finland. In 1904, she spoke and taught in workers' circles, and wrote. She took part in the 1905 Revolution, and in 1908 in the first All-Russian Congress of Women in St. Petersburg, in order to combat what she discerned as a growing feminist influence among the female proletariat in Russia. From this congress, Kollontai had to flee the police into exile.

In Kollontai's view, indeed in the general socialist view,

the feminists were basically conservative, content to compromise with the established order in return for a few concessions on women's rights. Kollontai contended that the feminists were irrelevant to the needs of working-class women. Yet she also saw them as posing a challenge to social democracy in Russia after the 1905 Revolution. In 1906, Kollontai had joined the Mensheviks over the issue of the Duma elections. It was the war of 1914 that brought her to Bolshevism, although initially she was a pacifist. Kollontai committed herself to Lenin's theory that the imperialist war would turn into a civil war, a class war, in 1915. In that year, she joined the Bolsheviks to work for the revolution she expected to follow on Russia's sure defeat in war.

Thereafter, Kollontai proved a consistent supporter of Lenin until the Revolution in 1917. She was the first woman elected to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party after the October Revolution. Kollontai became Commissar for Public Welfare in the first Soviet government. According to one biographer, Beatrice Farnsworth, Kollontai boasted of her following among the masses, of her popularity as an orator, of those who were 'utterly devoted' to her. Yet in practice, she met considerable hostility in the male world of politics and political leadership. Moreover, Kollontai was the butt of much criticism and salacious gossip because

of her personal life. (2) Indeed, she was the object of such criticism both from the right and from the left. For the former, Sorokin expressed the view that:

[Kollontai's] revolutionary enthusiasm is nothing but a gratification of her sexual satyriasis. In spite of her numerous 'husbands', Kollontai, first the wife of a general [sic], later the mistress of a dozen men, is not yet satisfied. She seeks new forms of sexual sadism. (3)

For their part, the left, including the Bolsheviki, accused Kollontai of petty-bourgeois sentimentality, of 'George Sandism', of feminism, of not being a materialist, and of ignoring the problems of everyday life. (4)

After the Revolution, Kollontai was in fact often in disagreement with Lenin. Thus, for example, she opposed the Peace of Brest-Litovsk in 1918, calling instead for a revolutionary war - perhaps surprising, given her earlier pacifism. She seemed to view war in 1918 as a revolutionary crusade, as the legitimate carrier of a revolution which would soon spread across Europe, for Kollontai was convinced that world capitalism had outlived itself. She resigned her government post in 1918 over this issue. She then concentrated on domestic politics, and in particular, on the

question of workers' control, which seemed in danger of being renounced as a utopian extravagance. In Kollontai's view, the principle of workers' control was being evaded through such practices as the re-establishment of managerial authority; the widespread use of specialists from the old regime who were offered the incentive of privileges, so attractive in a time of scarcity; the insistence on labour discipline, which was increasingly seen as both essential for the state's survival and irreconcilable with workers' control; wage incentives, which disappointed the hopes for equality as well as serving to undermine working-class solidarity; and the all-pervasive centralization, so inimical to any kind of shop-floor democracy. Kollontai thus feared that democracy was being sacrificed in this defensive strengthening of the Bolshevik state, that the reality of power was corroding communist principles. For Lenin, such actions were temporary expedients, necessary to give the Revolution breathing space in the face of a hostile world environment. The problem for Kollontai lay in what she saw as the virtue being made out of necessity. Hence, she feared for the survival of the Revolution, choking in the fog of directives from above.

Yet paradoxically, during the Civil War (1918-1921), Kollontai's optimism revived. She could once again, as in the heady days of the Revolution, use her considerable talents as

orator and agitator. Moreover, the circumstances of civil war allowed extreme solutions to override any caution, through the sweeping decrees of War Communism. Indeed, Kollontai welcomed this time of crisis as an opportunity to push on with revolutionary social change, to telescope the process of building socialism. At the same time, War Communism entailed extreme centralization - previously the development of which Kollontai was so critical, and would again attack as a member of the Workers' Opposition in 1920. The paradox was that, despite its dangers, Kollontai also felt that the degree of state control under War Communism could enforce much needed reforms, such as her own welfare measures which were foundering in the face of hostility, inertia, and scarcity.

This impatient desire for social change may have served to dilute the scope of Kollontai's criticism of the creeping authoritarianism, or at least to diminish the impact, because at bottom, her attitude was ambivalent. Indeed, despite her stress on the necessity for workers' control, Kollontai nevertheless supported Trotsky on the issue of labour conscription. Moreover, her attitude towards prostitution seemed to indicate that it was a case of forcing women to be independent by compelling them to work. In her view, prostitutes should be punished not for prostitution per se - this she dismissed as bourgeois hypocrisy and an aspect of

sexual inequality since the male customer went unpunished. Rather, prostitutes should be penalised for not contributing to the collective in the prescribed way, and so undermining socialist equality in general, and serving to perpetuate women's inferior position in particular. (5)

In 1920, however, Kollontai joined the Workers' opposition, recognising that the compulsion of War Communism was crushing the Revolution and that the Party was losing touch with the working class in whose name it held power. Her criticisms were trenchant. War Communism meant, in essence, rule by administrative decree and summary justice. Moreover, there was, for Kollontai, the runaway development of the bureaucracy, and of what she saw as the associated, pervasive and often brutal arrogance. Kollontai felt that the regime's attempt to manipulate discipline and enthusiasm in the struggle for survival was, in effect, destroying the spontaneity of the masses. Yet in 1919, Kollontai herself had acknowledged Russia's backwardness, reflected in the petty-bourgeois mentality of the peasant masses, whose resistance to basic change in their everyday lives presented a powerful obstacle to the revolutionaries' plans for the construction of socialism. Specifically, she acknowledged the profound conservatism of peasant women, many of whom were hostile to Bolshevism. (6)

Kollontai saw the issue as not simply one of the survival of

the revolution, but of how it should proceed. Lenin warned her against going too far, too fast. For her part, Kollontai protested against the loss of idealism, against the pragmatism that posed as principle. She saw the basic problem as lying in the increasing restrictions on party democracy. Lenin, however, insisted that it was indeed left-wing infantilism to take such chances with the survival of the revolution, and that in any case, it was utopian to try to build socialism in such conditions of economic, social and cultural deprivation. Kollontai nevertheless was a bitter opponent of the New Economic Policy, which she denounced as treachery to the revolution. It seems that despite her criticisms of War Communism, Kollontai felt that it at least held out the promise of the total, swift transformation of Russian society - a promise which NEP betrayed.

For Lenin, War Communism had served its purpose. Its continuation after the emergency was over would render it a threat to the very Soviet state it had been meant to save. The Party could not afford to alienate further the middle peasant. Kollontai suggested that the Party should concentrate on the peasant woman as a lever for social change in the countryside. Such women, she held, could be won for the revolution only by destroying the traditional family structures. She acceded that, despite the great

upheaval of revolution and civil war, the peasant family remained tenaciously cohesive, yet seemed to underestimate the task involved in sapping that vitality.

Kollontai was one of the leading proponents among the Bolsheviks of organising women, both before and after the revolution. She was constantly accused of deviating towards bourgeois feminism. Nevertheless, she became head of zhenotdel, the Party's bureau for women, in 1920, and was secretary of the International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern. In 1922, however, Kollontai was dismissed from her post at zhenotdel. The reasons are unclear, though she had published her Workers' Opposition pamphlet abroad, and she was outspokenly critical of the Party's attitude towards women. According to one biographer, Barbara Clements, Kollontai may not have been very effective in running zhenotdel, though in the opinion of Richard Stites Kollontai led zhenotdel with 'the abundant optimism, energy and talent which she had displayed in other realms of revolutionary work'. (7) Either speculation is difficult to substantiate. Nevertheless, Kollontai's biographers believe that her removal from the leadership was a blow to the women's bureau in particular, and to the women's movement in general.

From 1922, Kollontai was ambassador for the Soviet Union in

Norway; in 1926, she served in Mexico; and in 1927, she returned to Norway, moving to Sweden in 1930. This period is generally regarded by biographers as Kollontai's political exile. Indeed, from 1922, apart from her contribution to the 1926 debate on the Family Law, Kollontai virtually withdrew from the internal events in the Soviet Union, Barbara Clements concluded that Kollontai remained:

a dreamer at the end, as she had been in the beginning; the utopian vision which had made her a revolutionary sustained her. She was a human being of beauty and hope and compromise and despair and vanity and dignity and belief. She outlived her illusions, but she remained faithful to her dream, even though its earthly manifestation took too much blood. (8)

Yet the question remains of how Kollontai herself managed to survive the reality of her 'dream'. She certainly had a very stormy political career, at least until 1926. Thereafter, in 1927 she joined in the denunciation of the Left Opposition, and in the late 1930s in the ritual praise of Stalin's leadership. Her submission to Stalin may have partly been out of fear, for herself and the lives of those near to her, as Beatrice Farnsworth has suggested, and partly the caution age often brings, as well as the

debilitation of illness. (9) Even taken together, Farnsworth has acknowledged that these speculations can serve only as partial explanations for Kollontai's subservience, and it could be added, her survival since they do not explain Stalin's sparing her. Another biographer, Cathy Porter, has pointed to the possibility of Georgian chivalry, but this is one charge difficult to prove against Stalin. (10) In fact, it seems that while Kollontai was often at odds with Lenin, she never actually opposed Stalin himself. In addition, she was a useful propagandist for Stalin abroad, a symbol of how the Soviet Union was blazing the trail in the emancipation of women.

Perhaps finally, Kollontai herself succumbed to the temptation of making a virtue out of necessity, and reconciled herself to viewing the survival of the Bolshevik regime and its subsequent rapid, if uneven, development as an achievement in itself. Perhaps too, Kollontai's own impatience for change led her to endorse, if only implicitly, the combination of state authoritarianism with popular enthusiasm in the supreme effort to overcome Russia's backwardness by enforced transformation of the economy. Finally, her belief that maternity was a socialist woman's duty to the collective in effect precluded any fundamental critique of Stalinism, and ensured Kollontai's submission and tacit support. Ultimately, however important Kollontai

has proved to be in the west for the development both of feminist and of Marxist theory on the woman question, through her life as much as through her writings, the fact remains that she has, so far at least, failed to have a similar impact in the Soviet Union.

5:2 Theoretical context

Some basic groundwork in a Marxist approach to the woman question had already been done in the early 1880s by Engels in his book Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State, and by August Bebel, in his work Woman under Socialism.⁽¹¹⁾ From her writings, Kollontai appears to have been influenced by the latter work in particular, which was first published in 1879. She wrote a laudatory preface to the Russian edition of 1918, claiming that this book constituted the woman's 'bible', laying a solid foundation of knowledge for the socialist women's movement.⁽¹²⁾ Marx and Engels had already revealed the close dependence between the productive relations at the different stages of the economy, and the social situation of women. Bebel elaborated on this analysis, linking it to the socialist society of the future. Kollontai claimed that before the publication of Bebel's work, women had tended to take what amounted to a bourgeois position. His book played a vital role in forcing a re-evaluation by social

democracy of its position on women.

Kollontai complained that the majority of socialists had tended to view the woman question and the issue of a socialist morality as problems for the distant future, even as the male working class, she claimed, demanded the complete exclusion of women from industry and the trade unions. With Marx, Engels and Bebel, Kollontai vigorously opposed this view. Moreover, she asserted that women's inequality and lack of rights were not the results of any innate female characteristics, but rather were derived from the type of work which women performed in society. (13) She believed that what Bebel had contributed, in clear, simple language, was a class position on the woman question which showed that a woman without rights was not only a transient historical category, but one whose complete liberation was possible only through socialism. While the women's movement should, in Bebel's opinion, be part of the general socialist movement, he was always careful to stress that the latter must recognise that women had a double-edged oppression, being sexually as well as economically exploited.

Bebel's book on women presented nothing new in terms of existing nineteenth-century theory. Rather, what it contributed was precisely a historical analysis of the position of women through the ages, demonstrating that their

inferiority was not, in fact, a natural and therefore unalterable condition, but instead was the result of specific economic, social and cultural circumstances, with the stress being on the economic factors. Bebel did not simply dismiss the arguments that woman was weaker because of her biology, and in particular because of her reproductive function. Rather, he denied the implication that such weakness meant natural inferiority and that men's dominant position in the family and in society was atemporal. He showed, instead, the correspondence between the changes in relations between the sexes and in the position of women throughout history. He linked women's oppression under capitalism directly to the rise of private property. Finally, he declared that women would ultimately achieve emancipation only under socialism, where they would have complete equality with men.

Bebel was indeed a very important influence on Kollontai's writings concerning women and morality. Like him, she traced the subjugation of women throughout the various historical epochs, linking it directly to the economic basis of society, and to women's role in the process of production. She wrote that the position of women was not determined by either nature or culture, knowledge or civilization, but by the structure of the economy. ⁽¹⁴⁾ Every new form of the economy called forth a new form of social and sexual

relations to correspond to it. Kollontai claimed that there had been equality between the sexes before the development of private property, when women were subjected to male domination, reduced to a position of virtual slavery, essentially imprisoned in the home with their main function being to produce heirs to the family property. She acknowledged, however, that even in matriarchal society, there had been a division of labour between the sexes based on the family household. (15)

From a superficial glance at her works, Kollontai would appear to have based her ideas on women and the family on a simplistic economic determinist analysis. She wrote, for example, that:

woman's position, her rights, her recognition as an individual, her access to the storehouse of learning always follow from her role in the economy and in production.

At the same time, she added, while the new morality would arise from new social relations of production, nevertheless a future communist economy could not be built without the support of that new morality. She insisted, moreover, that the transformation of the economy simply was not enough for women to achieve equality with men, or for a revolution in

relations between the sexes. (16) Yet despite these significant reservations about the correspondence between economic change and change in the position of women, Kollontai consistently analysed the latter in terms of the former, notwithstanding her writings on the psychology of the 'new woman' and the need to develop a new morality, which will be discussed below. Kollontai's analytical method seems to have been founded on a kind of reflection theory, seeing everything flowing from the economic base upwards, with the relationship between it and the rest being direct, though by no means coincidental.

According to Kollontai, women's position in contemporary society and her development are directly dependent on the historical stage of economic relations. Another major influence on Kollontai's writings seems to have been the nineteenth-century theorists of matriarchy, such as J.J. Bachofen and L.H. Morgan. For the left generally, it seemed that matriarchal society upheld the ideals that socialists themselves dreamed of establishing: social solidarity and the happiness of all, rather than selfish individualism; love and compassion, and not fear and inequality. Such ideas helped to reinforce the view that women were morally superior, that they had a civilizing role to play. For Engels and Bebel, patriarchal society was related to class society, where pride of place was given to concepts of duty,

authority and sacrifice, and where self-interest was the order of the day.

There was no positive proof that matriarchal societies had ever existed. Yet they nevertheless proved to be important as an ideal, however primitive, and as an indication that there had been, and could be again, a society different from the established one based on what the socialists saw as callous inequality and injustice. The reality of primitive societies, matriarchal or otherwise, was not one of simple pleasure. Rather, it had been one of back-breaking toil, often desperate poverty, basic subsistence and early death. However, it seemed that progress for the few had then been at the expense of the many. According to socialist theory, women had lost out when they lost their economic functions and were shut up in the home. Yet as capitalism developed, it began to exploit women as a cheap source of labour. In the process, it also provided women with the means to their emancipation by drawing them into the economy and the class struggle.

Thus for Marxists generally, the economy determined women's position in society. According to Engels, and in line with Morgan's anthropology, matriarchal power had been strong under the system of settled agricultural production where woman had had an active and valuable role in the farm

economy and where motherhood had been highly esteemed. Kollontai contrasted the position of women in the nomadic cattle breeding tribal societies, citing the Bashkirs in Russia as an example. Among the Bashkirs, Kollontai claimed, women were regarded as the property of the men and possessed no rights. (17) Patriarchal power had become dominant, Kollontai asserted, as soon as private property had been introduced, following the analysis of both Engels and Bebel. The reason for woman losing her influence and becoming enslaved to man was seen by Kollontai to be the division of labour under capitalism in which agriculture, with women playing a significant if subordinate part, was no longer the basis of the economy. Kollontai acknowledged that all women were oppressed within the family, regardless of their social station. Nevertheless, she saw as crucial the class differences between women, and believed that the defining factor was the woman's role in the productive process. (18)

Here Kollontai revealed the influence of Clara Zetkin and German social democracy in her analysis of the woman question. Since the class struggle superceded the sexual struggle, the woman question could not be solved by bourgeois feminists. Rather, Kollontai insisted that women workers had to join the general proletarian movement. At the same time, however, Kollontai pointed to the specific problems encountered by women workers related to their sex. She also regarded them

as more politically backward than men. Thus, she reasoned, there had to be a special effort by socialist parties - but never separate from them - to organise and educate working women. Another factor for Kollontai was the need she perceived to combat the feminist appeal among working-class women.

Hence although for Kollontai the basis of women's oppression was economic, its manifestation was in sexual as well as in class terms. And although she believed that the woman question could only find its solution with the end of class society, she insisted that the emancipation of women had to be a vital facet of the class struggle. In her view, relations between the sexes would influence fundamentally the outcome of the class struggle. (19) Working-class morality, therefore, had to be worked out in the struggle against capitalism, and not after capitalism had been defeated. Indeed, such a new morality was essential for the revolution to be successful. (20)

5:3 The New Woman

Kollontai also believed that the character, the 'essence', of woman changed with the changing economic conditions. In bourgeois society, therefore, she saw the capitalist system of production as playing the vital role in the emergence of

the 'New Woman' as a type, referred to by Kollontai as 'species-like'. In other words, she saw the New Woman as a distinctive human being who was conscious of herself as a social being, as a member of a community based on trust and solidarity. Kollontai identified that community as the working class. Capitalism brought about this change by compelling an increasing number of women to take an active part in the economy. (21) Previously, woman had been chained to the home and to the husband, the breadwinner, by the prevailing relations of production which ensured her economic dependency. With the development of capitalism, however, the 'weaker' sex was unceremoniously thrown onto an extremely arduous, 'thorny' path for which she had had no preparation, an unknown road leading her into new forms of subjection through the system of wage-slavery. (22)

Hence, Kollontai claimed that the New Woman was essentially the 'child of the large scale capitalist system'. (23) She had not been created, nor would her psyche be transformed, by an effort of individual will, but rather by the basic economic process of society. Fundamentally, woman in bourgeois society was compelled by the 'scourge of hunger' to adjust rapidly to the changing economic conditions of developing industry. She thus experienced at first hand the struggle of her class by taking an active part in it. Kollontai recognised that the New Woman still did not perform

the same work as men, but held that they contributed to the welfare of the working-class community on an equal basis. Further, she believed that it was to the collective, and not to the individual family, that the New Woman's primary duty lay. (24) On the one hand, Kollontai saw the sexual division of labour, in the sense of men being associated with productive work and women with work in the family home, as the root cause of women's inferiority, and one which predated capitalism. She assumed that it would be abolished, and with it female subordination, when women entered the labour force. On the other hand, Kollontai failed to challenge the division of labour within the home, assuming that the mechanization of housework and the replacement of the isolated labour of housewives by public services would suffice to ensure female equality.

Kollontai outlined the differences she saw being wrought in woman's psyche by developing capitalism. She admitted that the New Woman attempted to cling to the past, but saw her as being torn from it by the 'dark satanic mills' which forced the development in her of a new consciousness, of an independent personality. (25) The New Woman was disgorged from the womb of the old family, deprived of its customary protection and authority over her, and catapulted into the class struggle. In this process, she became, through harsh experience, self-disciplined, refusing anymore to be

submissive, and asserting her own individuality, independent of men. The question, then, was how the New Woman reacted to the traditionally subordinate place allotted to her, and to the norms of bourgeois morality. Kollontai claimed that the New Woman was not a passive creation of the system which oppressed her. Indeed, she saw the changing psyche of the New Woman personified in the single woman worker who was totally dependent on her own abilities, and who rejected the customary situation of women, described by Kollontai as one of clinging dependence on the male breadwinner. (26) The New Woman, therefore, did not await the transformation of socialism. Rather, she must struggle alongside men and for the good of her class, not just for herself.

According to Kollontai, what happened to this weak, gentle, submissive sex when faced with the radically altered conditions of existence was a realisation, through cruel experience, of the uselessness and hypocrisy of bourgeois morality. The harsh reality of capitalism demanded other, entirely different characteristics, such as determination, toughness and activity in place of abject passivity - in other words, those characteristics which were previously considered the exclusive possession of men, and unnatural in women. Before capitalism, Kollontai held, the main axis of a woman's life had revolved around marriage and the family. With the development of the economy and society, the woman's

focus was increasingly on her emotional life. The consequent subjectivity marked her off from the male sex whose experience extended beyond the confines of the household. Men, according to Kollontai, did not regard emotional experience as in any way a dominant, or even major, factor in their lives.

However, the sharpening economic conditions flowing from the growth of industry made imperative a break from this traditional dominance of feeling in the female sex. The New Woman, in asserting her own personality, her ego, no longer demanded exclusive possession of the other person in a relationship. Indeed, she experienced marriage as a fetter, according to Kollontai. It had been material dependence on men under previous economic conditions which, above all, had rendered women helpless, forcing the woman to structure her relations to the man in such a way as to ensure their indissolubility and, therefore, her security. The New Woman, wrote Kollontai, did not see a formal relationship as an immediate necessity, did not consider it as the crowning achievement of her life. Not that she totally rejected the pleasure marriage afforded, but rather that she felt no imperative to rush into what she now recognised as a form of imprisonment. (27)

However, Kollontai accepted that the New Woman had to re-

educate herself if she was to assert her independence. Moreover, she had to conquer her emotions above all. To be independent, to have integrity, the New Woman had to develop self-control and self-respect. Kollontai was not dismissing emotion. Instead, she was insisting that it should not lead to the woman submerging herself in the personality and mind of her sexual partner. Thus, the New Woman had to learn to value freedom and independence, to insist on male recognition of her individual integrity. Kollontai believed that women would have to struggle for such recognition, since men would continue to try to subdue women, to objectify them in marriage. (28) She warned that if the woman succumbed to the 'tyranny' of emotion, she would become a mere shadow of her husband. Such submission, while it might bring pleasure, was, according to Kollontai, the negation of herself. Instead, the New Woman had to demand of men respect and consideration as their equal. (29)

Kollontai acknowledged the power of the past even over the New Woman. Nevertheless, she claimed that the state of being in love, of passion and romance, were but fleeting periods in her life, mere episodes when set against the goal the New Woman had set herself of socially useful work in the collective. (30) It was an extremely difficult task to throw off the education of centuries which taught women to see men as their masters. It was no simple matter to renounce one's

dependence, emotional as well as material, on men. (31) In addition, while Kollontai viewed the struggle as imperative, she also believed that the New Woman was in search of an ideal unattainable in capitalist society, an ideal of 'harmony and spiritual closeness, a union of love with freedom, and a union of comradeship with material independence'. Harsh reality would show that such an ideal could only be found in the distant future, and only if people, men as well as women, developed a new psyche. It was nevertheless a worthy goal, according to Kollontai. (32) The New Woman refused to be shackled by love, because for her the renunciation of her own ego for another person, the loss of her individual identity in a relationship with a man, would be disastrous. Work and not emotion was the driving force of her life. (33) Kollontai acceded that women's efforts were continuously frustrated by the obvious attractions of love and marriage. She saw this process of transformation as a transition period in which women had not yet learned how to harmonize their inner freedom and independence with the 'all-consuming passion of love'. (34) However, Kollontai seems to have assumed that work itself, wage-earning and outside the home, would force women to adopt new attitudes and to make new demands.

5:4 Women and class society

Thus, the transformation of the female psyche which Kollontai

charted began when capitalism was developing, and was in direct relation to the changing economic conditions. The final completion of the New Woman, however, would be, and could only be, achieved in a communist society. At the same time, her very development was essential to the contemporary class struggle. Kollontai held that the individual will of these women found fullest expression in the collective effort to adjust to the new economic conditions. (35)

Here Kollontai brought out the class differences between women. The feeling of working-class solidarity, which she viewed as almost instinctive in the proletariat, was precisely what differentiated the proletarian from the bourgeois woman, and thus sharpened class conflict between them. Indeed, Kollontai claimed not only that the proletarian woman's struggle to assert herself was coincident with her class interests, but that it was seen to be so by her class. Shutting women up in the home, making the interests of the individual family paramount, and essentially establishing rights of private property for the husband over his 'partner' - all these aspects of bourgeois marriage were, according to Kollontai, undermined by the basic principle of proletarian ideology: comradely solidarity. In Kollontai's view, it was precisely this guiding, instinctive principle which revealed how unnatural, how contradictory, female

inferiority was. Sexual inequality, she believed, was destructively divisive, helping capital, in effect, to exploit the workers by playing off one sex against the other, by giving male workers a spurious feeling of superiority and thus a vested interest in the established order which oppressed them. (36) However, as discussed in chapter three, the belief in female inferiority persisted among male workers, undermining Kollontai's greatly idealized proletarian solidarity. Although she saw the need for a change in male attitudes as well as female, Kollontai did not pay as much attention to the former as to the latter, as if the traditional inferiority of the woman was more of an obstacle to overcome than the superiority of the man.

According to Kollontai, the woman of the middle classes had a more difficult time than the working-class woman, in that she came up against the hostile ideology of her own class, which demanded that the interests of the family come first, that the woman remain in her role of housekeeper, and the man in his role of breadwinner. (37) The bourgeois woman's struggle, therefore, was that of the individual against her class, whereas the struggle of the working-class woman was, Kollontai claimed, the same as that of her class. Indeed, she asserted that there could be no such clash of interests between the psychology of the New Woman, already being formed, and the proletarian ideology. Further, Kollontai

claimed that the former corresponded exactly with the morality which the proletariat was working out in its own interests. The 'mission' of the working class was to overthrow capitalism, a task which demanded of the woman not a submissive domestic slave to the husband, but a personality prepared to demand her right to equality, to take an active, conscious part in the struggles of her class. (38)

Kollontai did not romanticize the lives of working-class women. She acknowledged the terrible working conditions, the abysmal poverty, the unequal pay, and the continuing domination by men. The sometimes brutal attitude of proletarian men towards women she saw as their peasant heritage. However, Kollontai firmly believed that the increasing numbers of proletarian women earning a living outside the home contributed to the creation of a new psyche for those women, by giving them a new confidence and independence. (39) Yet as discussed in chapters three and four, the harsh reality was that working-class women often earned barely enough to survive. Moreover, Kollontai would seem to underestimate the strength of the family among the workers, and to assume too great a distinction between peasant and proletarian families. Indeed, it was more often among the Russian gentry that the New Woman was to be found. Kollontai, therefore, would seem to have drawn a sharp dividing line between bourgeois and proletarian ideology under the capitalist system. In the process, she failed to

take sufficient account of Russia's specific conditions of a weak middle class and a strong peasant culture informing the development of a working class that was still very much in the minority. Moreover, while she stressed the fragmented nature of bourgeois society, she tended to underestimate its impact when analysing the relationships within the working class, perhaps because of her idealization of proletarian solidarity.

After the 1917 Revolution, however, Kollontai acknowledged the importance of the influence which the heavy weight of the dominant ideology wielded not only in capitalist society, but also in the new Soviet society. She continually addressed herself to the needs for agitation among women, in order to raise their level of consciousness. She acceded the profound conservatism of the majority of Russian women, and their continuing hostility to the Bolsheviks. At the same time, she criticised the Party for its failure both to work to overcome this opposition and to encourage positive female participation in building the new order. She noted the additional failure to include women in positions of leadership. (40) Moreover, Kollontai admitted that the bourgeois family had stubbornly survived. In her view, it had become an anachronism even under capitalism in terms of its economic functions, but that it had been maintained because it had been the most effective means of social

control, of dampening down any revolutionary ardour which might develop among working-class men and women. (41)

Indeed, experience after the revolution had shown the strength of conservatism within the family, from which a complete break was necessary if the female worker was to attain what Kollontai saw as the maturity of the average male worker. From the changed conditions of living would arise new feelings, new morals. (42)

Nevertheless, Kollontai also admitted that it was proving extremely difficult to break the hold of the 'old' family, with its customs which held back the development of class consciousness among women workers. Kollontai saw the legacy of capitalism in the very poor economic conditions of early Soviet Russia as well as in the dead weight of traditions which still dominated the minds of women. (43)

Thus, she realised that rights alone were not enough - women had to learn how to make use of them. Kollontai insisted that the revolution ensured that women would never again be tied to the family, but admitted that it had not changed everything. The Soviet state was in its infancy, struggling for survival in a hostile world environment, surrounded still by remnants from that dark, repressive past. The economy had been destroyed; material resources were poor; shortages were widespread, so that even the most basic needs could not be satisfied. And still, the working woman was weighed down by the shackles of the family, the

burden of housework, and the continuing existence of prostitution. For Kollontai, then, the issue of sexual relations had been eased, but not solved by Revolution. (44)

In addition, Kollontai realised that, given the circumstances of civil war, it was unclear to women workers and peasant women, who were not in the direct line of fire but were suffering severe privations caused by the struggle, just where their interests lay. (45) What Kollontai tried to do, through her agitational pamphlets, was to show women that they had a vested interest in, and a crucial contribution to make to, the victory of the Red Army and survival of the Soviet state. She believed that only through their active participation could women retain the rights so dearly won, and develop them when the situation improved. She attempted to explain, in simple terms, that being equal with men, women must struggle equally with them, as comrades. She returned continually to addressing women in her agitational work, viewing their education, the raising of their consciousness, as vital. Hence, her pamphlets asserted that women stood to lose most if the Bolsheviki were defeated, claiming that it was in the bourgeoisie's interests that women remain oppressed by their double burden of wage-earning and domestic labour. She claimed that the bourgeoisie realised that if women turned to the political struggle and took part in public life, capitalism would lose its last stronghold in the working class. (46)

Soviet Russia, according to Kollontai, had at least shaken the basis of the bourgeois family. The revolution had given women their basic right of equality with men. The New Woman was being created - an active fighter for the interests of her class. In her view, woman was being transformed by the Revolution from a docile creature into a political being. (47) Kollontai regretted that the Bolshevik Party, distracted by the basic struggle for survival, had not yet recognised the significance of the 'reserve army' of women for the revolution, and so still did not utilize them systematically in constructing the life of the Soviet state. (48)

Despite her claim for the part played by the revolution in the formation of the New Woman, Kollontai recognised that the process of breaking down women's isolation in the home by forcing them into industry had been initiated under capitalism. Capitalism had needed women to provide additional labour power as well as to act as a cheap and reserve or alternative pool of labour to male workers in order to divide the working class. Thus, what she saw as an ultimately progressive development for women could also be manipulated to hurt, or at least appear as a threat to, the interests of male workers. Besides the hostility of male workers to what they perceived as female competition for their jobs, Kollontai pointed to the contradictions which the working-class women faced in her triple burden of

worker, housewife and mother. Nevertheless, Kollontai was confident that when the proletarian woman realised how exploited she was by the capitalist system, she would become a class-conscious worker fighting alongside her male comrades in the common cause against their class enemy. (49)

In Kollontai's opinion, the forces of capitalism could only be defeated if there was total solidarity in the working class, and full female participation in the labour movement in a situation of complete equality with men. Thus, the seeds of future human relations were sown in the proletariat under capitalism. While demands for women's rights had a long history, and could be traced back to the French and even the American Revolutions, Kollontai believed that it was nevertheless the tremendous upsurge of the capitalist system of industrial production in the nineteenth century which stimulated the development of female consciousness, and that the First World War had revealed the essential role of women in the economy. (50)

5:5 Capitalism and relations between women and men

Kollontai's basic conception of the history of human relations tended towards a series of economic relationships. In line with accepted Marxist theory, she held that the division of society into individual families was the direct result of the system of private property. She described capitalism as an

individualistic system of economy in which private property and marriage were the main obstacles in the way of women's liberation. (51) For Kollontai, the function of the family under capitalism was to maintain the concentration of capital. As the system developed, however, more and more women were drawn into industry, swelling the ranks of the propertyless proletariat. According to Kollontai, a contradiction arose from this development in that, while the process contributed towards the disintegration of the family in bourgeois society, it was not in the interests of capitalism to allow this institution to die out completely, because, as pointed out above, the family constituted the best means of stifling the revolutionary spirit of the workers. Thus, Kollontai held that the working-class family under capitalism seemed, from the point of view of the state, to function mainly as a means of social control, ensuring the hegemony of bourgeois morality. Since the proletariat was, by definition, propertyless, Kollontai believed that working-class marriage could not have the same economic basis as bourgeois marriage. In her opinion, the former was founded on love, since there was no deformation of the relationship between the working-class woman and man by economic motives. In this condition, Kollontai saw evidence for the future healthy relationships between the sexes under communism. She was also adamant that sexual relations had to be changed so that they would have as their basis not blindly physiological desire, but rather the creative

principle of comradely solidarity. (52)

In Kollontai's view, the fragmented nature of capitalist society resulted in the incapacity of human beings for genuine love. She also held that there was generally a lack of leisure time necessary for emotional experience. When human relations were based on economic considerations, as under capitalism, Kollontai insisted that they were corrupted and distorted. She accepted that, since the working class was part of capitalist society, it too must be affected. Kollontai wrote that marriage partners in bourgeois society looked on each other as possessions, whether or not the relationship was legally recognised. Since the woman was generally economically dependent on the man, Kollontai believed that she became an object to him. Moreover, despite the apparently intimate relationship of monogamy, Kollontai held that the individualism fostered so assiduously by capitalism produced emotionally isolated, lonely human beings. The stress of urban life weighed heavily on them so that, despite the noise and the crowds, and even the claustrophobia of city life, the closeness of fellow workers and friends, and the shelter of the family, people experienced a truly frightening 'spiritual solitude'. In fear, they clutched at the image of intimacy afforded by a sexual relationship. In addition, and in seeming contradiction to that individualistic ethic and to the constant demands for privacy, people demanded total

knowledge of the sexual partner. In Kollontai's view, this demand was a denigration of the other's integrity, an invasion of that privacy capitalism purported to respect. It was not true individualism, but truly morbid selfishness, egocentricity without genuine consideration for the other person. For despite all the shared secrets, Kollontai insisted that there could be no real love since people were too afraid, too coarsened by the cult of the ego, to give of themselves honestly to another. (53)

According to Kollontai, the dominant theme in bourgeois relationships lay in the complete possession, emotionally and sexually, of the partner. Nor did this 'dark aspect' limit itself to legal marriage, for the contemporary lover under capitalism was no more tolerant of his partner experiencing any emotions outside the very real limits of the so-called 'free' relationship. Indeed, such was the compulsion to have total knowledge of the other even in unregistered marriages, that it was easier to cope with sexual than with spiritual 'adultery'. Thus, Kollontai flayed the cult of the ego, which she saw as a fundamental part of bourgeois ideology. Love was distorted through possession and exploitation of the other person while refusing to part with anything of oneself. The fact was, Kollontai believed, that bourgeois society was incapable of seeing woman as an independent personality, looking on her instead as a mere appendage of man, as a subordinate

part of the family unit. Moreover, capitalism, in effect, reduced woman to her sexual life. She asserted that for there to be genuine equality between the sexes, women and men must learn to experience 'bright and beautiful' emotions without all the traumas associated with love in bourgeois society where, as Kollontai expressed it, love was either a tragedy or a farce. She further asserted that women and men would be enriched by all emotional experiences which were not simply coarse physical acts, although they first had to pass through the 'school of erotic friendships'. (54)

Basically, then, Kollontai held that because marriage and the family in capitalist society were based on the system of private property, people were treated as possessions. Relations between the sexes were defined in material terms. Indeed, the form of monogamy under capitalism was to ensure the principle of inheritance, that a man's property be passed on to his offspring and thereby immortalised. Although she recognised no such function in the working-class family, Kollontai nevertheless realised that it must be influenced by the dominant ideology of possession, so that a healthy marriage was an impossibility under capitalism. Indeed, she believed that prostitution was an inevitable result. (55) Woman's position of inferiority in marriage and the family sprung directly from her subordinate role in the economy. Moreover, Kollontai charged that

in practice monogamy was only for the woman, that sexual fidelity was demanded of her alone, indicative of the intrinsic hypocrisy of bourgeois morality. The New Woman, however, demanded higher standards of men, a single standard of morality for both sexes, and that the man respect the woman's inner freedom and integrity. (56)

Kollontai was following both Engels and Bebel, and as we have seen, Lyadov, in defining prostitution as a necessary institution under the capitalist system. Indeed, it was her opinion that prostitution was the main basis of the relationships between women and men under capitalism. One could not, she asserted, make any real distinction between the most lawful wife who sold herself to one man when she married for material benefit, and the prostitute who sold her body to many men. (57) It followed that prostitution could only be eradicated when its economic base - private property - was destroyed.

Yet prostitution continued to exist in Soviet Russia. Kollontai explained it as persisting because of the poor material base, the legacy of Russia's backwardness and, more immediately, the destruction due to years of warfare. She pointed to the bad housing conditions; the low wages of women workers, and their tendency to be in unskilled occupations; the lack of political consciousness among the mass of women; the great numbers of destitute and homeless

children and youth; and the fact that those particular women who had become prostitutes were not directly involved in the task of constructing the new society. (58) Kollontai defined the prostitute in Soviet Russia as a 'labour deserter', since she deprived the workers' state, the collective, of her necessary labour power. Moreover, Kollontai included in her definition those women who had sexual relations with men in positions of power in return for material privileges in a time of great scarcity. (59)

Prostitution demanded a new approach determined by the interests of the collective. Kollontai maintained that prostitution had a degrading effect on all women. In her view, it meant essentially that there could be no real equality for women with men. Man, she held, continued to see women as dependent on him, and he transferred his contemptuous attitude for the prostitute to women in general. Prostitution, therefore, strengthened the unequal relationship between the sexes. Moreover, it also served to decrease the sum of working-class solidarity. The proletariat were, however, morally equipped to struggle against prostitution precisely because of their spirit of comradeship and solidarity. (60) Prostitution was still considered a crime under socialism - not an offence against a hypocritical moral code which victimized women, but a crime of labour desertion. In contrast to the situation under capitalism, moreover, the stress would be on rehabilitation. The

prostitute would be given job training, besides whatever medical and welfare help was necessary. If, however, she proved to be recidivist, the prostitute would be punished. (61)

5:6 The New Morality

Kollontai believed that one result of the exploitative socio-economic relations in bourgeois society was a sexual crisis. She pointed accusingly at the narrowly selfish individualism fostered by bourgeois ideology. What was necessary, she insisted, was a revolution in the human psyche. In turn, this transformation hinged upon the basic socio-economic transformation of capitalism. According to Kollontai, contemporary bourgeois society was degenerate. In contrast, the new morality would have no need for regulatory laws since it would be based on consideration of the other person, and no longer on exclusive possession or mere carnal desire. However, there were still certain general considerations which Kollontai believed should guide sexual morality. The health, both of the sexual partners and of the future generation, should be safeguarded, which would preclude consanguineous marriage, so that sexual selection would be in line with the interests of the human race. (62)

Above all, Kollontai thought that the new morality should strengthen the collective's solidarity, besides protecting

the health of the collective's members. Furthermore, the new morality should aim to develop the human psyche, to stimulate in the human spirit those feelings of comradeship and solidarity so instinctive to the proletariat, to promote the emotional experience of being part of the socialist collective. (63) It was, therefore, essential that the whole bourgeois concept of morality be destroyed, with its supreme egoism, and in its place there must be established relationships based on the proletarian principle of comradeship. However, Kollontai warned that bourgeois morality could only be destroyed by the abolition of the capitalist system in its entirety.

At the same time, Kollontai argued that it was necessary for socialists to address themselves to this problem of working-class morality at once, and not put it off to some time in the future, until after the revolution, as so many of them did when they relegated morality to the realm of the superstructure and claimed that this sphere could only be changed after the economic base of society had been transformed. Kollontai challenged this view by claiming that the new morality was an intrinsic part of the class struggle, and by insisting that the working class could only strengthen its position with the new morality as a weapon. Morality was of essential importance, she wrote, because the problems of sex concerned the working class in its daily life. The

apparent indifference of the majority of her fellow socialists towards this problem was not only mistaken, it was dangerously short-sighted for, as she pointed out, the crisis of sexual relations had been a constant feature of the general social crisis throughout history. Kollontai firmly believed that the ways in which the working class structured its personal relationships had a vital influence on the outcome of the class struggle. (64)

Kollontai stressed repeatedly that there could be no solution to the sexual crisis of capitalist society without a radical change in the human psyche, which necessitated a socialist revolution. Only under socialism could the new concept of relationships between the sexes, based on what she described as the unfamiliar ideas of complete freedom, equality and genuine friendship between men and women, be realised. She insisted that it was not utopian to demand a revolution in the human psyche. Rather, it was a practical as much as a spiritual necessity. Moreover, according to Kollontai, proletarian comradeship constituted so powerful a force that it determined the entire development of the new morality, contributing to the re-education necessary for the personality. It was through this process of re-education that human beings would be once more able to relate to someone without the need for possession of that person. Through it, they would come to spurn inequality, to recognise reciprocal rights, and to respect the other's independent

personality. Kollontai believed that, in practice, the working class was already trying to establish this new morality.

Kollontai believed that the potential for loving was so low in bourgeois society that people were unable to cope with the sheer joy of carefree relations, because of the dominant feelings of possession and of guilt engendered by the repressive Christian upbringing. That potential was increased enormously under socialism. At the same time, the woman had to learn that emotion was not the central point of her life, but rather a means of finding her true self, her ego. (65)

Kollontai did not deny the importance of sexual relations. Nor did she limit them to being expressed in a single, specific structure. However, while the development of the human psyche would mean more complex human beings, Kollontai still saw monogamy, a union based on the 'great love', as the ideal. Indeed, she saw it as qualitatively superior to bourgeois monogamy which was based on material considerations, and cloaked in hypocrisy. Love, she asserted, must strengthen the bonds both of matrimony and of the family, without recourse to economic, or other, pressures. (66)

Kollontai was not advocating 'free love'. (67) She explicitly denied that her ideas propagated any irresponsible or selfish sexual adventurism:

Many of the opponents of my writings tried to impose on me an absolutely false postulate that I was preaching 'free love'. I would put it the other way: I was always preaching to woman, make yourself free from the enslavement of love to man. (68)

Rather than encouraging decadent behaviour, Kollontai insisted that in a socialist society, the new morality would attack licentiousness much more implacably than the bourgeois code ever did, or could have done. She wrote that marriage under communism would be transformed by the revolution into a 'sublime union' of two souls in love with each other, and trusting each other. (69) The basis of communist marriage would be a healthy instinct for reproduction, coloured with the charms of romantic love, deepened by ardent passion, and set within a context of spiritual harmony. Freedom in relationships between the sexes would not contradict or undermine communist ideology, nor go against the interests of the collective. Nor would those interests be affected by whether a marriage was long or short term, however fleeting the passion. What would harm the collective, according to Kollontai, would be any material deal between the sexes - such as prostitution, and including marriage for material gain. (70) Sex without love was wrong in Kollontai's opinion because it did not rise above the level of primitive instinct. Such an act was deemed by her to be the 'wingless eros', incapable of absorbing the full force of the human

psyche, a very one-dimensional attraction, and ultimately boring physical experience which left only a feeling of dissatisfaction and incompleteness.

However, in the chaotic period of the civil war, perhaps in response to the privations, uncertainty and lack of time to concentrate on personal affairs, sexual relationships tended to be encounters based only on the sexual urge. Kollontai recognised that the efforts to save the revolution itself demanded all of people's energy and attention. She saw that they could ill-afford to expend energy in emotions which would not directly contribute to the triumph of the revolution. Individual life, which she asserted was the foundation of matrimony and the opposite of bourgeois individualism, exacted a great deal of psychic energy. Thus, the immediate demands of the revolution in crisis precluded, temporarily at least, meaningful relations between the sexes. She stressed, however, that it was very much a temporary concession to simple, basic and natural needs in a period of emergency. The ideology of the working class otherwise condemned the purely physical act, seeing the ideal in loving comradeship in which men would not demand dominance, nor women succumb to servile submission. Instead, there would be the full flowering of the individual psyche.

Kollontai believed, as did Engels and Bebel, that erotic love should contain emotional commitment. She termed such

love the 'winged eros' - love without possession and between equals, love which would reinforce and enhance collective solidarity, rather than isolate the couple in the old bourgeois prison of sexual absorption. (71) Kollontai believed that marriage should be abolished, but she refused to foretell the exact form of relations between women and men in the socialist future. She reiterated, however, that to say that love should be expressed freely was not to advocate a frenzied search for more and different sexual encounters. Instead, Kollontai believed that human beings under communism would develop the confidence to express love without compromising their integrity or that of the other person.

For Kollontai, marriage for life was not only based on the false foundation of private property, it also falsely simplified the complexity of love. The two seminal novels of Herzen and Chernyshevsky had already uncovered something of that complexity. Kollontai's own novels, however, have often been used as evidence of her supposed promotion of free love. She does not excel as a novelist. Nevertheless, she may be seen within the Russian tradition of didactic, socially conscious literature. Kollontai attempted to convey in her literature the tremendous importance of the work of the revolution and its exacting demands, on women no less than on men. Through her novels, she repeated and illustrated her contention that woman should not be a slave

to her emotions. Moreover, Kollontai insisted that if the relationship was not fulfilling, if love was not all it should be, the woman should have the courage to abandon it. At the same time, the stories showed how difficult it was for women to escape from the tyranny of emotion; and how very essential. (72) Yet Kollontai failed to come to terms with sexual insecurity outside marriage, particularly of the older woman. In contrast to Herzen, she simplistically equated jealousy with private property, believing that the support of the collective would be sufficient to render unnecessary the couple's need for each other, to lead to the disappearance of possessiveness. In her insistence that the proletarian society would see the reconciliation of a wide range of emotions, Kollontai seems to have assumed that each love relationship would fulfil different needs and desires, without seriously considering the problems of multiple physical attraction. Indeed, she appears to have relegated a plurality of sexual relations to the realm of the 'wingless eros', of which she disapproved, believing it involved excess, physical exhaustion, emotional impoverishment, and usually female inequality.

In view of the continuing development of the personality, however, there would be no artificial, unrealistic insistence on permanence in a relationship. Yet although she refused to be prescriptive, Kollontai advocated monogamy and seems to have only seriously considered

heterosexual relationships. Moreover, she seemed to be doing what Herzen had warned against - erecting a new authority, the collective, to replace the old, the individual family.

5:7 Maternity

Kollontai saw the maternity question as linked to these problems of relations between the sexes and of the institution of the family. Indeed, she asserted that the importance of the maternity question was fundamental, and that it had appeared along with the class struggle. (73)

Once communism had been achieved, this problem which was rooted in deep economic causes, would come to an end. In its place, a new problem would arise - the problem of humankind, of how to protect and improve the human race. (74)

There would be no conflict between a woman's work and her reproductive function, as there was under capitalism. Woman would be able to combine both work and motherhood without any risk to herself or to the children. The maternity question would be approached from the point of view of the health of the people and the struggle against child mortality. Kollontai asserted that in practice, bourgeois morality had been forced to recognise maternity as a problem. The war in 1914 had acted as a catalyst in this matter, revealing its urgency. Kollontai claimed that contemporary capitalist society had already been compelled, by the

necessity of preserving its numbers, not to distinguish between the married and the unmarried mother. (75)

The problem of maternity continued into the soviet state in Russia, but there, Kollontai claimed, it would receive its natural settlement. The abolition of private property changed the traditional form of the family and gave to the state responsibility for the maternity question which was recognised as one of the foremost of the national economic problems. The issue, however, was not confined to mere legislation. It was interlinked with the whole sphere of the economy and the construction of communist society. Protective legislation for the pregnant woman was essential to ensure the productive power of millions of workers would not be wasted. Unless the mother was helped, she was unlikely to give the maximum productivity in her work. Kollontai insisted, therefore, that the workers' republic must find the quickest and most satisfactory solution to the maternity question to ensure both the independence and equality of individual women workers, and the harnessing of all productive forces. (76)

Kollontai argued that there could be no solution to the maternity question under capitalism, given the widespread senseless destruction of human life. The causes of child mortality had to be eradicated. She saw the fate of humanity as dependent on the working mothers. Moreover,

she believed that as mother as well as worker, the woman gained in the eyes of the collective a new and tangible value. (77) Thus, the workers' state would assume the duty of giving security to every mother, married or not, as long as she was suckling her child, in order that the woman could serve the collective usefully, without the role of mother clashing with or detracting from that of worker. (78) The care of the future generations must also be entrusted to the state rather than, as under capitalism, left to the individual parents, so that a richer supply of workers' energy be ensured. By the same token, every member of the collective had the right to expect society to take care of them. (79)

According to Kollontai, the reproductive function of the woman was undermined by the conditions of everyday life under capitalism which confronted the working mother. She was compelled by circumstances to deprive her child of its mother's breast. Kollontai saw breast-feeding as essential for the infant's health. She held that previously only upper-class women refused to breast-feed their children. Under the harsh conditions of industrial capitalism, however, thousands of working mothers were forced to bottle-feed their babies. (80) She believed that this lack of natural nourishment had a significant effect on the rate of infant mortality. Hence, the urgent need for measures to protect both mother and child.

Concerning the relationship between parents and children, Kollontai was not suggesting that the former should have no rights or functions. Rather, she considered that the state should take upon itself the duties involved in the welfare and education of children, so that maternal and paternal joy would be able to develop without material anxieties. (81) Children, however, would no longer be considered the property of the individual family. Indeed, Kollontai held that in the socialist society, the working mother who was conscious of her social function of maternity would develop to the point where she no longer regarded her natural children as her only care, but would see all children as the common responsibility of the collective. (82) The working class had to develop a more profound understanding of maternity than was evident under capitalism. Maternity had to be accepted as an important social function, and not left to the individual family. Kollontai suggested that in the new Soviet society, material aid should be given to the mother as a prize for her services to the state. (83)

In the new society, the tragic conflict between the tasks of childbearing and the social personality of the woman which capitalism had engendered would disappear. Kollontai held that care for the health of the mother and child was essential not just to maintain prosperity, but so that society would not be condemned to extinction. (84) She

analysed the problem of maternity as an economic one. Moreover, when discussing the situation under socialism, she seemed to substitute labour power for private property, the future generation being the new society's 'capital'. She wrote that women under communism would be considered above all as participants in the productive process, and that their reproductive function would be viewed as an extremely important and complementary obligation to society. (85) Her work, in fact, lacked serious consideration of birth control, while she viewed abortion as a necessary, but temporary, evil, a legacy of capitalism and economic backwardness. Thus, despite her stress on the fundamental importance of the woman as worker in socialist society, despite her striking emphasis on the social personality of the woman, in her idealization of the collective, Kollontai risked depriving the woman of precisely these gains. Ultimately, she regarded maternity not only as a female function, but as woman's social duty to the collective. (86)

5:8 Conclusion

Kollontai's writings made a substantial contribution to the argument for the vital importance of the woman question, in revolutionary strategy as much as in the new society. She showed that women were oppressed by emotional as much as by economic factors of dependence on men. She highlighted the central role of morality in reinforcing the status quo, as

well as in overthrowing it. Further, she insisted that if the importance of morality was ignored, then revolution could never be total or complete. Kollontai's uniqueness lay in her consistent attempts to develop ideas on women and on the family as an integral part of the revolutionary theory of Russian Marxism.

She was often isolated by these views, because of the hostility to her demands for the dissolution of the traditional family and her often extravagant claims for the virtues and benefits of communal living. The acerbic criticisms directed at her theories, from female as well as male comrades, stemmed from what they considered to be a dangerously utopian outlook, a serious lack of realism in her appraisal of prevailing conditions in Soviet Russia. Given the chaos of War Communism, which dominated and distorted sexual relations, Kollontai's critics feared that the abolition of traditional constraints, and the demands for freedom in love among the culturally backward Russian masses would result in the dismissal of personal responsibility which they saw in the refusal of men to support their families, in the alarming incidence of homeless children, the continuation of prostitution, the rapid spread of venereal disease, and the high abortion rate. Given such desperate circumstances, it seemed that Kollontai's demands could only serve to deepen the misery of a working class waging a desperate struggle, in conditions of severe

deprivation, for the very survival of the workers' state. Not only were the necessary material conditions lacking, but there simply was not the socialist consciousness that would allow genuinely free sexual relations in Kollontai's terms. Nor was there agreement on what such relations could or should be. Neither Kollontai nor her critics solved the basic problem of how to achieve a radical transformation in the human psyche. She at least addressed herself to the necessity of doing so.

The failure of the Bolsheviks on the woman question lay not so much in the organization of women, or in a tardy recognition that it was essential. Rather, it lay in the failure to do precisely what Kollontai said was imperative - to work out a new morality. Her own ideas were useful, if not particularly original. Their plausibility, however, was undermined by a style of writing which tended to be overly sentimental, even though her analysis was based on a simplistic economic determinism. At the same time, Kollontai revealed profound insights into the emotional problems women face, both in capitalist society and in the struggle for emancipation. Yet she also displayed a tendency to submerge the individual in a greatly idealized collective.

Nor did Kollontai fundamentally challenge the sexual

division of labour, either within the family or within society as a whole. She recognised that the division of labour between skilled and unskilled, male and female, was hierarchical, that it favoured men at the expense of women, weakened democracy and tended to undermine people's control over their everyday lives. In addition, Kollontai described women's unfair double burden, of housework and child-rearing on top of paid employment outside the home. Yet she seemed to assume that while the state would take over much of the drudgery, it would be women who would staff the public institutions of nationalized childcare and housework services. On the one hand, this was a means of immediately utilizing women and giving them a positive role in building the new society, as well as recognising that there were skills in the previously undervalued work of the household. On the other, it reinforced the view of certain work as predominantly 'women's work'.

In addition, Kollontai saw motherhood as an innate, natural instinct, almost a sacred duty. Given the disregard she perceived in capitalist society for working-class natality, so long as there were sufficient 'hands' to labour in the factories at cheap rates and to serve as cannon fodder in the imperialist wars, as well as her own positive attitude towards reproduction and the dignity of motherhood, Kollontai seemed to suspect fertility control as a selfish aspect of bourgeois society. In her view, the state should

take away the burdens of child-bearing and rearing from the woman, leaving her free to work for the collective, and with the satisfaction both of personal fulfilment and of playing an honourable and vital social role through giving birth. Kollontai appeared to assume that there would be no contradiction between what the individual woman wanted and what society needed, perhaps because she saw maternity as a natural function, rather than a matter of choice. On the issues of contraception and abortion, as on those of child-care and everyday life in a communist society, Kollontai took as her starting-point the interests of the collective, while her stress was on productivity. Thus, although she discussed at length the New Woman, and insisted on the crucial role of women both in the revolutionary movement and in the construction of communism, ultimately she did not see the woman question in terms of the individual woman, but rather looked to the good of the whole.

Kollontai's writings were very much a part of Russian thought on the woman question as it had developed from the 1840s, from her stress on the need to develop the woman's independent personality by gaining autonomy through paid employment, to her stress on the community and socially useful work; from her demands for freedom in love, to her use of fiction as a means of publicizing her ideas. Her ideas on erotic love can be traced back to Chernyshevsky, and indeed to Herzen and his critical support for Sand's

'rehabilitation of the heart' and Enfantin's 'rehabilitation of the flesh'. Yet at the same time, the European influences on Kollontai, particularly Bebel, though crucial for the development of her ideas, led her to neglect the Russian reality of a still predominantly peasant culture which vigorously coursed through the emerging proletariat.

Even as she idealized proletarian solidarity, she neglected its peasant roots, which she tended to dismiss as a conservative legacy of patriarchy. She saw the peasant woman as a possible agent for revolution in the countryside, but she assumed that industry was Russia's future. Kollontai looked on the past as a burden of subservient womanhood, and overlooked the vitality of the peasant family. Her heroine was the proletarian woman who worked consciously and prodigiously for the victory of her class's revolution in an overwhelmingly peasant society. Kollontai's New Woman was a creature of developed, urban capitalism, of bourgeois society.

Yet Kollontai stands out, both as an individual and as a woman. She is important not simply for her theories and insights, above all into the position of women and the nature of the family, but also because in her own life and work, she set an example to women of the need to question and to struggle, and of the ability of women, both as individuals and as part of a movement, to act for themselves.

In addition, her life is not simply the story of one person, however remarkable and interesting in itself. Rather, it reflects the story of her time, perhaps especially in her contradictions. Kollontai confronted the problem of being a responsible person - and therefore as a woman, of being expected to devote her life to her family - and the desire to assert herself as an autonomous being. Neither she nor her biographers would claim that she solved this problem of the woman question. Indeed, her life reflected the difficulties women face in trying to establish an independent existence under the weight of the historical and sexual conditioning that women have in emotional dependency. Moreover, Kollontai's political 'exile' in Scandinavia perhaps coincided with her acceptance of human loneliness which the intimacy of the family is supposed to placate.

The painful, chaotic process of the sexual revolution in early Soviet Russia was seen by Kollontai as the beginning of a new communist morality. She wanted to use the opportunity of the civil war to push this revolution forward. Her optimism led her to consider too lightly both the adverse material conditions and the popular resistance, widespread and deep, among peasants, proletariat and the Party itself, to the sexual upheaval. Moreover, it would seem that Kollontai failed to grasp fully the link between the

authoritarian state and the patriarchal family, or indeed to realise that the family is not simply a reflection of the state. Ultimately, however, she failed to apply her Marxism to the woman question in the Russian context. Her New Woman was a model for an ideal industrial future, and not a reflection of Russia's present in the early twentieth century.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. For Kollontai's life and work, see for example A.M. Kollontai, "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", Proletarskaya revolyutsiya, 1921, no.3, pp.261-302; "Iz vospominani...", Oktiabr', 1945, no.9, pp.59-89; Izbrannye stat'i i rechi, edited by I.M. Dazhina et al (Moscow, 1972); Iz moey zhizni i raboty, edited by I.M. Dazhina et al (Moscow, 1974). See also I. de Palencia, Alexandra Kollontai (New York, 1947); A.M. Kollontai, Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Woman (London, 1972); J. Stora-Sandor, Alexandra Kollontai: marxisme et la révolution sexuelle (Paris, 1973); Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Writings, translated and introduced by Alix Holt (London, 1977); B.E. Clements, Bolshevik Feminist. The Life of Aleksandra Kollontai (Indiana, 1979); C. Porter, Alexandra Kollontai: A Biography (London, 1979); B. Farnsworth, Aleksandra Kollontai Socialism, Feminism, and the Bolshevik Revolution (Stanford, 1980); R. Stites, "Alexandra Kollontai and the Russian Revolution" in European Women on the Left, edited by J. Slaughter & R. Kern (Connecticut, 1981), pp.101-123; B. Williams, "Kollontai and After: Women in the Russian Revolution" in Women, State and Revolution, edited by S. Reynolds (Sussex, 1986), pp.60-80.
2. Farnsworth, op.cit., pp.75-76.

3. P. Sorokin, Leaves from a Russian Diary (London, 1925), p.59.
4. See for example P. Vinogradskaya, Pamiatnye vstrechi (Moscow, 1972), p.53.
5. A.M. Kollontai, Prostitutsiya i mery bor'by s nei (Moscow, 1921), p.10; "Avtobiograficheskie ocherki", p.302.
6. A.M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god' revolyutsii (Moscow, 1918), pp.18-19.
7. Clements, op.cit., p.216; R. Stites, "Zhenotdel: Bolshevism and Russian Women, 1917-1930", Russian History, 1976, vol.3, no.2, pp.174-193: 180.
8. Clements, op.cit., p.272.
9. Farnsworth, op.cit., pp.375-393.
10. Porter, op.cit., p.401.
11. See A. Bebel, Women in the Past, Present, and Future (London, 1885); Women under Socialism (1883:New York,1904); F. Engels, The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884: New York, 1972).

12. A. Bebel, Zhenshchina i sotsializm (Petrograd, 1918), p.iv.
13. ibid., pp.vii-ix; A.M. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin v evolyutsii khozyaystva (Moscow, 1923), pp.7-8.
14. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin, p.4.
15. ibid., p.31.
16. ibid., p.45; See also Kollontai, Prostitutsiya, p.15; A.M. Kollontai, Novaya moral' i rabochiy klass (Moscow, 1918), p.53.
17. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin, p.16.
18. in ibid., p.56, Kollontai also linked Christianity to the subjection of women. She claimed it was a religion which was in the interests of the rich and against those of the poor, and which was especially hard on women, upholding the power and authority of the man in marriage and the family.
19. Kollontai, Novaya moral', p.51.
20. ibid., pp.6, 61.
21. ibid., pp.4-5.

22. ibid., p.30.
23. ibid., p.29.
24. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin, p.97.
25. Kollontai, Novaya moral', p.32.
26. ibid., p.30.
27. ibid., pp.22-23.
28. ibid., p.20.
29. ibid., p.6.
30. ibid., p.86.
31. ibid., p.13.
32. ibid., p.19.
33. ibid., p.26.
34. ibid.
35. ibid., p.32.

36. ibid., p.60.
37. ibid., p.31.
38. ibid., p.33.
39. ibid., pp.6-7, 35.
40. See for example, Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god' revolyutsii, pp.18-19; A. M. Kollontai, "Profsoyuzy i rabotnitsa", Pravda, 22 May, 1921, in Kollontai, Izbrannye stat'i i rechi, pp.319-321.
41. A.M. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo (Moscow, 1918), p.15.
42. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin, pp.181-186.
43. A.M. Kollontai, Obshchestvo i materinstvo (second edition, Moscow, 1921), p.12.
44. A.M. Kollontai, Obshchestvo i materinstvo (Moscow, 1916), pp.570-571.
45. A.M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsy, krest'yanki i krasnyi front (Moscow, 1920), p.11.

46. ibid., pp.16, 27.
47. A.M. Kollontai, Za tri goda (Moscow, 1920), p.6.
48. ibid., pp.8, 11.
49. ibid., p.13.
50. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin, p.98.
51. ibid., p.29.
52. Kollontai, Novaya moral', pp.51-52.
53. ibid.
54. ibid., p.45.
55. ibid., p.51.
56. ibid., pp.6, 10.
57. Kollontai, Prostitutsiya, p.10.
58. ibid., pp.9-10.
59. ibid., p.10.

60. ibid., p.13.
61. ibid., pp.18-19.
62. Kollontai, NovaYa moral', pp.36-37.
63. ibid.
64. ibid., p.60.
65. ibid., p.47.
66. See Kollontai's Sem'ya kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo.
67. For example, in Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia (London, 1949), R. Schlesinger wrote (p.15) that Kollontai's defence of the free love position was elevated into a 'positive advocacy of standards regarded as libertine not only from the conservative standpoint, but also from that of the first generation of revolutionaries'. In fact, the misconception of the ideas of free love can be traced back to Bebel who held, and Kollontai agreed, that sex was a natural function, to be satisfied like eating or drinking. However, Bebel immediately qualified this statement, as did Kollontai, by acceding that, like any other natural function, sex should be used in moderation.

Thus, 'excessive sexual indulgence is infinitely more harmful than too little'; and 'temperance is as necessary in sexual intercourse as in eating and drinking, and all other human wants'. Bebel, Woman under Socialism, pp.164-165.

For Kollontai, sex without love was the 'wingless Eros', the 'undemanding instinct of reproduction', the 'unadorned sexual drive' which is 'easily roused but is soon spent'. Kollontai wrote in 1923 that:

The social aims of the working class are not affected one bit by whether love takes the form of a long and official union or is expressed in a temporary relationship. The ideology of the working class does not place any formal limits on love. But at the same time the ideology of the working class is already beginning to take a thoughtful attitude to the content of love and shades of emotional experience. In this sense the proletarian ideology will persecute 'wingless Eros' in a much more strict and severe way than bourgeois morality. 'Wingless Eros' contradicts the interests of the working class. In the first place it inevitably involves excesses and therefore physical exhaustion, which lower the resources of labour energy available to society. In the second place it impoverishes the soul, hindering the development and

strengthening of inner bonds and positive emotions. And in the third place it usually rests on an inequality of rights in relationships between the sexes, on the dependence of the woman on the man and on male complacency and insensitivity, which undoubtedly hinder the development of comradely feelings.

See Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Writings, pp.277, 189.

68. See Kollontai's "Letter to a young comrade" in de Palencia, op.cit., p.19.
69. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo, p.19.
70. Kollontai, Prostitutsiya, pp.18-22.
71. See A.M. Kollontai, "Dorogu krylatomy erosu!", Molodaya gvardiya, May 1923, no.3, pp.111-124, in Stora-Sandor, op.cit., pp.183-205; Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Writings, pp.276-292.
72. A.M. Kollontai, Liubov' pchel trudovykh (Moscow, 1923); "L'amour de trois generations", in Stora-Sandor, op.cit., pp.254-282; Free Love (London, 1932); Love of Worker Bees (London, 1977). See also A.M. Kollontai, Bol'shaya liubov' (Moscow, 1927). According to Kollontai, 'under the rule of bourgeois ideology and the capitalist way

of life, the complexity of love creates a complex of insoluble problems ... Alexander Herzen tried to uncover this complexity of the inner world and the duality of emotion in his novel Who is to blame?, and Chernyshevsky tackled the same question in his novel What is to be done?. Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Writings, p.187.

73. Kollontai, Obshchestvo i materinstvo (1921), p.28.
74. ibid., p.25.
75. ibid., p.8.
76. ibid., p.10.
77. ibid., p.8.
78. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo, p.16.
79. A. M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa-mat' (Petrograd, 1918), p.30.
80. Kollontai, Obshchestvo i materinstvo (1916), p.149 - Kollontai described the bottle used to feed children as a 'brick-monster'.
81. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo, p.17.

82. Kollontai, Obshchestvo i materinstvo (1921), p.30.
83. ibid., p.72.
84. Kollontai, Obshchestvo i materinstvo (1916), p.571.
85. Schlesinger, op.cit., p.53; Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin, p.80.
86. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo, p.17.
Kollontai wrote that in place of the slogan of voluntary limitation of the birth rate, the working class would see only the slogan of greater protection for maternity. She claimed that in the new Soviet society, workers should not hesitate or be afraid to have children, for in doing so they ensured the survival and development of their state. Moreover, the proletarian society needed new workers and welcomed the arrival of every new-born baby into it.

Chapter 6

Family, Women and Work in Soviet Society

6:1 The Sexual Revolution

The Bolshevik regime was committed to sexual equality in general, and to improving women's position in specific ways. Indeed, it was only after the October Revolution that there were attempts, for the first time supported and initiated by the authorities, to transform the position of women in Russia on a massive scale, in the full recognition that such an upheaval would, of necessity, fundamentally affect the family. (1) Hence, it appears that the Revolution at least brought formal equality between the sexes, enshrined in law and in the declared intention of the state to base that legal status in a firm social, economic, political and cultural foundation. Moreover, this goal of sexual equality was accepted and propounded as an essential, integral part of Bolshevik theory and practice. Women themselves continued to take an active part in the revolutionary process and in the civil war, in a variety of roles, ranging from the traditionally female tasks of caring for the sick and wounded to the conventionally male prerogative of the fighting military. In all of these roles they were encouraged to engage not simply for the good of the whole, but for the specific gains which women themselves had made through the revolution. (2)

However, it was impossible to transform the position of women immediately, given the historical context of centuries of subjugation as well as the actual situation of a socialist revolution led by a small urban party dominated by intellectuals, which represented a relatively small proletariat in an overwhelmingly peasant country, now under siege from the capitalist world. The divisions and hierarchies in society as a whole were reflected among women: the female intelligentsia and the few politically conscious women workers led the majority. Moreover, despite the fact that a number of women held important posts in Party and state, men predominated at all levels. There were efforts to involve women in politics, to prepare them for positions of responsibility. Nevertheless, the success of these efforts was limited by both male and female resistance. As the American observer, Jessica Smith, wrote, it would take more than one generation to wear away the layers of superstition and fear fostered through the centuries, and persisting in conditions of material scarcity, while the Bolsheviks had other, more immediate priorities. (3)

As far back as 1862, a secret proclamation had demanded the abolition of marriage as a 'highly immoral phenomenon, and one incompatible with the full equality of the sexes'. It had argued that, in order to free women, the care and education of children must become a function of society. (4)

The Bolsheviks had no blueprint for family legislation after the revolution. The primary aim was to abolish the traditional patriarchal institution, with its inequality, conservatism, and links with the despotic past. Yet there was no agreement on how this was to be achieved, or even on what should replace it. What was agreed was that the liberation of women would not be complete until they were drawn out of the home, which in practice entailed the development of services, of communal and educational facilities. Some advocated the total destruction of the family, replacing it with the upbringing of children by the collective. Some placed the hopes for the future on the children, who could act as agents of the revolution in their own homes once they had been educated away from the conservative influence of the family. Others had a less antagonistic view of relations between the family and the state, believing that the family would continue to function under socialism. In this view, it was unrealistic, given the material conditions of scarcity and the political situation of insecurity, to dismantle the family. Moreover, it was essential to win the people to the revolution, rather than risk their continuing resistance by setting the generations against each other. Thus, it was not enough for the educational institutions of the state to inculcate revolutionary principles and the collective way of life into the children. It was also essential that parents be trained

for their role in the new family, and in particular that special courses be provided to help mothers bring up their children. (5)

The goal was not simply to eradicate the profound conservatism of the family. It was also to achieve equality between women and men. Some held that the women would be liberated if the role of the family was minimized to providing the emotional security, a loving environment, for the children while the state took on the responsibility for their social and intellectual development, and freed the parents of material worries. Kollontai, however, believed that the emotional function of the family was based precisely on its role in taking care of the day to day needs of its members. If the state took on the latter, in time the former would develop outside the narrow, selfish confines of the individual family and within the collective. (6)

In fact, as discussed in chapter five, Kollontai's vision came up against the reality of civil war which absorbed all energies. Moreover, in the struggle for sheer survival, there developed an extremely functional attitude towards sexual relations. Certainly, it is difficult to assess how voluntary or conscious was the new sexual ethos for both women and men. What is certain, however, is that women and children were its particular victims. The circumstances

were extreme. Yet many comrades made a virtue out of necessity, including as we have seen Kollontai herself, seeing in War Communism a possible shortcut to the communist society. In a sense, the excesses of sexual relations in a situation of social chaos were taken for a sexual revolution, rather than for the disintegration of old forms with little understanding of what was to replace them. The cause of collective survival took precedence over private satisfaction of individual needs and desires, and even over consideration for others. According to the Soviet scholar, A.G. Kharchev, the civil war led to a sharp decline in the standards of sexual behaviour so that, concerning marital and family relations, Soviet society had to begin from an even lower level than had existed in tsarist Russia. The civil war had a profound impact on society as well as on politics. Every aspect of life was subjected to the military analogy, from Trotsky's call for the militarization of labour to Kollontai's view of the prostitutes as labour deserters. (7) Kollontai's vision of sexual relations had never, as we have discussed, entailed irresponsibility. Yet she was nevertheless seen as at least a baleful influence on, if not an agent of, the chaos. As Victor Serge wrote of Soviet Russia in the early 1920s:

Doubtless, sexuality, so long repressed, first by revolutionary asceticism and then by poverty and

famine, was beginning to recover its drive in a society that had been abruptly cut off from any kind of spiritual nourishment. Promiscuity fed upon the misery of the environment. Books like those by Alexandra Kollontai propagated an oversimplified theory of free love: an infantile variety of materialism reduced 'sexual need' to its strictly animal connotation. The most sophisticated section of youth, the university students, was discussing Enchman's theory (contested by Bukharin) on the disappearance of morals in the future communist society. (8)

In fact, as we have seen Kollontai had herself denounced the 'wingless eros' which in her view alienated the body, rendering it a completely passive object controlled by some natural instinct or pleasure principle. She was, however, writing in a period in which there had been little theoretical attention paid to sexual relations, in an immediate context which precluded it, and in a style which seemed ambiguous and unrealistic. She based her vision of the New Woman firmly in her economic independence bolstered by a variety of freely available public services. Only then could there be genuine equality between women and men, and could sex and love be put in proper, subordinate, perspective. The Soviet Republic in its first decade, and

for many years thereafter, lacked the required material base. Further, in the civil war, there was simply neither the time nor the energy necessary to devote to a serious consideration of other human beings in social relations of any sort. Occasionally, women actively protested against men's continuing superiority and all it entailed. (9) The 1918 Family Code had secularized marriage and decreed sexual equality, but it could not automatically instill the essential concomitant changes in popular attitudes. Visitors to Soviet Russia noticed that in spite of sharp criticisms from Old Bolsheviks like Smidovich, love was contemptuously dismissed as bourgeois sentimentality:

At that time ... temperance and discipline in sexual life was represented precisely by the advance guard of the Revolution as disguised counter-revolution; decorum was not only ridiculed, it was fought against; and a girl who did not weakly surrender herself to any communist was teased as being petty-bourgeois. That was a time of licentiousness, a time of widespread venereal disease ... a time of reckless abortion. (10)

The final comment brings up another factor that worked against sexual equality, which was the woman's lack of control over her own fertility, making her position especially precarious in the light of sexual anarchy. The

Bolshevik regime was, in fact, the first to legalize abortion. The 1920 measure was seen by the new government as necessary in social and medical terms, but as a temporary evil. It was assumed that, in time, when economic and social conditions improved and the cultural level rose, the widespread need for abortion would diminish. The majority of Marxists had either ignored the issue of contraception, or denounced it as Malthusian, and as inherently anti-proletarian as well as an aspect of selfish, bourgeois individualism. Yet at the same time, as Reich pointed out, the Bolshevik legislation on abortion contained, if only implicitly, the affirmation of sexual pleasure. (11) Thus, the Bolsheviks' attitude towards abortion was essentially ambivalent. They saw repressive laws as irrational and a reflection of bourgeois moral hypocrisy. Yet they disapproved of abortion, for they had a positive attitude towards fertility, and they considered maternity a social duty, as well as a natural function of women. (12) They also disapproved of the indiscipline of sexual relations which the ability to control the consequences contained in abortion seemed to imply. The fact that it would also make women at least potentially independent by giving them control over their reproductive function was never considered as either a matter of principle or a major question in the debates of the 1920s. Indeed, besides the abortion measure being one of expediency, there was a very conventional

image of women contained therein. In essence, women were still seen through their maternal function. The issue was seen as one of greater and better maternity protection, rather than either reducing the birth rate or giving the individual woman control over her reproductive organs. (13)

While the revolution held out the promise and potential of sexual equality, while the overthrow of the autocratic regime seemed to imply the demise of the patriarchal family, the immediate post-revolutionary period resulted in a downgrading of morality as a bourgeois concept, and in the debasement of sexual relations, especially for women whose position was extremely vulnerable. There were attempts to create a new 'life-style' with 'free love' and collective living. However, there was little serious consideration of what either involved, or of what the material conditions allowed. The harsh social conditions, the low cultural level, the lack of a clear ethical and moral basis, and the concentration required just for getting through each day, sapped family life. Kollontai's revolution of the psyche never happened. (14) A sexual revolution was declared - an essentially urban and youthful revolution, going on in a painful, haphazard way in the cities above all. Moreover, the dogmatism and social pressures of the communes supplied their own form of authoritarianism and contained their own

share of 'bourgeois' possessiveness. God and morality were pronounced relics of the pre-revolutionary era and declared abolished. Yet nothing positive or tangible had been put in their place, while attitudes of male authoritarianism and female submission persisted. (15)

The apparent disintegration of sexual relations took place while the Party was seeking to impose a military discipline. Nor did the New Economic Policy (NEP) see a lessening in the functional attitude towards sex. The Party nevertheless sought to instill some kind of discipline into sexual relations, especially among the youth. (16) In the view of the leadership, the prevalent attitude was not so much functional as frivolous. It was seen as resulting in the reduction of women to the status of object. In any case, sexual life was not considered a private matter, but an integral part of the social totality. The Bolshevik fear was that the sexual chaos which they perceived would allow the pernicious bourgeois morality to sneak back. Hence, what was seen as necessary was the formation of new rules of conduct. (17) As an observer described the situation:

A whole generation of Russian youth was adrift in the dark waters of NEP society. Hooliganism, sexual licentiousness, abortions, cases of nervous breakdowns, and suicides were rampant. (18)

Sverdlov noted that, by 1923, there were about 100,000 common-law marriages. However, according to Kharchev, it was usually the man who did not want to register the marriage, while in the early years of Soviet power, the vast majority of divorces were initiated by men and frequently contested by wives. (19) Family relations, it seemed, had been shattered by the revolution, while there had been some ill thought out experiments to replace the old patriarchal structure. Finally, the 'press and the Party and the trade unions launched a vehement campaign against sexual laxity!'. (20)

In fact, public concern had been roused by the alarming result of the disintegration of traditional family relations: the millions of abandoned children - besprizorniki. (21) It was the size of the problem, rather than the problem itself, which was new. Despite the shocking but ill-founded rumours that communism meant the collectivization of both women and children - and again, Kollontai was the scapegoat - the issue of family functions and child-care had nevertheless been raised. The issue revolved around the question of whether the state or parents were best fitted to bring up a child. (22) The Bolsheviki held that, while the parent-child relationship was not to be denied, if the woman was to be given a real chance of equality with men, many services had to be made available for the care of

children from an early age. There must also be maternity protection. Yet the material base to secure these essential reforms was missing. (23) Moreover, women workers on the whole continued to occupy less skilled positions than the men. It was observed that for women workers:

the fact of motherhood makes it impossible for most of them to spend as many years in industry as men do. Women's wages consequently average less than those of men, and were only 62% of the latter in March 1926. This shows that motherhood and the care of children are factors which make women's wages less than those of men. (24)

Besides the biological factor, sexual equality was inhibited by the social instability in the wake of civil war followed by the economic relaxation of NEP. As one foreign witness of Russia in 1925 wrote:

In the early stages of the Revolution the most trifling squabbles led to divorce, although this did not lead to moral disintegration. Contrary to the spicy gossip columns of the anti-Bolshevik press, promiscuity was rare in the early years of the Revolution - Radek explained this as another proof of its stability and wholesomeness. In fact, people

were too absorbed in the new tasks to have much time for what was called 'personal life'. Cold and hunger did not predispose one to it either... The men appeared to be the main beneficiaries of the loosened divorce and marriage regulations and they played havoc with their women. (25)

The revolution and succeeding struggles and events had indeed forced change, and entailed much discontent and misery. It was thought necessary to reform the 1918 Family Code in order to get rid of the abuses which had been unforeseen. The proposed new code was the subject of a national debate in which a great deal of dissatisfaction was revealed, especially among the peasantry who were shocked by what they saw as the libertinism of the urban folk, who in turn balked at the conservatism of the countryside. All were concerned, however, with the unforeseen consequences, personal as well as social, of the 1918 legislation on the family. Yet some believed that the new code was not radical enough, reflected in the debate on alimony which Kollontai, who advocated instead a General Insurance Fund, lost. (26) Beatrice Farnsworth claims that the notion that women were weaker and had to be protected was a major theme in the 1925 debate, and that it ran counter to the socialist assumption that the collective should provide social security for its members. Indeed,

Farnsworth asserts that:

few Bolsheviks shared Kollontai's view that women were inherently strong and needed freedom from the debilitating protection of men which alimony represented. The new marriage code, in its assumption that women were weak, continued to project the image of woman as victim. (27)

Yet however logical in theory, Kollontai's view did not accord with a situation which was severely deficient both in material resources and the necessary consciousness. For women were indeed victims, and alimony could be viewed as an effort to make men take responsibility in their relations with women and children. The other side of the coin, however, was reflected in the 'twelve commandments', or rules of communist morality, put forward by Professor Zalkind who argued throughout the 1920s that sexual excess (of which he had a very limited notion) drained vital energy that could have been more usefully employed in the construction of communism. Zalkind stressed a utilitarian and class viewpoint as the only possible one. He warned of the dangers of the isolation of the individual through absorption in sexual matters. Further, he claimed that 'sex life is permissible only when its essence promotes the rise of collectivist feelings'. It should also encourage

equality through class solidarity, and a militant commitment to scientific understanding as well as to building the new society, sentiments not so far removed from Kollontai's own stress on the collective. (28)

Nevertheless, despite conservative pressures, the 1926 Family Code was indeed radical in the context not only of Soviet Russia, but also of the west. For example, it legalized and defined de facto marriages. It also further simplified divorce procedures, in spite of popular disapproval. In Farnsworth's view, however, the progressive features failed to outweigh what she saw as the Code's 'basically stabilizing functions'. She saw this implied conservatism particularly 'in the light of the fact that unregistered marriage (i.e., the prevailing form) would now carry legal consequences'. (29) Yet this comment assumes a contradiction between progress and stability at a time when most women still saw security embodied in the family and experienced the insecurity brought about by the 'sexual revolution' as a situation which favoured men at the expense of women and their children. The Soviet writer Kharchev saw the 1926 Code as more complex than Farnsworth suggests. In his view, its recognition of unregistered marriage was both a step forward and a concession to conservatism. He stressed the massive social dislocation which seemed to be nothing less than a devastating crisis for women. (30)

Still, the general assumption behind the 1926 Family Code seems to have been that the family, and not the state, was responsible for the maintenance of its members, as reflected in the alimony provisions. It failed, however, to prevent the divorce rate from rising, the birth rate from falling, or the high numbers of abortions and of homeless children. This situation of unstable family relations, against the background of the continuing hostility of the outside world, the inability of NEP to promote a radical transformation in the economy, and Stalin's victories over the various oppositions, seems to have paved the way for some reactionary backlash: Trotsky's 'thermidor' in the family. Yet there have to be reservations about the idea of a total reaction. However deficient in practice, Marxist theory and the Bolshevik programme regarded sexual equality as fundamental. However distressing the experience of sexual upheaval, Soviet women were increasingly being drawn out of the patriarchal home and into paid employment and were seen as an essential part of the shock forces of economic modernization with the onset of rapid industrialization in the 1930s. Whatever women felt or wanted, they were expected to be active participants in building the new society. The New Woman was to be moulded by the needs of the state. Perhaps it was the type of submissiveness that was expected of women which had changed. They were no longer to be passive

'beasts of burden'. Given their low cultural level and the increasing authoritarianism of the Communist Party, however, their development would be dictated from above.

The first two family codes had had an ideological basis, despite the differences on how to transform their ideas into practice. The social confusion and personal unhappiness which followed had been unforeseen, though not entirely unexpected. The family had already been subjected to the shocks of war and revolution, before encountering the upheaval of civil war. There was no stable, let alone sufficient, material base to provide the necessary state support, and to cushion the impact of rapid legal changes in family law. By the end of the first revolutionary decade, the focus was on economic modernization, and the new stress was on stability in the family. One interpretation is that the Bolshevik attempt to abolish the family had failed, in the face of resistance to ideological extremism, the demands of the economy, and political authoritarianism. Yet as we have seen, there had been no ideological agreement in 1918 on the family, save for the desire to reform past abuses, and to establish sexual equality.

6:2 The impact of the revolution on the position of women

The majority of women in 1917 did not consider themselves

as leaders or organisers, but rather in a minor role, with no necessity for sustaining revolutionary activities. Circumstances again pressed them into a participatory role which at least a few of the leading Bolsheviks believed was essential, both in terms of theory and the needs of the new regime. Kollontai noted that the vast majority of women had opposed the Revolution from deep-seated fears of its implications for both the family and the church. She realised that there was growing disappointment and disillusionment with the Bolsheviks among women as early as 1918. (31) It was not enough to state, however reasonably, that there could be no immediate and total transformation of the society, she asserted, for the revolution had carried with it great hopes as well as fears. She saw that the vast majority of women were unprepared to accept any sophisticated arguments about the need for continuing struggle. Hence, Kollontai insisted on the need to explain things in simple terms to the mass of women. Hunger not only sapped physical strength, it diffused political consciousness. The day to day struggle against the legacy of centuries of ingrained submission and passivity was made even more difficult and demoralising by the misery and lethargy induced by severe shortages of food and fuel. (32)

When the Bolsheviks came to power, they had argued against

a separate women's organization. However, they had already recognised that some activity aimed specifically at women was essential both to raise female consciousness and to win female support. Despite the extremely difficult and dangerous conditions, the Bolsheviks called an All-Russian Congress of Women in 1918. Bolshevik motives were not only of expediency. They also stemmed from Marxist theory. The Party programme decreed that, as workers and mothers, women should have certain legislative protection; that for women to participate fully in life outside the home, they had to be relieved of the drudgery of housework and child-rearing so that the state would have to take over these functions by providing services and suitable accommodation. In addition, if women were to be truly liberated, prostitution - which the Bolsheviks held revealed the objectification of women under capitalism - had to be eradicated. To achieve all this, and to make women economically independent, the revolution had to defeat the double standards of morality and to transform women so that they became subjects, participants in their own right. (33) This programme was not simply a collection of platitudes. It was intended as a guide to action. Still, the organisers of the 1918 Congress of Women were themselves overwhelmed by the response. Over a thousand women came as delegates. Thus, however low the educational level, the 1918 Congress showed that work among women was possible on a large scale. The Bolshevik struggle for survival made it essential.

Hence Lenin's consistent support for work among women and in particular for the women's bureau, zhenotdel, which was set up in 1919 to carry out propaganda and agitation among women. (34)

During the civil war, under the leadership of Innessa Armand until her death in 1920 and of Alexandra Kollontai until her fall from political favour in 1922, zhenotdel concentrated on winning the support of women for the Red Army and the Party. During the famine of 1921, it focused on relief work. (35) However, zhenotdel was not simply a proletarian version of the pre-revolutionary feminist philanthropy. It sought above all to raise women's consciousness, to educate them and to make them active participants in their own right, and on a massive scale, in the knowledge that they had the full support of the state. At the same time, women were still being drawn into work which was seen as traditionally female work. Moreover, their low levels of literacy and job skills narrowed their choice of occupation. In response, zhenotdel had sections attached to every level of the Party, to the factory committees, soviets and trade unions, so that women could gain practical experience. Its delegates were involved in general party work despite the condescension, hostility and even opposition from many male comrades. Zhenotdel organisers travelled all over Russia, into the villages as well as into the towns, educating

women particularly in terms of literacy, health and child-care. The women's sections, with delegates of workers, peasants and housewives, met twice a month with a trained party member whose task was to teach them their new legal rights, deepen their understanding, and prepare them to take part fully in building socialist society. Zhenotdel published simply worded magazines addressed specifically to women. It also set up day-care and eating facilities, as well as organising housewives into consumer and producer cooperatives. The delegates who gained this experience were expected to pass it on to the women whom they represented. Indeed, by 1928 zhenotdel had offices in every region of the Soviet Union. (36) It had even penetrated the Soviet East where the opposition to the emancipation of women was fierce and often savage.

According to Fanina Halle, there had been no awakening of women in either the Caucasus or in Central Asia, areas recognised by the travellers to be more backward than European Russia and where patriarchy was particularly strong. Indeed, such an awakening depended specifically on the work of women from European Russia, given the extremely patriarchal structure of Moslem society observed by Halle. She recorded that Bolshevik women themselves had often to put on the veil in order to make the initial contact. (37) Gregory Massell claims that the Central Asian context made

the woman question for a time a primary issue - 'an important catalyst for generating the revolutionary process itself'. His thesis is that the Soviet approach to the woman question in Central Asia was based on their analysis that the key to undermining the traditional social order lay in destroying the traditional family structure, and that the means was contained in the mobilization of women. In a sense, Moslem women were a 'surrogate proletariat' where no proletariat in the Marxist sense existed. (38) However valid, this interpretation serves to undermine the Bolshevik commitment to the eradication of sexual inequality throughout the country, and particularly to freeing women from patriarchy.

The spread of literacy among women in the Soviet East was seen as fundamental in the effort to liberate women. The dramatic unveilings of thousands of women at a time, the violent and even murderous backlash of Moslem men (which included the rape, torture and murder of unveiled women and zhenotdel delegates) seemed to constitute a veritable civil war, a reflection of the general situation as well as an integral part of the Soviet cultural revolution. The fact, too, that male Bolsheviks in the East were reluctant to condone zhenotdel activities, and even sabotaged them, also reflected the situation in European Russia, if on an exaggerated scale. Indeed, the situation in Soviet Central

Asia - the slim hold on power by the Bolsheviks, the paucity of Party resources and members, the widespread illiteracy complicated by the varieties of language and religion, and the rigid patriarchalism - seemed a magnified reflection of the many obstacles to female liberation, not the least of which were the virulent rumours to counter Soviet influence. (39) Yet Bolshevik women continued to volunteer for work among Moslem women, and Moslem women themselves continued to discard the veil. According to Kharchev, they did so in the face of accusations of 'indecent behaviour', and even on occasions being taken to court by their men, and found guilty. (40)

By the late 1920s, however, the stress in Soviet policy was increasingly on the needs of the economy and particularly on industrialization. Hence, it was even more vital for women to be drawn into production. Yet in Central Asia, there was a Bolshevik retreat from dramatic confrontations with the patriarchal culture. While the Party was gearing itself up for a return to the heroic enthusiasm of the civil war in its drive for economic modernization, it was opting for a more gradual approach towards the woman question in the East and, in this case at least, against an administrative revolution imposed from above. (41)

Perhaps the Bolsheviks had recognised the tenacious grip of patriarchy in the more backward East, where the material and cultural bases for the liberation of women were even

more lacking. Perhaps too, they saw that, however essential, work among women there was too demanding of Party energy and resources when the newly launched Five Year Plan called for total commitment immediately. In any case, the Marxist view saw the position of women as tied to the economic base, which was to be transformed.

In 1930, zhenotdel was itself suddenly dissolved, although the timing of the decision may be placed in the context of the equally sudden decision to collectivize agriculture in December 1929. Collectivization likewise entailed a bitter, brutal struggle, this time between the peasantry and the state, so that even the limited resources, in terms of personnel, finances and less than wholehearted commitment from Party cadres, which zhenotdel commanded were seen as an unnecessary diversion. (42) Work among women continued. However, it was not seen as essential in itself. It was not directed to women as women. Rather, such work was primarily defined in terms of the general tasks of the Party, and especially of the needs of the economy. The zhenotdel had seen its primary goal in achieving women's conscious participation in the construction of the new society. It had had to grapple with the historical submissiveness of women. Moreover, it had agreed that women must become members of the working class by virtue of their own independent role in the

process of production.

At the same time as encouraging women to throw off their traditional passivity, however, a new discipline was being enforced on the Party, in the factories and on the farms. The duty, this time of the whole people and not just of the intelligentsia, was to the state. The stress was on order and discipline. The swift drive away from the direct participation of the masses in the decision-making process, the rapid and rough establishment of an authoritarian, hierarchical order throughout society and state institutions, could hardly fail to affect the attitude and activity concerning the liberation of women. Yet it was not simply a case of relegating the woman question to a side issue. However narrowly defined, the aim nevertheless remained sexual equality. The Bolsheviki saw the role of the Party as not only to foster a revolutionary transformation, but to guide and control the changes this entailed. They had an economic determinist analysis which tied the woman question to the material base. The immediate post-revolutionary period had witnessed mass unemployment, widespread famine and starvation, the movement of millions of people around the country, the absorption of the most conscious cadres by the institutions of the new order. There had been widespread disillusionment, particularly among women whose allegiance to the Bolshevik regime was recognised as tenuous. (43) By the end of the first decade,

when Stalin had risen to prominence in what had been a far from single-minded Party, the task above all others had come to be the transformation of the economy. In any case, most Russian Marxists had believed that socialism could be built only on the basis of large-scale industry, as developed under capitalism, and that the situation of women was tied to the economic base. It seemed that the revolutionary movement in Russia, including the work on women through the zhenotdel, had far outrun the development of the industrial base. Moreover, by 1921, it had become a socialism of scarcity. Thus, by the end of the decade, it was seen as essential to transform the economy. Moreover, while the participation of women in building the new economy was to be as submissive as that of the men, the underlying assumption was that the changes wrought in the material base would transform the position of the former.

Whether regarded as a breathing-space or a retreat, NEP signified an end to the exhilaration and idealism of the immediate post-revolutionary period. The inequalities which surfaced again, especially for women, seemed like a betrayal of the revolution. The new realism in the economy seemed like pessimism. Women in particular suffered from lay-offs and unemployment. Prostitution reappeared, and was directly linked to the economic situation, to the partial revival of capitalist market relations and the profit

motive. There was the pervasive resentment of the NEPmen, reflected in the finery of their women. Kollontai's novels were a reflection of this situation and of the disillusionment.⁽⁴⁴⁾ More and more, it had seemed that the permissiveness of the NEP fostered uncommunist, immoral behaviour. NEP was a time of intense, exciting debate; of cultural achievements; of much progressive legislation, including the 1926 Family Code and the enhancement of women's rights. However, material conditions of life and work remained poor and difficult. In reality, women had been decreed equal at a time when the economic conditions and opportunities, let alone people's attitudes, had not been transformed. Indeed, the inequalities of NEP had precluded any kind of genuine sexual egalitarianism. Thus, by the end of the first decade, the needs of the individual, the liberation of the human personality, had been firmly subordinated to the exigencies of economic development.

6:3 Women and the Soviet economy

Under Stalin, the economic base was transformed. So too was the Party and society, radically and brutally. By the end of the second decade, any idea of individual liberation, any progressive legislation, any attempts to experiment, to move away from the norm in intellectual, cultural, sexual and family matters was inconceivable, unless dictated by

the needs of the state. Authoritarianism in the economy and politics was mirrored in authoritarianism in morality. At the same time, the woman question was claimed to have found its solution. In a sense, women and men had found, or rediscovered, a basic equality in submission to the state. For his part, Stalin recognised the traditional family as useful for stability and social control. Yet it was modified by the changes in the economy. Both the Marxist prescription of drawing women into production and, to a much lesser extent, the socialization of services were accomplished under Stalin. While neither went far or deeply enough, they upset customary sex roles. Yet there could be no sexual equality within the context of the extremely inegalitarian society during the Stalin era, except perhaps in submission and terror.

The great leap into industrialization at the end of the 1920s needed women in the labour force. As noted above, unemployment in the 1920s had fallen more heavily on women. Managers had been reluctant to hire them because of the continuing objections from male workers, the expense of protective legislation, and the possibility of pregnancy. Thus, while the number of women in industry rose, the percentage of them in the male preserve of metallurgy and mining fell. Generally, women constituted about 28-29 per cent of the labour force, while their wages were only 60-65

per cent of men's, mostly because of their lower level of skills. At the seventh trade union congress in December 1926, a woman delegate had noted that only seven per cent of delegates were women. Another had complained that, when women became literate, employers no longer wanted them. A third pointed to the small proportion of women workers promoted to responsible positions in the railways. However, the first Five Year Plan called for an increase in female labour as an integral part of the process of industrialization. It was to rise from 27 per cent in 1927 to 32.5 per cent in 1932-33. (45) In addition, the Plan stressed heavy industry, which necessitated a widening of the scope of female labour. There was, in fact, a very considerable increase in the proportion of women studying industrial technology, though it was more in response to the needs of an insatiable economy than to any pressure from women themselves.

Yet despite the efforts, the quotas for women in industrial technical education were not met during the first Five Year Plan. Even on the eve of the Second World War, women constituted only fifteen per cent of all engineers with higher education employed in the economy, although they had been over twenty per cent of all technical students throughout the 1930s, which indicated that the dropout rate among women students had been higher than for men. (46)

Women still suffered disproportionate economic and social pressures both to marry and to help support families on top of the burden of housekeeping and childrearing, which were still considered their special sphere of activity. Women thus still tended to congregate in the lower skilled and status jobs, despite the gains in female education since the revolution.

It was generally considered that women in the villages were more backward than those in the towns, besides having fewer opportunities. Dorothy Atkinson cites as typical a 1925 newspaper article on women in the village which reported that those who attended the assemblies of the commune were treated with derision and were not permitted to speak. Yet she also points out that voting records for elections to the soviets show that the political participation of rural women in them rose substantially in the 1920s. (47) On the one hand, the rapidity with which peasant communes revived after the revolution revealed how deeply the commune was still rooted in the structure of peasant society and in the peasant collective consciousness. On the other, as the travellers' accounts had shown, whatever the derision peasant women encountered, they nevertheless had rights which could not be ignored. As we have seen, even in the late nineteenth century, the persistent patriarchal tradition had been experienced as a restraint by rural youth of both sexes, so

that there was considerable tension between the generations in peasant families. In the 1930s, collectivization was an extremely violent attack on the traditional and still vital peasant way of life, while industrialization was undermining the hold of agriculture on Russian society.

Kollontai had, therefore, looked on peasant women as possible agents of revolution in the countryside. Yet, women as well as the old have been recognised as the most conservative of the forces opposing collectivization. The strongest opposition was held to come from women over forty years old. Atkinson sees this female opposition as a convenient screen for the male peasants who were more likely to be penalized for overt resistance. (48) Yet in his dealings with the peasantry, Stalin made little distinction between the sexes, starving and transporting whole families and villages. In addition, considering the sexual division of labour in which women tended the animals and the household plot, collectivization was a direct threat to the peasant woman. (49) Atkinson further claims that the government increasingly concentrated its propaganda on the women; that meetings of female delegates were held throughout the country; that there was a marked rise in political participation of women in the soviets; that many soviets contained special sections; that a significant number of rural households were headed by women; and that some all-women collectives were formed. (50) The

official Soviet view was that collectivization would be beneficial to peasant women, allowing them to develop themselves outside of the home and domestic work. Yet Kharchev has noted that although the patriarchal authority of the male elder was much diluted, the customary type of male authority persisted in the countryside, a view confirmed by the ethnographic study of the village of Viryatino in 1958.⁽⁵¹⁾ Moreover, Stalin ultimately allowed the collective farm to correspond roughly to a village, and the collective farmers to retain a household plot and their own animals. Thus, the peasant household remained the basic economic and social unit, in the kolkhoz as in mir, while the woman remained the 'housekeeper, child rearer and the organiser of daily life'.⁽⁵²⁾

Fedor Belov, chairman of a collective farm in western Ukraine in the late 1940s, has described the sexual hierarchy of labour, and the crucial economic role played by women in agriculture, in terms similar to the American traveller William Walling at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Belov, with one exception all the important managerial posts on his collective farm were held by men. Men were assigned to most of the work done outside the farm, and to mechanized operations. Consequently, the bulk of the work done in the fields, caring for the animals and tending the household plot was left to the women and the youth, as in the nineteenth century. Those who headed the

field-work brigades were men, while the brigades themselves consisted entirely of women. Because of shortages of equipment and draft power, much of the work (sowing crops, spreading fertilizers, harvesting) was done by hand. Belov noted that those who worked in the fields had long distances to walk to reach their work areas, while those women who worked in the livestock barns had to pump and carry the water for the animals, and to prepare the fodder by hand since there was a severe lack of machinery. In Belov's view, little if any consideration was given by the economic planners to the problems faced by farm women who also had a multitude of tasks to do at home. In language reminiscent of the nineteenth-century travellers, Belov noted that a woman on a collective farm was valued not according to her beauty or charm, but according to the number of labour days she earned. This attitude extended to marriage: in selecting a bride, Belov claimed that a man usually checked up on her labour record, her strength and, still, her dowry. ⁽⁵³⁾ Kolkhoz women received public recognition if they had large numbers of children. Yet Belov recorded that on the farms, pregnant women worked almost up to the time of delivery, that they were exempt from work for only three weeks, and that the facilities for babies and young children were inadequate. Thus, in practice, women on the kolkhoz were given little consideration as mothers and few positions of authority or responsibility. Yet a certain proportion of candidates -

thirty per cent in 1948 according to Belov - to the local soviet had to be women. (54)

Rapid, forced collectivization and industrialization were performed to be accompanied by a disciplined society. This was to be ensured by the imposition of a conservative policy in sexual matters, including the outlawing of homosexuality in 1934, the ban on abortions and the new Family Code 'in defence of mother and child' in 1936, the abolition of co-education in 1943, the further restrictions on divorce in 1944, alongside the reintroduction of the concept of illegitimacy. Stalin did not simply depend on force. He also sought popular support by responding to the need for some semblance of stability or normality during the hectic transformation of the economy. Hence, he reinforced the residual popular conservatism in his family policy, adopting the virtues of the patriarchal peasant family modified by the economic and social changes he was enforcing. On the one hand, he wanted to reproduce the militarism, the popular enthusiasm, the willingness to subordinate the individual to the state that had epitomized the civil war period. On the other hand, he was determined to instil a discipline in which War Communism had been sorely deficient. His policy towards the family reflected this insistence on order. Indeed, Sverdlov has justified the 1944 edicts as in defence of the stability of the legal family by

discouraging divorce and paternity suits. Moreover, he linked the stable family with high birth rates. (55)

Thus, the traditional rural family, which the foreign observers had recorded as persisting in the late nineteenth century, with its characteristic features of large size, more than two generations and stress on women's reproductive function, continued as the model for Stalin's soviet family, though modified by economic and social developments. He used the traditional family, which included an ancient form of authoritarianism and the subordination of women, to reinforce a modern political authoritarianism which entailed an ambiguous position for women. Women were expected both to participate fully in the construction of communism and to be submissive to the demands of the state. They were given positive help and encouragement from the state, through maternity and welfare legislation and educational opportunities. Yet they were still expected to assume a traditional domestic and, above all, maternal role. They gained a great deal, but at an enormous and, as we shall see, continuing cost. What was missing was any emancipation of the individual human being which had been viewed as essential in Russian writings on the woman question since the 1840s, and without which, it had been held, there could be no genuine sexual equality. Stalin's 'solution' to the woman question reinforced the sexual division of labour, reflected

in the mystique of motherhood which he promoted, even as it greatly widened the scope of female education and occupation. Yet it seems that women in particular supported his 1936 legislation on family matters because they had felt exploited by the new morality of the 1920s which they had experienced as a moral vacuum in which they were especially vulnerable. (56) It was hoped that the 1936 legislation would instill in men that sense of responsibility which the 1918 and 1926 codes had seemed to have undermined. At the same time, despite the new emphasis on stabilizing the family and the return to the concept of the traditional family as an instrument of social control, as well as the expectations of large families, woman's place was still seen firmly in public life. She was still regarded as more than a housewife and mother. The woman was not expected to look for or to find fulfilment in domesticity alone. In practice, however, she shouldered the domestic burden alone.

Even before 1914, Soviet women were entering professions that were previously either exclusively or predominantly male. By 1941, women were forty-five per cent of the labour force. The war entailed the mobilization of millions of men, and of millions of women for the war effort in industry, keeping the army supplied in the context of terrible privation at home. In agriculture, women entered the machine tractor stations in significant numbers only

during the war, though most departed afterwards, as Belov has shown. Soviet women also served at the front and in the partisans, in the fighting as well as in the more usual female occupations of tending the wounded. The war ended with millions of widows and female heads of households, as well as widespread material destruction. Yet although women were thereby compelled to take over from men in many areas of work and responsibility, popular attitudes to the sexual division of labour remained largely unchanged, though of necessity modified. (57) Gail Lapidus has suggested that World War II intensified a certain 'masculinization' and 'feminization' of roles - a sharpening differentiation between male and female roles. (58) Perhaps the demographic shock of such a high death toll among Soviet men had led to a deep sexual insecurity, to a fear of losing sexual identity. The idealization of femininity was one result, though it should not be equated with a female desire to leave paid employment and retreat to the home. Nevertheless, although the levels of education and of occupational skills among women had risen enormously since 1917, a large number of women still worked at low-skilled, manual and physically demanding jobs, above all in agriculture. (59) The dominant factor in women's choice of occupation appeared to be force of circumstances, and above all the demands of the household. It seemed that a belief in a natural division of labour according to sex, which

defined housework and childrearing as female work, was inculcated in the home itself. (60) In the 1960s, however, the writer Kharchev condemned the unchanging sexual division of labour as unjust and undermining sexual equality. (61)

6:4 Women's work in Soviet society and the family

The family is still seen as retaining an important role in Soviet society, especially in the rearing of children, although Kharchev insisted that the function of housework should wither away. (62) According to Sedugin, the Soviet state and society 'are interested in making the family a social cell of society capable of bringing up the rising generation', while it is in the family that 'individual interests are closely intertwined with social interest'. (63) Ideas about the abolition of the family and its substitution by socialized child rearing remain a minority view, and indeed, are generally dismissed. (64) Soviet child care facilities do not match the numbers of working mothers, either in terms of quantity or quality. It has even been suggested that public child care was a feature of a poorer past period, and that a child's place is at home with the mother. (65) While this too is a minority view, and rather unrealistic considering that about ninety per cent of Soviet women of working age, outside of the more traditional regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus, are

in full-time education or employment, the fact remains that since the 1930s, the family as an institution has been strengthened, perhaps because it was no longer regarded as a threat to the regime.

Nevertheless, compared to the pre-revolutionary family, the Soviet family has undergone definite changes. It is no longer a unit of production, except for the private agricultural sector. It has also abandoned the patriarchal structure to a considerable degree. Marriage has increasingly come to be based on romantic love. Moreover, the family has moved away from the extended to the nuclear structure, although the inadequate housing and lack of adequate services, especially in the countryside, make for strong family ties. Yet Soviet observers have detected a new isolation for women in the home, and a more obvious split between housework and work outside the home than in the traditional patriarchal family. Now fathers fail, or simply refuse, to participate in household chores or child rearing. All these family responsibilities fall to the woman, so that if anything, change in the family has increased the time a housewife spends on domestic labour. (66)

In 1960, Kent Geiger deemed the family as politically helpless in the 'totalitarian' Soviet state. (67) In 1967, in their study of the peasantry, Stephen and Ethel Dunn

observed that the rural family retained important economic functions, for the household collectively owned the buildings, livestock and tools used in the private plot. They claimed that this situation was anomalous:

On the one hand, we have a regime ideologically committed to revolutionary social changes, and on the other, we have an institution so firmly entrenched that the regime itself had to sanction it and endow it with important functions. (68)

Yet the situation is surely more complex than either the irresistible force of the state and the indestructible institution of the family, for as we have seen, both government policies and the political and economic context changed considerably after 1917. According to Pankratova, writing in the 1970s, the traditional division of duties between the sexes remained in most rural families. The wife performed most of the housework, and the husband helped only in doing repairs and in heavy garden work. Nevertheless, she observed that the percentage of families in which the husband also shared the so-called woman's work was growing. Indeed, Pankratova's study revealed important changes in the understanding of family functions in the countryside. In her view, focus has shifted from material, practical functions to the emotions. She showed that men in all age

groups put a higher value on the family as a factor in helping them win promotion and improve their occupational skills. In fact, 'the family makes daily living easier for them and moreover, provides a state of emotional equilibrium that also facilitates success in society'. In contrast, women, and above all those in their twenties, saw the family as having a negative influence on their careers, an attitude which Pankratova linked to the difficulties of everyday life for mothers with small children. (69)

Kolokol'nikov, however, cautioned that the collective farm family retains producer-economic functions, in the form of the household plot. He recognised that conditions still compelled the rural family - and especially women - to spend an enormous amount of time and strength on work in the household plot and in the home itself. Nevertheless, there had been changes. The size of the rural family was declining, with one or two generations living together and the women making the decisions on the number of children. Yet he believed that, in practice, equality in divorce meant inequality, above all for the mother, since she had considerably less opportunity than her former husband to remarry. According to Kolokol'nikov, many divorced collective farm women faced the prospect of remaining single for life. (70) Yet it has also been observed that there is a shortage of unmarried girls in the countryside. (71) Moreover, young

people generally now regard the keeping of private plots as a relic of the past, as an 'old woman's' occupation, while young women in particular resent the heavy, time-consuming domestic duties associated with the life of rural women. (72) Indeed, there has been growing concern over the sexual and generational imbalance in the countryside, and the increasing reliance on older women in the rural work force.

Shishkan has noted that the historical conditions of life activity which equated female labour with manual labour, and male labour with mechanized, are particularly evident in the countryside. Moreover, mechanization seems to have been accompanied by the transfer of women to auxiliary, manual jobs that do not require skills. Indeed, Shishkan complained that such attitudes towards the division of labour are even shared by some economists. (73) Fedorova agreed that a de facto segregation of female and male labour in terms of manual and mechanized labour has evolved on the collective farms, pointing out that women also bear the workload of private farming as well as the household chores. She has observed that middle-aged and elderly women now predominate in the agricultural labour force, and that at the same time, the outflow of young women from rural areas has been greater than that of young men in recent years. Fedorova has pointed to the conditions and nature of farm work and restricted opportunities, especially for women, in education and occupation

as compared to those in the cities, as major reasons for the exodus of girls from the kolkhoz. (74)

Yet Barbara Holland sees the role of the family in the Soviet Union as a conservative and stabilizing force in that it reinforces the atomization, passivity and growing consumerism of Soviet life. (75) The family may do so in the last two areas, although the Soviet writings on changes in female attitudes, notably in the countryside, towards the family weaken the generalization about passivity, while it is difficult to agree with the claim for atomization, in the sense that the family fulfils an integrative function in society. Indeed, the family's educational duties in the widest sense are stressed. It may be instead that the state has protected the family to ensure against a radical change in people's thinking and therefore in their expectations. Nevertheless, there has been change, while there is growing concern about the apparently increasing instability in the family, reflected in the high divorce rates, the low birth rates, the recognition of women's 'double burden' and of the lack of male participation in household duties, the increase in juvenile delinquency, and the need to increase productivity in both industry and agriculture. (76)

Kharchev and Matskovskii observed in the late 1970s that in the Soviet Union, the process of destroying the old

outstripped the process of creating and developing the new family, a situation that was aggravated by wars and by the continuing strength of traditional attitudes. Indeed, they saw divorce as directed against the survivals of the past in marital relations, and as a means of achieving sexual equality. (77) Divorce rates throughout the Soviet Union have risen considerably since 1950, and quickened in the late 1960s following a simplification of divorce procedures adopted in December 1965. (78) Yankova saw the growth in the number of divorces as due primarily to 'the fact that the family of the new type is still in formation'. In her view, the educational function 'gradually turns into the main function of the family, not counting, of course, its procreative function'. (79) According to Soviet literature, women in Soviet European cities have fewer children than they consider ideal, while women in the Moslem areas have a higher birth rate because of a more positive attitude towards large families. Yet in the latter areas, patriarchal family values are believed to be declining, as is the birth rate. (80)

It has been consistent government policy to encourage fertility, in the hope that it would rise in European areas in particular, but it has failed. Moreover, its natality policies are often contradictory. Female labour clashes with the need for future labour resources. Sex education

is inadequate and contraceptives are in short supply, while abortion, legalized again in 1954, is used as a means of contraception. At the same time, higher abortion rates are not necessarily incompatible with relatively high, and increasing, use of contraceptive techniques. (81) Moreover, while there appears to be no single or consistent policy, with some policies working against each other, abortion is viewed from the concept of the personal freedom of the woman. Indeed, while many western and Soviet commentators have described the fall in fertility in European Russia as 'catastrophic', others in the Soviet Union view it as also having some positive aspects, as in part:

a spontaneous response by women to their excessive work load and lack of equality with men - a response that consists of eliminating the single factor over which they have the greatest control. The falling birth rate is an important - in fact, indispensable - lever that women can use in their efforts to achieve full equality with men. By reducing the time they must devote to the rearing of children ... women acquire valuable additional time that they can use to catch up with men... The new, lower birth rate is an essential factor in an enormous social revolution - the transition from a patriarchate to a 'biarchate', in which the two sexes are equally sovereign. (82)

From the Soviet literature, it would appear to be a slow development. Nevertheless, it is reflected in the response of many female participants in a 1969 Moscow survey. When asked about their husbands' views on the ideal family size, they retorted that they regarded 'their husbands' opinions as irresponsible and carrying no authority for them and that their own concepts and opinions appear to them more correct, better thought out, and more solidly founded'.⁽⁸³⁾

Ryurikov observed a greater individualization of people's consciousness, feelings and behaviour, which manifests itself among women in the need for self-expression and self-improvement, the need for complete equality in all areas of life. Thus, for women 'the relatively simple needs of husband, children and home are gradually being replaced by a new and more complex system of needs, one in which children are no longer a central, unrivalled value'. Woman's prestige now depends not on the size of her family, but on the success with which she performs her multiple roles, at home and at work. In Ryurikov's view, however, there has been an extreme swing from a maximum to a minimum number of children in families. He points out that while most women surveyed in European Russia considered two or three children as ideal, most gave birth to only one or two. He concluded that if urban women are to be encouraged to bear one additional child, then steps must be taken to reduce the 'cost' of this second or third child.⁽⁸⁴⁾ It is not, however,

simply a matter of increasing the birth rate in European Russia. Soviet writers see the combination of motherhood with participation in the economy as essential for a woman's personal fulfilment. According to Danilova:

Performing her procreative mission, a woman sacrifices a portion of her vital energy not only in the biological sense, but also in the spiritual and social respect ... On the other hand, childbirth ennobles woman, opens the way for the fullest development of all functions of a female organism, and has a beneficial effect on woman's physical and moral forces. (85)

By the 1960s, public attention was being focused on the difficulties women had in balancing work and family. The lack of esteem housewives suffered from was noted. Thus, in 1967 Larisa Kuznetsova wrote:

Cooking, washing floors, and doing the laundry are the same sort of difficult and unskilled labour that we object to when done in industry by women. The entire difference, however, is that industrial labour is of social importance and is paid for by the state, while housework is restricted to the private sphere and earns neither moral nor material rewards. (86)

Many western scholars point to certain elements, which they see as peculiar to the Soviet Union, and which have affected the role of women and of the family. These include an explicit ideology that encourages women to take part in the economic and social life of the country; the extremely rapid process of industrialization and collectivization which required the fullest economic participation of the population; and the extraordinary loss of manpower to 1945. (87) On the one hand, it is acknowledged that Soviet women have achieved economic independence, that not only are they essential to the economy, but that their economic participation is seen by women themselves to be necessary for personal fulfilment, while they find social and intellectual stimulation outside the home. Yet as we have seen, these ideas linking sexual equality with economic independence were not peculiar to Marxism, but have roots in Russian thought that can be traced back at least to the 1860s. The immediate qualification, however, is that Soviet women have not achieved equality in domestic and everyday life, or in politics. Discussion in the Soviet Union has tended to centre on the former area. Whereas western observers tend to equate the contemporary Soviet family with 'the bourgeois family of the past', Soviet observers see elements of the traditional patriarchal structure still evident in the family of today. (88)

In 1969, Natalia Baranskaya's story in Novy mir, 'A week

like any other', vividly expressed the stresses and conflicts in the everyday experience of the majority of urban Soviet women: the burden of both domestic and job responsibilities, the limited participation of men in housework, the low salaries and status that go with occupations clearly recognised as 'women's work' - in sum, the reality of a position of inferiority. (89) Despite the fact that living standards have been raised considerably since the 1960s, and there have been attempts to reduce regional disparities, there was widespread dissatisfaction among women. (90) In the following decade, the volume of printed criticism from women complaining about the paucity and inadequacy of consumer goods and services expanded. It was paralleled by a debate on the nature of femininity - not by any means mutually exclusive discussions. Stalin's stress on heavy industry and the military, and his neglect of consumer goods and services had been modified, but not reversed.

A symposium on 'women's employment and the family' was held in Minsk in 1969. Commenting on its recommendations, Kharchev and Golod acceded that despite the advances made in education and jobs, conditions of daily life lagged behind, which made for the continuing contradiction between woman's activity in her occupation and her social role as wife and mother. They saw the 'double burden' or 'second workday' performed by employed women as reflecting this contradiction. Since the

women bear the main burden of the work involved with consumption in and services to the family, they enjoy only one half to one third of the free time available to men.⁽⁹¹⁾ Yazykova insisted that free time is a powerful factor in social progress and the cultural development of the sexes:

While some 35-40 years ago the Soviet state concentrated on drawing women into production and public activity, and on teaching the bulk of the female population to read and write, the task today is to promote the harmonious development of woman's intellectual requirements (in creative labour, education, in setting up a family, making friends, recreation, caring for and bringing up children).⁽⁹²⁾

Kharchev and Golod outlined the results of the considerable discrepancy between male and female free time. One effect is that woman has less opportunity to develop her own personality, to realize her true potential either civically or culturally, or to upgrade her work skills. Hence, they concluded, women at many enterprises earn less, on the average, than men. Further, the woman is unable to perform to the full what Kharchev and Golod see as her function of bringing up the children. Indeed, they hold that the physical and psychological fatigue of women upsets the family, contributing to arguments, and possibly being a factor in

the high divorce rate. In addition, they see women's 'double burden' exerting a negative influence upon the birth rate, particularly in those cities and republics where regular employment of women is most prevalent (Moscow, Kiev, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, the Baltic Republics, Ukraine, the Russian Republic, Belorussia and Georgia). (93) The demographer, Viktor Perevedentsev, agrees that the unequal division of domestic labour between husband and wife is a major factor adversely affecting both the divorce and birth rates. (94)

The 1969 symposium recommended the establishment of 'privileged' working conditions for women raising children, with no loss of pay, as well as increasing maternity pay and pregnancy and post-natal leaves. Another recommendation was payment of sick-leave benefits to either the mother or father if they had to be absent from work because of their child's illness. (95) Interestingly, the symposium suggested that types of work should be recategorised, on the grounds that technical changes now meant that work previously seen as too heavy for women, could now be opened to them. However, new industries, such as the chemical and nuclear industries, might be considered as harmful to women physically. At the same time, the monotony of much female labour was acknowledged. Gruzdeva and Chertkhina have recently noted that women are still primarily concentrated

in work of routine nature, which is less well paid, and that around forty per cent of women workers are employed in unskilled or low-skilled work which requires no vocational training. Thus, despite equal pay legislation, the 'real life situation of working women' results in them earning less than men. They believe that among the factors causing such differences are the 'historically evolved peculiarities of the spheres in which women's labour is used', which they trace back to Stalin's priorities in the first Five Year Plan. (96) Since in Soviet law ^{there is} equality in educational opportunities, male and female workers may begin married life on an equal level of pay, but Novikova has noted that the respective wages of spouses follow different courses as the family increases. Whereas the man's pay rises with the acquisition of experience and additional qualifications, the woman's tends to remain stationary, since her working life is more prone to interruptions for family reasons. (97) According to Ryurikov, among workers, office employees and the intelligentsia, the average earnings of women are roughly two-thirds those of men, while their pensions are about three-fourths of male pensions. (98)

Thus, Pankratova and Yankova have cautioned that while there have been great strides in women's work in the Soviet Union, a great deal remains to be done, particularly in mechanizing and automating jobs that women traditionally

hold - auxiliary work in industry (still eighty per cent female), grading and sorting (eighty-six per cent women), and packing (eighty per cent women). (99) It was pointed out in 1970 that eighty per cent of women performing heavy manual labour had entered this line of work in response to 'circumstances', and generally despite their desire to work in more skilled and more mechanized labour. The obvious cause was seen in the domestic responsibilities of women, who chose not so much the type of work as the place of work - as close as possible to home. (100) It was therefore seen as necessary not only to improve the quality and quantity of services for the household, and especially of pre-school institutions, but also to educate little boys in particular 'in the spirit of the new socialist attitude towards the division of work in the household among members of the family'. (101)

Marilyn Goldberg has claimed that the emphasis in the Soviet attempts to alleviate the problems of women's lack of leisure time has been on reducing time required for household chores, rather than on challenging male privilege in the home. (102) Yet besides the above point made about the necessity of re-educating men from childhood, Danilova has insisted that the 'attitude to housework, participation in everyday duties, is the touchstone that reveals the nature of relations between man and wife'. (103) Soviet writers have, in fact, maintained

that besides improving consumer services and child care facilities, and encouraging women to continue their education and to upgrade their skills, men must share the housework, which they acknowledge requires a new attitude. (104)

Novikova believes that a new trend in sharing family responsibilities within the marriage partnership is discernible, and not just in the Soviet Union:

This questioning of notions that prevailed when working life was an exclusively masculine world is perhaps the best assurance that progress is being made towards true equality of opportunity and treatment for workers of both sexes. It is a recent development, and although it is still slow, there are grounds for thinking that it will speed up, particularly in view of the rapid rise in the level of education. (105)

For Danilova, work outside the home is necessary not just for the strength of the economy or the material needs of the family, but also as a source of personal development and so that the woman may be an appropriate role model for her children. (106) This stress on women's productive work is an aspect not only of Soviet ideology and material conditions, but may be traced back to Russian writings on the woman question in the 1860s, and notably to Maria

Vernadskaya, as discussed in chapter four.

Yet Igor Kon insists that social equality between men and women should not mean their levelling, the annihilation of differences between them. In his view, while 'the spheres of men's and women's endeavours keep crossing each other and it is impossible to draw the line between them', nevertheless there will be no early elimination of the differentiation in sex roles which he holds are the product of biological as much as cultural forces. (107) According to Lynn Attwood, concern over the perceived crisis in the Soviet family has played a prominent part in focusing attention on traditional family values and on the concepts of 'real' men and women, with the former being idealized as strong and powerful, and the latter as nurturant and caring. She has suggested that the extremity of these views might well be partly a backlash against the erosion of traditional masculinity and femininity which has occurred in the Soviet Union. (108) Yet given the stress on the physical health and strength of women as marriage partners, noted by the travellers in the nineteenth century and by Fedor Belov on his collective farm just after World War II, this discussion may instead reflect a desire, on the part of some at least, to continue and reflect the traditional division of labour between the sexes through novel ways.

The result has been a continuing debate on the nature of the

sexes which has parallels in the west, but which has a different context, with its strong peasant inheritance, lack of a bourgeois tradition in the western sense, and optimum rate of female participation in the work force. For some Soviet writers, biology determines not only that the woman bears children, but that she rears them. Thus, biology results in 'natural' psychological differences between the sexes, rendering boys active, competitive, adventurous and tough, and girls placid, tractable, cautious and emotional. In addition, the former are more persistent and assertive than the latter, whose tenderness leaves them vulnerable and even unstable. (109) Nevertheless, those who insist not only on natural psychological differences between the sexes but also on their reflection in education, also acknowledge that social and cultural factors are important in creating male and female personalities. They further agree with Ryurikov on the growing individualization of the personality which sexual stereotyping must not be allowed to suppress, and that Soviet society has resulted in a restructuring of the female personality, particularly through the stress on the active economic role of women. (110)

The emphasis on maternity as woman's natural function, and concern over the falling birth rate, seem to be the impetus behind the calls for femininity in women. This debate has been clearly linked by Soviet writers to the 'recent revival

of the notion that woman's proper role is that of mother and housewife'. Astonishment has been expressed over the fact that for 'the first time in the memory of those who are over sixty', it has been suggested in the press that there are negative aspects to the independent status of women:

Perhaps the crisis in the family has become so acute that some people are grasping at the totally fanciful idea that today's woman might come to view her chief vocation as motherhood and housekeeping if only she were reeducated and the necessary material conditions were created. Such misguided hopes only obscure the fact that the true solution to the problem of the family has already been discovered and is being applied more and more widely. Studies show that the more education young couples have and the greater the element of creativity there is in their work (especially the husband's), the more evenly they tend to distribute their domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. (111)

It is not so much that male roles are not questioned, since in practice the discussion on women's double burden and the studies on the huge differences in free time between the sexes ensures at least some debate on male attitudes. (112)

Rather, it is the insistence that 'equal does not mean identical', and the assumption that 'the high calling of mother preordains many of the qualities that we call feminine'. (113) For Susan Bridger, this is biological determinism, sex role stereotyping which will serve to strengthen the rural conservatism and further complicate women's access to work with technology. (114) Yet as we have seen, the commitment of Soviet women, rural as well as urban, to the family and maternity does not, in their view, make them the weaker sex. Rather, they see the combination of maternity with a job outside the home as personally fulfilling, and lament the one-sided nature of their men, whose lack of participation in domestic and child-rearing tasks is not simply unfair to women, but distorts the development of the male psyche.

Thus, as was believed in the nineteenth century, it is held that employment outside the home benefits the family socially as well as economically, develops the woman's personality, and promotes sexual equality in the home, including, at least in the long term, a rational division of domestic labour. At the same time, some in the Soviet Union now hold that the present participation rate for women in the labour force is abnormally excessive and the cause of low fertility rates in European Russia. Nevertheless, it is accepted that even though economic necessity is a major reason for women

working, they would still want to work if this factor was removed. While there is still the stress on being socially useful, women themselves see a purely household role as too limiting. (115) The high divorce rate may also confirm women in their desire for economic independence.

As we have seen, the conflicts experienced by women between their roles as workers and as mothers have been acknowledged as has the fact that women tend, still, to be employed in physically demanding, lower or un-skilled work, despite their high educational levels, so that, in contrast to the male worker's situation, a woman's choice of jobs is dictated more by family circumstances than by ability or desire. (116) It has also been acknowledged that too few women are in responsible administrative posts. (117) Taking women out of physically demanding jobs, putting them into more skilled sectors, mechanizing traditionally female labour, and even designating specific occupations as female have all been seen as methods of overcoming this inequality, as has a more equal distribution of responsibilities within the family. On the one hand, a sexual division of labour is seen as natural, and not as necessarily unequal between the sexes. (118) On the other hand, the existing division of labour which relegates all domestic chores to the woman is seen as hampering her all-round development. Hence, it is held that domestic labour must be recognised as socially useful work,

and not just necessary for the individual family, since it is in the family that the individual develops. The family, then, should be outward looking, a community in which all members actively participate, and in which men accept responsibilities for housework and childcare. (119) The remedy, therefore, is seen not simply in more and better public services, not only in men playing a full part in the tasks of the household, but precisely in a revolution in popular conceptions of women and the family. (120)

6:5 The unsolved question

The Soviet solution to the woman question lies in the declared goal of sexual equality through paid employment. Yet all the educational and occupational opportunities have failed to change fundamentally attitudes towards the position of women, or to break down the division of labour between the sexes. Indeed, Soviet women are tending to leave manufacturing and go into the service sector, thus reinforcing the traditional occupational division between the sexes. Women are also absent from political positions of leadership and power. As early as 1921, Kollontai had been caustically critical of the Party's failure to integrate women into positions of leadership in any one area of state activity. (121)

Khrushchev's memoirs reveal that, parallel with, and indeed an integral part of, the Stalinist contempt for women was

the residual idea of their moral superiority. (122)

According to Maggie McAndrew and Jo Peers, Soviet women have failed to achieve levels of political representation and power concomitant with their contribution to the economy. (123)

Genia Browning claims that research by western writers has revealed the sexual inequalities existing within Soviet society in general, and in the political institutions in particular. She points to western feminist suggestions that Soviet women's low political status is due both to their lack of women's consciousness raising groups and to discriminatory practices by the Communist Party itself, as well as the implication that the situation of Soviet women is more likely to improve from the impact of the western women's movement than from changes within Soviet society. (124)

Homage is paid to the dissident feminists of the early 1980s, whose rapid suppression and expulsion from the Soviet Union are seen as evidence of the refusal of the Soviet political elite to confront seriously its failure to solve the woman question. Even the acknowledgement that the feminist samizdat remains atypical, and included a certain nostalgia for traditional sex roles, is taken as proof that Soviet women lack feminist consciousness. (125) Some recognise, however, that Soviet women participate extensively at the local political levels, in the soviets, trade unions and commissions attached to both, and in other mass social

organisations, while they are also represented in the zhensovety (zhenskije sovety), women-only groups with the aim of raising female consciousness, which have spread throughout the Soviet Union from the 1960s. (126) Y.D. Yemelyanova explains the particular features of women's political participation in the Soviet Union:

Women are drawn into socio-political activity to an extent which will not prevent them from fulfilling their prime social function, that of being mothers. Therefore the proportion of women in the Party, the Soviets and trade union bodies, and especially those holding high elective posts, is smaller than that of men. But the gap is narrowing with the expansion of communal facilities for bringing up children and the realisation of plans for the improvement of the service industry and amenities. Women are less active in socio-political life than men also because they bear the main burden of household work. The solution of this problem does not depend solely on the industrialization and expansion of services, but also on the complete abolition of the old conservative view of women as the central figure in the household work. (127)

Browning argues that the inferior status of women in Soviet

political institutions springs rather from the 'underlying biologism of male-engendered policies for gender equality'. (128) In opposition, Ronald Hill has contended that the 'apparent bias against women in Supreme Soviet elections is in fact a bias against women as holders of particular occupations, and not against women as such'. He cites such occupations as teachers, medical, agricultural and industrial workers. (129) Yet these two views are not incompatible, since the occupations Hill points to are precisely the 'feminized' careers in the Soviet Union. Joel Moses suggests another factor. Family responsibilities do not of themselves prevent women from political participation, but they inhibit the scope of female activities. In his view, local work with little likelihood of transfer is most appropriate, given 'the societal norms that obligate even a female professional politician to sacrifice her career in order to stay with her husband and care for her family'. In addition, he points to the pressure on girls to conform to the collective's view of the woman's role, and identifies indoctrination - undemanding in terms of skills and lacking in pressures common to other party posts - as the 'ideal' and most feasible specialism for the politically ambitious woman with children. (130)

All these interpretations imply a western superiority, not in practice but in consciousness, as if western views of

sexual equality and of the specificity and influence of gender on politics were the norm. Yet to understand the Soviet situation, the Soviet views of gender must be taken into serious consideration, and not simply dismissed as 'biological determinism', or as a reflection of the backwardness of Soviet consciousness. Western analysts seem to assume that the bourgeois family of the nineteenth century, with its ideology of domesticity, is the equivalent of the contemporary Soviet family, and to overlook, or at least underestimate, the absence of a bourgeois culture along western lines. While much of the criticism western feminists make of Soviet concepts of femininity and masculinity can find substance in Soviet literature, there is a tendency to pay only lip-service to the overwhelmingly peasant past - a historically recent and vital legacy, vividly portrayed in the travellers' observations. Rather than a case of 'cultural lag', of the equation of Soviet ideas with 'old' bourgeois concepts, Soviet views of the different characteristics of women seem to stem from a political and social structure with a stress on collective over particular group or individual interests, from an ideology of sexual equality determined by the material base which was not exclusive to Marxism in Russia but integral to the general discussion on the woman question in the nineteenth century, from individual women and men in the Soviet Union today, and perhaps above all, to the peasant heritage.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. See A.M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god revol'yutsii (Moscow, 1918), pp.22-28; A.M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa i krest'yanka v Sovetskoi Rossii (Petrograd, 1921), pp.3-4; A. Artyukhina et al, Zhenshchina v revol'yutsii (Moscow, 1959), pp.187-206; E. Bochkareva, S. Lyubimova, Svetlyi put' (Moscow, 1967), pp.68-69; V. Bilshai, Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR (Moscow, 1956), p.106; A. Itkina, Revol'yutsioner, tribun, diplomat: stranitsy zhizny Aleksandry Mikhailovny Kollontai (Moscow, 1970), pp.84-96; R. Schlesinger, Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the USSR (London, 1949), pp.75-79.
2. See A.M. Kollontai, Rabotnitsy, krest'yanki i krasnyi front (Moscow, 1920); F. Halle, Women in Soviet Russia (London, 1933), pp.98-103.
3. J. Smith, Women in Soviet Russia (New York, 1926), p.34. See also Bochkareva, Lyubimova, op.cit., p.196; Halle op.cit., pp.285-288.
4. V. Burtsev, Za sto let (London, 1897), p.43.
5. See for example A.M. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo (Moscow, 1918); B. Sokoloff, Spasite detey! O detyakh Sovetskoy Rossii (Prague, 1921); L. Trotsky,

- Voprosy byta (Moscow, 1923); N.V. Krilenko, Sem'ya i novyi byt (Moscow, 1926); A.P. Pinkevich, The New Education in the Soviet Republic (London, 1930); N.S. Timasheff, "The attempt to abolish the family in Russia" in A Modern Introduction to the Family, edited by N.W. Bell, E.F. Vogel (London, 1960), pp.55-63. For a fuller discussion of the role of the family in post-revolutionary Russia, see B.L. Glass, M.K. Stolee, "Family Law in Soviet Russia, 1917-1945", Journal of Marriage and the Family, Nov. 1987, vol.49, no.4, pp.893-902.
6. Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo pp.17-18.
 7. A.G. Kharchev, Brak i sem'ya v SSSR (Moscow, 1964), p.140. See also A.M. Kollontai, Prostitutsiya i mery bor'by s ney (Moscow, 1921), pp.22-23.
 8. V. Serge, Memoirs of a Revolutionary (London, 1963), p.205.
 9. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa i krest'yanka v Sovetskoj Rossii, p.34. See also J. Smith, op.cit., pp.34-39, 45-46.
 10. K. Mehnert, Youth in Soviet Russia (London, 1933), p.205. See also Halle, op.cit., p.115. In his study, Russian

Folklore (1938: Detroit, 1971), the Soviet scholar Y.M. Sokolov noted the continuing dominance of men in sexual relations, reflected in a song (p.641):

They say that I am a Komsomolka

But I was not a Komsomolska.

I began going out with a boy from the Young
Communist League.

I became a Young Communist League girl.

11. W. Reich, The Sexual Revolution (New York, 1945), p.204.
12. See for example A.M. Kollontai, Trud zhenshchin v evolyutsii khozyaystva (Moscow, 1922), pp.80, 173.
13. See Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo, p.17; J. Smith, op.cit., p.186, records the negative attitude of the Communists to contraception, many of whom 'considered birth control as a bourgeois panacea for social ills which could have no place in a socialist society. They interpreted the question from the point of view of a conscious limitation of the race rather than of permitting women to choose for themselves whether they wished to give birth to an endless succession of children'.
14. V.I. Chekalin, Lyubov' i sem'ya (Vilnius, 1970), pp.24-36. Yet the need was clearly recognised. As one of

F.V. Gladkov's characters in his novel Cement (London, 1929), declares: 'After all, finally we shall have to have a revolution within ourselves as well. There must be a ruthless civil war within ourselves. Nothing is more fixed and tougher than our habits, feelings, and prejudices.' (p.213).

15. Chekalin, op.cit., pp.18-19, 32-34.
16. See Mehnert, op.cit., p.210.
17. See Chekalin, op.cit.; P.M. Chirikov, Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR (1917-1939) (Moscow, 1978), pp.197-207; R.T. Fisher, Pattern for Soviet Youth (New York, 1959), pp.81-82. It seems that the Komsomol in particular insisted that it was revolutionary behaviour to go against all the pre-revolutionary moral norms and principles. Hence, marriage and the family were restrictions on freedom as well as institutions which inculcated bourgeois egoism. Hence too, they preached free love and ridiculed the idea of 'falling in love' and condemned chastity. In effect, free love was equated with sex as a purely physiological act/need - a distortion of Bebel's and Kollontai's ideas, as we have seen.
18. M. Hindus, House Without a Roof (London, 1961), p.141.

See also X. Gasiorowska, Women in Soviet Fiction (London, 1968), p.116; A. Zalkind, Revolutsiia i molodezh' (Moscow, 1925),

19. G.M. Sverdlov, Sovetskoe semejnoe pravo (Moscow, 1958), p.74; Kharchev, op.cit., pp.153, 212. In Russian Folklore, Sokolov noted (p.641) that after 1917 the girls showed more independence in their rhymes. Yet these often echoed their acknowledgement that their independence could not be won all at once. For example (p.642):

My husband is a Communist,
And I am an Independent;
That is why our love
Is not getting anywhere.

20. See M. Hindus, The Great Offensive (London, 1933), p.125.
21. See V. Zenzinov, Deserted. The Story of the Children Abandoned in Soviet Russia (London, 1931); B. Madison, "Russia's illegitimate children before and after the Revolution", Slavic Review, March 1963, vol.XXII, no.1, pp.82-95, and Social Welfare in the Soviet Union (Stanford, 1968), p.39.
22. See Kollontai, Sem'ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo, p.17.

23. Pinkevich, op.cit., p.109. In Gladkov's Cement, the daughter wastes away in a children's home while the parents work for the revolution.
24. S. Chase, R. Dunn, R.G. Tugwell (eds.), Soviet Russia in the First Decade (London, 1929), p.221.
25. R. Levine-Meyer, Inside German Communism (London, 1977), p.100. See also V. Bystransky, Kommunizm, brak i sem'ya (Petrograd, 1921), pp.64-65.
26. For Kollontai's argument against alimony, see Alexandra Kollontai Selected Writings, translated and introduced by Alix Holt (London, 1977), pp.300-311. See also B.Farnsworth, "Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family: The 1926 Marriage Law Debate" in Women in Russia, edited by D. Atkinson, A. Dallin, G.W. Lapidus (Sussex, 1977), p.153; J. Smith, op.cit., p.100; Halle, op.cit., pp.121-122; Schlesinger, op.cit., part 2.
27. Farnsworth, op.cit., p.154.
28. Zalkind, op.cit., pp.55, 77-90. See also J. Smith, op.cit., pp.129-130; E. Winter, Red Virtue (London, 1933), pp.121-122. Pinkevich (op.cit., p.334), argued against Zalkind's 'so-called theory of sublimation' and for sex education. Moreover (pp.336-7):

The organization of appropriate surroundings, defence against an injurious environment, and rich provision for physical culture, sport, games, labour, creative activity, social work, and the Pioneer movement all taken together constitute the best means of utilizing the child's energy and of reducing the sexual life to a place of secondary importance. And in this connection the point should be emphasized that co-education has large significance. Studying, working, and playing together, always on an equal footing, boys and girls become accustomed to seeing in each other not primarily representatives of another sex, as happens when they are segregated, but comrades in a common cause.

29. Farnsworth, op.cit., p.163. See also R. Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930 (New Jersey, 1978), p.370.
30. Kharchev, op.cit., p.154.
31. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa i krest'yanka v Sovetskoj Rossii, pp.4-5.
32. Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god revoljutsii, pp.18-19; A.M.

- Kollontai, Iz moey zhizni i raboty (Moscow, 1974), pp.356-357.
33. See Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god revolyutsii, pp.22-28.
34. See Bochkareva, Lyubimova, op.cit., pp.81-82.
35. ibid., pp.68-78. See also Kollontai, Rabotnitsa i krest'yanka v Sovetskoy Rossii, pp.6-7; L. Katasheva, Natasha A Bolshevik Woman Organiser (London, 1934); A.M. Itkina, Zhenshchiny russkoy revolyutsii (Moscow, 1968). Kollontai was succeeded as head of zhenotdel by S.N. Smidovich (1922-1924), Klavdiya Nicolaeva (1924-1927), Aleksandra Artyukhina (1927-1930).
36. Chirikov, op.cit., pp.53-67; J. Smith, op.cit., pp.48-60. For a fuller discussion of zhenotdel, see C.E. Hayden, "The Zhenotdel and the Bolshevik Party", Russian History, 1976, 3, 2, pp.150-173; R. Stites, "Zhenotdel: Bolshevism and Russian Women, 1917-1930", Russian History, 1976, 3, 2, pp.174-193.
37. F. Halle, Women in the Soviet East (London, 1933), pp.120, 126, 154. See also Kharchev, op.cit., pp.131-132.
38. G. J. Massell, The Surrogate Proletariat Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia

1919-1929 (Princeton, 1974), pp.XXIX, XXI, XXI1.

39. See Halle, Women in the Soviet East, p.195.
40. Kharchev, op.cit., p.147. See also Artukhina, op.cit., pp.361-380; Chirikov, op.cit., p.188; Bilshai, op.cit., pp.144-168. Sokolov, op.cit., p.693, noted that a favourite theme in Soviet folklore was the contrast between the old and new mode of life, reflected especially in women's songs of the Soviet East. He recorded the song of a Turkmenian woman:

Now the time has come to break the tent of slavery -
Now you all may drink the delicious sherbet of
liberation ...

And our new rights are forever in our own hands.

Sokolov noted (p.695) that many songs were devoted to the heavy veil, the parandja, 'that symbol of the recent bondage of woman, of her woe and degradation':

O sisters, enough have you hidden the beauty of
your faces behind the heavy veil,
Enough have you swallowed the blood of sorrow, and
wept in the corner!

41. For a fuller discussion, see Artukhina, op.cit.;
Bilshai, op.cit.; Massell, op.cit., pp.332, 340, 363.
42. See Bochkareva, Lyubimova, op.cit., p.68; Chirikov,

op.cit., pp.67-71.

43. See Kollontai, Rabotnitsa za god revolutsii, pp.18-19.
44. See also Gladkov's Cement: a theme running through the latter part of the novel is the loss of revolutionary idealism and romanticism beginning with NEP. The reappearance of prostitution was particularly disappointing. See Kollontai, Prostitutsiya i mery bor'by s nei; Halle, Women in Soviet Russia, ch. XII; V. Bronner, La lutte contre la prostitution en URSS (Moscow, 1936); L. Bryant, Mirrors of Moscow (New York, 1923), pp.124-126; A. W. Field, Protection of Women and Children in Soviet Russia (London, 1932), pp.215-218.
45. See Bilshai, op.cit., p.126; E.H. Carr, Socialism in One Country 1924-1926 (Harmondsworth, 1926), vol.1, pp.392-393; E.H. Carr, R.W. Davies, Foundations of a Planned Economy (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp.501-502.
46. See Bilshai, op.cit., pp.126-143; K.E. Bailes, Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin (New Jersey, 1978), pp.201-202.
47. D. Atkinson, The End of the Russian Land Commune 1905-1930 (Stanford, 1983), p.241.

48. ibid., p.367.
49. According to R.W. Davies, the peasants had become increasingly dependent on their animals and vegetables between 1927 and 1929, and they were given no assurance that they could continue to cultivate the household for their own family, thus antagonising the women in particular. R.W. Davies, The Industrialization of Soviet Russia, vol.1, The Socialist Offensive The Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture 1929-1930 (London, 1980), p.211.
50. Atkinson, op.cit., pp.367-368.
51. Kharchev, op.cit., p.182. See also Chirikov, op.cit., pp.221-223.
52. P.I. Kushnev et al, The Village of Viryatino, translated by S. Benet (New York, 1970), p.253.
53. F. Belov, The History of a Soviet Collective Farm (London, 1956), pp.186-187.
54. ibid., pp.187-189.
55. G.N. Sverdlov, Okhrana interesov detey v sovetskom semeynom i grazhdanskom prave (Moscow, 1955), pp.37-38;

- G.N. Sverdlov, Sovetskoe semeinoe pravo, p.33; G.N. Sverdlov, Pravo grazhdan v semye (Moscow, 1963), p.8. See also G.N. Serebrennikov, The Position of Women in the USSR (London, 1937), pp.255-256.
56. For a fuller discussion, see J. Evans, "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Women's Question: The Case of the 1936 Decree, 'In Defence of Mother and Child' ", Journal of Contemporary History, Oct. 1981, vol.16, .no.4, pp.757-775: 759, 764.
57. Bilshai, op.cit., p.23; V.S. Muromtseva, Sovetskie zhenshchiny v velikoi otechestvennoy voYne (Moscow,1979), pp.20-21, 134-144.
58. G.W. Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society Equality, Development, and Social Change (California, 1979), pp.115-116.
59. Zhenshchiny i deti (Moscow, 1969), pp.56, 66.
60. See E.Z. Danilova, Sotsial'nye problemy truda zhenshchiny-rabotnitsy (Moscow, 1968), p.62.
61. Kharchev, op.cit., p.260. For further discussion, see Alix Holt, "Domestic Labour and Soviet Society", in Home, School and Leisure in the Soviet Union, edited by

- J. Brine, M. Perrie, A. Sutton (London, 1980), pp.26-54.
62. Kharchev, op.cit., pp.231, 260, 318.
63. P. Sedugin, New Soviet Legislation on Marriage and the Family (Moscow, 1973), pp.6, 38.
64. See for example S. Strumilin, "Rabochiy byt i kommunizm", Novyimir, 1960, 7, pp.203-220.
65. See for example B. Uralnis, "Babushka v sem'ye", Literaturnaya gazeta, 3 March, 1971, p.11.
66. See G.V. Osipov, A.G. Kharchev, Z.A. Yankova, Sotsial'nye issledovaniya i problemy braka, sem'i i demografii (Moscow, 1970), p.80.
67. K. Geiger, "The Family and Social Change" in The Transformation of Russian Society, edited by C.E. Black (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p.458.
68. S.P. Dunn, E. Dunn, The Peasant of Central Russia (New York, 1967), p.48.
69. M.G. Pankratova, "The Functions of the Family as Understood by the Modern Rural Resident", Soviet Sociology, Spring 1977, vol.XV, no.4, pp.38-51: 43,46-50.

70. 'Neither a bride nor a widow' according to a folk saying. Nevertheless, it is usually the wife in rural, as in urban, areas who petitions for divorce. See V.T. Kolokol'nikov, "Marital and Family Relations Among the Collective Farm Peasantry", Soviet Sociology, Winter 1977, vol. XVI, no.3, pp.18-34: 28-33. See also L.V. Chuiko. Brak i razvody (Moscow, 1975), p.135.
71. A.R. Mikheeva, "The Life Cycle and Urgent Problems of the Rural Family", Soviet Sociology, Spring 1987, vol.XXV, no.4, pp.35-46: 44.
72. See for example Literaturnaya gazeta, 28 June 1978, p.10, 17 January 1979, p.12.
73. For Shishkan, see Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union, edited by G.W. Lapidus, (New York, 1982), pp.122-124.
74. For Fedorova, see Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union, pp.134-145. Fedorova recorded (p.135) that in 1972, only 11.3 per cent of the women working on state farms in crop farming and livestock worked on machines or mechanized equipment (the percentage for agriculture as a whole was twenty-five). In crop farming, where about two-thirds of all the women work, their proportion of mechanized labour was 1.9 per cent, and in livestock

it was 28 per cent. In some republics, the proportion of women employed on manual jobs reached 90-98 per cent. The situation was similar among tractor and combine operators, managerial personnel, and specialists. In Alastair McAuley's view, Women's Work and Wages in the Soviet Union (London, 1981), p.112, 'to a considerable extent, women in the USSR are regarded as marginal workers; it is they who make up the bulk of the reserve army', since they perform the least skilled, backbreaking toil in the fields which makes them vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations. The number of technical specialists in agriculture is nevertheless increasing, although management remains a male preserve. It has been suggested, by N.T. Dodge, M. Fashback, "The Role of Women in Soviet Agriculture", in J.F. Karcz (ed), Soviet and East European Agriculture (California, 1967), p.298, that 'as the older generation of farm women dies off, as mechanization and modernization in farming methods advance, and as the shortage of males in the Soviet working age population diminishes, we can expect a decreased reliance on women as the "work horses" of agriculture'. Yet in spite of efforts and incentives since the early 1970s, a sexual division of labour in agriculture and female inferiority within it remains. See Kharchev, op.cit., p.260. See also P. Rebrin, "Country Youngsters" in Current Digest of the Soviet Press (CDSP), 1978, vol. XXX, 8, p.14. For a fuller discussion of women in

- farming, see Susan Bridger, Women in the Soviet Countryside (Cambridge, 1987).
75. B. Holland, " 'A Woman's Right to Choose' in the Soviet Union", in Brine, Perrie, Sutton, op.cit., p.60.
76. See for example, V.B. Mikhaulyuk, Ispol'zovanie zhenskogo truda v narodnom khozyaystve (Moscow, 1970); L.V. Chuiko, op.cit.; V.N. Tolkunova, Trud zhenshchin (Moscow, 1973); A.E. Kotlyar, S. Ya Turchaninova, Zanятost' zhenshchin v proizvodstve (Moscow, 1975); A.G. Kharchev, Izmenie polozheniya zhenshchiny i sem'ya (Moscow, 1977); E. Ye. Novikova, V.S. Yazikova, Z.A. Yankova, Zhenshchina, trud, sem'ya (Moscow, 1978).
77. A.G. Kharchev, M.S. Matskovskii in Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union, pp.191, 196-197.
78. See Yu. A Korolev, Brak i razvod: Sovremennyye tendentsii (Moscow, 1978), pp.126-131, 143-149; Chuiko, op.cit., pp.145. 163.
79. Yankova in T.N. Sidorova (ed.), Soviet Women (Moscow, 1975), pp.144, 147. See also V. Perevedentsev, 270 millionov (Moscow, 1982), p.32; Korolev, op.cit., p.141.
80. See for example, Zhenshchiny v SSSR (Moscow, 1975), pp.92-

- 95; Perevedentsev, op.cit., p.9; L. Kuznetsova, Zhenshchiny na rabote i doma (Moscow, 1980), p.29; V.A. Belova, L.E. Darskii, "Opinion Statistics in the Study of the Birth Rate (Part 3)", Soviet Sociology, Fall 1975, vol.XIV, no.2, pp.13-50:31. For a fuller discussion, see E. Jones, F.W. Grupp, Modernization, Value Change and Fertility in the Soviet Union (Cambridge, 1987), pp.339-372. For a case study, see T. Rokowska-Harmstone, Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia The Case of Tadzhikistan (London, 1970).
81. See S.I. Golod, Stabil'nost sem'i: sotsiologicheskie i demograficheskie aspekty (Leningrad, 1984), p.134. See Jones, Grupp, op.cit., pp.305-308. It seems that the more developed the region, the more likely women are to practice contraception and avoid abortion. See for example Molodaya sem'ya (Moscow, 1977), pp.93-95. For a fuller discussion, see B. Holland, in Brine, Perrie, Sutton, op.cit., pp.55-69.
82. Yu.B. Ryurikov, "Children and Society - On Certain Aspects of Demographic Policy", in CDSP, 1977, vol.XXIX, 29, p.8. For further discussion, see Mary Buckley (ed.), Soviet Social Scientists Talking (London, 1986), pp.11, 17, 23, 29, 34, 46, 51, 59, 71, 88, 94, for a variety of opinions.
83. V.A. Belova, L.E. Darskii, "Opinion Statistics in the

- Study of the Birth Rate (Part 1)", Soviet Sociology, Spring 1975, vol.XlIII, no.4, pp.3-42: 38.
84. Ryurikov, op.cit., pp.8-9.
85. Y.Z. Danilova, "Forming a New Attitude to Women" in Sidorova, op.cit., p.165.
86. L. Kuznetsova, "Whose job is in the kitchen?", GDSP, 1967, vol.XIX, 33, p.12.
87. See for example, N.T. Dodge, Women in the Soviet Economy (Baltimore, 1966); M.G. Field, K.I. Flynn, "Worker, Mother, Housewife: Soviet Woman Today" in Sex Roles in Changing Society, edited by G.H. Seward, R.C. Williamson (New York, 1970), pp.257-284; D. Atkinson, A. Dallin, G.W. Lapidus (eds.), Women in Russia (Sussex, 1978), part 2; G.W. Lapidus, op.cit.; F. Blækher, The Soviet Woman in the Family and Society (Jerusalem, 1979); M. Buckley, "Women in the Soviet Union", Feminist Review, Summer 1981, 8, pp.79-106; A. McAuley, op.cit.; M. McAndrew, J. Peers, The New Soviet Woman - Model or Myth?(London, 1981).
88. For a western view, see McAndrew, Peers, ibid., pp.7-8; for a Soviet view, see Sidorova, op.cit., p.139.

89. N. Baranskaya, "Nedelya kak nedelya", Novyimir, 1969, 11, pp.23-55.
90. Zhenshchiny i deti v SSSR, p.112; V. Perevedentsev, "The Family: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", CDSP, 1975, vol.XXV11, 32, p.15.
91. A.G. Kharchev, S.I. Golod, "Recommendations of the Symposium on 'Women's Employment and the Family', Minsk, June 21-24, 1969", Soviet Sociology, Fall 1973, vol.X11, no.2, pp.84-95: 84-85. This point was supported by the findings of M.G. Pankratova, Z.A. Yankova (see CDSP, 1978, vol.XXX, 8, pp.14-15: 15) that women spend ten to twelve hours weekly on food preparation, about six hours on grocery shopping, and almost six hours doing laundry. The corresponding figures for men were 1.5 to two hours, three hours, and twenty to thirty minutes.
92. Yazikova in Sidorova, op.cit., p.130. It was also pointed out, in A. G. Zdravomyslov, V.P. Rozhin, V.A. Iadov (eds.), Man and His Work (U.S.A., 1970), pp.261-262, that men with families spend, on schooling in evening and correspondence courses alone, a fund of time greater than the entire free time of married female workers. Hence, the average level of general and continuing education of female workers is lower than for men, and especially so for single mothers.

93. Kharchev, Golod, op.cit., p.85. Yazhkova pointed out (op.cit., p.133), that childless women have greater access to the arts than those with children. Whereas children are no impediment to men in this area, women with children have a lack of free time at specific periods of family life. The importance of cultural factors for the birth rate was highlighted in the 1969 survey which showed that the average ideal number of children in a family in the European republics varied from 2.6 in Latvia to 2.9 in Belorussia, whereas in the republics of Central Asia, the Transcaucasus and Kazakhstan, both the average ideal and the variation was larger, from 3.4 in the Kazakh SSSR to 4.6 in the Uzbek SSSR. It was held that this survey supported the contention that a high level of education is accompanied by low fertility. See V.A. Belova, L.E. Darskii, "Opinion Statistics in the Study of the Birth Rate (Part 3)", pp.31, 38.
94. Perevedentsev, 270 millionov, p.32. See also Korolev, op.cit., p.121.
95. Kharchev and Golod, op.cit., pp.87-88. Kotlyar and Turchaninova, op.cit., pp.126-127, note the high rate of absenteeism of women workers, since they are in practice the ones who stay at home when their children are ill.

96. E.B. Gruzdeva, E.S. Chertkhina, "The Occupational Status and Wages of Women in the USSR", Soviet Sociology, Winter 1987, vol.XXVI, no.3, pp.67-81: 72-73. See also L.A. Gordon, E.V. Klopov, "Some problems of the social structure of the Soviet working class" in Social Stratification and Mobility in the USSR, edited by M. Yanowitch, W.A. Fisher (New York, 1973), p.41.
97. E. Novikova, Work and Family Life : USSR (International Labour Office, Geneva, 1980), p.64.
98. Ryurikov, op.cit., p.8.
99. Pankratova and Yankova, op.cit., p.15.
100. Zdravomyslov, Rozhin, Iadov, op.cit., p.260.
101. Kharchev, and Golod, op.cit., pp.90-94.
102. M.P. Goldberg, "Women in the Soviet Economy", The Review of Radical Political Economics, July 1972, pp.60-74:68.
103. Danilova in Sidorova, op.cit., p.179.
104. Novikova, Yazskova, Yankova, op.cit., p.60.
105. Novikova, Work and Family Life:USSR, p.77.

106. Danilova, Sotsial'nye problemy truda zhenshchiny-rabotnitsy, pp.38-40.
107. I. Kon, "Women at Work:Equality with a Difference?", International Social Science Journal, 1975, vol.XXVII, pp.655-665: 661, 664.
108. L. Attwood, "The New Soviet Man and Woman - Soviet Views on Psychological Sex Differences", in Soviet Sisterhood British Feminists on Women in the USSR, edited by B. Holland (London, 1985), pp.54-77: 73-75.
109. See Kon, op.cit., p.662, and Kon in L. Kuznetsova, Zhenshchina na rabote i doma, pp.190-191.
110. See ibid.; Z.A. Yankova, Sovetskaya zhenshchina (Moscow, 1978), p.123; Ryurikov, op.cit., p.8; CDSP, 1978,42, pp.6-7; Literaturnaya gazeta, 1975, no.29; Novy mir, 1977, no.2.
111. CDSP, 1977, vol.XXIX, 29, p.9.
112. Thus one Soviet female letter writer noted that a sense of superiority has been cultivated in men for centuries: 'Many of them have tried to prove their strength by crushing women's sense of self-respect. We no longer want to put up with this. But wounded male pride wails:

"Women stay weak!". Isn't this so that they can consider themselves "knights in armour" without having to lift a finger? Men's emotional laziness and inability to love - many of them, whether they realise it or not, get married only so they can obtain the cheapest possible consumer services - all this drives us to break the ties that bind and to assert ourselves. We long for strength in men. Without it - yes, I agree - we develop one-sidedly. But whimpering about goodness and kindness is to no avail - we aren't going to weaken! ' CDSP, 1978, vol.XXX, 42, pp.6-7.

113. I. Rudinko, "One Time after a Dance", CDSP, 1978, vol.XXX, 42, p.6.
114. Bridger, op.cit., pp.223-225. See also McAndrew, Peers, op.cit., p.21; G.K. Browning, Women and Politics in the USSR (Sussex, 1987), pp.8-9.
115. Kotlwar and Turchaninova, op.cit., p.8; Mikhaillyuk, op.cit., pp.23-29. See also Moscow Women Thirteen Interviews by C. Hanssen, K. Liden with an introduction by G.W. Lapidus (New York, 1983).
116. Mikhaillyuk, op.cit., pp.42-44, 67, 72.
117. V.N. Tolkunova, Pravo zhenshchin na trud i ego garanti (Moscow, 1967), pp.102-103.

118. Mikhailyuk, op.cit., p.82; Novikova, Yazhikova, Yankova, op.cit., p.60.
119. ibid., pp.53-58; Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union, pp.165-181.
120. Tolkunova, op.cit., pp.102-103.
121. A.M. Kollontai, Izbranniye stati i rechi (Moscow, 1972), p.319.
122. Khurshchev Remembers (London, 1971), pp.44-46.
123. McAndrew, Peers, op.cit., p.19.
124. Browning, op.cit., p.1. For a general discussion of women in Soviet politics seen from a western feminist viewpoint, see also Lapidus, Women in Soviet Society; G.W. Lapidus, "Political Mobilization, Participation and Leadership: Women in Soviet Politics", Comparative Politics, Oct. 1975, no.8, pp.90-118; B.W. Jancar, "Women in Soviet Politics" in Soviet Politics and Society in the 1970s, edited by H. Morton, R. Tokes (New York, 1974), pp.118-160; B.W. Jancar, Women under Communism (London, 1978); A. Heitlinger, Women and State Socialism: Sex Inequality in the Soviet Union and

- Czechoslovakia (London, 1979); J.C. Moses, "Women in Political Roles" in Atkinson, Dallin, Lapidus, op.cit., pp.333-353; J.F. Hough, "Women and Women's Issues in Soviet Policy Debates" in ibid., pp.355-373; J. Lovenduski, J. Hills (eds.), The Politics of the Second Electorate Women and Public Participation (London, 1981), pp.278-298.
125. See Woman and Russia First Feminist Samizdat (London, 1980), introduced by the Women in Eastern Europe Group; Women and Russia Feminist Writings from the Soviet Union (London, 1984), edited by T. Mamonova, foreword by R. Morgan.
126. See Browning, op.cit., pp.2, 8; Heitlinger, op.cit., p.64; Hough, op.cit., pp.357-361. Alexandra Biryukova points out that half the deputies in the local soviets are women, thirty-three per cent of the Supreme Soviet deputies are women, and a quarter of Communist Party membership is female. A. Biryukova, "The role of the Soviet woman in decision-making in trade-union committees and in industry", Labour and Society, 1985, vol.10, no.3, pp.307-321: 309.
127. Y.D. Yemelyanova, in Sidorova, op.cit., pp.68-69.

128. Browning, op.cit., p.8.
129. R. J. Hill, "Continuity and Change in USSR Supreme Soviet Elections", British Journal of Political Science, Jan. 1972, vol.2, part 1, pp.47-68: 58.
130. J.C. Moses, op.cit., pp.350-351.

Conclusion

Despite their crucial role in the economy, women in the Soviet Union still suffer from inequality. The occupational structure, indeed, reinforces their position of inferiority, especially as Soviet society is very integrated around the place of work. For western feminists, the renewed concern with the woman question, expressed in the Soviet Union since the 1960s, has focused too narrowly on women's 'double burden'. In their view, the current stress on men sharing the housework and childrearing is an evasion of, or a reflection of a lack of consciousness concerning, the basic issue of gender definition. Yet the Soviet discussion reveals an awareness of the fundamental changes required to tackle the issue of the working mother's 'second shift' in particular. Thus, for example, Gordon and Klopov argued in the mid 1970s that drawing men into the domestic work of the household necessitated profound cultural changes. (1)

Moreover, while western observations of the position of women in the Soviet Union tend to concentrate on what has happened, and what has not changed, since 1917, Soviet writers see the persistence of a position of inferiority for women as stemming from the pre-revolutionary past, a peasant patriarchal tradition reinforced by a legacy of material as well as cultural backwardness, and by Stalin's

economic priorities. Hence, Gordon and Klopov asserted that 'surmounting the overburdening of women in everyday concerns is hindered by the norms of everyday behaviour carried over from the patriarchal past'. (2) As shown by the prominent part played by Soviet women not only in the continuing discussion on the position of the sexes in society, but in the low birth rate and high divorce rate, it is a much modified patriarchy. At the same time, the causes of its persistence cannot simply be ascribed to Soviet ideological or economic imperatives. In the late nineteenth century and into the Soviet period, the working class developed much of its culture from the traditional peasantry. Among the latter, the family was the key socializing agency. There have been considerable changes within the family, not only since the nineteenth century, but since 1917. Nevertheless, the family remains, and is recognised as, the basic cell of Soviet society. Moreover, since the brief rule of Andropov, and particularly under Gorbachev, the stress has been on the general improvement of labour discipline, including social behaviour, which the family is expected to instil. The emphasis remains on the collective, which may be traced to the development of Russian thought in the nineteenth century, and not only to marxist ideology. Yet as the discussion on housework and on reasons for the low birth rate in the European republics shows, there is renewed concern over the development of the

individual personality. Again, it is in the family where that development is shaped. According to Gordon and Klopov:

The family is, first, the basic area of non-productive consumption of material goods and is one of the most important units of consumption of spiritual values; second, many services providing for the normal vital activity of the individual are for the time being produced within the family; third, the family is a special sort of club in which family members pass their leisure time; and, fourth and finally, it is the family that is the principal sphere in which the younger generation, in particular children of pre-school age, is raised. (3)

In other words, the family will continue to develop. Yet while men are expected to take a much more active part in the rearing of children, as well as sharing the housework on a more equitable basis with women, there is no hint of distinct roles for men and women disappearing. Rather, there is an idealization of 'special', 'natural' female and male characteristics, which cannot simply be reduced to a nostalgia for sexual identity since the demographic shock of World War II, but whose roots may also be traced back to the nineteenth-century idealization of female moral qualities. Further, the Soviet stress on gender role

differentiation seems to be reinforced by the traditional friendship patterns outside the family, in which women and men seek friends among their own sex. (4)

At the same time, while Soviet writers generally imply, and sometimes assert, the 'natural' continuation of distinct male and female roles, they do not thereby reflect the western bourgeois ideology of separate spheres for the sexes. Rather, the Soviet writers recognise that the well-being of a woman worker is inseparable from her domestic situation. Indeed, it seems that for them the solution to the woman question lies within the family, though they recognise that female inferiority extends beyond it. The causes are considered to stem from deeply engrained popular attitudes which the Revolution dented but did not transform, and which the subsequent political and economic developments both modified and reinforced. Hence, both patriarchal and romantic influences continue, though in an attenuated form and in a context in which both the situation of women and the structure and functions of the family have altered radically.

In addition, if Soviet ideology is related to its Russian past, the tendency in western analyses of the position of Soviet women to relegate the pre-revolutionary period to a mere picturesque backcloth to the Soviet regime may be

avoided. The Bolshevik revolution took place in an agrarian society which lacked a developed middle class. To understand the situation of women, peasant traditions, and the cultural and intellectual heritage must be taken into account, as well as the political and economic factors since 1917. Indeed, it is essential if we are to avoid the oversimplification of viewing doctrine and policy on women and the family as flowing in one direction, from the top downwards, however much it is in turn shaped by economic imperatives. What is necessary is not simply to review the flaws in the Soviet analyses of the role of women and the family, measured against a bourgeois tradition of individualism, a western definition of gender. Rather, there must be an examination of the specifically Russian experience so that meaning might be given to the concept of continuity within change in the position of Soviet women and the family.

Notes to the Conclusion

1. L. Gordon, E. Klopov, Man After Work (Moscow, 1975), p.94.
2. ibid., p.73.
3. ibid., p.97.
4. See ibid., p.116.

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